An approach to the Laws : the problem of the harmony of the goods in Plato's political philosophy

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The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Department of Political Science

AN APPROACH TO THE LAWS
The Problem of the Harmony of the Goods
In Plato’s Political Philosophy

a dissertation
by
RAPHAËL ARTEAU MCNEIL

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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An Approach to the Laws
The Problem of the Harmony of the Goods In Plato’s Political Philosophy
by Raphaël Arteau McNeil
Dissertation Advisor: Christopher Bruell

Abstract

This dissertation is an approach to Plato’s longest political work, The Laws, with a view to the problem of the harmony of the goods. Since I understand the problem of the harmony of the goods as a universal one, i.e., as a problem stemming from human condition rather than from the reading of Plato, the first task is to present what it means to adopt a Platonic perspective on this problem. This is what I do in the first chapter through a discussion of the Euthydemus and the Statesman. This discussion leads me to these three questions: (1) What is the relation between the happiness of the individual and that of the city? (2) What is the model that guides the statesman’s work of harmonizing the goods in one whole? (3) How can the knowledge of harmonizing the various goods be passed to the citizens?

Since these three questions concern the city, it is the city that I examine next. But since there are two cities in the Platonic corpus, I thus turn to a brief exposition of the Republic (Books I-VII) and the Laws (Books I-III). From my discussion of the Republic, in the first part of chapter two, I draw the conclusion that the happiness of the city and that of the individual may not necessarily coincide. This conclusion justifies my turn to the Laws in the second part of chapter two, for in the Laws the emphasis is more on individual happiness than on that of the city, as it is in the Republic. I then show that the first Books of the Laws provide an answer to the central question phrased at the end of
chapter one, namely that it is by translating the natural hierarchy of the goods into a coherent and harmonized way of life that the good lawgiver can pass his knowledge to the citizens. Yet, since this solution is challenged in the sequel, I then move on in that dialogue.

The third and last chapter is devoted to the Books IV and V of the *Laws*. The core of that chapter consists in a close analysis of the general prelude to the law code of the city to be built in the *Laws*. I show that the aim of the prelude is to educate the citizens and that the prelude is therefore the means by which the lawgiver passes on his knowledge to them. Yet, since the prelude is a twofold speech which conveys a teaching that can be understood in accordance with the power of the listener’s soul, I come to the conclusion that the answer to the question about the lawgiver’s solution to the problem of the harmony of the goods is inseparable from my own interpretation of the prelude. My interpretation of the prelude is that the harmony of the goods will always remain partly imperfect and that this is why the knowledge of the hierarchy of the goods is, ultimately, more important than that of the harmony of the goods. This I take to be Plato’s position.
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## PART ONE

### THE HARMONY OF THE HAPPY CITY OF THE *REPUBLIC*

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1. **The Problem**

The origin of this dissertation is the problem of the harmony of the goods. This problem is easy to understand from a personal perspective. How to make one’s life harmonized or whole, when one is at the same time a father, a husband, a friend, a student, a salaried professor, and so forth? Presenting the problem of the harmony of the goods in such personal terms is meant, however, to underscore the universality of the problem. To the extent that this problem is rooted in the common experience that there are many good things in life but that their combination or harmonization is a puzzle that every human being has to face, it can be said to be *the* problem of human existence. Yet our own regime refuses to help us resolving this problem. For Western liberal democracies contend that the problem of the harmony of the goods is a personal problem
and thus encourage us to look at it only from a personal perspective. Although our regime is reluctant to make a distinction between lower and higher goods, it is nonetheless on the basis of such a distinction that its argument that the personal perspective on the problem of the harmony of the good is the right one can be best understood.

Western liberal democracies rest on the assertion that the protection of the lower goods—or the most necessary goods, such as food or security—gives to all citizens the liberty and the opportunity to pursue the higher goods. They do not promise to anyone the attainment of any of the higher goods. But they do instill the belief that no other regime can provide human beings with political conditions as proper as theirs for the pursuit of the best things in life. The American Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights are among the greatest expressions of this. The protection of life and property is meant to be the unshakable ground for any further pursuit of happiness. The citizens of this political order enjoy the liberty and the opportunity to seek, by their own will, all the goods that, according to their own understanding, will best fulfill their humanity. Western liberal democracies have proved to be powerful regimes in many respects. But the peculiar greatness of our regime springs—at least partially if not entirely—from the conscious decision of not resolving the problem of harmonizing the high with the low. Under liberal democracies, the problem of harmonizing the lower goods with the higher ones is therefore a personal problem, that is, it is a private problem, not a political one.

But in order for individuals to resolve this problem rationally, even if only for themselves, some sort of a model or guide is needed. The need of a model or opinion about the harmony of the goods is simply a necessary condition for the work of reason. In
order to attempt to find the true solution to this problem, reason needs to start from at
least an opinion which claims to present the truth about what it seeks. Yet, the regime we
live in refuses to give us an authoritative teaching about the harmony of the goods. But
since we still have to face this problem, we are therefore compelled to look elsewhere for
a solution. This is indeed the irony of our own political situation. In order to fully enjoy
the opportunity which is offered to us under our own regime, we need to make ourselves
the supporters of a foreign political teaching, temporarily at least.

2. Plato and the Problem of the Harmony of the Goods

The problem which confronts us can be restated as follows: is it possible for any
regime to harmonize all the human goods so that its citizens would enjoy both the lower
and higher goods in due proportion? To investigate this problem rationally, there is at
least one useful guide, namely the fact that the theoretical problem we have to deal with
is the one that stood out at the origin of political philosophy in Plato. If we turn to Plato
with this question in mind, we find that at least one dialogue seems to claim that this is, in
fact, possible. At the beginning of the Laws, the Athenian stranger gives a list of all the
good things and contends that the lower (health, beauty, strength, and wealth) depend
upon the higher ones (prudence, intellect, moderation, justice, and courage). He claims
that “if some city receives the greater, it possesses also the lesser ones, but if [it has] not
[the greater], it is deprived of both.”¹ The Athenian turns upside down the principle of

¹ Laws, 631b8-c1. All citations and references to Plato are to the Burnet edition (Oxford University Press;
in five volumes). Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.
modern liberal democracies. But in so doing, he seems to promise the attainment of that which our own regime leaves us free to seek, namely the possession of all the goods, from the greater to the lesser ones.

Although the Athenian’s claim will be qualified as the dialogue unfolds, his claim justifies turning to the *Laws* to investigate the problem of the harmony of the goods in Plato’s political philosophy. If, however, the main objective of this dissertation is the analysis of the *Laws* with a view to the problem of the harmony of the goods, two preliminary tasks are necessary before discussing that dialogue.

3. The Itinerary

There are three chapters to this dissertation. The first chapter discusses what it means to adopt a Platonic perspective on the problem of the harmony of the goods. This preliminary task is essential. As has been seen above, Western liberal democracies encourage us to look at the problem of the harmony of goods from a personal perspective. Yet, in order to avoid imposing on Plato’s thought a problem that may be alien to it, it is imperative to move away from this personal basis and to make the effort of formulating this problem as it is posed on the basis of Plato’s own writing.

To do so, we begin with a brief analysis of the *Euthydemus*. In that dialogue, the problem is looked at from a moral perspective, for Socrates makes the assertion that in order to be happy, we need the possession of many good things. Yet, as the dialogue moves on, Socrates proceeds to reduce all the good things to one, namely knowledge. The knowledge which is looked for is the knowledge of using all the things that we
usually call good for our own true benefit. That knowledge is not clearly identified in the *Euthydemus*, but the main contender that this dialogue invites us to consider is political knowledge. The *Euthydemus* thus suggests a movement from morality to politics. The best place to look for a definition of the political art is, of course, the *Statesman*. In that dialogue, the political art is understood on the model of the art of weaving. This is an important point for us, for it indicates that the purpose of the political art is to weave heterogeneous goods together in order to form one whole. Thus, the weaving of good things is the Platonic expression for the harmonization of the goods. Yet, the whole that political art produces and cares for is the city, for the result of the political weaving is not the happy human being but rather the happy city. This means that the political perspective of the *Statesman* in fact modifies what had been our starting point.

Accordingly, although crucial with respect to our inquiry, the *Statesman* leaves us with three questions: (1) What is the relation between human happiness and the happy city? (2) What is the model with a view to which the political work of harmonizing goods can and should be measured? (3) How can the knowledge of harmonizing goods be passed on to the citizens who live in the political community?

Since these three questions concern the city, it is the city which should be examined next. But since there are two cities in the Platonic corpus, this necessitates a brief comparison of the *Republic* and the *Laws*. The second chapter is thus in two parts. The first presents an analysis of the *Republic* I-VII and the second an analysis of the *Laws* I-III. However, this should all be considered as preliminary to the main task. For the analysis of the *Republic* confirms our hypothesis that the *Laws* is the dialogue in which
the problem of the harmony of the goods is best discussed. In this dialogue the problem
of the city’s wholeness almost completely eclipses that of the individual’s wholeness.
The beautiful city of the Republic is indeed the happy city, but it is so because it is the
city which is the most unified. The oneness of the city entails that each citizen be reduced
to a oneness too. But whereas the oneness of the city is a wholeness, the oneness of the
citizens is not, for citizens are one in the restrictive sense of a unit—the opposite of
many. In order to create the happy city, each citizen must become the practitioner of one
work (ergon) only. This principle, which is the very definition of the city’s justice, poses
a difficulty with respect to human happiness as well as with respect to human nature.
That difficulty is best seen in the person of the philosophers whose responsibility in the
city presupposes their holding simultaneously two jobs—that of ruling the city and that of
philosophizing—but also whose happiness transcends the city’s limits. Therefore, we
draw the conclusion that the happiness of the city and that of the individual may not
necessarily coincide. This conclusion, which also answers the first question raised in
Chapter One, justifies our turn to the Laws.

Although the city built in the Laws is not the happy city, that dialogue begins with
the claim that the city which adopts the right laws should make its people happy. To do
so, the good lawgiver should know the natural hierarchy of the goods and translate this
hierarchy into a coherent and harmonized way of life through the institution of practices
(epitêdeumata). The natural hierarchy of the goods thus appears to be the knowledge with
a view to which the political work is measured and the practices the way in which that
knowledge is passed on to the citizens. These would have been sufficient answers to the
two remaining questions raised in Chapter One were it not for the claim that the possession of the higher goods, namely the virtues, is the sufficient condition for the possession of the lower ones. This claim is tantamount to dismissing the problem of the harmony of the goods altogether, since the weaving of heterogeneous goods appears to be no longer a problem. It is with the purpose of qualifying the claim of the sufficiency of virtue that the reading of the beginning of the *Laws* is extended to Book III. Yet, if this claim is indeed qualified in the sequel, the assertion that practices are a sufficient means for passing on the lawgiver’s knowledge is also qualified. In contradistinction to practices, education becomes the appropriate way of acquiring knowledge. At the end of the *Laws III*, we thus draw the conclusion that the *Laws* is, in fact, the appropriate dialogue for a discussion of the problem of the harmony of the goods but that we have no satisfactory solution to it yet. We are therefore compelled to move on in that dialogue.

The third and last chapter is devoted to *Laws IV-V*. The core of that chapter consists in a close analysis of the general prelude to the law code of the city to be built in the remaining Books (VI-XII). The prelude is a legal device by means of which the lawgiver can explain to the citizens the rationality behind the law code. Accordingly, the prelude is explicitly said to aim at educating the citizens. The prelude is therefore the means by which the lawgiver passes on his political knowledge to the citizens. It is then a clear answer to the third question raised in Chapter One. Yet, the prelude is not a straightforward demonstration. In fact, the prelude is said to be a twofold speech which conveys a teaching that can be understood in accordance with the power of the listener’s soul. This means, however, that just as the prelude is a test for any citizen, it is also a test
for any reader of the *Laws*. Therefore, the answer to the question about the lawgiver’s knowledge of how to harmonize the goods and make men whole stands or falls by our own understanding of the prelude. Accordingly, the conclusion of our investigation is inseparable from our own interpretation of the prelude to the law code. Moreover, this conclusion greatly alters our own perspective on the problem of the harmony of the goods. It can be stated as follows. The harmony of the goods will always remain partly imperfect. This is the reason why, according to Plato, the knowledge of the hierarchy of the goods is, ultimately, more important than that of the harmony of the goods.

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Since the final content of this dissertation differs from what I originally intended to do, it is appropriate that I add a few words here in order to explain the modifications. The original intent was to focus on the *Laws* only. To carry out this project, I foresaw that two tasks had to be done. The first one was to present the city’s self-understanding, that is, the goal that the city officially pursues, which goal should reflect the standard of providing all the good things to the citizens living under its laws. The second task was then to consider the actual practices of the city, the city in deed as it were. The purpose of that second task would have been, then, to determine whether the city lives up to what it officially says, to determine, that is, whether the citizens who embody best the regime live up to the standard of harmonizing in their own soul all the goods. Thus, the general
purpose of the dissertation would have been to evaluate the distance between the city’s self-understanding and the city’s actual practices.

As it turned out, this original project had to be modified. The reason for this alteration is twofold. First, it is only when I began to write that I saw the full importance of the two preliminary tasks mentioned above. Of course, the time that I devoted to the Statesman, the Republic, and the first three Books of the Laws was, in a sense, the time that I expected to spend on the last Books of the Laws. The second reason is that the presentation of the city’s self-understanding proved to be more important for the understanding of the political teaching conveyed in the Laws than what I originally expected. Consequently, the last section of the original plan, i.e., the task of presenting the actual practices of the city of the Laws and of measuring the distance between the city in speech and that in deed, had to be abandoned. But it also means that this dissertation does not present a complete and comprehensive analysis of the Laws with respect to the problem of the harmony of the goods.

On the other hand, this dissertation, as it stands now, forms a coherent whole. For if it does not present a complete analysis of the Laws, it does discuss the importance of two other political dialogues, the Statesman and the Republic, in relation to the Laws. Accordingly, it adopts a broader perspective and it is a firm conviction of mine that it not only constitutes a valuable approach to the problem of the harmony of the goods but, in addition, to Plato’s political philosophy in general.
1.1. Introduction
1.1.1. The problem

“If many goods were present to us we should be happy and prosper.”\(^1\) This is, according to Socrates, an obvious assertion, so obvious in fact, that asking if this is so may appear “ridiculous,” “thoughtless” and “naïve.”\(^2\) As naïve as this question may appear to be, it is nonetheless worth asking. For there is a multiplicity of good things, which means that many things, which are in many respects different, are all desirable. All these goods may not be equally desirable. It is indeed desirable, if not necessary, to rank them. But the ranking of the goods in a hierarchy does not dispense with the fact of their multiplicity. We may easily proclaim wisdom a greater good than health, or friendship among fellow citizens a greater good than friendship among family members, or courage

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1. *Euthydemus*, 280b5-6; Lamb’s translation.
2. *Euthydemus*, 278e4-5 and 279a3.
a greater good than wealth, or food a greater good than shoes; and yet, although any of these rankings may be true, in each of them the superior good does not encompass, on the basis of its own superior goodness, the specific goodness of the lower good. For if we may say that the superiority of the number three over the number two implies that three encompasses, solely on the basis of its own numerical superiority, the quantity of two; however such a way of being superior does not seem to hold for the way in which one good is said to be superior to another good. The good things are not only many, but different from one another: they are heterogeneous. Hence the common human experience is that the higher good is not in every respect preferable to the lower, since in some circumstances the acquisition of the lower good is more urgent and more necessary, and therefore more desirable, than the pursuit of the higher good. Hence it is necessary to possess many good things of different kinds in order to be happy.

This seems to imply that conducting human affairs requires not only knowledge of the hierarchy of the goods but also knowledge of the combination or of the harmony of the goods. Yet too strong a distinction between these two kinds of knowledge may be misleading. It is true that the ranking of the goods into a hierarchy tends to make the eye focus on the highest good only, making all the other goods pale into insignificance beside the highest one. But if, on the other hand, the idea of harmonizing all the goods into a whole is more accurate on account of the plural character of the Good, this very same idea of a harmonious whole can hardly be contemplated without a guiding and overarching principle, which must somehow be a good in the position of a keystone holding the complex architectural structure together. From that perspective, the
knowledge of the hierarchy of the goods and the knowledge of the harmony of the goods appear to be like two sides of the same coin.

In order to investigate this relation further, we will turn briefly to the *Euthydemus* and the *Statesman*. The purpose is to show a movement leading from the moral exhortation to philosophy, on the ground that knowledge is the most necessary good for man, to political philosophy as the specific knowledge of harmonizing together different goods, that is, the knowledge, according to the expression of the *Statesman*, of weaving different goods together. This should provide the necessary preparation for launching the discussion of the *Republic* and the *Laws* in the next chapter.

1.1.2. Socrates’ exhortation to virtue and the Euthydemus

According to the picture he gives of himself in the *Apology*, Socrates is like a gadfly who constantly exhorts the most promising individuals to care about their souls, to strive for human excellence, and to love wisdom.\(^3\) This portrait is corroborated by the many exhortations Socrates makes in Plato’s dialogues; in fact, Socrates’ own activity is so much taken up with exhortation to virtue and philosophy that the question has been raised as to whether he can actually do more than solely exhort to virtue, i.e., whether he can actually teach virtue.\(^4\) Among all these exhortations, the one presented in the *Euthydemus* is of a particular interest with regard to the problem of the harmony of the goods, for in that dialogue Socrates begins with the multiplicity of the goods and

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proceeds to reduce them to one: knowledge. Furthermore, this exhortation is both concise and straightforward. This does not mean that it is flawless and completely convincing. Yet, because of the clarity of this exhortation, it makes apparent both the argument for reducing many goods to one and all the difficulties that such a reduction entails. The clarity of this exhortation is due in large part to Kleinias who, in comparison with the ambitious Alcibiades, for example, shows a great docility—perhaps a too great docility—which, at least during the first stage of the discussion, allows both the brother-pair of sophists and Socrates to perform their respective activities unimpeded.

1.2. The *Euthydemus*: Knowledge as the Only Good for Human Beings

1.2.1. The argument

At Socrates’ request, the sophists agree to display their knowledge and to exhort the young Kleinias toward philosophy and attention to virtue. Their demonstration, however, falls short of what Socrates had in mind, and Socrates feels compelled to show them how such an exhortation should be conducted. His own exhortation is divided into nine steps. 1 (278e3-279a1) He starts off with the human wish to be happy. 2 (279a1-c4)
He then considers how we can be happy and suggests that it should be by the presence of many goods. Socrates lists wealth, health, beauty and other physical assets, good birth, power, honors, moderation, justice, courage, and wisdom, all of which are reckoned by Kleinias as goods.

3 (279c4-280b3) But then Socrates suggests another one: good fortune, which, he hastens to add, may be identical to wisdom, for, the argument goes, as for arts such as flute playing, writing, seamanship, generalship and medicine, the wise man is also the most fortunate one. 4 (280b3-d7) Since Kleinias accepts the identification of good fortune with wisdom, it follows that wisdom is a good to the extent that it brings about good fortune. Wisdom is a good, thus, insofar as it is something beneficial (to ophelon). The same should be true for all the other goods previously listed. It is not so much their presence that makes them good to us, Kleinias agrees, but the benefit they give to us. Thus, happiness does not simply require the possession of the above-listed goods, but also their use. 5 (280d7-281a1) Yet, in order to be beneficial, a means (pros ti; 280e1) must be used rightly (orthōs), so that it is the rightness of the use of a means, and not just any use, that brings about benefit. This leads to the following hierarchy: the wrong use of something, which brings about evil, the non-use of something, which brings neither good nor evil, and the right use of something, which brings about benefit.

6 (281a1-281b6) Now, if knowledge (or science: epistēmē) is that which guides and rectifies the uses of things toward their right use, as the case of carpentry seems to
show,⁶ nothing is beneficial without science—or wisdom (sophia), or prudence (phronēsis), or intellect (nous); all these words seem to have an equivalent meaning here.

7 (281b6-d2) Accordingly, awaiting the acquisition of science, one should aim at doing less in order to make fewer errors while using things and, in this way, to cause less harm to oneself. In order to do less, Kleinias accepts that one would be better off being poor, weak, in low reputation, cowardly, slow and dim of sight and of hearing rather than their opposites.

8 (281d2-e5) As Socrates points out, the argument is not concerned with whether these things are by themselves naturally good but rather with their relation to knowledge. Since each of these things appears now as a power rather than a good, and since “the more powerful” (dunatōteron; 281d7) an ignorant man is, the more errors and thus harm to himself he will do, it is better to be less powerful than more for whoever is not in possession of “prudence and wisdom” (phronēsis te kai sophia; 281d8). Thus, Socrates draws the conclusion that “among the other [previously listed things] not one is either good or bad but these two: on the one hand wisdom, [which] is good, and on the other ignorance, [which] is bad.”⁷ 9 (282a1-d3) Wisdom is then the most necessary good that a man must acquire for himself.

Accordingly, one must first of all seek to acquire wisdom prior to any other thing; which means that he must seek, find, and attach himself to the person who can make him wise, provided, of course, that wisdom is teachable and does not come to be in human

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6. Later on, Socrates will however distinguish the knowledge of making from that of using and will accept that, for the great majority of craftsmen, which would include carpenters, their art provides them only with the knowledge of making and not of using (cf. Euthydemus, 289b4-c6).
7. Euthydemus, 281e3-5.
beings in its own way. But Kleinias easily dispenses with that difficulty by asserting that wisdom is teachable. Nothing, therefore, prevents him from saying that he should philosophize as much as possible.

1.2.2. A deliberation over happiness

This is how Socrates reduces the multiplicity of the goods to one. Socrates’ exhortation is, in fact, a deliberation. It does not inquire into the nature of things but into their relation. The goods listed at the beginning are not evaluated for their worth, i.e., ranked according to a hierarchy. We do not know the relative goodness of wealth and health, for example, but we do know that their right use requires the acquisition of wisdom beforehand. Accordingly, while the whole discussion is concerned with happiness, happiness is not investigated as such. The first definition of happiness is altered only to this extent: happiness consists in the right use of many things—which is taken to be equivalent to good fortune—rather than in the possession of many things. Starting from that point, the discussion turns into a deliberation rather than an investigation. This deliberation proceeds downward and reveals to Kleinias wisdom and knowledge as a necessary means for the attainment of happiness understood as good fortune. Wisdom, thus, appears desirable from that perception of the relation between means and goal. But since the discussion does not take the form of an examination of Kleinias’ own understanding of happiness, i.e., an examination of his opinions about the things he cares the most about (e.g., pleasure, courage, justice, friendship, nobility and the beautiful), the argument of the desirability of wisdom does not originate out of the
knowledge of one’s own ignorance and confusion about human happiness. In other words, the desirability of wisdom does not originate from the experience of a lack of wisdom about the most important things. For that reason, this exhortation to philosophy is a “defective specimen of the ‘turning wisdom.’”

1.2.3. Two flaws

Yet precisely because it is imperfect, this exhortation of Socrates may help to identify the difficulties in reducing all the goods to one. Two problems in the argument are worth noting in that respect. The first one concerns the identification of good fortune with wisdom (step 3). Both Kleinias’ astonishment and Socrates’ elusiveness about the details of their agreement indicate that this identification does not stand on a firm ground. That the identification of good fortune with wisdom is more problematical than Socrates’ argument allowed can be shown in this way. The wise pilot, to consider one case, is not necessarily the most fortunate one, inasmuch as his wisdom, i.e., the wisdom governing his art, or the pilot’s science, may not prevent him from being attacked by pirates, or from being hit by a tsunami, or from any of the other similar things that could happen. In that respect, a less wise pilot can be more fortunate than a wiser one. For the wisdom that can prevent such things from thwarting the pilot in the pursuit of his goal goes far beyond the precise and limited wisdom of the pilot; such a wisdom would need to be, ultimately, absolute wisdom: the full knowledge of the whole. It is in the lack of

such unqualified wisdom that luck and good fortune come into play. Regarding the pilot, being fortunate means meeting opportune circumstances in which to practice his art, or rather, meeting circumstances not so difficult as to hinder the use of wisdom in that precise matter. Only when piloting occurs under difficult but nonetheless manageable circumstances for the one who possesses the science of piloting—such as navigating along reefs or riding out a storm—it is true to say that the wiser the pilot is the more fortunate he will be. By tacitly omitting that qualification, Socrates is making of two things one; thus, he is doing the same thing the sophists just did when they refuted Kleinias on the possibility of learning.\(^{10}\) The truth that lies behind this spurious identification is that wisdom and science are relative to, and thus limited by, their work (\textit{ergon}) or relative to and limited by the good they pursue. Since the identification of good fortune with wisdom is a crucial step in the argument—for it is by the means of this identification that the good is identified with the beneficial—and since the latter identification is the premise on which the conclusion of the whole argument stands, the whole deliberation is affected by the fragility of this identification. In other words, to end the deliberation over happiness with the decision of pursuing science and wisdom is just a pause leading to a further investigation concerning which science one must acquire first. Socrates will raise that question in his second discussion with Kleinias, to which we will turn shortly.

The second problem concerns the relation of wisdom to the goods—or to those things first listed as goods. The crucial step in that case is when all the goods listed by

\(^{10}\) Cf. \textit{Euthydemus}, 277e3-278b2.
Socrates and Kleinias at the beginning of their discussion—that is, all the goods except wisdom—are reduced to neutral powers (step 6). We may observe, first, that, once again, Socrates’ argument appears similar to the sophists’ tricks. Indeed, it does not seem too unfitting to call it *anatreptikos* as well. For just as the two sophists prove themselves capable of making Kleinias invert any of his own statements, Socrates has no difficulty in making him invert his first evaluation of the goods for the sake of wisdom: just as the sophists have made Kleinias turn ignorant into learned and learned into ignorant, so Socrates makes Kleinias turn goods (wealth, honors, virtues) into evils and evils (poverty, low reputation, vices) into goods.\(^1\) Yet, this inversion does not match perfectly the goods first listed. Socrates points to the non-parallelism of the two lists when he asks “whether it is the courageous and the moderate men that would do less or the coward”\(^2\) and leaves out the immoderate as an alternative. The complete alternative should be: one is better off being a coward and ignorant than courageous and ignorant, immoderate and ignorant than moderate and ignorant and, according to what follows next in the original list, one is better off being unjust and ignorant than just and ignorant.\(^3\) Apart from omitting moderation and justice, health, beauty, political power, and good birth are all left out as

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1. The resemblance between Socrates and the sophists goes farther than this since Socrates explicitly agrees, on the level of principle at least, with the sophists’ goal of turning away any wealthy young man from his parents and fellow citizens in his pursuit of a professor of virtue. Socrates makes Kleinias not only desire wisdom before all other goods but also makes him ready to attach himself to any individual who can teach wisdom and science above all others (e.g., parents, lover, etc.). In that respect, he risks provoking the anger of those for whom Kleinias is a dear one, just as the sophists provoked Ctesipus’ anger. Cf. Leo Strauss, “On the *Euthydemus*” in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p.88.
3. The case of justice is tacitly omitted in that context, but Socrates raises a similar consideration later on except that that time, given the context, it would be Euthydemus who would appear to be the teacher of the disgraceful conclusion which links injustice to goodness (cf. *Euthydemus*, 296e3-297a2).
well—physical assets take their place: strength, swiftness, and sharpness of sense.

Leaving aside the question as to whether these “goods” can serve a bad end or not, there is already a problem with regard to the aim of the argument, namely doing less. For if it is true that the coward does less than the courageous person—after all, we go to war, and it is that action of going which matters the most and with a view to which the soldier who flees the battlefield can be said to do less than the one who stands firm and keeps his post—the same does not hold for the immoderate and the unjust men in comparison to their opposites. This is best shown at the psychological level. In contrast to the cowardly man who is moved by a negative desire, the desire to protect what he already has, i.e., his own life, the immoderate and unjust men are moved by positive desires, i.e., acquisitive and grasping desires, the desire to have more of something: pleasure, wealth, honor, or power. Accordingly, there seems to be something strange, to say the least, in the suggestion that the immoderate and unjust men do less than their virtuous counterparts. Besides, the relation of beauty and ugliness to doing more or less is not so obvious. As for health, it is certainly true that a sick man does less than a healthy one, but that does not decide the issue, for health might still be a necessary physical asset for the pursuit of wisdom.

14. But see what Socrates says in the Republic (352c1-8) about the necessity for a band of robbers to possess some kind of justice in order to achieve their goal.
15. This is Laches’ definition of courage; cf. Laches, 190e5-6.
16. Cf. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1129a31-b10 and especially 1168b15-22 where the desire to have more (pleonexia) is attributed to those who pursue bodily pleasures with excess, as well as to those who pursue money, and honors with excess. The latter passage blurs the distinction Aristotle has made in 1130a24-27 in order to separate particular justice from immoderation (but note the use of doxein an einaí). Therefore, even if Aristotle does not use the word in his discussion of moderation in Book III, it seems legitimate to say that pleonexia characterizes both the unjust and the immoderate man (references to Aristotle’s works are all from the Bekker edition: Aristotelis Opera, Vol. II, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1960).
1.2.4. Interpretation

Since Socrates is not a sophist, we may assume that these flaws are not devoid of all meaning. It has been suggested that the difference between the sophists’ exhortation and that of Socrates boils down to knowledge of the human soul.\(^{17}\) In contrast to the sophists’ logical refutations, Socrates’ exhortation relies on Kleinias’ wish to be happy. Socrates never refutes Kleinias’ desire for happiness understood as the possession and right use of a multiplicity of goods. Instead, he uses that very desire to show him the necessity of pursuing wisdom first. Yet, precisely because his argument is not without flaws, the momentary success of Socrates’ exhortation seems to rely on some natural inclination of Kleinias’ soul. What is attractive in Socrates’ exhortation may well be that it lets Kleinias foresee the possibility of enjoying the Good in all its forms, from wealth and honors to moderation and justice, without calling his attention to the difficulty of combining and harmonizing heterogeneous things. For that matter, he never says that some of the goods are not, in themselves, genuine goods or that there is only one genuine good worth pursuing. Indeed, Socrates grants that all the goods listed are good. He simply adds that they are good for the one who knows how to use them. Socrates’ promise to Kleinias is that he could enjoy all the goods, provided that he enjoys none of them for a while and focuses all his energy on the acquisition of wisdom, which is presented not so much as a good in itself but as the only way to be fortunate, that is, to never be hurt by the “use” of a good (be it money, pleasure, or courage). Somehow,

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Socrates’ exhortation appears to be a way to get around the difficulty of harmonizing all the goods in their heterogeneity. It may well be very appealing for Kleinias to see that there exists a good that, if possessed, will provide for the possession of all the other good things in life, or in other words, that by pursuing only one good, namely wisdom, he is in fact pursuing all the goods. Or else, it may be attractive for him to see that there is one common denominator for all the goods: just as money, the conventional common denominator of material goods, is the universal means for the acquisition of this kind of goods in any given society, wisdom appears to be the natural common denominator for the use of all the goods and therefore appears to be the universal means for the utilization of the goods simply.

That such a possibility attracts Kleinias—as it is likely to attract any human being at first glance—may explain why, in contrast to the argument identifying good fortune with wisdom, he does not show any sign of astonishment when all the goods save wisdom are turned into evils. But this, precisely, is the difficulty, for what makes the argument attractive is the same thing that makes it dubious. The argument stipulates that it is not only desirable but also possible to do less in all other spheres of human affairs while acquiring wisdom, i.e., that it is possible to bracket all the other goods, to abstract from all other goods, and to interrupt their pursuit while focussing on the most necessary one. The deliberative frame of the argument makes all this sensible: wisdom must be acquired first and prior to everything else, however desirable it might be, just as the foundations of a house must be built first and prior to the roof. But the silence of Socrates on moderation and justice hints at the problem with such a view. To the extent that the
learning of wisdom takes time and cannot be easily learned and imitated as the eristic art can be, and to the extent that the one who seeks wisdom still needs to eat and still has familial and political bonds and obligations, it is not so easy to bracket concerns of justice and moderation while pursuing wisdom. For, as Aristotle puts it, it is “by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other human beings that we become some of us just and others unjust.” All this points to the tension between the acquisition of a good and its use. In other words, we may grant that wisdom enables man to use money rightly, but we may wonder whether wisdom also enables man to acquire money. And as long as the learning of wisdom takes place in society, it is hard to see how one may eat without money, or the help of friends, family, or fellow citizens.

1.2.5. Resuming of the discussion

At the end of the first part of Socrates’ exhortation, there remain, then, two problems. The first one is the unspecified nature of wisdom. The second concerns the relation between wisdom and all the other goods in their multiplicity. Socrates takes up the first one at the beginning of his second discussion with Kleinias: “which science, then, if we acquire it rightly, would we have acquired?” According to the foregoing, the standard that must guide their investigation is the right use. They should therefore look for a science that combines both the knowledge to make and the knowledge to use what is made. On that ground, they reject lyre-making, flute-making, speech-making, generalship

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and along with it all the hunting arts.\textsuperscript{21} Finally, when their investigation arrives at the kingly art, which they assume to be identical with the political art (or statesmanship: \textit{politikē}; 289c4), it is just as if they had stepped into a labyrinth.

The problem they face with politics is this. On the one hand, politics appears to be the architectonic art \textit{par excellence}: it is to this art that all the other arts hand over their specific work, just as if only the political art could rule over all the arts and had the knowledge of using their work. The political art thus seems to be what they are looking for, since it appears to be “the cause of [everything which] is done rightly in the city.”\textsuperscript{22} On the other hand, the work of the political art is hard to identify, especially as the question is raised in this context. This is due to the conclusion of the first discussion between Socrates and Kleinias: if the work of statesmanship is to be beneficial, it must be a science, since science is that which is truly beneficial. Accordingly, although statesmanship may bring about goods such as wealth, liberty, and peace, these goods must be left aside for now, for they should be, as it were, the by-products of another good, which is the true work of the political art, and which must be some sort of science or knowledge. It is that science which is peculiar to statesmanship that the political art should be capable of handing down to the citizens of a city as its specific work and as the truly beneficial work by the benefit of which citizens are made wise and good.

\textsuperscript{21} Carpentry should be rejected as well; cf. supra section 1.2.1. (note 6).
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Euthydemus}, 291c10-d1.
1.2.6. The aporia and the search for the political art

Somehow, the discussion has now gone full circle. If the good is to be the science of the right use of everything, this suggests that it is known by the political art, for that art governs the use of the works of all the other arts. The problem with that specification is that the work of statesmanship, especially if that work is understood in itself as the handing down of a science, is not as easy to identify as the works of all the subordinate arts are. This *aporia* is often understood as the indication that philosophy, rather than politics, is the art that truly provides the knowledge they are looking for.\(^\text{23}\) Furthermore, at the end of the *Euthydemus* Socrates makes such a strong distinction between philosophy and politics that one may be tempted to dismiss politics as a worthy subject of study.\(^\text{24}\) But it remains that the real intrigue of the *Euthydemus* is about the political art and the science belonging to that art. For if we grant that there is some seriousness to Socrates’ exhortative effort, we must turn ourselves to the investigation of statesmanship. This time, the pursuit is philosophic, for we are compelled to ask the “what is” question. The question on which the first discussion ended, “Which science ought one to study?” has now been superseded with the question: “What is the science belonging to the political art?” As to the second question: “What is the relation between wisdom and all the other goods?” it still applies to statesmanship: “What is the relation between political

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science and all the other goods?” The Statesman presents itself as the first place to look for an answer to these questions.

1.3. The Statesman: Statesmanship as the Art of Weaving Heterogeneous Goods

1.3.1. Knowledge and multiplicity

The Statesman is the last dialogue of a trilogy which begins with the Theaetetus. The Theaetetus is devoted to the Socratic question, “What is knowledge (or science: epistēmē)?” Yet, Theaetetus, to whom the question is put, is unable to provide a solid answer to it. The only firm knowledge Theaetetus gains from his discussion with Socrates seems to be the knowledge of his own ignorance of what knowledge is. The dialogue thus ends on the promise of meeting again the following day to pursue, as one may assume, the same investigation. The following day, a stranger from Elea, introduced as a philosopher, joins them. Since the Stranger is said to be a philosopher and since philosophers, according to Socrates, show up in different sorts of guise, sometimes wearing the one of the sophist, sometimes that of the statesman, Socrates puts to the Stranger the question whether the three words sophist, statesman, and philosopher, refer to one tribe (genos), or two, or three. The Stranger thus takes up the question and investigates, in the respective dialogues, “What is the sophist?” and “What is the statesman?”

The translations of *sophistēs* by “the sophist” and of *politikos* by “the statesman” somehow obliterate the connection between these two dialogues and the *Theaetetus* question “What is knowledge?” For both the sophist and the statesman are to be reckoned among the knowers. In that respect, the rendering of *sophistēs* by “professor of wisdom” and of *politikos* by “he who is skilled in political things” are more fitting. Both the sophist and the statesman are akin to horse breeders, carpenters, and other craftsmen in that they practice an art on the basis of knowledge. In contrast to other craftsmen however, the product or work (*ergon*) of their art is not readily discernable.

The reason for this is that the work of both is directly connected with the arts in their multiplicity. This is another way of saying that their own knowledge may appear as manifold and as fragmented as the arts are. And this is the truth of the matter in the case of the sophist. The sophist ultimately shows himself as the possessor of the art of disputation, which means that he has a capacity to dispute about everything and thus to contradict any craftsman about his own business. To be in truth what it claims to be, that art would however require the knowledge of everything: of each and every art, to begin with. But this is impossible and the sophist must therefore be the possessor of some “opinionative knowledge” (*doxastikē epistēmē*; 233c10) about everything rather than the

28. Cf. *Sophist*, 232a1-2 and *Statesman*, 258b4. It is true that the Stranger finally concludes that the sophist should not be reckoned among the knowers (cf. *Sophist*, 267e4-5 and 268b11-c1). But since the sophist nonetheless possesses an art, albeit an art of imitation, it implies that, just like any other craftsman, he too is a knower of some sort. The sophist art seems to originate from some sort of experienced knowledge of arguments, from having turned arguments over and over again (*kalividā*; 268a2), which experience has then been compiled in books and is now readily available for whoever wants to learn it (*mathein*; 233d8).
possessor of a true knowledge about everything. In other words, the sophist is an imitator, and his art stands or falls on his capacity to appear to be what he is not, i.e., a superior knower in any matter whatsoever. He accomplishes this by making anyone with whom he discusses in private, whatever his own trade or virtue might be, contradict himself. This is why it is so difficult for the Stranger to show what the sophist is or to catch his being as a knower of some sort, for the sophist shows himself as an apparent knower only to the extent that he can show himself different or other, i.e., wiser, than the man he converses with by making that man contradict himself on the very matter he professes to know. In other words, the work of the sophist is to produce an image of himself as a superior knower by producing contradictions in his interlocutor’s speech. He practices the art of appearing to be wise. But since his wisdom is relative to the wisdom of the person with whom he talks, the work of the sophist, that is, his own being, finds itself fragmented and dispersed among all his interlocutors, and his wisdom is fragmented and dispersed among all the arts and knowledge.  

The art of the statesman is similar to that of the sophist in that it too deals with all the other arts. In contrast to the sophist however, the statesman does not dispute the specific knowledge of any craftsman but rules over their works: as the kingly art, “it must

33. Klein puts it beautifully: “The Sophist escapes into the darkness of pure multiplicity, into the unlimited variety of ‘the Other,’ and thereby becomes not only unable to distinguish what anything is but also becomes undistinguishable himself” (Plato’s Trilogy, p.63; emphases are in the text). We may add that, to the extent that the sophist is aware of his own ignorance about everything, of his inner otherness so to speak, his work is then one of dissembling (or irony: *ton eironikon mimētēn*; 268a7). If this is so, we may therefore understand that the work of the sophist is, in fact, money-making (*chrēmatistikē*; 226a1), which he performs by hunting the wealthy young men (cf. 223b5-6) whom he catches by using his own image of a wise man as a lure.
not itself act (prattein) but must rule over those having the capacity to act.\textsuperscript{34} And yet, as the \textit{Euthydemus} has shown, this assertion alone is not enough to make the work of statesmanship apparent. It may even bring the statesman closer to the sophist, for as long as statesmanship has no proper work of its own, it is difficult to distinguish its claim to some superiority from the sophistic goal of appearing superior to every and each craftsman. In contrast to the \textit{Euthydemus} however, the \textit{Statesman} does not end by simply indicating the puzzling character of such an assertion; the Stranger from Elea attempts to give an account of the political art.

\textit{1.3.2. The myth of Cronus’ reign}

In order to show the statesman and his work, the Stranger first identifies the statesman as the one who knows how to attend to human nurturing, by means of giving, by himself, commands to that effect.\textsuperscript{35} In short, the political art is the art of herding human beings and the statesman is the shepherd who attends to the nurturing of a human herd. But as soon as the Stranger arrives at this definition, he points out that all the other craftsmen—the merchants, farmers, bakers, trainers, and doctors—would claim that they, too, take care of human nurturing.\textsuperscript{36} By way of answer, the Stranger reports the tale about the reign of Cronus.

The age of Cronus is a golden age; as Klein summarizes it, “Everything in that age springs up spontaneously for the benefit of men.”\textsuperscript{37} This state of things came about

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Statesman}, 305d1-2.
\textsuperscript{35} Cf. \textit{Statesman}, 267a8-c3.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Statesman}, 268a2.
\textsuperscript{37} Klein, \textit{Plato’s Trilogy}, p.157.
because not only man but all the parts of the universe were ruled by gods or under the
guard of *daimones* who acted like divine shepherds for each tribe and herd of animals.
For man, this means two things: first the absence of family and second the absence of
politics (or regimes: *politeiai*; 271e8). There was no family because, due to a peculiar
movement of the universe induced by the god, there was no sexual generation and the
humankind was then an earth-born tribe. As for politics, the rule of the more divine over
the less divine made the development of the arts unnecessary. First, since lower deities
guarded over each herd of animals, including man, there was no strife inside each tribe
nor war among the tribes. Second, since under the care of the gods nature produces
everything of its own accord, men were grazed in a place where they did not have to
worry about food and weather, i.e., where they did not have to farm the land and to make
houses, clothes, and beds. Arts, from agriculture to the military art, could then be
dispensed with. Under the care of divine shepherds, human beings were just like cows
under the care of the cowherd, whose job combines the works of the nurse, of the doctor,
of the marriage broker, of the midwife, and so on. ³⁸

The tale about the reign of Cronus thus allows the Stranger to set apart human
statesmanship from divine statesmanship. It is to the latter that the name “shepherd”
(*nomeus* or *poine*) and the art of herd-nurturing belong, for the work of the divine
statesmanship encompasses the nurture of the herd and thus requires “some nutritive art”
(*tina threptikēn technēn*; 276c7). When the reign of Cronus ended, however, human
beings had to provide for themselves in every respect. It is at that time that the

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³⁸ Cf. *Statesman*, 268a5-b6 and 275b4-5.
development and the specialization of the many arts began. Accordingly and in contrast to divine statesmanship, the work of human statesmanship is not directly engaged in the nutrition of the city. This is the work of the farmer, to whom the statesman defers. If, then, the term “divine shepherd” fits divine kingship, the term “human caretaker” (ton anthrōpinon epimelētēn; 276d6) suits human statesmanship.

1.3.3. The fragmentation of the arts and statesmanship

As the Stranger has pointed out earlier, the recourse to the reign of Cronus was intended to provide for a new beginning of “the showing” (apodeixis; 269c2) of the statesman. The first thing to notice is that the work of the statesman must be both distinguished from the work of all the other arts and understood in reference to these other arts. As the tale about the divine shepherd shows, kingship—rather than statesmanship—is not, in itself, completely unengaged in the work of nurturing. But human statesmanship is peculiar in that it shows itself as an art only because there is a fragmentation of the human world in a multiplicity of arts, i.e., only because there is a division of labour based on the arts. Therefore, instead of specifying any further the work of the statesman, the Stranger’s tale rather takes a step backward by returning to a degree of greater generality. The statesman is not a shepherd but a caretaker of human things, just as all the craftsmen are. Yet this regression is accompanied by a progression.

40. It is here that the identification of kingship and statesmanship (cf. 259d3-4) becomes problematic, for if the divine shepherd can be legitimately called a king (cf. 276b6), he can hardly be called a statesman (politikos) since there were no city (polis) under his reign.
The second thing to notice is that the tale allows the Stranger to raise the question of happiness: he asks where the greater happiness is to be found in comparing the human condition under the reign of Cronus to the human condition in the present age—the age of Zeus or the reign of statesmen and kings, i.e., the rule of human beings over human beings. That statesmanship has something to do with happiness is precise to at least this extent: if the background against which human statesmanship emerges is the fragmentation of the arts, the connection with happiness specifies that statesmanship is not only concerned with the production of singular and separated goods, such as food or clothes, but rather it is concerned above all with the production of a specific good understood to be a whole, which is encapsulated in the word “happiness.” It is from that comprehensive perspective that it is possible to make a political comparison, i.e., a comparison between ages and regimes. In the case at hand, the Stranger puts down as the standard according to which each age is measured by the possibility of combining the satisfaction of the body and philosophy.\(^{42}\) If the age of Cronus allowed not only for eating and sleeping but also for philosophizing with all the other beasts—then endowed with speech—then human beings living at that time were happier than human beings living now.

1.3.4. Human nature and wholeness

This notion of combination is the crucial element for the understanding of the statesman’s work. This appears from the fact that the model the Stranger will now use for

\(^{42}\) Cf. Statesman, 272b8-c5.
showing the art of statesmanship is the art of weaving. The explanation of this analogy between statesmanship and weaving is the goal of this first chapter, after which we will be able to turn to the Republic and the Laws. It is then not inappropriate to pause here in order to flesh out the standard for politics the Stranger just gave.

What strikes one at first is not so much that philosophy stands in the position of the highest good. What is more striking is that philosophy is not a distinctive human activity but is enlarged to encompass all the beasts and animals. We may understand by this that if only philosophizing with human beings were possible under Cronus’ reign, the age of Cronus would differ little from the age in which Socrates lives. And yet, it seems difficult to conceive how philosophy understood as an exclusively human activity would be at all possible during the age of Cronus when the typically Socratic subject of inquiry, namely virtue and the virtues—which Socrates almost always links to philosophy, for example in the Euthydemus when he encourages the sophists to exhort Kleinias toward philosophy and the attention to virtue—do not seem to have any power, nor even any reality, in such conditions. We may then understand that if bodies were taken care of, human beings would be either pure bodies—caring only about the pleasure that food and drink bring about—or pure intellects—spending all their time in philosophical discussions with all living beings.

Now, if they were pure intellects, the unity or combination they would look for is the unity of the whole, the unity of Nature. This would be achieved through learning from every animal, by means of speech (logos) and discussion, the different perceptions that

each one has of the whole due to its own singular capacity; the purpose of such a philosophical inquiry would be “the collection of thought” (sunagurmon phronēseōs; 272c4). On the basis of the Sophist, we may understand that the whole is made of both the same (to auton) and the other (to heteron). During Cronus’ reign, there is as little heterogeneity among human beings as possible. Because human beings did not have to satisfy their bodily needs, they did not, as it were, experience any division, neither inside their own beings nor in their relations with one another. To speak the language of the Republic, there was as little conflict between their epithumia and their logos as there could be, and thus they appear to have no thumos. They were, as it appears to be, all the same. The heterogeneity they experienced originated entirely from the outside, from their being different from other beings and other tribes (genos). The heterogeneous element lies in the different natures. To understand the whole of nature, they thus had to understand the other beings’ perception of nature. Everything happens just as if self-knowledge were already granted to these human beings: they do not have to seek for who they are and what they desire. Under Cronus’ reign, human beings did not have to inquire about their own unity or wholeness. Somehow, the god provided for it, and human beings were happier to the extent that they used the leisure allotted to them by the freedom from their bodily needs to inquire about the whole of which they were but a part. In other

44. Cf. Sophist, 254b3: “Both [movement and rest] surely partake of the same and of the other” (Metecheton mên amphō [kinēsis kai stasis] tautou kai thaterou).
45. Cf. Republic, 439d4-440a6; and as the story of Leontius reported in that passage illustrates, thumos manifests the presence of a division inside the human soul. It must pointed out, in addition, that human beings under Cronus’ reign have no erōs since there is no sexual reproduction. More precisely, they have no bodily or sexual erōs, and it is therefore a question whether intellectual or philosophical erōs is simply possible.
words, if there was philosophy during Cronus’ reign, it was not concerned with human things—at least not by human beings—but it was concerned with the other beings’ things. In short, if there was philosophy, it was not political philosophy.

In contrast to Cronus’ reign, we may then say that politics and statesmanship originate when human beings are in need of a comprehensive perspective not only with regard to the whole of nature but with regard to themselves as well. It has been said earlier that in the absence of divine shepherding men must take care of themselves, which implies the development of arts and the division of labor. The division of labor based on the arts appears to be some sort of reflection of man’s inner fragmentation. This fragmentation threatens to dissolve the unity or the wholeness of the human world and creates a state of things in which pure heterogeneity reigns over human things. As has been seen above, the sophist, due to the activity he practices, embodies in his own person such a possibility. The sophist can prove himself superior to any proclaimed knower because he knows that there is no such thing as knowledge: any assertion can be refuted, as Kleinias has painfully experienced at the hands of Euthydemus and Dionysodoros.\footnote{Cf. \textit{Euthydemus}, 275e4-6.}

Now, from the perspective of statesmanship, i.e., from the perspective of political authority, the same threat of a state of pure heterogeneity reappears but from a perspective opposite the sophistic perspective: the threat now comes from the fact that each man, to the extent that he produces a good, actually knows how to take care of a part of the human things. Hence all these specific craftsmen have a claim to be legitimate contenders to the statesman for the title of human caretaker. The problem that now faces
the Stranger is that, by assigning to the statesman a specific work in order to separate him from all the other craftsmen, he may risk creating another part of the human things. To add another part, that is, to add another “other,” as it were, would only increase the heterogeneity of the human world. Now, the Stranger proceeds to separate the political art from the other arts, but he suggests doing so by the use of a model (paradeigma; 277d1). The smallest model for statesmanship proves to be the art of weaving.

1.3.5. The art of weaving

By weaving, the Stranger means the art of making woollen clothes. A garment of wool is a manmade possession crafted for the sake of protecting the body against the sufferings brought about by the weather; it is thus directly connected with human weakness after Cronus’ reign. The art of weaving is an architectonic art which requires the work of “close co-workers” (eggus sunergoi; 280b2). The Stranger divides these co-working arts into two arts: the “auxiliary-cause” arts (sunaition) and the “proper-cause” arts (literally, the cause itself: autē aitia; 281d11). The auxiliary-cause arts include the arts that provide to those who produce the weaving the instruments needed to perform their prescribed task (i.e., spindles, combs, etc.), whereas the proper-cause arts include

47. Cf. Statesman, 279a7-b2. We may say that the recourse to a model already presupposes the introduction of the “same” into the realm of the “other.” In other words, the recourse to a model is meant to break with the methodological approach by division.

48. Benardete proposes interpreting the analogy with weaving “rather generously”: “Some artefacts are directed to the enhancement of life, others to the avoidance of death, either individually (self-preservation) or collectively. Political science, then, would be more concerned with the preservation than with the actualization of potential, more with our fears than with our hopes. It is primarily a defensive art, and as such to be negatively determined.” (The Being of the Beautiful, p.III.118). One may add, however, that clothes also speak to human nakedness and the presence of erōs in social life.
the arts that produce the work itself, i.e., the woven web. The latter are in turn divided into two arts, for the wool-working is done sometimes in conjunction with the art of separating (diakritikē) and sometimes in conjunction with the art of compounding (sugkritikē; 282b7). The arts of separating and of compounding are, the Stranger says, two great arts that come into play in everything. In the case of weaving, however, it is a compounding art which has the upper hand, since weaving is properly defined as the art of intertwining woof and warp: “for whenever the part of the compounding art [involved] in wool-working produces a web by the proper interlacing of woof and warp, the entire intertwined [web] would be designated [as a] cloth and, on the other hand, we call the art which is over it weaving.”

All the elements of weaving that make it a model for the understanding of statesmanship have now been described: the notion of co-working arts, divided into auxiliary and proper causes, the division of arts into the two great arts of separating and of compounding, and finally, something which is in need of being fleshed out and which has come up in the last quotation in the term “proper interlacing” (euthuplokia: the result of which is a web that we may call “well interlaced”). The proper interlacing is the one which is neither too tight nor too loose, but which is properly or rightly tight, i.e., as tight

49. “The art of separating is involved in carding (xantikē) and in half of the operation of the shuttle (kepristikē), whereby the threads of the warp are separated from one another. The art of compounding is involved (1) in spinning (nēstikē) by twisting and intertwining, that is, producing with a spindle (atraktos) the firm threads of the warp (stēmononētikē) as well as the soft threads of the woof (krokonētikē); (2) in weaving itself (huphantikē), which includes the other half of the operation of the shuttle, whereby the threads of the warp are conjoined; and (3) after the weaving is done, in fulling (knapeitikē), which comprises cleansing (pluntikē) and darning (akestikē) the web” (Klein, Plato’s Trilogy, p.171).
50. Statesman, 283a4-8.
as the “due measure”\textsuperscript{51} or the “appropriate measure” (\textit{to metrion}; 283e3) requires it to be. The Stranger brings up the notion of appropriate measure to point out that the work of any art, its product and result, cannot be properly understood as only the result of the causes he just listed, i.e., auxiliary and proper causes—the mechanical causes so to speak. Were this the case, we could only measure the works of art—here the woven clothes—with one another just as we do with geometrical figures, calling this square bigger only in comparison to that one which is smaller. For geometrical figures have no specific, and thus no appropriate, size: they are what they are only due to their shape and, in that respect, they are all homogeneous. Thus, when we measure geometrical figures, we measure greatness with a view to smallness, that is, opposite to opposite, or in the Stranger’s words, we measure them “in accordance with the relation that greatness and smallness have with one another” (\textit{kata tēn pros allēla megethous kai smikrotētos koinōnian}; 283d7-8). On that score, “the art of measurement” (\textit{metrētikē}; 283d1), when applied to beings such as geometrical figures, is purely quantitative and there is no qualitative evaluation involved in it. A square is a square whatever the length of its sides is and the measurement of squares—provided that they are all squares, i.e., perfect squares—will never show a heterogeneity among them with respect to their “squareness,” with respect to their being squares: measuring squares will never reveal one of them as a better square.

In contrast to geometrical figures, the works of art, whose beings necessarily take shape in time, are not only measured against one another but are also measured against

\textsuperscript{51} Klein’s translation (cf. \textit{Plato’s Trilogy}, p.172).
something else, which the Stranger calls the appropriate measure. The appropriate measure is the thing with a view to which the produced work can be said to be “good and noble” (agatha kai kala; 284b2). This also means that, with respect to arts, the art of measurement reveals a heterogeneity that affects the being of the works themselves, for comparing the tightness or the size of two woven clothes does not only involve their being tighter and less tight or bigger and smaller, but it involves also the perception of such things as excess, deficiency, and appropriate measure with respect to the weaving itself. The Stranger thus sees the necessity of separating the art of measurement into two parts. On the one hand, there is what we may call the mathematical measurement, i.e., “all the arts which measure number, lengths, depths, widths, and speeds in regard to their opposites.”⁵² On the other hand, there is a different way of measuring (to de heteron) which includes all the arts “which [measure their works] in regard to the appropriate measure, the fitting, the opportune, the required, and everything which is settled toward the middle and away from the extremes” (pros to metron kai to prepon kai ton kairon kai to deon kai panth’ oposa to meson aĩkisthē tôn eschatōn; 284e5-8).

1.3.6. Heterogeneity and unity

With this last distinction, the three elements involved in the art of weaving and needed in order to explicate the art of statesmanship are now on the table: the co-working arts, the appropriate measure, and the art of compounding. We may however, once again, wish to pause before we proceed. The notion of co-working arts, along with its

⁵² Statesman, 284e4-5.
counterpart the notion of an architectonic art, have succeeded in modifying our perspective on heterogeneity. For even though co-working arts may be mere parts, and thus different (*hetera*) from one another, they now appear as parts partaking of something superior to themselves, that is, as parts of one architectonic work. The unity of the work provides for the unification or harmonization of all its heterogeneous parts. Now, the focus on the work itself has made manifest another form of heterogeneity. The Stranger warns us that the understanding of the new heterogeneity related to the appropriate measure requires more work than the understanding of the basic heterogeneity, the heterogeneity of being different from something different: *to heteron pros heteron* according to the words of the *Sophist*.\(^{53}\) We may however suggest the following.

We now see that there are many different works produced by the same art: there are many woven clothes. But these differ from one another precisely in their quality. The new heterogeneity is a heterogeneity among the singular works of one same art, i.e., the heterogeneity of singular individuals, with respect to their being, among one particular tribe. We may guess that, because this heterogeneity occurs somehow in the field of the sameness, it opens up the possibility of some measurement and therefore of some knowledge. The Stranger does not elaborate further what the content of that knowledge is or, rather, what the being that that knowledge seeks to understand is. He says a word about the “precise itself” (*auto takribes*; 284d2), but he seems fully satisfied with not pushing the discussion any further. What is at stake here seems to be solely the status of the craftsman as a knower: “For it is not possible for either the statesman or any other

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\(^{53}\) *Sophist*, 255d1.
[craftsman] to be indisputably a knower of the things about action (tōn peri tas praxeis epistēmona) if this [i.e., the measurement of works in regard to the appropriate measure] is not agreed upon." This point is crucial in the development of the dialogue, because it allows the Stranger both to separate statesmanship from its co-working arts and to dismiss the spurious imitators of the statesman solely on the basis of the existence of a political knowledge. That is, he can make all of these distinctions before even having identified the work of statesmanship as such. Because the architectonic art alone presupposes the knowledge enabling one to measure the worth of the produced work, it is alone legitimated to rule over the co-working arts. On that basis, the Stranger can now separate statesmanship from both all the other co-working arts inside the city and the spurious imitators of that art.

1.2.7. Separating statesmanship from the arts and its spurious contenders

First, the Stranger lists the most obvious auxiliary causes to statesmanship. He then considers somewhat separately slaves and servants (douloi kai hupēretoi; 289c4), which include slaves, merchants, speechwriters, and priests who, since they receive their

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54. Statesman, 284c1-3.
55. They are: (1) the tool (organon) makers, i.e., the works of which are used, in turn, to produce other things; (2) the vessel (klēsei) makers, i.e., the works of which are used for the safekeeping of dry or liquid things; (3) the carriage (ochēma) makers, i.e., the works of which are used for sitting someone or something, on land or on water, in movement or in rest; (4) the barrier (problēma) makers, i.e., the works of which are used to protect the body from weather and enemies; (5) the entertainment (paignion) makers, the works of which include ornament (kosmos), painting (graphikē), and music and are used for pleasure; (6) the providers of “human beings’ primordial property” (to prōtogenes anthropois kēma; 288e5), i.e., the extractors of raw materials, the works of which are the material used by every other art; (7) the nourishment (trophon) caretakers, i.e., the works of which is the health of the body, this group includes farmers, hunters, doctors, gymnastic trainers, and cooks; (8) the herd nurturers (agelaiotrophikē), i.e., the work of which is the nurture of tame animals.
authority from being interpreters of gods’ decrees to human beings, possess “some servile science.” As for the proper causes, he lists the rhetoricians, generals, and judges. Between these two groups (auxiliary and proper causes), the Stranger introduces a discussion of the spurious regimes and their ranking. As we will see, this discussion sheds light on the fact that priests—“of whom it may be said that they allegedly share in statesmanship”—do not belong to the category of proper-cause arts to statesmanship.

“Regime,” first of all, does not mean here the work of statesmanship as much as the outward appearance of the ruling principle in a city and the mode according to which it rules. The Stranger thus states the usual distinctions based on the number of rulers, one, few, or the many, and on the way in which the ruler rules, on the basis of wealth or poverty, by force or voluntary submission, by written laws or in the absence of laws. Yet, the Stranger argues that these distinctions are, in themselves, inadequate, for the right regime is the regime in which the ruling is done on the basis of knowledge and science alone. Given the way in which political activity is actually performed in deed, the establishment of statesmanship as an art guided by the knowledge of the appropriate measure appears to be a sufficient standard to separate true statesmanship from spurious ones.

This may explain why the Stranger judges it appropriate to discuss the spurious regimes right after setting apart the priests. In some places like Egypt, priests are the supreme political authority. But priests do not rule by the authority of a political

56. Statesman, 290c5.
knowledge of their own. Priests are, the Stranger says, “filled with arrogance” and rule on the basis of their “august reputation.” The critique of the rule of the priests thus anticipates the critique of the rule of the law. The rule of the law is rehabilitated only as “a second best” (literally a second sailing: *deuteros plous*; 300c2) to the effectual rule of political knowledge in the person of the true knower, the true king. Thus, just as the priests represent the gods without matching their knowledge, the law represents the true knower without matching his knowledge either. As for the rhetorician, the general, and the judge, each of whom does in fact possess a knowledge directly connected to the work of statesmanship—that is, respectively, the knowledge to persuade, to launch a war, and to make the laws obeyed—these kinds of knowledge nevertheless remain subordinated to the knowledge of whether or not persuasion is required (*deō*; 304c7), a war should be launched, and decrees should be obeyed.

**1.3.8. The nature of statesmanship**

Now that all the co-working arts and the spurious imitators have been set apart, solely on the basis of the hypothesis that there exists something like a knowledge of statesmanship, the question of the nature of the knowledge of statesmanship—the question which is in need of an answer since our summary of the *Euthydemus*—can now be answered. Statesmanship is the knowledge of making all the parts of the human things

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59. *Statesman*, 290d7-8. We may say, too, that in contrast to statesmanship which is concerned with making a whole with regard to the human things, the priests consider the human things as but a part of another whole over which the gods reign. In other words, the priests introduce into the human world the heterogeneity of humanity and divinity.

60. Cf. *Statesman*, 294a6-8 and following.
united. The political art, just like the art of weaving, partakes of the art of compounding: “The [art] that rules over all these [other arts] and over the laws, [the art] that cares for everything which concerns the city and weaves all these things together in the most correct way, to grasp its power under [one] common appellation, we would designate it most justly, as it seems, the political art.”61

If we rephrase what appears to us to be the most important point of this definition, we will say that human things are in need of being harmonized and that this harmonization appears to be, first of all, the work of the political art. This is why the work of statesmanship is so difficult to identify. The statesman’s work is not to produce one singular good that we could, so to speak, hold in our hands and show to everyone, just as the weaver can grasp his woven cloth and say: “Here is what I made.” The statesman, we understand, is the one who weaves the human things together. As Leo Strauss puts it, “The kingly art is one of the arts directly concerned with making men whole or entire.”62

1.3.9. Human wholeness and the city: a hypothesis

This is, to repeat, a crucial point. Human beings are not naturally whole or entire—this is the whole meaning of the tale of Cronus’ reign—and the political art is understood as the art, or at least one of the arts, that remedies that deficiency. The problem is that according to the definition, the political art weaves, into one whole and in

61. Statesman, 305e2-6.
the most correct way, everything which concerns the city. Somehow, the city takes the place of the human things. We may understand that from the statesman’s perspective: making human beings whole means making human beings live in a city. The city, after all, is an entity composed of many different things. The work of the statesman is not to produce all these different things, i.e., all the specific and separated goods crafted by the different arts, but to produce the city inasmuch as it is one entity. More precisely, the statesman’s work is not the city itself, but rather the oneness and the wholeness of the city. The city is needed because there is no god to provide for human needs. On that ground, we may say that cities come into being even if there is no true statesman to assist their emergence. On the other hand, the work of the statesman is to make sure that what is needed, namely the city, is in the right order, i.e., united or woven in the most correct way. In sum, even though there is an obvious connection between the city and the human things, it may be more prudent first to raise the question as to whether bringing about the wholeness of the city is the same thing as the harmonization of the human things.

This amounts to saying that the definition of statesmanship, or rather the analogy between weaving and statesmanship, needs to be specified. The Stranger does it to this extent: he considers “what sort [of interlacing the statesman’s interlacing] is, in what way it interlaces together, and what sort of web it hands down to us.”\textsuperscript{63} In order to see how puzzling the end of the dialogue is, it is useful to state what it prompts us to expect from it. On the basis of what we have seen so far, we may say that 1) the statesman’s

\textsuperscript{63} Statesman, 306a2-3; although I use, for the sake of uniformity, “statesmanship interlacing,” the Stranger uses the expression “kingship interlacing” in 306a1.
interlacing interlaces heterogeneous goods, 2) it is performed by way of transmitting a knowledge or science to the citizens, and finally 3) the result is human happiness.

1.3.10. The political weaving

The Stranger begins as expected by considering heterogeneous goods. Courage (or manliness: andreia) and moderation (sôphrosunê), being two different parts of virtue, are different from one another (heteron; 306b3). But precisely because they are parts of virtue (or excellence: arêtê), they are two different goods. The Stranger, however, goes on and adds something surprising. Although the parts of virtues are said to be friendly with one another, the Stranger now asserts that they are rather quite “enemy to one another and in opposite factions” (pros allêlas echthran kai stasin enantian echonte; 306b9-10). To support his assertion, he lays out two arguments. First, he contends that manliness and moderation are the words we use to praise two opposite things: quickness and slowness, or vigor and smoothness, and the similar pair of contraries whenever we perceive it in bodies, souls, voices, and so on. Yet, we notice that the Stranger changes “moderation” (sôphrosunê) for “orderliness” or “decorum” (kosmiotêtos; 307b2) as he fleshes out his argument. Thus, what he actually says is that manliness and decorum are the words used to praise quickness and slowness. Similarly, whenever slowness and smoothness or quickness and vigor are inopportune (akaira; 307b6), we, according to the Stranger, blame them as either “cowardly and sluggish” or “insolent and mad.” (307b10-c2). The Stranger then concludes that, for the most part, these natures, namely those of the moderate, the manly, and their likes, cannot be mixed with one another (out’ allêlaïs
meignumenas; 307c4-5). As Klein points out, if this argument is pursued further, it will be simply impossible to weave these virtues together.\textsuperscript{64}

We however wonder if it is appropriate to conclude, on the basis of the logical observation that courage and moderation partake of opposites (quickness and slowness), that they are in themselves opposite. The reference to the notion of the opportune should remind us of the notion of the appropriate measure according to which certain things are measured otherwise than in regard to their opposites. We may thus understand that if quickness and slowness are in themselves opposite, it does not follow from this that the goodness of quickness and the goodness of slowness are also opposite.

Yet instead of pursuing the inherent conflict of courage and moderation (or decorum), the Stranger launches a second argument that shows the necessity of weaving together these two goods. The Stranger observes that those who are “exceptionally decorous”\textsuperscript{65} become, “due to this love [of them] which is more inopportune than what is needed” (\textit{dia ton erōta dē touton akairoteron onta ē chrē}; 307e6-7), so unwarlike that they end up being the prey of aggressors, that is, they end up slaves. Similarly, the manly ones become, “due to [their] more vehement than required desire for such a [warlike] life” (\textit{dia tēn tou toioutou biou sphodroteran tou deonto epithumian}; 308a6-7), so warlike that they provoke hatred of many powerful peoples and thus face either destruction or enslavement. Since enslavement is, at best, the outcome of excessive manliness as well as

\textsuperscript{64} Cf. Plato’s Trilogy, p.196.

\textsuperscript{65} Klein’s translation for \textit{diapherontōs kosmioi} (307e2; cf. Plato’s Trilogy, p.196).
of excessive “decorum,” and since enslavement is the absence of political life, there is a necessity for the statesman to interlace these two qualities.

At this point we can see the problematical character of the Stranger’s two arguments. We began with two virtues, that is, two goods, which, since they both partake of virtue, are both part of the same thing while being different in look. But we end up with two opposite characters, manliness and decorum, that appear not only to be in opposition to one another but, what is worse, to be not good as such for the city. For in order to bring about a political good, namely political freedom, they must be woven with one another. Somehow, it seems necessary to reassert the goodness of the elements to be interlaced. And this is precisely what the Stranger does by asserting that any compounding science should only combine suitable and good (or suitable and useful: *ta epitēdeia kai ta chrēsta*; 308c5) elements with one another. Accordingly, to the extent that the statesman’s interlacing is done on the basis of “statesmanship which is truly in accord with nature,” the statesman’s interlacing is an interlacing of goods only. This means, first of all, an interlacing of good human beings. Just as weaving begins with the carding of the wool in order to produce fitting warp and woof, statesmanship too, then, must first oversee education so that educators would do nothing but perfect “a fitting character” (*ēthos ti prepon*; 308e7) for the sake of the political weaving. And just as carding produces the warp and the woof, education should produce or rather prepare the manly and the decorous characters and then should hand them over to the statesman.

From the statesman’s perspective, education is thus understood as a proper-cause art, just as carding and cleansing are proper-cause arts to weaving: education purifies the human stock and selects the natures that can be settled into a noble birth and mixed, with art, with one another.  

The Stranger then turns to the second point, namely, the way in which the statesman’s interlacing proceeds. In order to harmonize together (sunarmosō; 309c2) the two characters, the Stranger says that the statesman must use both a divine and a human bond. The divine bond is anchored in man’s most divine part: the soul. It consists in a true opinion (alētē doxan; 309c6) about the noble, just, and good things, which both tames the “manly soul” and makes “the decorous nature [...] moderate (sōphron) and prudent.” When both tribes have the same opinion about the good and the noble, it is not difficult, the Stranger goes on, to join them together by way of intermarriage. Intermarriage is then the human bond, which, anchored into the animal part of man (the body), ties the two different characters together. The Stranger adds: “for this is the single and whole work of the kingship weaving: never ever to let the moderate character stand away from the manly one.”

Finally, the Stranger concludes on the sort of web that the true statesman produces:

We thus say that this is the end of the weaving: the interlacing [achieved] by the statesmanship activity, by means of a proper interlacing of the character of manly and moderate human beings; whenever the kingship art brings them together into one common life by means of friendship and homogeneity of

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68. Cf. Statesman, 309a8-b2.
70. Cf. Statesman, 310e5-7.
71. Statesman, 310e7-9.
thought, having perfected the most magnificent and the best of all weavings, holding tightly together the others, all the slaves and the free men—provided that they are common—into the cities, it keeps them together in its web, and inasmuch as it belongs to a city to be happy, omitting absolutely nothing to [that effect], it rules and presides [over everything in the city].

1.3.11. The findings

So, to summarize our results: first, the sort of interlacing that the Stranger has stressed is an interlacing of characters. On the one hand, it indicates that statesmanship is not only concerned with material goods produced by the arts but with psychological goods as well, the goods of the human soul. On the other hand, virtues and characters are not the same thing; this is made plain enough by the fluctuation between moderation and decorum in the Stranger’s speeches. Second, the way in which these characters are interlaced together is by means of opinions and intermarriage rather than by the transmission of a specific knowledge. And third, the goal of that interlacing is the happy city rather than the happy human being. Of course, these differences are important enough to push our inquiry to proceed further.

1.4. Conclusion: The Harmony of the Goods and the Standard of Politics

1.4.1. Summary

The itinerary we just travelled through our analysis of the Euthydemus and of the Statesman can be summarized along these lines. The multiplicity of the goods that a happy human life requires was reduced to one: the knowledge of the political art. The inquiry into the nature of that knowledge, that is, the inquiry that aimed at finding the

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72. Statesman, 311b7-c6.
work of the political art, culminated, however, in the re-emergence of the multiplicity of the goods: statesmanship is the art of weaving, or as we rephrase it, the art of harmonizing into one whole the human goods. The knowledge or the science that makes such an art possible appears to be the knowledge of both the heterogeneity of the goods and of the wholeness of the Good. Our discussions of the *Euthydemus* and of the *Statesman* have thus proved to be fruitful, and lend themselves to the following provisional statement.

Human happiness is connected to human wholeness. To the extent that wholeness is not naturally granted to man, happiness is not a given for man either. If we use the tale of the *Statesman*, we may say that wholeness is so deficient in man that during Cronus’ reign—the age during which men, as individuals and as a tribe, were as naturally whole as they would ever be—men were happier than today’s men, provided that they used their leisure to understand the whole of Nature. In other words, even if human wholeness were naturally granted to man, they would soon discover another wholeness that eludes them and would seek for it. The wholeness of nature is not, however, the work of an art: the whole of nature escapes human understanding only because human understanding is but a part of that whole, i.e., it escapes man only because of man’s limited and apparently insufficient powers. By contrast, for today’s men, human wholeness seems to be the work of a specific art. And, again, to the extent that human wholeness is the work of a specific art, human happiness would seem to be, too, the work of a specific art, which is itself grounded in a specific knowledge.
1.4.2. First difficulty

There are however three difficulties that attend this statement. The first difficulty concerns the relation between human happiness and politics. The exhortation of the *Euthydemus* starts off with the natural wish to be happy and culminates in the need to acquire, as it were, political science. Now, political science, as it is fleshed out in the *Statesman*, culminates in the creation of a happy city. As we already pointed out, human wholeness and human happiness are not necessarily the same thing as the city’s wholeness and the city’s happiness. This is a first question that will need to be addressed.

1.4.3. Second difficulty

The second difficulty concerns the relation between knowledge and art with respect to wholeness. Let us consider the case of weaving once more. The work of weaving is the woven cloth. The knowledge relative to that art is not, first of all, the knowledge of producing the woven cloth but of measuring the worth of the product. Measuring the worth of a woven cloth is, according to what the Stranger from Elea has said, measuring the work of the weaving with regard to the appropriate measure or, maybe even better, “the measured” (*to metrion*). But what does this mean? We may suggest the following. The work of weaving is to create out of different materials a new whole. When we measure the woven cloth, we may in fact be measuring its wholeness. The wholeness of a cloth cannot be measured according to its opposite, the un-whole cloth, since a cloth is a cloth to the extent that it is a complete whole. The wholeness of a cloth is thus measured against something else. When it matches that “something else” to
which it is measured, we say that it is a measured cloth. When it does not match that “something else,” we say that it is a bad or faulty cloth. The whole question is to determine what that “something else” is. If it is true that what is in fact measured is the wholeness of the work, it would make sense to say that that wholeness can only be measured against another wholeness, which must not be itself an artificial wholeness but a natural one. In the case of the cloth, the wholeness by which it is measured appears to be nothing else than the body that will wear the cloth and what it will do while wearing it.

A good example of this can be found in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* when Socrates converses with the armourer Pistias. As it is revealed through this discussion, a good breastplate is a breastplate that is well proportioned (*euruthmon*). It means that the good breastplate is in harmony (*harmottonta*) with the body of the one who wears it, so that if that person is ill proportioned with regard to his body (*tōi arruthmōi sōmati*), a well proportioned breastplate for that particular person should nonetheless be in harmony with his ill proportioned body.  

In short, to be called measured, the wholeness of the breastplate should match the peculiar wholeness of that specific body. And this is, according to the craftsman Pistias, the standard according to which the worth of any breastplate should be evaluated. In other words, art may create artificial wholeness, but to the extent that it involves the knowledge of measuring the produced wholeness, it seems to presuppose the existence of some natural wholeness from which it takes its bearing.

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For it is with regard to this wholeness that the crafted cloth can be said to be too large or too small, too tight or too loose, etc.\textsuperscript{74}

If these specifications are true, the analogy with weaving suggests that we seek for the natural wholeness with a view to which goods are harmonized by the political art. Now, as has been pointed out,\textsuperscript{75} the way in which the showing of the statesman unfolds in the dialogue allows the Stranger to get around that question. The discussion of the notion of the measured takes place in between the showing of weaving and the showing of statesmanship. In some respect, this place is very fitting, since the measurement of any work of art is grounded in the notion of “the measured.” But because the works of all the arts differ from one another, the notion of the measured is too general to be a common standard for each of them. In other words, if we may use the same numbers to measure different lengths, heights, and weights, we cannot use the same standard to measure works of different arts. There may be one standard for the different works of one same art, but another standard for the different works of another art. Thus, the standard for measuring the works of weaving is different from the standard for measuring the works of statesmanship.

\textsuperscript{74} The example of the breastplate is very clear in that respect. However, the fact that many of our actions and many of the things that we do with our body are conventional complicates matters. For example, the wholeness of a judge’s ceremonial robe seems to have less to do with his body than with the solemnity of his function. In such a case, the wholeness by which such a cloth is measured cannot simply said to be natural. Similarly, national or cultural dressing may be said to have less to do with nature than with convention. Yet, the more the function of a cloth is connected with the action of the body, the more it takes its bearing from that body. Indeed, what Socrates says about the breastplate is true for anyone who has to fight in a battle: a good breastplate should protect the body while freeing the hands and it should be made in such a way as to be easy to wear, i.e., it should not be too heavy or hurt the body or be an encumbrance to the body’s movement.

\textsuperscript{75} Cf. supra section 1.3.6.
This difference shows the limit of the analogy between the two arts, however useful the analogy has proved to be. To be satisfied with the notion of the measured is to be satisfied with the fact that the practitioner of an art is a knower. And as has been seen, the Stranger was able to dismiss all the spurious contenders to statesmanship only on that basis. Yet, the full understanding of statesmanship would require understanding the nature of the statesman’s knowledge. That is, not only the understanding of his practical knowledge of weaving the goods is required, but above all of his theoretical knowledge: the thing with a view to which he can measure the worth of his own peculiar weaving, of his own work. And as we just said, our previous remarks on the relation of art to natural wholeness suggest that the statesman too must look to some natural wholeness in order to combine goods artificially. That the work of statesmanship consists in the harmonization of heterogeneous goods is the great knowledge that we gained from the Statesman. The importance of this gain must not, however, make us overlook its incompleteness.

Before considering the last difficulty, we should stress the fact that the two first difficulties are connected with one another. Indeed, since the end of the political work came to light as the creation of the city’s wholeness, i.e., the happy city, the question of the standard of politics is intimately connected to the first difficulty, that is, the question of the relation between human wholeness (or happiness) and the city’s wholeness (or happiness).
1.4.4. Third difficulty

Finally, the third difficulty follows from the still partially elusive nature of the work of the political art. If we recall the *Euthydemus*, we remember that the ultimate work of political art was to pass over its own knowledge to the citizens.\(^\text{76}\) That was the standard set by Socrates and Kleinias in their first discussion, and the status of political art as the supreme art, as the kingly art, was said to stand or fall on the capability of statesmanship to pass on its own knowledge. In the *Statesman*, there is no such stress on that standard. It is present to the extent that the Stranger calls the true opinion about the good and the noble the divine bond by which the manly and the decorous characters are combined with one another. But knowledge and opinion, even if the opinion is true, are two different things. We may add that, on the basis of the *Statesman*, the goal and the end of statesmanship is rather the harmonization of the goods with a view to the creation of the happy city than the passing on of a specific knowledge for the sake of human happiness. In short, the contrast between the *Euthydemus* and the *Statesman* points to the same difficulty of identifying the work of statesmanship precisely and, again, its relation to human happiness.

1.4.5. Examining the city

There are therefore three questions in need of being addressed. First, what is the relation between human happiness and the happy city? Second, with regard to which wholeness must the political work of harmonizing goods be measured? Third, can the

\(^{76}\) Cf. supra section 1.2.5.
statesman pass on his knowledge of harmonizing goods to the people he rules? Since these three questions stem from our reading of the *Euthydemus* and the *Statesman*, we must turn ourselves to other dialogues in order to search for an answer. Now, since these three questions are all connected to the question of the relation between human happiness and the city, it seems sensible to turn ourselves to Plato’s city in speech. Of course, this raises immediately a problem, since there is not one Platonic city, but two.
Chapter Two
Plato’s Two Cities:
A Brief Overview

2.0. The Republic and the Laws

There are two works by Plato in which a city in speech is built: the Republic and the Laws. It is however impossible to analyse thoroughly both dialogues within the limits of this dissertation. What we will do, then, is to provide a brief analysis of the beginning of both dialogues. The main purpose of this chapter is to show that it is the Laws which offers the most promising context for an enlightening discussion of the problem of the harmony of the goods as this problem has been articulated on the basis of our reading of the Euthydemus and the Statesman. Once this has been shown, we will be entitled to focus our attention exclusively on the Laws in the following chapter. Yet, the analysis of the Republic put forward here is not solely negative. First of all, since the city built in the Republic is the happy city, it is the appropriate dialogue for a discussion of the relation between the problem of the harmony of the goods and the goal of statesmanship understood as the creation of the happy city. Second, even though we aim at showing that
the *Republic* gets around the problem of the harmony of the goods, we also want to show how the * Republic* reveals the importance of love of one’s own in politics. In that respect, the analysis of the *Republic* will pave the way for that of the * Laws* by making us attentive to the importance and the impact of love of one’s own in the * Laws*. For these reasons, and also because the *Republic* presents the building of the best city and the * Laws* the building of the second best city,¹ we will start with the *Republic*.

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**PART ONE**

**THE HARMONY OF THE HAPPY CITY**

**OF THE REPUBLIC**

2.1. Introduction: Statesmanship and the question of justice

The *Republic* is not about statesmanship. The *Republic* is about justice. But if the discussions and speeches of the dialogue are concerned with and directed toward justice, the action of the dialogue is similar to that of the statesman. To answer the question of the nature of justice and determine whether or not justice is intrinsically good, Socrates suggests that they should build a city in speech. This suggests to us that justice is the good with a view to which the true statesman performs his work. On that basis, we may say that our working hypothesis for our reading of the *Republic* is that justice is the standard with a view to which the statesman should measure the harmonization of the

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¹ This is clear on the basis of the *Laws*, 739b8-e5 and also 807b2-8, and the communism of children and wives of the *Republic* (cf. 475c10 and the following).
goods he brings about. Besides, the fact that justice is almost absent from the *Statesman* seems to suggest that the heavy emphasis put on justice in the *Republic* may bring into light what still remains in the dark after the demonstration of the Stranger from Elea.² This is, to repeat, the hypothesis that motivated our turning to the *Republic*. Let us see, then, if justice succeeds in making the citizens of the *Republic* whole.

### 2.1.1. The Puzzle of the Just Man’s Work

#### 2.1.1.1. Justice as what is owed to others

The inquiry into the nature of justice begins in the *Republic* with the discussion between Socrates and the old Cephalus about the effects of old age on man. Cephalus’ diagnosis is ambivalent. According to him, old age is all about “reminiscing” (*anamimnēiskomenoi*; 329a5). On the one hand, there are those who remember the bodily pleasures of their youth and for whom old age is full of sorrows due to the withering away of bodily appetites and powers. This is not, however, true for everyone since for some, like Cephalus himself, the withering away of bodily appetites appears as a freedom from these very appetites; for men like Cephalus then, old age rather brings about a great deal of peace.

And yet, if the old Cephalus is not haunted by the reminiscence of the pleasures of his youth, he is nonetheless haunted by his past unjust deeds, for old age makes him

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² The only place where justice becomes an important theme in the *Statesman* is when law is discussed in relation to the stability of the regime; cf. *Statesman* 293e6-303d3, especially 300a1-301a4. This discussion is introduced by the important assertion that the ruler must use both science and the just (cf. 293d8-9). As Klein points out, the Stranger’s assertion “leaves it open whether the Statesman’s knowledge includes the knowledge of justice” (*Plato’s Trilogy*, p.183-184). But justice is never discussed as such and the word for justice as a virtue, *dikaiosunē*, is not even mentioned once in the whole dialogue.
remember with a new fear the tales he has heard about Hades since his childhood. Arriving at the end of his life, he now fears that these stories might be true and that “injustices done here [on earth] must receive [their due] penalty there [in Hades].” Thus, either the nostalgia of past pleasures or the fear of past injustices, rather than peace and tranquillity, appears to be the attribute of old age. Now, if there appears to be no remedy to old men’s nostalgia, there might be one for old men’s fears. Cephalus contends that it is the greatest use of money to avoid any recourse to lying and cheating and to leave life clean of debt.

Socrates takes Cephalus’ last assertion as a definition of justice, namely, justice would consist in telling the truth and giving back what one has taken from another. Socrates opposes to this definition the case of returning to a friend a weapon of his that he asks to have back while he is enraged. Cephalus acknowledges that in such circumstances returning what one has taken from another would be unjust, but he does not attempt to defend his own definition. Instead, he hands down the defense to his son Polemarchus. Polemarchus slightly alters the definition of justice and asserts that it is just to give to each what is owed, which he further specifies to match Socrates’ case: it is just to give to each what is owed, and friends owe it to friends to do some good. From Polemarchus’ precise formulation, it follows that returning to a friend a weapon of his that may, under some circumstances, harm him is not just, for what is owed to friends is not primarily the returning of their possessions but the good.

2.1.1.2. An overview of the puzzle

Socrates’ examination of the improved definition of justice takes the form of an inquiry into the work (ergon) of the just man. According to a scheme that is now not altogether unfamiliar to us, the outcome of Socrates’ examination is to dilute the just man’s work into the multiplicity of the specific works assigned to the arts. For each of Polemarchus’ suggestions, Socrates proves able to show that there exists some craftsman whose expertise is more appropriate with regard to the prescribed work than that of the just man. The outcome of the examination thus reveals that Polemarchus, a young man who undoubtedly cares about justice, nonetheless does not know what the work of justice is. Although the discussion between Socrates and Polemarchus raises the question of the just man’s work, it does not provide an answer to that question and it ends with the assertion that justice is a good and that, therefore, the just man’s work should be to perform some sort of good too. This conclusion provokes the reaction, not to say anger, of Thrasymachus who vigorously defends the view that justice is not good for the just man himself. Socrates will succeed in refuting Thrasymachus’ position but he will do so by linking, once more, the just man’s work to that of the craftsman.

This is then the puzzle which serves as an introduction to the Republic. It is the question of the inherent goodness of justice which, in Book I, is intimately connected to the question of the relation of the just man’s work to that of the craftsman. The puzzling character of such an introduction is revealed by the fact that Socrates uses the comparison of the just man to the craftsman to refute the position of both those who stand for the
nobility of justice (Polemarchus) and those who aim at debunking justice (Thrasymachus).

Even though our main objective is to understand the working of the city built in the *Republic*, we will take the time to flesh out that puzzle first. As will be shown later on, the notion of work (*ergon*) is crucial for the understanding of the working of the just and happy city of the *Republic*. In addition, we will return to the discussion of Book I after we have considered the working of the just city. For, as we wish to show, love of one’s own is not only a key element of the working of the city built in the *Republic*, but it is also a key element to the solution of the puzzle of Book I.

2.1.1.3. The opposition between justice and the arts

To resume with the action of Book I, then, Polemarchus answers Socrates’ first question: “in what action (*en tini praxei*) and for what work (*pros ti ergon*) the just man is most capable of helping friends and hurting enemies,” by naming only an action and leaving out the work: “in [the action of] (*en tōi*) making war and in [the action of] (*en tōi*) making alliances.”

That Socrates wants Polemarchus to focus on work rather than action may explain why he immediately leaves aside wartime actions and makes Polemarchus consider the case of justice in peacetime. With this shift, Socrates also makes Polemarchus assert that, in contrast to the arts which are useful in specific circumstances (medicine is useful when one is sick, the art of piloting when one needs to sail, and

5. *Republic*, 332e3-5; it is clear in the Greek that Polemarchus does not name any work for the two verbs he uses are both introduced by the prepositional expression *en tōi* which calls for an action and none by the *pros ti* which calls for a work.
generalship when one is at war) or for satisfying specific needs (e.g., farming for eating and shoemaking for the feet), justice appears to be useful all the time and in any circumstances. We may understand that it is this generality peculiar to justice that disturbs Polemarchus when he is asked to identify the specific work of the just man. As he has said at the beginning, the just man does “some good to friends and nothing bad.”

But the word “good” is too general and Socrates wants to specify the goodness of justice, he wants to specify the “some” that Polemarchus has slipped into his definition. In short, Socrates wants to identify the work of the just man: what sort of good the just man brings about. Thus, he asks Polemarchus to state for what use or acquisition, i.e., for what work, justice is useful in peacetime, just as farming and shoemaking are useful for the acquisition of food and shoes.

Once again, Polemarchus’ answer dodges part of Socrates’ question: he leaves out “use and acquisition” and says that justice is useful for contracts and partnerships. And once again, Socrates wants to know the specific object, i.e., the specific work, of these partnerships. Polemarchus answers that the just man is a better partner in partnerships sealed with a view to money matters. To this answer, Socrates replies that when the partnership aims at using money for buying or selling a horse or a ship, for instance, the horseman or the shipbuilder and the pilot are better partners than the just man. Polemarchus unwillingly concludes that justice is useful when money is useless and must be kept safe. This conclusion, which Polemarchus is already displeased with, is made worse when Socrates points out that an expertise (or cleverness: deinos; 333e3) enables

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6. Republic, 332a10
one to perform two opposite works, such as punching and guarding against blows or producing and guarding against a disease, which would imply that the just man’s expertise enables him both to keep money safe and to steal it. On the basis of the argument, the work of the just man would be a certain art of stealing that benefits friends and harms enemies.⁷

2.1.1.4. Justice and the good

Polemarchus is not happy with such a conclusion and although he cannot see what went wrong during Socrates’ examination, he rejects it and defends his definition of justice as benefiting friends and harming enemies. Polemarchus is not stubborn about his own definition, for he will soon reject it too. If Polemarchus is displeased with the argument, it is because justice now appears as something not very serious or respectable (spoudaion; 333e1); even more, justice is as base as stealing. Polemarchus’ deep conviction is that justice is something intrinsically good. Socrates reveals that conviction by the means of two brief arguments.

First, he makes him realize that the just man does good to good people, that is, to those who are really good and do not simply appear to be good. We may call these good people friends, but the point is that justice is more concerned with good people than with friends. Accordingly, they now agree that “it is just to do good to friends who are good and to harm enemies who are bad.”⁸ This apparently minor modification is important

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⁸. Republic, 335a8-10.
inasmuch as it states that whatever the work of justice is, this work should benefit good people. Second, Socrates makes Polemarchus realize that it is the work of justice to make human beings better with respect to the “human virtue” (*anthrōpeia aretē*; 335c4). Granting that harming a being never makes him better with respect to his own virtue and that, more precisely, “those human beings who have been harmed necessarily become more unjust,”

9 Polemarchus agrees to deny that it is the work of the just man to harm anybody, since by so doing he would make them more unjust, i.e., worse with respect to human virtue.

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Leaving aside the difficulty with the last line of argument,

11 one may say that it has not succeeded in specifying the work of the just man. The discussion with Polemarchus began with the assertion that the just man does good to friends and harms enemies, and it now ends with the assertion that the just man does good to good people and harms no one. We still do not know the nature of the good that the just man brings about, i.e., his work. What we do know is circular: justice is the human virtue, which is a good, and accordingly, the just man can only produce the good.

11. Devin Stauffer points out that it is not so obvious that harming a dog or a horse, Socrates’ own examples, would make it worse with respect to its own virtue: “If a horse were whipped or kicked, for instance, it might have no effect on the virtue of the horse, or it might even make the horse a better horse. Doesn’t the training of horses involve such beatings?” (*Plato’s Introduction to the Question of Justice* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001], p.46). Besides, “If just men refused to harm anyone, if only unjust men were willing to harm others, unjust men would have the run of the earth.” (p.48).
2.1.1.5. Stauffer’s interpretation

In his presentation of the Book I of the Republic, Stauffer suggests a way out of this circularity. According to his reading, the first part of the discussion with Polemarchus—the part where Socrates undertakes the search for the just man’s work understood on the model of the work of any craftsman—shows the difference between the virtue of justice and the arts. An art is rooted in a specific knowledge which endows the craftsman with some power. Socrates, however, presents that power as a pure ability that can be used for the production of good as well as evil. In other words, Socrates presents the arts as pure abilities without one specific work attached to them; thus, medicine is the ability to produce health as well as sickness. According to Stauffer, such a presentation highlights the fact that justice, in contrast to arts, is concerned above all with the intention or the willingness to do good. Justice, then, cannot be understood along the lines of the morally neutral arts, and the just man’s work cannot be understood only in terms of ability or capacity, because justice is intrinsically moral: its aim is not the acquisition of power but the performing of good actions. If we push that interpretation one step further, it seems possible to say that justice is that which guides properly each art in its specific work—say, that the medical art should heal instead of inducing a disease.

At any rate, Stauffer sees in the remaining part of the discussion with Polemarchus a deepening of the problem of the goodness of justice. The conclusion of that section is that the work of justice is never to do harm but always to do good, so that

12. Cf. Stauffer, Plato’s Introduction, p.36
the distinction between enemy and friend that was still tenable with the identification of the just man with the thief is finally dismissed. According to Stauffer, this points to the problem of the goodness of justice. Besides Stauffer’s observation that it seems to be a necessary part of the just man’s work to punish injustice in order to bring about justice in the human world, the necessity of punishing injustice also means that justice is not simply good, for if justice were intrinsically good it would be already a punishment in itself not to be just. Of course, that problem is continued and deepened in the sequel with the introduction of Thrasymachus.

2.1.1.6. The connection between justice and the arts

It is when he hears Socrates and Polemarchus agreeing that justice is a virtue, i.e., a good, which produces good things that Thrasymachus jumps in the discussion. Thrasymachus contends that justice is not a virtue, that it is not a good, but at best a “high minded simplicity.” More precisely, Thrasymachus acknowledges that justice brings about some good, but he rejects that that good benefits the just man. He asserts that it is injustice which is truly advantageous and that what is called justice in a city is the veil under which the stronger and unjust rulers exploit the just men for their own benefit and happiness. Now, Socrates apparently succeeds in refuting Thrasymachus. To make a breach in Thrasymachus’ position, Socrates exploits his admiration for the knowledge or

expertise or cleverness of both craftsmen and unjust rulers. Socrates unties these two “expertises” and shows Thrasymachus that it is the just man, not the unjust man, who is more akin to the craftsman. Two crucial arguments serve to make that breach.

First, Socrates makes Thrasymachus acknowledge that in the precise sense of the word, a craftsman does not care for himself but solely for the work assigned to his art. Accordingly, to the extent that the craftsman’s knowledge is concerned with the craftsman’s individuality only accidentally—e.g., the doctor’s work is to heal a sick person and this work benefits him only when he happens himself to be sick—and to the extent that political rulers rule in accordance with the knowledge relative to the art they practice—as Thrasymachus has just emphasized—they therefore only care about their work too, which is to benefit first and above all the people who are ruled by them, namely the weak. Thrasymachus retaliates against Socrates’ argument with the case of the shepherd whose work is not to consider the good of the sheep for the benefit of the

17. Cf. Republic, 340e1-4 and 348d3-9. As Stauffer explains, there are two sides to Thrasymachus’ position regarding injustice: “We have said that by Thrasymachus’ account justice is a kind of fraud. [...] Yet while Thrasymachus may be blaming and even trying to expose the rulers [...] there is another sense in which his presentation of justice is meant as a praise and even a vindication of the rulers. The rulers, after all, are the ones who are not taken in by justice; they are the ones who are clear-sighted in their pursuit of their own good. If justice is a fraud, [...] the rulers are indeed the culprits, but they are also the ones drawing the reasonable conclusion and acting prudently.” (Plato’s Introduction, p.68-69).
20. Cf. Republic, 342e6-11. Let us note that, once again, Stauffer sees in Socrates’ argument an indication about the knowledge of, if not justice, the human good in contradistinction with the knowledge of any craftsman. As he puts it: “Unlike the doctor who is only occasionally and accidentally sick, and so occasionally and accidentally the object of his own knowledge, the man who knows the human good is always and necessarily a human being with concern for his own human well-being” (p.78). If, then, justice is to be the human virtue as Polemarchus would have it to be, this is the standard that justice should meet: Justice should be a good for oneself as well as for others. The problem with Socrates’ argument is that it tends to make the goodness justice brings about for oneself even more elusive. This is why Stauffer argues that the section in which Thrasymachus is the main interlocutor should be read as the continuation, in fact as the deepening, of the section in which Polemarchus is the main one.
sheep themselves but rather for the benefit and the good of the master or the owner of these very sheep: it is for him, the master, Thrasymachus contends, that the shepherd looks after and fattens the sheep. The core of Thrasymachus’ reply stresses the benefit of injustice with respect to one’s own happiness: in contrast to the unjust man who is able “to get more” of the good things (or to overreach: *pleonektein*; 344a1), the just man is everywhere left with less. It is on this notion of *pleonexia* that Socrates builds his second argument.

Socrates first reasserts that any art, in the precise sense of the word, is concerned only with its prescribed work, and not with the craftsman’s own good, and he adds that this holds for the shepherd too. The case of the shepherd, however, compels Socrates to add that any craftsman or ruler has recourse to another art in addition to the one he practices, namely the wage-earner’s art, so that the practice of his art or the fulfilling of his charge may also benefit himself.21 But since this leaves untouched Thrasymachus’ claim about the prudence of unjust men in their pursuit of happiness, Socrates must not only show how a craftsman and an unjust man differ from one another with respect to their work but also that they differ in the way in which each one pursues his specific work. In other words, since Thrasymachus takes for granted that craftsmen in the precise sense of the word are models of human prudence and wisdom, Socrates must show him that craftsmen’s prudence and wisdom differ from the way in which unjust men pursue their aim.

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Here the notion of *pleonexia* comes to the fore. Thrasymachus readily acknowledges that the just man believes that he deserves to “get the better of” (*pleonektein*; 349b8) the unjust man—although he might not be able to do so—but not of another just man, for both men do not want to “overreach” (*pleon exein*; 349b3-6) the just action. The unjust man, by contrast, sees that it is worth “getting more” (*pleon exein*; 349c6) than everyone, just and unjust alike. As Socrates rephrases it, this means that according to Thrasymachus it is “prudent and good” (*phronimos kai agathos*; 349d6) for the unjust man “to overreach” (*pleonektein*; 349c12) both his “like and unlike” (*omoiou kai anomoiou*; 349c12-13), whereas it is not prudent for the just man “to get the better of” (*pleonektein*; 349c12) his unlike only and not of his like. Having secured that point, Socrates turns to craftsmen and makes Thrasymachus agree on the fact that the “good and wise” (*agathos kai sophos*; 350b7) craftsman does not want “to get the better of” (*pleonektein*; 450b8) their like but only of their unlike, whereas “bad and unlearned” (*kakos kai amathēs*; 350b10) craftsmen want to get the better of both their like and unlike. In that respect, the unjust man appears to be like the bad and unlearned craftsman whereas the just man appears to be like the good and wise one. And since Thrasymachus has previously agreed that “the one to which each man is like, each man is also as such,” it follows that the unjust man is in fact bad and unlearned.

Although Thrasymachus blushes in seeing his own position refuted, Stauffer is right in pointing out that the argument is flawed in that it draws a conclusion about the nature of each one, the just and the unjust man, only on the basis of their likeness with the

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good and the bad craftsman. Socrates makes the case even less adequately with the last two arguments of Book I, which are intended as replies to Thrasymachus’ claims that the unjust man is stronger and happier than the just one.

For the purpose of showing that justice is stronger than injustice, Socrates argues that the “work” (ergon; 351d9) of injustice is to create factions and hatred, so that the entity filled with injustice, be it a man or a city, is unable to bring itself together for the accomplishment of any goal. Conversely, it means that justice is necessary even for a band of robbers if they want to achieve their unjust goal. In other words, justice now appears as the necessary condition for any coherent action performed by any being composed of parts, that is, it appears as the necessary condition for power, from which it follows that justice has no specific work besides the creation of the necessary cohesion for the pursuit of any goal whatsoever. Just as he has done with Polemarchus, Socrates once more links justice to stealing. As for the question of happiness, Socrates points out that the work of the soul, whatever that work might be, requires the virtue of the soul in order to be accomplished properly. Drawing on his refutation of Thrasymachus, Socrates finally asserts that, since justice has been said to be the virtue of the soul, it

23. Cf. Stauffer, Plato’s Introduction, p.105: “For the principle ‘each of them is such as those whom he is like’ clearly should not be used as Socrates uses it, that is, as the general principle that any similarity between two types of people not yet known to be identical must mean that they are identical (‘If x is like y, then x is y’). A moment’s reflection—think of any two types that share a similarity (the dead and the asleep, for instance)—is enough to see the flaw in this principle” (emphasis in the text). Most importantly, Stauffer raises doubt about the meaning of pleonexia when transposed from moral matters to arts: “Is the just man’s restraint, that is, his unwillingness to take advantage of his fellow just men because it would be unjust or wrong to do so, really equivalent to an artisan’s restraint, which consists of his unwillingness to surpass his fellow artisans because it would be artless or foolish to do so?” (p.106).
24. Cf. Republic, 351e9-352a3
follows that the just man lives the good life and is happy. Yet, as Socrates is the first to admit, none of these arguments seems to provide a clear answer to the question of the work of the just man and, consequently, to that of the nature of justice.

2.1.1.7. The puzzle of Book I

At the end of Book I, we may say that Socrates has succeeded in saving the claim that justice is a virtue from Thrasymachus’ attack and that he has somehow shown that justice does bring about some good. But the nature of that good is still elusive and this is especially the case with respect to the good of the just man himself. It is no surprise, then, that Book II begins with the challenge put to Socrates by Glaucon and Adeimantus to prove that justice partakes of the category of goods that are good in themselves and for themselves.

But the puzzle of Book I concerns also the relation of justice to arts. As has been pointed out, the section in which Polemarchus is the main interlocutor and the one in which it is Thrasymachus are not all of a piece, for in the first section justice is distinguished from the arts and their work whereas it is understood along the lines of the arts and their work in the second. More precisely, if justice is first of all distinguished

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30. Cf. Sprague, Plato’s Philosopher-King, p.73. Stauffer does notice this tension, but he does not seem to see the problem that lies behind it; cf. Plato’s Introduction, p.72: “It may seem strange that the arts should provide such a model. Didn’t we contrast the arts and justice in our earlier consideration of Socrates’ discussion with Polemarchus? Aren’t the arts amoral, and wasn’t Socrates’ earlier use of the arts as an analogy for justice problematic because it abstracted from the just intention? Without retracting our earlier statements, we must now acknowledge that the arts do bear a certain resemblance to justice. The devotion of the artist to his art and the directedness of the art to its object is at least akin to the devotion and disinterestedness we take to be characteristic of the just man” (emphasis in the text). Later on, Stauffer will
from the arts, it is because Socrates presents the arts as pure powers with not one intrinsic
work attached to them; he presents them as morally neutral—the same expertise can be
used to do good or harm: to keep safe or to steal, to heal sickness or to produce it, etc.—
whereas if justice is afterwards understood along the lines of the arts, it is because
Socrates then takes for granted that any art has one specific work toward which the
craftsman—in the precise sense of the word—directs all his attention. The problem
consists in determining what is the proper basis for the understanding of arts: expertise
(deinos) or work (ergon). 31

To sum up, the first Book of the Republic leaves us with a twofold puzzle. The
first part of the puzzle concerns the goodness of justice. This problem is admirably
fleshed out in the speeches of Glaucon and Adeimantus at the opening of Book II. Taken
together, these two speeches raise the following question: is justice intrinsically good
(good in itself) or is it an auxiliary good (good for something else, say security or some
sort of reward, or even for someone else, say the unjust ruler)? The second part of the
puzzle concerns the relation of justice to the arts. As we just saw, the relation of justice to
art underlies this apparent opposition: whereas the craftsman’s expertise does not vouch
for his justice, the performance of the work assigned to him by his art makes the

however raise doubt about the similarity between the disinterestedness of the just man and that of the
craftsman (cf. p.106). The problem is that Stauffer’s “earlier statements” led to the conclusion that arts only
provide an expertise that can be used both for good or bad intention (cf. p.36-37), that is, that the doctor
could use his expertise for both healing and harming according to his intention and that, consequently,
medicine has not, as such, one proper work. On the other hand, he now seems to imply that each art has one
work since he acknowledges “the directedness of the art to its object.”
31. The tension appears even sooner than the entry of Thrasymachus, for shortly after having accepted that
the one who is clever at guarding against disease is also clever a producing it, that is, that a doctor can
produce sickness, Polemarchus asserts that musicians are not capable of making people unmusical by the
means of music; compare Republic, 333e6-7 with 335c9-10.
craftsman care for something other than his own benefit. Although the two parts of the puzzle are connected, we will focus more on the second problem for now. This is due to Socrates’ decision to build a city in speech in order to answer the brothers’ challenge and see more clearly what justice is and what good it brings about for the just man. For, as will be seen shortly, the city that will be built, which is said to be the most just city, is a city made of craftsmen. On that basis, one may be tempted to draw the conclusion that there is a necessary connection between justice and art, so that it is because the city is made of craftsmen that it is just or that to be a craftsman in the precise sense of the word is necessarily to be just. Yet, we learned from Book I that the relation between justice and art is a complex one. Accordingly, we may refrain from rushing toward a conclusion and rather seek to understand that relation between justice and art more clearly through an examination of this just city.

2.1.2. Justice and Ergon: The Principle of One Man, One Work
2.1.2.1. The coming-into-being of the just city

The building of the just and happy city begins in Book II of the Republic and concludes only in Book VII. More precisely, what is presented to us is the coming-into-being of the just city. Accordingly, we can distinguish at least three steps of this development, each of which is embodied in one particular city: the healthy city, the feverish city, and the beautiful city. In what follows, we will present a summary of that development, but much of our attention will be focused on the guardians who appear in the feverish city. The guardians are a key element in the development of the city and, as we hope to show, they embody the twofold problem of justice perfectly. For neither their
justice nor the benefit they derive from being citizens of a just city is crystal clear. But let us begin with the beginning.

2.1.2.2. The healthy city

The first step, or the first city, is called both the “most necessary city”\textsuperscript{32} and the true and healthy city.\textsuperscript{33} This city originates out of man’s lack of self-sufficiency, that is, out of man’s natural bodily needs, for it is only by living together in the same city that men can best satisfy their basic natural needs; among those needs, Socrates lists food, housing, clothing, and shoes. The efficient satisfaction of these needs is the result of a division of labor, so that the first city is a city made of farmers, weavers, carpenters, shoemakers, and of the practitioners of all the auxiliary-cause arts (from blacksmiths to tradesmen) to these four main arts. As Socrates puts it, the first city is a partnership of craftsmen.\textsuperscript{34} Indeed, in order to satisfy man’s natural bodily needs, which is the raison d’être of the city, it would be “more productive, finer, and easier” (pleiō [...] kallion [...] rhaion; 370c3-4), Socrates says, if each member of the city focuses all of his energy on the satisfaction of one need only and thus performs one work only, i.e., if he produces one crafted good only. By so doing, man is made a craftsman. The coming-into-being of the city thus coincides with the coming-into-being of arts or of the specialization based on arts.

\textsuperscript{32} Republic, 369d11.
\textsuperscript{33} Cf. Republic, 372e6-7.
\textsuperscript{34} Cf. Republic, 370d6.
There are two great benefits which follow from these men being turned into craftsmen and becoming part of this city. The first one is health, the good after which the city is named. The absence of doctors in that city indicates that it is assumed that health comes about naturally when the body is provided with what it needs in sufficient quantity.\textsuperscript{35} We may understand that health is the good that each man can enjoy due to his being a member of this peculiar community. If health is the common good of the healthy city, we can say that in that city the common good is really common to all and benefits each one without exception. In other words, because all the citizens are alike in their neediness or homogeneous with respect to their needs—the \textit{raison d’être} of the first city is precisely the satisfaction of needs that all men, so to speak, share in common—the good that results from the satisfaction of these needs is also shared in common by all. Yet, the counterpart of the fact that health comes about naturally is that these men do not need to gain an understanding of what health is or what kind of wholeness or peculiar unity of the human body health is. The absence of a comprehensive view of the human body is also made manifest by the absence of any doctor. Health is felt rather than understood. Accordingly, health is not as much an explicit goal for these citizens as poverty is one of the two evils of which they are always mindful.\textsuperscript{36} For if the healthy city were erected on a premise, it would read as follows: when there are sufficient material goods for satisfying everyone’s needs, everyone is healthy.

\textsuperscript{35} Doctors are needed when the expansion of desires have already destroyed the healthy city; cf. \textit{Republic} 373d1-2. 
\textsuperscript{36} Cf. \textit{Republic} 372c1.
The second evil is war, and conversely peace is the second great good enjoyed by the men of the healthy city. In contrast to health, however, peace does not seem to owe that much to the creation of the city (the partnership of craftsmen) as to the premise on which the city is built. The origin of the city lies in man’s natural bodily needs. Here, it is helpful to understand needs in contradistinction to desires. The healthy city, which is also called the most necessary city, originates in man’s most necessary needs, that is, it does not originate in human beings’ desire for intercourse with the other sex\(^37\) nor in the desires for more than what a human being needs to be healthy—such things as abundance of tasty food, fancy cloths and shoes of different colors and shapes, etc. To begin with, the fact is that this city is really a community of men (\(andrōn\; 369d12\)) and there is not one single word about women. The silence on women is also a silence on sexual desire. The crucial consequence of such a silence is the overall impression that singular individuals, and not several families, get together and form the first city. It is true that Socrates mentions children when he depicts the way of life in the healthy city, but he specifies that their “production” (\(poioumenoi tou̱s paidas\; 372b8-c1\)) is a matter of concern. We understand that the birth of too many children would offset the fragile balance between the citizens’ needs and the city’s capacity to satisfy these needs. If for one reason or another too many children come into being, this will create a state of poverty. Poverty means here the inability to satisfy the citizens’ basic needs (eating, housing, clothing, and shoes) with the four basic arts \(within\) the city’s limits. We can

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37. Although sexual intercourse is necessary for the perpetuation of the human species, it is not necessary for the survival of the individual, at least not as food and water are; we can thus understand reproduction as a need, at the species level, and as a desire, at the individual level.
easily see how war can appear as an appropriate remedy for such a state of poverty. On the other hand, if we can imagine a world of healthy cities in which each of these cities somehow controls its own birth rate, we necessarily imagine a world at peace. But the first premise that would make such a world possible is that the satisfaction of the basic needs is the only incentive that originally drives mankind to form city states.38

2.1.2.3. The feverish city

When desires, rather than needs, are taken into account, the healthy city is destroyed and a new city comes into being. This second city is called the luxurious and feverish city.39 It is called luxurious because the goal of this city is to provide for citizens’ desires that “overstep the boundary of the necessities” (huperbantes ton tôn anagkaiôn horon; 373d10). Although the word pleonexia is not used, it is really the desire to have more (in the present case, more than the bare necessity of life, i.e., the desire for luxuries) that drives the citizens of the luxurious city. To meet the demand generated by the expansion of desires, a multitude of new craftsmen and artists must be integrated into the city: swineherds, cooks, painters, craftsmen specializing in “feminine cosmetic” (gunaikeion kosmon; 373c140), and many others. Now, if the satisfaction of the

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38. In addition to the premise just stated, there are two other, very crucial premises that are necessary for the possibility of a world of healthy cities. First, one must assume that there are people who are by nature shoemakers and blacksmiths, or at least who are by nature suited to become shoemakers and blacksmiths. Second, as Strauss points out, one must assume that “nature has so arranged things that there is no surplus of blacksmiths or deficit of shoemakers” (The City and Man [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978] p.94). Related to these points is also the assumption that farming came before hunting, which would entail that some sort of technological rationality (farming) is prior to thumos (hunting); cf. Republic, 375a5-b2.

39. The expansion of desires transforms the true and healthy city in a “luxurious” (or sumptuous: truphōsan; 372e3) and “feverish” (or inflamed or full of humours: phlegmainousan; 372e8) city.

40. This is the first allusion to women.
most necessary needs led to health, the contentment of luxurious desires leads to illness or, according to the name of the city, to fever. Of course, the experience of illness goes hand in hand with the need for doctors. If we focus on the case of health for a moment, we find this paradox: somehow, the corruption of healthy mores goes with a gain of knowledge with respect to health. When health no longer comes about naturally but must be produced by an art, there is a necessity for these craftsmen, the doctors, to know what health is if they want to produce it. Here we may recall that Socrates has said that maybe it is not a bad idea to consider a luxurious city too.\footnote{Cf. Republic, 372e3-4.} For with regard to health at least, we can say that the desire for more than what the body needs has led to a development of the mind.\footnote{In contrast to all the other arts admitted into the city so far, which are all related to the human body, medicine alone deals with the whole human body and not solely a part of it.} It would be imprudent to say more than that at this point, but it makes us aware of the possibility of deriving some important benefits from the corruption of the healthy city.

Now, one crucial element of the luxurious city is its need of an army. The city needs an army because it needs more resources than the healthy city. Indeed, the development of all the new arts presupposes that the city possesses plenty of raw materials that can be used for the production of these fancy crafted goods. But the original borders of the city were set by the healthy city, which needed far less land in order to satisfy its population’s needs. Now that the citizens want more than the satisfaction of their basic needs, the city has to “cut off [a piece] of the land of those [living] nearby for [the benefit of its own citizens].”\footnote{Republic, 373d7.} Thus, the first art that the feverish
city actually needs is the military art, which is first understood as the art of taking what belongs to others for the contentment of one’s own luxurious desires. This is not altogether new, since a similar understanding of the military art peeped out when we considered the healthy city. In both cities, the military art is understood as the art of taking what belongs to others. The difference between the two is what initiates war: poverty or the desire for more.\footnote{We prevented the shoemaker from undertaking to be at the same time a farmer or a weaver or a housebuilder, but [he had to be nothing other than] a}

\subsection*{2.1.2.4. The specialization on the basis of the arts}

In sum, the expansion of desires destroys the first city almost completely: fever and war supersede health and peace. There is however one element of the first city that Socrates makes his interlocutor retain in the feverish city: the division of labor or the specialization on the basis of the arts. In the first city, this principle was introduced for the sake of efficiency and it was supported by the fact that it is also in accordance with nature: since all men are not alike by nature, each one will, somehow by himself, prefer to work for the production of one good instead of another.\footnote{Although poverty is likely to instill the desire for more (pleonexia), the latter is different from the former to the extent that the desire for more can come into being even when the body is furnished with everything it needs in order to be healthy. In short, the distinction between the two cities marks the distinction between the desire for what is needed and the desire for more than what is needed; as Socrates will put it later on, this distinction boils down to the distinction between necessary and unnecessary desires (tas te anagkaious epithumias kai tas mē; 558d9 and the following).} Now, this principle is reasserted but the tone has changed. It now sounds more like a law. Recalling what they have done in the first city, Socrates says:

We prevented the shoemaker from undertaking to be at the same time a farmer or a weaver or a housebuilder, but [he had to be nothing other than] a

\footnote{Cf. Republic, 370a8-b2: “each one is naturally not quite similar (homoios) to another, but different in his [own particular] nature; and a different man acts toward [the practice] of a different work (ergon).”}
shoemaker, in order that the work of the shoemaking art would be finely [kalōs] produced. For the other [citizens] too we assigned, in the same way, one [work] for each one, that for which each is naturally [suited] and at which he was in situation to work throughout his life, pursuing all the other [activities only when he will be] at leisure, [thus] accomplishing finely [his work] not letting the opportune moments pass by.\textsuperscript{46}

And since “the art of war” (polemikēs; 374b4) is superior to all the arts that have been admitted into the city so far,\textsuperscript{47} it is of the greatest importance that the principle according to which one man is to perform one work be put into practice for the soldiers as well. On the basis of that principle then, the idea of a city in which all the citizens have a military duty when a war breaks out must be rejected. Therefore, the need for an army calls for a standing army, i.e., a class of specialized soldiers.

As will be seen, the integration of a class of specialized soldiers, the guardians’ class as it is called, will lead to the purgation of city.\textsuperscript{48} From a luxurious and feverish city, it will become a beautiful or a noble city, a kallipolis. It is important to understand that the acceptance of the principle according to which one man is to perform one work is the first step toward that purgation. This can be explained in the following way. As craftsmen, the guardians are to provide the land the city needs for the benefit of its own citizens. But the land is something very different from any other crafted good, very different, even, from the raw material that can be extracted from this very land. In contrast to raw material and crafted goods, the land (as a whole that delimits the city’s borders) cannot be exchanged against something else. As Socrates will put it later on, the

\textsuperscript{46} Republic, 374b6-c2.  
\textsuperscript{47} Cf. Republic, 374c2-3 and 374d8-e2.  
\textsuperscript{48} For a thorough investigation on the theme and on the importance of war in the Republic, cf. Leon Craig, The War Lover (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1994).
guardians are “very precisely the craftsmen of the city’s freedom” \( (\text{dēmiourgous} \ \ \text{eleutherias tēs poleōs panu akribeis;} \ 395c1) \). As craftsmen then, the guardians are like no other: they produce nothing they can exchange, trade, or sell against another good they would need or desire. The guardians are at the root of what we may call the city’s economy, but they somehow remain outside its economic sphere. Yet they are nonetheless craftsmen and devote all their time to their art, just like any other craftsman in the city does. Accordingly, they are in need of much—in fact, of everything. Thus, the interdependence of the guardians and the other craftsmen is very strong: the guardians will provide the land and all the other craftsmen will provide for what the guardians need. Now, what they need means above all what they need in order to perform their work and to perform it well. We can foresee, then, that the way in which the guardians’ work is understood will have an impact on the way in which all the other craftsmen understand, and thus perform, theirs.

2.1.2.5. The Guardians’ work

The guardians’ work is to fight for the city, be it either for the acquisition of land or for the defense of its own land. Socrates says that their own work \( (\text{ergon}; \ 374d6) \), i.e., the work of founders befalling on Socrates, Glaucon, and Adeimantus, is “to select which and what kind of nature is suited for guarding the city.”\(^49\) As this remark indicates, the assignment of work was, until now at least, not in itself a work or a duty. As we saw at the foundation of the first city, Socrates made the assertion that a difference with respect

\(^{49}\) Republic, 374d7-8.
to nature implies a difference with respect to the practice of a work. We now perceive that what was said in the sequel was important too. For shortly after Socrates’ assertion, while he and Adeimantus were considering the need of tradesmen, Adeimantus had settled the matter with the assertion that there would be men “who, perceiving [the need of tradesmen], [will] set themselves to this very service; and in rightly administered cities these are generally the weakest with respect to the body and the useless for the practice of any other work.” Adeimantus’ remark somehow connects man’s will—they see the need and “order themselves” (heautous tattousin; 371c6) to the task—with some kind of bodily determination. Trade as a specialized activity is then rooted not in any disposition of the soul, e.g., the love of money (philochrēmatia), but rather in a bodily disposition, even a negative bodily distinctiveness: the absence of any bodily quality. In the first city, men are all alike (homoioi) with respect to their bodily needs and different (heteroi) with respect to their bodily capacities for satisfying their common needs. The first city is thus upheld by a kind of bodily determinism that predestines each citizen for one art; we may figure a community in which all those with strong hands are blacksmiths and all those with delicate ones weavers.

The corollary of this bodily predestination is the absence of the art of statesmanship in that city. And this is the paradox of the healthy city: although it is a city made of craftsmen and thus in some sense devoted to the arts, the city itself does not

52. Socrates seems careful to not use the word “soul” (psuchē) in the healthy city and thus refers to the wage-earners’ “mind” (dianoia), which is said to be not “quite up to the level of partnership” (371e2; Bloom’s translation).
require art in order to be: there is no architectonic art in it. The first city thus appears to be as natural as hives are. As a consequence of this, virtue is, to say the least, very problematic in that city. The healthy city is attractive because it somehow appears to be both moderate and just. Yet, it seems difficult to refer to its citizens as “moderate and just.” These men appear to have no desire but only needs—or desires strictly limited to their needs, i.e., necessary desires. Accordingly, it is not only the material conditions for eating too much that are lacking but, as it were, the anthropological conditions for it: somehow, everything happens just as if it were not in accordance with their nature to be immoderate.\footnote{Glaucon’s demand for more and more sophisticated food both contrasts with the natural restraint of these men and reveals the strangeness of it (cf. Republic, 372d4-e1).} As for justice, because the harmonization of all the works takes place on account of a bodily determinism, there is nothing like a justice understood as law-abidingness or a duty. Accordingly, there is no need of corrective justice either, or of any compelling or deterring power. There is only distributive justice, but since the differences among the men are inscribed in each one’s body, and thus visible enough, it requires no statesman to come about. As Strauss remarks, the true city “is just without anyone concerning himself with justice; it is just by nature.”\footnote{Strauss, City and Man, p.94.}

In contrast to this kind of bodily determinism, the guardians are the first craftsmen for whom the assignment of a work must take into account, in addition to bodily dispositions, the nature of the soul. And this is so because the guardians’ work requires at least one specific virtue. In order to fight well, guardians must be courageous. Now, courage appears to be impossible without \textit{thumos}. Thumos is usually rendered in English
by “spiritedness” and it is not easy grasp what it is. It is the following considerations about the guardians’ required bodily dispositions that lead to *thumos*. The guardians should be like noble puppies, Socrates says: they “need to be capable of being sharp for perceiving and agile for pursuing what they have perceived, as well as strong, if they have to launch into a fight with what they have caught.” Of course, strength is necessary for fighting, but it is not sufficient: what is needed in addition is the willingness “to launch into a fight with what has been caught” (*elonta diamachesthai*). It is with this natural willingness to fight that Socrates first introduces *thumos* in that section of the *Republic*. It may be prudent not to attempt to define what *thumos* is any further for now, and we may confine ourselves to this much only: *thumos* is some willingness to fight and there are individuals whose souls are so disposed that they are more prone to fight. Now, since “*thumos* is unbeatable and undefeatable” and it is by its presence that “every soul is fearless and invincible in the face of everything,” guardians must therefore be selected on the basis of their *thumotic* nature.

2.1.2.6. The Guardians and the puzzle of Book I

There is however one problem with the guardians. As much as this *thumotic* nature is needed for the defence of the city, it is, to the very same extent, a threat for the city itself. The problem boils down to the fact that the art of war does not solely

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55. Cf. Bloom, “Interpretative Essay,” p.348: “Hunger, thirst, sexual desire, etc., are all immediately related to a goal and their meaning is simple. The goal of spiritedness is much harder to discern. Its simplest manifestation is anger, and it is not immediately manifest what needs are fulfilled by anger.”
produce a good. Although what this art aims at producing is a good, say the city’s freedom, the capacity for acquiring this good is consubstantial with the capability of inflicting or of threatening to inflict harm; as Polemarchus (whose name means “War Ruler:” Polem-archos) has put it in Book I, the capacity to make war is necessarily bound to a capacity for doing “some evil” (kakon ti; 332b8) to the enemy. The military art, in other words, renders the argument Socrates opposes to Polemarchus explicit: expertise can be used for both good and bad. In the case of the guardians, there is an urgent necessity that they do not inflict harm on those they are supposed to benefit.

We now see why the guardians are such a key element for the understanding of the Republic. On the one hand, the city’s stability stands or falls on the guardians’ right use of their expertise. One the other hand, to make guardians rightly use their own expertise implies the resolution of the problem we stressed in Book I, namely the problem of the relation between arts and justice. If we can understand how the guardians can be made to benefit the city without ever harming it, we are entitled to hope that at least a crucial element of the relation between art and justice will come to light. Let us proceed then.

2.1.2.7. The education of the Guardians

To achieve their work, that is, to produce the twofold effect of their work (both benefiting and harming), the guardians need to be both thumotic and gentle: “it is needed that they be gentle (praious) with their own (tous oikeious), on the one hand, and harsh
(chalepous) with the enemies, on the other.” But this means that the guardians need to have two natures: the “spirited” one (to thumoeidēs; 410d6) and the “tame” one (to hēmeron; 410e1). Now, “to have both of these natures (amphoteræ echēin toutō tō phusei; 410e5-6)” is not, so to speak, natural. This is why the guardians need to be educated. To put it another way, a thumotic nature is a necessary ingredient in the guardians’ work, but thumos alone is not sufficient for the accomplishment of the prescribed work. For only if it is “rightly reared” (orthōs traphen; 410d7) can thumos become courage, i.e., a virtue. This means that, in contrast to the bodily determinism that prevailed in the healthy city, the guardians’ singular nature needs to be completed if they are to perform the work assigned to them well. To be completed, in this sense, does not simply mean to be developed through the acquisition of a particular skill, but rather to incorporate and harmonize more than one nature in one soul. The two natures, then, the thumotic and the tame, “must be harmonized with one another,” for “the soul of the man thus harmonized is moderate and courageous.”

This amounts to saying that the guardians’ needs are not the same as the other citizens’ needs. So that what was the case in the first city, namely, that men are all alike (homoioi) as to their needs and different (heteroi) as to their capacities for satisfying their common needs, is no longer true. For in order to be good soldiers, the guardians need to be virtuous: they need to be both courageous and moderate. And in order to be virtuous,

60. More precisely, Socrates says that tameness is an attribute of the philosophical nature. This is why he says that the guardians needs to be both thumotic and philosophical (cf. 411e5-6).
61. Republic, 410e8-411a1 (Bloom’s translation).
they need to be educated.\(^62\) The guardians, in short, have needs that go beyond their body: they have needs related to their soul.

The education of the guardians has two parts: musical education and gymnastic education. Musical education is in turn divided in three parts: the first part (376e9-392c6) deals with speech, i.e., with the lyrics of the song to be sung, the second (392c6-398b9) with the way in which lyrics are sung or narrated, and the third one (398c1-403c8) with melody. Since the songs will be about gods and heroes, the first part of the musical education takes the form of a legislation about theology, i.e., about what the poets can and cannot say about the gods and the heroes. These gods and heroes are to be models whose emulation by the guardians should make them both courageous (harsh with the enemy) and moderate (gentle with their own). In other words, the performance of the guardians’ work should be facilitated by making them “god-revering” (\textit{theosebeis}; 383c4) toward the appropriate gods and heroes. Gods and heroes that can inspire good guardians should never have cultivated hatred “for their families and their owns” (\textit{pros sugyeneis kai oikeious autôn}; 378c6), so that guardians never believe it to be pious to use force against their fellow citizens.\(^63\) But on the other hand, neither should they be so attached to their families and their own as to fear death or to lament the loss of dear ones. In that way, the guardians will efficiently fight for the city and be willing to die and willing to incite their peers to die for the city’s sake.\(^64\)

\(^{62}\) Let us emphasize the fact that virtue becomes a need only when fighting becomes a need, and thus a work. This may explain why Socrates refrains from saying “whether war works (\textit{ergazetai}) evil or good” (373e4-5; Bloom’s translation) when the city launches its first war.

\(^{63}\) Cf. \textit{Republic}, 378c6-d1.

\(^{64}\) Cf. \textit{Republic}, 387d4-e9.
We understand that love of one’s own should be strong enough to temper the guardians’ spirited nature, but at the same time, should not be so strong as to be an impediment to the expression of this very nature. Although all this makes sense with regard to the guardians’ work, it remains very difficult to see what is encompassed in the guardians’ “own” (*oikeia*) on the basis of this model. For one thing, the conventional tales about gods and heroes, those of Hesiod and Homer, are criticized on two opposite grounds: on the one hand because they present gods’ and heroes’ quarrels with and hatreds for their families and their own and, on the other hand, because they present the sorrows caused by their love for their families and their own. In short, both hate and love of one’s own get criticized. And matters do not clear up in the sequel, for as soon as Socrates says that the guardians should laugh at the stories about the grief-stricken Achilles and Priam, he adds that guardians should not be “lovers of laughter” (*philogelōtās*; 388e5) either. Nor should they be lovers of drinking, eating, and the pleasure of love\(^{65}\) or “lovers of money” (*philochrēmatous*; 390d8). The part of musical education concerned with speech ends with these bans on love of one’s own (one’s own lover, relative, bodily pleasures, and wealth).

2.1.2.8. The problem of the Guardians’ own

To sum up, in this new city, poetic works will be about gods and heroes. But these divine beings are now so deprived of human characteristics that the human soul that will take them as a model and strive for imitating them becomes very problematical. It is

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indeed very difficult to tell what will motivate the guardians’ willingness to fight on the basis of such divine models. This difficulty is alluded to by Socrates’ objecting to the argument, which is also a way of recalling it, that “justice is someone else’ good and one’s own (οικεία) loss.”

It is not clear yet why and how the status of the guardians in the city does not corroborate this assertion.

To rephrase the problem, the city that we see taking shape comes out of the city full of unlimited desires. To understand the guardians’ soul, we thus have to understand what they desire or love. We just saw, however, that there is some puzzle with the guardians’ love of their own. Yet, this puzzle is not discussed for the moment and the subject of love of one’s own seems to be dropped as the discussion of the part of musical education concerned with speech comes to an end. As the discussion proceeds toward the two last parts of musical education, however, a new love comes to sight.

2.1.2.9. The regime

Regarding the way in which tales are told, it is agreed that the guardians should not imitate every kind of speech but only those things which are appropriate for their specific work. Accordingly, they should only be willing to narrate, in their own name, speeches of men who are “courageous, moderate, pious, and liberal” (ανδρείος, σοφρόνας, ὁσίος, ἐλευθέρους; 395c4-5). As for everything else, the guardians should be ashamed of imitating base behaviors or base beings. As narrators, then, guardians

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66. Cf. Republic, 392b3-4; Bloom’s translation.
should be “unmixed imitator of the decent.” The corollary of this rule is that the mixed imitator (ho kekramenos; 397d6), i.e., the man who “narrates everything and thinks nothing unworthy of himself,” the one who has the power to become and imitate absolutely everything, should be outlawed. For this man, as Socrates puts it, “does not harmonize with our regime” (ouk harmottein tēi hēmēterai politeiai; 397d10-e1). This is the first occurrence of the word politeia since the very beginning of the city’s foundation.

There are at least two reasons justifying the use of the word politeia in this precise passage. The first one is the reassertion of the principle that guided the building of the city from the beginning: one man, one work. This time however, it is asserted as the city’s law of laws, which is referred to by the word themis. That this principle has now become a law is manifest in the fact that it is now used for discriminating between who is a citizen and who is not. The application of the principle that one man is to perform one work to the guardians leads to the consequence that not all works can be reckoned as legitimate works in the city. Whereas the criterion for the selection of craftsmen was the satisfaction of natural bodily needs in the healthy city and the contentment of bodily pleasures in the feverish city, a craftsman is now outlawed on the ground that each citizen must perform one work only. And this leads to the second reason, for the craftsman that

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67. Cf. Republic, 397d4-5; Bloom’s translation.
69. Cf. Republic, 398a6. As Bloom explains, themis means “‘law’ or ‘right,’ but it has a certain divine connotation lacking in the word nomos” (The Republic of Plato, p. 453, note 45). This recalls to us that the very first laws of the city are theological laws about the nature of the god the guardians revere: 1) “God is not the cause of everything (pantōn) but of the good [things]” only (380c8-9); 2) God’s form (eidos; 380d3) is unalterable; 3) God is truthful (cf. 382e8-11). We now see that the “god-revering” (theosebeis; 383c4) guardians mirror, in their own nature, the god they revere. First of all, the guardians’ work, which is consubstantial with inflicting pain or evil on evil people by fighting them, should nonetheless produce good things only. Second, they too must remain truthful and unalterable in their form, so much so that they are not permitted to imitate anything except “courageous, moderate, pious, and liberal” speeches and actions.
has been outlawed, the mixed imitator, is said to be “the most pleasing” \((\textit{hēdistos}; \text{397d7})\) in comparison to the one who has been made lawful, the unmixed imitator. It implies that pleasure is no longer the guiding principle of the city. Accordingly, we can say that the city is now almost completely purged of its luxurious desires, i.e., its feverish pursuit of pleasures. By outlawing specific pleasures, the \textit{polis} becomes a \textit{politeia}.

To bring the purgation of the city to a completion, both the last part of musical education and the whole of gymnastic education have to be considered. In both cases, other craftsmen are outlawed: lute-makers, harp-makers, and flute-makers, to begin with.\(^70\) Because these musical instruments can imitate many modes and thus many dispositions of the soul, especially the soft ones, they risk spoiling the education of the guardians (the spirited part of it). Finally, just as soft melodies are outlawed in music, fancy cooking of all sorts is also outlawed at the beginning of the gymnastic education.\(^71\)

Thus, due to the restrictions imposed on the arts by the guardians’ education, pleasure and softness can no longer be the goal pursued by city. Yet, the city is still a community of craftsmen. They thus need to have some purpose that will orient the production of their works, just as health was the ultimate good enjoyed in the healthy city and bodily pleasures the ultimate good enjoyed in the luxurious city. But this purpose now depends on what the guardians need in order to perform their own work well. And since the guardians’ work requires virtue (courage and moderation), what the guardians need above all is to be moved by what is connected to virtue, i.e., grace, nobility, and

\(^70\) Cf. \textit{Republic}, 399c10-d3.
\(^71\) Cf. \textit{Republic}, 404b10-e1.
beauty. In other words, since a courageous action is a noble deed and a beautifully crafted work is an instance of *kalon* too, *to kalon* (which refers to the noble, the fine, and the beautiful) proves to be the common goal shared by both the guardians and all the other craftsmen admitted into the city. To produce guardians who are lovers of the noble, then, the city must turn all its craftsmen into workers who produce the noble.

Is it imperative for us to supervise the poets only and to compel [them] to insert (*empoein*) the image of the good disposition (*ēthous*) into their poetic works (*poiēmasin*) or to not [let them] produce [their works] among us; or [is it not] also imperative to supervise the other craftsmen [too] and to prevent [them] from [inserting] this bad disposition (*to kakōēthes touto*) [into their works], [viz.] the licentious, illiberal, and graceless one, whether it is on images of living beings (*zōiōn*), in the building of houses, or in [any] other [works] produced (*empoiēin*) by their craft; and [whenever] one is not capable [of this], he must not be permitted to practice his craft among us, so that our guardians will not be reared on images of vice [...]; but [then] is it [not] imperative to seek these naturally gifted craftsmen capable of tracking down the nature of the beautiful and the gracious (*tēn tou kalou te kai euschēmenos phusin*), in order that the young [guardians], as if [they were] dwelling in a healthy place, will benefit from everything: from every place whatsoever something of the beautiful works (*tōn kalōn ergōn*) will strike their vision or their hearing, like a breeze bringing health from salutary places, leading them, without their knowing it, to the utmost likeness (*omoioitēta*), as well as friendship and accord, with the noble speech (*tōi kalōi logoi*)? On Glaucon’s affirmative answer to Socrates’ long question, the luxurious city gives birth to the beautiful city, the *kallipolis*.

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72. One may say that the guardians are “lovers of the noble” (*philokaloi*) but this must not downplay the erotic relation with the noble: for the noblest (*kalliston*) is the *erasmiōtaton*; cf. *Republic*, 402d6.

73. *Republic*, 401b1-d3.
2.1.2.10. Health, pleasure, and the beautiful

When the city has been successfully purged, it now possesses many of its definitive features. Of course, there remain two important points to be discussed: the peculiar way of life of the guardians and the identity and education of the ruling class. But let us pause and consider what we have before us. The city has now a regime. This regime can be described by saying that the guardians’ soul pervades the entire city. What moves the guardians moves every citizen too, and therefore it moves any craftsman admitted in the city. This is true with respect to bodily pleasure, but it is also true with respect to health.

The case of health and doctors is taken up again during the discussion of the gymnastic education. Two schools of medicine are then considered: the one led by the Asclepiads and the one led by Herodicus. The difference between these two schools can be stated this way. The Asclepiads treat naturally healthy bodies that happen to be sick: they treat them once and the body either recovers from the disease or dies from it. Herodicus, by contrast, treats bodies that are sick through and through and, without being capable of making them recover from the disease, he keeps them alive, but perpetually sick, by constantly treating the disease. Socrates and Glaucon outlaw the Herodicusian school of medicine. And the reason they give is that each man has “some work assigned to him, which [work] if he could not perform, it would be of no profit [for him] to go on living.”74 This is the complete inversion of the hierarchy that prevailed in the healthy city. In the healthy city, arts were for the body and therefore subordinated to the body. Now,

74. Republic, 407a1-2.
the body and health are subordinated to art. In other words, everyone in the city now performs his own work on the model of the guardians: as a noble deed, of a greater worth than life itself. Hence, again, the final name of the city: *kallipolis*, the noble city.

Now, one may raise two objections to the assertion that the guardians’ soul is, so to speak, the city’s soul. First of all, one may point that the city receives its name much later in the dialogue, in Book VII to be precise, when the work of the philosophers in this city is discussed. Following on from that, one may also point that those who rule the city are the philosophers, and not the guardians. We will undertake to discuss these two objections right now even if it implies that we will have to consider the section of the *Republic* devoted to the philosophers (Books VI and VII) before the one devoted to the guardians’ way of life (which begins at the end of Book III and is fully fleshed out in Book V). This itinerary, we contend, will prove to be helpful even if it implies some wandering in Plato’s text. We hope that the few simple observations to which we will limit ourselves will reveal the puzzling status of the guardians in that city.

2.1.2.11. The just city’s name

The name of the city is mentioned during the discussion of the philosophers’ education. The philosophers, who are to be the future rulers of the city, need to be acquainted with five types of study: the study of numbers (arithmetic), the study of planes

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75. Socrates calls the city, and its regime, “good and right” (*agathēn ... ἰὴν τοιαυτὴν πολίν τε καὶ πολιτείαν kai orthēn;* 449a1-2) at the beginning of Book V. At this point, the place of philosophers in the city has not been discussed yet, for only in the last third of Book V that the place and role of philosophers become the main subject, the treatment of which spreads up to the very end of Book VII. Accordingly, there seems to be a strong connection between the philosophers and the name of the city (*kallipolis*).
(geometry), the study of solids (geometry), the study of visible motions (astronomy), and the study of audible motions (harmonics). The purpose of these studies is not to gain a scientific knowledge about numbers, figures, heavenly bodies, and sounds, but rather to make the future philosophers acquainted with intellectual problems related to numbers and motions. In that respect, the study of these things is but a “prelude” (prooimiou; 531d7) to dialectic, which is the highest study of all, for dialectic alone aims at reaching the ultimate principle of that which is and thus brings about the “turning around” (sumperiaorgē; 533d3) of the soul toward what really is, toward the beautiful and the good.

Now, it is while considering one of these auxiliary studies to dialectic, geometry, that Socrates says to Glaucon that “those in your beautiful city” (hoi en tēi kallipolei soi; 527c1-2) must not neglect the study of geometry. In that context, Socrates is explaining to Glaucon what is the benefit attached to these kinds of study. Although he begins by pointing to the fact that all the arts, sciences, and thoughts necessarily presuppose the study of numbers—i.e., the capability of distinguishing one, two, and three—he soon qualifies his point. These studies are not useful for producing anything except as an auxiliary art for the turning around of the soul. Accordingly, the study of geometry is

76. These studies (mathēmata, cf., e.g., 525b3) are finally called “thoughts” (dianoian, 533d6). They are not sciences (epistēmai) but lie in between science and opinion.
78. Cf. also Republic, 518d3-e3.
79. Socrates says that the five preliminary studies are “useful for the seeking of the good and the beautiful” (chrēsimon [...] pros tēn tou kalou te kai agathon zētēsin; 531c6-7). The goal of dialectic, however, is “[the grasping] with the intellect itself of what is the good itself” ([an] auto ho agathon autēi noēsei [labēi]; 532b1).
useless with regard to any other work, including the work of the military art, and Glaucon should not be ashamed of saying so.\textsuperscript{81} Furthermore, the case of geometry is important because a part of it, the part that studies solids, developed somehow on its own, i.e., without having been attached to any kind of political benefit: “no city honors these things.”\textsuperscript{82} So that even if those who study geometry had no argument justifying the utility of their activity, geometry nonetheless “grows per force, due to its charm.”\textsuperscript{83} The fact is that mathematical entities have a certain charm, so that the contemplation of these things is somehow pleasant. Geometrical entities, we may thus understand, are also beautiful.

It is then possible to explain the name of the city in this way. The city built in the \textit{Republic} is finally called \textit{kallipolis} because it is devoted to the pursuit of the beautiful and the noble, the pursuit of \textit{to kalon}. The craftsmen take part in this pursuit by producing beautiful works and artefacts. The guardians take part in this pursuit by performing noble deeds. As for the philosophers, the rulers, they too take part in that pursuit by seeking to know what the noble (the beautiful) is. This implies two things. First of all, in order to know what the noble is, the philosophers must be acquainted with all the forms of the noble and of the beautiful, which includes the intellectual perception of the beautiful; geometry, as it seems, is a good example of such experience. But the charm of geometry is not the beautiful, and neither are the heavenly bodies, even if they are “the most

\textsuperscript{81} Cf. \textit{Republic}, 527d1-528a3. In this passage, Socrates and Glaucon discuss the usefulness of astronomy and not of geometry. But Socrates’ qualification leads to a reconsideration of geometry and thus to a postponing of the discussion of astronomy. For this reason, we consider this passage as a part of the general discussion of geometry even though it is not quite apposite.

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Republic}, 528b6-7.

\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Republic}, 528c7; Bloom’s translation of \textit{biai hupo charitos auxanetai}. 
beautiful works” of all (kallista ta [...] erga; 530a5). Geometry and astronomy may well enlarge and elevate the experience of the beautiful, but their ultimate goal is to be “useful for the seeking of the good and the beautiful.” Only by being dialecticians are the philosophers pursuing the knowledge of what the beautiful is.

2.1.2.13. The philosophers’ love and the city

Yet, there is one big difficulty with this kind of unification under the love of the beautiful. This difficulty is best seen if we compare the city’s perspective on the philosophic pursuit of the knowledge of the beautiful with the philosopher’s own perspective. From the city’s standpoint, the knowledge of that which is always is a means for the city’s existence. For the city, the work assigned to philosophers is to rule the city, i.e., to order it and to assign to each one his proper work, the one for which each one is naturally suited. In other words, what the city needs is good rulers, and it is only because the philosophers are those who can best perform this work that the city trains them in philosophy. Now, if philosophers are those who are best suited to perform the work of ruling the city, it is because the ruling of the city is best performed when it is performed for the sake of the city’s happiness in contradistinction with the rulers’ private happiness. And ruling is performed for the sake of the city’s happiness when the ruler knows that he cannot derive his own happiness or the greatest benefits for himself from his ruling position. This is possible only if there exists a good which transcends every

84. Cf. also the distinction between the “true philosophers” (tous alēthinous [philosophous]; 475e3) and all the other lovers of the beautiful things at the end of Book V (cf. Republic, 476b4-d3).
85. Republic, 531c6-7.
86. Cf. Republic, 536a2-7 and 546d8-547a4.
good thing the city has to offer: health, honor, power, money, and bodily pleasures. That is, only if the ruler does not perceive ruling as the best way for achieving his own happiness can he perform it as a work that benefits that which is under his rule, namely the city.

But the truth is surely this: that city in which those who are going to rule are least eager (hēkista prothumoi) to rule is necessarily governed (oikesthai) in the way that is best and freest from faction, while the one that gets the opposite kind of rulers is [governed] in the opposite way. [...] For that’s the way it is [...]. If you discover a life better than ruling for those who are going to rule, it is possible that your well-governed city (polis eu oikoumenē) will come into being.87

This is why, then, the city selects its rulers among the philosophers’ class. For philosophy as the dialectical activity of pursuing the knowledge of that which always is, which pursuit culminates in the pursuit of the knowledge of the good in itself, is, in itself, the greatest good for the philosophers as individuals.

In sum, there is a tension between the philosophers’ perspective on philosophy and the city’s. For the philosophers, philosophy is an end in itself. For the city, philosophy is a means, a precondition, for having suitable rulers. To put it in different words, this means that there is a tension within the city’s perspective: to be ruled in such a way as to be called happy and just, the city requires that there be a way of life that transcends its own political horizon. It is this way of life that the rulers of the city must desire above everything else. But the city must find a way to keep those who long for such a way of life from living it, at least for that time during which they will rule the city.

87. Republic, 520d1-4 and 520e4-521a2; Bloom’s translation (slightly altered).
2.1.2.13. The double standard forced upon the just city

This tension inside the city’s own requirements bears an important consequence. For concerning the class of citizens that rules over the city, the city is compelled to abandon its law of laws, the principle according to which one man is to perform one work only. With respect to the philosophers, the city is forced to make them “participate in both” (amphoterōn metechein; 520c1): the life of the philosopher and the life of the ruler. And to the extent that each life is directed toward performing of one work, it means that the city requires its ruling class to perform two different works.88 Since the city needs rulers that do not think of themselves primarily as rulers, the work of ruling must be performed by people who consider that their real work as human beings is to philosophize. In other words, the city’s happiness depends on rulers whose own happiness does not depend on the city. In the case of the rulers, then, their work (the ruling duty) is inferior to their private good: the pleasure they derive from practicing philosophy.

As a consequence, the philosophers must be compelled to rule the city. Yet, as simple as this may sound, a great difficulty underlies it. Since the ruler is the one who holds the power to compel, there is no power to compel him other than himself. Accordingly, the philosophers must be convinced that they should rule even if they have

88. That the idea of the philosopher-king violates the very principle of justice of the city by cumulating two works, two functions (erga), in one single human being is already hinted at when the idea is introduced in Book V. For we read that there can be no remedy to the political problem “unless either the philosophers rule as kings (oi philosophoi basileusōsin) in the cities or those who are now called kings (basilēs) or chiefs genuinely and adequately philosophize (philosophēsōsi), and this would coincide in the same [man] (tuto eis tauton sumpesēi): political power and philosophy” (473c11-d3; cf. also Bloom’s note to that passage in his translation, p.460 note 36, as well as p.407 of his “Interpretative Essay”).
no desire to do so. The first argument that can be made on the city’s behalf rests on justice. Because the philosophers owe their private happiness to the city, that is, because they owe to the city the very fact of having been educated in such a way as to develop their philosophical nature, so that their city is one of the causes of their being philosophers, the city can justly require from them, in return, that they perform the political duty assigned to them. Let us point out that the understanding of justice that the philosophers have to accept recalls the definition of justice Socrates drew from his discussion with Cephalus: the philosophers’ justice towards the city is to pay back their dept. Yet, one may also point out that ruling is a “necessary business” (anagkaion prattontas; 540b5) for them insofar as they wish to protect philosophy in that beautiful city and dislike the prospect of being ruled by people inferior to themselves. Although the fact that philosophers perform their political work on the basis of justice and necessity is of crucial importance—especially with regard to the overall argument about the Republic made in this chapter—we cannot help but stress that this solution already presupposes the existence of the city in order to work.

90. Cf. also Republic, 540e1-2.
91. It is here, I believe, that it is possible to understand that the city built in the Republic can never come into being. The impossibility concerns the city’s foundation. First of all, although everything appears just as if the city’s coming-into-being were following some sort of natural development, growing out of the healthy city to reach maturity in the beautiful city, this impression must be ruled out on the basis that the healthy city rests on an abstraction from human desires, evident especially in its omission of women. Man’s natural neediness may well explain why human beings form political communities, but human needs cannot explain the presence of human beings in the first place (the perpetuation of the human species). For if there are human beings present to form a city, it is because in human nature there is a desire for reproduction. Accordingly, the original city, the city that came first chronologically, is rather the feverish city, i.e., the city in which human desires rule without any precise purpose. Now, if the feverish city is the first city, there is no necessity that compels it to a strict obedience to the principle of one man, one work. Accordingly, the principle does not require this first city to have a class of specialized soldiers, although this city cannot survive without soldiers. In order to create specialized soldiers and therefore purge the city, one would have to establish the principle of one man, one work and therefore rulers that would enforce that
Be this as it may, the issue at stake here is that, with regard to the highest political function (ergon), the city cannot make political work (ergon) coincides with one’s own good. For if the philosophers perform their political work out of justice and necessity, it is because there is a gap between political work and their private happiness, that is, there is a gap between their work as citizens of the city and their work as human beings principle and assign one work to each citizen on the basis of their individual nature. In short, to create the beautiful city out of the feverish city requires an act of foundation, not to say an act of revolution. Socrates reveals this at the end of Book VII when he says that the beautiful city’s founding is performed through a generational cleansing (cf. 540e5-541a7). But the big problem with that foundation is that it requires that the “true philosophers” (alēthōs philosophoi; 540d4) “prepare their own city” (diaskeūrēsōntai tēn heautōn polin; 540e3), whereas Socrates has just said that the philosophers must be compelled to rule and take care of the city. In other words, philosophers can call a city their own only if that city has contributed to their being philosophers. Now, this cannot be the case at the time of the foundation. The philosopher-founders are natural philosophers in the sense that they have become philosophers by their own efforts. In short, just as the great act of violence that lies at the city’s foundation already requires political power in order to be performed, the philosophers’ willingness to rule the city already requires that they have been educated to philosophy by the city. One may also add that, in opposition to what Socrates affirms in that passage, it makes a great difference for the philosopher who has to rule whether he is alone or not for sharing the burden of political duty (cf. 540d4 compare with 540a8-b4).

Finally, the problem of the city’s foundation is rooted in two problems: the tension between being and coming-into-being, with regard to the city, and the tension between the twofold work assigned to the philosopher. These two problems are connected with one another. In Book V (cf. 477c1-d8), philosophers are introduced as those who possess the power (dunamis) to know what each thing really is, i.e., the power of science (epistēmē). Now, a power is distinguished from another power on the basis of its object (or “towards what it is directed:” eph’ hōi esti; 477d1) and of “what it produces” (ho apergazetai; 477d1). Since science or knowledge produces (apergazetai) something different from opinion, it seems to follow that it has a work (ergon) of its own too. The problem is that there are two different objects, as well as two different works, assigned to the same philosophical activity in the Republic. On the one hand, science is directed towards that which always is (tou aei ontos gnoseōs; 527b5). But this form of knowledge appears to have no other product or work beside itself. Or to put this in different words, if there is an art related to this science, it is only the art of producing the turning around of the soul (periagōgē technē; cf. 518d3-4) toward, precisely, this kind of knowledge; and this art is the true philosophy (cf. 521c5-8), i.e., the true dialectic (cf. 533c7-d4). Yet, philosophy understood as the art which turns produces nothing but the awareness of this kind of knowledge and thus the desire for it: it does not produce the knowledge itself. On the other hand, the city’s purpose is to direct the philosophical pursuit toward another kind of knowledge, namely the knowledge of that which comes into being, i.e., the city itself. In that respect, the work of knowledge is quite clear: to distinguish the nature of each citizen that comes into being and to assign to each one its proper work (cf. 536a2-7 and 546d8-547a4). Yet, the fact that philosophers, as rulers of the city, are unable to know the nuptial number seems to indicate that philosophers do not possess the knowledge of producing what comes into being (cf. 546a7-b3 and c6-d1). This will come up again later on during the discussion of the Republic communism of children and wives; cf. infra section 2.1.3.11.
accomplishing their own nature. This discovery brings us back to the guardians and forces us to take a closer look at their situation.

2.1.3. The Problem of the Oneness Analogy
2.1.3.1. Restatement of the problem

Before proceeding any further, let us first pause to restate the problem at hand. Our discussion of the city built in the Republic was initiated by the puzzling relation between justice and art. By focusing on the guardians, we hoped to find a key that would unlock that difficulty. And indeed we saw the very same puzzle re-emerging in the person of the guardians. Because there is no necessary connection between their work (protecting the city) and what we may call their “expertise” (having a thumotic nature, i.e., being prone to fight), the guardians might be said to embody the puzzle of Book I. Recalling Polemarchus, one may say that the guardians’ work is to do good to their friends and evil to their enemies, but this would also recall Socrates’ objection to the effect that the expertise enabling someone to do this makes his morality questionable (for at the end of this road the just man appears identical to the thief). This objection, in turn, could be taken up by a Thrasymachus as the ground for asserting that the guardians are like sheepdogs keeping the flock together not for the sheep’s own benefit, which assertion would recall to mind another of Socrates’ objections, namely, that in the precise sense of the word sheepdogs do protect the flock against its enemy, for this is their work. And now the argument has come full circle. Now, as we saw, the canalisation of all the

92. Cf. supra section 2.1.2.6.
works toward the pursuit of the noble and the beautiful appeared very promising. For if the notion of the noble (*kalon*) is attached to the work, the expertise is no longer the same. In order to perform noble deeds or works, one has to be a virtuous craftsman, and this means, for the guardians, not simply being prone to fight and harsh with the enemy, but being courageous and moderate.

The only problem with this scheme, which may seem trifling at first, was to find a way to include the philosophers under that rubric. It turned out that the way in which the philosophers pursue the knowledge of the beautiful makes them, so to speak, strangers in the city. For the philosophers’ genuine art is this *periegē technē*: the art of producing the turning around of the soul toward eternal beings transcending the city. The philosophical art is then the art aiming at producing the leaving of the cave, that is, the leaving of the city. It is this disinterest in the city that makes them fit for ruling the city. Accordingly, the political art falls on philosophers by accident and not as truly their own. This means that the philosophers’ attachment to the city is not perfectly tied to the performance of their own work. To repeat, the philosophers’ attachment to the city is connected to their own work only to the extent that it is their own city that provided for their philosophical education. But when they obey the city and fulfil their duty to rule, the philosophers do not perceive this as performing their own work, the work that suits their own nature. This duty is their way of paying back a debt they owe to their own city. At best, this can be understood as genuine gratitude toward their city. In the case of the philosophers, then, there is a tension between serving the city and their work, which are

93. One should never forget that even the beautiful city is called a cave; cf. *Republic*, 539e2-3.
both their own but in two different ways, as different as the origin (one’s own birth) differs from the end (one’s own work).

Furthermore, to the extent that the philosophers’ way of pursuing the noble and the beautiful through their work makes them transcend the city, the pursuit of the beautiful through each individual’s work cannot be the common goal shared by all citizens and the ultimate cohesive principle of the city. Ultimately, the love of the noble and the beautiful cannot fully attach human beings to their city, for there are noble and beautiful things outside the city, which are even more beautiful and more noble than those inside the city. It is because the philosophers are making the whole structure of the beautiful city crumble that we have to consider the guardians anew and look for another overarching principle under which the city and the citizens get harmonized and united. For this is the ultimate purpose of our journey into the Republic: to understand the way in which this Platonic city is a harmonized whole.

2.1.3.2. The citizens’ happiness

In order to descend from the philosophers to the guardians, let us consider the issue of the citizens’ happiness in the beautiful city. When Socrates asserted that they must compel the philosophers to govern the city, Glaucon objected that this was unjust, for by so doing they were compelling the philosophers to live a less happy life than that which they could live if they were not bothered with the city’s business. As we saw, Socrates’ response was that, on the contrary, this is precisely the just thing to do,

something that the philosophers themselves can understand as a just obligation imposed on them. But this understanding of justice departs from the way justice has been understood since the beginning. So far, justice was understood as the assignment of the one work that suits each one’s nature. The city never departed from that understanding in Books II and III where the healthy city is introduced, corrupted by unlimited desires and turned into the feverish city, and finally purged of these unlimited desires. Accordingly, justice is defined in Book IV as the principle according to which “each one must practice (epitēdeuein) one of the [works] concerning the city, the one [work] that nature has instituted (epitēdeiotatē) the most naturally in view of him.”

At first look, this principle appears to hold when Socrates asserts in Book V that only if philosophers govern the city can the regime they have sketched in the preceding books ever come into being. Yet, we now see that this is not unqualifiedly true. For since the work that suits the philosophical nature is to philosophize, the performing of the ruling work suits them only, so to speak, by accident. Thus, when philosophers perform the work of ruling, they do something just, but only in the sense of doing what is in agreement with the city’s laws—that is, justice as law-abidingness. From the city’s viewpoint, the philosophers are just, not because they perform the work that best suits their particular nature—the excellent use of their own reason—but because they are willing to obey the law which compels them to govern the city. In short, one could say that nature assigned it to philosophers to philosophize whereas the city’s law assigns to them the duty of ruling.

95. Republic, 433a5-6. The key word, ergon, is not mentioned but the article’s genitive plural tōn seems to refer to it (this is also Bloom’s reading), I therefore supplied for it: “hena hekaston hen deoi epitēdeuein tōn [ergōn] peri tēn polin, eis [ergon] ho autou hē phusis epitēdeiotate pephukuia eiē.”
Now, prior to Glaucon’s objection on behalf of the philosophers’ happiness, Adeimantus had formulated a similar objection on behalf of the guardians’ happiness. Upon his concluding that the guardians should have no property of their own, including money and a private household, Adeimantus demands that Socrates defend his proposal against the claim that by imposing a communist way of life on the guardians he in fact precludes their happiness.97 Socrates’ response to Adeimantus foreshadows his response to Glaucon in Book VII. The happiness of one group or one class, Socrates says, let alone private happiness, is not the goal with a view to which they are building their city. What they are looking for is the happiness of “the whole city” (*holē hē polis*; 420b7).

Yet Socrates does say in his defense that by living such a communist way of life the guardians might well be, in fact, the happiest of men.98 At this point in the dialogue, the guardians and the rulers are not clearly distinguished from one another and it is not clear whether this claim is meant to apply to both of them. However, because we have considered the philosophers’ way of life before the guardians’, we are in a position to understand how Socrates might well be correct with respect to the philosophers. To the extent that the future philosophers are included among the guardian class, and to the extent that the guardians’ way of life is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of the philosophical nature, and to the extent that philosophy brings about true happiness; it seems logical to conclude that the guardians’ way of life is the precondition for happiness. This, of course, is true for the guardians who will develop

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97. Cf. *Republic*, 419a1 and the following.
into philosophers. But what about the real guardians, those guardians who will never become rulers, and thus never become philosophers, those who are often referred to as “auxiliaries” (epikouroi), those whose singular nature is, in short, that of the soldier-guardian? For it is plain, on the basis of Book VII, that these men will never get out of the cave. Can they be said to be happy too?

2.1.3.3. The citizens’ oneness and the city’s oneness

There is no immediate answer to this question, for Socrates does not undertake to prove his claim. What he does, however, is to spell out in what way the city and the citizens mirror each other. Earlier, we suggested as a working hypothesis that the city and its citizens get united under the beautiful (kalos). But this was an inference of ours based on the city’s name, on one hand, and on the fact that each citizen’s work is related to the noble or the beautiful, on the other. Now, that is not what Socrates says at the beginning of Book IV. What he does say, actually, is that all the citizens “must care for the one singular work (pros hen hekaston ergon) [which is suited] for this one [person] (pros touto hena), that [work] for which a person was naturally [destined] (pros ho tis...)

99. The future philosophers are selected, and thus separated from the other guardians, when they are twenty; cf. Republic, 537b8-9. This is the ground for the distinction between “the auxiliary” (hoi epikouroi; cf. 414b5) and the “complete guardians” (phulakas panteleis; 414b2), namely, the rulers (or “the worthy rulers” as they are called later on [hoi archontes axioi; 458b9]). This is the distinction made in the “noble lie;” the rulers are said to have a gold soul and the auxiliaries a silver soul (cf. 4154-6). For the sake of clarity, since the final identification of the rulers is that they are philosophers, I usually make no distinction between the guardians and the auxiliaries. One may explain this confusing way of referring to the guardians as auxiliaries in the Republic on the ground that when the rulers are introduced for the first time Socrates wants to stress, as it were, the fact that the ruler will have to cumulate two works in one person (“the one [... must be appointed ruler of the city and guardian” (ton hen [...] katastateon archonta tēs poleōs kai phulaka; 413e6-414a1-2), thus prefiguring the twofold work of the philosophers.

100. Cf. Republic, 539e2-3.
101. Cf. supra section 2.1.2.10.
pephuken), so that [just as] each [person] practicing his own one [work] would not become many but one, in the same way the entire city (sumpasa ἐ̣ polis), too, will naturally grow to be one and not many."102 In short, the way in which each citizen of the city can be said to reflect the city, and the city each citizen, is with respect to oneness.

We should emphasize this fact. Whereas the enterprise is to build a just city, which is also understood to be a happy city, and which is finally called the beautiful city, the way in which the city and the citizens reflect each other is with regard to their oneness, rather than with regard to their justice, happiness, or nobility (beauty).

Now, “one” can be taken in two different senses: in the inclusive sense of a whole (i.e., the harmonization of many parts) or in the exclusive sense of a singular unit (i.e., the opposite of many). If oneness is really the principle under which both the city and the citizens are united, it has to have the same meaning for both.

The city, first, is one in the inclusive sense of the word. The city is a whole composed of parts, of three parts to be precise: the ruling class, the guardian class, and the craftsman class.103 It is a whole to the extent that each of these parts does what it has to do, performs its own work and does not meddle with the work of the other parts. If this is so, the city is said to be just when each member performs the work assigned to him by

102. The whole sentence reads as follows: “touto d’ ebouleto dèloun hoti kai tous allous politas, pros ho tis pephuken, pros touto hena pros hen hekaston ergon dei komizein, hopòs an hen to autou epitèdeuôn hekastos mé polloi all’ heis gignètai, kai houtò dè sumpasa ἐ̣ polis mia phuètai alla mé pollai” (Republic, 423d2-6; cf. also 462b1-2).
103. The city has four parts if we distinguish, among the craftsman class, the farmers from the craftsmen; cf. the four types of soul at 415a4-7.
nature. But as soon as this has been said, we foresee that the parts are understood in the restrictive sense of one. As Socrates makes quite clear in Book III, “there is no double man among [the citizens], nor a manifold one, since each [man] practices [only] one [work].” So that, “in such a city only will we find the shoemaker a shoemaker and not a pilot in addition to his shoemaking [work], and a farmer a farmer and not a judge in addition to his farming [work], and the soldier a soldier and not a money-maker in addition to his war-making [work], and all [the citizens are] this way.” This understanding of the shoemaker’s oneness and being, or that of any other kind of craftsman, is, so to speak, borrowed from Parmenides: to be a shoemaker is to be nothing other than a shoemaker, to be a guardian is to be nothing other than a guardian.

Since at this point in the dialogue the idea of philosopher-rulers has not yet been introduced, we may leave them aside. With respect to the other craftsmen, including the guardians, we see, however, that there seems to be a fallacy in the oneness analogy. In order to investigate further the way in which the city and the citizens are one in two different senses, we have to understand what the principle of assigning one work to one man entails for the way of life of the citizens. This can best be done with regard to the guardians, for it is with them that the principle acquired the force of a law. Accordingly, the strongest expression of that principle occurs in Book III. Yet, with regard to the question of the guardians’ oneness, that is, with regard to the harmonized and inclusive

104. Accordingly, “the performing of one’s own things” or, as Bloom translates it, “the practice of minding one’s own business” (to ta autou prattein; 433b4), is another way of expressing the definition of justice (one man, one work); cf. also the definition of injustice with regard to the city at 434b9-c5.
106. Republic, 397e4-8.
107. Cf. Republic, 398a6; cf. supra section 2.1.2.9.
character of their way of life, this might well be the most intriguing passage. When Socrates introduced the art of guardianship, he recalled the principle, saying that, from the city’s foundation on, “we assigned one [work] for each one, that for which each is naturally [suited] and at which he was in situation to work throughout his life, pursuing all the other [activities only when he will be] at leisure, [thus] accomplishing nobly [his work for] not letting the opportune moments pass by.”108 From our present standing point, we see that the question of what the specialization on the basis of arts entails for “the pursuit of all the other activities” needs to be asked.

2.1.3.4. The guardians’ way of life

The guardians’ way of life is first discussed at the end of Book III. This subject is introduced by the following considerations. The rulers of the city should be selected from among the guardians. Those who are selected should be those who, in addition to possessing many other characteristics, care the most for the city. Now, one cares most for what one happens to love.109 And one loves something the most when one believes that the same things are advantageous both for the thing one loves and for oneself, so that one presumes that if that which one loves prospered, one would prosper with it, and if it did not, neither would one.110 Accordingly, the guardians who appear “to do with all their eagerness” (pasēi prothumiai poein; 412e1-2) what they believe to be advantageous for the city must be selected as rulers. The only problem with that scheme, as Socrates

emphasizes, is that “the opinion (doxan) that one must do what is best for the city”\textsuperscript{111} is precisely this: an opinion, a belief. And many things run counter to or threaten to overpower that opinion. Socrates lists time and speech, grief or pain, and pleasure and fear;\textsuperscript{112} but even knowledge might be included on his list.\textsuperscript{113}

Socrates does not put forward an argument to defend the opinion that the same things benefit oneself and the city. What he does, first, is to use rhetoric and to have recourse to a “noble” (gennaion; 414b9) lie. According to that noble lie, all the citizens of the city are earthborn. It means that the territory of the city is the common mother of all the citizens who are, therefore, reckoned as brothers.\textsuperscript{114} Though according to that claim, they would all be alike (homoios) with respect to their origin, the citizens do differ (heteroi) with respect to their soul, for the “god who fashioned” (ho theos plattōn; 415a4) their souls did it in such a way as to distinguish four types of soul. These four types form two groups. The first group is the guardian class, which includes the rulers (the gold souls) and the auxiliaries (the silver souls). Then there is the working class, which includes, as it seems, the farmers (bronze souls) and all the other craftsmen (the iron souls).\textsuperscript{115} And yet, this rhetoric is not enough. Somehow, it must be put into practice. To

\textsuperscript{111} Republic, 412e8.
\textsuperscript{112} Cf. Republic, 413b6-c2.
\textsuperscript{113} Because knowledge presupposes a will or an intention (ekousiōs; 412e11) to know the truth, it is a threat only to false opinions. All the other elements of the list are feelings and thus said to be involuntary (akousiōs) movements of the soul that may lead to the departure of the true opinion, which is defined as the fact of “opining that which is” (to ta onta doxazein; 413a7). To the extent, then, that the opinion that doing what is best for the city is also doing one’s own good is a true, knowledge should not be included in the list of elements that may threaten that very opinion. The problem with that opinion is that, anticipating what comes next, it needs to be upheld by “some one noble lie” (gennaion ti hen pseudomenous; Bloom’s translation of 414b9-c1), but a lie nonetheless.
\textsuperscript{114} Cf. Republic, 414e1-6.
\textsuperscript{115} This distinction between the farmers and all the other craftsmen is something new, since nothing in the healthy city was said about such a distinction. On the basis of the healthy city, one would rather expect a
use an expression of the *Laws*, the noble lie is the “prelude” (*to prooimion*)\(^{116}\) for the law code as such.

Considering first the place in which the guardian class must live, Socrates returns to the problem of making the guardians gentle with their own and thus unwilling to use force against their fellow citizens for their private benefit. Yet this is not supposed to be a problem since, as Socrates himself points out, it was precisely the purpose of their education to make the guardians tame.\(^{117}\) Socrates nonetheless adds that “someone with intelligence would say that, *in addition to this very education (pros tēi paideiai tautēi)*\(^{118}\) they must have a certain way of life. And it is at this stage that the famous communism of Plato’s *Republic* is introduced.

The communism imposed on the guardians is threefold. Or to use the language of the *Republic*, this communism is constituted by three different laws (*nomoi*) each of which deals with one aspect of their life.\(^{119}\) The first law concerns the relation to property (416c5-417b9), the second law concerns the relation to gender (451d1-457c3), and the third law concerns the relation to family (457c10-461d6). As will be seen, these three spheres or domains of a human life are all interconnected. For what begins in Book III and is fully fleshed out only in Book V forms one coherent attack on everything which partakes of love of one’s own and may serve to counteract any resistance to the equation of one’s own with the city. But let us proceed step by step.

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\(^{118}\) *Republic*, 416c5; emphasis added.
2.1.3.5. The first communist law

First of all, Socrates puts forward the claim that the guardians must be provided with houses and wealth in such a way that these houses and wealth will not hinder them from being the best guardians.\textsuperscript{120} This means, however, that no guardian is allowed to possess private property (or wealth: \textit{ousian kekt\kappa\nu\nuon m\dertz\dertzian m\dertz\dertzia idian}; 416d5) beyond what is absolutely necessary—and that includes the claim that he cannot possess any sort of private house. They should then live in a common house and eat in common, just as an army in a camp would. As for the necessities of life (\textit{epit\eta\nu\nuia}; 416d7), that is, the satisfaction of their bodily needs, these must be provided by the craftsman class, in sufficient quantity but no more than that. In this way, the guardians will not need any money or wealth in order to provide for their bodily needs. Accordingly, Socrates proclaims that the guardians, whose soul is made of the purest gold and silver, are the only ones in the city for whom it is unlawful (\textit{ou themis}; 417a3) to handle or touch gold and silver, in any form (money, jewel, drinking cup, etc.), or to enter a place that houses gold or silver.

Socrates gives two reasons justifying these bans. As might be expected, the first reason is that guardians are to have one work only: they need to be this, guardians, and not household managers (\textit{oikonomoi}; 417a7) or farmers, which they would inevitably come to be if they were to possess houses and land.\textsuperscript{121} But Socrates adds that out of such possessions would also grow enmities among the owners, so that the guardians would

\textsuperscript{119} Cf. \textit{Republic}, 417b6-8, 456b13-c1, 457c7-8, and in general 465b5-6.  
\textsuperscript{120} Cf. \textit{Republic}, 416c5-d1.  
\textsuperscript{121} Cf. \textit{Republic}, 417a6-7.
come to perceive other citizens as their personal enemies, and would fear these personal enemies who live within the city more than those who live outside of it—which is the very thing their whole education was meant to avoid.\textsuperscript{122} At this point, we must consider especially this second reason.

\textit{2.1.3.6. Love of one’s own and thumos}

First of all, let us recall the beginning of Book III. The purpose was to make the guardians believe that it is impious to fight other citizens or to consider other citizens as enemies by making them revere gods and heroes who never fight against “their owns” \textit{(oikeious autôn; 378c6)}. But this is precisely the whole problem: the “own” \textit{(oikeia)}. For if one’s own house and one’s own city are both located in the domain of one’s own, they nevertheless remain two distinct spheres, two heterogeneous goods, each of which makes a claim as that which is genuinely one’s own, and which therefore has the highest claim on the care, time, and love which must be given to it. So that if the guardians were to own their own house, there would be a tension inside their souls, a split and eventually a conflict between the two things which they love as their own, i.e., a conflict between their household and their city. Depriving the guardians of houses is thus depriving the guardians of a private “own” distinct from the city.\textsuperscript{123} Accordingly, the founders, in order to make sure that the guardians are to be gentle with their fellow citizens and never use

\textsuperscript{122} Cf. \textit{Republic}, 417b1-5.

\textsuperscript{123} In the \textit{Republic}, the notion of “one’s own” is referred to by three different words: the substantive form of the reflexive pronoun \textit{(to heauton or simply to auton)}, the substantive form of the possessive pronoun \textit{(to emon)} and \textit{oikeia}, which is derived from \textit{oikos}, the household; this latter word is the one used by Aristophanes in the \textit{Symposium} when he says that \textit{erōs} is the most beneficial god for the human race because \textit{erōs} “leads us toward [what is our] own” \textit{(eis to oikeion agôn; 193d2)}. 
their force against them or the city, make it so that the guardians have as few other things
as possible which they may to consider their own besides the city.

To all this, we may add the following consideration. The guardians are selected,
above all, on the basis of their *thumotic* nature. *Thumos*, we recall, was first defined as
the willingness to fight for what has been “caught.” This definition was drawn from a
comparison with animals, especially dogs. With respect to human beings, however, we
may understand that *thumos* is, above all, the willingness to fight for what one already
has or possesses, or for what one believes rightly or wrongly that one has a right to or is
entitled to. In short, for what is believed to be one’s own. The guardians, we may thus
say, are those who are the most willing to protect and fight for what is their own. It is
therefore imperative that their own, or their most valuable possession so to speak, cannot
be separated from the city. In fact, if possible it should be made altogether identical with
the city, so that they would not turn their anger the city and commit violence against it.
On the contrary, the city would then become the only thing for the sake and benefit of
which they would get angry.

This specification provides some basis for a better understanding of *thumos*. A
good is generally understood as something we desire and thus lack. This attraction to the
good is generally referred to as *erōs* in Plato.¹²⁴ But a good can also be understood as
something we possess and want to protect. It is to this other relation to a good that
*thumos* seems to refer to. Of course, protecting a good means that the good in question is not

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¹²⁴ As Socrates objects to Agathon in the *Symposium*, we desire and love what we do not have or possess
(ouk echōn; 200a6), so that *erōs* is in fact “the desire of that which one lacks (to […] epithumein hou endee
estin; 200a9). And this is primarily and above all the good (agathon), not one’s own (heauton or oikeion),
as Diotima objects to Aristophanes (cf. 205d1-206a1).
simply a good, but that it is one’s good, more precisely one’s own good. Accordingly, it seems possible to distinguish between two different ways to love a good: to love it as something worth pursuing (erōs) and to love it as one’s own. Thumos, then, as a peculiar manifestation of the human soul, seems to take root in this love of one’s own.\footnote{For a thorough analysis of thumos, cf. Thomas L. Pangle, “The Political Psychology of Religion in Plato’s Laws,” American Political Science Review, Vol. 70, No. 4 (Dec., 1976), p.1059-1077; the last paragraph owes much to this passage: “pure desire or love (eros) seems to make us forget ourselves in the attraction to the thing loved; the more love is love of something as one’s own, the more it seems to involve thumos. One sign is the fact that we are more apt to get angry at friends and brothers than at the beloved who has not yet accepted us. The part of our love which demands that those we love should reciprocate comes from thumos” (p.1064).}

This also helps clarify why the guardians are so important for the purgation of the feverish city. The feverish city is a city devoted to the pure pursuit of the goods understood as limited to the bodily pleasures. In such a situation, the city may appear to be subordinate to the individuals. In other words, in such a city one may easily forget that the city is first, that is, that even the pursuit of pleasures can only take place in a city, for the contentment of bodily desires is dependent on the arts, and the development of the arts requires the existence of the city, for only in a city are trade and exchanges protected, and trade and exchanges are a necessary condition of the emergence of specialized craftsmen and thus of the possibility of the development, improvement, and refinement of the arts. We are reminded that this is the state of things by the fact that even the feverish city—in fact, especially the feverish city—needs guardians in order to exist. For it is this group of citizens that are to provide the material condition for the pursuit of pleasures, namely, the land, and protect it from any other group of people that may covet it. Yet just as the guardians are necessary, they also present a great problem with regard to the
psychological unity of the city. Because they need to be willing to be hurt and eventually to die for the city’s sake, the good they pursue cannot be understood with reference to bodily pleasures alone. On the other hand, they must understand the good which they pursue to be their own if, as we suggested, the human capacity to fight for something is connected to the perception that the thing for which one fights is one’s own. But, again, we see that the way in which the guardians have to understand their own can hardly square with the city’s goal of pursuing bodily pleasures, since excellence in war cannot be understood in terms of bodily pleasures. The city’s need for guardians, then, obliges it to enlarge the way in which the citizens understand their “own.” In order to integrate into the city a class of guardians, the city must convey to the citizens an understanding of their “own” that reaches beyond the mere body and thus includes the city itself. It is precisely this transformation, it seems to us, that underlies the purgation of the feverish city.

On this basis, one may say that the psychological and political problem that is posed by the guardians is to reconcile or to harmonize two spheres or domains of the love of one’s own: the body and the city. Or, to the extent that the pursuit of bodily pleasures takes place in private, one may say that these two domains are the household (as the place where the body is enjoyed) and the city (as the condition for the private enjoyment of the body). But this is not what happens in the Republic and this is a very important feature of the city built in the dialogue. Socrates and the two brothers do not try to harmonize these two spheres of one’s own. What they do is to completely subordinate the household to the city. This means, in practice, that they attempt to get rid of the household and everything private.
This intention becomes even more manifest in the sequel, for a fundamental step of this whole undertaking is set down in the second communist law, what is also called the first wave in Book V and famously known as Plato’s sexual equality teaching.

2.1.3.7. Preliminary remarks to the second law

Let us first recall what has happened to the body so far. As we saw, at the end of Book III health is subordinated to the performance of each one’s work. According to the movement of the dialogue, this is the step that brings the city’s purgation to a completion, for due to the new accepted definition of medicine, this art can no longer be understood as the essential means for the pursuit of bodily pleasures. Medicine is instead understood as the auxiliary and temporarily helper for the performance of each individual’s work. Glaucon’s decision to outlaw the Herodicusian practice of medicine implied that body and health were now subordinated to the performance of each one’s work. In other words, it means that what is really one’s own is no longer one’s body but above all one’s work. In the healthy city, the body was what was truly one’s own and, therefore, health was the supreme good. In the feverish city, health was already a means for something else: pleasure. But because the new end, pleasure, was intrinsically connected with the body—even though, paradoxically, this end cannot be pursued without upsetting the body’s goodness (health)—the “own” was still understood within the limits of the body. Only by making work (ergon) supersede pleasure was the “own” truly detached from the body and connected to the city. Indeed, since the guardians’ work is directed toward the city’s benefit, and since the education of the guardians required the work of all the other
citizens (craftsmen) to be devoted to the guardians’ education, the superseding of health by each one’s work was in fact an affirmation of the city as that which is each citizen’s own. But there remains one great difficulty with the body with regard to assigning to each one his or her natural work, and this difficulty is sexual differentiation.

Let us recall, too, that in the healthy city works were “distributed” on the basis of what we called a bodily predetermination or determinism. But the healthy city got around the problem of reproduction by remaining silent about women. In the feverish city, however, women were mentioned and, to that extent, sexual differentiation did come up. One may also add that a city devoted to the pursuit of bodily pleasures cannot be oblivious of the differences between the sexes, for what is generally agreed to be the greatest bodily pleasure of all is inseparable from the use of the organs by which we are differentiated into sexes (in the myriad ways in which human beings have contrived to acquire pleasure from these). Now, the fact is that the guardians grew out of the feverish city. Accordingly, sexual differentiation can no longer be ignored. On the other hand, the selection of the guardians introduced a new standard, for that selection took something other than the body into account. The guardians are selected not so much on the basis of some bodily determination as on the basis of one characteristic of their soul, namely their thumotic nature—and the corollary of this for all the other craftsmen is that they have the capacity to insert into their works some trace of the beautiful (noble), which, again, has more to do with the soul than with the body. In short, as we repeated many times, work superseded the body. Yet, the combination of the introduction of women, on the one hand, and the superseding of each one’s body by each one’s work, on the other, is
especially problematic, for nature’s imprint on the body in the case of sexual differentiation is obviously connected with the performing of one specific work. As it is put in Book V: “the female bears and the male mounts.”

We thus see that the issue over sexual differentiation is a crucial one, because what is at stake is the assertion that human beings have, by nature, one and only one work assigned to them, which is the fundamental premise on which the just city of the Republic is erected. For the case of sexual differentiation raises the possibility that human beings have at least two different works: one which is determined by their animal nature—let us call this their erotic work (the work related to their being erotic beings)—and the other which is determined by their political nature—let us call this second one their artistic work (the work related to their being craftsmen and craftswomen). Once again, this opens up the possibility for a harmonization of these two parts of their being, or at least the affirmation of a hierarchy ordering these two parts, which would be a way of recognizing the legitimate claim made by each of these two parts in us. However, just as was the case with the household, there is no suggestion of a harmonization of these two functions (erga) in Book V. Rather, the sexual differentiation is disregarded as politically irrelevant.

2.1.3.8. The second communist law

On Polemarchus’ initiative, soon joined by Adeimantus, Glaucon, and Thrasymachus, Socrates is forced to expose what he calls the “female drama” (to

126. Republic, 454d10-e1; Bloom’s translation.
gunaikeion [drama]; 451c2) in completion of the male (andreion) one. Since the issue over the place of women in the city came up with regard to the guardians’ way of life, Socrates first returns to the example of dogs and puppies and concludes, on Glaucon’s affirmative answer, that, with respect to guardian dogs (tōn phulakōn kunōn; 451d4), both the male and the female are used for the same works (hunting and guarding the flock). The only difference Glaucon mentions has to do with force: the male are stronger and the female weaker. Second, Socrates and Glaucon agree that if “any animal is to be used for the same [works],” they must receive “the same rearing and education.”127 Accordingly, if women are to be used for “the same [works]”128 in the city as men are, they should receive the same education as well, that is, there should be guardian women. However, since such an assertion would seem “laughable and contrary to custom” (para to ethos geloia; 452a7), the question must be investigated further. We must examine “whether the female human nature (phusis hē anthrōpinē hē thēleia) is capable of sharing in common with the [nature] of the male class (tēi tou arrenos genous) for [the practice of] all works or not for one, or for some [works] yes and for other no, and this particularly with respect to war?”129

As soon as this question is raised, Socrates raises a strong objection against the conclusion which depends upon the analogy between human beings and dogs. Giving voice to that objection, Socrates recalls that it is a principle that they established at the

127. Republic, 451e3-4; the first part of the sentence reads: “for any animal to be used for the same [things]” (epi ta auta chrēstai tīn zōiōi), I supply “works” (erga) as the substantive qualified by “same” (ta auta) for the sake of clarity.
128. Republic, 451e6; cf. the preceding note for the reading of tauta.
129. Republic, 452e6-453a4.
city’s beginning (en arxēi; 453b4) that “each one must perform the one [work] [which is]
for him in accordance with nature.” Following from that, one may add that man and
woman differ completely with regard to their respective natures. Hence the conclusion is
drawn to the effect that “it is suitable to prescribe a different work (allo kai ergon) to
each [man and women] too, which [work would be] in accordance with his [or her]
nature.” To the extent that men and women do not have the same nature, then, there is
no escape from this conclusion.

Yet Socrates contends that they should distinguish the name from that “which is
the form (eidos) of the difference and also of the sameness of nature.” First, Socrates
takes the case of the nature of the bald and that of the longhaired and points out that it
would be laughable to take into account this difference in nature for the assignment of the
work of shoemaking, for instance. The reason is that in building the city “they were
keeping (or guarding: ephulattomen) the form (eidos) of otherness and likeness directed
towards these very same practices (to pros auta teinon to epitēdeumata)”—namely the
practice of all the different arts the city needs. The corollary of this understanding of
nature is that whereas “a medical [man] and a medical [woman] have a soul of the same
nature,” the nature of the soul of “a medical man and [that of] a house-builder [are]
different." It is then as a consequence of the principle that each one’s nature is defined in accordance with the city’s work that Socrates can assert that the fact that “the female bears and the male mounts” should not be considered as an evidence for man’s and woman’s different nature. For according to this principle, the crux of the matter is rather this: if, as Socrates puts it, we cannot find any art or any practice necessary for cities with a view to which the nature of women and men are different, then sexual differentiation is politically irrelevant.

Finally, Socrates provides more evidence for the case for sexual equality in saying that the person who is said to be a “gifted nature for something” (ephuē pros ti; 455b5)—we might as well say for some work (ergon)—is the one for whom, among other qualities, “the things”—but we might as well say the works (erga)—“of the body sufficiently obey the thought” (ta tou somatos hikanōs hupētoi tēi dianoiai; 455b9). This last remark reveals what is at stake in the whole argument in favor of sexual equality. By establishing sexual equality in their city, Socrates and the two brothers uphold an understanding of nature which abstracts from the body and is concerned exclusively with the soul as it is defined by the city, that is, as the place where the arts dwell, so to speak, or as that which enables any human being to perform a certain art and thus makes him or her suited for one specific work in the city. In so doing, they bring about a surprising alliance between nature and art.

135. Republic, 454d5.
136. Republic, 454d10-e1; Bloom’s translation.
2.1.3.9. Sexual equality and the notion of work

Although the arguments favoring sexual equality are accepted by Glaucon, they should not have been accepted so readily. On the other hand, we can easily understand why sexual equality must be established if the city is to come into being. The overarching principle of the just city, its law of laws as we called it, is that each individual is to perform one work only. This requires that each human being has, by nature, only one work. If this were the case, it would be a possibility to create a regime in which everyone actualizes his or her own nature by being assigned to the work that suits him or her by nature. The corollary of such a possibility would be that, to the extent that the regime succeeds in assigning to each individual the work that suits him or her by nature, such a city could dispense with the necessity of coercive and corrective justice. For such a regime would not only be in accordance with nature, but it would bring about the

138. The main objection concerns the impact of pregnancy and nursing on the performing of a specialized or professional work, especially that of war. This objection will come up later on in the last communist law (the communism of children and wives; cf. infra section 2.1.3.11). However, we can already note that the baldness analogy seems to be flawed, for the hair is not an organ and no work is connected to it. A more appropriate analogy would have to consider an organ, say the ears, and a work, say composing music. And the question would consist in knowing whether it makes sense to assign the musical art without any consideration of whether one has a ear for music or not. On the other hand, being bald or having long hair may have some importance with regard to the work of the soldier. Besides, as Craig points out, if some work or occupation involves looking good, then hair seems to be relevant, and bald women are very rare indeed (cf. The War Lover, p.194).

139. Since Socrates, Glaucon and Adeimantus agree to appoint judges in their city (cf. 425d2-3), one cannot but draw the conclusion that there is some sort of corrective justice. However, it has to be noted that they model the judges’ art on the doctors’ art, i.e., the Asclepiads’ way, which is tantamount to a summary justice: just as doctors should let die sick body, the judges should kill those who have a bad nature with respect to their soul (cf. 409e4-410a6). On the other hand, later on they agree to assign the work of judging lawsuits to the rulers (cf. 433e3-5). This makes sense, for the rulers are the ones who assign to each citizen the work that best suits his or her soul, which means that the rulers are those having the art of knowing and distinguishing the souls, and therefore those who are the best for judging the nature of each soul. To that extent, getting rid of the bad-natured souls appears more like a purifying process than like a corrective justice; it seems to be almost an extension of the abortion policy (cf. infra section 2.1.3.11). Be that as it may, Socrates adds that, anyway, the guardians’ education should save the young guardians from needing the judges’ art (cf. 410a7-9). In short, corrective justice is not a central feature of the Republic, especially in comparison with the Laws where the penal code bears greater importance.
fulfilment of individual natures, which is another way of saying that it would make each individual happy. This is the city that is wished and prayed for in the Republic. And this is why sexual differentiation must be suppressed, for it introduces a duality into the idea of nature.

Now, the notion of “work” (ergon) is of course intimately connected with the notion of “one’s own” (oikeion). In the first two laws instantiating the city’s communism, these two notions are somehow disconnected. First, we considered the communism of property and household only with respect to the love of one’s own and without any reference to the notion of work. Second, we turned to the equality of men and women by connecting the two notions, but the discussion of sexual equality in the dialogue focuses exclusively on the notion of work without any consideration of love of one’s own. Yet these two elements merge into one in the last law of this peculiar communism, also called the second wave in Book V, namely, the communism of children and wives. As we will see, the communism of children and wives is the direct outcome of the sexual equality and its establishment causes the destruction of the household or, what comes to the same thing, its enlargement up to the city’s limits. For one must not miss the fact that in the Republic sexual equality goes hand in hand with an attack against, nay, the destruction of, family.

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140. Cf. Republic, 450d1, 456b13, 499c4, and 540d2.
2.1.3.10. Preliminary remarks to the third law

The following considerations may help to move from sexual equality to the household and the family. In the second law, the idea of nature which is manifest in the fact of sexual differentiation was ruled out in favor of the idea of nature which appears in human beings’ artistic activities and those having to do with the crafts. But if we leave aside the case of the guardians for the moment, a distinctive characteristic of craftsmanship is that it is in the nature of the products of crafts to be exchanged. Of course, the good that a craftsman makes is his own, for he is the one who made it, the cause of its existence. But most of what any craftsman produces benefits him only if it is exchanged for something else or sold to someone else. To the extent that it is in the nature of crafted goods to be exchanged, the notion of good and that of one’s own do not perfectly harmonize with one another. On the other hand, the relation of one’s own and the good is much stronger and complex in the case of what human beings produce on account of their sexual differentiation, of what is their work (ergon) as sexual beings, namely children. For as Socrates and Glaucon put it, offspring are produced by human beings due to the “erotic necessities” of “mixing with one another,” i.e., of mixing with people of the other sex. And this erotic necessity also produces a family, a household as the Greeks say (oikos): husband, wife, and children.

Now, the purpose of the third law is precisely to redefine family on the basis of the way in which property was defined at the end of Book III. The “ownership” of children should not hinder the unity of the city just as the ownership of things and wealth

must be arranged so that factions become unlikely, if not altogether impossible. In other words, we do not find in Plato the idea of producing children by means of the arts—something like the “Bokanovsky’s Process” imagined in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*. What we do find, however, is the myth of mankind as an earthborn species. This myth has been expounded by Socrates in what he also calls a noble lie at the end of Book III, but we have also seen this same myth in another guise in the *Statesman*, namely the myth of the Cronus. Yet, the objective is the same: to free the individual from his attachment to his own family so that he can be defined on the basis of his work alone and thus occupy the political position that suits him without any consideration of his parents, siblings, and children. For as the pain of Priam at the loss of his son illustrates, parents experience the fate of their children, in large part at least, as their own.

### 2.1.3.11. The third communist law

Let us now resume with where we left in Book V. Since nature has been defined with a view to each one’s capacity of acquiring and practicing an art, Socrates says that the law about the equality of the sexes with regard to assigning works has been instituted “in accordance with nature.” Regarding the women who have a guardian soul, then, it follows from the law that they must perform the same work as the male guardians and in common with them, namely the art of war, except that, just as is the case with female dogs, women should have a lighter part of this work on account of “the weakness of their

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class” (tēn tou genous astheneian; 457a10). Now, among the duties that the work of guarding the city entails is military duty, which, in turn, includes gymnastic education. And practicing gymnastics means being naked. Accordingly, Socrates says that the women guardians “must take off their cloths” (apoduteon; 457a6). Of course, this “has to be done in common” (koinōnēteon; 457a7) with men and when both sexes are in their late teens, for the core of gymnastic education takes place during the two to three years before they turn twenty.144 We can thus imagine a city in which the most promising teenagers of both sexes spend most of their day naked, running and wrestling with each other. It is then all too natural that, on the basis of the “erotic necessity” Glaucon will soon mention, that the next subject be wives and children.

The third communist law stipulates: “That all these women [guardians] be common to all these men [guardians], and no one woman cohabit with no one man in private; and that children be common too, and that no parent know his own offspring nor a child [his] parent.”145 Postponing the question of the possibility (dunata; 458b3) of such law, Socrates will discuss first “how” (pōs: 458b4) such a law can be arranged and why this law would be “the most advantageous of all” (tantōn sumphorōtata; 458b5) for both the city and the guardians.

As for the first part, the way in which the law can be enacted, three things are distinguished: marriage, nursing of children, and sexual relations not aiming at procreation. The need for a legislation about marriage comes out of the need of putting

145. Republic, 457c10-d3.
some order into “the natural necessity” (anagkēs [...] tēs emphutou; 458d2-3) driving both sexes “to mix with one another,” what Glaucon names, as we mentioned above, the erotic necessity. Socrates might first appear to elevate this erotic necessity by making it the matter for a “sacred marriage” (gamous [...] hierous; 458e3), but the god he invokes is the beneficial (ōphelon; cf. 458e4), which, as it turns out, reveals itself most efficiently in the breeding of hunting animals. For what is manifest with animal breeding is that the breeding concerns above all the best animals (aristoi; cf. 459a12) when they are in their prime (akmazontōn; 459b3). Similarly, therefore, the best men among the guardians should have sexual intercourse with the best of the women guardians as often as possible, whereas it should be the opposite for sexual intercourse between “the most ordinary ones” (tous phaulatatous; 459d8). In contrast to animals, however, human beings cannot achieve a beneficial result without being manipulated toward that end by the rulers by

146. Socrates’ description of the situation unravels the paradoxical use of nature in the communist legislation taken as a whole, for he intimates to Glaucon that he has to select women for the guardians on the basis of their “similar nature” (homophueis; 458e8). But while these men and women are living, eating, practicing, and even sleeping always in common, another form of nature comes out, which has more to do with their heterogeneity than with their homogeneity. In other words, whereas the intent of the whole political undertaking is to gather the same with the same, for the same is naturally the friend of the same, the reality is that opposites also attract each other. Let us note, by the way, that if sometimes Socrates says that it is their city and that they are the legislators (cf. 374d6), here he attributes this role only to Glaucon: “You [...] their legislator [...]” (458b9). As for Glaucon, he makes a fine distinction between geometrical necessity and erotic necessity (ou geōmetrikais [..] all’ erōtikai anagkai; 458d5). For this is a fine way of differentiating the homogeneous from the heterogeneous: the necessity governing the geometrical entities, for instance, follows from the sameness of their nature (it follows from the exclusive consideration of their own being), whereas the necessity governing any animal (and thus at least one of the necessities governing human beings) follows from the otherness of their nature (it follows from the fact that these natures are inner-divided in two sexes and thus marked by otherness from within). To the extent that arts are understood in a Parmenidian sense, as we put it earlier, the necessity governing any craftsman is akin to the geometrical necessity (following from the nature of the shoemaker is that he does nothing else than producing shoes, just like it follows from the nature of the triangle that the sum of its three angles is 180°). On the other hand, erotic necessity seems to be less predictable or less circumscribed, for even though its direct outcome is the begetting of offspring, it is not pursued only, and perhaps not even primarily, for that reason. Some evidence of this is given, first, in the fact that marital law must be instituted in order to orient erōs most efficiently toward that end and, second, in the fact that sexual intercourse is pursued even after the time of procreation.
means of “a throng of lies and deceptions for the benefit of the ruled.”

Marriages are then celebrated in common during some sort of sacred festivals, the number of marriages being determined by the number of “men” the city needs and the selection of the grooms being made on the basis of fixed lots favoring the best ones and, also, as a privilege rewarding excellence at war or elsewhere. These marriages, as it were, are not lifelong commitments but, to the contrary, mere events which can be repeated many times with different women for the best male guardians. “Marriage,” in short, is the word for the action of having sexual intercourse with a view to procreation; and on the basis of what is said in that part of the Republic, we may wonder if the actual performing of the act is not also public, the culmination of the religious festival as it were.

Now that the conditions for the production of excellent children have been set down, Socrates turns briefly to the nursing of these young babies. First, in accordance with the gender-blind specialization on the basis of the arts (which again, is the second communist law), it is not the work of the natural mother to nurse her baby, but rather, there is a sort of public pen for human babies on the model of those used for animal

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147. Republic, 459c8-d1; Bloom’s translation.
148. Strangely enough, Socrates mentions only the city’s need of men (andrōn; 460a4) and not of women. One may say that this oversight hints at the fact that a perfect control of birth would require a control of the sex of the offspring to be begotten.
149. Again, the fact that marriages seem to be instituted only for the reproducing of the male guardians’ virtue points to a fundamental difference between men and women. On the basis of the second law, the law on sexual equality with respect to work, it was accepted that both man and woman can excel in their own craft. Now, to preserve this virtue for the guardians, the third law arranges things so that the best guardians can have many children. But this, of course, works out well only for men who do not have to bear their own children inside themselves for nine months and, more often than not, only one at the time. Therefore, it follows from that that an excellent female guardian cannot have many children without ceasing to be a guardian and becoming a constantly pregnant women (with all the effect that pregnancy has on the body). In addition, the idea that one excellent male guardian should get many different women guardians pregnant presupposes that essentially only the virtues of the male pass on to the baby. Of course, this also runs counter to the second law which stipulates that the gender difference has no effect on virtue and excellence in one art or another. Again, then, the silence on women points to the impracticability of these measures.
breeding where specialized nurses take care of them. But since it is the natural mothers who produce the milk for their baby, it is also the work of the public pen nurses to invent devices preventing the nursing mother from “recognizes her own [children].” This is, of course, only for the healthy children of the best guardians, for those of worse parents or those who are deformed won’t be taken there; in all likelihood they will be killed.

And these are not the only babies the city will get rid of, for all the offspring who have been begotten without having been sanctified by a marriage are cursed, even if their parents are distinguished citizens. In addition, since these marriage ceremonies are restricted to men at their physical prime—up to age fifty five—and to women from the ages of twenty to forty, it would be unlawful to beget offspring at any other age.

Accordingly, any offspring whose parents (or at least one of them) are of an age outside of this range would not be recognized by the city. Thus, the work of producing offspring does not belong to the natural parents but to the rulers of the city. As rulers, they must,

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151. All this section on breast-feeding is naturally connected to a work which is specific to the woman’s body and Socrates recalls in the middle of it that, according to their second law, the care of babies, as any other work, should be a common business of both men and women whose soul is suited for the work.
152. Republic, 460d1.
153. Cf. Republic, 460b8-9: the nurses “will hide away [these babies] in a unspeakable and unseen place” (Bloom’s translation), which seems to be an euphemism for “kill,” for no one will feed them in this place (cf. 461c6-7; in all likelihood this refers to the same place). Noting that the communism put forward in Book V “entails the abolition of the natural family, and acceptance of polygamy, incest, and infanticide,” Craig asks the sensible question: “do men and women find these practices equally attractive or repugnant?” (The War Lover, p. 220). With respect to infanticide at least, we recall that in the Symposium (but see also Republic, 467a10-b1 and Theaetetus, 151c4-5) Diotima says that all animals, including human beings, have a strong inclination to protect their own offspring against death and she adds that even “the weakest are prepared to join battle with the strongest on their offspring’s behalf and even die for them” (207b3-4; C.J. Rowe’s translation). This may point to the females, for they are often said to be physically weaker than males. On the basis of all this, is it not sensible to draw the conclusion that the fact that women bear their own children inside their own body should have crucial impact on the thumotic part of their soul?
first, maintain the constancy of the city’s form or being throughout its coming-into-being by assigning to each one his or her natural work. Second, the rulers must replace the citizens who die by new ones of the same nature and in exact same number. In such a way, the city should resist the alteration caused by time and stay exactly the same.

The consequence of all this is that sexual intercourse is restricted by the political and religious laws only to the extent that it is related to the begetting of children. For, to repeat, “marriage” means only this in the beautiful city: a public religious ceremony arranged by the political rulers which aims at producing new citizens of specific natures and in a specific number. On the other hand, as long as sexual intercourse is divorced from procreation, the city has no objection to make to it. Accordingly, citizens who are too old to take part in these marriage festivals can enjoy “sexual intercourse freely” (eleutherous autous suggignesthai hōi an ethelōsi; 461b10-c1). And if a pregnancy would ever occur, abortion is to be expected, for the law prescribes the death of the unsanctified offspring anyway.155 The only restriction on this sexual freedom is a prohibition against incest. But since no one is to know his or her natural family, the definition of family is purely conventional. Whenever a marriage festival occurs, which includes many couples, all the children born from the seventh to tenth month after this peculiar festival are “declared” (arrena; 461d4) to be the sons and the daughters of all the men and women who took part in the festival. Accordingly, it would be prohibited for these men and women to have sexual intercourse with these children when they get older, and vice

versa. This, one may grant, makes some sense. However, the same applies to the designation of brother and sister. Now this poses a problem, for natural brothers and sisters are separated from at least the time they are seven to ten months old. In other words, far from prohibiting incest among siblings, the conventional way of designating family bonds does exactly the opposite: it makes it lawful. 

This is hardly an accident. For the purpose of the third communist law is precisely to make of all the citizens one big family, so that “with anyone [a citizen] would happen to meet, he would believe (nomizei) meeting like (hōs) a brother, or like (hōs) a sister, or like (hōs) a father, or like (hōs) a mother, or a son, or a daughter, or their descendants or ancestors.” The motive behind this is that the city should be the single and unique object of the citizens’ love of their own. Accordingly, when Socrates turns to the last point of the third law, the advantage of it for both the city and the citizens, he in fact concludes the whole section on communism by spelling out the key issue underlying every part of it: the problem of “one’s own.”

157. Accordingly, the prohibition of marriage between siblings, understood according to convention is very loose, for it can be overturned by the priests if the lot ever happens to select brother and sister and the priests concur with it (cf. 461e2-3). But since the lot are fixed by the rulers, such a selection would have been willed by the city. As for the tacit acceptance of incest, Bloom notes that the very term for “sacred marriage” (gamous hierous; 458e3) designated “the marriage of Zeus and Hera […], and it was celebrated in many Greek cities including Athens. They were, of course, brother and sister” (note 18, p.459; cf. also note 21). As it is stipulated, the law would prohibit incest only in the case of twins.
158. Republic, 463e5-7.
2.1.3.12. Making the city’s one and one’s own

First, Socrates recalls what they agreed on in Book IV: “the greatest good (meizon agathon) [for a city] is that which binds it together as well as makes it one.”\(^{159}\) But he adds that “the community of pleasure and pain” (hē ēdonēs te kai lupēs koinōnia; 462b4) is that which binds a city together. And the community of pleasure and pain occurs when all the citizens, as much as possible, are rejoiced or pained by “the same things” (tōn autōn; 462b5, and b9). But what hinders such a community of pain and pleasure from occurring is “the privacy” (idiōsis; 462b8) of these sentiments for whatever happens to the city and to those who live inside the city. The root cause of all this is the fact that citizens, although dwelling in the same city, do not utter phrases such as “my own” (to emon) and “not my own” (to ouk emon) at the same time and for the same things.\(^{160}\) Once the root or fundamental cause of the city’s dissensions has been identified, that is, the cause of the fact that cities are “many instead of one,”\(^{161}\) which is agreed to be “the greatest evil for a city,”\(^{162}\) Socrates and Glaucon can therefore agree on the principle that “in whatever city most [of the citizens] say ‘my own’ (to emon) and ‘not my own’ (to ouk emon) about this same [thing] in the same way (epi to auto kata tauta touto), this very [city] is the best administered (dioikeitai).”\(^{163}\)

\(^{159}\) Republic, 462b1-2.
\(^{160}\) Cf. Republic, 462c3-5.
\(^{161}\) Cf. Republic, 462b1
\(^{162}\) Cf. Republic, 462a9.
\(^{163}\) Republic, 462c7-8.
Although Socrates uses as a model for such a city the human body, the problem of “one’s own” (to emon) has more to do with the family than with the body. As Socrates explains, when there are many families cohabiting in one city, “one [man] drags off to his own house (tēn heautou oikian) whatever he can acquire apart from the others, and another one [drags it] to his own both different wealth (tēn heautou heteran ousian), and different wife and children also, making pleasures and grief private, since they are private [people].” But such dissensions would disappear “so to speak by themselves” (ex autōn hōs epos eipein; 464d8), if the condition for these, namely the household and family, are not present. If the cause is removed, the effect disappears. Since this is precisely the purpose of the communist laws, there should be no dissension among the beautiful city’s citizens and they all should live in peace with one another just as family members should do.

To conclude the communist legislation, Socrates brings back the two main problems related to guardians. There is first of all the issue of their happiness which was raised by Adeimantus at the beginning of Book IV. Socrates now uses the fact that the guardians live in a city at peace with itself (i.e., without having to compromise with factions) and are free from all the burdens of private life (i.e., the need to provide for food and house, and to care about children’s education, and all the petty worries of private life), in addition to the fact that they are honored by the city, to conclude that their life is

164. Cf. Republic, 464ab2, but this refers to 462c10-d2 and this passage is not easy to understand for Socrates speaks of “the whole community in accordance with which is brought together the body with the soul in one arrangement, the [arrangement] of the ruler” (pasa hē koinōnia hē kata to sōma pros tēn psuchēn tetamenē eis mian suntaxin tēn tou archontos). It is this community which “feels within itself [the pain] (en autēi ēistheto)” and in which “all is in pain together with the afflicted part as a whole (holē),”

165. Republic, 464c8-d3.
“nobler and better”\textsuperscript{166} and even “more blessed”\textsuperscript{167} than that of the Olympic victors. But the capital difficulty with the guardians, the one that prompted all these communist laws, was the difficulty of ensuring that the guardians would not betray their city and fellow citizens in order to, as Socrates puts it here, “appropriate (\textit{oikeiousthai}) everything in the city with their power.”\textsuperscript{168} But now, not only are there no places where the guardians could hoard wealth and possessions (namely, private houses), but more importantly even the motive to do so should be nonexistent, for there are no loved ones who could benefit from their power and wealth apart from the whole community. And the complete explanation of this point brings together the two notions of work and one’s own.

In the final pages treating the last communist law, Socrates asks Glaucon if the law will require that each citizen considers the other citizens as family members by naming them so or if the law will also require from them “the performing of all the actions in accordance with their names” (\textit{tas praxeis pasa kata ta onomata prattein}; 463d1). Regarding parents, these actions include: shame (\textit{aidous}; 463d2), obedience (\textit{hupēkoon}; 463d3), and providing for them (\textit{kēdemonias}; 463d3). And Glaucon answers: “It would be ridiculous if they only mouthed, without the works (\textit{ergōn}), the names of their own (\textit{oikeia}).”\textsuperscript{169} Because caring about one’s own requires specific works, the equation of that which is really the guardians’ own with the city is the ultimate guarantee

\textsuperscript{166} \textit{Republic}, 466a9. \\
\textsuperscript{167} \textit{Republic}, 465d2-3. \\
\textsuperscript{168} \textit{Republic}, 466c1. \\
\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Republic}, 463e1-2; Bloom translates: “It would be ridiculous if they only mouthed, without deeds, the name of kinship,” which is more understandable. I altered his translation in order to stress the two notions of “work” and “one’s own.”
that the performing of the work, namely the use of force, will always be for the city’s benefit.

2.1.3.13. The analogy with dyeing

The communism ends with the third law about children and wives. This is not, however, the end of Book V, for another wave awaits the interlocutors: the introduction of the philosopher-ruler. There is no need to go over the philosophers’ case again here. But in comparing what has already been said about the philosophers with what is now being said about the guardians, we can conclude this discussion by addressing the problem of the “oneness” analogy. First, the city is one in the inclusive sense of one: it has many parts but these parts are so harmonized to create one entity which is a whole and not simply a sum of things. In this way, we can talk of the city’s own, which is nothing other than or exterior to itself: the city. The citizens, on the other hand, are one in the restrictive and exclusive sense of one: they perform one and only one work. Accordingly, what is the citizen’s own is nothing other than the performance of his work, which benefits one thing: the city. But in contrast to the philosophers, the guardians do not accept this because they understand the necessity and the justice of such devotion. The guardians accept that they ought, nay, they desire to devote their lives to the city because they believe that the goodness of the city is necessarily bound to and even

170. Although we will speak only of the guardians, we shall keep in mind Aristotle’s observation about the Republic’s communism, namely that, in order to work well, the assignment of works on the basis of the nature of each one’s soul requires that not only the guardians’ children but that of all the craftsmen should be common, for if this were not case, the transfer of craftsmen’s children to the guardian class would arouse the parents’ love of their own children; cf. Politics, 1262b24-29 (with Republic, 423c7-d2).
indistinguishable from their own goodness. For the guardians, taking care of their “own” is nothing other and thus nothing more than taking care of the city by performing their own work. And there is no tension in their soul on that matter, because the possibility of feeling it has been removed.

In Book IV, Socrates explains to the brothers what they have been doing with the guardians by means of an analogy. Discussing the virtue of courage, i.e., the guardians’ characteristic virtue, Socrates uses the analogy with dyeing to explain to Glaucon what they just did and what they will soon resume doing in a more radical way. Courage, as he puts it, is “[the preserving (sôtērian)] of the opinion, generated by the law [and transmitted] through education, about the frightening things.”\(^\text{171}\) Preserving this opinion means roughly the same thing here as at the end of Book III: preserving it against pain, pleasure, desire, and fear. And we also recall that at the end of Book III, the opinion in question is that which equates one’s own good with that of the city.\(^\text{172}\) For one fears what threatens one’s own, so that the opinion generated by the law about what is to be feared is equivalent to the opinion about what constitutes one’s own good. Now, Socrates is willing (ethelō) to compare the way in which this opinion is preserved to what, according to him, it is most like (homoion).\(^\text{173}\) To do so, Socrates turns to the art of dyeing and points out that the dyer, before undertaking the dyeing of any cloth, makes the cloth as white as possible, so that the dyeing can fully adhere to the cloth and be indelible. And he immediately adds: “we were, in accordance with our power, working such a thing too

\(^{171}\) Republic, 429b7-8.

\(^{172}\) Cf. Republic, 412d2-7 and supra section 2.1.3.4.

\(^{173}\) Cf. Republic, 429d2.
when we selected the soldiers (tous stratiōtas) and educated them in music and gymnastic.”¹⁷⁴

This is said in Book IV. On the basis of our complete view of the guardians’ education, which now includes the three communist laws, we can suggest the following interpretation. Human beings have a natural love for what is their own. Yet, this love can take different colours,¹⁷⁵ so to speak, because it has many contenders: one’s own body, one’s own family, one’s own city, and one’s own gods.¹⁷⁶ Now, in the Republic, the city’s unity and the citizens’ psychological unity are created by means of stripping off or, to pursue the metaphor, by means of washing off the citizens all other bonds except that one which ties them to their city, namely their work. In this way, their love of their own can be given fully to the city, for they have nothing as their own except the city.

2.1.4. Justice and love of one’s own: the hidden pillar of the Republic
2.1.4.1. The separating and compounding sides of the political art

According to the Stranger from Elea in the Statesman, any art makes use of two overarching arts: the art of separating and the art of compounding.¹⁷⁷ Since we have left the Statesman, the purpose of our inquiry has been to gain a better understanding of the compounding aspect of the political art, which we rephrased as the problem of

¹⁷⁴ Republic, 429e7-430a1.
¹⁷⁵ If one pushes the metaphor one step further, one may also recall that the distinctive feature of the democratic regime is that it is “many-colored” (poikilon; 557c5, 558c5, 561e4).
¹⁷⁶ For the gods, cf. Republic, 470e9-10; there Socrates suggests that the guardians should consider Greece as their own (oikeian) too, because they share in common the same cult (hierōn) with the other Greeks, that is, the same gods.
¹⁷⁷ Cf. Statesman, 282b6-7.
harmonizing the goods. We have now enough material for attempting a general statement on the Republic about this question.

The first impression we have upon reading the Republic is that everything happens just as if the art of separating, the assignment of one work to each one, were sufficient for bringing about the political compounding, that is, the political and psychological harmonization and unification of the citizens into one city. But this first impression is partially misleading. For, to use the words of the Statesman once more, the political weaving that we see taking place in the Republic really does make use of the two great arts of separating and of compounding. On the one hand, the citizens are separated by means of assigning one specific work to each specific “nature” (that is, the individual nature of each one with regard to the arts), and, on the other, they get compounded by means of enlarging and restricting each citizen’s love of one’s own to the same and unique object: the city. If, as we endeavoured to show, this is really what happens in the Republic, the dialogue redirects the problem of understanding what provides the unity to the political art toward an investigation of what is one’s “own.”

2.1.4.2. The last account

We have already repeated the city’s story of the Republic several times from several points of view. But we believe that it will not be redundant to offer another, and final, account of that story. Of course, for this last account, the main thread of the story will be the notion of “one’s own.” To anticipate, we may say that, with respect to the
issue of “one’s own,” the *Republic* shows how human beings can rise above the concern for their body and those things which are related to their body: household and family.

The story begins with an old man asserting that justice, which is understood as giving back to others what is owed to them, benefits one’s own in the afterlife. There is already some sort of paradox in this first assertion, for although the “own” which is to be benefited in the afterlife cannot simply be said to be limited to the body—the benefit should come after the death of one’s own body—what is understood to be one’s own does not really reach beyond the egoistic consideration of oneself. As proof of this, one can point out that giving back what belongs to others is not, in every circumstance, beneficial for them, so that respecting others’ property may appear not to be a real consideration of the good of others. In short, other people do not really seem to be included in the sphere of one’s own on the basis of Cephalus’ assertion. This is why, then, this understanding of justice is altered in favor of an understanding of justice as benefiting one’s own friends and harming one’s own enemies. The distinction between friends and enemies enlarges the sphere of one’s own, but it is insufficient for defining justice because it does not specify how friends can be benefited. Thus, the new definition of justice corrects the flaw of the first one but loses what gave to the first its efficiency. To the extent that justice is understood as enlarging the sphere of one’s own, it requires two elements: it must include more than oneself in the sphere of one’s own (i.e., the consideration of the good of others) and to be just, one must know how to benefit these other persons (i.e., must have the means to do them good). Whereas in the first definition the means of conferring benefits were quite obvious—Cephalus has money and money is
the only thing he needs—but others were not clearly thought to be included in the sphere of one’s own, in the second definition the consideration of others as one’s own is obvious—Polemarchus distinguishes between friends and enemies—but the means of benefiting them remain somehow in the dark.

Now, the difficulty peculiar to the second definition turns the focus to the arts, for the arts are obviously beneficial insofar as they enable one who has expertise to produce some good. Yet, although the arts produce useful things, which are potentially good things, the problem with the arts is that their sphere of action, that is, the sphere in which the arts are useful for one’s own, is not defined or limited by the arts themselves. Accordingly, the arts can be looked at from two different perspectives: the expertise they give to someone (deinos) and the good they produce (ergon).

From the point of view of expertise, arts enable one to both produce a good (say health) and to hinder the production of a good or to produce something bad (say poisoning). What is most readily striking in that alternative is the possibility of harming others, and this easily leads to the idea of tricking and deceiving others for one’s own benefit. Accordingly, seen as being kinds of expertise, the arts lead to the suggestion of a restrictive notion of the one’s own: egoism or the own restricted to the individual. It is true that nothing forbids any expertise from being used for the benefit of a group, say a family or a whole city, but since nothing in the expert’s expertise makes him necessarily concerned with the good of others, we may say that expertise makes us focus instead on the limits within which the “own” is confined, which limits tend to shrink to the self as delimited by one’s own body. From this perspective, then, friendship has thus become
problematic as it has been eclipsed by the clever man who knows how to use others’
credulity for his own and private advantage.

But as soon as this perspective is reached in its full meaning—as it is by
Thrasymachus—that is, when the ultimate art is understood as the intellectual expertise
of getting the better (*pleonexia*) of everyone for one’s own benefit, it is possible to bring
to the fore the other perspective on the arts, that which looks at the arts from the point of
view of their work. For in the precise sense of the word, the craftsman is defined by what
he produces: his own work (*ergon*). It is because he produces a good, creating it out of
other material as a new being for human benefit, that he is called a craftsman. Just as
apple trees produce apples, shoemakers produce shoes; and just as the good apple tree
produces good apples, the good shoemaker produces good shoes. Yet the problem with
that perspective is that it looks only at the product of the craft and what is one’s own is
somehow eclipsed by the good. For we may ask: who benefits from good shoes—just as
we may ask who or what benefits from the apple tree’s good apples? The shoes must be
someone’s shoes, and yet it is not clear whether this someone should be the shoemaker’s
own relative, friend, fellow citizen, simply his customers, or even the wealthier among
his customers.

In short, the two understanding of the arts lead to two opposite understanding of
what is one’s own. From the perspective which sees arts as kinds of expertise, the
substance of one’s own appears to be limited and restricted. From the perspective which
is attentive to the work which the arts produce, the substance of one’s own appears to be
enlarged and unlimited.
This is, then, another way of explaining the initial puzzle of the *Republic*. Because justice presupposes a concern for the good of other human beings, it is genuine to the extent that these other human beings are included in the sphere of one’s own (Polemarchus) and it is credible to the extent that the just man has the means to benefit them (Cephalus). Meeting the second requirement leads to a consideration of the arts, for in order to do good to one’s own, one needs some expertise. But, to repeat, the expertise derived from the arts enables one to do both, good and evil, and thus tends to restrict the sphere of the own. As for the work of any art, it is surely a good, but at the same time it does not provide any clear limit on the sphere in which the good will be beneficial—on what is thought to be one’s own. The whole problem, therefore, boils down to this: finding a way of reconciling the notion of one’s own (*oikeion*) with that of work (*ergon*). And this is also what the general problem with justice leads to, for to the extent that not all men are just, justice appears to be some sort of work performed by the just man, and this work is assumed to be, like the work of any art, to be some good thing. But just as is the case for the work of any art, it is not obvious who benefits from the just man’s work. If, then, it is possible to reconcile the performing of some work with the good of one’s own, it would seem to match the two requirements of justice, as these first came to sight through the assertions of Cephalus and Polemarchus.

On that basis it may even be possible to understand the assumption of the *Republic* according to which the work of justice is easier to see in a city than in a man. To the extent that the problem of the goodness of justice appears to be similar to that of the goodness of the arts, if it is possible to create a city in which performing an art benefits
one’s own, the understanding of which is both *enlarged* and *limited*, then this would seem to indicate that such a city fulfills the requirements of justice. Accordingly, the first city is a city of craftsmen.

But prior to being a city of craftsmen, the first city stands for one specific understanding of one’s own: what is truly one’s own is the body. This understanding of one’s own is no doubt limited, but it can also be enlarged, because even though each individual has but one body, the needs of each body are common to all. Accordingly, the body’s own needs, that is, the needs of each one limited to each one’s body, are not restricted to each individual body. In such a city, the specific individuality of each human being is not so much rooted in the body’s needs (which are all common) as in the predisposition of each individual to the practice one art. Therefore, to the extent that the works of all the arts are destined and thus restricted to producing the goods that satisfy these specific needs common to all, a coincidence between the work of each one and the “own” shared by everyone is possible. This presupposes a specialization on the basis of the arts, so that each individual will perform one work only, but since each work will fully satisfy one bodily need, the community of all these works, that is, the community of all these craftsmen, will then benefit each craftsman’s own, namely, his one own body.

Since, then, the city’s fundamental affirmation is that the body is what is truly each person’s own and, as a consequence, the body’s goodness (health) is the true human good, there is a clear limit to the craftsman’s work. The purpose of the shoemaker is not to create any kind of shoes, but the shoes that will best satisfy the body’s need for shoes. One may say that in such a city, any man has a twofold nature, for any man is both a
craftsman and a needy body. To determine which nature is the more important is to
determine what is truly one’s own. And this, to repeat, is expressed in the name of the
city: the healthy city asserts that arts are subservient to health. Only by making such an
assertion, which is of a piece with establishing a hierarchy in man’s nature, can the city
be said to be just.

This deserves to be stressed: it is the understanding for which the city stands that
sets limits to the arts and their works. For arts can produce many more things than those
which are present in this first city: shoemaking, to keep to the same example, can produce
high-heeled shoes. Why would the best shoemaker refrain from making the best high-
heeled shoes, those that will make the beauty of feminine legs best stand out? Why would
no shoemaker see this as his own work? The answer is simple. The work of any art is to
benefit what is truly one’s own, and this city is presented in such a way as to make us
consider the body as what is truly one’s own. The body’s true good is health, which is
different from the body’s beauty; after all, good looking high-heeled shoes do not seem to
be good with respect to the health of the feet. The body’s needs are common, which
means, among other things, that in that respect sexual differentiation is irrelevant. For
with respect to the body’s needs, there is no difference of nature among human beings but
only of degree: men may need bigger shoes than women, but the same shoes nonetheless,
more or less of the same kind of food (say proteins, lipids, carbohydrates, vitamins, etc.),
and the same kind of clothes besides the fact that men tend to have bigger shoulders and
women bigger hips. Once what is understood to be truly one’s true own has been
restricted to the body’s needs, the works of the arts find their sphere of action.
On the basis of this first city, then, it seems possible to say that the problem of the arts can be easily resolved. If a clear and limited understanding of one’s own could be accepted by all the men living in a city as appears to be the case in this first city, the works of the arts can benefit oneself along with others. And this would seem to meet the requirements of justice too, for in the city composed of craftsmen everyone has the means for benefiting their own, which, understood as the human body, is both enlarged and limited. Now, the only difference between justice and the arts is that justice makes the claim about what truly belong to a human being: clogs rather than high heels are of benefit to what is genuinely one’s own. And here some problems with this first city come to the fore. First of all, everything happens just as if what is human beings’ true own were self-evident—or at least as if it were self-evident at the origin of the city—and that the fulfilment of it would not require any effort apart from the learning of a specific art or trade. That is, it would require no moral effort whatsoever. This can be seen in the fact that, although we use this expression to make the working of the healthy city manifest, the city does not have to make any claim about what truly belongs to a human being. To put it another way, this city is presented as a city purely in deed, without needing any kind of speech whatsoever for what the city stands for. This in turn leads to the second difficulty, for the definition of what is truly one’s own for which the city stands reduces human nature to less than what is truly good for human beings. To the extent that health is not the sumnum bonum, pleasure and beauty must be taken into account as well.

In short, the problem with the first political solution is that it abstracts from the soul and thus reduces what is one’s own to something less than human. The passage from
what is one’s own understood in a limited fashion as one’s own body (i.e., the understanding of the healthy city) to the understanding of one’s own as something which reaches the soul (the understanding of the feverish city) is not easy to explain. We may however suggest this at least.

Ultimately, what is one’s own has to be understood in terms of one’s own nature. For something that benefits what is one’s own should benefit one’s nature also, in the sense that fulfilling one’s nature is the same thing as being happy. Now, one’s own nature seems first of all to be revealed in what one desires or loves rather than in what one needs. This may first appear paradoxical if, as we just asserted, needs are more homogeneous and thus more common than desires. Yet this can best be shown on the basis of the action of the Republic rather than on the basis of the argument; on the basis of what it shows rather than what it tells. Adeimantus likes the healthy city because it suits his nature. But this is not true for Glaucon. Accordingly, Glaucon’s intervention in Book II is a good example of an affirmation of one’s own soul claiming for itself what it desires and loves. To Adeimantus, for whom health is probably the best example of a good which is good for itself,¹⁷⁸ the healthy city is a very good city indeed. But to Glaucon, for whom pleasure rather than health is the best example of a good which is good for itself,¹⁷⁹ the true and healthy city has nothing really attractive to it. Glaucon wants more than a simple life, however healthy and peaceful. In short, the nature of each is more revealed in the contrast between Adeimantus taking “pleasure” in or somehow

¹⁷⁸. Cf. Republic, 367d1; notice the emphasis Adeimantus puts on health with the use of the particle dē.
desiring rustic common meals à la Sparta and Glaucon taking pleasure in and desiring fancy and sophisticated food than in the fact that Adeimantus needs, say, three apples in order to be healthy whereas Glaucon needs only two. Of course, human nature has to be one thing, but the multiplicity and heterogeneity of human desires may nevertheless be more conducive to this one nature than the homogeneity of their needs. Although this is not a complete account of human nature and would require many qualifications, the movement from needs (the healthy city) to desires (the feverish city) leads us to the conclusion that bodily pleasures are more connected to the soul than are bodily needs, and that the soul is more one’s own than the body. Of course, saying that bodily desires are an expression of the soul is something strange, if not contradictory. The tension inherent in this assertion is best seen at the political level by considering a city devoted to bodily desires (the feverish city).

The city devoted to bodily desires still promotes an understanding of one’s own limited to the body. However, since the desiring part of the body is now taken into account, one may say that the understanding of one’s own has been enlarged. Yet, the

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180. The question is raised in Book IV: “Do we act in each [occasion] [on the basis of] this same [thing in our soul] or, if there are three [parts in our soul], [do we act in] a different [way] [on the basis of] a different [part]; do we learn with one, become spirited with another [of the parts] in us, and again [is it] with some third one [that] we desire the pleasures of nourishment and generation, as well as all their kin, or do we act with the soul as a whole in each of these [occasions], whenever we feel a surge (hormēsōmen)?” (436a8-b2). In Book IV, the conclusion is that there are three parts of the soul. Ultimately, however, it seems that there should be only one object to the soul’s desire, but its elusiveness or complexity may account for the diversity of human desires; cf. Republic, 505d11-e3: “Now this is what (ho) every soul pursues and for the sake of which it does everything, divining that it is something (apomanteuomenē ti éinai), but being at a loss about it and unable to get a sufficient grasp of just what it is, or to have a stable trust (pistei) such as it has about the rest” (Bloom’s translation slightly altered). It is with this singular demonstrative pronoun (ho) that Socrates makes the transition between the good things (agatha; 505d7), of which human beings truly seek to know what they are (ta onta zētousin; 505d8) and are not satisfied with the mere opinion about them, and the good (first mentioned by Socrates at 505a2, b3, b6), which he will compare to the child (ekgonos te tou agathou; 506e3) of the sun (cf. 508a7 and 508b12-c2).
outcome of this enlargement is that the own has become somehow limitless. The works of all the arts can satisfy the bodily desires, but since these desires are heterogeneous and unlimited—especially in “the unlimited accumulation of money” (chrēmatōn ktēsin apeiron; 373d9-10) as the means for satisfying all possible desires—no harmony can be achieved between the arts and the desires. And because bodily desires have no limit, one’s own has not limit, and neither does the city: it is expansive. And since the object of the city’s expansion is contested (land and raw material), its expansiveness in fact requires aggressiveness.

The aggressiveness that bodily desires lead to is the hiatus in the city’s dynamics; it is the element that makes of this kind of city, and the understanding of one’s own that it stands for—in the Republic at least—some sort of isotope: a short-lived element sustained by human effort only. The understanding of one’s own that the city stands for is restricted to bodily desires, but the way in which the city stands for it is by the use of force and violence, and those whose work is to use force on the city’s behalf cannot simply conceive their own on the basis of the city’s understanding, i.e., as limited to bodily desires. The work of fighting for the city thus leads to a redefinition of the own, which is both a purgation and an enlargement of it.

The purgation of the city devoted to the pursuit of bodily pleasures occurs, then, because the work of fighting for the city is not pleasant for the body. Accordingly, the work of fighting requires a new definition of what is one’s own. And if we accept that military duty has to be the work of one category of men only, that is, those whose nature is such that they somehow perceive something beneficial for their own in the activity of
fighting, the purgation of the city is radical. In such a purged city, one’s own is understood as simply identical with the performance of one’s work, so that nature and art perfectly coincide, and so do the soul (as the place where the arts dwell) and the city (as the place where arts can be actualized). But in order to uphold this understanding of one’s own, a specific education must be dispensed and a way of life enforced. This new education, divided into musical and gymnastic education, suggests a new religion, a new orientation for human desires toward the noble, a new way of honoring service, and a new definition of citizenship. The common element in these new measures is that they all place great value on the attachment to one’s own work and to one’s own city and on the detachment from one’s own body, one’s own family, and one’s own possessions. As for the way of life imposed on the city’s soldiers—which cannot but have a radical effect on the whole citizenry as well—it enforces the city’s speech about what is one’s own and makes it happen in deed by means of three communist laws: the outlawing of private property (or the establishment of common houses), the legal affirmation on the irrelevance of the natural functions of the body due to gender differentiation (or the establishment of sexual equality with respect to the assignment of each one’s work), and the outlawing of private families (or the establishment of purely conventional and thoroughly public marriages and familial bonds). With all these measures, what is one’s own is not simply said to be identical with the good of the city, but it is as close as it can ever be to becoming so in deed.
And although we used the word “enforcement,” in the Republic everything happens just as if all these measures would come about almost naturally.\textsuperscript{181} Once it is accepted that each one’s nature is to perform only one work, so that it is in the nature of some people to become shoemakers and in the nature of others to become glovemakers, what properly belongs to each human being already points to the city for its full actualization or development. If any human being has one and only one work of his own and this work is understood on the basis of the arts, it is possible to say, paraphrasing Aristophanes in the Symposium, that only the city in which each one is educated in such a way as to devote all his time, care, and love to his craft leads human beings toward what is their true own (\textit{eis to oikeion agon}; 193d2). For in such a city, being devoted to the city through the performance of one’s own work would be identical with being devoted to fulfilling one’s own nature. And to the extent that the problem of the goodness of justice is grounded in the problem of reconciling one’s work with one’s own, this purified city can be said to be the most just.

In order to get a better understanding of justice in the purified city, it is helpful to consider a short passage of Book IV.\textsuperscript{182} To be just, a city would have to reconcile two different poles or aspects of justice. On the one hand, justice should be concerned with fairness. This concern is first brought out by Cephalus for whom being just means being fair with everyone, i.e., respecting their property and being truthful to them. On the other hand, justice should be concerned with the common good. This concern is reflected in

\textsuperscript{181} At least up to the end of Book VII where a generational cleansing is mentioned (cf. 540e5-541a7; cf. also \textit{supra} section 2.1.2.13).
\textsuperscript{182} Cf. \textit{Republic}, 433e6-434d1.
Polemarchus’ assertion that justice is concerned with benefiting friends and harming enemies. Now, in Book IV Socrates asserts that “each one should not have the things of others nor be deprived of his own (tōn autōn).”\textsuperscript{183} This is, of course, a renewed assertion of Cephalus’ concern for fairness. In the purified city however, we now understand that one’s own means one’s work. So that “from this point of view too, it would be agreed that justice is the possession of one’s own and the practice of one’s own” (ē tou oikeiou te kai heautou hexis te kai praxis dikaiosunē an homologoito; 433e13-434a1). Thus, there is only one step from giving back to others what is owed to them to assigning one’s work to each one in accordance to each one’s nature. Accordingly, both explanations can be encapsulated under justice understood as fairness. As for the concern for the common good, it is precisely the premise of the purified city that there cannot be a “greater harm” (megistē blabē; 434c1) nor the production of a “greater evil” (malista kakourgia; 434c2) for a city than when each one does not perform the work assigned to him and meddles with the work of others. To the extent, then, that one’s own, understood as the performing of the work assigned to one, leads to both fairness for each and what is advantageous for the common good, the city that stands for such an understanding of one’s own reconciles the two poles of justice.\textsuperscript{184}

There is however a difficulty with this strong correlation between the works of the arts and one’s own. The difficulty is that what is generally thought to be connected with

\textsuperscript{183} Republic, 433e7-8.  
\textsuperscript{184} This passage in Book IV of the Republic (433e6-434d1) cannot but recall the passage of Book III of Aristotle’s Politics (chapters 9-17) where he shows of the quarrel between the democrats and the oligarchs how difficult it is to reconcile these two poles of justice: fairness (that is, equality [ison] among equals and inequality [anison] among unequals; cf. 1280a11-13) and the advantageous (sumpheron) for the common good (cf. 1283b40-42).
one’s own, namely, the body, the family, and the household, completely disappears—as if a human being were born first of all a shoemaker and not a girl or a boy; just as if a human being were born first of all a citizen and not the son or daughter of his or her parents. Somehow, the own the city stands for is built on nothing, nothing corporal to be precise, or, to use a vulgar image, it has the shape of a donut: extended and circumscribed up to the city’s limits, this own seems however to be empty in the middle. Yet, these considerations can be set aside by the following remark. Maybe human beings need to be cut off from their origin in order to reach what is truly their own, just like, to use another image, the acorn must fall from the three and rot in the ground in order to grow into a oak. Accordingly, the real test for the political dynamic unfolded in the Republic does not lie in what is lost during the process but rather in what this process leads to. And since the reason this specific education is dispensed and this specific way of life enforced is for the sake of creating good rulers for the city, it is in these rulers that the real test lies. The question is therefore to determine whether they succeed in reconciling, nay, in making their work identical to what is their own.

The rulers are philosophers. Qua philosophers, their work is the dialectical investigation of the nature of beings, especially into the nature of the good. For the philosophers, these investigations appear to be at least as pleasurable as mathematical investigations are for mathematicians and, because their object is the good, such investigations can legitimately be said to be even more beneficial than mathematical investigations are. Furthermore, since the art of turning the soul toward these investigations is at least a part, if not altogether identical with, the dialectical
investigations, the philosophers’ work can be said both beneficial for their own and for others. In this respect, the philosophers do succeed in reconciling their work with their own. This, however, leads to a great difficulty. For the philosophers’ dialectical investigations transcend the city, as does what is their own, if we understand their own in terms of these investigations. On the one hand, this is necessary if the city has to have good rulers, that is, rulers who will not try to derive benefits for their own from their ruling position. The only benefit the philosophers can derive from the city comes from ruling it in such a way as to preserve its regime or its form. The preservation of the city would be, from the philosophers’ perspective, a just recompense for the city that has made them philosophers and an efficient way of perpetuating philosophy inside the city. Yet, at the political level, the work of ruling the city is not in harmony with their nature as philosophers. And if this is so, it is because the philosophers’ own is, at least, twofold. Because the philosophers’ soul (own) is not thoroughly political, that is, because their soul is not limited to the city, we call into question the complete politicization of the soul (own) of the other citizens.

In short, the philosophers make us face in a new form the problem that belonged to the city devoted to bodily pleasures. For the philosophers’ own is enlarged to the utmost, and if this new enlargement makes them highly moderate with respect to bodily pleasures, it is by no means clear where the limits are to what is now taken to be their own.

At the end of the story Socrates tells in the Republic (in Book VII), the relation between the work and one’s own has become puzzling. This puzzle is probably best
understood by the comparison of the guardians with the philosophers. On the one hand, because caring for the city is indistinguishable from caring for the work which suits one’s own soul, the definition of one’s own that the beautiful city promotes is intimately connected with the soul, where the soul is understood as that which makes each of us fit for the performance of one specific work based on one specific art. Now, this proves to be the ground for an alliance between the city and the philosophers. The philosophers’ own may be different, more complex, and more open than that of the guardians. It is however similar to theirs in that, for both, what is one’s own is detached from the body and what is related to the body and is attached only to the soul and to the city.\textsuperscript{185} On the other hand, the philosophers’ twofold “own” reveals the fallacy of identifying the own perfectly with the city.

Now, the philosophers’ case leads to the following question. If, ultimately, what truly belongs to a human being cannot be perfectly and thoroughly identified with the city, what is the difference between the city and man?

\subsection*{2.1.4.3. The city and man: inward and outward beings}

On the basis of our summary of Socrates’ long story, let us point out, first, that it is one important teaching of the \textit{Republic} to show that politics is not exclusively driven

\textsuperscript{185} Drawing from Bloom (cf. \textit{The Closing of the American Mind} [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988], p.137 and also \textit{Love and Friendship} [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993], p.47-48 and 61-62), one may express the similarity and the difference between the guardians and the philosophers by comparing the understanding of the former of what is their own to a circle and that of the latter to an ellipse. The “own” of both is made of two elements: the soul and the city. In the case of the guardians, however, these two elements merge into one, so that what is their own has only one focus and thus takes the shape of a circle. As for the philosophers, these two elements never fully merge with one another, so that their own has two distinct foci and thus takes the shape of a ellipse.
by bodily preoccupations, be they understood as desire for preservation, accumulation of
wealth, or else. In spite of Socrates’ often twisted arguments, this long dialogue shows us
that the logic of politics is rather one of broadening or of enlargement of the self, of the
sphere of one’s own, an enlargement which moves beyond the preservation or enjoyment
of each one’s body.

Now, this is true for the citizens; it is true at the psychological level one may say.
However, things get complicated when one looks to the city as such rather than to the
citizens that populate it. For there is a deep disjunction between the city and the citizens,
which leads us to question the very first assumption of the whole undertaking, namely,
that the truth which was sought about man can be more easily sought in a city, for the city
and man are similar except that the former is “written larger”.186

We have already emphasized the problem with the analogy with oneness analogy:
whereas the city is one in the inclusive sense of the word—it is a whole—the citizens are
one in the restrictive sense of the word—their oneness is that of numerical units, the true
opposite of many. It is on the basis of this difference that we investigated the guardians’
way of life, in order to understand the way in which the oneness assigned to them by the
city affects their life as a whole, that is, the way in which it affects all of their other
activities as we put it.187 We now understand that the guardians have, as much as
possible, no activities other than those related to their work. And the root cause of this is

186. Socrates suggests that it will be easier to understand justice in the city than in a man, just as it is easier
to read bigger letters than smaller ones (cf. Republic, 368d2-7). Socrates’ analogy is not without ambiguity
though, for how is it possible to know that it is really the same word which is written in larger and smaller
characters when we are not able to read the smaller ones?
187. Cf. supra section 2.1.3.3.
that they have nothing else to care about as their own, for their own has been shaped in
such a way as to have nothing in it interfering with their love for the city. They really are
the type of craftsmen in the precise sense of the word who, as Socrates pointed out to
Thrasymachus, are perfectly devoted to the object of their art. The implication worth
stressing here is that the guardians are therefore outward beings: the object of their work,
their goal, which is also thought to be their true own, is entirely external. The city, by
contrast, although it may be said to fill the guardians’ own, pursues nothing exterior to or
beyond itself. For the city is one in the inclusive sense of the word and, therefore, its
whole purpose is to create this oneness, which is the ultimate work from its perspective:
to secure and perpetuate its own oneness, for this oneness is what truly belongs to the
city. If, then, the guardians are outward beings, the city is an inward being, concerned
with its internal unity.

The tension between the citizens of the beautiful city and the beautiful city itself
comes to the fore if one seeks the class of citizens that best embodies the regime. For as
we learn in the following Books (VIII and IX), there is an intimate relation between any
political regime and the human soul. Indeed, to each different “regime” (politeia; 544d7)
corresponds a different “soul” (psuchē; 544e5) or a different type of human being (or the
different “forms of human characters:” anthrōpōn eidē [...] tropōn; 544d6-7). Accordingly, there is a strong parallel between the timocratic man and timocracy, the
oligarchic man and oligarchy, the democratic man and democracy, and finally the
tyrannical man and tyranny: for each of these men and regimes, there is one common
goal pursued by both the most important citizens and the regime: honor, money, liberty,
and pleasure, respectively. As for the beautiful city, it may seem at first look that the same parallelism works, for both the guardians and the city love the same object: the city itself. Accordingly, they both desire the same thing: the city’s well being. The problem is that the guardians cannot love the city the same way the timocratic men love honor, for the guardians cannot be one in the same sense the city is one. They cannot because they are not wholes but parts.

This difficulty is revealed when Socrates presents the type of man that embodies the city’s justice in Book IV. For Socrates does not consider any of the four classes of citizens the city is made of, but he describes a new kind of man, which he calls the just man.

The truth is that justice (dikaiosunē) was such a thing, as it seems, not however with respect to the outward performing of one’s own action (all’ ou

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188. Both the timocratic man and the timocratic regime are said to be a “lover of honor” (philotimon; 545a2 and 545b5) and a “lover of victory” (philonikon; 545a1 and 548c6). The timocracy, then, is naturally inclined or suited to war rather than for peace (cf. 547e4-548a1), just like are the regimes of Sparta and Crete which are “praised by the many” (hupo tôn pollôn epainoumenē; 544c2-3). Accordingly, in contrast to the best regime (the beautiful city, which is here called the aristocratic regime; cf. 544e7), the timocracy is an outward being, for it pursues honors by the means of military victory over other cities (compare to the foreign policy of the best regime; 422d1-7). Similarly, the oligarchy, where the wealthy rule (plousoi archousin; 550d1), is devoted to wealth and the acquisition of wealth. Accordingly, the oligarchic men are said to be “lovers of money-making and lovers of money” (philochrēmatistai kai philochrēmatoi; 551a7-8). As for the democracy, it defines the good as “liberty” (eleutherian; 562b12), which is mirrored not only in the democratic man, who hands down the rule of himself to whichever pleasure happens along (cf. 561b2-4), but in the democratic animals too (cf. 563c3-d1). Finally, the tyrant goes as far as “enslaving” (doululeuousan; 575d6) his own family and his own city (motherland and fatherland) in order to content his “desire” (epithumias; 575d8).

In sum, the outward character of each of these regimes is illustrated by the sequence of revolutions leading from one regime to another. For a revolution means this: directing the city toward a new goal which cannot but transcend it, and this is possible when the citizens somehow see the city as a means for achieving this new goal (and through the sequence of goals starting with honor up to pleasure the city becomes more and more a means for the benefit of individuals, and ultimately for the benefit of only one individual: the tyrant). By contrast, a city which is fully devoted to itself, that is, to preserve and perpetuate its form or regime, has not the seed of revolution within itself. For such a city, a revolution comes from the within only by “accident,” that is, not so much because there are many elements in it which each desires something different (honor, money, liberty, or pleasure), but because the city does not succeed in keeping its own form or regime through the alteration caused by time and thus “simply” stumbles over the ultimate power of becoming, just as it is said to be the case with the beautiful city (cf. 546a1-3).
peri tēn exō praxin tēn autou), but with respect to the inward one (alla peri tēn entos), with respect to what is truly one’s own and the things [related to] one’s own (ōs alēthōs peri eauton kai ta eautou), not letting each [part] in himself performing the things [belonging to] others (mē easanta tallotria prattein hekaston en autōi) nor [letting] the classes in his soul meddling with one another (mēde polupragmanonein pros allēla ta en psuchēi genē), but really settling well his own (ta oikeia eu themenon), ruling himself by himself (arxanta auton autou), and making [himself] in good order, and becoming his own friend, and harmonizing the three [parts] existing [in him], exactly like the three notes in a harmonic scale: lowest, highest, and middle—and others if there are some in between—binding all them together and becoming entirely one from many, moderate and harmonized; then and only then he acts, if he does act in some way (ouē dē prattein ēdē, ean ti prattēi), either concerning the acquisition of money, or the care of the body, or something political, or concerning private business, in all such things thinking and naming, on the one hand, just and noble (kalēn) the action that would preserve and also fulfill this very condition (tautēn tēn hexin), and wise the science supervising this very activity, but unjust, on the other hand, the action that always disbands this [disposition], and ignorance, in turn, the opinion supervising this [action].

This is the just man who mirrors the justice of the beautiful city. But this man cannot be any of its citizens, for he is not a craftsman in the precise sense of the word. Let us stress the fact that this man is, like the city, an inward being: he is concerned only with his internal order (peri tēn entos), that is, his internal oneness, and external actions are not even necessary for his being just: “if he does act in some way” (ean ti prattēi), Socrates says. As Socrates portrays him, this man appears to be attracted or directed by nothing exterior to himself. In that respect, he is the opposite of the craftsman living in the beautiful city. In short, this just man is like the city inasmuch as his unity is a unity and a harmonization of parts and works (erga), but just like the city he seems to have no work

(ergon) that would compel him to look beyond himself. Thus, what belongs to this man does not reach beyond himself. His own is certainly limited, but not very large.

To make the difference even clearer, it might be useful to consider how much this just man differs from the philosopher-ruler. For as one may point out, to the extent that the philosophers are the only ones in the city who have to harmonize different works (hetera erga) in the same being (to auton), they are, in that respect at least, just like the city. To begin with, we must recall that the fact the philosopher needs to do this is an accident; it is unwillingly admitted by the city. Second, and more important, is the fact that both of the two works assigned to the philosophers make them look toward and make them concerned with something beyond themselves: the knowledge of that which always is and the city’s good order or oneness. In that respect, the philosopher could even be said to be the very opposite of the city, for when he philosophizes he looks beyond the city and when he takes cares of the city he must give up his own true pleasure: the full exercise of his reason (logos).190

The difference can also be stated as follows. The philosopher is wise because he is a philosopher; he is courageous because he was first a guardian; and he is moderate because he is a craftsman. Accordingly, to the extent that the philosopher cumulates in his own person the three classes of citizens, one could say that the philosopher has, within himself, the three parts identified in Book IV: reason (logos), spiritedness.

190. To the extent that the guardians are also detached from their body and family, they prefigure the philosopher, but only the philosopher reaches beyond the city while enjoying a private pleasure. The philosopher is at the same time the most outward being (his love is directed toward the whole nature) and the most private one (he finds an inward satisfaction to his activity, for this activity is pleasurable; in fact, it is the most pleasurable one and his life is therefore “the most pleasurable life” [ho toutou bios hēdistos; 583a3]).
What about his justice then? According to the city’s law of laws, he is just to the extent that he performs his own work only. But the city will not let him do this and neglect itself. Besides, at the end of Book IV this kind of justice is called a “phantom” (or image: eiδολον; 443c4) of the true justice (alēthes; 443c9), which, according to the passage we just quoted, consists in harmonizing the three parts of the soul together. But with which part would the philosopher do this? The problem is that his reason (logos) already has an object outside of him. So that, whereas the just man’s purpose is to set his soul in order and only secondarily to act and be concerned with the outside, the philosopher appears to be fully devoted to the fulfilment of his reason, and so he is highly concerned with the world outside, and it is that pursuit which has the effect, secondarily as it were, of setting his soul in order. As for the last option, if he is just for being law-abiding, that is, for consenting to keeping his reason from devoting itself to its own work but rather forcing it to be subservient to the city’s good order, this is tantamount to saying that his justice consists precisely in accepting some disorder in his soul, since he forces his reason to be concerned with a lower being (the city).

192. In addition to the peculiar problem that this definition of justice poses for the philosopher, the procedure from which they arrive at the definition of justice as performing one’s own work is, to quote Bloom, “open to several obvious objections” (“Interpretative Essay,” p.373). The main objection is surely that they assume from the outset that the four virtues (wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice), and only these four, are to be found in the city, and that, while they do not know what justice is, they claim having found what it is on the basis of what remains once they have found the three other virtues (cf. 427e10-428a6). With such a way of reasoning, someone who does not know my family (composed of four persons: my daughter, my son, my wife, and I) could conclude that my dog is my son only because, once having found three of us (my daughter, my wife, and myself), he would have come across the dog first.
2.1.4.4. Rejecting the Republic: making the city whole and man part

At the end of our reading of the *Statesman*, we quoted Strauss’ remark to the effect that politics is one of the arts whose purpose is to make human beings whole or entire.\(^{193}\) In the *Republic*, the purpose is to make the city whole and complete and the consequence of this is that man is turned into a part of it. Accordingly, there are two complementary reasons that motivate our dissatisfaction with that dialogue. On the one hand, the *Republic* dodges the problem of the harmonization of the goods in the soul of the citizens: one’s own is reshaped so that its inner heterogeneity is not manifest, the unity of virtue is not resolved with regard to man, and the question of man’s natural work is defined in such a way that it hinders the citizens from raising the question of their own incompleteness and complexity. On the other hand, the focus is so much on the city’s oneness and harmony that no goal emerges from it other than the city’s own self-preservation. It is true that this forces the city to value virtues and philosophy, but the beautiful city does so in the same way that it values health, that is, not as an end but as a means for its self-preservation. It is unwillingly that the city values philosophy and thus acknowledges something beyond itself.

Finally, these two reasons merge into one, namely, in the *Republic* the happiness of the city eclipses that of man. Recalling the first question raised at the end of Chapter One about the relation between human happiness and the city’s happiness,\(^{194}\) we

\(^{193}\) Cf. *supra* section 1.3.9.

\(^{194}\) Cf. *supra* section 1.4.2.
therefore conclude that the happiness of the city and that of the individual may not necessarily coincide. This is the reasons motivating our turning toward the Laws.

2.1.4.5. The last word: justice as the art of enlarging the sphere of one’s own

But before doing this, we feel obliged to say a few more words in order to be fair to this profound and complex dialogue. We recall that we began by stressing the problem of the relation between justice and art in Book I. The problem was that arts appeared to be connected to both injustice and justice. Because any art provides expertise that can be used for exploiting others, the arts came to light as morally neutral powers potentially put to use for unjust ends. On the other hand, the practitioner of an art also came to light as the man who cares for others, so that the true craftsman appeared to be foreshadowing the just ruler. This was the problem that made us unsatisfied with Stauffer’s interpretation of Book I and launched our journey into the Republic. Yet, it would be unfair to Stauffer’s penetrating interpretation not to recognize that he provides us with important elements that enlightened our reading of the Republic. Probably the most important of these is admirably spelled out at the end of his book.

In the thought that justice is virtue [...] lies a concern that does not come fully to light in our pursuit of more ordinary goods. [...] Ordinary goods, while they are undeniably good in an obvious way, are just as undeniably good in a limited way. By promising not only to gratify us but also to perfect us, justice, by contrast, opens up a certain question that might otherwise remain closed: the question of the true good or the best life.\textsuperscript{195}

\footnote{195. Stauffer, \textit{Plato’s Introduction}, p.130.}
By way of conclusion, we will try to present the way in which Stauffer’s insightful remark can be understood on the basis the reading of the Republic which has been proposed in the previous pages.

In retrospect, it is possible to see how the problem of one’s own was already present in Book I. During his discussion with Thrasymachus, Socrates succeeds in making him acknowledge that the craftsman in the precise sense of the word does not benefit from his own art. But Socrates also notes that this is why any craftsman needs to practice another art in addition to his own, namely the “wage-earning art” (mīstharnētikē; 346d3). This, one may then say, bridges the gap between the two perspectives on the arts, reducing them both to an expertise whose acquisition and practice is motivated by the benefits that can be derived from it. Yet, a wage is only one of the motives Socrates lists as a reason one would practice an art, especially the political art or the art of ruling a city. In addition to “wage” (mīsthon) or “money” (argurion; 347a5), Socrates mentions “honor” (timēn; 347a5) and “penalty” (zēmian; 347a5) or “necessity” (anagkēn; 347c1).

Of course, these three motives foreshadow the three classes of the Republic: the craftsmen, the guardians, and the philosophers. More appropriately, these three motives foreshadow three cities: the true and healthy city, the purged city by the rule of guardians, and the beautiful city ruled by philosophers.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶. The distinction between the purged and the beautiful city is somewhat artificial since the city is said to be completed in Book IV and Books V to VII are presented as a detailed examination of the communist way of life agreed at the end of Book III and the beginning of IV (cf. 416d3–417a5 and 423e6–424a2). Yet, when the feverish city is finally purged in Book III and the best guardian is selected for its ruling, he is rewarded by receiving honors (tīmas; 414a2) during his life and after his death. By contrast, the idea of ruling by necessity appears only in Book VII when the rulers are identified. Then, the rulers consider their work “not as something noble but as a necessary business” (ouch ὡσ kalon τι ἀλ’ ὡσ anagkaion pratontas; 540b4–5). As for the healthy city, the whole paradox of this city lies in the fact that the introduction of
Now, to each of these cities corresponds a precise definition of the “own.” The condition for the harmonious working of the healthy city is that each member of the community considers that his body, and the health of his body, is that which is truly his own, that which is his true own. The condition for the harmonious working of the purged city is that the citizens, and especially the guardians, consider the city to be that which is their true own. Finally, the condition for the harmonious working of the beautiful city is that the rulers—and this time the rulers only—consider their reason, i.e., the faculty enabling them to seek that which always is, as that which is their true own.

In short, the harmonisation of the arts, that is, the harmonisation of works (*erga*), is itself dependent on another art, an architectonic art, whose object is the definition of what is truly one’s own. To the extent that this art is the one that Adeimentus, Glaucon, and Socrates performed as the founders of a city, that art might be called the political art. And to the extent that the action of the dialogue illustrates the argument of the dialogue, this would be true for justice too. Justice, indeed, appears to be peculiar in this: it broadens one’s own, it enlarges its sphere up to the limit of the city, and stipulates that a good citizen should include the city and the other citizens in his love of one’s own and act in accordance with this. Justice turns human understanding of the own toward something greater than oneself in a way that arts, if they prefigure this broadening, cannot perform by themselves.

money, as the means which allows the arts to be interconnected with one another, is sufficient for its working well, that is, for the creation of a common good which benefits everyone in the city.
However, by so doing, justice complicates the problem of harmonizing a human being into one whole, for it introduces a new concern, a new field into the domain of one’s own. In addition to the body, the soul, and the family, there are also the city and the citizens. But the Republic indicates this problem by devising extraordinary, not to say ironic, ways of muting it. For the unity of the own achieved in the Republic is a reduced one, not a harmonious one: it is exclusive instead of being inclusive. With such a result, the very subject of our inquiry is lost, for as it is so well stated in the Republic,

If, on the one hand, the one (to hen), itself by itself, is sufficiently seen or grasped by some other sense, it would not draw [us] toward being (τῆν ousian) [...]. If, on the other hand, some opposition to it is always seen at the same time, so that nothing appears as though it were one more than the opposite [of one], then there would be need of something to judge; and in this case, a soul would be compelled (αναγκαζοιτ') to be at loss and to make an investigation, setting in motion the intelligence within it, and to ask what the one itself is; and thus the study of the one would be among those apt to lead and turn around toward the contemplation of what is.197

That is our problem with respect to human nature: the perception of its oneness is at the very same time the perception of its multiplicity. And the Republic, instead of resolving our problem, has rather increased it. For if, through the reading of the Republic, the hierarchy of the goods has become somewhat clear—that is, the good of the reason (logos) prior to that of the spirited part (thumos), and this one prior to that of the desiring part of us (epithumia)—the ways in which all these goods can be harmonized in one being, in one’s own being, need to be investigated further.

197. Republic, 524d9-525a2; Bloom’s translation slightly altered.
PART TWO
THE SUFFICIENCY OF VIRTUE AND
THE HARMONY OF THE GOODS
IN THE LAWS I-III

2.2. Introduction: The context of the Laws in comparison with that of the Republic

In contrast to the Republic, the question of justice is not the central question of the Laws. As we have seen above, the purpose of the Republic is to answer the Socratic question “What is justice?” and to show what kind of good justice brings about in both the city and the individual. In the Laws, the purpose is to know “how (pōs) a city might best (arista) be established sometime, and how (pōs), in private, someone might best (beltista) lead his own life.”\(^{198}\) At first glance, it seems that the goal of the Laws is higher than that of the Republic, for the simple reason that the good is higher than the just. Indeed, the Republic itself argues that the good is the highest principle, higher even than Being and therefore necessarily higher than the just.\(^{199}\)

Yet, the difference between the two dialogues also implies the difference between the “what is?” question (ti estin) and the “how?” question (pōs). In the Republic, Socrates’ two main interlocutors are young men who both long to know what justice is. Glaucon and Adeimantus believe that leading a just life would make them happy, and yet, while they clearly see the pain that a just life may entail, they do not readily perceive the good that justice will bring to them, even though that good should be the ground for their

\(^{198}\) Laws, 702a8-b1; Pangle’s translation.
\(^{199}\) Cf. Republic, 509b6-10.
happiness. They want to be just but they do not want to be fooled by conventional justice. They thus ask Socrates to come to the defense of justice, to state what justice is and to make manifest its specific goodness. To some extent, this means that they agree to subordinate themselves to Socrates. Socrates’ answer, as we saw, takes the form of the construction in speech of a perfectly just city. When the possibility of the realisation of the just city is raised, Socrates replies that the coming-into-being of the just city requires the absolute rule of philosophers. In that respect, the focus on justice leads to the rule of the highest: justice requires that every part of the city and every part of the soul be under the rule of that which truly deserves to rule, namely, reason (logos).

In the *Laws*, by contrast, an old man, Kleinias, belonging to one of the oldest Greek regimes, Crete, is appointed to lay down a legislation for a new Cretan colony. It is in connection with that duty, in all likelihood, that Kleinias undertook to go to the cave where, according to the tradition, Minos met with Zeus and received from the god what became the Cretan laws. It is during that walk from the city of Knossos to the cave-sanctuary that, apparently, Kleinias met with an old Spartan, Megillus, and an old unnamed Athenian. In fact, we do not know when and how the three old men met. What we do know, however, is that neither Megillus nor the Athenian was aware of Kleinias’ founding project when they first met, for Kleinias discloses his lawgiving duty to them only at the very end of Book III.200 The age of the characters and the political responsibility of Kleinias have a great impact on the nature of the dialogue, especially in contrast to the *Republic*. Kleinias is the political authority: although he comes to

acknowledge the Athenian’s deep knowledge of politics, so much that he invites the Athenian to join him as a political authority for the new city to be founded.²⁰¹ Kleiniαs never completely relinquishes his political power to the Athenian. If one accepts that the Athenian embodies the philosopher, this means that in the Laws, reason (logos) never rules alone. The Athenian and the two Dorianσ may grant some power to reason and philosophy over the new legislation, but philosophy qua philosophy will not rule the city to be founded as it does in the Republic. In that respect, one may say that the city of the Laws, the city of the Magnesians,²⁰² is of a lower rank than the one of the Republic, the beautiful city.

The central question of the Laws also indicates the lower status of the dialogue with regard to the Republic. In the Laws, the central question is Kleiniαs’ pressing “how?”: “How a city might best be established sometime?” One is tempted to state the main objective of the Laws as follows: to find what is the best law code and how to establish it. But the quintessential Socratic question “What is a law?” is never raised in the Laws.²⁰³ That question is dealt with in another dialogue, the Minos. The Laws is not about law (nomos), it is about lawgiving (nomothesiai). Even though it is the Athenian who formulates most if not all of the laws in the dialogue, it is Kleiniαs who remains, from beginning to end, the lawgiver for the Cretan colony to be founded. In fact, Kleiniαs is only one of the ten Knossians appointed to that task. In the Laws, then, the characters

²⁰¹ Cf. Laws, 969c4-d3; cf. also 753a5-6. ²⁰² It is only in Book IX that the city is called by a name: “the city of the Magnesians” (860e6). Earlier, in Book VIII, the Athenian referred to “some local Magnesian [deities]” (848d2-3). ²⁰³ The Socratic question “What is a law?” is never raised, but the question “What is education?” is raised in Book I (643a5; cf. supra section 2.2.2.4).
are not engaged in the pursuit of the form or look (*eidos*) of one part of the whole. In that respect, it may be said to be a sub-Socratic dialogue.

Yet, these two obstacles, namely, the power of a non-philosophical authority and the urgency of the political context, may yet turn out to provide illumination in that they forbid a political solution as radical as the one imagined in the *Republic*. The obstacles thus compel the philosopher to give a greater consideration to all the other aspects of the human life which, though of a lower status than reason, are integral parts of politics. In other words, the political weaving of the *Laws* may be of a lower quality than that of the *Republic*, but it may also be more supple, which, for the great majority of us, would mean more suited for human beings. Of course, this is but a hypothesis, a hypothesis in need of being tested. What remains to be seen, therefore, is how the problem of the harmony of the goods is dealt with in the *Laws*.

### 2.2.1. The Standard for Politics: The Sufficiency of Virtue
#### 2.2.1.1. The preliminary task: evaluating the Dorian code

A Cretan colony is to be founded. This means that laws must be instituted. As Kleinias explains, he, together with nine other Knossians, has been commissioned to select good laws for the new colony. These goods laws could be Cretan or foreign if foreign laws are judged to be better than Cretan laws for that peculiar colony. But in

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204. Cf. *Laws*, 702c5-8. It is useful to recall Fustel De Coulanges’ comment on the political status of a colony in Ancient Greece: “On sait que ni les Grecs, ni même les Romains, n’ont pratiqué la colonisation de la même façon que les modernes. Une colonie n’était pas une dépendance ou une annexe de l’État colonisateur; elle était elle-même un État complet et indépendant. Toutefois, un lien d’une nature particulière existait entre la colonie et la métropole, et cela tenait à la manière dont toute colonie avait été fondée” (*La Cité Antique: Étude sur le culte, le droit, les institutions de la Grèce et de Rome* [Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1910], p.252).
order to judge between two law codes, one needs a standard. Furthermore, since one of
the law codes is the Cretan one, the standard should be reckoned as better and higher than
the Dorian code itself.\textsuperscript{205} To accept a standard other than the Dorian code, then, Kleinias
and Megillus have to see the limits of their own law code. Since at the end of Book III
Kleinias wholeheartedly invites the Athenian to join him and to help him in the laying
down of the new Cretan colony’s legislation, we may infer that the exposition of the
Dorian code’s limits take place during the first three Books of the dialogue. We may also
expect that the exposition of the Dorian code’s limits will allow us to see the standard
with a view to which any legislation should be gauged.

\textbf{2.2.1.2. The necessity and the nobility of war}

The \textit{Laws} begins as an investigation into the origin of the Dorian code and into
the meaning of the Dorian practices (\textit{epitēdeumata}). The Dorian practices are a military

\textsuperscript{205} The expression “Dorian code” is meant to refer to the similarities between the Cretan and the Spartan
regimes. Although each code is said to come from a different god, Zeus and Apollo, and to have been
established by different men, Minos and Lycurgus, it was also said that Lycurgus had visited Crete and
imitated the Cretan code when he established the Spartan one, which explained the similarities between the
two regimes (cf. Herodotus, \textit{Histories}, I, 65 and Aristotle, \textit{Politics}, II, 10, 1271b22-27). This tradition,
however, is never referred to in the \textit{Laws} (but cf. \textit{Minos}, 318d-320b), and the Athenian Stranger limits
himself to saying that Cretan and Spartan codes are brothers (\textit{adelphoi nomoi}; 683a2). According to
Morrow, this shows that Plato understood the similarities of the two codes on the basis of their common
ethnic origin rather than on the basis of some imitation, as it is generally asserted by contemporary
historians of Ancient Greece (cf. \textit{Plato’s Cretan City. A Historical Interpretation of the Laws} [Princeton:
Princeton University Press, 1960], p.34). Be this as it may, this much appears to be true: “The disciplined
severity of their social organization, the simplicity of their motives and ambitions—whether genuine
survivals from the period of the conquest or the results of a deliberate revival in the seventh century—set
[the Dorians] apart from their kinsmen who had preceded them into Greece and who had become,
particularly the Ionians in Asia Minor, somewhat softened by their contacts with Minoan and Oriental
culture. [...] The distinctness between these two branches of Greek people—between the ‘soft-living
Ionians’ (\textit{habrobioi lônes}) and the ‘man-mastering’ (\textit{damasiubrotos}) code of the Dorians—underlies all the
Greek history and culture” (\textit{ibid.}, p.59). As will be seen below, it is above all to this “man-mastering
severity” that the expression “Dorian code” refers.
way of living even in time of peace. Although the origin of the Dorian code is said to be
divine, the reason of these practices appears to be nature. As Kleinias explains, there is in
fact a continuous, and often undeclared, war among cities, a war which is “according to
nature” (*kata phusin*; 626a4-5), and it is with a view to this natural state of war that the
legislators of Crete and Sparta have instituted their military practices. And these were
sound views, for, as Kleinias goes on, “no other things, neither possessions nor practices,
will be of any benefit, unless one should also be the stronger in war, for [the outcome of
war is that] all the goods belonging to the defeated become those of the winner.”

The Athenian, however, objects to this conclusion and launches an argument
against it. By tracing the origin of the war back to the individual, the Athenian makes
Kleinias admit that the worst war is not the war against an outsider but the one against
oneself. With regard to the city, it means that civil war is the worst of all wars.
Considering civil war and also the needs of foreign war, Kleinias concedes that creating
friendship and peace through the reconciliation of the opposite factions is more
choiceworthy than simply destroying the other party. In other words, peace and
friendship are, in that case at least, a greater good than victory through the use of force.
The Athenian thus affirms that everyone would establish “custom” (*nomima*; 628c6) for
the sake of the greatest good. Now, he goes on, the greatest good is neither war, nor civil
war but peace, and it is for the sake of peace that the things of war should be legislated,
not vice versa.

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Kleinias acknowledges the soundness of the argument but still stands by his assertion that it is for the sake of war that the practices and laws were established both in Crete and Sparta. There are two motives that may explain Kleinias’ rebuff. First, Kleinias is an old man who has been reared by these very laws and who has lived his life in accordance with them. Acknowledging that the Cretan code is erected on a faulty principle would thus be tantamount to acknowledging he has lived his whole life up to now on the basis of a faulty principle. But it might also be the case that Kleinias does not see war simply as an evil or a sad necessity of life, something we should “pray for not needing to have recourse to,” as the Athenian has put it.\(^\text{207}\) The problem stems from Kleinias’ assertion that there is nothing beneficial without military superiority, since war is the process through which goods are acquired and lost. As for what goods he has in mind, Kleinias mentions “possessions” (\(\kappa t\varepsilon mata\); 626b2), which could encompass the majority of exterior goods, from shoes and golden deities’ representations to children and wife, and “practices” (\(e\pi\iota\de umata\); 626b2), which we may understand as a whole particular way of life. This seems to imply that war is a means directed either toward the protection of one’s own possessions and way of life or toward the acquisition of material goods by the use of force, depending on whether military superiority is thought of as a necessary or a sufficient condition for the possession and enjoyment of all the goods. In both cases, however, the goodness of war appears to be subordinated to the goodness of one’s own goods, i.e., possessions and way of life, which are truly enjoyed, as it were, in time of peace.

\(^{207}\) Laws, 628c10: \textit{apeukton de to de\v{e}th\v{e}nai tout\v{o}n}.\)
Yet, Kleinias rejects such a conclusion. The relation of war to good and evil seems to be established on another basis according to him. When the Athenian has traced the origin of war back to the individual, Kleinias has said that, in the individual at least, the war is oriented according to two poles: the stronger and the weaker, the noble and the base. As Kleinias emphatically asserted, the victory over oneself is the first and the best of all victories. This, however, contrasts with his previous understanding of nature, for it is no longer the fact of war that is important but the nobility of one particular victory: the victory of the good over the evil. Being the stronger and victorious at war can no longer be the ultimate good, for sometimes the lower part of a city or of a man defeats the higher one and this cannot be said to be good according to Kleinias. Somehow, it appears that the victory of the lower part of an entity should be referred to as being inferior to oneself, for that victory does not change the principle that the good should be stronger than the evil. We may understand then that war appears as an opportunity for making manifest the superiority of the good over the evil. This point is clearer in the individual, for at this level war can be seen as the opportunity for separating the noble from the base, through the submission of the lower self (such the fear of pain) to a higher good, namely the obedience to the city. In short, war is an occasion for virtue to shine. To the extent that war is related to courage, it seems difficult to say that war is only an evil or a sad necessity. It would be surprising if the Spartans—and for that matter all the

208. Cf. Laws, 626e3.
Greeks—consider the battle of Thermopylea only with a view to its military outcome. Courage, honor, and glory are attached to war.

These considerations can explain the way in which the Athenian presents his second argument. The Athenian now uses the words of the poet Tyrtaios who praises the virtue of the courageous warrior. This poet has found the words for expressing the point abovementioned: it is in war that the brave man distinguishes himself. True, war is a terrible thing, but those who can stand it and overcome their own fear are, for that very reason, superior men. The goodness of war is not so much related to the enjoyment of possessions, then, as it is to its ability to make a courageous character shine forth. Courage seems to be a higher good than material possessions but the relation of courage to material possessions is not discussed here. Instead, the Athenian turns to the relation of courage to higher goods. Since civil war is both the most terrible and the most important war, it follows that it is in the context of such a war that the greatest virtue could shine.

Now, on the basis of another poet, Theognis, the Athenian asserts that whereas exterior war requires only a part of virtue, namely courage, civil war requires complete virtue, for the goal is not simply to destroy and kill the other party but, as Kleinias has himself agreed before, to create peace and friendship. Accordingly, the soldier in a civil war must be courageous enough to fight the opposite faction, but he must do so while constantly keeping an eye on civil peace. This means that in addition to be courageous,

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210. Somehow, the Dorians need the Athenians in order to express their own view with regard to war; just as the Athenian stranger has expressed the origin of the Cretan legislator’s reasoning (cf. 626d5), it is a poet who was born at Athens and later naturalized as a Spartan that proved able to express the Spartan view on greatness (cf. 629a4-5); cf. Leo Strauss, *The Argument and the Action of Plato’s Laws* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p.6.

he needs to be moderate, just, and prudent. Not only war but the most terrible of all wars
has led the three interlocutors to a new series of goods each of which, the Athenian
asserts, is superior to courage alone.

2.2.1.3. The Athenian’s restatement or the standard for any regime

To make his point accepted by Kleinias, the Athenian must now specify that the
argument is not a critique of the Dorian code as such but a critique of the way in which
Kleinias has interpreted this allegedly divine code. To praise the Dorian code and to show
that it is divine and thus perfectly good, Kleinias should have shown that by living under
the Dorian laws one would acquire not only a part of virtue, i.e., courage, but the
complete virtue. And to make this clear, the Athenian shows to Kleinias how he should
have spoken:

[The laws] are right, [when] those who use them are made happy. For [these
laws] provide all the goods. And the goods are twofold: the human [ones]
and the divine [ones]. The others depend on the divine [goods], and if some
city
receives the greater, it also possesses the lesser, but if [it has] not [the
greater], it is deprived of both. There are, on the one hand, the lesser [goods],
which health leads, beauty is in second, third is strength in running and in all
other movements of the body, and fourth, then, is wealth, not blind but sharp-
sighted [wealth], if it follows prudence. This one, prudence, in turn, is the
first and leader of the divine goods, second after intellect
is a moderate
habit of the soul, and from these [previous ones] mixed with courage would
be justice, in third, and fourth [is] courage. All of these latter [goods] have

212. I follow the manuscripts A and O and read “tis ... polis ktatai” at 631b8; on that point I depart from
England (cf. The Laws of Plato. The Text Edited With Introduction and Notes by E. B. England [New York:
213. I follow the manuscripts A and O and read “meta noun” at 631c7. England and Des Places suggest to
read “meta nou,” which would mean: “second is a moderate habit of the soul [joined] with intellect.” As
Strauss points out (The Argument, p.8), intellect is said to be the leader of all the goods in the following
(631d5), which corroborates the idea that intellect should also be ranked in first, i.e., before moderation.
been placed by nature prior [in rank] to the other [four], accordingly they must be ranked in this way by the legislator.\textsuperscript{214}

Officially, this is but a restatement, and only the first half of it, to be precise. But this half suffices to show that the Athenian is providing the framework for a code of law according to nature, that is, a standard that any regime would have to match, especially if it proclaims itself to be sanctioned by the gods. In short, we are entitled to expect that the legislation for the new colony that the Athenian and the two Dorians will elaborate starting at Book IV should match that standard too. This speech deserves therefore to be considered with attention.

\textit{2.2.1.4. A clear and not so clear standard}

The first part of the Athenian’s restatement stipulates the aim of the laws. The aim of a law code is to make the people who live under these very laws happy. And just like in the \textit{Euthydemus}, happiness is here defined as the possession of all the goods.\textsuperscript{215} Accordingly, the aim of the law code should be to provide the citizens with all the goods. Now, these goods are not unlimited. There are only eight goods. The emphasis here is not on the heterogeneity of these goods, but rather on the distinction between two classes of four goods. There are, on the one hand, the human goods and, on the other, the divine goods. The Athenian asserts that the possession of all the goods depends on the possession of the greater ones, the divine ones. In that respect, the Athenian replicates

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{214}] \textit{Laws}, 631b5-d2.
\item[\textsuperscript{215}] Cf. \textit{supra} section 1.2.1.
\end{itemize}
Kleinias’ intimation that the best is also the strongest. This may not be the Athenian’s last word, ²¹⁶ and we will have re-examine that point in what follows. But for now such an affirmation has a crucial consequence on the problem of the harmony of the goods. If this were true, the problem of the harmonization of the goods would disappear, for the intellectual virtues would vouch for, say, health and wealth. It would mean that the lawgiver would have to care only about one good, the possession of which would be the sufficient condition for the possession of all the others.

In fact, this is not exactly what the Athenian says. The Athenian considers two categories of goods and he says that the lesser one is dependent on the higher one. This means that he solves the problem of the harmony of the goods in this manner: there is no need to harmonize them, for the higher is a sufficient condition for the lower. He does not say, however, that inside the divine category the higher one—prudence or intellect, let us keep the ambiguity for now—vouches for the possession of the lower ones: moderation, justice, and courage. In other words, even if it were true that the human goods are dependent on the divine ones, the problem of harmonizing the divine goods would still remain.

On that point, justice is of a peculiar interest. Justice is said to be the combination of all the virtues or divines goods: it is the “mixture” (krathentōn; 631c8) of courage with all the higher virtues, prudence and moderation for sure, and the same ambiguity remains with respect to intellect. This would be an example of harmonization: justice, as a whole,

²¹⁶. The fleshing out of Kleinias’ view has shown that few just men can be enslaved by many unjust ones (cf. 627b2-8), so that virtues (or say justice) did not appear as the sufficient condition for victory (or say bodily strength).
would be a virtue insofar as it is the perfect combination of prudence, moderation, and courage. Yet justice occupies quite a low rank: it is third out of four. This makes sense to the extent that the combination of high and low is necessarily lower than what is high simply. But it is nonetheless strange in that it implies that complete virtue is lower than a part of virtue. It is even more puzzling when we recall that the Athenian has criticized Kleinias for believing that courage, the “smallest” of all virtues, was the only good with a view to which the divine legislator has instituted the Cretan practices. The Athenian has objected that a divine legislator would rather look to the “greatest virtue” \( (\text{aretē} \ \text{malista}; \ 630c4) \) whenever he lays down laws. And shortly afterward, the Athenian has used the expressions the “perfect justice” \( (\text{dikaiosunē} \ \text{telean}; \ 630c6) \) and the “complete virtue” \( (\text{pasan aretē}; \ 630e2-3) \) as synonymous with the “greatest virtue.”

Now, the low rank assigned to justice makes us wonder whether justice, as the mixture of all the virtues—or at least of prudence, moderation and courage—is something different from perfect justice and complete virtue.

In short, the Athenian’s restatement of the goal of legislation provides a standard which is at the same time clear and ambiguous. It is clear because it asserts that a legislation which is good, divine, and in accordance with nature should provide all the goods to the citizens living under its laws. On that point, it is intimately connected to the problem of the harmonization of the goods. But it is precisely on that point that the standard is puzzling. On the one hand, it asserts that the lesser goods are dependent on the greater ones, which implies that the legislator should focus his attention on the greater

ones only. On the other hand, the Athenian does not identify the greatest good, but aims at listing all the goods. He even includes justice which, as a mixture of all the virtues, may seem redundant: if the purpose is to make the citizens prudent, moderate, and courageous, how this is different from making them just, if justice is defined as the mixture of prudence, moderation, and courage? In other words, what is the relation of the greater goods to the lesser ones in the case of the virtues? Or again, what is the relation of the parts to the whole in the case of virtue? And what is the place of intellect in that regard? We have no immediate answers to these questions but we must be satisfied, for now, with the fact that the questions that this standard has raised are all connected to the problem of the harmony of the goods.

2.2.1.5. Making the hierarchy of the goods a way of life

After having stipulated the standard for a good legislation, the Athenian goes on:

It is imperative to proclaim (*diakeleusteon*) to the citizens that the other orders are given to them with a view to these [goods], of which the human [goods look] to the divine, and all the divine [goods] look to their leader intellect.

Concerning the marriage to be contracted with one another, and after these about the birth and rearing of children, males as much as females, while they are young and as they get older, [and this] up to old age, it is needed to be careful (*dei epimeleisthai*) in apportioning honor and dishonors correctly; in all their intercourses, observing and keeping watch over (*epeskemmenon kai parapephulachota*) their pains and pleasures, and the desires and ardors of all their erotic longings, [it is needed] to blame and praise [them] correctly by the means of the laws themselves.

Again, in [state of] anger and [of] fear, in the troubles for the soul brought about by misfortune as much as in the releases from such things in good fortune, as much as in the afflictions that befall on human beings due to diseases or war or poverty or their opposite circumstances, in all such cases [and] for the disposition (*diatheseōs*) of each one, it is imperative to teach
and define (**didakteon kai horisteon**) the noble and the not [noble] (**to te kalon kai mē**).

After these things, necessity [requires] that the lawgiver keep watch over (**phulattein**) the citizens’ acquisitions and expenditures, in whatever way they would occur, and [that he] observe (**episkopein**) the associations of all the [citizens]**218** with one another and the dissolutions [of them], voluntary as well as involuntary (**hekousin te kai akousin**), [so as to see] the manner in which they behave towards one another in each of such [cases], [observing] the just and the not [just] (**to te dikaion kai mē**), in which ones [of these situations] it is present (**estin**) and in which ones it is lacking, assigning honors to the obedient to the laws and imposing fixed penalties to the disobedient, [and this] up to the point where, arriving before the end of the whole regime (**pros telos hapas politeias etexelthōn**), he should know (**idēi**) the way in which the funeral of those who have died must take place and what sort of honors must be assigned to them.

Knowing (**katidōn**) [this], then, the one who lays down the laws (**o theis tous nomous**) will set up guards for all these things, some of them taking their bearings on prudence, others on true opinion, so that intellect (**nous**), binding all these things together, will make manifest (**apophēnēi**) that [all these things] are under the guide of moderation and justice, but not of wealth and love of honor.**219**

This is the second half of the Athenian’s restatement of the nature of a good legislation. The first half was the standard, that is, the knowledge of the natural hierarchy of the goods. But the work of the legislator does not consist only in knowing the proper ranking of the goods. In addition to this, the legislator must organize and regulate human life so that citizens can possess or enjoy these goods. For all the legislator’s orders or commands “look to” (**blepousas**; 631d4) the eight goods according to their natural rank. In other words, the legislator must arrange things in such a way that the citizens live their lives in accordance with the natural hierarchy, so that their lives would mirror the natural

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218. I follow England (cf. *The Laws of Plato*, I, p.216) and read *pasin toutois* as a genitival dative referring to the citizens (**tōn politeōn**, 632b2), with which *hekousin* and *akousin* agree. Pangle, on the other hand, disagrees with this reading; he translates: “... associations with one another for all these purposes” (emphasis mine).

order. To use Benardete’s expression, it means that the legislator’s work consists in “translating” the natural hierarchy of the goods into laws and orders regulating citizens’ life. Accordingly, the legislator must look not only to the hierarchy of the goods but he must also observe all aspects of human life in which these goods come into play.

Now, as this second half of the restatement makes clear, this means watching and keeping watch over all the spheres of human activity from birth to grave in all possible circumstances. We can identify four types of orders or, more precisely, fours spheres of human life that the legislator should consider: 1\textsuperscript{st} (631d6-632a2) the ordinary or natural course of life, 2\textsuperscript{nd} (632a2-b1) the disturbing events, 3\textsuperscript{rd} (632b1-c4) the necessities of life, and 4\textsuperscript{th} (632c4-d1) the embodiment of laws by political authorities.

2.2.1.6. Ordering the four spheres of the human life

The ordinary course of life is all about human relationships. This term, “human relationships,” should be understood as the relations that human beings form with one another for the sake of being with one another (as distinct from, for example, those they form for the sake of acquiring material goods). One could say that this section deals with friendship rather than justice. What determines these relationships is pleasure, pain, desire, and erotic longings rather than utility. These human relationships (homiliais; 631e4) at the origin of which lie pleasure, pain, and desires form, we could say, the substance of the human life. We might even say that this is the natural course of life,


\footnote{221. These divisions are indicated with paragraph breaks in the quotation given at the previous page; needless to say that these editorial divisions are not in the Greek text.}
recalling Aristotle’s remark that “no one can spend his days with one whose company is painful, or not pleasant; for nature seems above all to flee the painful and to aim at the pleasant.”\(^{222}\) Pleasure, pain, desire, and erotic longings are then the four feelings the legislator must watch and regulate by blaming some kinds of intercourse while praising others, all this by the means of the laws. Through blame and praise, as it seems, the laws orient these natural feelings towards the greatest goods, the virtues.

But these four natural feelings (pleasure, pain, desire, and erotic longings) are not mentioned first. It is rather marriage and education that introduce the theme of the natural course of life. Although these are “natural” in the sense of being found in any political society, marriage and education are more properly understood as institutions or practices (\textit{epitēdeuma}), for they cannot be regulated by pleasure and pain alone. Marriage is the honorable relationship among the sexes or the way in which the erotic necessity of life, as it is called in the \textit{Republic}, is transformed into something honorable.\(^{223}\) We may even venture to suggest that, in contrast to the \textit{Republic} where bodily needs and arts are said to be the natural basis of political life,\(^{224}\) in the \textit{Laws}, this erotic necessity seems to be the starting point or natural basis of the city. However, this erotic necessity is not, to repeat, let loose in the city. Family and the making of families, rather than erotic necessity simply, constitute the natural course of life. And the legislator must supervise the making of families not simply by praising and blaming the nature and the ardor of the feelings

\(^{222}\) Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, 1157b15-17 (Barnes’ translation slightly altered).
\(^{223}\) Cf. \textit{Republic}, 458d3-5.
\(^{224}\) Cf. \textit{Republic}, 369b5-7.
that come into play, but above all by apportioning honor and dishonor (*timōnta ... kai atimazonta*; 631e2-3), depending of how well the practice itself is performed.

A man and a woman exchange marriage vows, they get together, and the natural outcome of their relation is the birth of another human being. At this point, another relationship develops, that of rearing (*trophais*; 631e1) a child. Since, however, rearing is pursued throughout human life—“up to old age” (*mechri gērōs*; 631e2)—it necessarily includes civic education as well. At some point in this very short story, the laws take the place of the parents. Furthermore, to the extent that it is the laws that push for elevating males and females to honorable fathers and mothers, one may say that the laws were in motion right from the beginning.

In short, the pleasure and desire of living together, the procreation of children and the education of citizens, and also the pain that interferes in human relationships, all taken together constitute what we might call the ordinary course of life. It all could also be called the natural course of life, provided that we bear in mind the extent to which laws, not nature, shape much of the substance of human life. The lawgiver must therefore primarily look to these relations if he wishes to direct his citizens toward the greatest good, namely a virtuous way of life.

In contrast to the first section, which dealt with the natural or ordinary course of life, the second section deals with what England calls “all the extraordinary occurrences that ‘upset’ the mind.”\(^{225}\) These extraordinary occurrences are however very likely to occur in a lifetime: anger, fear, bad or good luck, diseases, war, poverty and abundance

are very common indeed. We may even call them ordinary disturbing events. Yet, although the legislator must consider these things very closely, they are brought up by the Athenian secondarily. In that respect, the Athenian seems to imply again that war, be it foreign or civil, is not the human circumstance with a view to which the whole legislation should be framed. On the other hand, he agrees with Kleinias—or with what we have identified as Kleinias’ view—and asserts that disturbing events are the opportunity for nobility (to kalon; 632b1) to shine. Perhaps the most important difference between the Athenian and Kleinias on the question of the primacy of war and its conductiveness to nobility is that the Athenian emphasizes that the noble must be taught and defined in any case by the legislator. Implicit in this claim is that virtuous behaviour in war is not possible simply on the basis of pleasure and pain. For, again, the natural inclination is “to flee the painful and to aim at the pleasant,” which, if strictly obeyed, would make very poor soldiers indeed. There must be another incentive for action and it is the legislator’s work to define it and teach it. And this, the noble, should influence the citizens’ disposition in these disturbing events. For nobility, one may say, is the good that one can acquire when life becomes either very difficult—and thus opens up opportunities for heroic actions—or plentiful—and thus opens up opportunities for leisure and other forms of greatness in domains such as the arts or science.

Although the previous two sections are distinguished with regard to their themes, there is not a clear textual marker between them as there is one between the second and

The third section concerns the necessities of life, the first example of which is the possession of material goods. To be precise, they are not called necessities of life, but it is said that it is “necessity” (anagkē; 632b2) that compels the lawgiver to guard and watch over these things. On the basis of what is said here, we may attempt the following explanation. In the previous two sections, pleasures, pains, desires, fears and hopes were regulated by another good: honor or the noble. In that respect, the lawgiver was introducing, by the means of the laws, a new good in the structure and the dynamics of human psychology. We assume that this good, although it deserves to be called conventional, should work somehow as a compass for pleasures and desires, the purpose of which is to elevate the citizens in the natural hierarchy of the goods. Now, in order to regulate the exchanges of possessions and other transactions, the legislator has to make use of, in addition to honor, “fixed penalties” (dikas taktas; 632b8). In doing this, the lawgiver is introducing, by means of law, not only a new good but a new evil. Justice is not here concerned so much with elevating the citizens as with forcing them to not debase themselves. With respect to possessions, those disobedient to the laws are not merely dishonored but punished.

On the other hand, these low preoccupations are immediately connected with what is called “the end of the whole regime” (telos hapasēs politeias; 632c1). The end of the regime consists in celebrating the death of each citizen in accordance with the merit of his whole life, which is now complete and can thus be evaluated as a whole. At first look, the emphatic tone of the expression gives the impression that the subject has now been

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elevated to a higher level. The end of the regime somehow coincides with the relation of man to his own mortality. How are we to understand this?

Commenting this passage, Strauss says that “what is deathless transcends politics,” and he points out that the Athenian “is silent on piety or the divine things proper in his summary of the natural order of the law.” These remarks invite us to read this passage in connection with the subject of material possessions and the lowering effect that this subject has on the Athenian’s speech. On that basis, we will make two remarks. First, the proximity of fixed penalties with the regime’s concern for the citizens’ death recalls to mind the fact that the death penalty is the ultimate penalty that can be inflicted by the laws. Not only must the city evaluate the life of each citizen once that life is complete, but the city may also decide to put an end to the life of some of its citizens. The recourse to penalties and above all to the death penalty may well be a necessity for the legislator in order to carry out his duty of orienting the citizens towards the greatest goods, the virtues.

But this is highly problematic. For one, the death penalty is mentioned right after the discussion of material possessions, that is, to the least good of all, namely wealth. Second, the death penalty can by no means be said to improve the behavior of the disobedient himself, for obvious reason. And although other citizens may become more law-abiding as a result of the death penalty, they would be doing so only out of fear. As Glaucon powerfully argues in the Republic, fear is hardly a sufficient motive to make

citizens love justice for its own sake.\textsuperscript{229} Of course, Adeimantus holds the same argument with regard to the relation of justice to honor.\textsuperscript{230} This leads us to the second point.

The Athenian says that it is the end of the regime to know what sort of honor should be assigned to each citizen once he has passed away. This means that honor is a good that the city provides even and especially to those who can no longer enjoy it. This complicates the status of honor as good and qualifies its importance in the previous two sections. Honor is an external good, similar in that respect to material goods, except that it does not concern the body: it is personal or one’s own in the way virtue seems to be but, at the very same time, external like a medal or a crown. The evaluation of the whole life by the regime is necessary, as a compass indicating both the noble and the wicked lives, but nonetheless problematic, as a genuine good. This, however, paves the way for what is said next.

Just as the first and second sections are closely connected, the fourth section appears to be the continuation of the third one. The fact that honor was a good to be received after one’s death hinted at the problematical status of honor. Honor was mentioned neither as a human good nor as a divine good in the natural hierarchy of the goods, but it is used in every sphere of life as a compass, so we said, for orienting pleasures, pains, and desires towards higher goods. Now “love of honor” (\textit{philotimiai}; 632d1) is explicitly said to be not the goal or guiding principle of the regime. This is in tension with the assertion that the end of the regime consists in the knowledge of

\textsuperscript{229} Cf. \textit{Republic}, 358e3-359b5.  
\textsuperscript{230} Cf. \textit{Republic}, 367c5-d5.
assigning proper funeral honors to each kind of citizens. For once the legislator knows
this, he still has offices to create and guardians of the law to appoint. And it seems
sensible to assume that these guardians, those who will have devoted their life to the law
and the respect of the law, are also the ones who will receive the greatest funeral honors.
Yet this is precisely what these guardians should make manifest in serving the law: that
they do it not for the sake of honor and wealth but because they are guided by moderation
and justice.

Thus, although honor has been used in every sphere in order to elevate the citizens
towards greater goods, it should be manifest that honor is not the guiding principle of the
regime. Honor must be subservient to moderation and justice. Paradoxically, we find a
counterpart to the status of honor in the status of the intellect. If the guardians are to make
manifest that the regime stands for moderation and justice, this is only because they are
an embodiment of the laws as perfect as possible. But these guardians of the laws did not
create the laws. It is rather the other way around: they are themselves the creation of the
laws. Now the coherence of the code, that is, the fact that all the laws, orders, and
practices organize the citizens’ life into one coherent whole is the work of the legislator’s
intellect. In binding all the parts of the citizens’ lives together, intellect pervades all the
spheres of the human life.\textsuperscript{231} Yet, the omnipresence of intellect does not make of it the
guiding principle of the whole regime. Just as it is the case for honor, intellect is to be
subservient to moderation and justice too. The two virtues that were first identified as the
leaders of the divine goods are finally in a subordinate position: intellect presides over the

\textsuperscript{231} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 632c6: \textit{panta tauta sundēsas ho nous}. 
creation of the law code and prudence, together with true opinion, is the virtue through which the regime endures.

2.2.1.7. The hierarchy of the goods and the virtuous practices

This brief analysis of the Athenian’s restatement of “right” (orthōs; 631b5) legislation furnishes us with an insight, albeit a somewhat crude one, into the general articulations of the city to be founded in the Laws. Before proceeding any further, let us consider what we have.

First of all, the standard with a view to which the political art must be performed is the natural hierarchy of the goods: this is what the legislator should always keep an eye on while laying down his laws. The Athenian’s words could not have made it clearer. It is “by nature” (phusei; 631d1-2) that the divine goods, the virtues, are superior to the human goods, bodily and material, and it is that natural “arrangement” (tetaktai; 631d1) that the lawgiver “must reproduce” (takteon; 631d2) in the city. Accordingly, the first thing that the lawgiver “must proclaim” (diakeleusteon; 631d4) is that all the “orders,” “instructions,” or “recommendations” (prostaxeis; 631d3) that are given to the citizens by the means of the law “look to” (blepousas; 631d3) that natural hierarchy of the goods. This is thus a clear answer to the second question we were left with at the end of our reading of the Statesman, namely, with regard to what is it possible to measure the political work?232 The natural hierarchy of the goods is the standard with a view to which

232. Cf. supra section 1.4.3.
a regime should be instituted and, accordingly, it is the standard with a view to which
regimes can and should be evaluated and ranked.

The Athenian’s restatement furnishes us also with a clear answer to the third
question we raised in the concluding sections of our first chapter, namely, how the
statesman can pass on his political knowledge to the people he rules. The key word is
here ἐπίτευκτα, which we rendered in English by “practices.” This is the object of the
Athenian’s inquiry when, once Kleinias and Megillus have agreed to his suggestion of
taking the opportunity of their long walk to discuss regimes and laws, he asks: “With a
view to what (kata ti) the law imposed on you common meals, and also gymnastic
training and the habit (hexin) of [carrying your] weapons? These three thing: common
meals, gymnastic training, and the constant carrying of weapons are three peculiar Dorian
practices. Kleinias, as we saw, responded that these military practices are “according to
nature” (kata phusin; 626a4-5), for the natural state of things is war. Despite everything
that can be said in “words” (onomä; 626a3) or in speech, war is always present “in
deeds” (tōi d’ergōi; 626a3). Yet, the Athenian succeeded in revealing that behind this
crude realism lies an appreciation of man’s excellence which affirms a hierarchy of the
goods in saying that “the victory of oneself over oneself is, of all the victories, the first
and the best.” Since Kleinias seems to define courage by such a victory, the Athenian
is not completely wrong in attributing to Kleinias the explanation of the Cretan laws with
a view to virtue. But now that the Athenian has spelled out the hierarchy of the goods

233. Cf. supra section 1.4.4.
234. Laws, 625c6-8.
235. Laws, 626e2-3.
which is truly in accordance with nature, the inquiry is brought back to its beginning as the terms of it have been specified: “let us consider first the practices (epitēdeumata) [favoring the acquisition] of courage.” In short, practices inculcate the natural hierarchy of the goods into each citizen. It is by means of practices that the laws “translate” (to quote Bernadete again) the speech about the hierarchy of the goods into deeds.

Although the standard clearly indicates the goal of the city and the way in which the knowledge of that goal is passed on the citizens, that does not mean that everything is resolved. For as it has been pointed out at the very beginning of Chapter One, a hierarchy is something different from a harmony. When we formulated the problem on the basis of the Statesmen, we were looking for a whole, just like the armor-maker in Xenophon’s Memorabilia performs his work with a view to the natural wholeness of the body that will wear the armor and with a view to the particular activity of that body. In the Athenian’s restatement, however, the problem of the wholeness or coherence of that standard, that is, the problem of its inner harmony—which is the same as the question of the harmony of the goods simply—is resolved by his assertion that the presence of the higher goods is a sufficient condition for the presence of the lower. This assertion is however hardly reconcilable with the fact of the heterogeneity of the goods; we may therefore doubt that virtue is a sufficient condition for health. On the other hand, the Athenian asserts that intellect is the leader of all the goods and it, alone, binds all the goods.

238. Cf. supra section 1.1.1.
elements of a human life together. Is this not tantamount to saying that the highest good provides for all the lower? But if this is the case, it only raises anew the problem of determining what model the intellect uses for its bonding work. If all the goods look to intellect, toward what thing or whole does intellect itself look?

But from another perspective, the Athenian’s point is clear in that the purpose of the law code is to make citizens whole. The matter of the legislator’s work is the human life as a whole in which four spheres are distinguished. The purpose of the whole legislation appears to be nothing other than to make out of these four spheres a coherent whole with respect to virtue. Thus, even though we have no immediate answers to the main problem about the relation between the hierarchy of the goods and the harmony of the goods, we may be satisfied with the fact that we have the impression of dwelling in the core of our subject. And this can become even clearer by a comparison with the Republic, which comparison will reveal the Laws as the appropriate dialogue for our investigation.

2.2.1.8. The Laws and the Republic: epitēdeumata and ergon

In the Republic the city is ruled by philosophers. The rationale behind this decision is that the philosophers are those who aim at knowing the nature of each thing. On the one hand, this means that they have no benefit to gain from ruling the city and thus they will not usurp power. One the other hand, the city needs rulers that know the individual nature of each citizen. Such a knowledge is required because the central principle upon which the city is built is that each citizen has a specific nature which suits
him for a specific work. In order to understand the difference between the *Laws* and the *Republic*, it is necessary to understand the importance of the notion of work (*ergon*) in the *Republic*.

Although work is a crucial notion to the understanding of the *Republic*, it is disturbing to notice that the assumption that each man is naturally suited for performing a unique work is never discussed in the whole dialogue. Its only justification is the claim that human beings are naturally “not quite homogeneous” (*ou panu homoios*; 370a8-b1). It is on this basis alone that, first, one work is attached to each individual and, second, the nature of each individual is reduced to the performing of his or her specific work. Therefore, one fulfils and perfects one’s individual nature by the virtuous practice of doing one’s unique work. Now, in order to put these works into a hierarchy, a goal has to be determined. In the *Republic*, we see the development of a city through a succession of three goals: health, bodily pleasures, and the city’s oneness or harmony. It is with the third goal that we best see how politics necessarily calls forth or mandates the assertion of a hierarchy of some sort.

In the *Republic*, the political hierarchy is a hierarchy of works which aims only at the city’s particular oneness. Now, it is crucial to see that, in the *Republic*, everything happens just as if the harmony of the city would come about spontaneously out of the hierarchy of the works (*erga*). This impression is due, again, to the fundamental assumption that the city’s harmony rests on the principle of one man, one work. For once that assumption is granted, the first thing the city needs is the knowledge of each one’s specific nature, so that the right work can be assigned to the right person. The knowledge
of each one’s specific nature is therefore the first work in the city, i.e., the work of the rulers. But since the city’s unity presupposes the city’s existence, the city also requires the capacity of securing the land against foreign attack. The second work is therefore the defense of the city, that of the guardians. And finally, the city’s harmony requires the production of the material goods without which the citizens could not work for the city’s best interest. The third work is then that of the craftsmen. Accordingly, justice, which aims at the city’s unity, is defined in the *Republic* as each one’s performing his or her work only. Consequently, justice not only serves the city’s interest or the common good, but it gives to each what is truly his own (his work) and it sets up a hierarchy among the works, a hierarchy which is reflected in both the city’s classes and the human soul’s powers.

But the model for this hierarchy is the city rather than nature. To the extent that the happiness of the city necessitates the rule of reason over everything else, it might be true to say that the hierarchy which is revealed through the logic of politics—when this logic is pushed to its limit in the happy city—appears to be in accordance with nature. This is why the *Republic* shows us a wonderful alliance between politics and philosophy. Still, the whole demonstration rests on a reduction of the human nature. For the fundamental principle of the city, to repeat it once again, is that each human being is by nature suited

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239. We must however note that the hierarchy of virtues set forth in the *Republic* does not agree with that set forth in the *Laws*. In the *Republic*, the hierarchy is as follows: intellect or prudence (philosophers), courage (guardians), and moderation (craftsmen)—as for justice, it has no specific place in the city and yet it is the very virtue of the city as a whole or the city itself. Accordingly, one may say that justice is the highest virtue in the *Republic*, for it is the virtue that makes possible the rule of the intellect. So the hierarchy might be better stated as follows: justice (the city), intellect or prudence (philosophers), courage (guardians), and moderation (craftsmen). In the Book I of the *Laws*, by contrast, the hierarchy is said to be as follows: intellect or prudence, moderation, justice, and courage.
to perform one, and only one work. If this assumption is flawed, the harmonization of works the city stands for is of little help for the individual. For one thing, a human being cannot delegate to a part of himself the work of taking care of his family, to another part the work of protecting his city, and to another to work of making his own reason right, as the city does. Whereas the city delegates all these works to different natures, a human being has but one nature. Accordingly, even if the hierarchy set forth in the *Republic* should be the model for the individual, the way in which the city harmonizes the multiple and heterogeneous works in order to be the happy city can hardly be imitated by any individual.

In short, the hierarchy of the *Republic* rests on the identification of the ultimate good with the city. The city is the whole or the one, i.e., the one good toward which everything is oriented and toward which everyone looks. Somehow, the heterogeneity of the goods is forgotten. This is done through an enlargement and a limitation of each citizen’s sense of their “own” with respect to the city. This conception of the highest good being that of the city is translated in deed by the assignment of one, and only one work to each. Of course, many practices are instituted in the beautiful city such as a specific education for the guardians and the three communistic laws, but the aim is for each to perform his work as best as he can. Hence follows the equation: everyone is happy when the city is happy and the city is happy when everyone performs his own work.

By contrast, the *Laws* suggests a different scheme. Happiness is attributed to human beings and the city appears rather as a condition for happiness, although we must of course establish whether it is a sufficient or only necessary condition. In any event, the
city appears to be a condition for happiness because the city stipulates the content of happiness. But the city does more than that, the city also shapes the life of the citizens through peculiar practices (*epitēdeumata*) in order to translate the hierarchy of the goods into a way of life. It is into that way of life that we must look if we want to gain a better understanding of the harmonization of the goods.

Finally, we are now in a position to state quite simply the difference between the *Laws* and the *Republic*. In the *Laws*, the counterpart of “work” (*ergon*) is “practices” (*epitēdeumata*). “Practices” encompasses a larger and more variegated category of phenomena than “work.” “Practices” are practiced in private and in public, at work and in leisure times, in peace and in war, in joy as in pain. The aim of the practices is not to make the individual citizen specialized in the production of one good, but rather to instill in him the habit of virtue and the desire of the higher goods in the many activities in which the citizens partake. Whereas in the *Republic* there is one work for one citizen, the *Laws* institutes many practices, whose purpose is to remind one in each situation of the higher, even when one is dealing with the lower.

2.2.1.9. Testing the Dorian code and testing the standard

The standard proposed in Book I thus paves the way for our investigation by identifying two important steps. The first is to understand what the city says about the hierarchy of the goods (that is, the city’s self-understanding about human happiness), and the second, to determine how this is translated into deeds, the specific practices the city institutes which compose its unique way of life. These are the two parts of the Athenian’s
restatement. We recognize these two steps when the three old men undertake the colony’s legislation. Books IV and V present the city’s speech, its self-understanding. In the remaining Books, the old men flesh out the practices and thus the way of life of the Cretan colony. This is the city’s way of life.

Yet, between the Athenian’s restatement in Book I and the city’s speech in Book IV there are almost three whole Books. Instead of jumping right into Book IV, we will first take some time to consider the development of these three Books. The general itinerary has already been stated: in Books I to III the Dorian code is stated and criticized. At the end of Book III there seems to be a general agreement on the fact that the colony needs a new legislation, and that they cannot simply replicate that of Crete. In some way, therefore, the weakness of the Dorian code must have become manifest to them in what preceded. It is important to understand these weaknesses, for these very weaknesses should shed light on the standard that will be used to build the new colony. In other words, the test that the Dorian code will undergo in Books I to III (a the test that we assume it will fail) should also be a test for the standard the Athenian has proposed.

2.2.2. The Education to Virtue: The Limits of Practices
2.2.2.1. The Spartan practice and the practice of pleasure

The Athenian’s exposition of the standard forces the two Dorians to start their demonstration about the excellence of their own regime from the beginning again. This is so because all the interlocutors appear to accept this standard and consider that, in retrospect, Kleinias’ demonstration was not satisfying. At any rate, Megillus invites the
Athenian to question Klenias anew. But as it turns out, it is Megillus himself who undertakes the task of defending the goodness of the Dorian code on the ground of the Athenian’s standard. If Megillus were to fail, one might conclude that none of them is capable of such a demonstration. This might be attributed to the Dorians as individuals, i.e., to their poor understanding of the matter, or to the Dorian code itself.

“Rightly” (orthós; 631b5) established laws should provide those who live under these laws with all the goods. Since the possession of the lower goods depends on the possession of the higher ones, a truly divine code should care above all about the higher goods, the divine ones. These are the four virtues: intellect-prudence, moderation, justice, and courage. Thus, the Athenian suggests that they consider the “practices” (epitēdeumata; 632e1) favoring the acquisition of courage first and then use it as a model for a consideration of each virtue. If this exercise is carried out properly, it should show that the Dorian code truly looks to the “complete virtue” (aretēs pasēs; 632e5-6) as the goal of the regime. Encouraged by the Athenian, Magillus has no problem in listing five different Spartan practices of preparing for war or of promoting the endurance of suffering, toils, cold and heat. But when Megillus agrees to define courage as struggle not only against fear and pain but also against longings, pleasures, and flatteries, he is at a loss to name even one practice that would promote this side of courage. His fellow traveller from Crete can think of nothing either.

Since the problem is simply to point to a practice promoting the endurance regarding pleasure rather than to explain how a practice would favor a virtue, one is

tempted to conclude that it is the Dorian code itself which is flawed rather than the two Dorians’ understanding. In any case, there seems to be a blind spot in the Dorian code, a blind spot regarding pleasure. On the other hand, although Megillus accepts the two-side definition of courage, it is nonetheless unusual to define courage with respect to pleasure.\textsuperscript{241} Why did the Athenian not grant that the Dorian practices promoted courage, and then turn to look for the flaw in their code in its understanding of moderation (especially since he will do make this distinction in a few pages)?\textsuperscript{242} Strauss suggests that in agreeing that courage is also a fight against pleasures, Megillus “tacitly admits that courage rightly understood includes moderation.”\textsuperscript{243} In other words, what comes up here again is the problem of complete virtue, or that of unifying or harmonizing the virtues with one another. Megillus might be wrong in attributing to courage the power of “fighting” or resisting some sorts of pleasure in certain circumstances, but he might be right in sensing that in order to be truly courageous one also has to be moderate. This raises the question of the unity of virtue, i.e., whether it is possible to be truly courageous without being also truly virtuous and thus having the complete virtue.

The second element worth stressing in that short section is that whereas Megillus and Kleinias cannot identify one practice instituted with a view to pleasure, they do agree that being weaker than oneself means above all being overcome by pleasure. To Kleinias at least, it appears that, “all [of us], isn’t it?, we say that [it is] the one overcome by

\textsuperscript{241} Cf. England, \textit{The Laws of Plato}, I, p.222: “The fact that temptations, like privations, are spoken of as \textit{endured} and \textit{combated} […] enables the Ath. to slip imperceptibly from the subject of courage to that of temperance.”

\textsuperscript{242} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 635e5-6.

\textsuperscript{243} Strauss, \textit{The Argument}, p.10.
pleasure [that is] the one who is inferior to himself in a blameworthy way rather than to one [overcome] by pain.”

The point is that man’s relation to pleasure concerns himself intimately, so much so that it describes his relation to himself. Man’s relation to pain is especially important with regard to war, i.e., with regard to man as a soldier, whereas man’s relation to pleasure may be said to be important for man as a human being. As we recall, according to the Athenian’s restatement the first sphere of human activity the legislator must consider deals with “the pains and pleasures, and the desires and ardors of all the erotic longings.” Three terms out of four are connected to pleasure rather than pain. War may well be all about pain and suffering but human life is not necessarily so. In short, all these elements only serve to put more emphasis on the importance of pleasure in human life and on the significance of the absence of any clear legislation about pleasure in the Dorian code.

Yet, the silence on pleasure in the Dorian code is, in one sense at least, very understandable. The whole problem is the practice of pleasure. For all the Spartan practices make sense on the assumption that it is possible to promote endurance by accustoming a human being to pain. And being accustomed to pain decreases the fear of that which causes the pain. The equation is simple: the more an individual is accustomed to pain, the less he will fear pain and, therefore, the more he will be capable of facing pain. What about pleasure then? Does the equation is the more one is accustomed to

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244. Laws, 633e3–6.
pleasure, the less he will desire pleasure and, therefore, the more he will be capable of resisting pleasure, still hold?

2.2.2.2 Rising above one’s own laws: to see the truth and the best

Megillus’ and Kleiniass’ incapacity to name a practice instituted with a view to pleasure prompts the Athenian to openly criticize the Dorian code. This critique is however motivated by a clear purpose: the wish “to see the truth as well as the best.”246 As Strauss explains, that means “the truth about the laws of the city in question and the best which may differ from these laws.”247 In order to do so, that is, in order to say the truth about the Dorian code, the Athenian retains a shadow of the Dorian code, for the way in which he launches his criticism of the Dorian code is at the same time a submission to this very code. Although the Spartan and the Cretan regimes forbid anyone among the young to criticize the laws and command them to say that all the laws have been finely instituted by the gods, it is possible for old men to discuss the laws in private.248 Since there are no young men among them, the Athenian draws the conclusion that they can therefore discuss the Dorian laws quite legally. Kleiniass praises the Athenian highly for having “most correctly” (orthotata; 634e7) guessed the original intention of their lawgiver and he even encourages him to proceed in his criticism hoping

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246. Laws, 634c7.
that a discussion over the defects of the code may lead to its cure. “The laconic Megillus does not object,” as Patch puts it.249

As it has been pointed out already, the “difficulty” (aporôn; 635b3) the Athenian feels about the Dorian code concerns moderation, the practice of pleasures. The Athenian wonders why the Dorian legislator did not apply his reasoning on pains and fears to pleasures and play. The reasoning goes as follows: the habit, from childhood on, of fleeing pains and fears on every occasion has a twofold consequence: (1) fleeing from the necessary toils, pains, and fears of life and (2) fleeing from those who have been trained in these things and therefore ending up being enslaved by them.250 The legislator who has

249. Andrew James Patch, Plato’s Jurisprudence: The Goal of Wise Legislation in Plato’s Laws (1999, University of Toronto, unpublished dissertation), p.56. According to Patch, this is a crucial moment in the dialogue, for it reveals that the alleged divine origin of the Dorian code is a fiction aiming at political stability. Patch furnishes a brilliant summary of the development of Book I up to now with a view to the problem of prophecy: “How then does the Athenian stranger refute the contention of Cleinias and Megillus that the Cretan and Spartan law codes were communicated by Zeus and Apollo? He begins with arguments intended to show that what the two Dorians believe to be the goals of those codes are not the goals of a good law code. These arguments make a great impression on the Dorians. But their claim or contention that the Dorian codes are divine initially prevents them from concluding from those arguments that the Dorian codes aim at the wrong goals: law codes revealed by gods are perfect, and so cannot aim at the wrong goals. They are at a loss how to reconcile this implication of their claim with the apparent incorrectness of the goals of the Dorian codes (see 628e2-5 and esp. 630d2-3). The Athenian suggests a way of resolving the difficulty, a way that is fully consistent with their claim. Since the Dorian codes are divine (the Athenian grants this premise), they cannot aim at the wrong goals, cannot be imperfect. Hence the appearance that the goals of the Dorian codes are incorrect must have been the result of misinterpretation (630d4-7). In order to correct that misinterpretation, in order to understand the divine and therefore perfect codes, the Athenian suggests that he and they consider what the goals of a perfect law code must be. They do not object to this procedure (630d9-631b2). After he has sketched the standard of a perfect law code (631b3-632c7), a standard whose correctness they do not dispute, he imposes on the two Dorians the task of reinterpreting the Cretan and Spartan codes in conformity with that standard by showing how those codes promote the goals of a perfect law code (632d1-e3). This they prove unable to accomplish (634b7-e4). It becomes clear to them that those goals are very imperfectly promoted by the Dorian codes, in other words, that the Dorian codes are very imperfect. This conclusion contradicts the implication drawn by both the Athenian and themselves from the premise that the Dorian laws are divine. The Dorians therefore feel compelled to abandon that premise. They admit that the divine origin of the Dorian laws is a fiction that was devised by the Dorian lawgiver to protect their laws from irresponsible or unwise criticism (634e7-635a2)” (p.57-59).

250. Here I am more inclined to follow England who see in pheuxeisthai (635c2) a “paronomasia” which “helps the formal statement of the analogy: it is not only pain and alarm that they will run away from; they will run away from those men who have had the training which they themselves have missed” (The Laws of
reasoned that way should have come to the same conclusion about pleasure: if citizens, from childhood on, “do not experience the greatest pleasure” (*apeiroi tōn megistōn hēdonōn*; 635c5-6) and are not trained in resisting these pleasures, they will suffer the same thing as those overcome by fears: (1) they can be compelled to do shameful things and (2) they will end up being enslaved by those who have acquired the power of resisting pleasures. Kleinias grants that the Athenian appears to have a point, but if this is to be the ground for a criticism of the Dorian code, a more detailed demonstration is needed. So the Athenian is willing to take the same path as they took for courage, and challenges them anew to find in their regimes practices favoring the training in pleasures, except that this time he makes clear that the discussion is concerned with a new part of virtue, namely “moderation” (*sōphrosunēs*; 635e6).

In between the first and the second formulation of the question by the Athenian, Megillus appears to have been giving the question some consideration, for he now holds that two practices which he has already mentioned with respect to courage also favor the acquisition of moderation: common meals and the gymnastic training. Surprisingly, the Athenian objects to the idea that one practice could provide many goods. By way of responding, he points out that common meals may favor civil strife and gymnastic training homosexuality, which is a corruption of the pleasures related to sexuality when sexuality is practiced in accordance with nature. Hearing an Athenian calling him a

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*Plato, I, p.226*. As England argues, this would also create a parallelism between the lack of training in pains (635b6-c3) and the lack of training in pleasure (635e6-d1). The alternative reading is to take the clause *hopotan eis anagkaiaous elthēi ponous kai phobous kai lupas* in conjunction with *pheuseisthai* as Pangle does: “the result will be that when he gets into unavoidable toils and fears and pains, he will flees before those [...]” Pangle’s reading (but des Places does the same in the French edition Les Belles Lettres) implies that the “unavoidable toils and fears and pains” are those of war.
homosexual, the Spartan Megillus responds in kind: the worst practice related to pleasure is rather these Dionysia, these drinking parties à la Athenian, for these are the cause of “the greatest sort of insolence (hubresi) and total mindlessness” in a city. To put an end to this calling names—not however without having the last word by pointing to the Spartan women’s looseness—the Athenian says that whether or not a “practice” (epitēdeuma; 637d4) favoring drunkenness should be instituted in a city deserves great consideration from a lawgiver and he points to many warlike nations that have the same practice. Megillus has a clear enough criterion that should end the discussion: we, Spartans, beat all these cities, he says. Surprisingly, again, the Athenian rejects Megillus criterion, arguing that military victory cannot settle whether a practice is noble or not.

According to the Athenian, in order to blame a practice one must consider it when the practice in question is conducted in the best possible way. Only when the criticism hits the practice at its best can it be said to hit the practice as such. And to illustrate how they should proceed with any practice, the Athenian is willing to consider with them the case of drunkenness more closely.

As we have indicated, there are two surprising things in that short section preparing the discussion of symposia, i.e., drinking parties. The first one is encapsulated in the Athenian’s assertion that “it is difficult for regimes to become uncontroversial similarly in deed and in speech (ergōi kai logōi).” Comparing regimes to bodies, the Athenian explains that “it may happen that, just like it is the case with body, it is
impossible to prescribe one practice (*hen epitēdeuma*) for one body in which it would not appear that it is at the same [time] harmful to some [part] of our bodies and beneficial to others.\textsuperscript{255} This is, on the level of principle, the Athenian’s justification for rejecting Megillus’s claim that common meals and gymnastic training favor both courage and moderation. But if this assertion is surprising, it is so with regard to the question of the harmony of the goods. For we understand that a healthy practice does not, in fact, promote the health of the whole body, but of only a part of it. What is more, not only may such a practice promote the health of only a part, it may be harmful for another part. Jogging, for example, is good for the heart but bad for the knee. But if the health of the whole body stands or falls on the health or good shape of all the parts of the body, this points to a grave difficulty. For it means that the harmonization of the good of all the parts through the prescription of a set of practices is next to impossible.

The categorical way in which the Athenian makes his assertion leads us to this conclusion. Applied to politics, this conclusion means that there might be a tension, to say the very least, between the truth (the regime in deeds) and the best (the regime in speech). Now, we find an illustration of that in the Athenian’s second surprising assertion. To prove the baseness of drinking parties and how politically unsound they are as a practice, Megillus states the fact that they, Spartans, have defeated all the drinking warlike nations or tribes the Athenian has mentioned. The answer of the latter is straightforward:

Best of men, do not say these things. For many routs and pursuits have occurred, and will occur again, without a clear cause, wherefore we should not

\textsuperscript{255} Laws, 636a6-b1.
speak of this as a clear criterion, but a controversial one, with respect to noble and not [noble] practices, when we speak of victory and defeat in battle; since, indeed, in battle bigger cities win over smaller ones.\textsuperscript{256}

The truth is quite simple: the bigger the city is, the more powerful military it is. The corollary is that bigger cities can defeat more virtuous but smaller ones. In other words, the virtues, i.e., the divine goods, do not vouch for political security.

To be sure, the Athenian’s responses to Megillus in that section qualify what he has said in his earlier restatement to the effect that the possession of the higher goods provides for the possession of the lower ones. The whole difficulty is to determine the extent and the importance of that qualification. On the one hand, the standard (in speech) for any regime that the Athenian laid down earlier is counterbalanced by his present assertion that regimes are not as uncontroversial in deeds as they are in speech. This means that, although the best may be for a regime to look to the higher goods, it may not be true that the higher goods will provide for the lower. On the other hand, a comparison of the two passages reveals an important feature of the Athenian’s standard that passed almost unnoticed. The perspective of the standard is the individual, it is not the city. For when the Athenian says that the truth about war is that bigger cities defeat smaller ones, he rejects Megillus’ claim that in war courageous and moderate cities defeat immoderate and party-drinking ones. The corollary, as has been stressed, is that moderation and courage neither vouch for nor provide political security. But does that mean that divine goods neither vouch for nor provide human ones? The problem is that the standard does not mention political security as a good. Of course, health and strength are mentioned,

\textsuperscript{256} Laws, 638a3-b1.
and therefore, presumably, physical force, but if military power boils down to number
and size, we cannot but conclude that it is forgotten in the standard. The man, as an
individual, is what the standard for any regime considers, not the city.

In order to emphasize the peculiarity of the Athenian’s standard, it might be
helpful to revisit the movement that led from the city to the individual. When interrogated
on the reason behind Dorian practices, Kleinias answered that the perpetual war among
the cities makes them necessary. Then, Kleinias asserted that this perpetual state of war
exists also inside the city, inside the family, and inside the individual. But he also said
that the war inside each man is the principle or the origin of the argument. Yet, the case
the Athenian considered first is that of the family. In that context, Kleinias affirmed that
the best judge might not be the first one with regard to virtue. Instead of eliminating the
bad ones or making the good ruling the bad, Kleinias held that the best judge would
rather reconcile all the brothers and establish friendship between them. This judge the
Athenian called a lawgiver.\textsuperscript{257} Apparently, it is this judge that should also lay down laws
for the city. And these laws should be established with a view to peace as well, that is,
with a view for domestic peace, because the necessity of external war requires civil
peace. In other words, the exigencies of war prevent the lawgiver from legislating with a
view to the highest only: the absolute rule of the virtuous, nay, the absolute purgation of
the bad and the low. But this focus in the necessity of civil peace also allowed for an
entirely new perspective on the human soul in a state of war. For whereas the necessity of

\textsuperscript{257} It is in fact Kleinias who calls it a lawgiver at 628a5, but in so doing he follows the Athenians who
just said that this judge would “lay down laws for them” (628a2).
external war had a lowering effect on virtue and the good and called for a compromise between the good and the bad, the necessity of civil peace seemed to have an elevating effect, for the necessity of peace calls for higher virtues than courage, namely prudence prudence, moderation, and justice. This permitted a consideration of civil peace for its own sake and it is from that perspective that the Athenian formulated the standard for any regime. Now, on the basis of the Athenian’s response to Megillus, one can see that external war has not been completely forgotten. It still remains in the background. But the status of external war as a criterion for the institution of practices is now completely demolished. The exigencies of war may still be true, but they no longer lead as obviously toward what is best. In short, the Athenian appears to be willing to sacrifice a little bit of political security for the sake what is best, just like a jogger is willing to hurt his knee for the health of his heart. The problem is to find the new criterion which will determine which practices are noble and which are not.

The movement of the discussion suggests a direction: whereas war required being accustomed to pain, the experience of pleasure is now at the forefront. The city’s survival requires, first and foremost, the psychological overcoming of pain, and ultimately the willingness to die for one’s own city. Human happiness appears to have more to do with the experience of pleasure and the resistance to certain kinds of pleasure. However, the content of happiness is not yet crystal clear nor are the noble pleasures.
2.2.2.3. Symposium and education: a new practice for a new goal

The discussion of symposia is introduced as an example that will show the “correct method” (orthēn methodon; 638e4) of discussing the goodness of any practice. The wrong method has just been illustrated by Megillus and, to some extent, by the Athenian himself, i.e., blaming on the ground of military outcome and praising on the ground of its acceptance by a multitude of people. Using once more a bodily analogy, the Athenian says that the correct method of discussing practices is the same as that of discussing food, which suggests that practices are to the soul as food is to the body. The correct method is to consider “the effect” (or product or even work: ergasion; 638c6) of a practice when it is used in the right circumstances. Now, this has the direct effect of undermining the authority of the two Dorians in that matter, for they have no first-hand experience of a symposium conducted in the right circumstances. In the right circumstances, a symposium is, to begin with, conducted by a “sober and wise ruler,” and obviously the symposia Megillus has seen when he was outside Sparta, on the basis of which he has drawn the conclusion of the debasing effect of the practice itself, were not of that sort. With the dismissing of Megillus’ experience and conclusion, the Athenian has now gained complete authority over the matter. The only problem is that he, too, admits having never seen nor heard of a whole symposium conducted in the right circumstances. Yet, he nonetheless knows what these circumstances are, for he proves able to define what a symposium conducted in “the most right” (orthotata; 640d9)

261. Cf. Laws, 639c1-d1 and 639e4-640a2. Cf. also Patch, Plato’s Jurisprudence, p.70.
circumstances looks like: it is an “intercourse” (sunousia; 639d3) of “friends, getting together in time of peace and with goodwill” (philōn d’en eirēnēi pros philous koinōnēsontōn philophrosunēs; 640b7-8), under “the rule of a sober and wise man” (nēphonta te kai sofphon archonta; 640d4) who, by preventing any “disturbance” (atherubos; 640c2) that alcohol might cause, will be the “guardian” (phulax; 640c10) of their friendship, which friendship will then be “increased” (pleionos; 640d1) through the intercourse itself.

The Athenian’s correct method of discussing practices is peculiar, to put it lightly. One can hardly object to it on the level of principle: in order to show that a practice is a bad one, one must show that it is bad even—i.e., especially—when the practice is at its best. The problem is that the practice may never be at its best in deed. Just as Megillus’ criticism of the Athenian symposia may have missed the goodness of the symposium, it is possible that the Athenian’s criticism of Dorian practices (common meals and gymnastic) has not hit these practices yet. On the other hand, a too strong distinction between what is seen in deed and the best revealed in speech may make the discussion very difficult. In other words, the Athenian’s method stands or falls on the possibility of determining a criterion with a view to which practices can be evaluated for what they are as such. But in order to apply the criterion, one would have to know, first of all, the effect or the product (ergasian; 638c6) of the practice when it is conducted in the best possible way. In Kleinias’ words, we need to know first “what good (agathon) [...] would [the practice] do to us?”, “what great thing (ti mega) would befall the individuals and the city?”

262. Laws, 641a4-5 and b1-2.
knowledge of the good the practice produces is, one may assume, essential for
distinguishing the practice in deed from the practice at its best. Yet, the Athenian has
managed to do so only on the basis of the right circumstances in which symposia should
take place. He has thus established the need of a “wise and sober ruler” before
establishing the goal or the good such a ruler will pursue.

The fact that the goal pursued by the practice of symposia remains to be stated
indicates that the discussion has been elevated to a higher level. For we recall that the
original aim of this discussion was to discuss practices favoring moderation. Yet the
connection between drinking parties and moderation is not entirely obvious as the
reaction of the two Dorians indicates. Besides, when Kleinius asks about the good that
symposia would do for us, he compares it to the good produced by an army correctly led,
namely victory in war. This, we recall, was the goal Kleinius assigned to the Dorian code
as a whole at the very beginning of the Laws. In short, Kleinius no longer has in mind
courage and moderation as two specific goods, but the good the regime pursues as a
whole. All this has been somewhat prepared by the Athenian who has contrasted war and
peace again and again. In contrast to armies, symposia are social relations related to
peace. Yet, the goal such intercourse should pursue is all the more elusive. We can put it
that way: why would someone sober and wise be willing to rule over drunkards? This
cannot but recall to us the question the first Book of the Republic leads to: what can a just
man gain from being the ruler of his city?
Now, the Athenian gives a straightforward answer: rightly conducted symposia produce the great good of contributing to the education of the citizens, which benefits both the city and the individuals.

It is not difficult to say that those who are well educated will become good men (*andres agathoi*), and [that] having become such, they will fare nobly (*prattoien kalos*) in other things, and, in addition, they will defeat their enemies in battle; education thus brings also victory, but victory sometimes [brings] the loss of education; for [there are] many [who] have become more insolent (*hubristoteroi*) due to victories in war and were filled with ten thousand other evils due to their insolence (*di’hubrin*), and education has never been Cadmean, but many victories have been and will be such for human beings.263

Education (*paideia*) is thus the new goal or criterion. The way in which the Athenian presents it, education includes victory in war. The two goals are distinguished from one another by the fact that victory in war does not necessarily bringing about education. However, the Athenian says that education is a sufficient condition for victory in war, for victory in war is one of the good things education brings about. Recalling what the Athenian has said earlier, this means that victory in war has at least two causes: the size of the city and the education of the citizens. Thus, we understand that if two cities, similar with respect to education, face each other on the field, the bigger one should have the upper hand. Accordingly, education cannot be said to be simply a sufficient condition for victory in war. On the other hand, as a goal for the whole regime, education can be looked at as an extension of the Dorian perspective. After all, the Dorian practices, the Dorian way of life, are nothing else than a peculiar form of education. This form of education may bring about victory, but as Kleinias himself has already admitted, even if

the good men were to be defeated in the field, they would somehow remain the stronger, at least from a moral perspective. In other words, it was already in the two Dorians’ mind that the specific education which prepares them to be great soldiers is a higher good than victory itself.

However, what is in clear contrast with the Dorian perspective is the idea that symposia can promote this education which shows its greatness in war. Kleinias thus asks the Athenian to show them how this can be true. At this point, the Athenian seems to have some hesitation. At first he says that he cannot present the truth to them but only how the truth appears to him, that is, his own opinion on the matter. Then he says that such a matter would require long speeches in the Athenian fashion, so that discussing how symposia promote education requires some sort of “Athenization” already. He thus offers them the option to drop the subject.

The two Dorians respond that they both love Athens in a certain way and are willing to adopt the Athenian way of speaking for the sake of the subject. Among all the things the two old Dorians say here, one deserves to be emphasized. Megillus recognizes that “those, among the Athenians, who are good are so in a different way,” different from that of the Dorians’. To Megillus, the difference is this: “[the good Athenians] alone are good by their own nature without compulsion (aneu anagkēs autophuōs), by a divine dispensation; [the good Athenians] are truly, and not artificially good.”264 As Patch points out, Megillus implies more than the fact that outstanding goodness is the product of nature, divine allotment, or chance.

264. Laws, 642c6-d1.
If true excellence were simply a product of chance, its being found among Athenians only would be inexplicable. It is the absence (the comparative absence) of compulsion in Athenian life that explains that fact. True excellence, then, is not only not a product of compulsion. It is incompatible with compulsion: it is a delicate plant that withers under the influence of compulsion.\textsuperscript{265}

The difficulty to which Patch points can be rephrased as follows. The institution of practices is a kind of political education enforced by the laws. It is thus compulsive or coercive. Although this form of education can certainly breed virtue as in Sparta and Crete, the virtue it breeds runs the risk of not being genuine. What is more, this form of education may impede the development of genuine virtue, of genuine goodness, because of its coercive nature. This is not to say that the development of one’s own goodness does not require education, but it may require a different sort of education, an education that might be better described as cultivation than coercion. Assigning education as the new goal for the institution of practices can thus permit a distinction between two forms of education: one which is limited to the city and one which points beyond the city.

\subsection{2.2.2.4. The First Definitions of Education}

The Athenian will now show how symposia can contribute to education. He thus begins by stating the definition of education. In so doing, he raises the typical Socratic \textit{ti estin} question: “let us define what is education (\textit{ti pote estin}) and what power it has.”\textsuperscript{266}

According to the subtitle of the work, the \textit{Laws} is about lawgiving (\textit{nomothesiai}). The \textit{Laws} shows what lawgiving looks like, what it is in deed, rather than searching for the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{265} Patch, \textit{Plato’s Jurisprudence}, p.74.
\item \textsuperscript{266} \textit{Laws}, 643a5.
\end{itemize}
proper definition of it. But the activity of lawgiving now leads to education, to human beings educated in a particular way, as citizens of a particular city. Performing the activity of lawgiving, i.e., performing it well, thus requires an understanding of what education is. We cannot help drawing a comparison with the Republic. Book I of the Republic leads to the question: what is justice? Book I of the Laws leads to the question: what is education? It is very tempting to say that the subject of the Laws is education. Be that as it may, the capital point is that a Socratic question is raised. As Strauss remarks, it is not discussed in the typical Socratic way, for the Athenian will answer the question rather than initiating a dialectic investigation. Yet, the Athenian provides at least four separate definitions of education, which makes it difficult to discern his true teaching.

The first definition of education reads as follows.

Whatever a man intends to become good at, this very [business] he must be concerned with from childhood, [while] playing as well as being serious [he must be concerned with] each of the things related to his business (tou pragmatos). [...] And [one must] endeavor, through their games, to direct the pleasures and desires of children there, [the businesses] in which they themselves need to reach accomplishment (telos echein). The capital point about education, we say, is this correct upbringing (tēn orthēn trophēn), which will best (malista) lead the soul of the child at play toward an erotic attachment (eis erōta) to that which he will have to do when he will be himself an accomplished man (andr’ auton teleion) with respect to the excellence of his business (tēn tou pragmatos aretēs).

This form of education is very much like the one instituted in the beautiful city of the Republic. Although the word ergon is not used, the purpose is to direct all the activities of

268. If the discussion of education is not Socratic, it does, however, remain loosely Platonic, and is somewhat reminiscent of the beginning of the Sophist where the Stranger from Elea provides several different definitions of what a sophist is; cf. Sophist, 231c9-e6.
269. Laws, 643b4-7 and 643c6-d3.
one human being toward the practice of one specific work. In contrast to the *Republic*, however, the ground on which one specific business (*pragmatos*) is assigned to this specific man is not specified. In the *Republic*, the ground is nature and the love of one’s work merges into the love of the city. Here, the city is not even mentioned once.

Education is all about expertise and specialization, it is all about becoming excellent in one domain, in one business, but nothing is said about the intrinsic worth of the business in question. Accordingly, to the extent that it is through the same pedagogical process that someone become an excellent farmer or an excellent soldier, farmers and soldiers appear to be on the same footing with respect to education. For each of them, education boils down to an “erotic attachment” to their business.

As we shall see, the Athenian will address this difficulty and thus qualify his first definition of education. But let us stress that the Athenian’s first definition of education carries on with his general effort of making the Dorians focus first of all on pleasure. For we may say that, except for the emphasis put on pleasures and desires, defining education as the constant training in one business pretty much matches the Dorian way of producing soldiers. The only problem is that the orientation of pleasures and desires is the main concern of education according to the Athenian. And this surely contrasts with Megillus’ and Kleinias’ understanding of the Dorian education, which was all about becoming accustomed to pain and suffering. If, then, the chief concern in education is pleasure, desire, and erotic attachment, there is something very problematic, not to say flawed, with Dorian education.
But the Athenian is not yet fully satisfied with this definition. Although he has just stated the “capital point about education” (kephalaion dē paideias), he now says that “education is not yet defined.” The Athenian has presented in what the education consists, namely an erotic attachment to some business. What needs to be specified is the business in question, that is, the goal of education. For the attachment to or specialization in one business does not necessarily produce what we call an “educated” human being (pepaideumenon; 643d8). As the Athenian puts it, we sometimes call “uneducated” people (apaideuton) human beings who have been “very seriously educated in trade or seamanship, or in other such things.” If these formations or trainings do not qualify as education, it is because we assume that education pursues a specific goal. True education is “an education to virtue, which, from childhood, makes one desiring and erotically longing (epithumētēn te kai erastēn) to become a perfect citizen (polītēn teleon) who knows how to rule and being ruled with justice.” Virtue is thus the goal of education. Moreover, virtue is here understood as similar to perfection as a citizen or to the love for one’s own city. At last, the city is mentioned and education is connected to it. And yet, the city is not at the forefront. Somehow, education occupies this place. For education has become an end in itself. As the Athenian concludes, “if it [education] ever goes astray, and if it is possible to set it right, everyone ought always to do so as much as he can, throughout the whole life.” Although education aims at virtue and becoming a perfect citizen, it is not the city that is said to be “the first among the noblest things for the best

270. Laws, 643d6-7; Pangle’s translation.
272. Laws, 643e4-6.
273. Laws, 644b2-4; Pangle’s translation.
men, but education itself. Being an educated man now means something in itself, being an educated man has become a criterion in itself. It means being virtuous, it means having intellect and caring for justice (nou kai dikēs; 644a4).

What has been presented as two definitions of education is generally taken to be only one definition, the first one. Be that as it may, the Athenian’s two speeches are not perfectly all of a piece. True, the overall argument is clear enough: before being any kind of specialization or expertise, education is an education to virtue. In that sense, being educated is the goal of education. But this leaves unspecified the work or the specific business of the educated man, and therefore the action or thing to which his desires and love should be attached. The difficulty is that education was first defined as the attachment to one’s business and, afterward, it appeared to be the very business a human being ought to be attached to. Whereas education was first defined as the process of orienting desires toward one’s things, it then turned out that education is the very thing that should be loved and desired. If this is so, how does this affect desires and love? And what does an educated man love and desire? Somehow, it is easier to understand how a child can be attached to carpentry through toys and games than to education itself or to virtue. This latter case, it seems, would require a discussion of the inner dynamic of the man’s desires. In any case, these considerations may help us following the Athenian’s next step.

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The Athenian has just called “the best men” (tois aristois andrasin; 644b1-2) those for whom education is “the first among the noblest things” (prōton tōn kallistōn; 644b1). He now recalls that at the very beginning they agreed to call “good those who have the power to ruler over themselves” (agathōn ontōn tōn dunamenōn archein autōn; 644b6-7). To the extent that these are not the same men, it seems to indicate a descent from the best to the good. In any event, the Athenian now feels the need to explain with greater clarity what is going on in the soul of these good men. Although every human being is one or the same (auton; 644c4), there are, inside each of us, two opposed and “unsound” (aphrone; 644c7) counselors called pleasure and pain. Furthermore, there are also two opinions about the future connected to each counselor: the expectation of pain is called “fear” and the expectation of the opposite, i.e., the absence of pain, is called “boldness” (tharros; 644d1). The Athenian does not mention the expectation connected to pleasure, which we may assume to be desire and either repulsion or indifference. In addition to all these, there is a “reasoning” (logismos; 644d2) about what is best and worse regarding these counselors (pleasure and pain) and the expectation related to them (fear, boldness, desire, and indifference). Finally, there is the law, which is defined as a certain reasoning about pleasures, pains, and expectations which has become “the common opinion of the city” (dogma poleōs koinon; 644d3).

To make his speech more understandable to the two Dorians, the Athenian illustrates it this way. Each of us is like a puppet. Each puppet is dragged by many cords: pleasures, pains, opinions or expectations of each sort, reasoning and law. The cords drag the puppet in opposite directions and thus toward opposite actions. These cords are of
two sorts: the reasoning and the law—whose origin is the reasoning—are made of gold and can be said to be delicate,\textsuperscript{276} whereas the others are made of iron and are hard. Dragged by these cords like a puppet, human being is not, however, simply a puppet, for according to “this argument” (\textit{ho logos}; 644e5) he needs to follow the lead of one of these cords, always keeping his hands on it, so to speak, and pulling with it against the other cords. This cord, the Athenian says, “is the golden and sacred pull of reasoning, and is called the common law of the city.”\textsuperscript{277} Yet, these are two distinct cords, but they are made of the same soft material. The point is that, because it has its origin in reason, which is “gentle and not violent,”\textsuperscript{278} the cord of the law needs helpers if the golden race is to be victorious over the other race of cord. We understand that, somehow, the cord of the law should be tied up to other cords in order to make it harder and stronger.

This myth, the Athenian contends, should help us understand the idea of being superior or inferior to oneself. It should also help us understand education and practices, and especially symposia, in their relation to education. We will turn to these shortly. But before, the Athenian reasserts the distinction between the city and the individual:

\begin{quote}
[the individual] takes hold, within himself, of the true reasoning (\textit{ton logon alēthē}) about these dragging [cords], and must adjust his life to it, as for the city, on the other hand, it takes over the reasoning from one of the gods or from the very knower of these things, laying it down as a law, for itself and for its relations with other cities.\textsuperscript{279}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{276} But cf. England (\textit{The Laws of Plato}, I, p.256): “Homer’s picture of Zeus at one end of the golden rope, successfully resisting the pull of all the other gods and goddesses at the other, was no doubt present in Plato’s mind here.”
\textsuperscript{277} \textit{Laws}, 645a1-2.
\textsuperscript{278} \textit{Laws}, 645a6.
\textsuperscript{279} \textit{Laws}, 645b4-8.
This brief quotation encapsulates all the important elements of the Athenian’s puppet-analogy, which can be legitimately considered as a new definition of education.

First of all, this picture is more complex than what has been previously said about education. We now step inside the citizen’s soul and we find many opposing dragging cords. Nothing is said about unifying all these “passions within us” (*pathē en ēmin*; 644e1) toward one goal or business. There is no mention of *eros* anymore. Yet reason has become the crucial element. The purpose is no longer to orient all these passions toward one same thing, but rather to arrive at “the true reasoning” on all these passions. And this, we assume, is the great goal of education. In this way, we can at least understand the extent to which education can be an end in itself. Education is the process by which human beings cease to be simply the puppets of their own passions through the effort of gaining true understanding about these very passions and adjusting their own life and actions to this understanding.

But this is true for the individual only. For the second important element of that picture is the distinction between two forms of education: that of the individual and that of the city. To the extent that the education of the individual is acquired through one’s own rational effort, it can be called the natural education in the sense that Megillus has used earlier when he said that good Athenians are good “by their own nature” (*autophuōs*; 642c8), “truly and not artificially good” (*alēthōs kai outi plastōs agathoi*; 642d1). This natural education must be contrasted to the political education. Political education transforms true reasoning into a commonly accepted opinion (*dogma*). And it gives force to it by attaching passions to it, just as it was the case in the very first account.
of education. Yet, recalling here again Megillus’ words, we may assume that this attachment includes more than pleasures and desires through plays and games, for it might as well include “compulsion” (\textit{anagkēs}; 642c8). Still, if education can be divided into natural and political, it remains the human activity in which nature and politics meet one another.

But, thirdly, political education depends on natural education, because the city’s law is borrowed from an individual’s reasoning about human passions. Only an individual, be it a god or a human being, can acquire the knowledge of the true reasoning on human passions. On that level therefore, the level of knowledge, the reasonable individual can reach a higher degree of self-sufficiency than the city. Only the individual can acquire a knowledge of his own, and it is that knowledge which, once it has been transformed into a law, makes it possible for the city “to converse with itself and other cities.”

Accordingly, this definition of education is at the same time the one that, so far, gives the most importance to the city and the one that undermines its self-sufficiency the most. It gives great importance to the city to the extent that law is one of the main cords that drag human beings. On the other hand, this cord, which is called “the most noblest” (\textit{tēi kallistēi}; 645a4), is ultimately but an ersatz of individual rationality. This cannot but recall to mind the Allegory of the cave of the \textit{Republic} with its puppet-masters and their artefacts.

This leads us to the last important element of this definition of education. By answering the question “What is education?”, the Athenian has given a definition of what

\footnote{280. Strauss, \textit{The Argument}, p.18.}
is a law. A law is a reasoning about human passions which has become the common opinion of city. To the extent, then, that a specific law has a different origin (whether it is cupidity or egoist interest, an accident, fear, or whatever else), we ought to conclude that it is not a true law but a spurious one. The truer the individual reasoning behind the law is, the better is the law. The best law code should then be the most rational one.

2.2.2.5. Symposia and the Practice of Revealing Nature

The Athenian now explains how the puppet analogy can help us understand the common experience of being inferior to oneself, and also education and the practice of symposia. To do this, we merely have to imagine what would happen if this puppet was filled with wine up to point of drunkenness. Wine increases the power of the passions (pleasure, pain, spiritedness, and erotic longings), while it weakens the power of the faculties (sensations, memory, opinions, and reasonable thoughts). Or, in other words, wine makes the pull of the passion-cords stronger and that of the faculty-cords looser. So that the drinking of wine induces a state in which one has the least mastery or control (egkratēs; 645e8) over oneself, that is, a state in which it is the most difficult for a human being not to be a puppet. True, then, wine drinking is debilitating for the soul, but this should not be an objection, for many practices also induce a momentary inconvenience in the purpose of gaining some benefice. Dorian practices, in the first place, and especially the Spartan ones, imply many sufferings of many sorts. In that respect, wine drinking has the advantage of causing no physical suffering: quite the opposite, wine drinking is first of all pleasant. Now, to understand the benefit of symposia, the Athenian needs to
distinguish between two kinds of fear: the fear of evils (kaka; 646e7), or fear simply, and the fear of opinions, the fear of doing or saying something not noble (mē kalōn; 646e11), or shame (aischunēn; 647a2). Shame can be understood as the fear of being overcome by fear and pleasure. It therefore appears to be both good and bad. For whereas people are called coward when overpowered by fear simply, shame is revered by the city and called “awe” (aidō; 647a10). And this time, it is the “boldness” (tharros) connected to it, “the lack of awe” (anaideian; 647a10), which is said to be the greatest evil or vice (megiston kakon; 647b1) in private as well as in public. Accordingly, this creates the paradox that political education aims at making the citizens both fearless (with regard to pain) and fearful (with regard to opinion).

The Athenian then points out that the way in which someone is made fearless is by being dragged into the midst of fear “with the help of the law.” After all, this is what the Dorian practices are all about. Now, just as courage is acquired through the experience and the overcoming of one’s own pain and fear, would it not be logical to say that “perfect moderation” (sōphrōn teleōs; 647d3-4) can only be acquired through the experience and the overcoming of one’s own pleasures and desires which lead to “shamelessness and injustice” (anaischuntein kai adikein; 647d5)? If this is so, someone would also benefit from being dragged into the midst of fearlessness “with the help of justice” (meta dikēs; 647c6-7). Of course, this is what the practice of symposia is all about according to the Athenian. As a way of illustrating his thought, the Athenian asks Kleinias whether a legislator would find some usefulness in some sort of a “fear drug”

(phobou pharmakon; 647e1) for training his citizens in courage. Kleinias agrees that such a drink would be useful and the training in courage and the testing of it easier and less painful than the current Dorian practices. We may however wonder if this fear drug could possibly supersede the physical accustoming of pain and toils and produce the same effect. For although the Athenian calls the practice of drinking the fear drug “a gymnastic training against fear,”²⁸² he never mentions physical pain, toils, or withstanding cold and heat. Instead, the Athenian describes the effect of the fear drug as inducing in someone the belief of being “unfortunate” (dustuchē; 647e3) and the fear of “everything” (panta; 648a1) in the present as well as for the future. In short, there seems to be a shift from the body to the soul. Be that as it may, the point is that, although such a fear drug does not exist, there does exist one drink whose effect is to produce “fearlessness and excessive boldness.”²⁸³ This boldness drug is wine. And just as the practice of drinking the fear drug would have been useful for the education in courage, wine should be made use of for the benefit of the education in moderation.

On one level, the analogy works very well. One way to express the purpose of education is to train humans in maintaining control, especially when the pull of the passion is strong. Since the passions are of two sorts, it seems sensible to institute two kinds of practices, one that tests human beings with respect to fear and another that tests them with respect to boldness. But to resist the pull of these cords, one must, according to the analogy, get hold of another cord. In the case of fear, the Athenian has been quite

²⁸². Laws, 648d3.
²⁸³. Laws, 649a4-5.
explicit. Awe is what resists the pull of the fear-cord. So that the more an individual withstands pain and overcome his own fear during these practices, the more his awe, or reverence for the law, is strengthened. But because awe is, in itself, a form of fear, it means that overcoming one’s own fear is, at the same time, being overcome by another fear of one’s own. Political practices à la Dorian are really a kind of war in which two opposite fears face each other: the fear of pain and the fear of public opinion. Withstanding the test and winning that struggle against oneself means, in fact, letting one fear win out. In this way, we can understand how the cord of the law can be strengthened.

Now, is this also the purpose of symposia? Since awe is a fear against both pain and pleasure, it would seem logical to say that the purpose of symposia is also to strengthen awe by instituting tests which make it difficult for fear of public opinion to prevail over pleasure and desire. This is what the Athenian says first.

[When] we feel naturally (pephukamen) inclined to be especially rash and bold, it is in these [situations] that we should, as it is likely, exercise becoming as little filled with shamelessness and boldness as possible, and instead, in any occasion, be afraid up to the point (phoberous de eis ti) of [not] saying, suffering, or doing anything shameful.284

Yet, the Athenian finally concludes by saying that the greatest benefit of symposia is to reveal the real nature of human beings, that is, one’s own nature and that of others.

This, then, would be one of most useful thing (tōn chrēsimōtātōn hen), [i.e..] to know the natures and the habits of souls (to gnōnai tas phuseis te kai hexeis tōn psuchōn), for the very art that cares about these things; and this is, we assert, as I think, the political art.285

284. Laws, 649c8-d2.
The whole problem, then, is to know for which cord, that of the law (awe) or that of reason, symposia are useful.

This question is more difficult than it may look at first, for it is connected to the questions of the relation of nature and politics and also that of body and soul. Consider the difference between the fear drug and Dorian practices. Dorian practices make the body accustomed to pain, that is, Dorian practices harm the body and make it suffer, but this has the peculiar effect of strengthening the soul, or at least a part of the soul. The fear drug would also affect the body—after all, it is a drink—but with the peculiar effect of weakening the soul. It would produce in the soul the most fearful state, and the whole training would consist in inciting the soul to find in itself the strength to resist the fear. It means that the fear drug would have the effect of overcoming the fear of opinion as well, overcoming shame and awe. The fear drug would require the soul to move beyond the city and thus to reach, by its own power a reasoning on the basis of which it can resist fear, provided, of course, that the soul does overcomes the fear. The point is that since awe is a kind of fear, passing the fear-drug test would require another power of the soul than opinion or law. This is not quite the same with wine, since resisting the pull of pleasures and boldness can be done on the basis of both awe and reason. Indeed, for some people the fear of opinion can be stronger than the attraction of pleasures. But failing the test also has a different usefulness, in that it reveals individual natures. The symposia have another goal than simply strengthening awe. The example the Athenian provides is straightforward: before giving the hand of one’s own daughter to a young man, it would be an efficient way of knowing the real nature of that young man by seeing how he
behaves under the influence of alcohol. As the Athenian put it earlier, correctly conducted symposia increase the friendship of the friends that drink together. Symposia reveal individual natures and they can therefore increase the friendship of those having a similar nature. However, symposia can also destroy friendship. In short, although symposia may sometimes increase private friendship, the example provided by the Athenian make the case of political friendship more doubtful.

2.2.2.6. Preliminary Remarks to Book II

Book I ends on the assertion that symposia, because they make it possible to know the natures and habits of souls, are extremely useful for the political art. Book II will now pursue the task begun in Book I. This task consists in evaluating the worth of the Dorian code and it is in Book II that it is finally carried out. Because the discussion in Book I follows a tortuous path, it may be helpful to make a pause and take a general look at this path.

The discussion initiated at the beginning of the dialogue concerns the Dorian code. According to the two Dorians, their code has a divine origin. On the premise that a divine code ought to be rational, the Athenian undertakes the rational examination of the Dorian code. If the code is rational, all of its laws and practices should aim at the virtues, for according to the natural hierarchy of the goods, virtues are the highest goods, the divine goods, the goods the acquisition of which is both necessary and sufficient in order to be happy. This is the natural standard for any political regime, the one that reason can

identify, the one according to which a regime can be called divine. It is against this standard that the Dorian code will then be evaluated. Now, it soon appears that the Dorian code seems to be deficient with regard to moderation, that is, with regard to pleasures, for we can find no practice instituted by this code which aims at an education of pleasure. This criticism of the Dorian code leads to a discussion of symposia, the Athenian practice of spending time drinking wine in the company of fellow citizens. According to the Athenian, symposia are practices which, if correctly conducted, contribute to an education of pleasure. To prove his claim, the Athenian will give a definition of education (actually more than one, to be precise) which will then lead to a definition of law, and then finally to something close to, if not exactly, a definition of political art. The material point, for now, is that symposia, whether or not they are useful in promoting moderation, are surely useful for revealing what a particular man really thinks about pleasure. Because symposia induce a state in which a man fears the law less, a state in which the compulsion of the law has less influence on his mind, symposia reveal an individual’s nature. But this also means that symposia are a test which makes it possible to see the extent to which the message of the law—its teaching about pleasure and pain—has impregnated an individual. Therefore, we understand that practices (epitēdeumata) may not be a sufficient means in order to pass on the lawgiver’s understanding of human nature to the citizens. For we recall that we assumed, on the basis of the standard the Athenian set forth, that practices were the answer to the third question we raised at the end of Chapter One, namely, how the statesman can pass on his
political knowledge to the people he rules. Yet, we see that the whole meaning of symposia is to evaluate whether the law—and the practices instituted by the law—have been experienced only as a fear of public opinion. In other words, by revealing an individual’s nature, symposia make it possible to see whether the reasoning from which originates the law, but also to which the law points, has been incorporated into an individual’s nature. This explains why the Athenian’s emphasis on symposia is also an emphasis on education. Law and practices aim at educating the citizens in a certain way. Yet, although law and practices may promote education, they remain something different than education. To sum up, the whole discussion of symposia puts into question the efficiency of practices for the transmission of the legislator’s knowledge to the citizens.

Now, the larger context of the discussion of symposia is the evaluation of the Dorian code. If the Athenian’s criticism of that code is right, we should find a proof in what the two Dorians think about pleasure. In order to make the Dorians disclose their own nature, it would be useful to make them participate in a symposium. But, as Strauss suggests, it may be the case that the discussion of symposia produces an effect similar to that of a true symposium. In short, it may be the case that the Athenian is conducting a symposium in speech through which the Dorians will disclose their own nature. At any rate, the disclosure of what they think about pleasure is surely the core of Book II. As the Athenian puts it at the very beginning of Book II, there is a danger that “the argument” (ho logos; 652a5) ensnares them during the discussion.

287. Cf. supra, section 2.2.1.7.
2.2.2.7. A New Definition of Education

The Athenian now inquires whether there is not another great benefit to symposia in addition to the knowledge of our individual natures. He suggests that this practice may contribute to the “safeguard” (sōtēria; 653a3) of education. To do this investigation, he recalls the definition of education he gave earlier. Yet, this recollection is, in fact, an alteration, for he provides a new definition of education.

“Education,” the Athenian now affirms, “is the virtue that first comes into being in children.”289 Virtue is here defined as the “complete harmony” (sumphōnia sumpasa; 653b6) in one mature human being between the habits regarding pleasure, liking, pain, and hating that he has acquired in his youth, and his own reason when this reason is developed. Accordingly, education is “the training in [feeling] pleasures and pains whereby one hates what he ought to hate, from the very beginning until the end, and also cherishes what he ought to cherish.”290

Just like the very first definition of education, this definition of education consists in orienting the child’s pleasures,291 but also his pains. Yet, the main difference lies in the purpose. The purpose is no longer to make a craftsman or an expert, but a virtuous man, and virtue is no longer defined in connection with the city.292 Virtue is here defined with regard to the inner harmony of the human being as a whole. The purpose of education is to make harmonious individuals rather than a harmonious city. Virtue thus belongs to the individual, not to the city. For the harmony of the individual is made of two parts in man:

289. Laws, 653b1-2; Pangle’s translation.
290. Laws, 653b7-c2.
291. Laws, 643c6-d3.
the things to which his sensations of pleasure and pain are attached through habits and what his reason says about what is pleasant and painful. We do not know, however, on what ground reason comes to determine what is pleasant and painful. What this definition makes possible, on the other hand, is the tension between habits regarding pleasure and pain and reason, or, put otherwise, between public opinion (law) and one’s own nature (reason). In short, this definition of education makes possible the disclosure of inharmonious individual natures through symposia.

Yet, the claim is now that symposia also help to safeguard that education. The fact is, the Athenian goes on, that the “natural” (pephukos; 653d1) course of the human life is filled with labor and suffering. This, the Athenian asserts, corrupts to a great extent the education by which one is trained to feel correctly pleasures and pains. In order to safeguard this education, religious festivals are instituted. Such encounters with the gods—with the Muses, Apollo, and Dionysus—give to human beings a “spiritual nourishment” which “might set human right again.”293 These festivals are symposia, but the Athenian now stresses the importance of music and dancing in addition to wine drinking.

2.2.2.8. Music and the Diversity of Pleasures

By bringing up music and dancing, the Athenian can specify something he was vague about in Book I. We recall that being an educated man has become a criterion in

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293. The first quotation is from England (The Laws of Plato, I, p.275), the second is Pangle’s translation. I find that together they render well 653d4-5.
itself in Book I, that it has been said to be equivalent to being a virtuous man. But besides that, it was not so clear what an educated man is or does, what his business or work is. Now, the Athenian affirms that “he who has been nobly (kalōs) educated should then be able to sing and dance in a noble way (kalōs).”\textsuperscript{294} This claim stands on the observation that “every young thing, so to speak, is incapable of remaining calm in body or in voice, but always seeks to move and cry.”\textsuperscript{295} But in contrast to all the animals, human beings have received from the gods “the sense of rhythm and harmony accompanied by pleasure.”\textsuperscript{296} This sense or perception is what makes human beings able to perceive “order” and “the lack of order” (taxeōn and ataxiōn; 653e4-5) in movements and voices. And the Athenian adds that it is by means of this pleasurable perception of rhythm and harmony that the gods “move us” (kinein hēmas; 654a3), recalling the puppet analogy of Book I. We also understand that the subject of music and dancing, which we can encapsulate under the term “choral education,” serves the important purpose of connecting a pleasurable perception with something of a rational perception of rhythm and harmony. In Book I, fear and rationality were connected by the city through the notion of awe. By contrast, it is now the gods that make the connection between rationality and a sub-rational part of the soul, and this part is not fear but pleasure. In short, we saw in Book I how fear could strengthen the law-cord, so to speak, which makes possible one form of education, namely political education. What we now see is the ground on which an education is also possible by the means of pleasure, by means of

\textsuperscript{294} Laws, 654b6-7.
\textsuperscript{295} Laws, 653d7-e1; Pangle’s translation.
\textsuperscript{296} Laws, 654a2-3.
making the rational-cord work in harmony with and thus being strengthened by a pleasure-cord. This is of course all of a piece with the definition of education given at the beginning of Book II as the habituation of feeling pleasure for the right things. And all this also contrasts with the very first definition of education according to which education is the orientation of pleasures toward one specific business through games and play, which understanding leads to the idea of a perfect malleability of human beings. For if an education in pleasure is possible it is because there exists one kind of pleasure which has a specific object the perception of which is also rational.

Now, the capital element of this education, the choral education, is the harmony between the capacity of performing noble dances and singing noble songs and the inner appreciation (i.e., the thought, the belief: ἱέγουμενος; 654c3) of these things as noble and beautiful (kala). One could very easily possess the ability to perform these things without ever feeling moved by their nobility and beauty. In light of that fact, being an educated man would seem to require knowledge of what is noble and beautiful, much more than the ability to perform noble dances and songs. Accordingly, it is imperative to know what is the noble, the fine, and the beautiful (το καλόν; 654d5) in song and dance in order to know what an educated man is. But just as the question is raised, it is immediately answered by the Athenian: to avoid a “long speech” (makrologia) on this subject, he says, “let us simply [call] noble (kala) all the figures as well as [all] the melodies in which lies (echomena) the virtue of the soul or that of the body, either [the
virtue] itself or some image of it, and those [in which lies] vice (kakias), [let us call them] entirely the opposite.”

The problem to which the Athenian wishes to devote the discussion is rather the diversity of tastes with regard to choral performance. Because human beings are not unanimously charmed by the same performances, the Athenian first rejects the idea that correctness in the domain of the Muses lies in the ability to provide pleasure to souls. The sensation of pleasure is a complex phenomenon where three elements in the soul interact with one another: individual “nature, character, and a certain habituation” (phusin ἐ tropon ἐ tina sunētheian; 655e3-4). However, since character (tropon) appears to be the result of the peculiar arrangement of nature and habituation in one soul, the sensation of pleasure depends on this very arrangement. Choral performances are about imitations of characters, and these imitations will charm those having a similar character, that is, a similar arrangement of their soul. But for certain persons, there is disagreement between their individual nature and what they have been habituated to say and do. For these persons whose nature disagrees with their habituation, whatever it is rightly or wrongly, they cannot but “make pronouncements of praise that are opposed to their feelings of pleasure.”

Being charmed by base performances is, according to the Athenian, a great harm for the soul, so much so that the Athenian corrects Kleinias on that point: it is not “likely the case” (eikos ge; 656a10) but rather “necessarily” so (anagkaion; 656b1). And

298. Cf. Laws, 655d5
299. Laws, 655e7-656a1; Pangle’s translation.
this is why it is imperative, for the sake of education, to legislate about these things: songs, dancing, and choral performances, just as it was the case in Egypt.

Yet, to legislate about these things, one must be able to judge who the man is that is charmed by the right choral performances and thus feels pleasure for the right things. Accordingly, the Athenian agrees with the idea that the domain of the Muses must be judged with regard to pleasure, but with the important qualification that pleasure is the criterion to the extent that it is felt by “the best men” *(belistous)*; 658e9, by “the one who distinguishes himself for his virtue and education.” This he illustrates by imagining a contest in which the only criterion would be the pleasure felt by spectators. The Athenian points out that even though the youngest would, in all likelihood, judge the puppet show the most pleasant, and the older children comedy, and the majority of the spectators would probably choose tragedy, it is nonetheless the oldest men who would be the best judges in attributing the prize for the best the recital of Homer. Of course, the Athenian makes here a hasty identification between the best men and the older ones. We may say that he presents here “a certain image” of virtue rather than virtue “itself.” Yet, the overall argument explains how these religious festivals can be said to safeguard education. The point is that dancing and music, the domain of the Muses in which our feelings of pleasure and pain seek to find expression, should be under the control of the law, so that the expression of these feelings be at the same time the recalling of the orientation these feelings should follow. As the Athenian puts it: “For it is imperative that

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they [the spectators], by continually hearing about characters better than their own, feel better pleasure.”

2.2.2.9. The “Third or Fourth” Definition of Education

With these specifications, the Athenian says that “the argument” (ho logos; 659c9) has led them, for the third or the fourth time, to the definition of education. It is actually the fourth definition of education if, as Strauss points out, we reckon the puppet analogy as a definition of education. And, indeed, this new definition of education reminds one of the puppet analogy in many respects:

education is the drawing and pulling of children toward the argument that is said to be correct by the law (pros ton hupo tou nomou logon orthon eirēmenon), and it is an opinion commonly shared (sundedogmenon) by the most decent and the oldest [men], on account of their experience (di’ empeirian), that [this argument] is in fact correct (ontōs orthos estin). In order, then, that the soul of the children may not become habituated to feel delight and pain (chairein kai lupeisthai) in a way opposed to the law and to those who are persuaded by the law, but [in order that the soul of the children] follow [the law] and feel delight and pain for the same things for which an old man [would feel delight and pain], for the sake of these things (toutōn heneka), the things we call songs, but which are in fact (ontōs) incantations for souls, they themselves (hautai) have now been instituted (lit. come into being: gegonēnai).”

First, this definition of education, just as the previous one, is all about orienting pleasure and pain toward the correct feeling of pleasure and pain. The major difference between the two is that the law now plays a crucial role. It is the law that indicates the

304. Laws, 659d1-e2; Pangle’s translation with some alterations.
correct reasoning about pleasure and pain. This, along with the recurrence of the image of “drawing” and “pulling” (holkē te kai agōgē; 659d2), seems to connect this definition of education with the puppet analogy from Book I. The question is how to know the extent to which this definition of education alters the claim that religious festivals are only a safeguard for education. In what follows, the Athenian compares the mixing of these “incantations for the soul” and pleasurable songs with the mixing of healthy food and tasty food by means of which doctors help sick people to recover their health but also accustom them to like healthy food.305 This suggests that choral performances, just like medicine for the body, are useful for straightening up souls. Yet, the song themselves seek to produce a peculiar “habituation” (ethizētai; 659d5). In that respect, they seem rather to be an inherent part of education.

This ambiguity can be partially understood by the fact that the definition encompasses four elements, among which one is radically new. There are habituation and reason, which are a theme since at least the beginning of Book II, law, which has now become central, but especially new is the experience of the old men (di’ empeirian; 659d3). This experience plays a crucial role too, for it is said to be the evidence that corroborates the correctness of the reasoning indicated by the law. Although it is necessary to distinguish reason from law and experience from habituation, it is nonetheless difficult in both cases to do so clearly. For law indicates what one should think when guided by reason, and experience is always shaped by prior habituation. Yet, we can understand that the experience of the old men refers to their life as whole which,

305. Cf. Laws, 659e5-660a3.
of course, has been shaped by the practices of the regime (epitēdeumata), but which also includes all the pains and toils of human life. The experience of the old men is what enables them to evaluate if law and habituation have in fact made them happy.

The importance of the experience of the old men needs to be emphasized. It stands as the evidence for the correctness, and thus the truth, of what the law says about pleasure and pain. The old men, through their songs, should be the living proof that the law is right. The correctness of the regime thus stands or falls on their testimony.

2.2.2.10. Kleinias’ Disclosure Or the Truth about Dorian Education

Kleinias, like Megillus and the Athenian, is himself an old man. Furthermore, he is a proud old Cretan who has proved to be willing to explain and defend the soundness of the Cretan laws. Since the beginning of Book II, Kleinias has listened with interest to what the Athenian has said. But on hearing that music and dancing should be under the control of the law in order to contribute to political education, he makes his longest response so far. Kleinias says that no city among the Greeks, besides Crete and Sparta, makes the Muses subservient to the law, but rather, the only things to which musical innovations obey in these cities are the “disorderly pleasures” (ataktōn hēdonōn; 660b6-7) of the spectators. The Athenian agrees with Kleinias and specifies that what he said was by no means an account of how things are now, but an expression of his “wish” (boulomai; 660c5) about how musical things should be. Yet, the Athenian is very much interested in Kleinias’ claim that only in Crete and Sparta are these principles followed. The Athenian restates Kleinias’s claim and even asks him if this is actually his opinion.
On Kleinias’ affirmative answer, the Athenian wants to make sure that there is really an agreement among them about these things. He thus “clearly” (*saphōs*; 661d1) restates the moral content of things on which they just agreed:

> You and I, we say this: that all these things are the best possessions for just and pious men, but [that they are] all very bad possessions for the unjust man, beginning with health; just as well, [it is the same thing with] seeing, hearing, perceiving, and, in general, living, and the greatest evil [is this:] being immortal for the whole time and possessing all the things said to be good except for justice and the complete virtue, on the other hand [the evil] gets less as the time such a man continues to live would get shorter. [...] For I, I say plainly that the things said to be bad are good for the unjust man, but bad for the just man, and the goods are in fact good for the good men, and bad for the bad ones.\(^{306}\)

This amounts to a repetition of the standard set out in Book I.\(^{307}\) The first difference is that the four divine goods listed in Book I are here reduced to one: justice. Justice is now the necessary condition for happiness. It does not mean, however, that justice is the sufficient condition for happiness. Health may also be a necessary condition for happiness and justice does not produce health. The second difference is that the Athenian states here with the utmost clarity the corollary of this assertion: injustice is not only a necessary condition for unhappiness, injustice is a sufficient condition for unhappiness. Injustice turns everything which would be otherwise good into evil. It echoes Socrates’ famous assertion according to which one is better off suffering injustice than performing it.\(^{308}\)

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\(^{306}\) *Laws*, 661b4-c5 and c8-d3; Pangle’s translation with some alterations.


Now, the Athenian restates his question: do, you and I, agree on this, are we in harmony (*sumphōnounen*; 661d3-4)? Kleinias, who speaks for both himself and Megillus, answers this: “According to me we appear to be somehow [in agreement with you] on [certain] things, but on [other] things not at all (*ta d’oudamōs*).” ³³⁰⁹ The point on which Kleinias has not been convinced by the Athenian—and presumably the silent Megillus too—is that a man who possesses all the things said to be good except for justice is “not happy” (*ouk eudaimona*; 661e4). In order to disclose Kleinias’ thought further, the Athenian asks them if they at least agree that the man who possesses every thing said to be good except for justice “would necessarily live in a shameful way” (*ex anagkēs aischrōs an zēn*; 662a2). On this, they agree, Kleinias says. Then the Athenian asks: would you also agree on the fact that he lives in “a bad way” (*to kai kakōs*; 662a5)? Kleinias answers: “on this we would not [agree] again in a similar way” (*homoiōs*; 662a6). The Athenian adds a last question: would you also agree on the fact he lives “in an unpleasant way and in a way which is not advantageous to him” (*to kai aēdōs kai mē sumpherontōs hautōi*; 662a7)? To which question Kleinias answers: “And how could we possibly agree on these things again?” ³³¹⁰

In sum, according to Kleinia’s injustice may well be shameful, but it is nonetheless pleasant. One may be ashamed of having stolen money, but not, in every case, so much so that one would refrain from still using it to pursue intense pleasures. Furthermore, Kleinias is not even ready to grant that being unjust leads one to live a bad

life, that is to say that he is not sure that injustice is in itself bad. We suggest the following as an explanation of Kleinias’ position. Goods are not only heterogeneous but, in many cases at least, mutually exclusive. Say that the good can be divided into three categories: the noble, the advantageous, and the pleasurable. Kleinias says that injustice is shameful (aischros) but also advantageous (sumpheron) and pleasurable (hēdos). We can legitimately deduce that justice is noble (kalos) and not pleasurable (aēdos), and leave it open whether it is advantageous or not. Since justice is noble but not pleasant and injustice is pleasant but shameful, they both can be said to be good—or bad—in certain ways. If this is so, it would seem impossible to create the harmony of the goods, that is, to combine all the goods into one’s own life, and thereby achieve happiness. To the extent that harmonizing the goods is the goal of political life, this implies that politics cannot achieve the goal it sets for itself. For we recall the Athenian’s big claim: “[The laws] are right, [when] those who use them are made happy. For [these laws] provide all the goods.”

But, given the context in which Kleinias says what he says, even more important than understanding how Kleinias can believe what he believes is simply the fact that he believes it. For although the Athenian says that it is he who has not convinced Kleinias and Megillus of the fact that the unjust life is also the most miserable life (isōs humas ou peithō; 661e3), this is not quite true. It is primarily their own laws and practices, their own regime, the Dorian code itself that has not convinced them that living in accordance with that code would make them happy. And Kleinias’ confession, so to speak, is made

311. Laws, 631b5-6.
right after the experience of the old men has been said to be the evidence for the correctness of the regime’s education. Accordingly, his own position cannot but be read as providing conformation of the failure of the Dorian education. For on the basis of his own experience, Kleinias, an old Cretan who has been raised under Dorian laws and who, we assume, has lived most of his life in accordance with these laws, cannot say that his life has been more pleasant than the life of those who have lived in accordance to other laws or who have disobeyed the Dorian laws. Kleinias’ life has been more noble, not more pleasant. To the extent that pleasure is an inherent part of happiness, it means that Kleinias’ own regime has not made him a happy man.

Kleinias’ disclosure of his own thoughts can also be read in the light of the practice of symposia. Symposia, we recall, are useful for the disclosure of individual natures. And this is what we get here. The discussion of wine has loosened his tongue and he is no more ashamed of singing his own song, his solo in the old men’s choir. Now, Kleinias’ song reveals a lack of harmony between his reason and the Cretan law, between his own experience of the Dorian regime—the practices that have shaped his own person—and what he has acknowledged to be the goal of any regime.

2.2.11. Justice and the Pleasure of the Good Life

The Athenian reacts vehemently to Kleinias’ view. According to him, “these things appear so necessary (anagkaia) that [in comparison to it] it is not so clear (saphōs) that Crete is an island.” Yet, what the Athenian sees as necessary is “to compel”

(anagkazein; 662b5) the poets and everyone in the city to assert this, that injustice is neither pleasant nor advantageous. For, he goes on, if he were a legislator, he would lay down “almost the greatest penalty”\(^3\) for anyone asserting that there are “wicked” (ponēroi; 662c1) human beings who live in a pleasant way or that there are profitable and gainful things, on one hand, and things which are more just, on the other. In sum, the necessity to which the Athenian is referring is, at first sight at least, a political necessity.

Now, the Athenian imagines two dialogues in order to illustrate his point. The first dialogue is with the legislators of Crete and Sparta who, according to what these cities claim, were gods: Zeus and Apollo. If it were possible to question these gods about the most just life and the most pleasant life, it would be “strange” (atopo; 662d6), the Athenian says, if the gods were to answer that these are two distinct lives and that, between the two, it is the most pleasant life which is the happier one. But the Athenian abruptly drops the dialogue with the gods, for he rather “wishes” (boulomi; 662d7) to put the question to fathers and legislators. This twist in the argument makes the reader wonder about the meaning of it. To begin with, the expected answer implies that he who makes this answer is in contradiction with himself. Put to the father, the expected answer provokes the following question: “O father, did you not wish that I live the happiest [life]? But you never ceased to exhort me to live the most just [life].”\(^4\) Blaming a god for not being coherent would be, indeed, quite impious. In addition, introducing a father shows that this contradiction dwells in the majority of us: it is found among “the Cretan,

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313. Laws, 662b6; Pangle’s translation.
314. Laws, 662e4-6.
the Spartan, and the other human beings.”\(^{315}\) Even more important, however, is that this contradiction shows that if the scope of the desire for happiness is broadened, so that one’s own happiness includes that of one’s child—whether the child in question is human or metaphorical like a city is for its legislator—love for justice somehow becomes an inherent part of happiness.\(^{316}\) In short, any father who is neither perfectly virtuous nor perfectly vicious should find within himself a disagreement in his own soul when he honestly wishes that his own children, in order to be happy, acquire virtues in which he, when he looks only to his private life and experience, finds little pleasure. That is another, and very powerful, illustration of a disharmonious individual, of a divided soul: a man who would “appear to be at loss [when trying] to speak harmoniously of himself.”\(^{317}\)

Now, the Athenian adds another reason supporting the political necessity of asserting that the most just life is also the most pleasant one.

If, on the other hand, he [the legislator] declared the most just life to be the happiest, everyone who heard him would, I think, seek [to know] (ζητοῖ) what is (τί ποτ’) in [this life] the good and noble thing superior (κρειττόν) to pleasure the law found to recommend (ὁ νόμος εν ἐπαίνει).”\(^{318}\)

This, we recall, is closely akin to Stauffer’s insightful remark about the impact of the claim that justice is a virtue, not to say the complete or ultimate virtue. To quote Stauffer once more, justice “opens up a certain question that might otherwise remain closed: the

\(^{315}\) Laws, 662c3-4.
\(^{316}\) Strauss explains the action of the Republic according to a similar process (cf. Thoughts on Machiavelli, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984 [1958], p.289).
\(^{317}\) Laws, 662e8; aporos phainoito tou sumphorountos heautoi legein.
\(^{318}\) Laws, 662e8-663a1; England’s translation slightly altered (cf. The Laws of Plato, I, p.301).
question of the true good or the best life." This is another kind of argument, for instead of pointing to a psychological inconsistency, it indicates a great benefit which derives from the political assertion that justice brings about happiness. Of course, the tension that one can see between the just life and the pleasant life is an ideal breeding ground for another way of life, a zētētikos way of life: a life that seeks to know what happiness is. In short, the tension between the just and the pleasant as two heterogeneous goods that happiness must harmonize with one another points to a third good, knowledge or wisdom.

This, it seems to us, is at least a part of the reason why the Athenian insists on keeping pleasure as a legitimate component to happiness and requires that an education to pleasure be included in political education. Anyway, “no one,” the Athenian says, “would voluntarily be willing (ekōn etheloi) to be persuaded to do that which does not bring him more joy (chairein) than pain.” Accordingly, the action of both, the just man and the unjust one, should be, in principle, rooted in a difference with respect to pleasure. But now, the taste of the old men can no longer be the sufficient guide for discriminating on the basis of pleasure. Indeed, if we are to follow Kleinias and discriminate between the just and the unjust man on the basis of pleasure alone, we should select the unjust one. Accordingly, a new criterion is given and Kleinias agrees that the man who has the better soul should be selected, for it is that man who should, in principle, feel pleasure correctly. Yet, Kleinias still does not seem to be wholeheartedly convinced that, for all that, he

319. Stauffer, Plato’s Introduction, p.130.
320. Laws, 663b4-6; Pangle’s translation.
should conclude that the unjust life is unpleasant as well as ignoble. This might be the case, Kleinias says, “according to the present argument” (*kata ge ton nun logon*; 663d5). And with another surprising twist in the argument, the Athenian concedes that, if in fact things are this way, there could not be at least a “more profitable lie” (*pseudos lusitelesteron*; 663d9) a legislator could tell for the sake of the good of the young in the city. We understand why the Athenian calls the assertion that the most just life is also the most pleasant a lie when we compare it to his final assertion:

> When we assert that it is said by the gods that the most pleasant [life] and the best (*hēdiston te kai ariston*) life are the same, we will be saying at the same time the truest thing, and we will persuade those that it is imperative to persuade more [efficiently] than if we were asserting that they [gods] speak in a different way.\(^{321}\)

The just life has been superseded by the best life. And these are not necessarily the same thing. Interestingly enough, the gods, who were put aside when it was asserted that the just life is different from the pleasant life, now reappear to say that the most pleasant life and the best life are one and the same.

In sum, this little section of Book II is capital with respect to the criticism of the Dorian code but difficult to follow. Let us break the argument down into its parts. There are at least three different claims made in this section: (1) the unjust life is both pleasant and profitable, (2) the just life is the most pleasant life, and (3) the best life is the most pleasant life. The first assertion is made by Kleinias and, as we suggested, it discloses both his own nature and the outcome of the Dorian education. According to the Athenian, it is necessary to condemn this assertion and even to punish those who say it. As for the

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second assertion, which is the opposite of the first one, the Athenian is willing to call it a profitable lie. It is profitable because it claims that happiness consists in a good which is pleasant but whose pleasure transcends the pleasure of the body. That good, according to the assertion, is identified as justice. Yet, such an assertion may also bring about an intellectual inquiry, not to say a philosophical inquiry, into the nature of that good, the nature of justice, happiness, and pleasure. One may understand the tension in the assertion that justice is pleasurable in this way. Of course, honor and praise can be said to be pleasant, but the pleasure of honor is much more difficult to understand than bodily pleasures for the simple reason that, whereas each bodily pleasure is connected to a specific organ of the body, it is not so clear to which organ of the human nature honor brings pleasure. However, to the extent that intellect is an organ of the human soul, it is easier to understand that intellectual inquiries bring about a specific kind of pleasure. At least, this may help to explain the third assertion, which the Athenian puts into the mouth of the gods and says that it is most true, namely, that the best life is the most pleasant life.

Be that as it may, the main point is that the two Dorians are not prepared, on the basis of their own political education, to make these steps. If, as our reading of the *Republic* suggested, the politics tends to enlarge the sphere of one’s own far beyond mere bodily pleasure, this is what the Dorians cannot admit with regard to pleasure. The Dorians can easily admit that politics raises human beings above bodily concern and pleasure, but this is what they call the noble life. This is, for sure, a valorisation of the human soul, but the two Dorians understand it as a negation of the bodily pleasure, and even of the bodily safety. Accordingly, they cannot explain the good they seek through
their training and practices (*epitēdeumata*) in terms of pleasure. As a consequence, they are torn between their experience of bodily pleasure as good and their belief that obedience to the laws of the city is also good, but not pleasant. To the extent, then, that they cannot but concede that happiness should also be pleasant, they cannot admit that obeying the Dorian laws will make them entirely happy.

2.2.2.12. The Failure of the Dorian Code and the City of the Laws

The conclusion that we draw from Kleinias’ disclosure of his—and we assume Megillus’—opinion about pleasure and justice is that the Dorian code fails to make human beings who live under its laws happy and genuinely virtuous. This conclusion is encapsulated in the last criticism against the Dorian code the Athenian launches in Book II. “Indeed, you in fact have never attained the most beautiful (or noble: *kallistēs*) song. For the regime (*politeian*) you have is that of an armed camp, but not that of people settled in towns (*astesi*).”

The Dorians have been educated with a view to the necessities of war, they are tough and fearless in front of enemies. For all that they are certainly admirable. For if, recalling the myth of Chronos in the *Statesman*, removing the necessities of war and the difficulties of life leads to a lazy life engrossed in satisfying bodily appetites, the Dorian way of life is certainly more ennobling. If, however, peace opens up the possibility for experiencing higher pleasures, the possibility of being educated to experience the most beautiful songs and speeches, settling in cities for the

322. *Laws*, 666d11-e2; Pangle’s translation slightly altered. Let us point out that the Athenian has sometimes called their discussion a singing, cf. 662b2.
sake of such a life becomes a legitimate contender to any warlike regime. This goes especially for those who dwell under warlike regimes but still possess a longing for pleasures which can only find satisfaction in fantasizing about illicit, unjust pleasures.

In the remainder of Book II, the Athenian lays down the laws regarding symposia. It is true that, in principle, the building of the city cannot begin before the end of Book III where the project of Cretan colony is first divulged. Yet, the Athenian really speaks just as if they were already building the city, for he states how they should legislate with regard to wine and choral performance. They agree that only men between thirty and sixty who take part in the chorus of Dionysus should be allowed to drink a fair amount of wine. The purpose is to rejuvenate the soul of these old men and make them “less ashamed” (hētton aischunomenos; 666c4) to sing in public. We suggest that this is what the Athenian just did with Kleinias and Megillus. He made them more willing to speak up and to disclose their own thoughts about pleasure and justice. He made them young again and, in so doing, he may have made them remember the pleasures of their youth, and maybe their injustices, which, as it is often the case with the youth, may have been the experiment of bodily pleasures.

Be that as it may, throughout Books I and II, a new meaning of the idea of harmony has come into sight. The harmony of the goods has become more and more the inner harmony of the soul. This is the harmony between virtue and pleasure and it seems to fulfill the conditions for happiness. Now, Kleinias’ disclosure has showed that the Dorian code fails in the attempt to produce this harmony. Kleinias’ disclosure reminds

323. Cf. Laws, 666a3 and 674c1-4.
one of the myth of Er at the end of the *Republic*. In both cases we see good citizens of a virtuous city being tempted by injustice and the tyrannical life or, at very least, finding such a life attracting. Now, the failure of the Dorian code cannot but raise our expectations for the city built in the *Laws*. For the exposition of the flaws of the Dorian code and the reason of these flaws make us hope for a city that succeeds in producing harmonious human beings through education and practices.

We must add, however, that during that discussion, a distinction between education and practices has come to light. Practices are a form of habituation that shapes an individual’s life, but it is no longer clear whether this form of habituation is sufficient in order to convey the legislator’s understanding of human nature to the citizens. For sure, the Dorian practices did not succeed with respect to Kleinias and, we assume, Megillus. If this failure reveals the flaws of the Dorian code, it is hard to imagine what kind of practices can avoid such a failure. For even symposia, which is the practice discussed in the first two books, are finally more like a test for evaluating whether the citizens have understood the reasoning that the law code points to.

### 2.2.3. A History of Regimes: The Limits of Virtue

#### 2.2.3.1. The Puzzle of the Dorian Victory

If the disclosure of Kleinias’ soul is strong evidence for discrediting the claim that the Dorian code is both right and divine, it would be unwise to simply reject the Dorian code right away. For it is undeniable that the Dorian code has lasted for a very long time

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and has produced a powerful military. This causes us a problem because the same argument which rejected the Dorian code for not producing genuine virtue in its citizens also claims that the higher goods, the virtues, were a sufficient condition for the lower goods, wealth, beauty, and strength. Yet, Crete and Sparta, if they are not truly virtuous, are certainly strong and stable cities. We could even call them noble and beautiful cities: *kala poleis*. It is true that in the Athenian’s restatement of the standard for any regime, he was only referring to individuals, and not to cities, saying that one cannot be happy without being virtuous. Yet, we may wonder whether a city can be prosperous by aiming at one and only one goal: virtue. For we remember that the Athenian also said in Book I that virtue is not a sufficient condition for victory at war. If this is so, can it be wise to legislate only with a view to virtue?

These considerations explain, according to us, why “we now pass abruptly”\(^{325}\) to a Book devoted to a history of regimes. The passage is abrupt because this subject was not announced as such in the preceding Books, nor does it seem to follow logically from the previous discussions. What we were expecting was a discussion on gymnastics.\(^{326}\) That is, after a long discussion about the training of the “soul” (*psuchēs;* 673a3) it would have seemed proper to discuss that of the “body” (*somatos;* 673a7). Yet, this discussion is superseded by a discussion about the coming-into-being of cities, i.e., the origin of political life. If, however, there is a connection between gymnastics and political history,

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we may assume that both announce a descent from the heights of the soul’s virtue to lower considerations. As Strauss explains:

The investigation which begins now presupposes that [the knowledge of virtues] is insufficient for guiding a legislator. For the virtues cannot be understood properly without consideration of the city which they serve even when they transcend it. [...] [This is why the Athenian] also begins his political inquiry with a consideration of the coming-into-being of the city or rather of the cities. Without such a consideration one might misconceive the context within which political life is possible or, more precisely, the condition or limitation of political life.\(^{327}\)

If, then, the assertion that virtue is the sole goal of legislator must be qualified—or limited—somewhere, it should be here, in Book III.

2.2.3.2. The First Regime: Fear and Family

In order to understand the historical superiority of the Dorian regime, the Athenian says that they have to consider “the origin of regimes” (politeias archēn; 676a1). The Athenian’s account is not, however, about the literal beginning. Because so much time has passed, the very first origin of regime seems impossible to reach. Thus, the Athenian starts from one beginning among the infinite number of political life’s beginnings. This cyclical view of political beginnings is upheld by some truth contained in “the old speeches” (hoi polaioi logoi; 677a1), according to which the human race came very close to being completely destroyed many times by natural cataclysms. The Athenian considers one of these destrucitons, the one caused by a flood, and starts from there. The cyclical view allows him to avoid a stipulation on the pre-political origins of

man and the sub- or supra-human origins of man. The point of rupture in his account is the flood, and human beings existed before and after the flood. As a species, there is no difference among pre-flood and post-flood human beings. Of course, there is a huge difference regarding their virtues and vices and regarding their way of life, which is precisely what the Athenian wants to focus on by his going back to the origin of regimes. The objective is to find out “the cause” (aitian; 676c7) of the regimes’ “genesis and transformation” (genesin kai metabasin; 676c8).

Those who may have survived the flood would have been, in all likelihood, the people living high up in mountains. Such men were mountain herdsmen. Since these men were living alone in mountains and thus away from cities and civilization, it is assumed that they lacked experience in all the other arts besides their own, the useful ones as well as the arts people used against one another in cities to satisfy “their desire to have more and their love of victory” (pleonexias kai philonikias; 677b7). Thus, their inexperience in other arts is somehow all of a piece with their moral disposition. In that respect, their goodness stems from their ignorance. Now, since all the cities have been destroyed by the flood—for cities are settled either by the sea or in the plain—all these other arts have therefore disappeared too. On that basis, the Athenian draws three conclusions about the state of human affairs in the flood’s aftermath. First, it was a state of “vast and frightening (phoberan) desolation:”

328 very few human beings, very few animals as well, only a great expanse of empty land. Second, there was no memory at all about cities,

328. Laws, 677e7-8; Pangle’s translation.
regimes, and legislations. Third, it is from this state of things that cities, regimes, arts, laws, as well as much “wickedness” (*ponēria*; 678a9) and much virtue came out.

The two crucial elements in the Athenian’s account are fear and ignorance. But the one that needs to be emphasized is fear. Fear, we recall, plays a central role in political education, for shame and awe are the names given by the city to what we may call fear of public opinion. Of course, the original fear was of a different sort. It was the fear of the flood, i.e., the fear of going back into the plain where everyone who lived there perished from the flood. Yet, the fear of the flood shapes the behavior of these first men, for the memory of it was kept alive through speeches even when water had receded. As the Athenian puts it, the fear of the flood was then “ringing in the ears of everyone” (*pasin phobos enaulos egegonei*; 678c3). The fear of the flood was thus strong enough to restrain them from going back into the plain where they could more easily meet other people even though these men were “glad” (*hasmenoi*; 678c5) to see other human beings and, as it seems, would have wished to mix with one another. It is true that their ignorance of the other arts, especially the art of working with metal, also restrained their capacity of travelling, but the fear of travelling was the great impediment to the development of the arts in the first place. Because the fear of the flood constrained their desires, these men were not seeking means for satisfying these desires. In short, the pre-civil men appear to have had sociable inclinations, or at least to find some pleasure in society, but the pull of the fear cord, let us say, was stronger in their soul than that of the pleasure cord.
This can also be seen in the fact that although the “original” men were fearful, they were not warlike or aggressive. The assertion that war was not present at the origin cannot but appear as a correction of Kleinias’ assertion that war is the pervasive fact of human existence. The Athenian provides four reasons on account of which war was unlikely in the flood aftermath: 1) the pre-civil men’s mutual “affection” and “friendly disposition” (ἔγαπόν καὶ εὐφιλόπρονοντο; 678e9) due to their solitude; 2) the existence of plenty of land and hunting stock for all; 3) the absence of both poverty and wealth due to ignorance of gold and silver; and 4) the pre-civil men’s “naive simplicity” (εὐθιανή; 679c3) that made them believe everything they were told about “noble and the shameful things” (καλά καὶ αἰσχρά). But in addition to these reasons is the fact that the fear of the flood is a very peculiar fear. Fearing the flood is very different from fearing other human beings or even wild animals. For if it would make sense to launch a war out of fear against other men, there is no point at fighting against the flood. The flood is impersonal: its cause is either natural necessity or a god, and it killed almost all human beings in one shot, without distinction other than where they lived. Accordingly, there is nothing man can do to prevent another flood from killing him except to stay in the mountains, to keep the memory of the last flood alive and to pray, to show humility towards an ontologically superior being. The passive character of man’s actions reveals the incommensurability in power between him and the cause of the flood. In other words, the military art or any other human art could never be powerful enough to master the flood. Fear, not war, is now the pervasive fact.
Now, one may say that the Athenian’s account is paradoxical, because he stresses both the solitude of the first men and their speeches about the flood and the noble things. This is a paradox only insofar as one thinks of men as individual beings originally, as in the case of the first city of the Republic. In contrast to the Republic, there is here a kind of “regime” (politeias; 680a9) prior to the erection of the first city. These people, the Athenian says, are scattered on mountain’ tops but they are regrouped into “one household and family” (kata mian oikēsin kai kata genos; 680d7-8). The family is then the original group or unity. In the flood aftermath, we can conceive of a world peopled with families scattered on the mountain’ tops without communication with one another. The Athenian characterizes the regime of the family by a reference to Homer’s Cyclops. The principle of authority is the rule of the father over his children and wives. Later on, the principle of authority is reiterated as follow: “The eldest rules with an authority handed down from the father and mother.”  

329. This principle of authority intertwines three components: the rule of the parents over the children, the rule of the eldest over the youngest, and, at the root of all this, the rule of the stronger over the weaker.  

330. Although the Athenian calls the Cyclopean dynasty “the most just kingship of all kingships,” Megillus points out that the Cyclopean way of life depicted by Homer amounts to

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329. Laws, 680e1-2; Pangle’s translation.
330. There is an emphasis on the father in the first and third mention of the principle of authority. The mother appears only in second mention (680e1-2). In the first (680b5-c1), the fact that “wives” are in the plural just like the children seems to indicate that they are similar to them. In the third one (680e3), only the paternal laws are stated. This distinction between the male and the female(s) seems to point to the distinction of the sexes, i.e., the stronger rules over the weaker.
331. Laws, 680e3-4.
“savagery” (*agrotēta*; 680d3).\(^{332}\) The Athenian’s claim can be understood with reference to what he has called their simplicity. Due to their isolation, these men cannot compare their own way of living with that of others. They are therefore ignorant not only of other arts but of other ways of life as well.\(^{333}\) This is why their state of ignorance and naive simplicity makes them believe whatever they are told about the noble and the shameful. The lack of opportunities to compare their way of living to other ways cannot but make them believe that their way is the natural way. Therefore, they embody more fully the regime’s way of living than it is possible to do in any other subsequent regimes where authority is more or less uprooted from the family. To the extent that they are more a living embodiment of the regime than any subsequent citizens, these pre-civil men can then be said to be more virtuous than any subsequent citizens too. Yet, the Athenian is careful not to include prudence (*phronēsis*) in the list of virtues he attributes to them. Since the rule of the father and the eldest are settled by nature through force, there is no need for political deliberation and, therefore, no opportunity for prudence to develop. On the other hand, the lack of opportunities for comparison is the ground for the

\(^{332}\) Albert Whitaker agrees with Megillus and says that the Cyclopean family is a family where one “would never wish to live in” (*Plato’s Laws on the Roots and Foundation of the Family* [Illinois: University of Chicago, Unpublished Dissertation, 1998], p.45). He also argues that in such a family incest would not only be necessary but preferable (cf. p.44 and 61-62). This view does not seem to be shared by England: “In this paragraph [680e1] we pass from the single family with the father at the head, to the next generation, when *the eldest brother* takes his father’s place and, as it were, acts as the ‘father’ of his younger brothers and their families, as well as of his own” (*The Laws of Plato*, I, p.352; emphasis in the text). The only problem with England’s reading is that he introduces a plurality of families on one mountain’s top, so to speak, whereas the encounter of other families occurs only in the next step, when these people go down into mountains’ slopes and foothills (cf. 680e6-7, 681a8-b4). Accordingly, it is surely true to say that the eldest brother acts as the “father” of his own brothers and sisters, but this, as it were, without the introduction of any outsider.

\(^{333}\) In his exposition of the next form of regime (the walled town’s regime), the Athenian says that each family has adopted a particular way of life (*ethē*) because of the fact that they have lived apart from one another (681b1).
impossibility of war. In their mutual autarchic isolation, no trade is possible. Rich and poor are comparative categories that do not belong to an insulated family. Neither does the desire of having more and the love of victory belong to them, for both necessitate a comparison with someone else.

The Cyclopean dynasty is a pre-civil regime without legislation except for what the Athenian calls “the laws of the father” (patronomoumenoi; 680e3), which are not, properly speaking, laws. This regime is the original regime, the first regime, out of which the regime that should match the political standard identified in Book I will have to grow. The whole difficulty is that the two pillars of that regime are fear and family. As for virtue, it does not appear to be too strong a claim to say that it is absent as a conscious goal for the regime.

2.2.3.3. The Historical Origin of Law

The Cyclopean dynasty is an insulated and closed regime bounded by the blood ties and the fear of the flood. That this regime is not a deliberated attempt to promote one way of life as the best, most virtuous way among many others, can be seen in the fact that it only takes the passage of time to make the fear in which it is rooted forgotten. At some point, some families came down into the foothills and inevitably met with one another. Somehow, they got together and created one large and common “dwelling” (oikian; 681a2), which the Athenian also calls a “city” (poleis; 680e7). These families surrounded their new dwelling with a wall to protect them from the “wild beasts” (thēriōn; 681a2). We may assume that the friendly disposition the Athenian has stressed may account for
their coming together, but we should not forget that according to Homer some Cyclops, at least, are cannibals and should then be reckoned as wild beasts. Be that as it may, the coming together of different families entails a coming together of the different “ways” or “customs” (ethē; 681b1) proper to each family. The peculiar way of each family reflects the peculiar nature of the first members of the family—just like in the Statesman, the great natural distinction is between the “manly” and the “decorous” (kosmiōterion [...] kai andrikōn; 681b3-4). From generation to generation, this way has been perpetuated inside the insulated family and thus became an ancestral custom. Now, in the walled town, because one’s own way necessarily “pleases” (areskein; 681c1) each family more than that of others, each family still keeps perpetuating the ancestral custom in its descendants. In short, the common dwelling in one place does not automatically produce one common way of life. This common way, or more precisely this common set of laws, is the result of a few men who looked over the ancestral customs of all the families and selected those that “please them the most with a view to the community.”

"These men, not bound to any prior ancestral customs, were the first legislators [nomothetai; 681d2].” Once the selected customs have been accepted by the chiefs of each family, it became the common way or the common law of the whole community. This is “the

335. For the sake of clarity, I use “own way” instead of “own laws” (hautōn nomous; 681c1). I assume that when the Athenian uses the word “law” (cf. also “peculiar or private laws:* idious nomous; 681b6-7) prior to the first legislating act (cf. 681d2) it is synonymous with “way.” Cf. Strauss, The Argument, p.40: “They did not have laws proper, i.e., written laws, but they lived in obedience to customs and so-called ancestral laws.”
origin” (archēi; 681c4) of legislation and with it the regime undergoes its first transformation: from a familial dynasty it becomes an aristocracy or a kingship.

Once again, it is crucial to know what the standard is by which the first legislators selected the first laws. Now, this information is encapsulated in one clause. The Athenian says that they selected the customs that “please them the most with a view to the community.” So it was not with a view to virtue that the selection was done. It seems safe to say that the adoption of the common way goes along with the erection of the defensive wall. Securing the community’s survival seems to have been then the greatest concern. Perhaps the best way to secure a regime is to promote perfect virtue through legislation, but this does not seem to have been the understanding of the first lawgivers. In other words, if the Athenian’s account is right, the first lawgivers were not gods neither did they receive the first law code from the god. They have been “chosen” (haireisthai; 681c8) and they “looked” (idontes; 681c9), or we might well say examined with their own reason, all the ancestral customs which they wove into one common law code. So far, we have encountered neither a god nor virtue in the Athenian’s account.

2.2.3.4. Back to the Original Question: The Virtue of the Dorian Regime

The first two regimes—the Cyclopean dynasty and the walled town legislation—are situated in a remote past that antedate history. So far, the Athenian calls his account a “myth” (muthou; 682a8) which is, however, somehow in accordance with both “the god and nature” (kata theon pōs [...] kai kata phusin; 682a2). Proceeding further into his myth, the Athenian reaches the third regime and, in so doing, the mythological account
becomes an account of Greek history. The transitional event is the Trojan War. From the mountain’ tops to the mountain’ slopes, the human beings went down further and established cities into the plain and by the sea. The settling by the sea indicates that the fear of the flood has been forgotten for a long time, so that the men of this time were “no more fearful” (aphobōs; 682c10) to use the sea for nourishment, travel, and other ambitions. Now, one of the cities built by the sea was Troy, the sacred Ilium. This city has been besieged for ten years and finally destroyed by the Achaeans. These Achaeans came to Troy by the sea and during those ten years of war their affairs at home deteriorated seriously. When they crossed the sea again after the war and returned to their own cities, many Achaeans were killed and many others were forced into exile. The Athenians says that the exiles changed their name from Achaeans to Dorians and that they eventually came back again to recapture their own cities. Following Pangle, let us say that, by his account, “the Athenian domesticates and legitimizes the Dorian invasions.” But the point of all this is that it led to the foundation of Lacedaemon, for the victorious Dorians resolved to divide their army into three parts, each of which became a city: Argos, Messene, and Sparta.

According to the Athenian’s account, Sparta is thus the fourth city in human history. This “providential” fact (hōsper kata theon; 682e10) brings the interlocutors back to the starting point of their dialogue about the laws. Sparta and Crete are “brotherly
legislations” (*adelphois nomois*; 683a2), they are, that is to say, of Dorian origin. And according to the original claim of both Kleinias and Megillus, the cities living under the Dorian code have been “rightly settled” (*orthōs [...] katoikesthai*; 683a1). The digression from the main argument provides them with the opportunity for discussing this claim again, as if from the beginning. The Athenian specifies three points on which the examination of Sparta should shed light: “(1) which [city] has and has not been nobly (*kalōs*) settled; (2) what kind of laws preserve those [i.e., the cities] that are preserved and what kind [of laws] destroy those that are destroyed; (3) and what sort of change in these [laws] would make a city happy (*eudaimona*).”

We notice that nothing indicates that the laws that preserve or save (*sōizousin*; 683b2) a city are the same as those that make it happy or the same as those that make it nobly settled. Besides, the safeguarding of Sparta is, so to speak, the fact that serves here as the starting point, for out of the three original Dorian cities—Argos, Messene, and Sparta—only Sparta preserves her laws and regime whereas the two other cities were corrupted. Sparta’s political stability is therefore the historical basis for the claim about the nobility or rightness of her settlement and about her happiness. To say the least, this claim has been shaken in the previous two books, but since the historical fact of Sparta’s political stability remains unshaken, it deserves to be investigated.

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340. *Laws*, 683b1-4. I understand the demonstrative pronoun *autōn* at 683b2 to refer to “cities.” Yet, Patch understands it to refer to “regimes” (*Plato’s Jurisprudence*, p.145) and England to “the parts of the polities which survive intact” (*The Laws of Plato*, I, p.359), as for Pangle, he plays safe with “the things that are preserved.”

The careful examination of Sparta is all of a piece with the test of the Athenian’s claim about the self-sufficiency of virtue in politics. The Athenian links the two elements in the following passage.

But is a kingship destroyed, before Zeus, or was any rule ever yet destroyed, by any others than [the rulers] themselves? Or is it the case that just now, a little before we chanced upon these arguments, we supposed these things to be so, but now we have forgotten?\(^{342}\)

In agreement with Patch, we understand that what the Athenian is referring to is his former assertion according to which the possession of virtue is a sufficient condition for the possession of the lower goods too,\(^{343}\) from which he, the Athenian, infers that “no government ever is destroyed except by the rulers themselves, that is, by their lack of virtue.”\(^{344}\) Accordingly, Sparta’s political stability and the other Dorian settlements’ lack of political stability provides the opportunity for testing the self-sufficiency of virtue in politics. And this is what the Athenian says in so many words: with the present investigation,

we will now establish more firmly such a [thesis]: for having chanced upon deeds that occurred (\emph{ergois genomenois}), we are led, as it seems, to the same argument, so that we will not investigate this same argument in some empty thing, but in a real event in which truth lies (\emph{alla peri gegeon te kai echon alêtheian}).\(^{345}\)

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344. Patch, \textit{Plato’s Jurisprudence}, p.146-7. As Patch notes, the passage at 683e3-6 “has given rise to much speculation about the unity of the first three books of the Laws.” Patch discusses these views there (p.145-47) and in the Appendix (p.192-203). We have noting to add to his conclusion.
345. \textit{Laws}, 683e8-684a1.
2.2.3.5. The Case of Sparta’s Stability: Virtue or Chance?

The Dorians settled in the Peloponnese and founded three kingships: Argos, Messene, and Sparta. These three kings, together with their respective peoples, swore an oath of mutual assistance, establishing a Dorian confederacy between the three kingships. The oath stipulated that in each city the king and the people shall obey the common law regulating the way in which ruling and being ruled has to proceed. The common law stipulates that kings shall not make use of more violence as time goes by and the people shall not attempt to overthrow the king. And if a party in one city were to fail to keep their oath, the kings and the peoples of the two remaining cities shall side with the party that suffers injustice. About this oath of mutual assistance, the Athenian says that it was “the greatest [thing] for the establishment of the legislative regimes in the three cities.”

The second great advantage that facilitated the establishment of these legislative regimes was the absence of opposition to a redistribution of land in a manner that pleases the people. Of course, the ultimate reason for the absence of opposition, that is, the non-existence of factionalism due to old debts and great inequality of wealth, lies in the fact that these Dorians were invaders who took over lands that did not belong to them. Be that as it may, these two original arrangements were greatly favorable because they insured against political and economic oppression, as we might say today. To be closer to the language of the Laws, we might rather say that “the settlement and the legislation”

346. Laws, 684b5-7. The Athenian encapsulates several political notions in this sentence which I have regrouped in the expression “legislative regime.” England provides this literal translation: “was not that point of the greatest importance [...] to the establishments of polities [politeiōn], as by law established, in the three states” (cf. The Laws of Plato, I, p.362).
347. Laws, 684e8: katoikisis te kai nomothesia.
were such as to eliminate the mutual fear that may exist between the ruler and the ruled as well as that between the rich and the poor. Moreover, the original intent behind the Dorian alliance was meant to preserve all the Greeks from a barbarian invasion.\textsuperscript{348} In short, the examination of the Dorian settlement in the Peloponese provides an answer to the first question the Athenian pointed out, namely “which [city] has and has not been nobly (\textit{kalōs}) settled.”\textsuperscript{349} Indeed, the three Dorian cities have been nobly settled on account of the favorable condition of their settlement, the framing of their legislation, and the original intent of their alliance.

Yet, despite these three advantages, the situation turned out badly (\textit{kakōs}; 684e7) for the Dori\textn{a}s, not to say for all the Greek given the broader intention of the alliance. In two cities out of three, Argos and Messene, the regime and the laws were corrupted; as for the third one, Sparta, she “has never to this day ceased fighting with the other two parts.”\textsuperscript{350} Yet, Sparta nonetheless stands out as the only city that has preserved its original form or regime. Sparta thus appears as a model of political stability. Therefore, understanding the difference between Sparta, on the one hand, and Argos and Messene, on the other, should provide an answer to the Athenian’s second question: “what kind of laws preserve [the cities] that are preserved and what kind [of laws] destroy those that are destroyed.”\textsuperscript{351}

The historical investigation is however delayed as the Athenian confesses to having made a mistake while recalling the political enterprise behind the Dorian

\textsuperscript{348} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 685b7-c2.
\textsuperscript{349} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 683b1-2.
\textsuperscript{350} \textit{Laws}, 686b1-2; Pangle’s translation.
\textsuperscript{351} \textit{Laws}, 683b2-3.
confederacy and, in the pursuit of correcting his mistake, he may appear to be carried away from his objective. He has mistakenly become attracted to the idea of a powerful army led by the Dorians and devoted to the defense of all the Greeks without first asking himself whether military power should be the ultimate goal of politics. Such an army would have been, for sure, an “amazing and fully noble possession.” Yet, focusing on power as the means to accomplish whatever one wishes rather than on the intrinsic worth of the wish itself was a mistake, the Athenians says. As he puts it, it is “the common desire of all human beings” to wish that “the things that happen happen in accordance with the commands of one’s own soul.” Summarizing the Athenian’s point, Megillus understands that no one should pray “to have everything follow his own wish, but rather to have his wish follow his own prudence.” The Spartan has rightly understood the Athenian’s point, but the latter adds that this distinction brings them back to the very beginning of their discussion. For if prudence supersedes power as the ruler which is both “right and in accordance with nature,” then the goal of politics is not war, as he argued at the beginning of Book I, but rather virtue, or, “the leader of the whole virtue, and this would be prudence and intellect and opinion with erōs and desire following upon these.” The delay of the historical investigation has then proved to be the occasion for broadening the objective sought by this very investigation. Indeed, the Athenian not only recalls his original criticism according to which the Dorian code failed to set the right

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353. *Laws*, 687e1 and c5-6: *To kata tēn tēs hautou psuchēs epitaxin ta gignomena gignesthai.*
354. *Laws*, 687e6-7; Pangle’s translation slightly altered.
356. Cf. *Laws*, 631b5-d2; cf. supra section 2.2.1.3.
357. *Laws*, 688b2-4; Pangle’s translation.
political goal, but he now claims to find evidence for it in the failure of the Dorian confederacy.

Indeed, I do expect that you will find now, provided that you attend to the argument we set forth a little earlier [and follow it] as it proceeds,\(^{358}\) that the cause of the downfall of the kings and of the whole [original] intent was not cowardice, nor the lack of the knowledge of war on the part of the rulers or of those for whom it was fitting to be ruled, but the corruption came from all the other vices, and most of all [it came] from the ignorance of the greatest of human affairs.\(^{359}\)

Now, it is crucial to understand the ignorance the Athenian talks about in order to see what is at stake in the investigation of Sparta’s political stability. This peculiar ignorance consists in “the dissonance between pleasure and pain, on the one hand, and the opinion that is according to reason, on the other.”\(^{360}\) This ignorance, which is usually called incontinence, we attributed to Kleinias in Book I.\(^{361}\) And this was evidence that the Dorian code failed to make the people living under it virtuous and happy. But now the Athenian adds a crucial element: he draws a parallel between the individual and the city and asserts that the part of the soul that feels pain and pleasure is like the people in the city. Accordingly, the Athenian asserts that lack of intelligence occurs “in a city, when the majority refuses to obey the rulers and the laws and, in the same way, in one man, when the noble arguments in the soul achieve nothing good (\textit{pleon}).”\(^{362}\) Thus, the Athenian draws the conclusion that in order to create some harmony in the city it is

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360. \textit{Laws}, 689a7-8; Pangle’s translation.
361. Cf. \textit{Laws}, 661b4-662a8; cf. supra section 2.2.2.10.
imperative to select rulers whose feelings follow their reason, that is, it is imperative to select harmonious men for rulers if we wish to have a harmonious city.\textsuperscript{363} In other words, the thesis that will be tested on the basis of the failure of the Dorian confederacy is the assertion that the cause of the destruction of any city lies in the vice of the rulers.\textsuperscript{364} Agreeing with Patch,\textsuperscript{365} we understand this assertion to be the corollary of the Athenian’s more fundamental thesis, his many times repeated assertion that virtue, the complete virtue, is the necessary and sufficient condition for both citizens’ happiness and political prosperity. Indeed, if this thesis is true, the fate of the three Dorian cities should corroborate it. The time for testing the Athenian’s thesis about the political sufficiency of virtue has finally come.

In order to follow the Athenian’s demonstration most carefully, let us begin by considering more closely the thesis that the city’s harmony rests on the selection of harmonious rulers. On the basis of our reading of the \textit{Republic}, we cannot help being suspicious of the analogy between the city and man. For one thing, the rulers, even if harmonious themselves, can hardly succeed in ruling over a people notorious for their disobedience. It is on that point that the analogy between the city and man is partially misleading. For if man, like a city, has many parts, he remains nonetheless by nature one being, so that if one part rules, the other must necessarily obey.\textsuperscript{366} As for a city, however, the purpose is precisely to make it one. Accordingly, making one part the ruling part does not necessary makes the other parts obedient. It is useful to have this difficulty in mind.

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\textsuperscript{363} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 689d2-4.
\textsuperscript{364} The thesis is clearly stated by Kleinias at 691a1-2.
\textsuperscript{366} Cf. supra section 2.2.1.8.
because right after having made such hasty identification of a city with man, the Athenian makes a sudden shift in his argument and raises the question of the number and the nature of “the authoritative titles for ruling and being ruled.” One of these titles is, of course, the rule of the wise (or prudent: \( \text{ton phronounta} \)) over the ignorant (\( \text{ton anepistēmena} \); 690b10), and to the extent that incontinence is ignorance, one could say that this title is tantamount to the rule of the continent over the incontinent. But the point is that the rule of the wise over the ignorant is but one of the titles, and the Athenian lists six others: (1) the claim of the parents to be entitled to rule over their children, (2) that of the well-born to rule over the vulgar, (3) of the older over the younger, (4) of the master over the slaves, (5) of the stronger over the weaker, and finally, in addition to (6) that of the prudent over the ignorant, there is (7) the claim of the one chosen by lot to be entitled to rule over those who have not been chosen. By listing all of these seven titles, the Athenian brings to the fore the peculiar plurality of the city. For not only are these titles manifold but, more important to us, they are “naturally in opposition with one another.” These titles are then heterogeneous. Of course, this is a great source of “civil strife” \( (\text{staseōn}; 690d4) \) and the Athenian now says that it is the work of the legislator to “treat” or “cure” \( (\text{therapeuein}; 690d5) \) this source of political instability. And it is in Sparta’s peculiar regime that the Athenian wants us to see a model of such a political treatment. Let us follow.

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367. \( \text{Laws, 690a1: axiōmata tou te archein kai archesthai.} \)
368. Cf. \( \text{Laws, 690a3-c8.} \)
369. \( \text{Laws, 690d3-4: pephukota pros allēla enantiōs.} \)
The kings of Argos and Messene, having nothing to moderate their power except their oath, ended up extending their power over the people. In that sense, the case of Argos and Messene corroborate the Athenian’s thesis that it is the ruler’s vice that destroys a city. But Sparta, the ultimate test, remains. It is on the basis of the examination of that city that one can learn “what should have happened at the time” in order to preserve the other two cities as well. And according to the Athenian what happened in Sparta is this. First, a “god” brought about the birth of twins in the royal family with the result of creating a dual kingship. Second, a council of twenty-eight old men, the elders, was established. These elders and the kings formed the political body named the gerousia, which limits and moderates the rule of the kings. Finally, the power was split once more with the creation of the Ephors, a form of power similar to that based on lot, which limits the rule of the kings even further. So, the stability of Sparta rests on the mixing of at least three different titles to rule: noble birth (kings), old age (the elders), and lot (the Ephors). To the extent that the kings also embody parental authority, the elders some sort of wisdom, and the Ephors strength, one may say that Spartan regime succeeds in mixing six heterogeneous titles.

373. Cf. Laws, 692a1 where the elders are said to have moderation: gēras sōphrona dunamin.
374. As Strauss points out, “strength by nature resides in the majority [...] the rule of the stronger is democracy” (The Argument, p.46-47). And this truth was also pointed by the Athenian in Book I: “in battles bigger cities win over smaller ones” (638a7-b1).
375. Strauss too suggests that six titles are mixed in the Spartan regime, but he attributes strength to the kings: “Thus the Spartan regime became properly mixed (out of kingship, aristocracy, and democracy); its ingredients are strength on the basis of birth, sobriety (moderation) of the old, and election by lot; all seven titles to rule, with the exception of course of the rule of the masters over slaves, seem to have been used for the mixture” (The Argument, p.48). As for the rule of the master over the slave, the Athenian’s silence on the Helots should not make us forget them; cf. Laws, 633b9-c1 and Pangle’s note on that passage (The
The question is then to determine what should be concluded about the thesis of the political sufficiency of virtue on the basis of Sparta.

2.2.3.6. The Sufficiency of Virtue Revisited

At the end of the historical examination of Sparta and the Dorian confederacy, the Athenian draws the following conclusion.

And certainly, this is what we said about it just now, that one should not establish with the law (nomothetein) great ruling powers nor unmixed ones, [but] keeping such a thing as this in mind, that a city should be free, sensible, and in friendship with itself, and [that] the one who legislates (ton nomothetounta) should look (bleponta) to these things while legislating (nomothetein)."376

This conclusion certainly departs from the thesis of the sufficiency of virtue. The first major difference is that political stability is the result of “not great nor unmixed ruling powers” (ou megalas archas oud’ ameiktous), that is, it is the result of limited and therefore mixed ruling powers, or titles to rule as they have been called. Thus, the stability of Sparta is due to her mixed regime rather than to her devotion to virtue. The second major difference is the list of three new goals the legislator should look to for the city’s goodness: freedom, good sense, and friendship with itself (eleutheran te kai emphrona kai heautēi philēn). Virtue (aretē) is not even included in the list. To use Friedländer’s expression, this list appears to be a radically new “table of the goods.”377

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376. Laws, 693b1-5.
377. Paul Friedländer, Plato, vol. III (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969), p.562, note 44: “the tables of the goods described in Laws I 631b et seq. and in III 697bc bear no relation to one another.” The passage of Book III that Friedländer refers to is not the one analyzed here. But the most important opposition is here,
Yet, this is not the way the Athenian sees it, for just after the passage quoted above he adds:

Yet, let us not be surprised if many times already we have set down certain goals and said that the legislator must legislate with a view to these, but the goal set down do not appear to us to be the same in each case. Rather, one ought to consider, whenever we say that [the lawgiver] must look to moderation (to sōphronein) or prudence (phronēsin) or friendship, that this target is not different but the same in each case.378

According to Patch, this suggestion is “obviously false.”379 As he rightly points out, the Athenian is now silent about liberty or tries to replace it by moderation. He does this without real success, for as a way of response, Kleinias drops moderation and recalls the radically new triad of liberty, prudence, and friendship.380 According to Patch’s interpretation, these three goals established in Book III on the basis of the historical examination of Sparta supersede what was introduced in Book I as the sole and unique true goal for a wise legislation. In short, it means that the historical demonstration of Book III, far from confirming the thesis of the sufficiency of virtue, in fact refutes it.381

Patch claims that this means that the wise lawgiver must grant some power to the lower goods in order to safeguard the city, and also some power to the people in order to ensure

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378. Laws, 693b5-c4; Pangle’s translation slightly altered. From that passage up to 701d8-9 where we find intellect (nous), prudence (phonēsis) supersedes sensibleness (emphrona; 693b4) in the trio with liberty and civil friendship.
381. Cf. Patch, Plato’s Jurisprudence, p.161: “Virtue no more guarantees security against foreign aggression than it guarantees internal political stability. It appears that Book III, instead of confirming, contradicts the thesis first stated at 631b-c. Virtue does not guarantee political prosperity. It does not guarantee the possession of strength or the other ‘human goods.’ This has important consequences for our understanding of the goals of the wise lawgiver. It means that he cannot legislate with a view to virtue only.”
political stability. The wise lawgiver must thus grant liberty to the people in order to secure friendship between the rulers and the ruled.\textsuperscript{382}

We believe that Patch is right to say that the case of Sparta does not corroborate the thesis about the sufficiency of virtue. However, there are two points that need to be stated in addition to Patch’s interpretation. First, the Athenian keeps stressing, throughout his historical demonstration, the significance of chance (\textit{tuchē}) as a cause. Even as he phrases the problem and launches the investigation, chance comes up: he says that they should investigate “what sort of chance” (\textit{hētis pote tuchē}; 686b7) causes the corruption of the Dorian confederacy. In addition, he adds they have been lucky (\textit{eutuchōs}; 686c4) to fall on such a case to test their theories about the evolution and alteration of cities against historical and truthful events.\textsuperscript{383} More crucial, however, is the repeated suggestion that now, with the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to state how the three Dorian cities could have been saved. But to have known the solution at the time of the Dorian confederacy would have required someone “wiser than us,” and nothing indicates that the Athenian should not be included in this “us.”\textsuperscript{384} Consequently, the Athenian’s account of Spartan political development diminishes the role of Spartan lawgivers.\textsuperscript{385} The conclusion drawn by the Athenian is that “the god has shown what had to be done and what should still be

\textsuperscript{383} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 683e8-684a1. For what the Athenian calls their luck at 686c4 is in fact the repetition of what he has already said at 683e9: “the deeds we have chanced upon (\textit{perituchontes}) lead us to the same argument ...” (Pangle’s translation).
\textsuperscript{384} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 691b2-5. In addition to this passage, the assertion is repeated at 691b7-9, 692b7-c4, and even the ambiguous sentence at 691d5-6 seems to refer to it.
\textsuperscript{385} The case of Lycurgus is striking. Although the editors and commentators agree in saying that Lycurgus is referred to at 691e1-2, the fact remains that he is not mentioned by his name, so that Pangle is right to say that the “Athenian makes no mention here of Lycurgus or of the help Lycurgus was supposed to have received from Apollo by the way of the Delphic Oracle” (\textit{The Laws of Plato}, p.523, note 29).
done to bring about an especially stable rule (tēn menousan malista archēn)." Yet, what Athenian attributes to a god, might as well be called a historical discovery, a political arrangement which came about unintentionally. In the Athenian’s account, human wisdom or political art does not have much importance as cause of the political solution Sparta stands for. Accordingly, this account cannot corroborate the thesis that virtue alone, as the goal purposely sought by the rulers, can secure political happiness, prosperity, and security. For everything reported by the Athenian about Spartan history, without any objection from Megillus, happens as if the Spartan lawgivers were looking not to virtue, but rather to stability and liberty, that is, to a way of limiting the power of the kings. And it is on the basis of the stability of the political arrangement that they arrived at that the Athenian now identifies liberty, good sense, and political friendship as the threefold goal for any city.

In sum, the emphasis put on chance and the god is strong evidence to support Patch’s assertion that the examination of Sparta contradicts the thesis it is said to corroborate. Now, the result of all this demonstration is that the mixed regime, as embodied by Sparta, stands as a model for any city and therefore a model that any lawgiver should look to while performing his work. This regime is mixed because it succeeds in mixing most of the heterogeneous titles for ruling. Or, to recall the Statesman, we could as well say that the regime is mixed because it succeeds in weaving together most of these heterogeneous titles. Of course, this cannot but bring back the

question of the work of statesmanship or lawgiving. Now, just as it is the case in the *Statesman* with the notion of weaving, the work of mixing heterogeneous elements together leads to the idea of *to metrion*: the due measure.

If someone, paying no regard to due measure (*to metrion*), gives what is bigger to what is smaller, whether it is sails to ships or food to bodies or ruling powers to souls, in every case he turns things upside down; and filled with insolence (*exubrizonta*), some things run to sickness, others to the injustice born from insolence. [...] Knowing due measure and to preserve against these things is thus [the work of] great lawgivers.

This notion of due measure is intimately connected to our problem of the harmony of the goods. For with the idea of the mixed regime, the question of what the legislator should look to in order to bring about the unity of the city in the best possible way once again comes to the fore.

### 2.2.3.7. The Goal of a Good Legislation and the Harmony of the Goods

As a way of concluding this chapter, let us focus on Patch’s interpretation of the first three Books of the *Laws* just as we did with Stauffer’s for the *Republic*. Despite Patch’s great insight, we find that his conclusion is too categorical. According to Patch, the result of Book III supersedes that of Book I, so that the goal for a wise legislation is no longer virtue but the trio: liberty, friendship, and prudence. In our view, this is better understood as a problem than a conclusion. The fleshing out of this problem will show why we must now turn to the city of the *Laws*.

389. *Laws*, 691c1-4 and d4-5. The last sentence reads: *tou't' oun eulabēthēnai gnontas metrion megalōn nomothetōn*; there no mention of “work” (*ergon*), but the absolute genitive makes it possible to understand it this way (Pangle translates: “Knowing how to preserve due measure in this respect is the sign of great lawgivers”).
As the Athenian points out, the mixed regime is above all a mixture of monarchy and democracy. The Athenian calls monarchy and democracy the two mothers of regimes and the presence of both is required in order to produce liberty, friendship, and prudence. The three old men then undertake an investigation of each ingredient separately, which involves an investigation of both Persia and Athens as the former best represents monarchy and the latter democracy. This new historical investigation reveals that both regimes are now corrupted. In the Persian monarchy, the “due measure” (to metrion; 694a3) between liberty and obedience that existed under Cyrus has been lost as the education of the kings was corrupted. As for the Athenian democracy, “the measured” (metron; 698b1) obedience to the law was corrupted when the people’s fear of the law, that is, their “awe” (aidōs; 698b6), was forgotten as the rules regulating music and theater were corrupted. At the origin of both regimes, then, the due measure between liberty and obedience created a strong friendship among the citizens that made both political communities powerful military. The Persians were capable of acquiring a vast empire because both soldiers and leaders perceive this goal as a common enterprise. However, their success ended with the loss of liberty, and with it, the communal character of their enterprise. As a result, when the Persians invaded Greece, the Athenians, though outnumbered, were able to resist them successfully because the bond of friendship among the Athenians was so much stronger, forged as it was out of a fear of

390. Cf. Laws, 693d2-e3. The Athenian’s analogy of motherhood is puzzling, for there is not a word about who should be the “father.”
both their own common law and their common enemy.\textsuperscript{393} Yet, despite this similarity, Persia and Athens differ greatly in what may be legitimately called the goal of each regime. In good old Persia, the goal seems to have been military victory and imperial expansion but in such a way as to acknowledge the merit of virtue, even intellectual virtue, the condition of which is a certain freedom of speech that moderated the monarchy, that is, that made it partly democratic.\textsuperscript{394} As for good old Athens, the goal seems to have been a fearful reverence to the laws, that is, awe, this “certain despotic mistress”\textsuperscript{395} which moderated their democracy by making all citizens obedient, giving them something of the character of a subject of a monarchy. In short, even though Persia and Athens were measured regimes when they were at their best, they still remained two very different regimes in the goal they were pursuing.

Now, the conclusion of the discussion is that none of the regimes that the three old men have examined can now stand as a model for a lawgiver. To sum up: Persia and Athens are now corrupted and Sparta appears to have been lucky in achieving political stability. Of course, the Athenian has shown that from Sparta one can learn the political arrangement out of which stability is possible. But this political arrangement cannot be the whole of the regime as the examination of Persia and Athens, which were both mixed and measured regimes, makes clear. For the mixing of ruling titles has to be performed with a view to one specific goal. Now, Sparta, Persia, and Athens stand for three different goals. Let us say that Sparta goal is political stability and war, that of Persia virtue and

\textsuperscript{393} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 698b2-c3.
\textsuperscript{394} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 694b1-6. The emphasis is on prudence: \textit{tis au phronimos} (694b2).
\textsuperscript{395} \textit{Laws}, 698b5-6; Pangle’s translation for \textit{despotis enēn tīs aidōs}.
imperial war, and that of Athens awe. At the beginning of the whole dialogue, Sparta is criticized for aiming at the wrong goal, namely war, but it is praised in Book III for its stability, that is, its being mixed and measured, so that Sparta was not corrupted by its military successes. The goals of Persia and Athens may be said to be better than that of Sparta but, in contrast to Sparta, the measure or the mixture they achieved was not incorporated into the political arrangement of these regimes, so that both were corrupted by their military successes.

This is why we say that the movement of the three first Books of the Laws brings us back to the question of the harmony of the goods. At the end of Book III, the Athenian says that the city for which the lawgiver lay down his laws should possess three things: liberty, friendship, and intellect.\textsuperscript{396} It is noteworthy that intellect now replaces prudence. This new ingredient complicates the mixture, for the scope of intellect is wider than that of prudence and transcends the sphere of the city, so that the city’s recognition of it is more difficult: Cyrus acknowledged the merit of prudent advisers (\textit{tis phronimos}; 694b2) in measured Persia, but one may doubt that he did the same for men whose wisdom were not politically useful. So that our question stands still: how can these elements be harmonized, wove, or mixed into one city? To what thing should we look to be able to say that a city which encompasses these elements is well measured?

Let us restate our conclusions about the introduction to the \textit{Laws} in this way. As a result of Book III, the thesis of the sufficiency of virtue has become, to say the least, seriously doubtful. We are thus left with the Athenian’s third question: “what sort of

\textsuperscript{396} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 701d7-9: \textit{hē nomo\theta toumēnē polis eleuthera te estai kai philē heautēi kai noun hexei.}
change in the [laws] would make a city happy (*eudaimona*).”\(^{397}\) The mixed regime appears to be the answer, but the problem is that the mixed regime encompasses three ingredients the weaving of which is in need of further clarification. In addition, we have now three partial “models” of a measured regime: Sparta, old Persia, and old Athens. In two of these three political communities, fear appears to be the binding element. We understand Sparta’s political arrangement to be the outcome of the fear of the kings and it is quite clear that the fear of the law was the reason of Athens’ greatness. Now, in the two first Books, fear underwent a certain criticism, for if it might regulate behavior it may, on the other hand, impede the activity of reason and the education of pleasure. In Book III, however, fear is present right from the beginning in the first regime analyzed, the one that resulted from the flood’s aftermath, as well as in the last one analyzed, that of old Athens. Moreover, we may say that the fundamental problem with the Dorian alliance was the absence of fear: the absence of fear between the rich and the poor, between the rulers and the ruled, and even the absence of fear of a foreign invader. Or at least the purpose of the alliance was to insure the Dorians against those sources of fear, and thus to dismiss fear in politics, and it failed. Book III reveals a crude realism. It is sharp and cold. The only regime where we find virtue and some freedom of speech is old Persia, which was devoted to military expansion.

We draw two conclusions from all this. First, the human hopes about what is possible to accomplish in politics are now more limited. Second, it might nonetheless be possible to create a better political regime than those that have been erected so far. The

\(^{397}\) *Laws*, 683b3-4.
whole difficulty is to find the due measure between what reality (history) teaches about politics and what politics aims at: the creation of virtuous citizens. The difficulty stems from the fact that politics claims to produce both the happiness of the city and that of the individual. On the basis of our reading of the first three Books of the *Laws*, it is no longer obvious that these two goals can coincide. Yet, the last question the Athenian raises in Book III, the one with which he sums up the whole discussion so far and which leads to Kleinias’s disclosure of the project of founding a new colony, is this: “how a city might best be established sometime, and how, in private, someone might best lead his own life.”\(^398^\) In this question, the Athenian states in one common inquiry the two different goals of the city’s best arrangement and the individual’s best life. This cannot but raise our expectations regarding the city to found in the next Books.

Patch’s interpretation is very penetrating but it pushes us to move on. According to us, the city built in the *Laws* should be examined, for it is that city that will now stand as a model for a wise legislation. Considering the whole dialogue, it is indeed accurate to say that the purpose is to build a city in speech that will be better than any Dorian city, including Sparta, but also better than Athens, and Persia. In short, we understand Patch’s interpretation along with that of Stauffer’s: it is Plato’s introduction to the question of a wise legislation. As for the wise legislation as such, it begins to unfold in Book IV of the *Laws*.

\(^{398}\) *Laws*, 702a8-b1; Pangle’s translation.
CHAPTER THREE
THE ATTEMPT AT HARMONIZING THE GOODS

3.1. Introduction
3.1.1. The Difference Between Human Happiness and the Happy City

The analyses of the Republic I-VII and of the Laws I-III that we carried out in the previous chapter aimed at showing that the best place to look for a discussion of and a solution to the problem of the harmony of the goods is the Laws. As already indicated, the main conclusion that we drew from these analyses concerns the difference between human happiness and the happy city. This conclusion can now be stated as follows. The city of the Republic, the beautiful city, is the happy city, indeed, but since the city’s happiness (or oneness) entails the sacrifice of man’s wholeness, we drew the conclusion that the city’s happiness and that of man may not necessarily coincide. This conclusion, as it has also been indicated, provided us with an answer to the first question we raised at the end of Chapter One. But it also provided us with a justification for turning to the
Laws. For even though the city of the Laws is not the happy city, it is that city which needs to be understood with regard to our problematic. Indeed, it is claimed at the beginning of the Laws that the city which is ruled by the right laws should make its people happy by providing them with all the good things in life. Since we are now in a better position for understanding the significance of this conclusion, it is appropriate to consider it anew here.

3.1.2. The Unresolved Question of Laws III and the City’s Happiness

The historical account provided in Laws III was supposed to answer the three following questions: “(1) which [city] has and has not been nobly settled; (2) what kind of laws preserve the [cities] that are preserved and what kind [of laws] destroy those that are destroyed; (3) and what sort of change in these [laws] would make a city happy.”\(^1\) On the basis of the historical examination of Sparta and the other Dorian cities, we concluded that all of these were nobly settled cities, but that only Sparta was preserved due to its mixed regime, i.e., due to the fact that its laws grant power to several and different ruling titles. The third question, however, was left unanswered, for none of the cities that stand as models in Book III—Sparta, old Persia, and old Athens—are said to be happy. The question even seemed to be forgotten, as the main question raised at the end of the Book concerned the city’s best “establishment” (oikoiē; 702a8). Yet, in Book V, the Athenian asserts that the “first city,” the one with the “best laws,” is the one in which wives,

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\(^1\) Laws, 683b1-4.
children, and possessions are all common. ² These best laws are, in short, the communist laws of the Republic. Indeed, if the beautiful city is the happy city, it is due to these very laws. This can be briefly explained as follows. The happy city is the best city, which also means that it is the most just city. In order to be the best and the most just, the city needs to be the most perfectly one. And the city which is the most perfectly one is the city in which there are no families or anything else private that would make it many instead of one. Therefore, to the extent that the happy city is the one in which there is nothing a citizen can call his own beside the city, we infer that the sort of change in a city’s legislation that would make it a happy city is the passing of the three communist laws laid down in the Republic. ³ Since, however, there is no record of such a city in political history, that conclusion could not have been drawn from any historical investigation. This might explain why the third question was left unanswered in Book III; and to the extent that Book V of the Laws is, so to speak, the least historical of the whole work, this might explain why that question is addressed there.

But the crucial point is that the assertion according to which the city founded in the Laws is not the “first city” (prōtē polis; 739b8) is tantamount to asserting that it is not the happy city. However, to the extent that human happiness and that of the city do not coincide, this is not much of a problem to us. To repeat the main points of our “critique” of the Republic, let us say that the happy city is the one that succeeds in harmonizing all the individuals of a city into one city, so much so that in the Republic the problem of the

² Cf. Laws, 739b8-c5.
³ Cf. supra sections 2.1.3.4.
city’s wholeness almost completely eclipses that of the human wholeness. The creation of
the happy city that we witness in the Republic is, so to speak, the creation of one new
being whose organs are made of human beings, each of which performs only one ergon.⁴
Accordingly, dismissing the Republic as the appropriate dialogue for the discussion of the
question of the harmony of the goods was therefore tantamount to affirming that human
happiness and human wholeness do not coincide with the city’s happiness and wholeness.
In contrast to the Republic, the Laws’s primarily focus is on human happiness.⁵ This
explains why the question of the city’s best establishment supersedes that of the city’s
happiness at the end of Book III. On the basis of what has been seen so far, the goal
aimed at in the Laws can thus be stated as follows: the creation of a stable city which can
promote the best way of life.

3.1.3. The Two Remaining Questions and the Chapter’s Objective

In Chapter One, the effort of formulating the problem of the harmony of the
goods on the basis of Plato’s writings led us to the formulation of three questions. Now
that the first question has received a satisfactory answer—at least for the purpose of this
dissertation—it is only natural that the second question reappears and presses us for a
solution. If the city’s happiness, which is the same as the city’s oneness, is not the goal
with a view to which the statesman or the lawgiver performs and measures his work, then
what is the thing at which he must look? This is, in essence, the second of our three

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⁴ On the basis of the Timaeus, mostly, but also of the Republic and the Laws, Jean-François Pradeau
argues that for Plato the city is a living being; cf. Platon et la cité, Paris: PUF, 1997, p.79-104, and also Luc
⁵ Laws, 631b5-6: “[These laws] are right, [when] those who use them are made happy.”
questions. The first answer suggested in the *Laws* is the natural hierarchy of the goods at the top of which are the four cardinal virtues. By constantly looking at virtue when he lays down the laws, and therefore by constantly laying down laws that promote the acquisition of virtue, the lawgiver should make his citizens happy. But that first assertion got complicated by what followed, especially in Book III. Because virtue does not suffice for securing the city’s stability, virtue, that is, the virtues—the harmonization of which is already a problem—cannot be simply the solution. In addition to virtue, friendship and liberty need to be attentively considered by the lawgiver. That qualification is sufficiently important for making us look for a more complete answer to our second question in the city to be founded.

The third question that we raised at the end of Chapter One concerned the passing on of political knowledge to the citizens. Once we dismissed the *Republic*, and together with it the notion of work (*ergon*)—which notion was connected to a profound remolding of love of one’s own—the notion of practices (*epitêdeumata*) suggested at the beginning of the *Laws* struck us as very promising. Yet, the possibility of passing on knowledge by the means of politically established practices underwent a severe test in Books I and II, and it is no longer obvious whether practices can achieve that crucial task. Throughout Books I and II, education became the most important theme and we noticed some attempts at establishing practices that would promote the education of the citizens, such as symposia and religious festivals. But the main effect of these discussions was Kleiniyas’ disclosure of his private opinion about his own laws and practices. Although Kleiniyas’ life has been profoundly shaped by Dorian practices, these very practices did not
convince him that breaking with the Dorian laws would make someone unhappy. This might well be due to the failure of the Dorian practices alone. But if the reason for this failure is that these practices did not convey nor promote an education worthy of the name, that is, an education which relates to the highest part of the soul—whether it is called reason, understanding, or intellect—this only means that practices, by themselves, cannot pass on knowledge. For that reason, we believe that the third question has not been satisfactory answered yet.

Therefore, the objective of the present Chapter is to address these two remaining questions. As the city’s foundation is beginning to be laid, we expect to find answer to them. For the foundation of the new colony should compel the three old men to state clearly the goal of the city and how the knowledge of that goal should be passed on to the new colonists.

3.2. The City’s Foundation
3.2.1. The Problem of the City’s Founding

Book IV is the first book devoted to the building of the city as such. Naturally, it is in that Book that the founding of the city is discussed. Yet, although it is natural to begin with the foundation, such a discussion was left aside in the Statesman and only alluded to in the Republic. To state it simply, the problem of the city’s foundation boils
down to the problem of authority, that is, the problem of providing those who should rule
with the necessary power to rule actually. This is the problem that the three old men of
the *Laws* face at the beginning of Book IV.

3.2.2. The Reassertion of Virtue as the Goal of the City

After having inquired about the nature of the land where the city is to be founded,
the Athenian asserts that the assessment of the land should be made with a view to the
advantages it provides for “the acquisition of virtue” (*aretēs ktēsin*; 704d3). And, in
general, the Athenian repeats many times throughout Book IV that the goal of the city to
be founded is virtue.

Now then, you, in turn, must keep a watch on me while you follow the
present legislation, if ever I legislate something which does not aim at virtue
or [which aim only at] a part of virtue. For I put as a principle
(*hupotithemai*) that this is the only law rightly (*orthōs*) laid down, the one
which, as in the way of an archer (*dikēn toxotou*), aims each time at that
which alone is constantly accompanied by something noble (*kalon ti*), the

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(gnōstikēs; 259c10) on the basis that the possession of the political knowledge may be independent from
the possession of the authority to rule (cf. 259b3-5). Following on from that is the assertion that there is no
difference between ruling over a household and a city (cf. 259b9-11; but note that the Stranger from Elea
says a “big household” and a “small city,” which may point to the fact that size does matter, for if he had
said a “small household” and a “big city” the answer would not have been, in all likelihood, the same).
Also following on the understanding of politics as a theoretical knowledge is the assertion that preserving
political authority is performed by the power of the king’s soul rather than the king’s body, i.e., by
knowledge rather than by force (cf. 259c6-8; which is true to some extent with respect to the force of the
king’s body, but not with respect to the force of the king’s army, the fidelity of which is generally not a
willing subjection to the king’s powerful soul, e.g., the case of a hereditary king).

7. I follow England’s reading of the subordinate clause: *eun ara ti mē pros aretēn teinon ê pros aretēs
morion nomothetō*. England understands that the Athenian is saying that there are two possible mistakes he
must be guarded against; as he translates: “take care that I do not fall into (1) the error of putting
something else before virtue, or (2) that of exalting one kind of virtue at the expense of the rest” (*The Laws
of Plato*, I, p.418). This is the reading that Pangle adopts too. On the other hand, des Places and also
Brisson and Pradeau read the clause as if the Athenian were meaning that the goal is virtue or a part of
virtue; cf. des Places: “si je viens à édicter une loi qui ne tende pas à la vertu ou à une partie de la vertu” or
Brisson and Pradeau: “si [...] j’édicté quelque chose qui ne tend pas vers la vertu ou vers une partie de la
vertu.” But since, as the Athenian just recalled (cf. 705d8-9), he has criticized the Dorian code for aiming
only at a part of virtue (courage) and not the whole virtue, England’s reading makes more sense.
one which leaves all the rest aside, even if there is a chance of producing some wealth and some other such things by ignoring the things just mentioned.8

This assertion echoes the standard the Athenian has suggested in Book I.9 The goal of the regime should be virtue, the whole of virtue, and the laws indicate this goal by pointing to nobility or the beautiful in any circumstances of life.

Such a reassertion may appear a bit surprising after the historical investigations of Book III. But it has to be noted that the reassertion of virtue as the goal of the regime is no longer accompanied by the affirmation of the sufficiency of virtue. In fact, the Athenian even implies that it is possible to produce other good things besides virtue by the means of the law, such as wealth, without adding that without virtue these things cannot be genuinely good. However, among the other good things besides virtue there are friendship and liberty (as for prudence or intellect, we can legitimately assume that it is included in the virtues). We understand, therefore, that the Athenian agrees to take into consideration friendship and liberty, but not at the price of ignoring virtue and the noble things. In other words, the Athenian makes clear at the beginning of Book IV that if their historical investigations have called into question the sufficiency of virtue, the consequences of these investigations do not extent to such a degree that virtue should be dismissed altogether. As the Athenian stresses it: “we do not hold, as the many do, that preservation and mere existence are the most honorable things for human beings, but

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8. Laws, 705e1-706a4. England calls the last sentence a “puzzle” (cf. The Laws of Plato, I, p.419) and the manuscripts do not agree on its reading. I follow Pangle’s translation with minor alterations. For the repetitions of the assertion that virtue is the goal the laws should aim at in the new city, cf. 707d1-6, 718c10-12.
[that the most honorable thing is] to become the best [human beings] and to be so as long a time as they may exist.”

Virtue or becoming as best a human being as one can be is therefore the goal of the city to be founded. The objective is then to understand how friendship and liberty now fit into the scheme.

3.2.3. Harmonizing Virtue and Friendship

As a matter of fact, friendship comes up as the Athenian inquires about the origin of the citizens that will people the city. But the consideration of this point poses a grave difficulty for the founders of the new city. For, if, on the one hand, these people are from one common origin and share the same language and the same political experience, their unity as a human group will be very strong indeed, but this same unity may be an obstacle to their adopting the new laws and, therefore, the new goal of the city. Such a group of people will prefer their “own ways” (tên oikothēn; 708c4) to any others, even the ones that would promote virtue most efficiently. The Athenian calls this kind of unity or political homogeneity “a certain friendship” (tina pilian; 708c3). Although friendship is desirable, preexisting friendship is a problem for the lawgiver, for such a friendship is rooted in a different way of life than the one the lawgiver aims at establishing among the citizens. On the other hand, a group of human beings much more heterogeneous may adopt more easily certain of the new laws, but the mere obedience to the law does not suffice for uniting this newly formed group by the bonds of friendship. To do so will

require “a long time and difficult labors,”11 the Athenian says. Virtue and friendship thus appear as two distinct elements. Friendship may impede the political education to virtue, and, in turn, this political education is not the sufficient condition for the creation of friendship.

The harmonization of friendship with virtue as the goal of the whole legislation is a real puzzle, because if virtue is to be the real common goal of the city it requires friendship, and if friendship is to be genuine it requires virtue as a goal. Of course, one can easily see how these two elements, although distinct, may merge into one, that is, into one political community. But if it is easy to see how friendship and virtue support each other, say in speech, it is much more difficult to make them support each other in deed when the perspective is that of the coming-into-being of a political community. Either friendship preexists but without virtue or there is no friendship but virtue rules without the force of being supported by one united people. And we see here that the problem of harmonizing virtue and friendship is the same as the one of making the legitimate authority powerful. For friendship is that by which the mere obedience to the law becomes a way of life of one group cemented by common opinions and experiences. In the puppet analogy of Book I, the Athenian has put forward the definition of a law according to which it is a reasoning about pleasures, pains, and desires which, although originating from the intellect of one human being (or some god), has come to be accepted as the common opinion of the city.12 We now see that the passage from the individual

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12. Cf. *Laws*, 645b4-8; and supra section 2.2.2.5.
reasoning to the common opinion is far from being simple. For sharing such an opinion requires friendship. To be precise, sharing common opinions about pleasures, pains, and desires and sharing the same way of life structured on the basis of these opinions is friendship.\textsuperscript{13}

The fact that the citizen-body of the new city will be made of people from divers origins thus remains a great difficulty. Eventually, these people will, in all likelihood, come to form one city united by friendship, but the lawgiver’s power over the form that this friendship will take, the opinions on which it will crystallize, has now become quite fragile. The lawgiver’s power has become fragile to such a degree that the Athenian is tempted to draw the conclusion that, actually, no human being ever legislates. It is rather “chances and calamities of every sort, occurring in all kinds of ways, [that] legislate everything for us.”\textsuperscript{14} As Strauss explains, “the willingness to accept new laws is greatest in emergencies, i.e., in situation in which there is no room for choice and hence for choice of the best.”\textsuperscript{15} If this were the case, not only the art of legislation but virtually all the arts would be useless. Yet, the Athenian moderates this thought. He then says that

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{13} The “certain friendship” (\textit{tina pilian}; 708c3) the Athenian speaks of, what we would rather call “political friendship,” is the ties that bind into one same group human beings of different origins, which could simply mean of different families. In that respect, political friendship is the form of love of one’s own that attaches a human being to his city and to his fellow citizens. The chains in Plato’s famous Allegory of the cave are, we suggest, a representation of these very same ties, bonds, or attachments. This helps us understand how the problem of friendship is all of a piece with that of political power and authority, which is the theme of Book IV. Political friendship is that which makes it much more difficult for a citizen to break with the law or the common opinions of the regime, because such breaking is at the very same time a breaking with all of those who share these opinions, that is, family, friends, citizens, in short, those who are called one’s own. Just as the Allegory of the cave focuses on the difficulty of freeing oneself from the chains of political friendship, Book IV of the \textit{Laws} focuses on the difficulty of creating the chains, of attaching each link to the others so to say.

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 709a2-3.

\textsuperscript{15} Strauss, \textit{The Argument}, p.56.
\end{flushright}
“god” (theos) governs everything, and following from that are “chance and opportunity” (tuchē kai kairos; 709b7). This pair now makes possible a third thing: the arts (technēn; 709c1), which consist in recognizing the opportunity when it comes about and making it beneficial for human beings. The question of harmonizing virtue and friendship thus becomes the question of knowing what opportunity the true lawgiver, the one that possesses the art of legislation, should “pray for” (euasthai; 709d2). The true lawgiver’s answer, speaking through the Athenian’s mouth, is this: “Give me a tyrannized city.”16 Somehow, the rule of the law requires the help of tyranny.

3.2.4. Tyranny and Fortune: the Limits of the Human Arts

Kleinias is the first to find it unsettling now to have recourse to tyranny,17 which is understandable on account of what has been said only few moments ago about the mixed regime, the model somehow brought about by history. Yet, we also learned from history that the Dorian settlement in the Peloponnesus, which was nothing less than an invasion, i.e., a tyrannical action, can be reckoned as an example of noble settlement.18 If, then, history cannot provide an answer to the question of “what sort of changes” (poia metatethenta; 683b3-4) in the laws could bring about the happy city, that does not mean that history does not provide any valuable lesson about the requirements for bringing about political changes of whatever sort. And the founding of a city is necessarily a political change, especially if it aims at the city’s “best establishment” (arista oikoiē;

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18. Cf. supra, section 2.2.3.5.
702a8). To the extent that a law is an opinion on human pleasures, pains, and desires, a change in the laws is necessary in order to create a new citizen-body out of the heterogeneous mob of colonists that will people the new city. In order to bring about such a change, one needs power first. This is why the lawgiver’s very first requirement is a tyrant; a tyrant of a peculiar sort it is true, and above all a tyrant who is naturally moderate and will therefore not use his power to give free rein to his most fanciful desires,\(^19\) some sort of “public-spirited despot”\(^20\) as England puts it but, yet, a tyrant nonetheless. Since the tyrant holds all the power, he can “change the city’s ways” \((metabolein [...] poleōs ēthē; 711b5)\) without too much effort or too much time if only he wishes to do so. The recourse to tyranny in order to bring about a change in the city—the greatest change being of course the city’s foundation or, what amounts to the same thing, a revolution—is therefore “in accordance with nature” \((kata phusin; 710c3-4)\).

Let no one persuade us, friends, that there will ever be another [way] for a city to change its laws rapidly and easily than through the hegemony of all-powerful [rulers]: there is no other [way] to do it now nor there will ever be [another in the future] either.\(^21\)

Since the justification for the recourse to tyranny is the possibility of the harmonization of virtue with friendship, it is appropriate to make a pause in order to understand the significance of this for the problem of the harmony of the goods. Virtue is the highest good, but in order to become the goal of the city it needs to be supported by political power. Ultimately, the power it requires is friendship, that is, the psychological

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21. *Laws*, 711c5-8
attachment to one’s city and hence its goal. But when friendship is not there, virtue requires power in its purest form, so to speak, as it is present in tyranny. And so we are back to the original problem of harmonizing virtue with power. Now, the Athenian does not provide any model with a view to which this harmonization could be performed and measured. In other words, the Athenian does not perform a work of art here. What he does is to make a prayer in accordance with, or with a view to the political art. We understand that virtue and power are two heterogeneous things. Yet, it appears to be possible to harmonize or weave them together. But this depends on what is available, the material at hand, so to speak. And this material is brought about by fortune. Fortune can bring about opportune circumstances but it can also bring about inopportune ones. The Athenian’s prayer thus needs to be understood as a warning, an invitation to lower our expectations or hope of finding a complete and permanent solution to the problem of the harmony of the goods, in politics at least.

3.2.5. The Myth of Cronus Revisited and the Law

The demand for a tyrannized city seems to be granted by Kleinias. In any case, he is happy to forget it, to move on, and to now discuss the laws.22 The Athenian thus asks them “what sort of regime” (tina dē potē politeian; 712b8) they have in mind for the city. Kleinias expects it not to be a tyranny, at least. As for identifying the regime more precisely, he and Megillus cannot even indicate what the regime of their own city is. Because Sparta, and Knossos too as it seems, are mixed regimes, this is no surprise. The

22. Laws, 712b3: “Yes, let’s go on with it and not delay anymore” (Pangle’s translation).
Athenian praises the two men for belonging to real regimes whereas the other so-called regimes (democracy, oligarchy, aristocracy, and monarchy) are in fact the name of the group that rules the city despotically. Yet, the Athenian does not so much condemn these “regimes” for their despotic or tyrannical features but for the despot in each case being the wrong despot. The right despot is the god who rules despotically over those beings who possess intellect. The Athenian then tells the myth of Cronus, which is almost the same as the one told in the *Statesman* with two important differences however. First, there is no indication as to how it begins, so that we can infer that in this version of the myth human beings are the same as they are today (i.e., they are not earthborn). Second, there is no indication whatsoever that the reign of Cronus is now over. Quite the contrary, the reign of *daimones* over human beings, i.e., the reign of superior beings over inferior ones, becomes the model for the reign of the law over human beings.

What this speech (*o logos*) is saying, grasping the truth [of the matter], is that now too as long as cities are not ruled by a god but by some mortal, there can be no rest from evils and toils for these [cities]. It holds that we must imitate by every device the life that is said to have existed under Cronus, and as much as there is immortality within us we must, by our obedience to it, arrange in public and in private our households and our cities, giving the name “law” to the distribution ordained by intelligence.  

23. *Laws*, 713e3–714a2. England notes a pun in the last sentence *tên tou nou dianomēn eponentamous nomon* which helps understanding the meaning of the myth of Cronus in the context of Book IV: “whereas, of old, obedience was paid to the Deity in the person of his ministers, the *daimones*, it is now due to the ‘immortal,’ i.e. *the divine in us*, and that is the *intellect*, represented in the person of its ministers. These ministers we may call not *daimonas* but *nou dianomas*, ‘the arrangement’ or ‘appointments made by the intellect,’ and to which we give the name of *laws*. [...] Not only is *nomos* connected with the idea of *nemein*, but I think Plato’s fancy played with the verbal assonance between *dainomas* and *dianomas*. [...] *nous* in its highest form—*the trained philosophic intellect*—is thus enthroned as the supreme authority in politics and law” (*The Laws of Plato*, I, p.441-442).
This is, so far, the second definition of what law is. Whereas the first definition focuses on the origin of the law and its nature—it is the city’s opinion derived from the intellect of one human being—now the focus is rather on the impact of the law and on law’s power. It commands obedience and organizes or arranges human affairs, both public and private, on the model of the way in which Cronus is said to have reigned over both the human world and the natural world. Intellect is still something belonging to human beings, but it is now connected to the divine which confers on it a great power. The myth of Cronus thus serves here to establish and justify the tyrannical rule of the law. Cronus provides a justification for tyranny, because, since he is a *theos philanthrôpos* (713d6), human beings lived a “blessed way of life” (*makarias*; 713c3) under his absolute and tyrannical rule. To the extent that the rule of the law can replicate the rule of Cronus, there seems to be no objection against a tyranny of the law. This explains why the Athenian turns abruptly to the claim that justice is the interest of the stronger, which he uses to recall what was listed in Book III as the fifth authoritative title for ruling, namely the rule of the stronger over the weaker. For the problem of power is not resolved yet. The tyrannized city is only a means. The tyrannized city is the city in which all the power is concentrated in one person. Accordingly, it only depends on the tyrant to give all the power to the law by making himself the first servant of the laws. This is why the Athenian has said that it is easy for the tyrant to change the city’s

24. We recall that under Cronus’ reign, nature produces spontaneously food in great abundance (cf. *Laws*, 713c2-4) and this is so because all the parts of the universe were ruled by gods or *daimones* (cf. *Statesman*, 271d5).
ways if only “he wishes to do so” (boulēthenti; 711b5). Yet, in so doing, the city’s regime is not so much changed as is the tyrant. What we see taking shape in these pages is not a mixed regime, but a tyranny of the law.

I have called “servants of the laws” those who are now said to be the rulers not for the sake of an innovation in names, but because I believe that it is over this point above all that a city is either saved or the opposite. For where the law is ruled over and lacks sovereign authority, I see destruction at hand for such a place. But where it is [like a] despot over the rulers and the rulers are slaves of the law, there I foresee safety and all the good things which the gods have given to cities.27

With this speech the Athenian concludes the section on the regime. On the basis of such a speech, it is not so clear whether the regime should be called a nomocracy or a theocracy.28 The Athenian is now about to address the citizens with a speech that will introduce them to the city and its laws. Later on, this kind of address will be called a prelude. After the myth of Cronus, it is no surprise that the first prelude is on the gods. We will not, however, discuss this prelude right away. We believe that it is proper to consider the elements that prepare the analysis of all the preludes first and then to present them together. This should allow us to draw a better and more unified picture of the city. So, let us make a pause and consider what we have so far.

3.2.6. Speaking With One Voice: The Tyranny of the Law

One key element to the understanding of the preludes is precisely their tyrannical tone. To see evidence for this, one needs only to glance through Book V which presents

27. Laws, 715c6-d6; Pangle’s translation slightly altered.
the longest of the preludes. Book V stands out in the arrangement of the *Laws* as the only Book in which the Athenian speaks without having an interlocutor. From the point of view of the action in the *Laws*, Book V is rather a monologue than a dialogue. In that respect, we may say that it is the most tyrannical Book of the *Laws*, and yet the tyrannical aspect of that Book makes it possible for the Athenian to present the city as if it were speaking with one voice. In other words, because it is in Book V that we find the best representation of the despotic rule of the law, we expect this Book to be the most representative of the city in speech in the *Laws*. Accordingly, the analysis of the prelude of Book V will constitute the main part of this chapter.

Needless to say, this peculiar feature of Book V is only a stylistic illustration of a political necessity to which the discussions in Book IV constantly return. That political necessity is power. Power is not simply a necessity for the city’s survival but, maybe more importantly, a necessity for the city’s unity or, as we might as well say, for the city’s friendship. At some point, the community is one when all the citizens speak in the same way about the same thing. Socrates pushes this necessity to the utmost in Book V of the *Republic* when he requires that all the citizens say “my own” for the same thing. Yet, as Aristotle puts it in a more commonsensical way at the beginning of his *Politics*, a city exists when the people share in common the same opinions about notions such as the beneficial, just, and the good. 29 In the *Laws*, the same idea is expressed in the definition of a law as the common opinion of a city. But in order to make the opinion common to the whole city, or in order to make the law reign over the whole city, it is necessary to

grant all the power to the law without any restrictions. This contrasts with the mixed regime. The mixed regime appeared as a model with a view to political stability. But this stability may be bought at the price of a deep division regarding the question of who or what should rule in the city. After all, Megillus could not say what kind of regime Sparta is but only name the factions that hold parts of the power.\textsuperscript{30} This leads us to wonder about the degree of friendship in the mixed regime. Or maybe Sparta should be characterized above all by the common military training that united everyone towards the activity of war, for we may wonder what Sparta—and Sparta’s stability—would have been without that common pursuit.

Be that as it may, so far the discussions of Book VI have led us away from the mixed regime and made tyranny seem more friendly to us. Or, again, we have been taken away from Sparta and its peculiar stability, and we have moved closer to old Athens, without of course ever naming the democratic city. For, according to the picture the Athenian gave at the end of Book III, old Athens’ citizens were “obeying to the old laws like slaves” which produced a strong friendship among them.\textsuperscript{31}

### 3.2.7. Speaking Twofold: The Preludes To the Law

The first act of legislation in the *Laws* is a prayer for the opportunity of receiving a city under the absolute rule of a peculiar type of tyrant. This tyrant embodies the undivided power that the lawgiver needs in order to harmonize virtue (understood as the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{30} Cf. *Laws*, 712d4-e3.
  \item \textsuperscript{31} Cf. *Laws*, 698b6 and 699c1.
\end{itemize}
aim of the law code) and friendship (understood as the common attachment to this law
code and to those who live under it). But there remains something odd with the idea of
imposing virtue and friendship and forcing them to support each other. We may point to
the discussion of symposia in Book I, which were pleasurable activities whose effect was
the increase of friendship among the drinkers.\(^{32}\) We may also point to Megillus’s praise
of the virtuous Athenians, also in Book I, which implied that genuine virtue requires the
absence of coercion, and hence tyranny, to develop fully.\(^{33}\) And we may add that the
emphasis on intellect as both the leader of the virtues and the structural principle behind
the laws does not suit tyranny, for one cannot force another human being to learn and
understand.\(^{34}\) All this points to the absence of liberty in the city to be founded, even
though liberty was mentioned, together with intellect and friendship, as one of the things
to which the lawgiver must pay attention when he lays down his laws.\(^{35}\)

Actually, liberty comes up as the discussion moves on in Book IV. After the first
prelude, the one devoted to the gods, the three old men discuss the benefit of preludes for
the acquisition of virtue. Through the discussion, two elements are distinguished with
regard to the art of the lawgiver: “persuasion and force” (\textit{peithoi kai biai}; 722b6). These
two elements are like two instruments that the lawgiver can make use of in order to
perform his work. The first one, force or coercion, is the law as such, which stipulates

\(^{32}\) Cf. \textit{Laws}, 640c9-d2. The discussion of drinking parties took place in a larger discussion about pleasure
and the practice of pleasures which starts at 633c8.

\(^{33}\) Cf. \textit{Laws}, 642c6-d1 and Patch’s comment on this passage (\textit{Plato’s Jurisprudence}, p.74); cf. supra
section 2.2.2.3.

\(^{34}\) This truth is illustrated in the \textit{Charmides}, where we see the future tyrant Critias getting angry at his
pupil Charmides for his failure to understand what he taught him, but where we also see Socrates not being
angry at Critias, his own pupil, for not understanding Socrates’ own teaching (cf. \textit{Charmides, passim}).

\(^{35}\) Cf. \textit{Laws}, 701d7-9.
what must and must not be done and the penalty attached to the transgression of the ordinance without further explanation. The second element, persuasion, is “the prelude to the law” (prooimion tou nomou; 722c7). The analogy the Athenian uses in order to make the distinction clearer is medicine. The Athenian contends that there are “two types [of man] among those who are called ‘doctors.’”

[The first ones,] be they free men or slaves, acquire their art (tēn technēn ktōntai) by following their masters’ command (kat’ epitaxin de tôn despotōn), by observing, and by experience, but not by following nature (kata phusin de mē), as the free ones do (oi eleutheroi), who have learned in this way by themselves and who teach their disciples (paidas) in this way.

In this analogy, liberty comes back to the fore. The first doctor, the one who is fit for the treatment of slaves, treats people “with the absolute air of a tyrant” and provides no explanation whatsoever in addition to his orders. By contrast, the free doctor treats only free men and tries as much as possible to teach them how to treat themselves or, at least, “he does not give orders until he has in some sense persuaded” the sick person. Of course, the tyrannical doctor is the law personified, whereas the free doctor is the prelude.

We understand that the law aims at the control over behavior, whereas the prelude aims at the citizens’ understanding, at their intellect. This does not mean that the law and the prelude do not agree about the prescription. The analogy even suggests that the slave doctor follows the commands of his master, knowing only by experience that it is

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38. Laws, 720b2-5.
41. Laws, 720d6-7.
appropriate and good without knowing why. The free doctor, on the other hand, who is also the master of the former, knows why the very same treatment is good because he knows the nature of things. After all, this was already contained in the first definition of the law, the one that stipulates that a law is somebody’s reasoning about the nature of human feelings of pleasure and pain which has become simply accepted as the city’s opinion about these matters. The conclusion of the reasoning has been accepted, that is, without the complete understanding of why this reasoning is accurate and in accordance with nature. The crucial implication of the recourse to prelude is that there are two different types of human beings among the citizens, just as the two types of doctor deal with two different types of sick persons: the slaves and the free men. We understand that for some citizens the tyrannical commands of the law and the threat of a punishment suffice not only for molding their behavior but, somehow, also for their understanding of how things are. However, the Athenian contends that there is another type of human being in the citizen-body whose intellect is much more demanding and for whom understanding the rationale behind the law does matter. The distinction between the law and the prelude indicates that there is an important heterogeneity among the citizens. And the recourse to both in the city to be founded indicates that the law code as a whole addresses a twofold speech to the citizens in order to reach both types of citizen. The twofold character of the regime impregates the prelude, which is in itself a twofold speech.
3.2.8. Liberty Revisited: the Demos and the Intellect

We recall that in Book III the great division was between the rulers and the ruled, and this was a threat to the city’s stability. It was out of this tension that liberty appeared as a political necessity. For the sake of the city’s stability, it was necessary to grant some power to the people, and this was a kind of compromise which limited the power of the monarchical and of the aristocratic rulers by mixing a democratic ingredient into the constitution, thus creating a mixed regime. The concern for stability and liberty, we then concluded, lowered the political goal of promoting virtue. Here, however, liberty takes a new meaning. In Book IV, liberty reflects a concern for the superior persons, and it addresses their demand for being treated as free men who can understand how things are and who can behave on the basis of their understanding of how things are rather than on the basis of the fear of the law. One may add that it is only because not all the citizens are such demanding human beings with respect to intellect and understanding that the tyranny of the law is necessary. Indeed, it is in order to deal with the people, as an indistinct mass of human beings, that tyranny is introduced in Book IV. Even Megillus has associated the people with tyranny when he described the Spartan regime.\(^{42}\) Liberty, thus, instead of uniting the people into one homogeneous group, indicates that the citizens are divided on the ground of a natural inequality with respect to intellect.\(^{43}\)

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42. Cf. Laws, 712d4-7. In the same sentence, Megillus calls the Ephors both tyrannical and democratic, whereas in Book III the Athenian has said that the Ephors were introduced to moderate the rule of the kings and of the aristocrats (the elders) which were, therefore, more tyrannical (cf. 692a3-6).

43. It is appropriate here to quote England’s comment on the triad “liberty, friendship, and intellect” (eleutheria, philia, nous; cf. 701d7-9) which gains all its meaning with the discussion of prelude in Book IV: “Of the three objects, the first two correspond accurately enough to the Liberté and Fraternité of the early French Republicans; but the mind in Plato’s state is shown chiefly in the renunciation on the part of the multitude of any claim to intellectual Égalité” (The Laws of Plato, I, p.412).
is why the lawgiver needs to make use of both law and prelude, that is, force and persuasion. For although it is important, for the sake of friendship, that all the citizens speak in the same way about the same things, it is equally important, for the sake of intellectual liberty, to explain the same things in different ways to persons who are different with respect to their understanding. The preludes are therefore the device by which friendship and liberty can be harmonized or woven together.

### 3.2.9. The Preludes Or How To Pass On Knowledge in Politics

Before turning to the preludes as such, we should consider the importance of preludes with regard to the question as to how political knowledge can be passed on to the citizens. For if we refer to the distinction between practices and education—a distinction which made us unsatisfied with the notion of practices (epitēdeumata)—the preludes clearly partake of education rather than practices. As the Athenian says as a way of introducing the discussion on preludes, what is said in the prelude aims at making the hearer, i.e., the citizen, a “better learner” (eumatheteron; 718d6). Even more straightforwardly, as he says at the very end of Book IV, “by pondering these matters [said in the preludes], [the citizens] will attain education (paideias)—insofar as they are able (kata dunamin).”

44 Preludes not only convey the intellectual understanding behind the laws themselves, but they are one key element, not to say the key element—at least so far—by the means of which the knowledge of the lawgiver is passed on to the citizens, not to all of them, but to the citizens who have in their soul the power for understanding

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44. Laws, 724b2-3; Pangle’s translation.
the rationality of their law code. In short, the preludes appear to provide a coherent and sensible answer to the third question we raised in Chapter One and which has been calling for an answer since.

3.3. The City’s Speech
3.3.1. The Preludes and the Two Remaining Questions

In accordance with the foregoing, it is needless to say that the preludes deserve to be read carefully. Let us restate briefly the capital importance the preludes convey to us in order to explain why we expect that their analysis will provide an answer not only to the third question but to the second one too.

The preludes are a legal device by which the lawgiver has the opportunity to explain to the citizens the rationality of the laws. This explanation, however, is not necessarily straightforward. On the other hand, it might be difficult to grasp it or there might be tensions or necessities that the lawgiver can allude to or show without however stating them bluntly. Yet, however difficult or sophisticated the preludes might be, we assume that these explanations will set forth the lawgiver’s political knowledge. Since this knowledge is, ultimately, the knowledge of the model with a view to which he performs and measures his work of weaving, we therefore assume that the preludes will provide an answer to the second and most important question we formulated earlier.

For that reason, we can already announce that we will conclude our investigation of the Laws with the careful reading of the preludes presented in Books IV and V. This is not to say that the remaining of the Laws is irrelevant to the problem we undertook to discuss in this dissertation. Quite the contrary. But just as the preludes are, in a sense, a
test for the citizens, they are also a test for us. We readers of the *Laws*, and hence of the preludes, are in the same position as the citizen-hearers. And just like them we should understand the knowledge conveyed in the preludes in accordance with the power of our own souls. Accordingly, even though a thorough discussion of the problem of the harmony of the goods in Plato’s *Laws* would require the understanding of the *Laws* as a whole, in some important aspect the understanding of the *Laws* stands or falls by the understanding of the preludes. This will thus be the test to which we will submit ourselves in the following pages.

To state these same things differently before proceeding, we can add this. Towards the end of the prelude on the soul in Book V, the Athenian explains what he is doing in the preludes by saying that he is “conveying a dialogue with human beings” (*anthrōpois gar dialegometha; 732e3*). It may appear somewhat strange that the Athenian speaks of the preludes as dialogues whereas, as we noted, they are monologues or addresses. We understand that, just as it is the case with any Platonic writing, these preludes will disclose the knowledge they convey only if we, ourselves, create the dialogue with them.45 For the preludes convey the lawgiver’s knowledge; they do not set it out.

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3.3.2. The First Prelude

3.3.2.1. The Gods and the Law

The first prelude concerns the gods. In fact, it is first presented as an address to the colonists, the very first address to be precise, and only afterward it is called a prelude.\(^{46}\) Although it is only after the first address that the use of a twofold speech in the law code is granted, we will nonetheless consider all the preludes according to the same necessity of balancing persuasion and coercion. On the other hand, it is fitting that this specification comes only after the prelude on the gods, for “the god” (\(\alpha\,\theta\epsilon\sigmaς\); 715e8) is the absolute master, the ultimate authority that supports the authority of the law. Although the ground for having a twofold speech in the legislation is quite understandable, and although we just said that there is a deep agreement between the law and the prelude, between force and persuasion, requiring obedience still remains something different from requiring understanding. This brings us back to the problem of harmonizing power and virtue. The fact that the discussion of preludes, and therefore the taking into account of understanding, comes only after the prelude on gods may point to the fact that the laws, just like gods, are, in a decisive respect, more concerned with obedience than with understanding. In other words, the prelude on gods takes place in Book IV before the tyranny of the laws was qualified by the two doctors’ analogy.

The prelude begins as follows:

the god (\(\alpha\,\theta\epsilon\sigmaς\)), just as the ancient saying has it, holding the beginning and the end and the middle of all the beings, completes his straight course by revolving according to nature (\(κατα\,\phi\upsilon\ς\upsin\)). Following him always is right

\(^{46}\) The Athenian even says that “everything we [said] before was the prelude to the laws” (722d1-2). This should include not only the first address to the citizens but all of the first four Books of the \textit{Laws}.\)
(dikē), avenger (timōros) of those who forsake the divine law (tou theiou nomou).⁴⁷

There are at least two elements worth stressing. The first one is the assertion that the god controls everything. The god holds everything in his hands, and therefore nothing escapes him, so that dikē follows the god and punishes any transgression to the divine law. We assume that the divine law refers to the law code of the city. This is why this nomocracy is also a theocracy. Yet, there is no indication whatsoever that the laws were received from a god, as Minos is said to have received his from Zeus. With the first prelude, the Athenian puts the law code under the authority of the god, but he remains silent on the identity of that god. And this leads us to the second element. Although this god appears to be all-powerful, his movement is said to be in accordance with nature, which cannot but impose a limit to his power. England suggests that the circular movement attributed to the god “is probably meant to bring before our mind the revolution of the heavenly bodies.”⁴⁸ At the least, the reference to nature points to a regularity in the god’s movement and action. The problem is then to bring together the regularity of nature with the willingness to avenge any transgression (dikē).

We may understand that the regularity of nature is given as evidence for the regularity of punishment for any breaking with the law. In that respect, both can be encompassed under the larger notion of necessity. And this brings us back to the beginning of Book IV. We recall that the Athenian almost gave up the art of legislation altogether when he faced the difficulty of harmonizing virtue and friendship. He,

⁴⁷. Laws, 715e7-716a3; Pangle’s translation slightly altered.
however, has saved the art by the assertion that everything was under the governance of a god, whose rule produces both chance and opportunity. Opportunity is that onto which the arts can grasp with the result of achieving a certain control over things for the benefit of man. It was in the context of such a world in which a god dispenses chance and opportunity that a prayer was made for a tyrant. But then everything happens just as if, from that moment on, the whole world were under the absolute control of a tyrant. The first tyrant we met was a young but moderate man, then the god Cronus, and then the law itself. As the argument in Book IV unfolds, the pair of chance and opportunity has been somehow left behind. Accordingly, the god to which the prelude refers, the one followed by dikē, does not seem to be the same god as the one followed by tuchē and kairos. The god of the prelude has, so to speak, a firmer grip on the world, and he is closer to human beings and much more concerned with them. It is not Cronus, however, since under Cronus’ reign there was no need for punishment. And yet this god is similar to Cronus in his care for human beings. He may not make them blessed as Cronus did, but, being followed by dikē, he punishes those who transgress the law and thus creates a regularity in human affairs which benefits pious and law-abiding men.

3.3.2.2. God As the Model For Human Beings

The prelude then proceeds to a distinction between two types of human being: the humble one (tapeinos; 716a4) and the arrogant one (megalauchias; 716a5). These two

49. The transition seems to be at 712b4 when the Athenian invokes a god that will “hear” them and, “having heard,” will help them in the “ordering” of the city and of the laws.
men embody two opposite attitudes vis-à-vis the gods. About the first one, little is said at first besides the fact that if he intends to become happy he must follow dikē with humility and orderliness. But the nature of this man’s happiness is left unspecified. It is rather the second man that is brought into focus. This man, on the grounds of some kind of superiority or absence of thought, thinks highly of himself and believes that he needs neither ruler nor leader but, on the contrary, is himself capable of leading other human beings. This man is said to be abandoned by the god. But it seems more proper to say that it is he who abandons the god first by asserting himself over everybody. In so doing, he may gain some merit among human beings, yet it does not take long, it is said, before dikē strikes him with vengeance, bringing the complete destruction of himself, of his household, and of his city.

At this point, the Athenian pauses for a question: “in front of such a state of things, what the sensible man (emphrona) should do and think and what he should not do?” Indeed, if things are such that dikē governs human affairs with such a power and such a knowledge of any action, there is hardly a need for prudence (phronesis) or understanding. The only thing left to do is to obey the god, that is, the so-called divine laws, like a puppet or a slave or, again, in a Cephalus-like manner. In fact, this prelude would make more sense if there were at least one indication that the god actually spoke to the lawgiver or, in contrast to the three old men, that the lawgiver actually reached the cave-sanctuary and received the law code from a god. Yet, without any indication that he

50. Laws, 716b5-7.
ever met with a god, the Athenian still goes on to state which action is “dear” to the god

\( \textit{philē}; 716c1 \).

The Athenian says that there is only “one [action]” \( \textit{mia [praxis]}; 716c1 \) dear to the god which is expressed in “one old reasoning” \( \textit{hena logon [...] archaion}; 716c2 \), namely, “the like (\textit{to homoion}) would be the friend to the like and measured being, but the things that lack measure are neither [friends] to one another nor to the measured ones.”\(^{51}\) This is a rational statement which is grounded in the two important notions of the similar (\textit{to homoion}) and of the measured (\textit{to metrion}). It is not easy to understand exactly what this reasoning means but, if taken seriously, it prompts one to look for evidences of it in both human affairs and nature. In any event, the following conclusion is drawn from that old saying. “It is certainly the god that would be the measure for us in all matters \( \textit{pantōn chrēmatōn} \), and far more so than some human being.”\(^{52}\) Accordingly, it is said that the one who is to become a friend to such a being, or dear to such a being, should necessarily endeavor to become himself as much as possible like that being, i.e., like a god. And it is the moderate man \( \textit{o sōphrōn}; 716d2 \) who is similar to and friend to the god, whereas the immoderate and the unjust one is dissimilar and different from him.

Such a conclusion has the merit of being clear. The measure for human beings in all their affairs should be the god. The great difficulty that this conclusion poses is that it encourages human beings to be like gods, to be similar to gods, and not to take their bearings among human beings. In the sequel, this incentive is interpreted as an

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51. \textit{Laws}, 716c2-4: \textit{homoiōi to homoion ontī metriōī philon an eiē, ta d’ ametra outē allēlois outē tois emmetrois.}
52. \textit{Laws}, 716c4-6.
encouragement to sacrifice to the gods, to pray to them, and to do all the sacred rituals.\(^53\) But sacrificing to the gods is something different from being similar to them. For no god sacrifices to other gods, even less to human beings. The conclusion that incites human beings to be similar to the god thus contradicts the praise of the humble man over the arrogant one. Performing sacred rituals suits the pious and humble man. The god who holds everything is neither pious nor humble, even if he may not be arrogant. It also complicates the reasoning about the like being friend of the like, for it asserts that the measure for one species of beings, namely man, should be a superior species, namely god. Once again, this conclusion pushes us to determine what is it to be like a god, and performing sacred rituals can hardly be an appropriate answer. One possible answer would consist in being similar to \(dikē\) and in avenging injustices and transgressions of the divine law. Yet, it is noteworthy that \(dikē\) is not even mentioned once in the section devoted to the old reasoning about the like being friend of the like.\(^54\) In addition, if the unjust man is condemned, one may say this makes the absence of the just man as a model only more noticeable. Instead of justice and \(dikē\), moderation stands out as the human way to be similar to the god.

To the extent that we look at god as a self-sufficient being, it seems strange to attribute to him moderation. On the other hand, a self-sufficient being would not demand sacrifice and other rituals. When sacrifices and rituals form the core of piety, it is sensible that moderation grows in importance. The prelude thus specifies that a god cannot be

\(^{53}\) Cf. \textit{Laws}, 716d4-7.
\(^{54}\) This section begins at 716c2 with the mention of the “one reasoning” (\(hena logon\)) and ends at 716d4 with a reference to “this same reasoning” (\(ton auton logon\)). Everything said in that section is then supposed to lead to “the next argument” (\(ton toionde logon\); 716d5) about the practice of piety.
bribed, so that the sacrifices of the bad man or the impious one are performed in vain. In that respect, human beings must strive to be similar to the god, for “it is never right to receive a gift from someone stained for a good man (andr’ agathon) or for a god.” The soundness of that theological principle would certainly please someone like Adeimantus. Although very sound indeed, this principle remains a negative one: what one should not do is more understandable than what one should do in order to be similar to the god.

Even if it is not so clear to us what it means to be similar to the god, we should stress the fact that it cannot but sound like an answer to our second question. The Athenian is straightforward: god is both the model and the measure for human beings. If we could fully understand what this means, it seems that we would have the answer we are looking for.

3.3.2.3. Sacred Duties and Divine Anger

As the prelude comes near the end, sacred rituals and duties are emphasized. They are now said to be the “target” (skopos; 717a3) at which we should aim. The best way to hit this target is by honoring the different gods and other deities, and this includes one’s parents, which are clearly the focus of the prelude’s conclusion. By including the parents in the prelude on the gods, the Athenian implies that in the new city parents will stand to their offspring in a “quasi-divine relationship.” This is justified on the basis of the incommensurable debt the offspring owe their parents for their birth—“the laborious

55. 716e3-717a1.
pains suffered”\textsuperscript{57} by the parents—and all the cares bestowed upon them. In recognition of this old debt, the grown up child must consider everything he has and has acquired as belonging to his parents and must strive to devote all these things to their service. These possessions are listed and ranked with a view to their worth for the paying back of the debt. The first possession that should be devoted to the service of the parents is one’s wealth, second is what relates to one’s body, and third what relates to one’s soul.\textsuperscript{58} We notice that the soul is ranked last. We infer that the parents are more accountable for wealth and the body—the genetic pool as it were—than for the soul.

In addition to this, it is also expected that each citizen shows an unfailing “respect” for his parents in his speech throughout his life (\textit{euphēmian}; 717c7). Even when the parents get “enraged” (\textit{thumoumenois}; 717d3), be it in speech or in deeds, respect is due to them, for the father’s anger with his son—“who he believes (\textit{doxazōn}) is doing him injustice”—is “most likely (\textit{eikotōs malista}).”\textsuperscript{59} In a similar way to a father whose anger (\textit{thumos}) is aroused by his son’s injustice (\textit{adikia}), the god too sees to it that no disrespectful word be uttered towards one’s own parents and has put \textit{Nemesis} in charge of overseeing the fulfillment of that duty. Finally, the last duty consists in arranging appropriate burial for one’s parents when they pass away and, thereafter, in keeping their memory alive.

The first prelude is about the gods and, as it is put at the very end, “those who are stronger than us” (\textit{hosoi kreittones ēmōn}; 718a5). This expression is well chosen, for the

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Laws}, 717c4-5; Pangle’s translation.
\textsuperscript{58} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 717b8-c3.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Laws}, 717d5-6.
overall effect of this prelude is subjection. The colonist who hears it should understand that he is deprived from all the authoritative titles listed in Book III. According to this prelude, he is cast as a young and a perpetual child with regard to his parents, as a base-born, a weak, and an ignorant with regard to the gods and the heroes and, in general, somewhat as a slave in front of his different masters. As for the title based on chance, it has been ruled out already, as we noted above. The first prelude is thus a good expression of the tyrannical feature peculiar to Book IV. That the last words be about “the good hopes” (*elpisin agathais*; 718a5) is then all the more fitting, since it recalls the inferior status of man, his dependence on superior beings, even if he lives in accordance with the principles stipulated in the prelude. It is true that it is also said that the god should be the measure for man, which is an incentive for the hearer to be as similar to the god as it is in his power. Although this part of the prelude needs to be better understood, which we should strive to do on the basis of the two other preludes, we can at least understand it to this extent. Taken literally, it is an incentive to become one’s own master, but in such a way as to be also similar to the moderate man. In that respect, the first address is really a prelude in that it delivers a twofold speech.

3.3.3. The Second Prelude

3.3.3.1. Marriage and Erōs

The prelude on the gods is attached to no law in particular, for it is meant to be the prelude to the law code as a whole. Accordingly, the first prelude does not so much explain why one specific behavior is condemned by one specific law, the transgression of which would incur one specific penalty, as it provides a justification for penalty as such.
The prelude on the gods thus provides a justification for the tyrannical character of the law. Since the god, who is the ultimate authority for everything in the world, does allow for punishment (dikē), and since the fathers, who have full authority over their offspring, do get angry at their son’s injustice, which they punish by words and by deeds, the law, whose authority lies somewhere in-between that of the god and that of the fathers, is therefore entitled to make use of punishment as well. The second prelude, in contrast, is attached to one specific law. This law stipulates that “One shall marry after having [turned] the age of thirty, and before the age of thirty-five, and if one may not [marry], there will be a penalty of fine and dishonor.”\textsuperscript{60} The prelude on marriage aims at convincing of the soundness of the law by explaining why marriage is such a beneficial thing for human beings.

In contrast to the first prelude, the prelude to the matrimonial law is quite short and can be quoted at full length.

There is a sense in which the human species has by a certain nature (phuseitini) a share in immortality, of which everyone has naturally the desire in every way. For the desire to become famous and not to lie nameless after one has died is a desire for such a thing. And the species of human beings is somehow naturally akin (ti sumphues) to all of time, which it accompanies and will always accompany to the end, being in this way immortal, leaving behind children of children, being always one and the same, partaking to immortality through coming-into-being. Assuredly, it is never pious to deprive voluntarily (hekonta) oneself from this, and whoever disregards children and a wife deprives [himself] in a premeditated way.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{60.} \textit{Laws}, 721b1-2. The exact amount of the penalty varies according to the economic class (cf. 774a6-8), as for the penalty in dishonor, cf. 774b5-c2. The age for getting married differs for both sexes: men must marry between 30 and 35 (but it is also possible for a young man of 25 to marry, cf. 772d5-e2) and women must marry between 16 and 20 (cf.785d2-3; but cf. 833d2-4 where it is made mention of “unmarried girls over thirteen”).

\textsuperscript{61.} \textit{Laws}, 721b8-c8.
This is, in a nutshell, Diotima’s famous teaching that Socrates reports in the *Symposium*. And as any reader of this work will know, it is all about *erōs*. Whereas the first prelude pointed to *thumos*, the second one brings *erōs* into the focus. And if the prelude on the gods fits into the general emphasis on tyranny in Book IV, the prelude on marriage calls to mind the more general emphasis on pleasure and desire in the *Laws* as a whole. The matrimonial law is indeed the first law the three old men formally adopt and, in so doing, they follow the standard in Book I.

The prelude on marriage also complicates the picture we drew from the prelude on the gods. In that first prelude, human beings were said to be under the guidance of gods and parents, but in such a way as if they were to remain children for their whole life. If it is not that easy to determine when a human being becomes fully and truly an adult, the fact is that when a human being becomes a parent he is no longer simply a child. For as Book III pointed out, one authoritative title to rule is that of the parents over their offspring. And when one gains that authority, one can no longer be simply a slave; or let us say that a complete and true slave should not have children of his own. But the return of desire (*epithumia*) and *erōs* to the forefront also qualifies the claim that the human

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63. Cf. *Laws*, 631d6-632a2. Indeed, marriage was mentioned first by the Athenian as a part of human existence that the lawgiver should carefully look to.  
64. But cf. *Laws*, 773e5-774a1, which adds an important qualification to what is said here: “So let these be the things said to encourage marriage, together with (*kai dē kai*) what was said about this earlier, that one must partake in the eternal coming-into-being of nature (*tēs aeigenous phuseōs*) by always leaving behind children of children, whom one leaves as servitors (*hupēretas*) for the god as a replacement of oneself.” Pangle reads the *kai dē kai* as meaning “in addition to what was said a while ago.” By contrast, des Places reads it as meaning a repetition: “*et aussi* celle que nous avons formulée plus;” Brisson and Pradeau are even more emphatic on the idea of repetition: “*sans oublier naturellement* ce qui a été dit auparavant.” I incline to read the *kai dē kai* as claiming to be the mere repetition of the prelude, which is false anyway, for it is really an addition.
beings should strive to be similar to the god, who is their model and true measure. For in contrast to the god who holds everything, and thus is what he is since the beginning of time, no human being is born a parent. Not only the human beings become parents due to some natural erotic necessity, but they come into being, simply, due to some natural erotic necessity.

3.3.3.2. Children and the Desire of Immortality

There is however one major difference between the prelude on marriage and Diotima’s teaching. In Diotima’s teaching erōs is not confined to the begetting of offspring. According to her, erōs manifests itself in three different ways: as a sexual desire that naturally leads to the production of offspring, as political or artistic ambition that leads to the performing of immortal actions or masterpieces, and also as the rational pursuit of the eternal truth that leads to science and wisdom.65 In the prelude on marriage, the first two expressions of erōs are indicated but second one, “the desire to become famous and not to lie nameless after one has died,” is finally reduced to the first one, “being in this way immortal: leaving behind children of children.” As for the third one, which is philosophy, it is not even mentioned.

Yet, the prelude’s insistence on marriage and children as the fulfillment of a natural desire renders the need of a coercive law only more puzzling. As Strauss explains, this puzzle points to what is not said in the prelude.

But if everyone has every desire to immortalize himself by generating children, why does one need a law enjoining it? Does one need a law

65. Cf. Symposium, 207a5-212a7.
commanding men under the threat of a penalty to eat? The reason of the law
on marriage is silent about the man who involuntarily abstain from marriage
because his desire for immortality compels him to seek immortality
exclusively through immortal fame. But it points to this possibility: it is in
itself twofold. This possibility was actualized above all by Plato himself,
who by not marrying seems to have disobeyed his own legislator, i.e., the
dispensation of the intellect; yet, as we see, he did not disobey, since his
action was involuntary. (He would not have objected to paying a bachelor’s
tax and to the inevitable diminution of respect which accompanies
childlessness.)

We will add that to the extent that the desire for immortality is a desire for that which is
“always one and the same” (tauton kai hen on aei; 721c5-6), the desire for immortality
could never be completely fulfilled by the generation of children. After all, generation
and coming-into-being is the process by which the same is brought into being by means
of another, and hence different, being. The human species, being one and the same,
maintains itself through the succession of beings which are at the same time the same (as
belonging to the same species) and other (as individuals). The movement of generation
is never “always one and the same,” although it may point to the necessity of a being
which is such.

In sum, we may say that this prelude completes the first one. The prelude on the
gods expressed an incentive to become similar to a god without, however, providing a
clear positive model of what to do to be so. Now, the human desire to partake to
immortality appears to be at least a part of the answer. After all, gods are immortal and

67. Cf. Symposium, 208a7-b2: “In this way, indeed, all mortal being is preserved, not by being completely
always the same as the divine is, but as the one who is going away and gets old leave behind a new and
different one, such as he was himself” (totei gar to tropoi man to thneon soizetai, ou totei pantapasi to
auto aei einai hosper to theion, alla totei to apion kai palaioumenon heteron neon egkataleipein, oion auto
en).
men are mortal. Striving to be similar to a god should then be connected to the desire for immortality. The official answer of the city in that respect, i.e., the answer which is enforced by a law, is that human beings partake of immortality by the means of a fertile marriage. Yet, for some human beings, the production of children may not be sufficient or even promising in that respect. However, in its twofold way, the prelude speaks to them too.

3.3.4. The Third Prelude

3.3.4.1. Some Preliminary Remarks

The transition from the second prelude to the third one coincides with the transition from Book IV to Book V. Although these three preludes go together and form the three sections of what we may call “the General Prelude” to the law, the fact that the third one introduces a new Book—which Book is peculiar for being the least dialogical of the whole dialogue—suggests that there may be a difference between the last prelude and the first two.

As it is announced at the end of Book IV, the third prelude is on one’s own soul, body, and property. But the Athenian adds that saying how a human being should consider each of these things, how their pursuit should be serious or relaxed, can benefit both the speaker and those who listen to that speech, for from such a speech they can gain, in accordance with each one’s power, “education” (paideais; 724b3). Now that education comes to the fore, we cannot but expect to find the city’s expression of its own

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goal, i.e., in what things the citizens need to be educated. And as we shall see, the soul will be the main focus in this third prelude. In the prelude on the gods, by contrast, the soul was mentioned but it occupies quite a low rank with respect to the possessions one should devote to the service of one’s own parents. In the prelude on marriage, the soul was not even mentioned once, even though the desire for immortality is common to all living beings, i.e., to all beings with a soul. This is, at least, an important difference between this prelude and the first two. The relative silence on the soul in the first two preludes can be explained by the emphasis on tyranny in Book IV. One may say, indeed, that the main concern of these two preludes was to make the citizens obedient to or even reverent for the law, the divine law that is, and this even in the matters concerning erōs. On the other hand, we noticed that these preludes were not crystal clear, for they also point to another way to be, say, in accordance with the law. On the basis of the assumption that these three preludes from a coherent whole, we expect to gain a better understanding of the puzzling elements of the first two preludes here in the third one. These puzzling elements are, first, the incitation to become similar to a god and, second, the extent to which a fertile marriage may not fulfill human being’s deepest aspiration. That the Athenian invites us to listen to a teaching on the soul is only fitting with regard to these two questions.

70. Cf. Symposium, 207d4: τὸν ζῷον.
3.3.4.2. The Prelude To the Prelude On the Soul

The prelude that opens Book V is the longest by far. It is made of four sections: a first one (727a2-728c8) on how to honor the soul, a second one (728c9-730a9) on the hierarchy of all the things that can be called one’s own, a third one (730b1-732d7) on the noble lives, and a fourth one (732d8-734e1) on the pleasant lives. But prior to the first section, the prelude on the soul begins with a sort of introduction, a prelude to itself as it were, which reads as follows.

Of all the possessions one [owns] (pantōn [...] tôn autou ktēmatōn), the most divine after the gods is the soul, indeed, which is the most one’s own (oikeiotaton on). And for everyone, all of one’s [possessions] are of two sorts. On the one hand, the superior and the better are the masters, on the other, the inferior and the worse are the slaves; and it is imperative that one always honor one’s masters over one’s slaves. Thus, when I say that one must honor one’s soul in second, after the gods who are the masters and those who follow after them, my exhortation is correct.71

This introduction echoes the standard of politics suggested in Book I and repeats the same idea that there are two classes of good things. There are, however, two noticeable differences. First, whereas in Book I the highest category included the four cardinal virtues: intellect-prudence, moderation, justice, and courage, here only two mastering possessions are listed: the gods and the soul. Although the soul is said to be second after the gods, the focus is on it: it is that which is most one’s own (oikeiotaton). To the extent that the soul is, so to speak, the dwelling of the virtues, the prelude on the soul can be read as the continuation of the standard of Book I. The second and more important difference is that there is no assertion about the sufficiency of the superior

goods for the possession of the inferior ones. That assertion, we have concluded, has been ruled out in the first three Books of the *Laws*. What is emphatically reasserted here, however, is the hierarchy of the goods or possessions. Soul, being the most divine one after the gods, is the possession that must be honored with a sacred seriousness similar to that owed to the gods.

Before turning to the prelude itself, we must say a word about the editors’ uneasiness about this introduction. The problem is that according to that introduction the gods should be reckoned as possessions (*ktēmata*). England brackets the words “after the gods” (*meta theous*; 726a3), for he “cannot believe that the author put them in there.”

Apparently for the same reason, Stobaeus corrected “of all the possessions [belonging to] one” (*pantōn gar tōn autou ktēmatōn*; 726a2) to “of all the possessions in life” (*pantōn gar tōn en tōi biōi ktēmatōn*). Yet, on the basis of England’s own admission and des Places critical apparatus, there appears to be no ground for such corrections: neither the manuscripts nor the Greek grammar could justify them. From what has come down to us, we cannot positively conclude that Plato did not write these words. The corrections of Stobaeus and of England thus rest on their understanding of the *Laws* with respect to religious matters. On that score, we are entitled to make a suggestion.

Let us say, first, that the reference to the gods seems to indicate that this prelude is connected to the first one and follows from it. In that respect, the prelude on marriage does not seem to be a part of the General Prelude to the law code as whole. It is true that,

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73. *autou* is found in the manuscripts A (*Parisinus Graecus 1807*) and O (*Vaticanus graecus I*), which are the two main manuscripts for the *Laws* (cf. des Places’ edition, critical apparatus for 726a2) and England admits that *meta theous* “are quite in place as a qualification of deuteran” (*The Laws of Plato*, I, p.472).
above, we said that the General Prelude is made of three parts, one of which is the prelude on marriage. As a matter of fact, the movement of the dialogue leads the three interlocutors to present the prelude on marriage in-between that on the gods and that on the soul. In many respects, this place is very fitting, since the prelude on marriage emphasizes at least one element that was absent from the prelude on the gods, namely erōs, and in so doing it paves the way for the soul. On the other hand, the prelude on marriage is about one specific law,74 whereas those on the gods and on the soul are about the law code as a whole. In that respect, if we suppose the lawgiver to be addressing the heterogeneous mob of colonists arriving at the new city, the prelude to the law code would be a long speech without a break between the section on the gods and that on the soul, as the first sentence of that prelude, the very first sentence of Book V, indicates.75

Of course, these details do not solve the difficulty of presenting the gods as possessions, although they indicate that the prelude on the soul should be understood in connection with that on the gods. Now, one peculiar feature of the prelude on the gods is that it presents gods that care about human beings or, to be specific, about these peculiar human beings who are to be the citizens of the city to be founded. For these gods care enough for these human beings to punish injustices (Dikē) and disrespect to parents (Nemesis). It would not seem inappropriate, then, to say that the citizens are the possessions of these gods, just as slaves are the possessions of masters or children the

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74. Latter on, the Athenian says that there should be one prelude for each law, which would mean that there are as many preludes as there are laws; cf. 772e3-4.
75. Laws, 726a1-2. However, if, as the Athenian seemed to imply before (cf. 722d1-2), everything that has been said since the beginning of the whole dialogue is to be reckoned as the prelude to the law code, it would mean that the written version of the law code would be the Laws, and the general prelude to the law code would then include, among many other things, the prelude on marriage.
possessions of parents. This, we believe, England or Stobaeus could admit. But once this step is taken, it is possible to show that ownership works in both ways in such a relationship. For just as children or slaves belong to parents or masters, parents and masters too belong to children and slaves. Children must take care of their parents, because they are their own, and so must slaves care for their own. And this is also true for the pious man who must take care of his god, by devoting money, energy, and time to him by ways of sacrifices and other sacred rituals. So that just as the father can complain to his son: “you did not take care of your father,” and punish his own son for his son’s own good—for a good son should take care of his father in words and deeds—so too could a personal god complain to a man: “you did not take care of your god,” and punish him for his own good. After all, the prelude on the gods urged the citizens to devote all their “possessions” (ha kektētai kai echein; 717b8) to the service of one’s parents, starting with wealth and the body. The same should hold for the gods and the sacred duties they require, and for the same reason, namely because these gods are one’s own gods.

To the extent, then, that possessions (ta ktēmata) are broadly understood as including everything that is encompassed in the large domain of one’s own (to oikeion), from clothes and shoes to the parents and the city itself, it does not seem to be nonsense to say that gods should be reckoned as possessions. In fact, the greatest claim of that introduction is not, to us, the one about the gods being possessions. The greatest claim is that it is the soul which is the most one’s own (oikeiotaton), i.e., the possession for which one should care the most. The soul might not be the most divine thing, but from the individual’s perspective, the soul is the most important thing, more important than the
city and the gods. One could respond that in a good city the care and love for one’s soul may not conflict with the care and love for the city. This, we recall, is the great claim of the Republic. But this claim is not made here, and although the gods can be said to be the ultimate authority for the city’s laws, there is no mention of the city and its laws in-between the gods and the soul.

Let us add a last thought before turning to the prelude itself. In his commentary, Strauss points out that if the introduction of the prelude on the soul echoes the standard in Book I, that standard was, however, silent on the gods, and on the city too for that matter.\(^7\) The virtues were then called “divine goods” (\textit{ta theia [agatha]; 631b7}), but the excellence of the soul did not require submission to one’s gods. We notice, in addition, that gods make their appearance once the claim on the sufficiency of virtue has disappeared. We could say that the claim on the divine character of the law supersedes that on the sufficiency of virtue. In a sense, the result can be the same, for it is not uncommon that human beings willingly obey divine commands in order to get the human possessions they pray for; they obey the high for the sake of the low. It remains to be seen, however, how gods reward those who are similar to them. For submission to the gods can be understood in two ways on the basis of the prelude on the gods, one of which is striving to be similar to them. This element of the prelude of the gods is unsettling enough to make piety itself twofold. It is echoed here in the assertion that both the gods and the soul are “mastering possessions” (\textit{despozonta}; 726a5), which implies that the gods are not the only masters. Taking care of one’s own soul can thus be understood as

\(^7\) Cf. Strauss, \textit{The Argument}, p.66.
becoming one’s own master with respect to what is most one’s own. Let us see, now, what it means to take care of, or, as it is put here, to honor one’s own soul.

3.3.4.3. The First Section: How to Honor One’s Soul
3.3.4.3.1. The Problem of Honor

The citizens are urged to “honor” (timan; 727a1) their souls as their most important possession after the gods but as that which is most their own without qualification. We may expect that it will now be explained what one should do in order to honor one’s soul. Yet, it is not exactly what is said first. Instead of explaining what to do, the Athenian proceeds negatively and provides examples of the wrong ways of honoring one’s soul. The Athenian is even more assertive than that, for he says that “no one among us honors [the soul] correctly, so to speak, but one believes (dokei) [to do it correctly].”

It is striking that the Athenian says “no one among us” (hēmōn oudeis) without any qualification, for the consequence of this universal assertion is that even the lawgiver himself, the man behind the prelude and the law code, does not honor the soul correctly. At the very least, this is in keeping with the fact that in the following only negative examples are given.

The next sentence provides some elements that may help to shed light on this blunt assertion.

For honor is somehow (pou) a divine good, and nothing bad is honorable, but the [man] who thinks of making his [soul] greater with some speeches, or with gifts, or with certain indulgences (tisi logos dōrois autēn auxēn e tisin hupeixesin), without however working on it (autēn apergazomenos) so

77. Laws, 727a2-3.
that from worse it becomes better, he believes he honors [his soul], but he is not doing so at all. 78

We recall that with the standard in Book I honors became problematical once we noticed that it is a good that one can receive after one’s death. 79 We may as well say that this is problematical because after death one can no longer perform any work. Indeed, the fact of receiving “speeches, or gifts, or indulgences” that somehow “increase” the self, that “make it bigger” or even “inflate it” (*autēn auxein*), is here contrasted with a work (*ergon*), with the activity of “making the soul better through the performing of a work,” as we may allow ourselves to stretch the translation for *autēn apergazomenos*. For honors generally mean nothing else than speeches (praises and titles), gifts (money and medals), or indulgences (applause or kneeling). These honors do make the self shine, but they may not reveal or improve the soul as such. As the distinction between honor and work suggests, to reveals one’s soul one needs to perform a work, and to make the soul better, one needs to perform the work better. We understand that the musician improves his musical soul when he understands music better, and therefore plays music better, which would be true for the architect and the doctor too, and whatever work we may think of, so that understanding, learning and performing some work appear to benefit the soul much more than any honor one may receive on the basis of any performance however good and excellent. In the best case, honor would be the recognition of the soul’s improvement, but this is different from the improvement itself.

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79. Cf. *supra* section 2.2.1.6.
Of course, these considerations lead to the question of the soul’s work which, as we know, is one of the main questions in the *Republic*. And we cannot but expect that this question will be dealt with in the sequel. But these considerations also raise the question of the status of honor. Honor is here called “somehow a divine good” (*theion agathon pou*). The qualification is important, because it reminds us that, in the standard in Book I, honors were not listed among the divine goods. These were the virtues. And virtues are certainly at the core of this problem, for virtues speak to the performing of some work just as they speak to the idea of honor.

Thus, seven wrong ways of honoring the soul are indicated in that section of the prelude on the soul. They are: 1 (727a7-b4) letting one’s soul do whatever it wishes to do on the basis that one understands everything sufficiently; 2 (727b4-c1) considering always others as the cause of one’s own mistakes and gravest evils; 3 (727c1-c4) enjoying pleasures condemned by the lawgiver and thus having one’s soul filled with bad thoughts and remorse; 4 (727c4-c7) shrinking from hardships, fears, pains, and suffering that are praised by the lawgiver; 5 (727c7-d5) preferring life to death in any situation on the assumption that one knows what the afterlife consists in; 6 (727d6-e3) honoring body more than soul, and thus beauty more than virtue, due to the ignorance of what an amazing possession the soul is; 7 (727e3-728a5) loving wealth so much as to acquire it in a base way or as not to be ashamed of owning such stained possessions. On the basis of

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80. All these divisions are clearly indicated in the Greek text with six *oude*. England puts each of the wrong ways under one of the three general ways by which we believe we honor the soul: speeches, gifts, and indulgences: “(1) Self-confidence and self praise, and (2) self-excuse, fall under the head of *logois*; (3) self-indulgence, and (5 [sic, England means 6]) the preferring beauty to goodness, and (7) the preference of wealth to virtue, fall under the head of *dôrois*, wile (4) shrinking from toil, and (5) the shrinking from death fall under that of *huperxesê*” (*The Laws of Plato*, I, p.473).
these seven negative examples, we should then try to draw a positive teaching about the soul and its excellence.

3.3.4.3.2. Knowledge, Cause, and Pleasure

The first bad example focuses on understanding and knowledge (gignōskein; 727a8). The positive conclusion to draw is that, as we already pointed out, one important activity of the soul is learning. The soul is that by which one can learn, and believing that one does not need to learn is dishonoring one’s soul. We have to be careful not to make the logical error of holding the reciprocal sentence to be simply true. If believing that one’s soul does not need to learn is dishonoring the soul, it does not necessarily follow that believing that one’s soul needs to learn is honoring the soul. Again, learning and honoring are two different activities. We may honor (with speeches, gifts, or indulgences) someone for the importance and the depth of the knowledge he has acquired, but in so doing we are not making his soul better or, for that matter, we are not making his understanding better. Yet, the main point is that one cannot learn if one thinks that he already knows everything, if he ignores his own ignorance as Socrates puts it. And we face here another universal assertion according to which not simply some human beings, but “every (pas) young person who has barely become an adult human being thinks that he is capable of understanding everything (panta),” so that instead of seeking knowledge he does whatever he is inclined to do. Such a universal assertion may well be

81. For instance, the majority of human beings would say that believing that killing an innocent baby is right or pleasant is certainly dishonoring, but the same majority would not say that believing that killing an innocent baby is not right or pleasant is honorable, they may simply say that this is basic commonsense.
82. Laws, 727a7-8; Pangle’s translation slightly altered.
corroborated by experience; it remains that it calls for an explanation. Although no explanation is given here, such an attitude reminds one of the “arrogant man” (*magalauchias*; 716a5) in the prelude on the gods. But we note that the focus is no longer on ruling or leading others but on one’s own knowledge, from which self-confidence stems. We understand that the problem with self-confidence is ignorance. In contrast with the prelude on the gods, self-confidence is not so much condemned as is the ignorance of one’s own ignorance. Once that ignorance is acknowledged, one should strive to find someone who really knows and from whom one can learn. We may add that, ultimately, the model one should seek is the god, provided that the god is omniscient. And to the extent that acquiring knowledge is becoming similar to the one who knows, we could say that making one’s understanding better is becoming similar to the god. In that respect, the first example would shed some light on the puzzle of the prelude on the gods.

The second wrong example focuses on the idea of “cause” (*aition*; 727b5). In conjunction with the first example, we may say that the soul is the cause of our actions, for we act on the basis of our knowledge of the world which is acquired by the soul’s activity. We may also say that considering oneself as the cause of one’s own mistakes and errors is the necessary condition for the acknowledgement of the fact that one does not know everything already. In that sense, mistakes are the cause of the discovery of one’s own ignorance and of one’s need of improvement with respect of knowledge and understanding, i.e., the need for making one’s soul better. From this, two points follow. First, it implies that the prelude on the soul urges the citizens to think of themselves as their own masters, and not as puppets of some god or other beings despite the earlier
suggestion to this effect. In other words, there is some arrogance in the idea of thinking of oneself as a cause. But this arrogance does not extend, here, to the arrogance of ruling others. The idea of oneself as the cause of one’s own action rather leads to the pursuit of knowledge. The second point concerns the relation between mistake and honor. Generally speaking, honors are understood as the recognition for some accomplishment or success. But this second example indicates that it is the recognition of one’s own mistakes or failures that may prompt someone to improve his soul. And this is the very opposite of honors, political honors at least. For Socrates never got a medal for acknowledging his own ignorance, even if he received the most honorable speeches in the works of Plato and Xenophon. Be that as it may, we may have here an element of explanation of why all young human beings believe they know everything. To the extent that they are lovers of honor and that they understand honors as success and accomplishment, they might easily overlook their own ignorance for the sake of success or accomplishment.

In the two first examples, knowledge was important but it was never specified which knowledge directly concerns the soul’s improvement. Now “pleasure” (ἡδοναίς; 727c1) comes to the fore. That the knowledge of pleasure is crucial for human beings in general and in politics in particular is fully in agreement with what we saw in Books I and II. Yet, the example indicates that human being’s experience of pleasure is not simple, because politics aims at educating the way we experience pleasure, in the best cases, or, at least, politics aims at distinguishing between the good and the bad ones. This is done by way of “reasoning and praise” (λόγον καὶ επαίνον; 727c2). But the reason and
the praise are those of the lawgiver, which means that they are exterior to oneself. Accordingly, there is a possibility of experiencing an inner tension, of having a divided soul, so to speak, just as we saw in Book II with the case of Kleinias. In this third example, the result is the feeling of “evils and remorse.” Now, Strauss points out that only in this example and the next (3 and 4), is “soul” (psyche) not explicitly mentioned, and only in these same examples is the legislator mentioned or alluded to. These observations suggest that somehow “the legislator” (tou nomothetou; 727c2) takes the place of the soul. For if we draw a positive example out of this bad one, the changes will somehow make him disappear or at least be superfluous. The example is about some one who enjoys pleasures “contrary to the legislator’s reason and praise” (para logon ton tou nomothetou kai epainon; 727c2). The counterpart would be to enjoy pleasures in accordance with reason (kata logon). But whose reason will it be? To put this another way, to the extent that pleasures are in accordance with reason, there is no longer need of praise. The agreement between one’s own reason and pleasure is in itself fulfilling. Pleasure is in itself a reward, and to the extent that it is possible to gain knowledge about pleasure and to live in accordance with that knowledge, praises and honors are superfluous. This presupposes, however, that there is an agreement between the legislator’s reason and that of the citizen. It presupposes that being in accordance with reason somehow transcends the individual reason of each man and reaches a common understanding of how things are. To the extent, then, that the lawgiver’s reason is right

83. Laws, 727c3; Pangle’s translation.
and that a citizen’s own reason agrees with the lawgivers’, they not only become similar to one another but, so to speak, they become similar to reason itself.

3.3.4.3.3. The Central Difficulty: Enduring Pain and Making the Soul Better

On the basis of the first three examples, we therefore draw the following lesson: enjoying pleasure in accordance with reason (3) is possible only if one does not assume that one knows everything about human nature (1), which is made manifest through one’s own mistakes and errors (2), and thus seeks out such knowledge for oneself (1) and acts on the basis of it (2) whether one is praised or not (3). Yet, there remain four more examples. And the next one, the fourth and central one, mirrors the third one except that it is now about “hardships, fears, pains, and sufferings.” In addition to the change of subject (pain instead of pleasure), we note that reason has disappeared too. These pains “are praised” (epainoumenous; 727c4) by the legislator but there is no indication of any reason for that. However, honors are stressed: shirking enduring all of these things is “working to have one’s [soul] dishonored” (atimon gar autēn apergazetai; 727c6-7). We may understand that enduring these hardships, just like a brave Dorian soldier, is the best way to reap honors. Yet, the question that this raises is this: what would it mean to endure pains, hardships, and all such things in accordance with reason?

Let us restate the problem this way. The laws praise endurance toward pains; they even praise the sacrifice of one’s life for the city. All these things are honorable. Yet, if the soul, not the city, is the possession which is most one’s own, this can only be justified

85. Laws, 727c5; Pangle’s translation.
to the extent that these kinds of actions or work make the soul better. They do make the soul better, one could respond, because courage is that which enables one to endure pain and courage is a virtue. The problem is that courage is not mentioned here. And we could add that courage has been ranked, in Book I, as the lowest of all the virtues. On the basis of the first three examples we discussed, this can be understood this way. To the extent that knowledge is that which makes the soul better, it is difficult to see how enduring pain, in contradistinction to understanding the different pains and their proper hierarchy, could make the soul better. For courage, as a virtue, may presuppose knowledge of the hierarchy of the goods, and enduring pain for the sake of a greater good shows that someone knows that hierarchy, according to which there is something greater than one’s own body. Yet, it remains unclear how enduring pain, that is, sacrificing, say, the lower part in man (the body), would make the higher part in man (the soul) better. What is more, by enduring pain one can even put one’s whole soul, and thus one’s intellect, at risk. As Harvey Mansfield indicates while discussing *thumos*, “When the low in you defends the high in you, it will want to save you by putting all of you, especially the high, at risk.”\textsuperscript{86} We can easily understand why such action can be honored and praised. But honor would mean here something different from making one’s soul better. It would mean being honored by the city, for by obeying the lawgiver in these matters the citizen shows that the city and the honors bestowed by the city are of a greater worth than his mere body. The Athenian may well be playing on these two senses of honor here.

3.3.4.3.4. Life, Body, and Money

From the fourth example we drew daring conclusions which point to a profound tension between politics and the soul. If pushed to their limits, these conclusions would belittle courage so much that it could hardly remain a virtue. We would be the first to be uncomfortable with such a conclusion. Yet, the relation between soul and the enduring of pain is a real problem that will need to be addressed in what follows. And as the prelude moves on to consider life, body, and money, we should have the material to begin to do so.

Indeed, the fifth example takes up the core of the problem in addressing the fear of death. We are now told that considering that “living is absolutely (pantōs) good,”\(^\text{87}\) is not honoring one’s soul. We understand that striving to stay alive at all costs neither makes the soul better nor is politically honorable. But the reason given is not with a view to the city. The reason is that such a position is in fact a belief which is not grounded in knowledge: for one “does not know” (ouk oiden; 727d4) whether it is not the opposite, i.e., that it is the afterlife, “the kingdom of Gods below,”\(^\text{88}\) which is good in every respect for us human beings. This argument, which Socrates used during his trial, works well when the choice is between risking one’s life or performing an action that one knows to be bad.\(^\text{89}\) As an explanation of the fourth example, however, it is less convincing, for one still needs to know why fleeing from pain is performing a bad action besides the fact that it is not politically honorable. In other words, the argument works in both ways: it surely

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moderates the fear of death but it may as well moderate the willingness to sacrifice oneself, for maybe the gods do not honor self-sacrifice as the city does. Since we do not know what lies for us after death, this example refocuses the attention on what should give a price to life. To the extent that it rules out security as the primary good, this example may support the idea of enduring pains and sufferings, but in order to endure such things, a more positive idea of the good is required. To the extent that the soul is that which is the most one’s own, the only honorable sacrifice should be for the sake of one’s soul. But this brings us back to the main problem. For although it is true that any sacrifice of oneself shows the strength of one’s soul, it is hard to see how the sacrifice itself makes the soul better, provided of course that there is not afterlife. On the other hand, to the extent that shrinking away from sacrificing oneself when one ought to do so is tantamount to debasing or dishonoring one’s own soul, self-sacrifice may be sometimes a necessity. In that sense, shrinking away from death or pain when one should face them would be really dishonorable. However, not shrinking from death would not be, for all that, truly honorable, since it would not make the soul in itself better.

In the sixth example, “virtue” (aretēs; 727d6) comes up for the first time since the beginning of the prelude on the soul. Given the fact that virtue is the goal of the new city, this may appear to be surprisingly late. Yet, it is now appropriate to mention virtue in connection with the good with a view to which pains and sufferings may be willingly endured. Virtue, as the excellence of the soul, should be preferred to the body’s well-being and security. But although the one who prefers or honors the body over the soul is here condemned, this is connected to the preference of beauty or nobility (kallos; 727d6)
over virtue. The opposition of virtue to bodily pleasure would have been more obvious, since the endurance of sufferings or the overcoming of fear are usually called noble actions. We understand that the excellence of the soul should be preferred to that of the beauty of body, but for some reason the Athenian refuses to present the excellence of the soul as nobility or beauty. Virtue here rises above beauty or nobility, and it is not easy to understand what it is meant by that. But the Athenian anticipated our failure to understand what he means, for he adds that if someone does not hold such a view about the soul it is due to the fact that “he ignores (agnoei) the astonishing possession (thaumastou toutou kiēmatos) he is neglecting.”

We understand that vice can be explained by a lack of experience, the experience of one’s soul, on the basis of which it is then possible to look down on the body’s beauty. Yet, nothing indicates, however, that the experience of one’s soul is connected with the endurance of bodily pains, suffering, and so forth. One may say that, from the rejection of mere life or the body’s well-being as the ultimate good, there is but one step to reach the opinion of, say, Tyrtaios who praised the courage of Spartan warriors in Book I. But, as far as we can judge, this step has not been taken so far in the prelude.

Finally, the last example concerns “money” (chrēmata; 727e3). Money can be useful for the body’s security, beauty, or pleasure. With regard to the soul, however, the usefulness of money is rather negative: not to debase one’s soul by the “ignoble” (mē

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kalōs; 728a1) acquisition of money. The tone here is emphatic: all the money and the
gold in the world is not worth “virtue” (aretēs; 728a4).

3.3.4.3.5. Honoring the Soul and the Harmony of the Goods

These seven examples form the core of the first section of the prelude on the soul.
As we endeavored to show, the examples follow each other in accordance with a certain
logic. On the one hand, they, as a whole, all support the idea that the one who does not
put the lawgiver’s commands and orders “into practice” (epitēdeuein; 728a8) treats his
soul in “the most dishonorable way” (atimotata; 728b1). But this amounts, once again, to
a negative principle. And it would not seem very honorable with a view to the soul to put
into practice these orders without grasping the lawgiver’s understanding about the
shameful and the bad, and their opposite, the noble and the good. In that respect, it is not
perfectly clear why one should obey the lawgiver in every respect, especially with regard
to the performing of painful practices (epitēdeumata). For, to sum up, we may understand
that the soul is that which learns (1) and that which is the cause of our actions (2), that the
experience of the soul is attached to the experience of one sort of pleasure (3 and 6),
which can however be hindered by the fear of death (5), the pursuit of bodily beauty (6),
and “the erotic attachment” (erai; 727e3) to wealth (7). On these grounds, we can
understand why one would not make one’s soul better by fearing death (5), honoring
bodily beauty (6), acquiring money at any price (7). But we may also conclude that
improving one’s own understanding (1) and striving to be the cause of one’s own action
(2) do make one’s soul better. To the extent that making the soul better is inseparable
from an activity which fulfills the soul’s nature, we can also understand why some
specific pleasures can be attached to the improvement of the soul (3). But it is not so clear
why enduring pain should make the soul better (4). To the extent that bodily pleasures do
not make the soul better, why should bodily pains do so? This question calls for a
discussion of courage that we did not find in that sub-section of the prelude. We will
however keep it in mind.

Before turning to the end of that section, let us stress the fact that the teaching we
drew from these seven examples has repercussions for the question of the harmony of the
goods. For the lesson is not so much that one should endeavor to harmonize all the good
things in life in order to be happy as he should not let lower preoccupations hinder the
improvement of the soul. The concern in that section of the prelude is not to indicate how
human beings can be whole. It is rather taking care not to let the pursuit of other goods
eclipse the improvement of the soul. Or if we have to identify one unifying principle on
the basis of these seven examples, it would seem to be this. To the extent that the soul is
involved in all the aspects of life, aiming at the right honoring of the soul in any of these
occasions should provide some unity in one’s life. According to what has been said in the
prelude on the soul so far, this appears to be the lawgiver’s guiding consideration.
The first section ends with considerations on justice. As it is now asserted, “the gravest so-called ‘judicial-penalty’ for wrongdoing”\(^2\) is “to become similar in substance to the wicked men.”\(^3\) That assertion combines two elements that bring back to mind the first prelude on the gods: \textit{dikē} and becoming similar (\textit{homoios}) to someone else. As it is now characteristic of the prelude on the soul, the argument is negative: the danger is becoming similar to wicked people. But the prelude is silent about whether or not one will grow similar to the god if one follows the law thoroughly.\(^4\) However, we note that this time \textit{dikē} is not personified as a god but is described as a natural consequence of bad behavior. “It is a necessity (\textit{anagkē}) that he who has associated [his own nature] (\textit{prosphukota}) with [that of] such people do and suffer what it is in the nature of these people (\textit{pephukasin} [...] \textit{hoi toiotoi}) to do and say to one another.”\(^5\) Yet, the Athenian refrains from calling this natural necessity \textit{dikē}, for both “the just and the right are noble things” (\textit{kalon gar to ge dikaion kai hē dikē}; 728c2-3). This natural necessity of suffering from sharing the nature and the company of wicked people is rather what was called in the first prelude the “vengeance” of \textit{dikē}, which we may call here a sort of natural “retribution” (\textit{timōria}; 728c3).\(^6\) In any event, the natural consequence of injustice

\(^2\) \textit{Laws}, 728b2-3; Pangle’s translation slightly altered for: \textit{tēn} \textit{gar} \textit{le}\textit{genen dikēn tēs kakourgias tēn megistēn}.

\(^3\) \textit{Laws}, 728b4; translation a bit stretched of \textit{to homoioousthai tois ousin kakois andrasin}.

\(^4\) In connection with that question, it may be noteworthy that the soul has just been said to be “the most divine thing” (\textit{theiotaton}; 728b1), without any qualification. This is another way of raising the question as to whether law-abidingness makes the soul better.

\(^5\) \textit{Laws}, 728b7-c2.

\(^6\) For the understanding of these two notions of \textit{dikē} and \textit{timōria}, England’s commentary is useful: “When we call this consequence \textit{dikē}, we give it too good a name for \textit{dikē} is the right treatment of an offender, with a view to his reformation. [...] Plato feels that the Greek language cannot easily express what he means; the nearest he can get to a bad name for punishment is \textit{timōria}. Perhaps he chooses this because
supports the assertion that both the man who is punished by the city as well as the one
who escapes legal punishment are “miserable” (althios; 728c4), a point that, we recall,
Kleinias challenged in Book II. Becoming similar to unjust people and suffering from
their company is therefore said to be the main retribution for injustice, which produces a
state of wretchedness, whereas being sentenced to death by the city is presented as the
only way of escaping the natural and necessary retribution for injustice.97

This last point encapsulates the problem to which we constantly return in that first
section, namely, the extent to which the obedience to the laws can make the soul better.
Indeed, the prelude says that the man who performs an injustice, and thus becomes
similar to unjust people, is miserable because “he does not get cured” (ho men ouk
iatreuomenos; 728c5). Following from that, one would infer that there is some sort of a
cure for that person, the purpose of which would be, precisely, “to work a better soul out
of this worse one,” as it is put at the beginning of the prelude.98 This improvement of the
soul is what we understand to be the only proper way of honoring one’s soul. Yet, no real
“cure” is suggested in the prelude, and there is no education of the soul on the city’s

97. Cf. Laws, 728c4-5. There is a great variety of interpretations of this “most perplexing passage” as
England puts it. Yet, we agree with England’s own reading: “the worst penalty that can be incurred by the
wrong-doer is that he is cut off from the society of the good and incorporated in that of the bad and
completely assimilated to them. If he is not so cut off and incorporated, he is still althios, for the good,
among whom he still lives, are likely to get rid of him as an incorrigible villain; this is ho mé tugchanón
whose fate is likely to be ‘destruction,’ as an example to others [...]. On the other hand ho tugchón is althios
because he does not get the only treatment that would cure him, which is proper punishment” (The Laws of
Plato, I, p.477; cf. also Brison et Pradeau, Les Lois, I, p. 392, note 9). England’s reading is right but, as we
shall explain below, his last sentence raises an important difficulty.

behalf. For the alternative to the natural retribution is “death” (apollumenos; 728c5). Moreover, it is explicitly said that death does not benefit the unjust man’s soul: the unjust man is sentenced to death “so that many others be saved” (hina heteroi polloi sōisōntai; 728c5). This we understand to be the city’s view on injustice. This view is certainly understandable, but it may nonetheless remain limited.

The limited scope of the city’s view is indicated in the very last sentence of that section.

Honor is for us, as if speaking for the whole (hōs to holon eipein), to follow the better things, on the one hand, and the worse things, on the other hand, [to the extent that] they can become better, [honor is] to bring them to that same end as best as possible.99

Unless we are mistaken, the expression hōs to holon eipein is quite rare not only in Plato but in the whole of Greek literature.100 Although it would be imprudent to build too much on this simple linguist peculiarity, it supports the idea that the first section of the prelude delicately presents a tension between the city and the soul, between the tyranny of the laws and the essential educable nature of the soul. This is not to say that it is possible to

100. After a search on the Greek word index TLG (Thesaurus Linguae Graecae), I found only three occurrences of the expression hōs to holon eipein in the whole Platonic corpus and no more than thirteen in the whole Greek corpus, including those in Plato. In addition to this one in the Laws (728c6), the other two are in the Republic (377a5) and in the Cratylus (392c7); as for the whole Greek corpus, it is noteworthy that among the ten other occurrences six are found in the Neoplatonist Proclus (Commentary on Plato’s Republic, v.1, p.177, l.15; Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides, p.653, l.15 and p.971, l.15; Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus, v.1, p.210, l.1; Platonic Theology, v.1, p.107, l.3 and v.5, p.111, l.25; the four others are in Eusebius [Praeparatio evangelica, Bk. 12, ch.4, sect.1, l.14], Eustathius [De engastrimytho contra Origenem, ch.28, sect.1, l.16] and in the Anthologium of Joannes, Stobaeus, and Anthologus [Bk. 2, ch.31, sect.110, l.12 and Bk. 4, ch.1, sect.115, l.65]). On that ground, I feel entitled to conclude that the expression hōs to holon eipein is not a usual one, a mere variant of hōs epos eipein (which occurs 74 times only in the Platonic corpus), as it is usually translated (e.g., Pangle: “To speak generally;” des Places and also Brisson and Pradeau: “à tout prendre;” and Bloom for the Republic: “as a whole;” Robin for the Cratylus: “En général, veux-je dire, et sans faire de distinction”).
educate the soul of every human being whatever his degree of viciousness. There exists a political necessity for the city to punish injustice and to defend itself against other cities. And those among the citizens who are the most zealous in accomplishing these duties ordered by the city are rewarded with honors. We can thus say, as if speaking from the city’s viewpoint, that honor is following what the city or the law commands. Obedience to the city’s laws can certainly improve the soul to a considerable extent. Yet, we are reminded that the city also has the power to destroy physically or socially an individual. Here, we may recall the discussion of fear in Book I, when the Athenian pointed out that fearlessness in the face of the enemy, hardships, and the like can be rooted in a fear of public opinion.\textsuperscript{101} There is ground for doubting that making a soul fearful instead of learned is making it essentially better. Now, as if speaking for the whole, honor is following what is better. That which is better may however transcend the city. On the other hand, by indicating that tension and the limits of the city, the prelude on the soul somehow incorporates this trans-political perspective in the law code itself.

\textit{3.3.4.4. The Second Section: The Domain of Love of One’s Own Revisited}

\textit{3.3.4.4.1. Preliminary Remarks}

We took the liberty of naming the prelude on which Book V opens the prelude on the soul. At the end of Book IV, the Athenian announced that this prelude would focus on “one’s own souls, bodies, and material possessions (\textit{tas ousias}).”\textsuperscript{102} These were the three things left untreated after the prelude on the gods, which also included the parents. And,

\textsuperscript{101} Cf. \textit{supra} section 2.2.2.5.
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Laws}, 724a8.
indeed, the first section of that prelude is all about the soul. It does not come as a surprise either that the second section begins with a consideration of the body and then moves on to consider money and material possessions. But the second section reaches beyond the body and wealth. It establishes a hierarchy among eight elements, including the soul, the body, and wealth, but also the children and the strangers, which are connected, in some crucial aspects, to the parents and the gods. One may then conclude that this prelude is really “a second and better start” as Kleinias announced it.¹⁰³

We can understand why the second section of the prelude on the soul departs from the initial plan on the basis of what is said at the beginning of that prelude. For if this prelude deserves to be called the prelude on the soul, it is due to the crucial assertion according to which soul is that which is “most one’s own” (οἰκειοτάτον; 726a3). This assertion is of the highest importance, and it is yet to be challenged or qualified. Now, if the soul is that which is most one’s own, it cannot but affect what we may call the whole domain of the love of one’s own, that is, all the things that can be called “one’s own” and which are therefore inevitably loved or cared for. As we argued earlier, the gods and the parents can be legitimately reckoned among these things. The second section of the prelude thus revisits the domain of the love of one’s own from a new perspective, the perspective from which soul is the first and the most important element in that whole domain.

¹⁰³. Cf. Laws, 723e1; Pangle’s translation. Kleinias was however of the opinion that the gods and the parents had been “sufficiently discussed” (λεχθέντα ἡκανά; 723e5) in the prelude on the gods.
So, in that second section of the prelude on the soul (728c9-730a9), eight elements are listed and discussed. They are: 1st (728c9-d2) the soul, 2nd (728d3-e5) the body, 3rd (728e5-729a2) wealth, 4th (729a2-c5) children, 5th (729c5-8) family, 6th (729c8-d4) friends, 7th (729d4-e1) the city, and 8th (729e2-730a9) strangers. The order in which these elements are discussed is the place each of them should occupy in the hierarchy of the love of one’s own.

3.3.4.4.2. The Soul

The soul is then the possession which is most one’s own, and, accordingly, it is ranked first. And a short explanation follows that we should not overlook.

There is no possession (ktēma), then, which is more naturally well-suited (euphuesteron) for human beings than soul for fleeing the bad and for tracking down (ichneusai) and capturing what is best of all, and, after capturing it, dwelling in common with it for the rest of one’s life. We understand that soul is the first possession because it is the origin for all possessions. Soul is not simply a principle of self-preservation or conservation of one’s own; it does not only flee the bad, but more importantly, it “tracks down” the best things. This means that the soul reaches outward. This is what we call erōs, understood as the natural movement toward an external good. To quote from the Symposium again, we are erotically attracted to what we do not possess, and erōs can therefore be understood as

104. At the end of that second section (730b1-3), the Athenian provides a list of eight elements that have been supposedly treated in that section of the prelude. The problem is that the list does not match the content of this section of the prelude. According to the Athenian’s list, the following relations are covered: (1) the relation with one’s parents (goneas), (2) with oneself (heauton), (3) with what relates to oneself (ta heautou), (4) with the city, (5) friends, (6) family, (7) strangers, and (8) with the natives (epichōria).
105. Laws, 728c9-d2; Pangle’s translation slightly altered.
“the desire of that which it lacks.”

The intimate knowledge of the lack instills the desire for that which it lacks, which means two things: the pursuit of the thing itself (the tracking down: *ichneusai*) and the acquisition of things (the capturing: *helein*). This is what founds and enlarges the domain of one’s own: “the dwelling in common with” (*koinēi sunoikein*) the good things that one has captured. In other words, soul is that which is most one’s own, because it is that on which the domain of the love of one’s own is founded. But for that very reason, the soul somehow transcends possessions and love of one’s own. Soul tracks down what is “best of all” (*to pantōn ariston*), because it is best and not because it is one’s own (*oikeion*). According to this erotic movement of the soul, things become one’s own because of their intrinsic goodness rather than being good because they are one’s own.

Now, if this short description of the soul’s nature emphasizes *erōs*, we should also note the absence of *thumos*. Soul is presented as that which “flees the bad” (*phugein to kakon*) instead of that which enables human beings to fight against bad persons. Or again, soul is that which enables human beings to capture the best things and, once they have been captured, to “dwell in common with them” (*koinēi sunoikein*). This certainly contrasts with Socrates’ description of the guardians’ *thumotic* nature in the *Republic*, which should show a willingness “to launch into a fight with what has been caught” (*elonta diamachesthai*). The *thumotic* fight over what has been captured thus appears to culminate in a strong feeling of ownership or possession. For as a result of that fight,

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the nature of the thing captured is somehow subordinated to the fact that it is now one’s own (οἶκεῖον). By contrast, the expression “dwelling in common with” (κοινῆς συνοικεῖν) emphasizes the idea that the thing preserves its nature even once it has been captured.

To sum up, these few lines on the soul emphasize the soul’s erotic nature, and, at the same time, they abstract from its thumotic component. To the extent that the soul is that which is most one’s own, it is the thing with a view to which the whole domain of love of one’s own will now be revisited. That description of the soul should have important effects on what will follow. For as we argued while discussing the Republic, thumos is a peculiar manifestation of the human soul which is firmly rooted in the love of one’s own. But according to the description of the soul with which this section of the prelude begins, it is as if the Athenian were announcing that the domain of the love of one’s own will now be revisited with a view to the soul’s erōs and not with a view to the soul’s thumos. We note, however, that he does not specify what is this thing that the soul tracks down due to its erotic nature, i.e., what this thing is which is “best of all” (τὸ πάντων αριστὸν).

3.3.4.3. The Body

As announced, the body is discussed after the soul. In so doing, the prelude also echoes the standard of Book I. But the similarity between the two speeches ends there, for what were considered to be good things in Book I are no longer considered such here.

108. Cf. supra, section 2.1.3.6.
Health, beauty, and strength were said to be the first three human goods in Book I,\(^\text{109}\) whereas here none of them, “not even health” (*oude ge to hugieinon; 728d8-e1), is said to be a good. In fact, it is now asserted that these are no longer the qualities of an “honorable body” (*timion [...] sōma; 728d7). Instead, the “attributes” (*hexeōs; 728e3) which should be praised are those which are “in the middle” (*en tōi mesōi; 728e2), that is, those lying in-between the extremes of beauty and ugliness, strength and weakness, and even health and sickness. The ground for such an important alteration is the soul. We understand that, by themselves, health, beauty, and strength are good things, that is, good with respect to the body. But with respect to the soul, neither of the two extremes, say beauty and ugliness, is desirable, “for the former extremes make souls boastful and rash, while the latter make them humble and unfree.”\(^\text{110}\) Accordingly, the second-rate qualities are said to be “the most moderate ones (*sōphronestata*) as well as the most steady ones, and by far.”\(^\text{111}\) Both of these terms can be understood with a view to the soul: moderation as a virtue and steadiness as the bodily support for the soul’s development.

Regarding the problem of the harmony of the goods, this alteration has a crucial impact. In the standard of Book I, the possession of the higher goods, say virtue, was a sufficient condition for the possession of the lower ones, say health. Such an assertion simply dismissed the problem of the harmony of the goods. Here, in the prelude, the relation is turned upside down. The lower goods, say bodily honors, are presented as the support for the pursuit of the higher ones, say the honor of the soul. We thus understand


\(^{110}\) *Laws*, 728e4-5; Pangle’s translation.

\(^{111}\) *Laws*, 728e3-4.
that the hierarchy of the goods has a profound impact on the harmony of the goods. For although it is true to say that beauty is, as a good thing, preferable to plainness, this evaluation somehow abstracts from the human being as a whole. Considering the human being as whole, soul should be honored above the body. The implication is that the way of honoring the body should not impede or distract from the activity of the soul that makes of it the most honorable possession. The “true” way of honoring the body (alēthes; 728d5) is to make of it “the most steady” (asphalestata; 728d3) basis for the soul’s work or development. In that respect, it is sensible to say that even the pursuit of health should be limited.

Needless to say that such a conclusion is capital. We will simply add that we already drew the same conclusion in the first section of the prelude on the soul.112

3.3.4.4.4. Wealth

The third element discussed is wealth. It is asserted that money and possessions should be honored in the same way as the body is. There is however an important addition: “Excesses in each of these [i.e., money or possession] create (apergazetai) enmities and strife both in cities and in individuals (tais polein kai idiai), while deficiencies lead, for the most part, to slavery.”113 In other words, wealth is not only a threat to the city’s inner friendship but it is also a threat for the individual’s inner

112. Cf. supra, section 3.3.4.3.5.
113. Laws, 728e7-729a2; Pangle’s translation except for the translation of idiai, which he renders with “in cities and in private life.” Although Pangle’s translation is fully legitimated, we prefer to render idiai by “individuals” in order to stress the inner strife that wealth can create; cf. 626d8-9 where Kleinias says that “in private” (idai) each one is an enemy for himself. England too reads the idiai at 729a2 as meaning “individual citizens” (cf. The Laws of Plato, I, p.479).
friendship or, as we could say, harmony. This brings back to mind Kleinias’ inner division and, more generally, his emphasis on the fact that each man is an enemy for himself. We understand that when someone has so much wealth that he could satisfy any of his most fanciful desires, refraining from doing so requires an effort of the will that frustrates the part of the self which would enjoy the fulfillment of these desires. The soul is here again the main consideration. For from a purely political standpoint, the concern is that the spending of money and the display of wealth may affect civil peace and civil friendship. But when the soul is the main concern, the mere accumulation of wealth might have an effect. Let us simply say that continence is politically efficient but psychologically undesirable.

3.3.4.4.5. Children

Wealth is linked to inheritance, and so children are discussed next. This subject was not announced in Book IV but it is the one which is treated at greatest length among the eight elements discussed. Children have been already discussed in the prelude on marriage as the privileged way for actualizing human immortality. The prelude on marriage thus established a strong connection between one’s own immortality and one’s own children. Now children come after wealth and thus appear to be far more detached from one’s own. To put it this way, the prelude on the soul corrects the prelude on marriage or renders more explicit what was left implicit in the prelude on marriage, namely, the fact that one’s own children are different beings than oneself. We may
conclude that with respect to the soul, the begetting of offspring is not the privileged way for actualizing the human desire for immortality (erōs).

The handing down of money to children is, of course, considered with regard to their souls. But the main object is not really the children themselves. The main object is rather the parent’s soul, the soul of the person for whom the children are his own. In that respect, not only the perspective taken in the prelude on the gods is reversed, but the teaching differs as well. In the prelude on the gods, the citizens were cast as children and urged to show an inflexible “respect” (euphēmia) toward their own parents and patiently put up with their “anger” (thumos).\textsuperscript{114} The prelude on the soul echoes this when it says that “one must leave abundance of awe (aidō) for his children, not of gold.”\textsuperscript{115} But it departs from what has been said earlier when it sets forth how parents should behave in order to inspire awe in their children.

Now, we believe that by scolding the young when they behave shamelessly we hand down this [awe to them]. [...] The sensible lawgiver (ho de emphrōn nomothetēs) would instead urge the elderly to be ashamed before the young, and to take care above all lest any individual among the young persons (idēi tôn neōm) ever see or hear them doing or saying anything shameful; for when the old are lacking in a sense of shame, there the young necessarily lack modest awe. Indeed, what really makes a difference in education (paideia) of the young as well as our own (neōn [...] hama kai autōn) is not to reprimand (nouthetein), but the very things that one would say when reprimanding another, to make these things manifest in one’s conduct throughout life.\textsuperscript{116}

Just as the prelude on the soul is silent on erōs when discussing the children, it is also silent on thumos. This is a major difference with the two previous preludes. We can

\textsuperscript{114} Cf. Laws, 717c6-d6.
\textsuperscript{115} Laws, 729b1-2.
\textsuperscript{116} Laws, 729b2-c5; Pangle’s translation altered.
understand this twofold difference this way. When children are considered as one’s own in the most intimate way, as that which is most one’s own so to speak, they both satisfy erōs and arouse thumos. They satisfy erōs because it is just as if one were continuing his own life in that of one’s own children. But that perception might be delusional, which would become manifest each time the child does not obey the parent’s order.117 On the basis of the prelude on the gods, we can say that such an act of disobedience will be perceived as injustice, that is, just as if the parent had been robbed of his own. For if thumos is understood as the “faculty” (or at least the aspect of human nature) which protects what is considered as one’s own, we can understand why thumos is aroused by one’s own children. However, the prelude on the soul takes a different perspective. In the course of the prelude, “any individual among the young persons” supersedes one’s own children. Since the soul is that which is “the most one’s own” (oikeiotaton), the education of “the young” (neōn)—which may or may not includes one’s own children—becomes the opportunity for “our own” education (paideia neōn [...] hama kai autōn). Accordingly, thumos is no longer present, or solely in the limited sense of the inner pride of never saying or doing something shameful, i.e., in the limited sense of always making manifest the harmony between one’s own precepts and one’s own conduct.118

117. The delusion is also manifest in the fact that both parents, the father and the mother, cannot live their own life in the same and unique child. Besides, in the prelude on the gods, there is a shift from the “living parents” (717b5-6) to the father and son relation (717d6).
118. This may shed light on the metaphor with music used above, at 729a6 (mousikōtē), which is continued with the words sumphōnousa and sunarmottousa. Most editors have noted this metaphor but no one provides any explanation as to its meaning; cf. England, The Laws of Plato, I, p.479-480 and Brisson et Pradeau, Les Lois, I, p. 392, note 13. We must admit that the meaning of it remains partially obscure to us, and the harmony between one’s own life and precepts is the only suggestion that appears to us.
3.3.4.4.6. Family

From the children, the prelude moves to the whole family. Whereas the section on children is the longest, that on family is the shortest, aside from the few lines on the soul at the very beginning.

He who honors and reveres the family and all of those who share in common the same family gods (*homogníōn theōn koinó̂nian*), and who have the same natural (*phusin*) blood, may expect (*ischoi*), in accordance with reason (*kata logon*), the benevolence (*eunous*) of the gods of birth (*genethlious theous*) for his own begetting (lit. semen: *sporan*) of children.¹¹⁹

Although short, this part of the prelude reveals the whole problem with family. In these few lines are intertwined, as well as balanced, the “gods of the homogeneous lineage” (*homogníōn theōn*) and the “gods of birth” (*genethlious theous*), on the one hand, with the “natural blood” (*phusin haimatos*) and the “semen” (*sporan*), on the other.¹²⁰ We may suggest that this points to the fact that family and children are both, by nature, inside and outside the domain of one’s own or, more precisely, the domain of what partakes of homogeneity and the same. It is a common and, we may even say, natural expectation or wish that sharing with respect to body (the natural blood) be a sharing with respect to the soul (the gods of the homogeneous genus). Yet, such a wish must be made “in accordance with reason” (*kata logon*), so that the “expectation” with regard to family expressed here is in fact curbed by “reason.” For it is also a common human experience

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¹¹⁹ *Laws*, 729c5-8.
¹²⁰ I believe that this peculiar intertwining may explain the grammatical problem that the first clause of the sentence poses. *suggeneian* and *koinó̂nian* are clearly the two complements of the two verbs (*timó̂n* and *sebomenos*), which is indicated with the conjunction *kai*. The problem is that *pasan* too appears to be a complement of the verbs, but there is no grammatical indication for its distinction from *koinó̂nian*, so that it is not clear whether the “community of the same family gods” and “all of those who have the same natural blood” form one same element (i.e., one complement of the verbs) or two. This problem is indicated by England, whom I follow for the translation of this passage (cf. *The Laws of Plato*, I, p.480).
that the erotic pursuit for what is truly one’s own (or truly the same) compels human beings to go outside their own family. On the basis of what we have seen of the prelude on the soul so far, we may add that this is especially true with respect to the soul.

3.3.4.4.7. Friends and Comrades

After the family, the prelude considers “friends and comrades.” In accordance with the foregoing, thumos, understood as the assertive defense of one’s own, is not mentioned here either. Instead, the prelude urges citizens to think more highly of what they owe to their friends than what their friends owe to them. This can be understood in light of the prelude on the gods’ effort of quelling human arrogance or claim to self-sufficiency. On the other hand, it can also be understood with respect to the soul. To the extent that soul is made better by the acquisition of knowledge, what one learns thanks to a friend is of a greater worth than what one teaches to a friend.

3.3.4.4.8. The City

Continuing the movement that goes from what is the most one’s own toward what is the least one’s own, the Athenian finally considers the city as it arrives at its penultimate element. If we consider the noble lie of the Republic to be equivalent to the preludes of the Laws, this shows a great difference between the two cities: whereas the

121. Laws, 729c8: philōn kai hetairōn (Pangle’s translation).
122. One would recall here what Aristotle says about the magnanimous man in his Ethics: “it is the kind [of man] who possesses beautiful and useless things rather than useful and beneficial ones; for this is more [fitting] for an self-sufficient [being] (autarkous gar mallon)” (1124a11-12). And Aristotle adds that the magnanimous man thinks more highly and also remember more easily what he has done for others than what others have done for him; cf. 1124b9-14.
citizens in the Republic are told that they are born from the land delimited by the city and must defend it as their own mother, the citizens in the Laws are told that the city is ranked seventh out of eight among all the things that are their own and to which they should devote their love and care.123

The city is the place to give free rein to the love of “victory” (nikan; 729d8), the human desire to be “the best one” (aristos; 729d5). Yet, this love of victory (philonikia) is at the same time not let completely loose, for it should be made subservient to obedience to the laws. It is then the laws, rather than the city, which are called “one’s own” (tón oikoi nomōn; 729d8). In so doing, being the best or the first one in obeying the laws is said to prevail over being the best at “war” (agōnōn polemikōn; 729d6) or in Olympic games. Although obeying the laws may entail military service and thus enduring pains and suffering, to distinguish oneself as a servitor of the laws is nonetheless contrasted with distinguishing oneself as a warrior. This is all of a piece with the absence of thumos, not mentioned here either, for in war (or Olympic games) a man asserts the superiority of his own city by being himself superior to another human being, i.e., by fighting against another human being. By contrast, the obedience to the law does not necessarily entail such a fight.

We cannot help connecting the city’s low rank and the relative depreciation of war in this section with the problem courage (the enduring of pains) posed for us in the previous one. But to the extent that thumos is not the main feature of the soul’s nature, it

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123. Cf. Republic 414d1-e6, and also 412d2-e8 for the equation between love of one’s own and love of the city.
becomes much more understandable why enduring pains may not be the most proper way for honoring one’s soul, i.e., for making it better.

3.3.4.4.9. The Strangers

Yet, the domain of the love of one’s own is naturally associated with *thumos*. In this section devoted to the hierarchy of all the things that can be called one’s own, we repeatedly stressed the absence of *thumos*. The silence on anger or vengeance (*thumos* or *timôria*) in all the previous elements is made even more manifest as vengeance occurs no less than three times¹²⁴ and eagerness once (*prothumoteron*; 729e8) in the very last subsection, the one discussing what is the most remote from one’s own, namely the strangers. The discussion of strangers, which is the second in length after the one on children, also stresses the importance of gods. Benefiting from the protection of neither comrades nor relatives, of neither a city nor family, they really are on their own. But the prelude urges the citizens to do them no wrong, because the gods, in the first place “Zeus” (*Dìi*; 730a2), will avenge them. This is the only place in the prelude on the soul that avenging gods are mentioned. In the prelude on the gods, however, gods were present and said to be there to avenge any transgression of the law. We note here that the gods are invoked for the defense of the most defenseless beings. There is but one step from this to say that the truth about the laws is that they are, by nature, like strangers, defenseless in the face of a people, without comrades or family to protect them. Just as it

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happened in Book IV, the laws need the help of a god, and then a tyrant, in order finally to reshape both the people and the families into one city.

3.3.4.5. The Third Section: The Noble Lives

3.3.4.5.1. Preliminary Remarks

Throughout the reading of the two first sections of the prelude on the soul we made the effort to formulate the positive teaching that the citizens—at least the most demanding among them—could gain from what has been said. What we have gathered so far can be summarized this way. In general, we know more about how not to dishonor one’s soul than how to honor it. This is, at least, how we can understand that, in certain circumstances, shrinking from pains or even death can make the soul worse. It remains to be seen, however, whether courageously facing death or pain makes the soul better. This is one of the main questions left unanswered. That question is connected with the status of courage, as a virtue, and with the status of honors, which now has a twofold meaning of being, on the one hand, the city’s reward for placing the city’s safety or well-being above oneself and, on the other hand, that which makes or contributes to making the soul better. According to the second meaning, we assume that we are looking for a work (ergon), which should be specific to the human soul. So far, we understand that work to be knowledge.

But the soul’s work cannot be fully understood without the knowledge of the good which is pursued through the performing of the work. We know, however, that this good must be that which is “best of all” (to pantón ariston) and that the soul is the best “possession” we have for tracking down, capturing, and dwelling in common with that
thing. Yet, the Athenian did not specify any more the nature of that thing which is “best of all.” But the assertion that such a thing exists was enough for qualifying the goodness of all other possessions that a human being could call his own. The body, wealth, children, family, friends, and the city appeared to be subservient to that pursuit. We note that, once again, the problem of the harmony of the goods seems to have been eclipsed. Not completely, however, since with the assertion of the highest pursuit, it is just as if all the other good things fall in their right place. Accordingly, the question is no longer to understand how they can be acquired and harmonized with one another, but rather, assuming that all these other good things are already present, how to limite the pursuit of each good so that none of them hinders or distracts from the pursuit of the highest. In other words, by focusing on the soul’s erōs and by assigning to it a specific, although indefinite, object, the thumotic attachment to all other things that a human being could call his own has been quite relaxed.

This is what we understood on the basis of the two first sections on the soul. The two remaining sections should furnish us with the material to complete and deepen our understanding of the Athenian’s teaching.

3.3.4.5.2. The Introduction

The first two sections of the prelude on the soul consist, mostly, in presenting lists. By contrast, the last two sections are not as clearly lists of elements. Accordingly, their division is less obvious. This is especially true with respect to the present section, the third one. Many elements are discussed and the way in which they should be divided
is not obvious. The division that we suggest, although not perfect, aims at showing the main relations between the elements discussed. We thus identify four parts: 1st (730c1-d2) truth and friendship, 2nd (730d2-731a2) honors and common goods, 3rd (731a2-d5) love of victory and injustice, and 4th (731d6-732d7) love of one’s own and the human condition.

These four sub-sections are however preceded by a short introduction.

And now which sort of [man] someone who wishes to spend his life in the most noble way (kallista) would have to be himself, this will be set forth; [and this] does not so much [concern] the law, but rather praise and blame which, by educating (paideuôn) each of the [citizens], make them obedient and well-disposed toward the laws that are about to be laid down, these are the things it is imperative for us to speak of after that.125

According to both England and Strauss, this introduces the section in which “directions for the real honoring of the soul” are given.126 In support of this, we note that as the laws are said to be of secondary importance, education comes to the fore. To the extent that the real honoring of the soul consists in making it better and that the soul is made better by learning, education—even if instilled by praise and blame—is the activity by which one honors one’s soul. This was already one of the conclusions we drew from the first section of the prelude. Let us proceed then.

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125. Laws, 730b3-c1.
3.3.4.5.3. Truth and Friendship

This section of the prelude on the soul is about the noble life, which is introduced as that which promotes education. The first element the Athenian mentions in that respect is truth.

Truth, then, is certainly the leader of all the goods for the gods, and of everything for human beings; [and truth is] that which the [man] who intents to become blessed and happy should partake of from the very beginning (ex archēs euthus metechos eiē), so that he may live as a truthful [man] for the longest time.¹²⁷

Truth is then the object the soul should aim at. On the basis of the few lines on the soul at the beginning of the second section, we concluded that the soul has an erotic longing for something outside itself. We now learn that truth (alētheia) is that which a man “should partake of from the very beginning” (ex archēs euthus metechos eiē) if he is to be happy. This expression appears to echo the expression, in the previous section, that soul is that which tracks down, captures, and “dwells in common with” the best thing of all (koinēi sunoikein). For us, the best thing of all is here identified with the truth. Truth is therefore the object of the soul’s erōs.

That truth and education go together requires not too much explanation. On the other hand, the relation of truth to happiness is less obvious. But this is explained in the following as truth being connected to friendship. For the man who is not truthful is also untrustworthy, and as time goes by, such a man becomes “friendless” (aphilos; 730c6) and ends up old and alone, deserted by his “comrades and children” (hetairōn kai paidōn; 730d1), having no one to take care of him just as if he were an orphan (homoiōs

orphanon; 730d1). We understand that human relationships are cemented above all by “trust” (pistos; 730bc4), and when trust is lacking ties risk being broken. This is a bitter truth for the family, for it implies that ties of blood are not a sufficient condition for friendship. Ties of blood may facilitate trust, but if the higher element is removed, the lower falls apart.

To the extent that friendship relies on trust, the trustworthy person is such because he is a friend of truth. Accordingly, the untrustworthy person is said to be the “voluntary friend of falsehood” (philon pseudes hekousion; 730c5). Yet, the Athenian adds that the “involuntary [friend of falsehood]” (akousion; 730c5) is not so much untrustworthy as “without intellect” (anous). To the extent that intellect is the faculty that perceives truth, the man who wants to be in the truth but misses it misses it due to the poor quality of his intellect. This explains well enough why one would be the involuntary friend of falsehood. But it also makes one wonder why someone would be the voluntary friend of falsehood. If one has the intellect to see the truth, why would he want not to be in the truth? The next sentence may be read as an explanation. It reads: “indeed, is friendless everyone who is untrustworthy, assuredly, and ignorant.”128 This sentence has troubled editors, some of whom suggest an alteration that would distinguish the untrustworthy man from the ignorant man, both of whom would be friendless but for different reasons.129 But since there appears to be no textual basis for such modification, we must

conclude that the two states, the voluntary and the involuntary, are finally brought together. On these grounds, it seems possible to conclude that the one who tells lies voluntarily must be ignorant about at least one thing, namely, that truth is a necessary component to happiness. Ultimately, therefore, such a man is involuntarily a liar. In accordance with the foregoing, there is but one step from saying that only those who love the truth can be truly friends.

We recall that friends were mentioned in the previous section but barely discussed. In addition, friends were the sixth out of eight in the list of all the elements included as one’s own. Now that truth is taken into consideration, friendship gains in importance. At the same time, friendship is more narrowed, for those who are usually called “friends” are not necessarily truthful and trustworthy persons. Yet, due to the limitation of friendship to this specific meaning, friendship thus becomes something honorable. Or let us say that true friendship is the honorable reward of those of love the truth.

3.3.4.5.4. Honors and Common Goods

After truth and friendship, the prelude moves next to honors and common goods. The first assertion is that the man who fights injustice is more worthy of honors than the one who simply does not commit injustice. The man who collaborates with the rulers is proclaimed “the great man in the city and perfect [one], [...] the victor in virtue.”\textsuperscript{130} It is however puzzling that such a man is not called, in addition, “the just” (\textit{ho dikios}).

\textsuperscript{130} Laws, 730d6-7.
Although injustice occurs many times in these few lines, its counterpart, justice, is not even mentioned once. This is all the more surprising, since as the prelude goes on moderation and prudence come up.

And this same praise must be said about moderation and prudence, and to all the other goods someone possesses which admit, not only of one having them himself, but of his imparting them to others; and the one who does impart [them to others] must be honored most highly, and the one who is not capable, but willing [to impart them to others], should be [honored] in second, and the one who begrudges some goods and voluntary puts nothing in common, out of friendship, this one should be blamed, the possession, however, should not be dishonored at all on account of the possessor, but one should still strive to acquire it, as much as one can.  

This passage is also puzzling, especially as the continuation of the “great man’s” praise. First, it is not clear why moderation and prudence should be honored as is the man who crushes injustice rather than as the man who does not commit injustice. Second, this passage makes us wonder what kind of good the great man imparts to others by crushing injustice. And third, how can a man be willing to impart a good to others but not capable of doing it?

The following interpretation comes to mind. Honors are bestowed on the “great man” because “he is worth many other [men]” (ho de pollôn antaxios heterôn; 730d4-5). The criterion that appears here is, we would suggest, the common good. Although the motives that drive such a man may remain obscure, he nonetheless reflects in his own behavior a concern for the common good. The fact is that such a man purges the city of its bad elements. In so doing, he may not make anyone better, i.e., he may not impart any

131. Laws, 730e1-731a2; the translation can be said to be mix of both England and Pangle.
good to the citizens by making them genuinely more just, for he may only frighten them, and yet, through his action the city as a whole is made better or, say, less unjust. From this, the prelude moves on, naturally as it were, to moderation and prudence. Yet, if the key to understanding that sub-section of the prelude is the common good, the problem is sharing moderation, imparting it to others. And this is also true for prudence, for although intelligent people may arouse the intelligence of others, they have nothing except their own example to move other persons. Saying so, we, however, begin to understand how it is possible to be willing to share a good while being incapable of doing it. Moderation and prudence are good examples, but truth would be the best one, for truth is by definition a common good: it belongs to no one, except by accident. Pythagoras is no more the possessor of the theorem named after him than is Euclid. Yet, even though Euclid would want to share that truth, he is not capable of doing it on the basis of his own effort. To do so requires the reader’s own efforts and the right use of his own intellect. In that respect, the truth lover seems to differ from “the great man in the city.” For by informing the rulers and helping them to crush injustice, the “great man’s” efforts do bear fruits. At the same time, however, we noted above that he is nowhere called the just man, which might indicate his own limits in that respect. Just as Euclid’s efforts are not sufficient for imparting mathematics to others, the “great man’s” efforts may not be sufficient for imparting justice to others, provided that he is, himself, just, something that is never said explicitly in the prelude.

Thus, just as the soul affects all the domains of the love of one’s own because it is that which is the most one’s own, we understand that truth affects the whole domain of
the noble, because it is said to be the ultimate good for human beings. The impact of truth is first on the private sphere, friendship and family. But truth also has an impact on politics, for the purging of the city can be understood with a view to truth as well. Truth or science is the true common good. On that basis, human beings’ attachment to any form of common good may be said to mirror their attachment to truth. Accordingly, there exists a kind of alliance between the man who seeks injustice and denounces injustice, and the man who seeks what is true and denounces falsehood. These things are two distinct activities, and there is no guarantee that the former leads to the latter. But that is a different question. The point is that by honoring the man who cherishes the common good and the virtues, the city honors a man who devotes himself to a good that can be shared, a good that does not belong to him personally. The distinct pursuits of each man thus enrich the common good.

3.3.4.5.5. Love of Victory and Injustice

Now, if the action of purging injustice in the city and that of pursuing the truth bear some similarity with regard to the idea the common good, that similarity should not blur the differences between the two activities. For if the man who crushes injustice, “the informer”\textsuperscript{132} as England calls him, is called “the great man in the city,” this is a title that he shares with no other. In other words, if that man works for the common good, the reward he receives for his action is not a common good, for it is precisely the point of honors to distinguish the few from the many. There is thus a tension—at least at the

psychological level—between the pursuit of honors and the pursuit of the common good. If both actions mirror each other in deeds, they remain distinct with respect to motive. Or the motive may even be the same, namely love of victory (philonikia). But one can be a victor in two different ways: either by beating the bad ones or by surpassing the best ones. The victory against injustice is in fact a battle against unjust people. By contrast, being the first one with respect to the truth, i.e., being the victor in, say, science, does not require a battle against the ignorant or the unwise. By fully developing one’s faculties one may simply surpass all others. The pursuit of common goods thus leads to a closer examination of love of victory as a motive for action.

And this is what is asserted in the first sentence of the next sub-section: “Let all of us be lovers of victory (philonikeitō) when it comes to virtue, but without envy (aphthonōs).”¹³³ This form of the love of victory is beneficial, for it “increases (auxei) the cities’ [goodness].”¹³⁴ We understand that by competing with others without thwarting them, such man is really worth many others. Indeed, such a man brings to the city a healthy spirit of competition: by developing his own faculties he prompts others to develop theirs. Yet, the whole problem is that it is not certain that this could apply to “the informer,” the great man in the city. For, the prelude goes on, the envious man, by slandering others, “lessens his own efforts to attain true virtue (aretēn tēn alēthē) and makes his competitors dispirited (athumian) by getting them unjustly blamed.”¹³⁵

According to England, this assertion should be connected with the case of the “great

¹³³ Laws, 731a2-3; Pangle’s translation.
¹³⁴ Laws, 731a4.
¹³⁵ Laws, 731a6-8; Pangle’s translation.
man,” for “the desire to rise by the detraction of others not only takes away all the merit from the ‘informer,’ but vitiates all the efforts he may make towards excellence himself.” There is indeed a problem with the “informer.” To the extent that his virtue is concerned with unjust people or the bad and the wicked ones, he proves himself a “great man” by crushing others. We can therefore legitimately raise the question as to whether this virtue is “the true virtue.” But if the “informer” is a case of the envious lover of victory, as England wants it, one would have to show how he gets his “competitors,” or rather his enemies, “unjustly blamed.”

The next discussion takes up that difficulty.

For there is no other way to get rid of the injustices done by others which are harsh and hard to heal, or even completely incurable, than to defeat (nikōnta) them, by fighting and retaliating (amunomenon), and to punish them without relaxation; that which every soul in unable to do without a noble spiritedness (thumou gennaiou). There is no delusion about the necessity of fighting and even retaliating against those who commit injustice in the city. This is a combat through which injustice should be defeated. The war against injustice is the war Klieinas described at the very beginning of the whole dialogue, a war out of which justice should have the victory (nikia), which is a victory of the city over itself, as Kleinias put it. For that reason, the man who takes part in that battle and helps the rulers win that war is called “the great man in the city and the perfect [one],” “the one who brings the victory of virtue” (nikēphoros aretēi; 730d7). The whole question, to repeat, is then to know whether this man, “the great victor” or “the

champion of morality” is also the lover of victory with respect to “the true virtue” (aretēn tēn alēthē; 730a7). And the prelude goes on:

Now, for those who commit these injustices, and are curable, one ought to know first that every unjust [man] is not voluntarily (hekōn) unjust; for no one would ever acquire none (oudeis oudamous ouden) of the greatest evils, all the more so since it is inside the most honorable of his own [possessions]. But the soul, as we said, is in truth (alētheiai) of all [the possessions] the most honorable; no one would then ever voluntarily (hekōn) take the greatest evil in his most honorable [possession] and live throughout his life in possession of it. But he is piteous in every respect the man who is unjust and who holds these evils [inside his own soul] [...].

The political necessity of crushing injustice, and thus thumos and anger, is now counterbalanced with the truth about injustice. And this truth is that “for no one in no way none” (oudeis oudamous ouden) of the injustices is “voluntary” (hekōn). This is a universal assertion. The only qualification to that assertion is that for some people the propensity to commit injustice is curable, whereas for others it is not. But that qualification does not affect the universality of that truth. The qualification only affects the scope of thumos, that is, the limits within which thumos is legitimate. For those for whom injustice is curable should be handled with gentleness (proaunein; 731d2).

Accordingly, the man who fights them should master his own anger, he should “put a stop to the work of his thumos” (aneirgonta ton thumos; 731d1). For if he does not, he will act “like an enraged woman” (akracholounta gunaikeios; 731d2). In a funny twist, the overly thumotic man is likened to a woman; of course, becoming overly thumotic is especially a risk for the man who is proclaimed “the first man in the city and the perfect [man].” By contrast, the human being who is capable of being thumotic or gentle

139. Laws, 731c1-8.
according to the situation is called “the good [man]” (*ton agathon*; 731d5). This man may not be the first one in the city, the great man, but he is good in truth.

If England is right about “the informer” (the great man) being a case of the envious love of victory, we should conclude that the way in which he unjustly blames his enemies is by considering them voluntarily unjust. And, indeed, it is psychologically more coherent for the man who devotes his life to tracking down and capturing unjust people to have the solid conviction that unjust people are knowingly, and hence voluntarily, the enemies of the city rather than seeing them as ignorant of their own good, and hence the good of others. In contrast to this great man, the good man will not, in all likelihood, devote as much time and energy to fighting injustice, for he sees that those who commit injustice are involuntarily unjust due to their ignorance of the hierarchy of the goods. In fact, they not only ignore the hierarchy of the goods, namely that wealth and power are not the highest good for human beings—according to the foregoing, the highest good is truth—but they also ignore something about the harmony of the goods, namely that the accumulation of wealth and power is not a sufficient condition for the possession of the highest good. On that score, the good man would be closer to the truth than the great man.

Yet, pushing that argument further would lead us to question the necessity of punishing injustice. We understand that there are three ways of actualizing the love of victory. Let us assume that one of them is through the pursuit of the truth as the examination of the prelude led us to discover. This is the good man’s way. The second way is that of the great man, who is the first man in the city, the perfect one, because he
brings the victory over injustice. His love of victory is thus in agreement with the common good. The last way is that of the unjust man. His desire to be first leads him to acquire wealth and money by whatever means. Because this man wants to be the first with respect to wealth and power, he is a threat to both the city and the other citizens. By contrast, the great man aims at being the first with respect to honors, so that he needs the city to fulfill his desire. This is why his thumos is called “noble” (gennaiou). This is why he is not a threat to the city. He may be, however, a threat to other citizens, the unjust ones, for sure, but also to the unusual types, such as Socrates was for Meletus.140 As for the good man, who aims at being the first with respect to the truth, he is not an explicit threat to the city and the citizens, not in terms of money and power at least. But to the extent that his perspective leads him to conclude that all injustice is involuntary—to consider solely that truth—let us say that he may not be fully in agreement with the city. And this brings us back to the necessity of punishing injustice even though unjust people are in fact ignorant and degrade themselves due to their ignorance.

We understand the necessity of punishing injustice in connection with the question of the harmony of the goods. Indeed, the necessity of punishing injustice implies that the highest good does not vouch for the possession of the lower ones. If that were the case, it would necessitate one robbing a mathematician’s truth in order to rob his wealth. Yet, the necessity of punishing injustice also indicates that the possession of the lower goods does not vouch for the possession of the highest either, for if the acquisition of wealth were a sufficient condition for the acquisition of truth, which we assume to be the

140. Cf. Euthyphro, 2d4-3a5.
highest good, one could hardly blame someone for pursuing the acquisition of the highest good, whatever the means. On the other hand, if wealth were not necessary for the acquisition of the highest good, it would not seem necessary to punish injustice. We conclude, therefore, that because the pursuit of the higher good requires the possession or the presence of some of the lower goods—wealth, power, and a relatively peaceful political community—there is a necessity to punish those who pursue these lower goods in an unlimited way and thus undermine the basis of the highest pursuit.

Provided that all this is the correct interpretation of what the Athenian means in this sub-section of the prelude, we can therefore summarize his twofold speech along these lines. For those who long for being the first and the winners in the city, the prelude indicates a way. Their love of victory must become a love of honors, so that their desire to be the first is subservient to the common good. This means, in a word, helping the rulers in their fight against injustice. At the same time, the prelude indicates that the virtue of such men is not the true virtue, for the true virtue, we understand, is more concerned with truth than with honors. Yet, the great man cannot be dispensed with, for injustice is a threat to everyone in the city, including the true virtuous man, the good man. In order to fight injustice, the great man’s noble thumos is needed. So, if the great man is not truly virtuous, he is however essential for the development of true virtue. It is thus truly fitting to call him “the one who brings the victory of virtue” (nikēphoros aretēi).
3.3.4.5.6. Love of One’s Own and the Human Condition

The interpretation we suggested in the last sub-section stands or falls by the assertion that all the forms of love of victory must be understood in light of love of the truth. So far, the prelude on the soul has furnished us with the material for drawing such a conclusion, but it is nowhere unambiguously asserted as it is here.

Of all the evils, the greatest [that afflicts] the vast majority of human beings is one that grows naturally (emphuton) in their soul, for which everyone [readily] forgives oneself [so that] no one devises [any way] to get rid of it (apophugēn); that [evil] is that which [people refer to when] they say that every human being is naturally dear to himself (philos autōi pas anthrōpos phusei) and that it is rightfully (orthōs) that things need to be this way. In truth, yes, (alētheiai ge) the excessive love of one’s own (tēn sphodra heautou philein) is the cause (aiōn) of all the faults for each [of us] in each occasion. For the lover is blind with regard to what he loves, so that he judges badly the just things, the good things, and the noble things, believing that he should always honor his own before the truth (to hautou pro tou alēthous aei timan dein hēgoumenos); indeed, it is neither oneself nor one’s own (oute heauton oute ta heautou) that the one who is to become a great man (megan andra) must be fond of, but the just things, whether these actions happen to be done by oneself or, rather, by someone else. And it is from this same fault that comes about the fact that one’s own ignorance (tēn amathian tēn par’ autōi) is believed, by everyone, to be wisdom; from which, knowing so to speak nothing, we fancy that we know everything and thus, not turning over to others the things that we do not know [how] to do, we necessarily commit mistakes by doing them. Accordingly, any human being ought to get rid of this excessive love of one’s own (chrē pheugein to sphodra philein hauto) and always pursue (diōkein) someone better than himself, without allowing any feeling of shame to stand in the way of such [a pursuit].

The most important passage of this long quotation is that noting the distinction of and opposition between love of one’s own and love of the truth. This is encapsulated in the

human tendency of “always honoring his own before the truth” (to hautou pro tou alēthous aei timan; 732a1).142

For us, truth is the greatest good. And the soul is that which is the most one’s own, because it provides an access to truth. What we now understand is that any other form of love of one’s own that hinders the pursuit of truth is condemned. Therefore, this should be the ultimate basis for the hierarchy of everything encompassed in the domain of love of one’s own. Yet, we recall that in the section in which that subject is discussed, the city is next to last, surpassing only strangers. Here, however, to the extent that love of justice is connected to the love of the city, the city appears to be more important. For there is an alliance between love of justice and love of the truth. On the one hand, we understand that injustice is connected to this excessive love of one’s own. This is a typical political assertion, which condemns any form of love of one’s own that makes the city subordinate to one’s interest and, hence, is a threat to the common good.143 In other words, from a moral perspective, love of justice and love of the city are usually closely connected and love of the city is not perceived as a form of love of one’s own—as it is in the Republic, for instance—but as something honorable that rises higher than love of one’s own and even as something which is opposed to love of one’s own. It is on the basis of that perspective that the alliance between love of justice and love of the truth can be established. This leads one to push love of justice a step further and thus serves as a

142. We should specify that we make no difference between to oikeion (one’s own) and ta heautou (the things belonging to oneself), so that we translate heautou philian by “love of one’s own.”
143. For example, in Sophocles’ Antigone, when Kreon makes his first speech as king of Thebes, he asserts: “Whoever believes that [there is something] more dear [to him] than his own homeland, I say that this [man is worth] nothing” (v.182-3: kai meizon’ hostis anti tēs hautou patras/ philon nomizei, touton oudamou legō).
ground for criticizing love of honors. But since honors are the city’s reward for the devotion to the common good, this means that love of justice can rise higher than love of the city. This confirms the critique of “the great man” we found in the last sub-section. For the great man is rehabilitated here, but only insofar as he can put justice above himself: “indeed, it is neither oneself nor one’s own (oute heauton oute ta heautou) that the one who is to become a great man (megan andra) must be fond of, but the just things, whether these actions happen to be done by oneself or, rather, by someone else.” In so doing, love of justice transcends love of victory and merges with love of the truth. For if love of victory can also have for its object the truth, as we argued above, there remains a distinction between victory and the truth, so that one should establish a hierarchy between the two. The hierarchy is here clearly indicated. Love of victory should not be blinded by the excessive love of one’s own, so that one is hindered in seeking for someone better than oneself. This is a tough order, especially for the victory lover and the lover of honor.

In sum, we understand this passage as a reassertion of the superiority of erōs over thumos. Truth and justice are not only higher than oneself, but they transcend oneself and one’s own, so that they can be found in other persons’ speeches or actions. Accordingly, the pursuit of truth and justice are erotic pursuits. Thumos, understood as the assertion of oneself and the protection of one’s own, may serve that pursuit but this is not necessarily so. More often than not, the thumotic desire to be the first will, on the opposite side, hinder that pursuit. For such a pursuit necessarily presupposes that there is something greater and more important than individual human beings, and hence oneself.
The fact that truth and justice really and truly transcend individuals is that which makes their pursuit truly honorable. In other words, only truth and justice understood in this way can really fulfill what is meant to be rewarded by political honors. But this, too, poses a problem, for when truth and justice are the ultimate good for human beings, they also become the model for human beings. Yet, we understand truth and justice as unalterable beings, as beings above becoming. Having truth and justice as models, and therefore striving to be similar to these intellectual entities, entails that honorable human beings should be unalterable in the face of fortune. Accordingly, they should restrain “excessive laughter or weeping.” At some point, this means that honorable human beings should escape the human condition. This, we understand, is the explanation of the puzzle in the prelude on the gods. The pursuit of truth and justice imply that, somehow, something divine is the model and the measure for human nature. In that sense, pursuing truth and justice means striving to be similar to a god.

3.3.4.6. The Fourth Section: The Lives of Pleasure
3.3.4.6.1. Preliminary Remarks

The previous sub-section culminated on a high point. Citizens are encouraged to fight the love of one’s own, to love truth and justice more than themselves, and to bear any circumstances with constancy. On that basis, we concluded that the two main characteristics of nobility asserted in the prelude are self-transcendence and unalterable stability. These two characteristics are more honorable with a view to the soul than the

144. Laws, 732c1-2; Pangle’s translation.
thumotic man’s self-assertion and anger. On the other hand, the critique of love of one’s own also indicated that love of one’s own “grows naturally” (emphuton; 731d6-7) in the human soul. Similarly, the critique of human alterations also indicated that human beings are subjected to “change” (metabolas; 732d2) and becoming, so that even the voluntary commitment to stability in the face of fortune tends to escape their minds, and they must therefore “be reminded” (anamimēiskonta; 732d6-7). Thus, pointing out the heights of human excellence was at the same time to indicate the limits of the human condition. Now, by selecting pleasure and pain as the last point with which he will end the general prelude on the law code, the Athenian appears to focus even more on the limits of human nature. We should add, however, that the relation between the soul and pleasure and pain was the very first problem we faced at the beginning of the prelude on the soul. To the extent that in this last sub-section that problem will be addressed and discussed, it will bring the prelude on the soul to a state of a completion.

The discussion of pleasure and pain begins with a clear indication of the distance between that section and the previous ones. The Athenian affirms that he has now set forth the “practices” (epitēdeumatōn; 732d8) that need to be adopted and the kind of person each one needs to be, but only “inasmuch as all this relates to the divine things” (hosa theia; 732e2). To the extent that “honor is somehow a divine good” (theion gar agathon pou timē; 727a3-4), we may understand that the discussion of honor is now completed. This would imply that honor and pleasure are two different things. In any event, the Athenian’s point is clear enough. He will now set forth the human things (anthrōpina; 732e2), “for we are carrying on a dialogue (dialegometha) with human
beings, not gods.” If that sub-section on the human things mirrors what has been set forth so far, we infer that it should be divided in two as well, discussing first of all practices and then the kind of person each one needs to be, inasmuch as all this relates to the human things.

3.3.4.6.2. Human Nature and the Pursuit of Pleasure

The Athenian thus describes in what the human condition consists.

By nature, the human [condition] (anthropeion) [consists] above all in pleasures and pains and desires (hêdonai kai lupai kai epithumiai), to which it is a necessity (anagkê) for every mortal animal to be simply, as it were, attached and to hang upon in the most serious way.

By nature, man is a mortal animal (to thêton zôiôn). Now, every mortal animal is by necessity attached to pleasures, pains, and desires. Accordingly, the praise of “the most noble life” (kalliston bion; 732e8) has to take into account pleasures and pains. In order to move the citizens toward the most noble life—which means, in fact, to instill in them the desire for it—the lawgiver cannot simply assert that this life is superior to any other way of life with respect to its “external form” (tôi schêmati) only, namely with respect to “good reputation” (eudoxian; 733a1). The argument must get inside the body, so to speak, and assert that the one who “tastes” it (geuesthai; 733a2) will find the most noble life also superior with regard to “that which we all seek (zêtoumen): having more delight and less pain throughout the whole of one’s life.”

145. Laws, 732e3; Pangle’s translation.
146. Laws, 732e4-7.
147. Laws, 733a3-4; Pangle’s translation.
This is an important qualification of the criticism of love of one’s own. We understand that the prelude on the soul encourages citizens to transcend themselves in the love of truth and all other pursuits that somehow mirror the pursuit of truth, but only insofar as such a transcendence is, at the very least, not painful. And we notice now that in the previous sub-section, the one on nobility, there was no mention of enduring pains, hardship, or even death for the sake of a higher good. In short, the critique of love of one’s own does not go as far as to condemn all forms of pleasure. Quite the opposite, pleasure becomes here the criterion for the most noble life. But this does not mean that pleasure and nobility always come together. It does suggest, however, that at the highest point nobility should also be pleasurable.

Yet, if every human being seeks to have more pleasure and less pain and that, ultimately, there is no tension between the noble and the pleasant, it becomes difficult to grasp why someone would not choose, by himself, the most noble life and need to be convinced to do so. Moreover, it is tempting to conclude that human beings are simply determined by pleasures, pains, and desires, for they are “attached to” (ἐχτείσθαι) and “hang upon” (ἐκκρεμαμένον) these things. Yet, these words recall the puppet analogy in Book I, where the Athenian said that we are pulled by these “cords.” In that analogy, however, there was in addition to these the cord of reasoning. This comparison leads us to emphasize the little addition of the word “correct.” For one would choose the most noble life if one tastes it, provided, the Athenian adds, that “he tastes it in the correct way (ὀρθῶς).”¹⁴⁸ This little addition has a great effect, for it now compels us to “examine”

¹⁴⁸ Laws, 733a5.
(skopein; 733a7) “what is the correct way” (orthotēs tis; 733a6). And this examination should be done “under the guidance of the argument (tou logou)”\(^{149}\) or, for that matter, under the guidance of reason. The necessity of such an investigation thus renders the reference to nature much more complicated. For examining the more pleasant and the more painful life becomes an investigation as to “whether [life], in this way, grows in accordance with nature (kata phusin pephuken) or whether [it grows] otherwise, against nature.”\(^{150}\)

3.3.4.6.3. Three States, Three Mixtures, Three Lives

The Athenian thus proceeds to the examination of the pleasant life by first distinguishing between three possible states with respect to pleasure and pain: 1) a state of pleasure, 2) a state of pain, and 3) a neutral state (mēdeteron; 733b1) where neither of the two is present. Each of these states is here considered in itself, i.e., without any mixture between them. The Athenian thus asserts that “we wish for us” (boulometha hēmin; 733a9) the state of pleasure (1) and the neutral state (3) when it is in exchange for the painful state (2). Accordingly, we never wish or choose the state of pain (2) and the neutral state (3) when it is in exchange for the state of pleasure (1). In addition to these three pure states, there are three other states in which both pleasure and pain are mixed with one another: 1*) the mixture in which there is more pleasure than pain, 2*) the mixture in which there is more pain than pleasure, and 3*) the mixture in which pleasure

\(^{149}\) Laws, 733a6; Pangle’s translation.

\(^{150}\) Laws, 733a7-8.
and pain are equal. This time, the Athenian asserts that we wish for the first one (1*) and we do not wish for the second one (2*). As for the third one (3*), he says that it is not quite clear what we wish to have on each occasion. Nor is it quite clear in what kind of situation or activity pleasure and pain would be perfectly equal. This would imply that pleasure and pain are somehow divisible and quantifiable, not to say commensurable like numbers. This appears to be confirmed by the fact that the wish is said to be made on the ground of “the quantity (πληθεῖ), size, intensity, and equality” of either pleasure or pain.151 On that basis, one would be entitled to infer that pleasure and pain are made of one and the same material, just like water which can be measured—and thus equal—which can also be cold or hot with differences in intensity that range from frozen to boiling. If this were the case, there would be no need for a hierarchy of pleasures, for a “correct way” (ὀρθὸς) of experiencing pleasure and pain. If this were the case, differences among pleasures and among pains, as well as differences between pleasure and pain, would only be differences by degrees. Just as if one could tell by how many units of pleasure, say, a good joke surpasses a glass of water, and thus how many glasses of water one needs to drink in order to have the same amount of pleasure as laughing over a good joke.

Although we feel uneasy about the reduction of pleasure and pain to measurable units, the Athenian appears to have no reservations on this score. For he now claims that “these things are ordered in this way by necessity.”152 He then proceeds to identify three

151. Laws, 733b6-7.
152. Laws, 733c1-2.
kinds of life: 1**) the life in which pleasure and pain are numerous, great, and intense, 2**) the life in which both are few, small, and peaceful, and 3**) the life in which both are balanced. He asserts that when pleasures predominate over pains we wish to live this life, be they intense (1**) or peaceful (2**). As for the balanced life (3**), it is now claimed that “it ought to be understood in accordance with the foregoing.”153 But what is said next is not in accordance with the foregoing. For it is now said that “we wish for ourselves the balanced life in which the things we like (tōn [...] tōi philōi) predominate, but the one in which the hostile things (tōn [...] tois echthros) [predominate], we do not wish it.”154 We understand that when pleasures and pains are balanced or in a state of equality, human beings wish and choose with a view to criteria other than pleasure and pain. The criterion that is suggested here is, as it is usually rendered in English, “the things we like” and “the things we find repugnant.”155 But literally, what he says is that the criterion is “the friend” (singular) and “the enemies” (plural). This criterion cannot but bring to mind the political distinction between us and our allies, on the one hand, and our enemies, on the other. It is tempting to conclude that if there exists such a thing as a perfectly balanced life with respect to pleasures and pains, then what should make the difference is the city. Or, again, the reference to friend and enemies makes us wonder whether it is possible to be attached to one’s city on the basis of pleasure and pain alone. Although it would be imprudent to build too much on the mere reference to friend and enemies, we recall the assertion of the first section of the prelude on the soul according to

153. Laws, 733c7-8: kathaper en tois prosthen dei dianeoeisthai.
154. Laws, 733c8-d2.
155. Pangle’s translation; des Places renders it in French with “satisfaction” and “odieux,” and Brisson and Pradeau are closer to the text with “aimable” and “hostile.”
which not enduring pains and hardships praised by the lawgiver was tantamount to working to dishonor oneself. We came to suggest that sometimes enduring pain may be the only way not to debase oneself, but that enduring pain can hardly make, in itself, the soul better. Yet, on the basis of what is said here, we are forced to conclude that enduring pain and hardships is possible only if the result is not only a good reputation, but more and more intense pleasures for oneself.

In any event, what has been said about the balanced life seems to be sufficient, for it is now claimed that all ways of life available to us “are bound by nature to these [three alternatives].”\(^{156}\) Furthermore, “if we claim we wish some [other life] besides these [three alternatives], we are speaking from some ignorance and inexperience of the real lives.”\(^{157}\) We note that the prelude is emphatic on the fact that there is no other alternative besides the three lives mentioned above, namely the intense and pleasurable life (1**), the peaceful and pleasurable life (2**), and the balanced and as it were friendly life (3**).

3.3.4.6.4. The Four Ways of Life

The last sub-section of the discussion of pleasure begins with a question.

What, then, and how many are the ways of life (bioi), between which when [a man] selects (proelomenon), [on the basis of] the wish-for and voluntary as well as of the unwished and involuntary (to boulēton te kai hekousion aboulēton te kai akousion), he ought to make this consideration into a law [which] he lays down for himself, and so, choosing the lovable (to philon) together with the pleasant and the best as well as the noblest, he lives as blessed a life as it is humanly possible?\(^{158}\)

\(^{156}\) Laws, 733d3.
\(^{157}\) Laws, 733d4-6.
\(^{158}\) Laws, 733d7-e3. England’s translation is here helpful, except for the words he brackets; cf. The Laws of Plato, I, p.494.
It is surprising that the question of the nature and the number of the ways of life is raised again, since the previous sub-section concluded with the assertion that there are only three alternatives one can possibly wish for. On the other hand, we note that the distinction between the voluntary and the involuntary (to hekousion te kai akousion) adds to the distinction between the wished-for and the not wished-for (to boulēton te kai aboulēton). It is now possible, then, that someone chooses what no one can reasonably wish for, provided that he does so involuntarily (or if it is voluntarily, it has to be the least bad choice in the circumstances). With that possibility, the soul comes back to the fore. For if someone chooses what he ultimately does not wish, it might be due to a lack of understanding about either himself or that which he chooses.

Another element deserves to be stressed. It is the reappearance of the law or, to be precise, the echo of the first definition according to which a law is the private reasoning of one individual about pleasure and pain and which has become the common opinion of a city. This time, however, the city is not mentioned. It is rather an encouragement to reflect on pleasure and pain and to adopt one’s own reflection on the matter as one’s own law. In so doing, the prelude encourages citizens to become their own authority; it encourages them to become their own lawgivers or authorities. Furthermore, to the extent that the laws are divine, this is an encouragement to become similar to a god. The encouragement to formulate one’s own law with respect to pleasure and pain thus echoes the encouragement to have a god for a model and measure in the prelude on the gods. We also recall that in the prelude on the gods, to become similar to a god was connected to
moderation, though without any explanation. Here, however, becoming one’s own legislator with respect to pleasure and pain leads to a discussion of moderation.

Indeed, considering the nature (tines) of the ways of life that can be chosen either voluntarily or involuntarily, the Athenian now lists four pairs of way of life. Let us note, in passing, that in the previous sub-section, there was a kind of insistence on the number three (three states, mixtures, and lives) that is now abandoned. Be this as it may, the four pairs are: (1) the moderate (sôphrona) and the unrestrained (akolastōn) lives, (2) the prudent (phronimōn) and the imprudent (aphrona) ones, (3) the courageous (andreōn) and the cowardly (deilōn), and (4) the healthy (hugieinōn) and sickly (nosōdē) lives. At last, courage is mentioned. It is the first occurrence of courage since the beginning of the prelude on the soul, and, for that matter, it is the first occurrence since the beginning of the preludes simply. We are entitled to hope that the question of the problematic relation between enduring pains and making the soul better will be addressed.

Yet, what follows for now is a description of the moderate life and its opposite, the unrestrained life. The moderate life is connected with the life of peaceful pleasures and pains (2**) in which pleasures predominate over grief (achthēdonōn; 734a6). As for the unrestrained life, it is connected with the life of intense pleasures and pains (1**) in which pains predominate over pleasures. In addition, whereas loves (erōtas) are “mad” (emmaneis; 734a2) in the unrestrained life, they are not so in the moderate life. Accordingly, the moderate life is “necessarily and in accordance with nature”\textsuperscript{159} more pleasant, whereas the unrestrained life is more painful. It follows, therefore, that no one

\textsuperscript{159} Laws, 734b1.
who wishes to live pleasantly will “voluntarily” (hekonta; 734b2) choose to live in an unrestrained way. “If what is said now is right,” it is “obvious that everyone who is unrestrained is necessarily so involuntarily (akōn).”\(^\text{160}\) The conclusion can thus be drawn that “the whole mob of humanity (ho pas anthrōpinos ochlos) lives with a lack of moderation because of their ignorance or their lack of self-mastery (di’ akrateian) or a combination of both.”\(^\text{161}\) In short, the great majority of human beings does not live a life in which pleasures predominate over pains, even though they wish, by nature, to do so. We understand that, in so doing, the great majority of human beings does not honor their souls.

The next life discussed after the moderate one is the healthy life and its opposite, the sickly one. In the list provided above, the healthy life was mentioned last. There is thus a leap from the first life to the last one. But this may be explained on the grounds that the healthy and sickly lives must be understood in “the same way” (tauta; 734b6) as the moderate and unrestrained lives. Since peaceful pleasures predominate in the healthy life, it is the one that deserves to be chosen. There is not an explanation, however, as to why someone would not make such a choice. And as Strauss points out, “in this case it is not obvious that everyone is of necessity sick involuntarily either through ignorance or through incontinence or through both.”\(^\text{162}\) Besides, we can easily imagine a healthy but unrestrained man. Or, again, nothing guarantees that a healthy man may not have to endure much pain, as with the soldier during his military training for instance.

\(^{160}\) Laws, 734b3-4.
\(^{161}\) Laws, 734b4-6; Pangle’s translation.
\(^{162}\) Strauss, The Argument, p.70.
Of course, this remark makes us turn to the courageous life anew. And, indeed, the courageous life is taken up in the sequel, but very quickly and, as it seems, only as a way of concluding the prelude. Without further argument to support the connection, what has been claimed to be true of the moderate and the unrestrained lives is now extended to the prudent and imprudent lives and to the courageous and cowardly lives. It is then asserted that, as it is with the moderate life, the prudent and the courageous lives have both pleasures and pains which are “fewer, smaller, and rarer,” but that in each of these lives pleasures predominate over pains, whereas it is the opposite in the opposite lives. Accordingly, the prudent and the courageous lives “defeat” \( \text{nikōsin;} \ 734d2 \) the imprudent and cowardly lives. And the general prelude on the law code concludes with an emphatic assertion on the harmony of the goods with respect to these matters.

In sum, [we would assert] that the [life] that possesses virtue, of body or even (\( \text{kai} \)) of soul, is more pleasant than the life possessing depravity (\( \text{mochthērias} \)) and is far superior in the other [respects, namely] nobility, correctness, virtue, and good reputation (\( \text{eudoxiāi} \)), so that it makes the one who possesses it more happy than his opposite, in every way and on the whole (\( \text{tōi panti kai holōi} \)).

3.3.4.6.5. The Case of Courage

Before drawing our general conclusion on the prelude as a whole, it is appropriate to say a few words about the very short discussion of courage that we just summarized. According to the foregoing, we should understand the courageous life on the model of the moderate life, that is, as being an example of the life in which pleasures and pains are

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164. \textit{Laws}, 734d4-e2; Pangle’s translation slightly altered.
few, small, and peaceful, and in which pleasures predominate over pains (2**). In his commentary, Strauss invites us to compare this assertion with a passage of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, which comparison should indicate “the unique relation of courage to pleasure.” In that passage, Aristotle says that the “end” (*telos*; 1117b3) related to courage is indeed pleasant, but that it appears to be “a small thing” (*mikron*; 1117b6) with a view to all the pains suffered in order to achieve that end. Aristotle illustrates his point with the example of the boxer. Winning the boxing championship and all the honors that come with it is surely a pleasant thing, but the training and the fights are truly painful. Now, if the boxer’s life is to be associated with one of the lives set forth in the prelude, it would be the first one (1**), the life in which pains are numerous, great, and intense. Yet, according to what has been said in the prelude, in such a life pleasures too should be numerous, great, and intense. We may grant that the pleasure of winning the boxing championship is an intense pleasure, but Aristotle nonetheless says that it is a “small thing.” Thus, Aristotle’s boxer example provides us with a case of numerous pains and small pleasure. This makes us aware of the fact that the insistence in the prelude on the three states with regard to pleasure and pain, and the three mixtures, and the three lives, may not encompass all possible cases. The boxer’s courageous life, at least, does not fit into that scheme.

The boxer’s case is also useful for understanding the problem of incontinence or the problem of the involuntary choice of a life that no human being should wish to live if

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166. One could add that the fact that this insistence on the triplets was broken with the consideration of the four couples of opposite lives, in which courage and cowardice were one, may point to that difficulty.
he were wishing in accordance with nature. For Aristotle says that the pleasure of winning the boxing championship is a small thing. Yet, such victory certainly does not appear to be such a small thing in the boxer’s eyes. On that point, the judgment of Aristotle and that of the boxer differ. Such divergence needs to be rooted, ultimately, in their knowledge of the hierarchy of the goods, that is, the knowledge of what is important and great and of what is trifling and small. On this basis it is possible to understand why it is “the one who knows” (ho gignōskōn; 733e7) who can rightly say that the moderate life is more pleasant than the unrestrained one, even though “the whole mob of humanity” sees it otherwise. In that case, the divergence would rest on the knowledge as to whether, say, the pleasure of eating or being drunk, is a great or a small thing.

Finally, that the boxing championship victory is a small thing can be granted to Aristotle without too much difficulty. The real problem, however, concerns the common good or the city’s safeguard. These are certainly not small things. But following Strauss’ suggestion, we may say that the pleasure one can derive from these things, namely honors, that this pleasure is a small thing. In other words, the safeguard of the city is a serious and great thing, but not with respect to pleasure. Accordingly, what we called the emphatic assertion of the harmony of the goods on which the prelude ends should be qualified. For sometimes, in some circumstances, the most noble choice is not the most pleasant.
3.4. Conclusion

The city built in the *Laws* is not the happy city. But this city should have the power to make those who live under its laws happy. These are individual human beings. In the general prelude, much importance is attached to the individual, not because the individual is valued qua individual, but because it is the individual who can live happily, provided that he lives his life in the correct way. The general prelude reflects this concern for the individual in that it does not really address a people. For example, Pericles’s funeral oration in Thucydides, in which he speaks more of Athens than those who died for it,\(^{167}\) stands in stark contrast to the perspective adopted in the prelude. Of course, what makes it possible for Pericles to do this is Athens’ past actions, something which is impossible to refer to in the *Laws* since the action takes place at the foundation of a new colony. Yet, the setting of the dialogue was Plato’s decision, and nothing prevented him from making another choice if he had wished it. Assuming that the perspective adopted in the prelude is intended, we draw the conclusion that the tension between the individual and the city is also intended.

This tension appeared first in the fact that, on the one hand, the law aims at making the souls of the citizens better and, on the other, the law rewards the enduring of pains, hardships, and ultimately self-sacrifice. From the courageous man’s perspective, this is not a problem. To the extent, however, that the law makes the citizens’ souls better by educating them about pleasure and pain in such a way as they could live a moderate life in which pleasures predominate over pains, this is a problem. This problem,

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ultimately, is the problem of the unity of virtue, especially with respect to courage. Of course, the prelude does not simply set out the problem of the unity of virtue or that of the tension between the city and the individual. The first effect of the prelude is rather to persuade us that obedience to the law and the improvement of one’s soul go perfectly together. This is so because there exists an alliance between politics and philosophy, an alliance between love of honors and love of the truth, which is indicated but also cleverly exploited by the Athenian. At some point, the law has no other choice than to assert the superiority of the soul over the body, because the law commands the enduring of some pain and even rewards bodily sacrifice. Also, the law greatly affects the domain of the love of one’s own by introducing into it the care and love for the city and the common good. In so doing, the law condemns any excessive attachment for lower goods that would undermine the possession of a higher one. Accordingly, the law stands for a hierarchy of the goods which will benefit any individual who will live in accordance with it.

But for the same reason that it defends the superiority of the soul over the body, the law has no choice but to reward those who care more for the city than for their own souls, and to reward them more than those who care more for their soul than for the city. According to the prelude on marriage, being an irascible father is more honorable than being a bachelor philosopher. According to the prelude on the soul, reporting and fighting injustices provides greater honors than being moderate and understanding the truth about injustice. There is thus a limit to the alliance between politics (the law) and philosophy (education). Beyond this limit, a tension between the two appears.
This tension is also noticeable in the form of the prelude, especially in the prelude on the soul, which is a long and uninterrupted speech carried out by the Athenian. Yet, the Athenian nonetheless calls this prelude a dialogue with human beings. But if it were really a dialogue, the tension that lies in the prelude would become obvious and the prelude could no longer serve the political purpose it is meant to serve. Let us simply say that such a dialogue can only be fully carried out at night with select individuals.\textsuperscript{168}

In sum, we understand that the tension between the city and the individual points to the fact that it is possible for some individuals to rise above the city. In order to rise above the city, these individuals must acquire, by their own efforts, the knowledge of pleasure and pain which is in accordance with nature. In so doing, these individuals become similar to lawgivers, even if the laws they lay down on the basis of their knowledge of nature regulate their own action only. And to the extent that the laws which are in accordance with nature should be called divine, these individuals are similar to gods in that respect. They are similar to gods also in the fact that the city’s law code is rooted in the reason of such individuals. To the extent, however, that the exercise of human reason in the pursuit of the truth is pleasurable for the individual, the tension between the city and the individual culminates in this difference. Only individual human beings can feel pleasures and pains. The city requires that citizens rise above the pleasure of their mere bodies. Yet, the political activities in which this occurs are not, in themselves, pleasurable. For that reason, the city has to reward those who nonetheless

\textsuperscript{168} Cf. \textit{Laws}, 962a9-965e5. In this passage, the Athenian asserts that one of the main subject of discussion among the members of the Nocturnal Council is precisely the unity of virtue; cf. especially 963e1-8 where the Athenian raises a difficulty with respect to courage, which he opposes to prudence (\textit{phronēsis}) and reason (\textit{logos}).
endure pains and sufferings for the city’s sake with honors. Honors thus point to the possibility of a kind of pleasure that transcends the body. But to the extent that honors are not related to a specific organ of human nature—honors can be reaped after one’s death—honors do not fulfill this potentiality by themselves. This possibility can be actualized, however, by the pleasure related to the activity of one’s own intellect, namely the pursuit of truth and the knowledge of truth.
CONCLUSION

1. The Summary

The objective of this dissertation was to present Plato’s treatment of and solution to the problem of the harmony of the goods. The reason for pursuing this objective was the assumption that the problem of the harmony of the goods is a universal one, so that any human being has no choice but to face it in his own life. Yet, this assumption was drawn from a personal experience of the human condition. Therefore, our first task was to move away from such a personal basis and to present the problem from Plato’s own perspective. We showed in Chapter One that the *Euthydemus* and the *Statesman* furnish us with the material for accomplishing this task. It is therefore on the basis of these two dialogues that we launched our investigation by means of three questions: (1) What is the relation between happiness and the happy city? (2) What is the model with a view to which the political work of harmonizing goods can and should be measured? (3) How can the knowledge of harmonizing goods be passed on to the citizens who live in the city?
Since all of these questions concern the city, the city was what had to be examined next. With regard to Plato’s works, that meant at least a brief comparison between the two cities he proposes to us in his Republic and his Laws. Chapter Two was devoted to this comparison and the result can be stated as follows. First, we showed that the Republic gets around the problem of the harmony of the goods by reducing each citizen to the performer of a unique work. Since that reduction appears to be a necessary device for producing the happy city, that is, the city which is most one and harmonious, we drew the conclusion that human happiness (and wholeness) and that of the city do not perfectly coincide. This conclusion was also a justification for our turning to the Laws even though the city built in the Laws is not the happy city. In the second part of Chapter Two, then, we examined the first three Books of the Laws with the hope that this dialogue provides a better treatment of the problem of the harmony of the goods and an indication as to its solution.

And, indeed, the standard for any regime that the Athenian sets forth at the beginning of the dialogue appeared to be promising. That standard stipulates that there is a natural hierarchy of the goods and that a city should be measured with respect to its capacity to provide its citizens with all the goods in accordance with their natural hierarchy. In addition, the standard stipulates that this natural hierarchy of the goods is to shape the citizens’ lives by means of practices. We drew the conclusion that practices are that by which the citizens’ lives are made harmonious and whole. In that respect, the standard suggested by the Athenian provided an answer to the question of the model with a view to which the political weaving of goods should be measured—i.e., the second
question raised in Chapter One—and the question of the way in which the knowledge of that model is passed on to the citizens—i.e., the third question raised in Chapter One. And since the first question, the one about the city happiness, had been already dismissed, those were the only two questions we were left with. The only problem with that standard was the claim that virtue is a sufficient condition for the possession and enjoyment of all the good things a human being needs in order to be happy. Yet, since the beginning of the *Laws* already contained elements that could serve for calling into question the claim of the sufficiency of virtue, we were confident of finding qualifications to that claim in the books that prepare the founding of the city.

And qualifications we found indeed. In a word, virtue, even though it is the highest good, vouches neither for military superiority nor for political stability. Virtue, therefore, does not vouch for power. This result we anticipated and we were ready to look for some way of harmonizing these two elements. What we did not anticipate, however, is that we would find a critique of practices as the appropriate means for passing on political knowledge. The climax of this critique occurs when Kleinias, the old law-abiding Cretan, reveals that he does not believe that disobeying the law would make someone unhappy. Kleinias’ disclosure takes place in a section where education is the central theme. Thus, the overall effect of the discussion of education in Books I and II is to contrast practices and education. Practices certainly promote the obedience to the law, but they do not necessarily pass on the knowledge of why these are sound and reasonable practices which will contribute to one’s happiness. Practices can be obeyed out of fear and, for that reason, they do not necessarily relate to the intellect. The critique of
practices thus leads to the distinction between the law and the prelude to the law. Whereas the law is concerned with obedience and therefore tyrannically imposes a penalty for any transgression, the prelude is concerned with education and the free exercise of one’s intellect.

The fact that the prelude to the law code takes the place of the practices for the transmission of the lawgiver’s knowledge allowed us to conclude our inquiry with a last chapter devoted to the three preludes presented in Books IV and V. Since the preludes are meant to be understood differently by different people, i.e., by people endowed with different intellectual power, our own understanding of the preludes—and especially of the highly sophisticated prelude on the soul—that became indistinguishable from the lawgiver’s presentation of his own knowledge about human happiness and wholeness.

The main conclusions of our reading of the prelude did not provide us with as clear of a solution as we expected. The core of the general prelude is a discussion of the human soul. The main problem that this discussion raises regards the unity of virtue, especially with respect to courage. As for the lower goods, we understand that the problem is not so much to harmonize them with the higher ones as not to let them hinder the pursuit of the higher ones. And the highest pursuit of all, of which the pursuit of honors is but the reflection, is the pursuit of truth. In a city ruled by correct laws like the one in the Laws, political activity, at its highest, should not be an obstacle to the pursuit of the truth, namely to philosophy.
2. Courage and the problem of the harmony of the goods

In all the dialogues of Plato analyzed in this dissertation, there is one common element that we faced again and again. This is the claim that knowledge or truth is the highest of all the goods. That knowledge is the first of the goods is the claim with which we began in the *Euthydemus*. That knowledge should rule everything is asserted in both the *Statesman* and the *Republic*. Finally, though the *Laws* may be less radical than the *Statesman* and the *Republic* in that respect, it still remains that, in the prelude, truth is said to be the leader of all the goods. On these grounds, we conclude that the answer to the question of the hierarchy of the goods is constant and clear in Plato. What is more, the question of the hierarchy of the goods appears to be more important than that of the harmony of the goods. What should we understand by this?

In the conclusion of Chapter Three, the problem of harmonizing courage with knowledge became the perfect example of the problem of the harmony of the goods. Courage is the ability to endure pain in an excellent manner. But this is tantamount to saying that courage is the virtue enabling one to sacrifice a lower good for the sake of a higher one. Of course, the voluntary sacrifice of one’s well-being, and ultimately of one’s life, for the sake of the common good is an impressive instance of this virtue. But the body is not the only lower good. For that matter, if knowledge and truth are the highest goods, all the other goods may be said to be lower in that respect. To the extent that the pursuit or even the possession of the highest good is not a sufficient condition for the possession of the lower ones, the pursuit of truth may not bring about honor, familial joy, money, or health. In other words, pursuing the truth may require one to sacrifice other
goods which, although lower, still remain good nonetheless. Now, if this is the case, one needs a certain strength to see that peculiar truth and to live in accordance with it. For it means that choosing the highest may also be sacrificing other parts of oneself. That does not mean that life is tragic or happiness impossible. To the extent that the best use of one’s intellect is in itself pleasant, this can hardly be tragic. Yet, even if the pursuit of truth is pleasant, it is not pleasant for all the parts of which we are made. Thus, even the life devoted to knowledge and truth may require courage. For if the goods are incommensurable, the harmony of the goods will always remain partly imperfect. This is why, ultimately, the knowledge of the hierarchy of the goods is more important than that of the harmony of the goods.

But there is a certain irony in this. For the assertion that the goods cannot be perfectly harmonized is also that which makes possible the harmony of the virtues. Or we could state it this way. Philosophy, as the way of life devoted to knowledge and truth, makes sense only because the weaving that the political art aims at cannot be perfectly achieved.
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