

CORRIGENDA

Corrigenda belonging to “On Plato’s Πολιτεία,” by Stephen Menn, pp. 1-55, in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, Volume XXI, 2005 (eds. J.J. Cleary and G.M. Gurtler, S.J.). 2006. ISBN 90 04 15353 5 (Pbk), ISBN 90 04 15391 8 (Bound).

Due to a series of failures of regular and electronic mail, Stephen Menn’s contribution was printed without his having seen either first proofs or page proofs, and without the comments of Professor Sara Monoson (Northwestern). Menn refers to Monoson’s comments in his final footnote, on the assumption that they would be in the same volume. The editors apologize to Professor Menn and especially to Professor Monoson for these failures.

Corrections:

- p.2 n2, “Proclus *In rem publicam* v.1 p.8. Kroll, citing unnamed earlier writers ...” should be “Proclus *In rem publicam* v.1 p.8 Kroll, citing unnamed earlier writers ...”
- p.4 line 13, “καλῶς ἔξειν” should be “καλῶς ἔχειν”
- p.4 line 24, after “περὶ πολιτείας” delete the quotation mark.
- p.4 line 27, after “περὶ πολιτείας” delete the quotation mark.
- p.5 n4 next to last line, “Πολιτεῖαι” should be “Πολιτεῖαι”
- p.5 n5 line 4, “πολιτεῖα” should be “πολιτεία”
- p.6 n8 first line, “τὸ βίβλιον” should be “τὸ βιβλίον”
- p.7 line 1, “ἦ” should be “ἦ”
- p.7 n10 line 4, “Θεόδωρος” should be “Θεόδωρος”
- p.14 n21 line 5, “περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῆς καταστάσεως” should be “περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως”
- p.18 line 5, after “πρὸς τὰς πολιτείας” delete the quotation mark.
- p.19 line 4, “νομιζῆ” should be “νομίζῆ”
- p.50 n56 line 1, “ξυνωμοσίαι” should be “ξυνωμοσίαι”
- p.52 line 7, “στασις” should be “στάσις”

For similar reasons, Eric Brown’s contribution, “Wishing for Fortune, Choosing Activity,” was printed without notes. It will be reprinted with full apparatus in the next volume of the *Proceedings*. The editors extend their deepest apology for this oversight.

COLLOQUIUM 1

ON PLATO'S ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ

STEPHEN MENN¹

I.

I want to present here some interim results from an ongoing project of reading Plato's *Republic*, and also Plato's *Laws* and Aristotle's *Politics*, in the light of the Greek tradition of writing "on the πολιτεία." This was a well-established kind of writing in Plato's day, and a kind quite different from the "Socratic λόγοι" that Plato had mostly been writing, and we can ask why Plato in the *Republic* chose to take up this kind of writing (and to make the character Socrates take up this kind of talking, very different from his usual questioning style). Undoubtedly, part of Plato's reason was to show that he could write this kind of text better than the people who usually do it, just as, in writing the *Timaeus*, part of his reason was to show that he could write an *On Nature* [Περὶ φύσεως] better and significantly different from the usual pre-Socratic accounts. Plato would not have written a Πολιτεία that would be just one more instance of the usual kind, so in trying to understand his work we will want to understand not merely how it is like, but also how it is unlike, typical earlier Πολιτεῖαι, so far as they are preserved or can be reconstructed. I hope to present here, in sketchy form, enough of the results of this kind of investigation to show that it can bring new illumination to Plato's text. In particular, it can give new perspectives on some perennial problems, both about the interpretation of Plato's views in the *Republic*, and about the relations between different parts and emphases of the text. By problems about the different parts of the text I mean, for instance, what is the relation between the elenctic Socrates of Book I and the more positive Socrates of Books II-X, and what is the relation between the *Republic*'s discussion of moral virtue and its discussion of politics (is one a means to the other? is the text sim-

¹ I am grateful for comments on various stages of this paper to Tad Brennan, Eric Brown, Myles Burnyeat, Paul Cartledge, John Cooper, Rachana Kamtekar, Nelly Lahoud, Josh Ober and Malcolm Schofield (the comments of Brennan, Cartledge and Kamtekar were very detailed and helpful), as well as to my BACAP commentator Sara Monoson and an anonymous BACAP referee, and to audiences at Brown (BACAP) and at the Montreal Political Theory Workshop.

ply a hodgepodge of different topics?). By problems about Plato's views I mean, notably, does Plato really believe that the *πολιτεία* he constructs in Books II-VII would be the best if it ever came about, does he really believe it is possible to actualize it, and does he advocate taking political action toward that end? Also—a somewhat less discussed but also perennial problem which will be of particular interest to me—what should we make of Plato's views on Sparta, given that the *πολιτεία* Plato constructs has striking similarities to the Spartan *πολιτεία* (not necessarily to the historical reality but to the idealized Sparta as described in Xenophon's *Πολιτεία of the Spartans*), but given also that Plato sharply criticizes the Spartan *πολιτεία* in *Republic* VIII (and also in the *Laws*)? Should we say that Plato was essentially a Laconizer (with Popper 1945, and, with qualifications, Cartledge 1999), or should we conclude (with Tigerstedt I 244-76) that despite the similarities, the differences are deep enough to show that Plato's ideal proceeds from a fundamentally different and independent inspiration? Obviously both the resemblances and the differences are real, and what is interesting for us is not to weigh them up and judge whether he is more pro- or anti-Spartan, but rather to understand why he constructs his ideal the way he does, with both Spartan and anti-Spartan elements, why he finds Sparta good to think with in constructing his ideal *πολιτεία*, and what this might imply for the meaning of his ideal.

First let me say something about Greek *Πολιτεία* literature and why it gives relevant comparanda for reading the *Republic*. The title *Πολιτεία* (Latin *Res publica*, English *Republic*) is attested solidly and early for Plato's text. Plato himself, at *Timaeus* 17c1-3, refers back to what is apparently the *Republic* as *λόγοι περὶ πολιτείας*. This is not exactly a title, but Aristotle clearly cites the *Republic* under the title *Πολιτεία* at *Politics* II 1, 1261a6, II 6, 1264b28, IV 4, 1291a12, V 12, 1316a1 and VIII 7, 1342a33, and *Rhetoric* III 4, 1406b32.² Furthermore, Aristotle makes clear that he intends this, not as a proprietary title for Plato's work alone, but as a generic title like *Ἐπιτάφιος* (Aristotle's title for the *Menexenus*, *Rhet.* III 14, 1415b31) or *Συμπόσιον*. For Aristotle says that, although there is a fifth *πολιτεία* or constitution beyond monarchy, oligarchy, democracy and aristocracy, and although this fifth constitution is the one most properly called *πολιτεία*, yet “because this [fifth kind] does not often

² Proclus *In rem publicam* v.1 p.8. Kroll, citing unnamed earlier writers who had argued that the σκοπός of the text was the (best) *πολιτεία*, points out that Aristotle cites the text by that name not only in the *Politics* but also in his *Sussitikos* (presumably the *Sussitikoí Nomoi* mentioned in Diogenes Laertius' catalogue of Aristotle's works), and that Theophrastus does so in his *Laws* and in many other places.

come about, it escapes the notice of those who try to enumerate the kinds of πολιτεῖαι, and they make use of only four [kinds] in their Πολιτεῖαι, like Plato” (*Pol.* IV 7, 1293a40-b1).³ In this passage Aristotle is using the word “πολιτεία” in three different senses: once for “constitution” in general, once for a particular constitution which is preeminently constitutional as opposed to despotic rule, but once for a genre or kind of writing that includes Plato’s *Republic*.

The written Πολιτεῖαι that Aristotle is thinking of would include not only texts called simply “Πολιτεία” or “Περὶ πολιτείας” or “Περὶ τῆς ἀρίστης πολιτείας,” but also texts called “Πολιτεία of the so-and-so’s.” We might think that the first type of text would be “normative” and the second “historical”; but Aristotle often does not bother to distinguish the two types, and they would have covered heavily overlapping ranges of topics. As we have seen Aristotle say, texts called simply “Πολιτεία,” like Plato’s, would not merely describe an ideal πολιτεία, but would also classify all possible types of πολιτεία, in order to prove by exhaustion that their ideal is the best possible, and in describing the possible types they might well describe the πολιτεία of the so-and-so’s (so the *Republic* describes the second-best type, the timocracy or timarchy, as “the Cretan and Spartan [πολιτεία],” *Rep.* VIII, 544c2-3). Conversely, a text called “Πολιτεία of the so-and-so’s” might discuss which if any of the standardly recognized types of πολιτεία it fell under (cp. Plato *Laws* IV, 712c6-e5, on the notorious problem of classifying the Spartan πολιτεία). Furthermore, many texts called “Πολιτεία of the so-and-so’s” are also descriptions of an ideal, since they are written in order to praise the πολιτεία of the so-and-so’s and to contrast it with how other cities are governed. This was clearly Xenophon’s aim in his *Πολιτεία of the Spartans*, and it would also have been the aim of many other texts on the Πολιτεία of the Spartans—and many there were. Thus Aristotle speaks of “Thibron [who] seems to admire the legislator of the Spartans—and all the others who write about their πολιτεία too—on the ground that they ruled over many through exer-

³ It initially seems odd that Aristotle does not mention Plato’s class of “timocracy”; but Aristotle’s subsequent discussion makes clear that he is counting this among governments which can be called aristocracies, although they are not aristocracies in the strictest sense. In any case, the series of constitutions described in *Republic* VIII does not include a mean or blending of oligarchy and democracy, of the kind that Aristotle specially calls πολιτεία; the *Laws*, by contrast, does describe such a constitution, so it is clear that Aristotle is referring specifically to the *Republic*. Aristotle omits tyranny here as being not properly a constitution, but the opposite of constitutional rule. It is curious that Aristotle’s own collection of Πολιτεῖαι, going by the catalogue in Diogenes Laertius, did not include the missing mixed constitution—which may support his judgment that this type is rarely found.

cising themselves for danger” (*Pol.* VII 14, 1333b18-21; Thibron was a general in the Spartan campaigns in Anatolia after the failure of Cyrus’ revolt, Xenophon *Hellenica* III i 4-8 and IV viii 17-19). So too Critias, who wrote a *Πολιτεία of the Spartans* in prose and perhaps another in verse (DK 88 B32-7, cp. A22), said that “the πολιτεία of the Spartans is thought to be the most noble” (*Hell.* II iii 34). Naturally such Πολιτεία-of-the-Spartans texts involved much idealizing away from the often brutal Spartan realities. Aristotle treats both idealizing Πολιτεῖαι-of-the-so-and-so’s and purely ideal Πολιτεῖαι like Plato’s as proposals for how a city might best be governed, and in *Politics* II he sets out “to examine the other πολιτεῖαι, both the ones practiced in certain cities that are said to be well-governed [εὐνομεῖσθαι—a Spartan slogan], and any others that particular people have described and thought to be right [καλῶς ἕξειν]” (*Pol.* II 1, 1260b29-32), to find out what is right in them and to show that he himself is seeking a further πολιτεία not arbitrarily but “because the ones that now exist are not right” (b34-5), drawing no distinction between πολιτεῖαι that “exist” only in λόγοι and those that are said to exist (or to have existed) in places like Sparta. In *Politics* IV he complains that “most of those who have spoken περὶ πολιτείας” either “seek only the very highest [πολιτεία],” even if it requires impracticable material conditions, or else “although they speak of a more common [πολιτεία], they take away the existing πολιτεῖαι, praising the Spartan πολιτεία or some other” (*Pol.* IV 1, 1288b35-1289a1). Aristotle himself, having described his own *Politics* as an investigation περὶ πολιτείας” (*EN* X 9, 1181b14-15), argues that, just as gymnastics must investigate not only what is the best regimen for an ideal body, but also what is best for the average body or for particular types of body, so the science περὶ πολιτείας” must investigate not only the best πολιτεία for an ideal city, but also what is best under more common conditions, and what best preserves each given type of πολιτεία (so *Pol.* IV 1). As Aristotle states this program in *EN* X 9, one crucial step is “to consider, out of the πολιτεῖαι that have been collected, what kinds of thing [= what laws and customs] preserve and destroy cities and what kinds [preserve and destroy] each of the πολιτεῖαι, and for what causes some [cities] are governed [πολιτεύονται] rightly or wrongly” (1181b17-20); so for Aristotle too, as for the admirers of Sparta, texts on the Πολιτεία of the so-and-so’s are instruments of the normative study of how a city should best be governed.

The broad outline of the history of the Πολιτεία genre is well known—at least, it is well known in continental scholarship: I am not sure how far

this discussion has penetrated the Anglophone world.⁴ But the genre, and the title *Πολιτεία*, seem not to have been much taken into account in the literature on Plato's *Republic*.⁵ This may be in part because of a reluctance to rely on works that are lost. But not all *Πολιτεῖαι* besides Plato's are lost: setting aside the complex cases of Plato's *Laws* and Aristotle's *Politics* (although at least *Politics* VII-VIII is a classic *περὶ ἀρίστης πολιτείας*), we have the pseudo-Xenophon *Πολιτεία of the Athenians*, the genuine Xenophon *Πολιτεία of the Spartans*, Aristotle's *Πολιτεία of the Athenians*, and Cicero's *De re publica*; in addition, Book VI of Polybius' *Histories* is a *Πολιτεία* of the Romans, and most of Book II of Josephus' *Against Apion* is a *Πολιτεία* of the Jews. Of course, the majority of these texts are later than Plato's, and influenced by Plato to some degree, and I have heard it suggested that if there was afterward a *Πολιτεία* genre, it was Plato who invented it (in this vein one hears it said that Zeno of Citium's *Πολιτεία*, just because of its title, must have been a reference specifically to Plato; against this inference see Schofield 1999). But in fact the genre is both older than Plato, and also highly ramified, with nothing to suggest that Plato is the source from which all the branches after his time are spreading out. Aristotle describes Hippodamus of Miletus as "the first of those who did not themselves engage in politics [τῶν μὴ πολιτευομένων] to undertake to say something *περὶ πολιτείας τῆς ἀρίστης*" (*Pol.* II 8, 1267b29-30; Hippodamus was involved in the founding of Thurii in 444/3 BC); Hippodamus and Phaleas of Chalcedon, whom Aristotle discusses together with

⁴ A standard German handbook account is Treu 1966, 1935-47; a distinct French approach, focussing more on uses of the word "πολιτεία" than on the *Πολιτεία* genre, and with much less interest in lost works, is Bordes 1982, building on de Romilly 1959. None of these studies show much interest in philosophy. One Anglophone account, Dawson 1992, seems to have had no impact on the literature, apart from Schofield 1999 (originally a review-essay on Dawson). The only other recent Anglophone scholars of Greek political philosophy I know whose work makes use of the *Πολιτεία* genre are Schofield, Paul Cartledge (see Cartledge forthcoming), G.R.F. Ferrari (see Griffith and Ferrari 2000), and Josiah Ober (see Ober 1998). There is a very quick sketch of the genre at Jacoby 1949, 211-15; even briefer by Connor 1989, 49-51 and by Gera 1993, 11-13. A volume of the continuation of the *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Jacoby 1923-, abbreviated *FGrHist*) has been projected to include fragments of *Πολιτεῖαι*. The majority of the fragmentary Spartan *Πολιτεῖαι* are already in *FGrHist* vol. 3B, ##580-98.

⁵ Standard surveys such as Annas 1981, Cross and Woolley 1964, Murphy 1951, Reeve 1988, White 1979, and Höffe 1997, have no discussion of the genre, and no index entry for "Sparta"; the honorable exception is G.R.F. Ferrari's introduction to Griffith and Ferrari 2000. Leroux 2002, 42-54 discusses the concept of *πολιτεία* and the question of Plato's political or utopian program in his historical context, but does not focus on the genre or on Sparta.

him, seem to have written their πολιτεῖαι without any pretence that they had been in practice in Sparta or elsewhere. There was also a *Περὶ πολιτείας* by Protagoras, and a *Πολιτεία* forged in the name of Epicharmus (two extant fragments, DK 23 B56-7), according to Aristoxenus by Chrysgonus the flute-player (datable by his involvement in Alcibiades' ceremonial return to Athens in 407, Athenaeus XII 49 and XIV 59). Also the extant pseudo-Xenophon (or "Old Oligarch") *Πολιτεία of the Athenians* (generally dated to somewhere between the 440's and the 420's),⁶ the extant genuine Xenophon *Πολιτεία of the Spartans* (dated by its latest editor to the 390's),⁷ the lost Πολιτεῖαι of the Spartans and the Thesalians by Critias, and of the Spartans by three Spartans, Thibron, Lysander,⁸ and Pausanias,⁹ are all pre-Platonic.

After Plato we hear of works called Πολιτεία or Περὶ πολιτείας by Diogenes the Cynic, Xenocrates, and the Stoics Zeno and Chrysippus, a Περὶ

⁶ See the edition, translation, and brief but acute introduction in Bowersock 1968. For a sense of the apparently limitless range of views that have been defended about the date and purpose of this text, see de Ste. Croix 1972, 307-10, Mattingly 1997, and Hornblower 2000.

⁷ I will use Lipka 2002, an excellent scholarly instrument, as the edition of reference; see however also the less ambitious Rebenich 1998. (I abbreviate the title as *Resp. Lac.*). The date of the treatise has been the subject of a fair amount of controversy, and there is something to be said for Rebenich's dating to the time of the Theban revolution in the early 370's, but I accept Lipka's arguments (9-13) for a dating in the mid-390's: the evidence turns on chapter XIV, which assumes a time when the Spartans have lost their allies and their hegemony, but when they still have harmosts (military governors) in many cities. More generally, Xenophon's attitude in the treatise is not simply pro-Spartan, but is taking sides in an internal debate at Sparta, on the side of his patron Agesilaus and against Lysander, whose partisans are the target of the polemic in chapter XIV (on Agesilaus and Lysander and Pausanias, see a note below). If we accept Rebenich's dating, Lysander would be a non-issue and Xenophon would have to be criticizing his patron Agesilaus, who condoned the seizure of the Theban citadel and failed to punish Sphodrias for his raid on the Piraeus. In any case the once popular dating of chapter XIV after Leuctra seems clearly impossible (harmosts? threat of Sparta regaining hegemony?). It also seems clear that chapter XIV is not, as was once commonly assumed, an afterthought reflecting Xenophon's later disappointment with Sparta: the parallel with the end of the *Cyropaedia*, where everything has degenerated in Persia since Cyrus' time, as everything has degenerated in Sparta since they stopped following the laws of Lycurgus, cannot be a coincidence. On the comparison between the end of the *Cyropaedia* and *Resp. Lac.* XIV, see Dorion 2002.

⁸ τὸ βιβλίον ἐν ᾧ γεγραμμένος ἦν ὁ περὶ τῆς πολιτείας λόγος, found in Lysander's house after his death, according to Ephorus in Plutarch *Lysander* 30; written for him by Cleon of Halicarnassus according to *Lysander* 25 and *Agesilaus* 20. For full references and discussion see *FGrHist* #583.

⁹ *FGrHist* #582. Warning: much about Pausanias is controversial, including the text of the crucial passage from Ephorus, *FGrHist* #582 T3, from Strabo VIII v 5. Besides Jacoby, see references in a note below.

νόμου ἢ Περὶ πολιτείας by Antisthenes, a Ἐπεὶ τῆς πολιτείας by Demetrius of Phalerum, a Περὶ τῆς ἀρίστης πολιτείας by Theophrastus (the same title might be applied to Aristotle's *Politics* VII-VIII, which begin with [almost] these words), and, in the imperial period, a Περὶ πολιτείας by Tiberius' teacher Theodorus of Gadara and a Πολιτεία by the third century AD Cynic Oenomaus, also of Gadara.¹⁰ And besides Aristotle's 158 Πολιτεῖαι of individual cities (including of course Sparta) there were further Πολιτεῖαι of the Spartans by the Peripatetic Dicaearchus, by the Stoics Persaeus and Sphaerus, and by persons named Aristocles, Dioscurides, Hippasus, Molpis, Nicocles and Proxenus (and Λακωνικά by Aristocrates and Polycrates).¹¹ Much of this literature may lie under Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus* (which cites the works of Aristotle, Sphaerus, Dioscurides and Aristocrates); as far as we know, none of these Πολιτεῖαι of the Spartans, except Aristotle's and possibly Pausanias', said anything negative about Sparta, except to criticize what were alleged to be post-Lycurgan deviations (Dicaearchus' Πολιτεία was so laudatory that the Spartans are said to have mandated yearly readings of it, Fr. 2 in Mirhady 2001).¹² There were

¹⁰ References to all except Chrysippus and Theodorus and Oenomaus are in Diogenes Laertius in the lives of the respective authors (Diogenes VI 80, Xenocrates IV 12, Zeno VII 4, Antisthenes VI 16, Demetrius V 81, Theophrastus V 45). Theodorus and Oenomaus are in the Suda under Θεόδωρος Γαδαρεύς and Οἰνόμαος Γαδαρεύς respectively. References to the Zeno and Chrysippus works are collected in von Arnim's *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*.

¹¹ For all of these see *FGrHist* ##580-98. The title of most of the lost Spartan Πολιτεῖαι, as well as of the extant Xenophon, seems to have been *Λακεδαιμονίων Πολιτεία* or *Λακωνική Πολιτεία* or variants on these, not *Σπαρτιατῶν Πολιτεία*, but I will translate as "*Πολιτεία of the Spartans*" in all cases. "Lacedaimonians" or "Laconians" might in principle include the perioeci or other disenfranchised groups as well as the Spartiate full citizens. But these groups precisely did not participate in the πολιτεία, and the texts on the Spartan πολιτεία seem to have said little or nothing about them, concentrating on the collective mode of life of the Spartiate full citizens (especially men but also women) who are trained and lived their lives πρὸς τὴν πολιτείαν. Where necessary to disambiguate, I will say "Spartiate" to make it clear that I am talking only about the full citizens.

¹² But see the reference in Josephus *Against Apion* I 221 to Polycrates' *Tripolitikos*, which contained an attack on the Spartans' πολιτεία (according to Jacoby *FGrHist* #588 and #597, this is not the same Polycrates who wrote the Λακωνικά mentioned above). There are of course also criticisms in extant works of Plato, Aristotle and Isocrates, none of these works being primarily devoted to Sparta. Note that even Aristotle, who makes harshly critical comments on Sparta and who remains the source of our most damning information about it, also said that Lycurgus, who was honored as a god by the Spartans, was honored less than he deserved (Aristotle Fr. 534 Rose, cited by Plutarch *Lycurgus* 31, perhaps from Aristotle's Πολιτεία of the Spartans). The Pausanias text is unfortunately a scholarly hornet's nest (on which see now van Wees 1999 and references therein, notably David 1979; Rebenich 1998, 23n87, lists which scholars line up on which side). It seems to be agreed that

also Πολιτεῖαι of the Athenians, Corinthians and Pellenians by Dicaearchus (so Cicero *ad Atticum* II ii) and a Περὶ τῶν Ἀθήνησι πολιτειῶν by Demetrius of Phalerum (DL V 80). No one will seriously maintain that Plato's *Republic* was the generic model for all this literature. In some ways, what is striking is how little impact Plato had. Despite his (and Aristotle's) criticisms of Sparta and of all other existing πολιτεῖαι, it remains true after Plato as before him that the most common way to present "the best πολιτεία" was to describe, in an idealizing way, the πολιτεία allegedly practiced in some actual city, usually Sparta. Cicero's *De re publica* explicitly sets out to describe the best constitution (I xx 33), but then does so only by asserting that the best constitution is the constitution of the (pre-Gracchan) Romans and describing that historical constitution (II i 2-3). In substituting the πολιτεία of the Romans for the πολιτεία of the Spartans as the best, Cicero is following Polybius; Josephus is emboldened to argue instead that the πολιτεία of the Jews (at some indefinite past time) was the best πολιτεία. But the Spartan presumption remains strong enough that all these authors need to describe and contrast the πολιτεία of the Spartans in order to prove that not the Spartan but their preferred πολιτεία is the best.¹³

At this point it will be objected that the fact that all these texts are referred to by later sources as Πολιτεῖαι is not enough to show that the authors themselves, particularly in the fifth century before it had become standard for authors to give titles for prose works, thought of these texts as belonging to a determinate Πολιτεία-kind of writing. And it is indeed true

either Pausanias criticized the ephorate as a post-Lycurgan innovation, *or* he criticized Lycurgus for establishing the ephorate over and above the constitutional structure imposed on Sparta by the Delphic oracle. Even if the latter is true, Pausanias is still conforming to the basic pattern of criticizing later decay from an originally ideal πολιτεία.

¹³ Josephus' Πολιτεία of the Jews is *Against Apion* II 145-296 (Josephus coins the word "theocracy" to distinguish the Jewish πολιτεία from the standard Greek forms at II 165). Polybius examines the Spartan πολιτεία, to show the superiority of the Roman, at VI xlviii-1, as does Cicero in the fragmentary *De re publica* II xxiii; Josephus discusses Sparta from a similar motive at *Against Apion* II 225-31, with further Spartan comparisons scattered elsewhere. Polybius also discusses Crete (VI xlv 1-xlvii 6), commonly linked with Sparta (Polybius argues that it is much worse), and also Carthage (VI li-lii), as well as explaining why Athens and Thebes are not contenders (VI xliii-xliv; the list is very close to Aristotle's in *Politics* II). Polybius also explains why Plato's πολιτεία, since it has never been actualized, has no right to enter the competition (VI xlvii 7-10); Josephus *Against Apion* II 220-24 says that while Plato's πολιτεία and νόμοι are generally regarded as unattainable by human nature, those which the Jews have actually practiced are more demanding. Cicero contrasts his procedure, describing the real Roman *res publica*, with Plato's, making up his own perhaps impossible *res publica*, at II i 3 and II xi 21-2.

that the references to Hippodamus, Phaleas, Thibron, Lysander, and Pausanias are not really to titles, and that any title we did have for these texts might well be non-authorial. But we do not have to worry too much about titles of lost works. Our earliest extant *Πολιτεία*, the pseudo-Xenophon, begins with the words “περὶ δὲ τῆς Ἀθηναίων πολιτείας”; this is not exactly a title, but it is as close to a title as we can expect for a fifth-century text, and it sets the theme of the pamphlet, which consistently argues that while the Athenians’ *τρόπος τῆς πολιτείας* is bad (being rule by the worst people), all of their laws and customs are good, in the sense of being well calculated to preserve that bad *πολιτεία*. While the pseudo-Xenophon has a reputation as crude and un-intellectual, this in fact fits very closely with everything else we know about early theorizing about the *πολιτεία*, and the text is a good witness to what *πολιτεία*-writing looked like around the time of Plato’s birth. The only anomaly is that, while most *πολιτεῖαι* of which we know were works of rhetorical praise, this one is equally rhetorical blame. But a work “on the worst *πολιτεία*” seems to presuppose, and be a deliberate twist on, works “on the best *πολιτεία*.” And the pseudo-Xenophon is also, in its way, a speech of paradoxical praise, like the genuine Xenophon *Πολιτεία of the Spartans*: both take up the hypothesis “the customs of the so-and-so’s are opposite to those of the rest of the Greeks, doing what would be considered bizarre or shameful elsewhere, but I will show that each custom, even the most bizarre, is correct, being justified by the purpose that they all serve.” What is important for our purposes is that the pseudo-Xenophon assumes the theoretical distinction between the *τρόπος τῆς πολιτείας*, classifiable by ruling group, and the particular customs designed to preserve that *πολιτεία*. We first meet such a classification, into monarchy and oligarchy and the rule of the *demos* (though without the generic term *πολιτεία*), with characterizations of each type and arguments about which is the best and about how stable they can be, in the “constitutional debate” which Herodotus puts in the mouths of the Persian conspirators in *Histories* III 80-82. Similar classifications, and similar arguments on one side or another, can be found in other texts, notably Isocrates’ *Nicocles* 12-26, which explicitly sets out to show that monarchy (or even “tyranny”) is “the best of *πολιτεῖαι*” (12; the other options being oligarchy and democracy, 15 and again 18), and texts in his *Areopagiticus* and especially *Panathenaicus* praising the “ancestral *πολιτεία*” at Athens.¹⁴

¹⁴ Xenophon also assumes the threefold classification of *πολιτεῖαι*, in the first sentence of the *Cyropaedia* and in Alcibiades’ conversation with Pericles about laws, *Mem.* I ii 40-46.

There is a close analogy between τρόποι τῆς πολιτείας and τρόποι τοῦ βίου, and indeed it seems to have been a commonplace that “the πολιτεία is the βίος of the city” (Aristotle *Pol.* IV 11, 1295a40-b1, cp. Isocrates *Areopagiticus* 14, *Panathenaicus* 138). A Πολιτεία of the so-and-so’s will give enough details of their actions to allow us to see their τρόπος τῆς πολιτείας, and a βίος of so-and-so will give enough details of his actions to allow us to see his τρόπος τοῦ βίου; both contrast with “history,” and both, owing to a shared origin in rhetorical praise and blame, feel freer to take liberties with the truth of the details than history does. Τρόποι are not simply general (abstracting from the details) but classificatory and evaluative. A work Περὶ βίων might be a collection of lives of famous people, but it is as likely to be a classification of the different τρόποι τοῦ βίου and an argument about which is preferable, and the same is true for a Περὶ πολιτείας; indeed, it is often assumed that the questions of the best βίος and of the best πολιτεία are linked.¹⁵

A discussion περὶ πολιτείας was not necessarily a book: it might be merely part of a book (as in Herodotus), it might be spoken rather than written, or it might be written only as an aid to a political speech (as, probably, Lysander’s text); and in speaking of the discourse περὶ πολιτείας as a background to Plato and Aristotle, I do not mean to restrict myself to whole books. But certainly whole books, called Πολιτεία or Περὶ πολιτείας or Περὶ τῆς ἀρίστης πολιτείας or Πολιτεία of the so-and-so’s, were common enough, and it is fair to describe them, using the standard phrase, as “pamphlet literature”: that is, as texts describing, in more accurate or more fictionalized form, some possible mode of collective life and governance,

¹⁵ The issues about ancient biography and its relations with other forms of writing (history and antiquarian writing) are complex and have been much discussed. A point of entry is Momigliano 1993; the *locus classicus* for the contrast between biography and history is Plutarch *Alexander* 1. Xenophon’s assumptions about the aims of βίος-writing come through at *Agesilaus* I 6: “I think that from his deeds his τρόποι too will best be shown.” It has often been observed (notably in Cartledge 1987) that Xenophon takes more liberties with the truth in the *Agesilaus* than in the *Hellenica* (itself no paradigm of historical accuracy), even when (as often) the accounts are parallel. The assimilation between πολιτεία and βίος is perhaps already in Pericles’ funeral oration in Thucydides, which speaks conjunctively of the Athenians’ ἐπιτήδευσις and πολιτεία and τρόποι (II xxxvi 4), thus their collective way of life (posited as the inner cause of their external successes, like the Spartans’ ἐπιτηδεύματα at Xenophon *Resp. Lac.* I 1). Plato in *Rep.* VIII-IX, discussed in section IV below, assumes a correspondence between τρόποι τοῦ βίου and τρόποι τῆς πολιτείας (see VIII, 544d6-e2); Aristotle *Pol.* VII 1-3 argues that answers to the questions of the best βίος for an individual and for a city go together. Polybius says that he will apply biographical (not historical) methods in his Πολιτεία of the Romans (VI ii 5-6); Dicaearchus wrote a *Bíos of Greece*.

proposed for emulation (or, in the pseudo-Xenophon's case, avoidance) to a citizen body that must decide how to govern itself now.¹⁶ By far the favorite form were texts praising the πολιτεία of the Spartans, and even texts with some other aim would be influenced by the standard praise of Sparta. (Just how standard was the praise of the Spartan πολιτεία can be seen from the fact that Isocrates' *Nicocles* 24, arguing that kingship is the best πολιτεία, admits that the Spartans are the best governed of the Greeks,¹⁷ but argues that they are governed by kings when at war; while his *Areopagiticus* 61, arguing that [not the degenerate modern Athenian democracy but] the democracy of our glorious ancestors was the best πολιτεία, admits that the Spartans are the best governed but argues that this is because they are the most democratic; elsewhere and with more truth, including in the *Nicocles* passage, he describes Sparta as an oligarchy.)¹⁸ Perhaps the main division of the *Πολιτεία of the Spartans* literature is into texts written for non-Spartans using historical or philosophical reasoning

¹⁶ Aristotle's Πολιτεῖαι are not themselves pamphlet-literature in this sense, but are a correction of earlier texts that were pamphlet-literature as I have described it; a natural development, paralleled in Aristotle's writings on other topics. Jacoby 1949, 211-5 distinguishes, within the literary form of the πολιτεία, three εἴδη, "political πολιτεῖαι" (pamphlet literature like the pseudo-Xenophon and the Xenophon), "philosophical πολιτεῖαι" (like Hippodamus' and Plato's, not primarily about some existing πολιτεία but seeking to determine the best πολιτεία), and "scientific πολιτεῖαι" (invented by Aristotle and in fact represented only by him, or by him and the students who may have collaborated on his series of 158 Πολιτεῖαι). I am probably not substantively disagreeing with Jacoby on the relationship between the Aristotelian Πολιτεῖαι and the earlier texts (and Jacoby agrees that Aristotle's *Πολιτεῖαι* are ultimately intended to subserve the construction of the best state), although it seems a poor idea to posit a genre with just one author; I think he draws too great a distinction between his first two types, although of course Plato's *Πολιτεία* is much more reflective and sophisticated than the earlier texts. But Jacoby is *not* distinguishing *Πολιτεῖαι of the so-and-so's* as historical from *Πολιτεῖαι* without genitive as normative: on the contrary, and rightly, he takes the *Πολιτεῖαι of the Spartans* (apart from Aristotle's) as normative texts not intimately related to historical reality.

¹⁷ Or, with an emendation, that the Carthaginians and the Spartans are better governed than all others.

¹⁸ At *Panathenaicus* 41 he says that "most people moderately praise the city of the Spartans, but some refer to it as if the demigods were πεπολιτευμένοι there." At *Panathenaicus* 111, the supporters of the Spartans, being defeated by Isocrates' arguments that the Athenians have benefited the Greeks and the Spartans have harmed them, try to turn instead to the issue of the πολιτεία, where, it is agreed, the Spartans come off well: so Isocrates investigates πολιτεῖαι. He takes it as agreed that the present Athenian democracy is bad, but argues that the Athenian "ancestral πολιτεία" is better than the Spartan πολιτεία, and that Lycurgus in fact used it as his model, against the claim of Xenophon *Resp. Lac*. I that Lycurgus imitated no other city, and against the common claim (already at Herodotus I 65) that he imitated Crete.

to present an idealized Spartan πολιτεία as a contrast with other πολιτεῖαι and so as a possible model for reform elsewhere, and texts written for Spartans, like those of Lysander, Pausanias and Thibron, relying often on oracles and legends to present an idealized past Spartan πολιτεία as a model for reform (presented as a return to a glorious past) at Sparta itself; but the distinction is far from absolute.¹⁹

Aristotle's numerous references to earlier discussions of the πολιτεία, and the references we have already noted in Plato, in *Laws IV* to the difficulty of fitting the Spartan πολιτεία under any of the standard types, and in *Republic VIII* to the Spartan and Cretan πολιτεία "praised by the many" (praised certainly not by the democratic masses in Athens, but by most of those who theorize about such things), show that Plato and Aristotle were

¹⁹ The Lysander and Pausanias, like the rest of the Πολιτεία-of-the-Spartans literature, were political pamphlets urging some present political aim (for Lysander, opening the kingship to those not born to it, for Pausanias, abolishing the ephorate) on the basis of arguments from alleged Spartan history. From the little we know about them, however, Lysander and Pausanias seem to have been much more interested in arguments from oracles (*FGrHist* #582 T3 and Plutarch *Lysander* 25 in *FGrHist* #583 T1) than is the rest of the literature, which generally treats the Delphic authorization of Lycurgus' laws as a mere divine rubber-stamp on Lycurgus' work, if not as a cynical fabrication by Lycurgus. Undoubtedly the reason is that these works were meant to be read or heard at Sparta, and the Spartans were particularly impressed by oracles (so, on Lysander's text, Plutarch *Lysander* 25, and cp. Diodorus Siculus XIV xiii 3 [from Ephorus] on Lysander trying to bribe the priestess at Delphi "considering that the Spartans especially paid heed to oracles"; both in *FGrHist* #583 T1). These texts were designed to support radical change (presented as a return to a mythical past) at Sparta, while most other Πολιτεία-of-the-Spartans literature was designed to support assimilation to a Spartan ideal at other cities, especially Athens. On the other hand, Sphaerus' *Πολιτεία of the Spartans*, which so far as we can tell (e.g., if, as is generally thought, it lies behind much of Plutarch's *Lycurgus*) was very much in the tradition of other Πολιτεία-of-the-Spartans literature, was written in support of the revolutionary innovations (or "return to Lycurgus") of Cleomenes III at Sparta, and since Cleomenes did in fact abolish the ephorate, undoubtedly Sphaerus referred back to Pausanias at least to prove that the ephorate was a later deviation. Since Sphaerus' fellow-student Persaeus was the captain of the Macedonian garrison at Corinth defending the Peloponnese against Cleomenes, his *Πολιτεία of the Spartans* presumably argued for a very different view of what that traditional πολιτεία was, and inferred (or allowed it to be inferred) that the Spartan revolutionaries were dangerous innovators. Both Sphaerus and Persaeus would presumably have been writing (at least *inter alia*) for a Spartan audience; so we cannot cleanly distinguish between literature for Spartans based on oracles and literature for Athenians and other Greeks based on sophistic and philosophical modes of reasoning. (However, Spartans may have been better educated in Sphaerus' day than in the fourth century). Although Xenophon is writing in the first instance for an Athenian or other non-Spartan audience, he may also intend some Spartans to overhear; cp. Isocrates *Panathenaicus* 250-51, saying that while most Spartans will care no more what is said about them in Athens than at BACAP ("beyond the pillars of Heracles"), the most intelligent people there will pay attention.

conscious of this existing mode of discourse *περὶ πολιτείας*, with its conceptual apparatus, standard topics, and commonplaces of praise and blame; and that they could, when and if they wanted, call up for their readers the expectations of this discourse, inviting their readers to judge their own new proposals against the background of the standard classification of *πολιτεῖαι*, the standard evaluation of laws and customs as designed to preserve the *πολιτεία*, and the standard praise of Sparta. Juxtaposing the different extant texts will help to bring out this generic background and thus to shed light on many details in Plato. When Aristoxenus said that “almost the whole of Plato’s *Πολιτεία* was written in the *Ἀντιλογικά* of Protagoras” (DL III 38), he was doubtless being deliberately provocative, but he must have been thinking of *something*. It is curious that Aristoxenus does not say “in the *Περὶ πολιτείας*,” a title credited to Protagoras elsewhere (DL IX 55, which also lists two books of *Ἀντιλογίαι*); this suggests that Protagoras’ *Περὶ πολιτείας* was just a section of his *Ἀντιλογίαι*, containing arguments for and against each of the standard *πολιτεῖαι* (as in Herodotus), and perhaps for and against some more outlandish customs as well. Plato may well have taken over some arguments from Protagoras, as well as from other earlier *Πολιτεία* literature, naturally with the intention of creating something new.²⁰

II.

Why, then, did Plato choose to write a text in this mode—and why did he decide to modulate what starts out looking like a standard Socratic dialogue, on justice as a virtue, into a *Πολιτεία*? The standard answer, so far as the question is raised at all, is that Plato depicts the types of city in order to give larger-scale models of the types of soul, so that, having first

²⁰ In the glory-days of Quellenforschung it used to be suggested that the debate in Herodotus was taken from Protagoras’ *Περὶ πολιτείας* (especially since both Protagoras and Herodotus, as also Hippodamus, are supposed to have been involved in the foundation of Thurii). But it also used to be suggested that Protagoras’ book was the source of the utopian feminist constitution parodied in Aristophanes’ *Ecclesiazusae*, whose ridicule may be referred to at *Rep.* V, 452a7-e3, and this was supposed to be what Aristoxenus was thinking of. I find it hard to imagine Protagoras as proposing utopias, or as arguing, against the common sense of the society of his time, for the equality of women and men. (If Protagoras had proposed such a utopia, we would expect Aristotle to mention it in *Politics* II.) On the other hand, I have no trouble at all imagining Protagoras arguing for the *superiority* of women—he would also have argued, in the other half of the *ἀντιλογία*, for the superiority of men—and this, not equality, is what the *Ecclesiazusae* depicts.

discerned the justice and injustice “writ large” in the city as a whole, we will be better able to discover the justice and injustice within the individual soul and so to respond to the challenge of Glaucon and Adeimantus (cf. *Rep.* II, 368c4-369a7). This answer seems to me to be clearly inadequate. In the first place (as Ferrari rightly argues, in Griffith and Ferrari 2000, xxiii), Plato goes into far more detail about the different πολιτεῖαι than would be needed simply to show the correspondence with each type of soul (what, for instance, does the equality of women guardians in the ideal πολιτεία correspond to within the individual soul?); and it is at many points clear that Plato’s discussion of the different πολιτεῖαι is engaging with earlier Πολιτεῖα literature, and not simply imagining civic equivalents for different individual psychologies. Second and more importantly, the issue of justice was already a political issue in Book I, and the standard sophistic topic of the πολιτεία is first raised, not by Socrates in Book II, but by Thrasymachus in Book I: “don’t you know that some cities are governed tyrannically, others democratically, other aristocratically” (338d7-8), distinguished by their “ruling part” (d10)?²¹ And Thrasymachus invokes the theory of πολιτεῖαι, not to display the variability of laws and customs in support of a cultural-relativist challenge to morality, but as a specifically political challenge to justice. In each city, the ruling part makes laws commanding actions that are advantageous to that ruling part, and those actions are called just for the ruled. If this is the whole truth about “justice,” then the rulers will have no reason to limit their exploitation of the ruled by any objective norm of justice, and the ruled will have no reason, except fear or habit, to live either by what is called justice in their society, or by any other kind of justice.

Plato naturally finds it very important, in the context of his Socratic dialogue on justice, to refute these claims of Thrasymachus and to give a positive alternative account of what justice is, and of why rulers and ruled have reason to follow it. And Plato’s task in refuting Thrasymachus is made harder by the fact that he agrees with Thrasymachus about how laws are made in any of the three standard types of πολιτεία. But even if all existing πολιτεῖαι are Thrasymachean πολιτεῖαι, where the rulers rule in their own interests, Plato wants to show that a Socratic πολιτεία, where the

²¹ Thrasymachus does not here use the word πολιτεία, although, as we will see, someone who sounds much like Thrasymachus elsewhere in Plato does use the word. He does however speak of ἡ καθεστηκυῖα ἀρχή (339a1), and, as Bordes 1982 shows, κατάστασις was the precursor of πολιτεία as a technical term (and this is probably its sense in Protagoras’ title περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῆς καταστάσεως, DL IX 55), and fourth-century authors including Plato still sometimes use the term in this way.

rulers rule in the interest of the ruled, is possible; in such a πολιτεία, what is conventionally called just would be rooted in what is just by nature, and it would be in the interest of the ruled to live by what the laws declare to be just. Thrasymachus' claim about the different types of πολιτεῖαι and about what is called just in each is implicitly a modal claim, about all possible πολιτεῖαι and not merely about all actual ones; if Plato can show the possibility of his Socratic πολιτεία, he will have refuted Thrasymachus, as well as displaying "writ large" what is just by nature.

However, this just seems to push the problem back a step: why should Plato have introduced Thrasymachus and πολιτεῖαι in the first place into the more typically Socratic and non-political discussion with Cephalus and Polemarchus? If Thrasymachus is just an eccentric (and, as is often thought, incoherent) "immoralist," it seems strange to let his concerns, and his conspiracy theory of "justice," dictate the development of the grand argument of the *Republic*. But this is not how Plato thinks of Thrasymachus: he thinks of him as the logical outcome of the standard sophistic theory of πολιτεῖαι, and he thinks that this theory has much empirical support in the actual conduct of the different cities.

The connection between Thrasymachus and the sophistic theory of the πολιτεία, not made especially clear in *Republic* I, becomes clearer in a parallel text from *Laws* IV, which will be important in interpreting the *Republic*. *Laws* IV, together with some references in Aristotle's *Politics*, points us back to an early stage of πολιτεία-theory, which may go back to Protagoras and which Plato sees as logically leading to Thrasymachus; *Laws* IV also suggests a Platonic strategy for responding to this theory, which we can also see at work in the *Republic*.

Starting at *Laws* IV, 712b8-c1, the Athenian Stranger and his Spartan and Cretan interlocutors are discussing what πολιτεία they should prescribe for their new city; a number of possibilities are discussed, and it is proposed that, since it is no longer possible for us to be ruled by *daimons* as in the age of *Kronos*, the best imitation of that is to be ruled not by one or more human beings, as in a monarchy or oligarchy or democracy, but by "as much of immortality [i.e. of reason] as is in us, calling that dispensation of reason 'law' [etymologizing νόμος as νοῦ διανομή]" (713e8-714a2). This of course contradicts the theory that *every* πολιτεία is a monarchy or oligarchy or democracy, and it assumes that it is possible to produce laws which simply reflect universal and impersonal dictates of reason, against views that justice is relative to the type of πολιτεία, and, especially, against the view that reason in legislating is instrumental to the interests of the human rulers of the πολιτεία. Plato decides to confront the difficulty head on:

you know that some people say that there are as many forms [εἶδη] of laws as there are of πολιτεῖαι, and we have just gone through how many forms of πολιτεῖαι most people say there are [= monarchy, oligarchy, democracy]? Consider that the present contest is not about something small, but about the greatest: for it has come back to us contested where one should look for the just and the unjust. (714b3-8)

Now at first sight the commonplace sophistic thesis that there are as many forms of laws as of πολιτεῖαι might not look so alarming, but Plato thinks that, when its implications are spelled out, it is a challenge to the concept of laws as dispensations of reason reflecting an objectively just order, and specifically to the *Laws*' project of legislation aiming at promoting virtue in the citizens. The Athenian Stranger continues with the view of (apparently all of) the people who say there are as many forms of laws as of πολιτεῖαι:

they say that the laws should look neither toward warfare [= toward promoting military virtue, like the Spartan and Cretan laws] nor toward virtue as a whole, but rather, whichever πολιτεία is established, they should look toward the advantage of this [πολιτεία], that it should rule forever and not be dissolved; and they say that the natural limit [or definition] of justice is most rightly expressed thus ... the advantage of the superior. (714b8-c6)

This theory (as stated here and further spelled out 714d1-10) is certainly meant to be the same as that set out by the character Thrasymachus in the *Republic* (“the advantage of the superior,” τὸ τοῦ κρείττονος συμφέρον, is verbatim Thrasymachus' formula at *Rep.* I, 338c2): it is possible that it was also the theory of the real person Thrasymachus, and it is possible that Plato intends to allude to Thrasymachus here in the *Laws*, but it is at least as likely that he is just alluding to the views of a much broader class of people who theorize about πολιτεῖαι and laws, and that the character Thrasymachus in the *Republic* is intended to represent this broad group rather than anything peculiar to the real Thrasymachus. Certainly Plato thinks that the “Thrasymachean” views of law and justice logically follow from a widely held theory of πολιτεῖαι, even if it was especially Thrasymachus who made the conclusion explicit. In any case, the account in *Laws* IV gives the proper context in πολιτεία-discourse for the claims which Plato puts in the mouth of Thrasymachus in *Republic* I, and which he is concerned to reply to not only there but in the rest of the *Republic*.

There is something distinctive and worth noting in the way that the “Thrasymachean” theory of *Laws* IV speaks about πολιτεῖαι. It seems a bit odd to speak of a πολιτεία as “ruling” [ἄρξει, 714c2], especially since this theory has insisted that cities are ruled by one or more human beings rather than by laws, and likewise to speak of what is advantageous to the πολιτεία, rather than to one or more human beings. The explanation is that

this theory does not really distinguish between the *πολιτεία* and the ruling group: for something to be advantageous to the *πολιτεία* is simply for it to be advantageous to the rulers. This way of speaking about the *πολιτεία* turns up even in Aristotle—‘*πολιτεία*’ and ‘*πολίτευμα*’ [= ruling body] mean the same thing, and the *πολίτευμα* is what is sovereign [κύριον] in the cities, and either one or a few or the many must be sovereign” (*Pol.* III 7, 1279a25-8, cp. III 6, 1278b8-14)—although it is certainly inconsistent with Aristotle’s considered theory of the *πολιτεία*, and must be a residue of an earlier way of thinking. Plato does not reject this identification of the principles of legislation in the *πολιτεία* with the advantage of the ruling group, as an empirical description of the behavior of tyrannies, oligarchies, and democracies. He does reject the accompanying normative claims (the laws “*should* [δεῖν] look toward the advantage of this [*πολιτεία*],” *Laws* IV, 714c1-2); he also rejects the universal claim that this is the behavior of all actual and possible *πολιτεῖαι*, which helps to support the normative claims; indeed, he refuses to grant the honorific title of “*πολιτεία*” to any authority which does govern in this way. As the Athenian Stranger says, what his opponents describe has indeed happened all too often as a result of civil strife, where the victors make everything belonging to the city their own, excluding the losers from any share in rule and continuing to exclude their descendants for fear of vengeance (715a4-b2); “but we say now that those are neither *πολιτεῖαι* nor correct [ὀρθοί] laws which they had made not for the sake of the whole city; and those who acted for the sake of some, we call not citizens but civil warriors, and the legal duties [τὰ δίκαια] which these people assert to exist, we say are said in vain” (715b2-6); thus the three standard forms of *πολιτεία*, having arisen through such winner-take-all conflicts, “are not *πολιτεῖαι*, but managements of cities which are masters and slaves in different parts of themselves, and each is called the power [κράτος] of its master” (712e10-713a2).²²

The same stage of *πολιτεία*-theory that Plato criticizes here in *Laws* IV also seems to be alluded to in Aristotle’s *Politics*. Indeed, Aristotle seems to regard this theory as giving the default assumptions that he must modify, which is surely not how he would treat an idiosyncrasy of Thrasymachus. What is most striking (beyond the equation of *πολιτεία* and *πολίτευμα* that we have already seen) is that Aristotle several times cites, and endorses, a formula very close to the one Plato had used as a summary of his opponents’ theory, namely that there are as many forms of laws as

²² Similarly at *Laws* VIII, 832b10-c7.

of πολιτεῖαι. Thus “it is clear that the laws must be laid down πρὸς τὴν πολιτείαν” (*Pol.* III 11, 1282b10-11); “it belongs to this same prudence [which studies the different πολιτεῖαι] to know both the best laws and the laws which fit with each of the πολιτεῖαι: for one should [δεῖ] lay down, and everyone does in fact lay down, the laws πρὸς τὰς πολιτείας” and not the πολιτεῖαι πρὸς the laws” (IV 1, 1289a11-15); those who will hold the supreme offices must have “the virtue and justice in each πολιτεία which is πρὸς τὴν πολιτείαν: for if legal duty [τὸ δίκαιον] is not the same in all πολιτεία, justice [δικαιοσύνη] too must differ” (V 9, 1309a36-9). For Aristotle, as for the opponents, to say that the legislator should legislate πρὸς τὴν πολιτείαν is to say that he should institute whatever practices tend to preserve the πολιτεία; and Aristotle is willing to infer, with the opponents, that justice in the sense of the political virtue (the virtue of the good citizen) is different in different πολιτεῖαι. But Aristotle tries, while accepting these premisses, to modify the theory so as to avoid the “Thrasymachean” conclusions. In part this is because he does not individuate the πολιτεία simply by its ruling group, so that preserving the πολιτεία does not mean simply preserving the given rulers in power. In particular, kingship and aristocracy and “πολιτεία” proper, being the rule of the one, the few or the many in the interests of the whole city, are distinct πολιτεῖαι from tyranny and oligarchy and democracy, the rule of the one or the few or the many in the interests of the rulers themselves, and so an aristocracy (say) will not be preserved if the same group continue to rule but in pursuit of different ends; and Aristotle, like Plato, will say that tyranny and oligarchy and democracy are not right [ὀρθαί] πολιτεῖαι (*Pol.* III 7, 1279a22-b10, IV 2, 1289a26-30), or even that they are not πολιτεῖαι but rather δεσποτεῖαι (implied *Pol.* VII 14, 1333a3-6). Aristotle also tries to avoid the implication that justice and other virtues are relative to the πολιτεία, by distinguishing moral from political virtue, and holding that the virtue of the good citizen and the virtue of the good person coincide only in the ideal πολιτεία.

It seems very likely that this pre-Aristotelian and pre-Platonic theory of justice and laws and πολιτεῖαι is in fact due to Protagoras. Protagoras is said to have given the laws of the pan-Hellenic colony of Thurii,²³ and he, like Aristotle in the *Politics*, would have seen training in the art of legislation as the highest part of his training of aspiring πολιτικοί. The Prota-

²³ Although on a dubious authority, Heraclides Ponticus *Περὶ νόμων* in DL IX 50. Still, someone must have done it, especially because there was no one mother-city whose laws the Thurians could simply copy, and who better than Protagoras? (Well, as Paul Cartledge says, Hippodamus; but then Aristotle would probably have said so in discussing him.)

goras of the *Theaetetus* explains that “wise and good orators make good/useful [χρηστά] things appear [δοκεῖν] to be just in place of wretched ones; whatever things appear to each city to be just and fine *are* so for that city, for as long as it practices/deems/legislates [νομιζῆ] them, but the wise man has made good/useful things both *appear* and *be* for each of them in place of wretched ones” (167c2-7). For things to “appear” just and fine to a city is simply for the city to have a law or decree enjoining those things, and for something to *be* just is simply for it to be in accordance with the law; but while all laws are equally “true,” some are better and more useful, as the perceptions of healthy person are better and more useful than those of a sick person, and the Protagorean orator or legislator will replace worse laws with better ones, as the doctor replaces worse perceptions with better ones. Plato speaks here equally of the better laws as being “advantageous” to the city [συμφέρον, 172a5-6, b1, as in *Laws* IV, 714b8-d3, and Thrasymachus at *Rep.* I, 338c2ff]. When the one, few or many sovereign in a city summon Protagoras (or one of his students) to help them make laws, this is because they think that he will be better able than they to determine what laws will be most advantageous for them: they set the end, and he determines the best means (the *συμφέρον* is in general the aim of discussion in deliberative assemblies, Aristotle *Rhet.* I 3, 1358b20-25). When you summon Protagoras, he will presumably say something like this:

“When you set out to legislate well, you must first of all know the target that legislation aims at [cp. *Laws* IV, 705e3-706a4, etc.]. In making laws for your city, you should not aim at commanding what is just and forbidding what is unjust: for there is nothing just or unjust by nature, but everything is just or unjust according to different circumstances and for different cities, and whatever you command will be just in your city, and whatever you forbid will be unjust. But you should have a care that what you command and enact as just, and what you therefore do in your city, will also be advantageous. For not everything that people desire turns out well for them. A patient may desire certain foods and find them sweet, and yet the doctor may know that if he takes them, they will be harmful to his health, and he will find everything bitter tomorrow. So too for some customs which the city may desire today, the legislator may know that they will be harmful and lead to civil strife, which is disease in the whole city. But what customs are advantageous? Again, you must know that there is nothing advantageous by nature, but everything is advantageous or harmful according to different circumstances and for different cities: just as one diet is advantageous for a phlegmatic person and another for a bilious person [cp., with different examples, *Protagoras* 334a3-c6], so one custom is

advantageous for a monarchy, another for an oligarchy, and another for a democracy. That is always harmful which leads to civil strife, and that is always advantageous which preserves the *πολιτεία*. Wise legislators in every city have taken this as their aim, and this is why different things are lawful and just in monarchical and in oligarchic and in democratic cities; and this is why, in making laws for your city, you must not simply imitate what is just and advantageous elsewhere, but must take counsel that you enact what will be advantageous here.”

If Protagoras said something like this, he had no sinister political agenda. Protagoras was neither a democrat nor an antidemocrat, but a travelling educator and political advisor who had to be useful to each of his clients, whether a sovereign individual or group that might ask him to make laws, or an individual who aspires to a political career (and thus wishes to acquire political virtue) in any of the different *πολιτεία*. But what begins as value-neutral social science may have sinister political implications. If what is just is what is in accordance with law, and if laws do not reflect nature but are freely enacted agreements or conventions, and if those conventions are made with a view to the advantage of the conveners, that is, of the sovereign whether one or many, and if this advantage is chiefly the preservation of the *πολιτεία*, that is, the preservation of their own rule, then, as we have seen above, law and justice give the rulers no reason, beyond the fear of provoking a revolution, to restrain them in exploiting those they rule, and the ruled have no reason except fear of punishment to follow the so-called legal duties decreed (“in vain,” as Plato says, *Laws* IV, 715b6 above) by their rulers.

In the good old days—so Plato might say—the Greeks used to despise the tyrant, the man who ruled over his fellow-citizens “despotically,” i.e., as a master over slaves, unrestrained by law and justice; and they used to praise law and the common covenants which allow us to live together in civil peace, and not eat one another like the beasts. Now, taught by Protagoras and his kind, they contrast law to nature, not as civilization to savagery, but as the merely conventional, and they suspect the laws of an oligarchy or even a democracy of serving the partisan interests of the conveners, much like the decrees of a tyrant.²⁴ In the days of Solon and Tyr-

²⁴ This line of thought is beautifully illustrated in Alcibiades’ conversation with Pericles about laws, Xenophon *Mem.* I ii 40-46. (While modern readers tend to sympathize with Alcibiades, I agree with Dorion in Bandini and Dorion 2000, CLX-CLXIX, that Xenophon is horrified by him and is trying, not necessarily successfully, to show that this is *not* what he learned from Socrates.) The pseudo-Xenophon *Πολιτεία of the Athenians* accepts some, but not all, of the amoralist conclusions of the Protagorean theory of *πολιτεία*: the author

taeus, the Athenians and Spartans could agree in praising the rule of law and condemning despotic rule, and when the Peisistratids were overthrown they were in concert, but then the anti-tyrannical movement split into oligarchic and democratic factions: the democrats accuse the oligarchs too of ruling despotically—for what does it matter whether the people are enslaved to one or to several masters?—while the oligarchs accuse the δῆμος of ruling as arbitrarily and lawlessly and irrationally and hubristically as a collective tyrant (this line of thought already at Herodotus III 81; Herodotus' debate does not include an explicit democratic critique of oligarchy). Thrasymachus agrees with them all, and concludes that tyranny and oligarchy and democracy are despotisms alike; Plato agrees too, but rather than identifying πολιτεία with δεσποτεία, rule over fellow-citizens with rule over slaves, and concluding that law and justice are merely a mask for partisan interests, he argues that tyranny and oligarchy and democracy “are not πολιτεῖαι, but managements of cities which are masters and slaves in different parts of themselves, and each is called the power [κράτος] of its master” (*Laws* IV, 712e10-713a2 above), and that they do not enact correct laws or real δίκαια. By contrast, in a real πολιτεία, governed by laws which reflect not the advantage of human rulers but rather the rule of Kronos, that is to say of νοῦς, “god would be for us most of all the measure of all things, much more than, as they say, some man” (716c4-6).²⁵ This puts the burden on Plato to explain what a real πολιτεία would be like, and what law and justice in it would be; as I put the question above, if all actually existing πολιτεῖαι are Thrasymachean πολιτεῖαι, what would a

thinks that there are objective standards of human goodness, justice and good government, but that since these would lead to the “good” people ruling in their own interests, overthrowing the democratic πολιτεία, and indeed enslaving the “bad,” the δῆμος is right to act in its own interests and contrary to these objective standards (so I 4-9). It should be stressed that both benign and sinister Greek social contract theories begin from *real* social contracts, such as that imposed by Solon to head off στάσις at Athens, or the “Lycurgan” social contract at Sparta: these social contracts were originally sworn by the oath of all the citizens, or were afterwards remembered as having been so sworn, and at Sparta the oaths between king and city are ritually renewed every month, with the ephors standing in for the city, according to Xenophon *Resp. Lac.* XV 7 (cp. 2 Kings 23:1-3). Social contract theories generalize such events and project them back onto the first origin of law, of the πόλις, or even of (evaluative) language.

²⁵ Compare the opening of the *Laws*, I, 624a1-6, where the Athenian asks whether a god or a man is responsible for the laws of Sparta and Crete, and Cleimias and Megillus both say a god: this is at least believed to be true in Sparta and Crete, and would be true in a real πολιτεία. (This passage is stressed, in an unusual alliance, both by Strauss 1975 and by Burnyeat 1997.)

Socratic πολιτεία, ruled in accordance with knowledge and in the interests of the ruled (or of the whole city rather than of its ruling part) be like?

III.

Here Sparta helps. Sparta enters the argument in rather different ways in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, but I do not think Plato's real attitude toward it has changed much.²⁶ Sparta plays a much more explicit part in the *Laws*—which features the only Spartan and the only Cretan in Plato, talking with Plato's Athenian spokesman about the laws for a new Dorian colony—and I think the *Laws* can help, by comparison and contrast, in understanding the strategy of the *Republic*. While Sparta and Crete have been subject to examination beginning in Book I of the *Laws*, they are brought up again in Book IV, when the Athenian stranger asks what πολιτεία we should prescribe for our new colony. The interlocutors assume that the choice must be between aristocracy, oligarchy and democracy (since tyranny, if it is a πολιτεία, is clearly a bad one), but the Athenian stranger, in order to show them that there are other alternatives, asks them which of these types their own home πολιτεῖαι in Sparta and Crete would fall under, and they are unable to answer: the Spartan and Cretan πολιτεῖαι share some distinctive features with each of the given types (and the Spartans also have kings). Plato could now give a minimalist solution by saying that the Spartans and Cretans have “mixed πολιτεῖαι,” that the standard types are idealizations and that we should expect to encounter many shades of gray between them.²⁷ Instead, the Athenian says that the reason the Spartan and Cretan have difficulty classifying their πολιτεῖαι in the standard scheme is that

²⁶ I will say more about this below. Here let me note that the passage of time between the composition of the *Republic* and of the *Laws* is *not* in itself a reason to expect Plato's attitude to Sparta to have changed, against the peculiar view that it took the defeat at Leuctra in 371 to convince Athenian conservatives that the Sparta of their own time was no model. If someone was going to be convinced by historical events, then the experience of Lysander and the Thirty, the imperial arrogance which led to the Spartans' alienating their Theban and Corinthian allies and driving them into the arms of Athens and Persia, the Spartan betrayal of the Greeks of Asia Minor in the King's Peace, the Spartan seizure of the Theban citadel and the attempted seizure of the Piraeus, and so on, would have convinced them. Isocrates wrote his most pro-Spartan piece, the *Archidamus*, after Leuctra and Mantinea. Athenian conservatives could of course still choose to believe that an earlier uncorrupted Sparta remained a good model.

²⁷ For intermediates between the ideal types see *Rep.* VIII, 544c8-d4; for mixed constitutions (although not with the precise term which later becomes technical) see Thucydides VIII 97 and the *Laws* itself, III, 693d2-e3.

“you really do belong to πολιτεῖαι,²⁸ whereas the ones we have just now named are *not* πολιτεῖαι” (712e9-10)—as he explains in a text we have already cited, they are forms of despotic rather than of political rule (712e10-713a2). The Spartan and Cretan πολιτεῖαι (or “the Spartan and Cretan πολιτεῖα” in the singular, as *Rep.* VIII, 544c2-3 puts it) are thus important to Plato as counterexamples to the reductionist Protagorean-Thrasymachean theory of πολιτεῖαι.

However, to say that these are really πολιτεῖαι is not to say that they are *good* πολιτεῖαι, and while the *Laws* does not flatly call the Spartan or Cretan πολιτεῖα “bad and erring” as the *Republic* does (V, 449a2-3, covering all four deviant forms), here too Plato is sharply critical of their (mythical) lawgivers Lycurgus and Minos, at least as their work is commonly understood. When the Athenian, at the beginning of the dialogue, asks the Cretan about the purpose of some particular Cretan customs, the Cretan replies that “the lawgiver of the Cretans arranged all our public and private lawful practices with a view to war” (626a5-7), and indeed that “the mark [or goal, ὄρος] of a well-governed [εὖ πολιτευομένη] city ... [is] that it must live ordered in such a way as to defeat the other cities in war” (b7-c2); the Spartan agrees and indeed says that any Spartan would agree (c4-5). The Athenian argues that this is misguided, and that, as peace and friendship are the best things for a city, and war merely a necessary means to them, an “accurate lawgiver” must “legislate the things of war for the sake of peace, rather than the things of peace for the sake of war” (628d7-e1).

On the face of it, this implies that the Spartan and Cretan lawgivers have gone badly wrong, but Plato tries to find a way of praising them. Happiness [εὐδαιμονία], for a city as for an individual, depends primarily on the possession of virtue, rather than of health or wealth, and Lycurgus and Minos, recognizing this, have arranged all their laws with a view to instilling virtue in the citizen-body (631b3-d6, a2-4), by contrast with the laws of all the other so-called πολιτεῖαι as described in Book IV, which aim merely at preserving the power and advantage of the ruling group (these laws contrasted with laws aiming at virtue, IV, 714b8-c4). Unfortunately, it appears that Lycurgus and Minos have legislated looking only to courage or *military* virtue, which is less important for happiness than wisdom and temperance and genuine justice (630a7-d1, 631c5-d1).²⁹ But Plato

²⁸ Using the language of μετέχειν τῆς πολιτείας, to be citizens or belong to the citizen body or have a share in the civic life and its rights and duties.

²⁹ At *Laws* II, 660d11-661d4, the Athenian explains that, without justice, no life can be happy, and all the other so-called “goods,” including external goods but also courage, can

argues, or pretends, that this is not the fault of Lycurgus or Minos but of their modern interpreters: Lycurgus and Minos were in fact aiming at complete virtue and not merely at its least important part (630c1-631a8), and the Athenian stranger challenges his interlocutors to give an interpretation of the Spartan and Cretan laws that would reveal them as a rational system designed to promote virtue (632d1-e7).³⁰ It is this hypothesis that leads the three characters into their collective examination of laws, involving many criticisms of particular Spartan or Cretan practices, and designed to lead an admirer of a charitably reinterpreted Laconizing ideal to the revised version of that ideal which Plato presents as the laws of his imaginary new Dorian colony and as a model to be adapted (V, 739a1-b7, 745e7-746d2) by lawgivers elsewhere. The Spartan and Cretan interlocutors serve as stand-ins for the Laconizing intended reader whom Plato hopes to persuade; the Athenian stranger serves as a stand-in for Plato himself, the good Athenian by contrast to the usual products of the democracy,³¹ who has the philosophical and mathematical knowledge which the Spartans and Cretans are sadly lacking. But if all other existing cities aim only at the advantage of their rulers, and the Spartans and Cretans aim at virtue, even if it is a militaristic and unphilosophical conception of virtue, these rather than the other *πολιτεῖαι* will be the natural starting-points to

only make it worse; the Cretan (and presumably also the Spartan) is politely unconvinced. Compare Isocrates *Panathenaicus* 182-88, arguing against those who praise the Spartans that victories won without justice are not properly speaking virtuous or noble and should not be praised, and that the Spartans have never had any concern with justice or with virtue properly so called, but only with gaining other people's possessions by violence. (But Isocrates does not seem to take the Platonic line of denying that the Spartans genuinely benefit themselves in this way).

³⁰ Cp. Xenophon *Resp. Lac.* X 4, where Lycurgus mandates the practice of "all the virtues."

³¹ At *Laws* III, 698a9-701e8, the Athenian democracy, particularly as it has become since the Persian wars, is represented as a sad warning of the excesses of freedom. But at *Laws* I, 642b2-d2, the Spartan character turns out to be a hereditary *πρόξενος* of the Athenians at Sparta, and, unlike most other Spartans, is full of good will toward Athens: "those Athenians who are good are especially so ... for only they are, without compulsion, spontaneously [*αὐτοφύωδες*] by divine allotment [*θεία μοίρα*] truly and without artifice good." (This is close to Plato's descriptions elsewhere of good people arising spontaneously or even miraculously in bad environments, e.g., *Rep.* VII, 520a9-b4 which also uses "*αὐτοφύεζ*"; in the *Meno* Pericles and the like have their virtue *θεία μοίρα*, 100b2-4, and Socrates says something similar about Glaucon and Adeimantus at *Rep.* II, 368a5-7, a passage I will return to below.) The Cretan character then chimes in that he too has old family connections with Athens (*Laws* I, 642d3-a1). The interlocutors of the *Laws* are thus types of the Laconizer who might be amenable to Athenian philosophical persuasion.

criticize and reinterpret and try to reshape if we are looking for the best (or even the second- or third-best, V, 739a1-b7) πολιτεία.

The *Republic* proceeds rather differently, and its ideal is further from Sparta than is the ideal of the *Laws*, most strikingly in abolishing the family and private property for the guardians. Nonetheless, I think it is correct to say that in the *Republic* too Plato constructs his ideal by beginning with Sparta (not the real Sparta but the idealized Sparta of Laconizing πολιτεία-literature) and modifying it as necessary. For the *Republic* too the Spartan and Cretan πολιτεία, the timocracy, is superior to the so-called πολιτεῖαι that Thrasymachus talks about in Book I, tyranny and oligarchy and democracy; in the terms of *Republic* VIII, the timocracy is ruled by θυμός, which values the noble even if it may not have an adequate conception of the noble, while these other πολιτεῖαι are governed by appetite, which values only pleasure. So the Spartan πολιτεία, here as in the *Laws*, has the value of a counterexample. It is not a merely Thrasymachean πολιτεία, but it is not a Socratic πολιτεία either, since the Spartiates do not rule in accordance with knowledge, nor do they rule in the interests of the ruled, notably the perioeci and helots. Plato thus needs to consider in what ways this πολιτεία would need to be modified to make it Socratic.

However, Plato does not do this explicitly in constructing the ideal city in Books II-VII. The Spartan πολιτεία is not thematized until Book VIII, when it is sharply criticized, even satirized, but where it is also said to be, of all the “bad and erring” πολιτεῖαι, the closest to the good and correct one. So while the character Socrates is constructing the best πολιτεία he is not explicitly pointing out what is wrong with other real or imagined πολιτεῖαι, or how these might fail to meet their own intended aims, and so he does not avail himself of the *Laws*' strategy for bringing admirers of other πολιτεῖαι along with his argument. Indeed, Aristotle seems to be making just this criticism of the *Republic* in a passage that we have cited from *Politics* II 1, where we must “examine the other πολιτεῖαι, both the ones practiced in certain cities that are said to be well-governed [εὐνομεῖσθαι], and any others that particular people have described and thought to be right” (1269b29-32), not just to draw on what they have got right, but also to show that we ourselves are seeking a further πολιτεία not arbitrarily but “because the ones that now exist are not right” (b34-5). Aristotle thus devotes *Politics* II to showing what is wrong with the proposals of Plato and Phaleas and Hippodamus and with the Spartan and Cretan (and for good measure Carthaginian) πολιτεῖαι and with the “ancestral πολιτεία” at Athens, the models praised by different earlier writers, before going on to give his positive proposals, either for the best πολιτεία absolutely or for the best under certain conditions. This is precisely what Plato

has *not* done in the *Republic*, where he constructs the ideal city out of the raw materials of human nature without explicit reference to other cities, and turns to savage criticism of the Spartan and Athenian ideals only in Book VIII, probably after most readers have stopped reading. Aristotle's complaint is that this makes it more difficult to motivate the reader who may be satisfied with the existing πολιτεῖαι; more to our present point, the fact that Plato criticizes Sparta and Athens only after he has presented his own ideal can make it harder to follow what he is doing in constructing his ideal.

Nonetheless, in the *Republic* as more explicitly in the *Laws* and *Politics*, we must understand the ideal as emerging from a process of correction of the inadequacies of the (real or imagined) πολιτεῖαι that people ordinarily admire. In a sense Book VIII delivers the punchline of the *Republic*, or at least of the specifically political project of the *Republic*, and the ideal must be read backwards from Book VIII: it is only by seeing the contrasts between Callipolis and the other πολιτεῖαι that Plato draws in Book VIII that we understand why he has built certain features into Callipolis in the first place. And, if Plato constructs Callipolis by modifying other πολιτεῖαι, it is most immediately by modifying the Spartan πολιτεία, which according to Book VIII is the first degeneration of the Callipolis and has the most in common with it. Furthermore, given the Laconizing background of the πολιτεία-genre, we might assume that Plato's intended reader would initially expect the developing ideal to resemble Sparta, and that, as in the *Laws*, it would be the differences from Sparta (or from Sparta as usually imagined) that would be foregrounded and would be interpreted by the reader against that background expectation. As we will see, this assumption is strongly confirmed by Plato's characterizations of the interlocutors, especially Glaucon, and by their interventions when Socrates' exposition goes too hard against their expectations (and by their non-intervention when it does not): Glaucon and Adeimantus are stand-ins for the intended reader of the *Republic*, just as the Cretan Clinias and the Spartan Megillus are stand-ins for the intended reader of the *Laws*. What Plato presents in *Republic* VIII as the story of the decay of the Callipolis into the timocracy, explaining both the defects of the timocracy and the good features that it retains from the Callipolis, can be read in reverse as the story of the generation of Plato's ideal, showing both what features it kept from the Spartan ideal and what features Plato found it necessary to change.

The similarities between the Callipolis and the Spartan ideal are fairly obvious, and have been pointed out since antiquity by those who have viewed Plato as a Laconizer. (Dicaearchus says that Plato "mixed Socrates no less with Lycurgus than with Pythagoras," Fr. 45 in Mirhady 2001;

Plutarch says that “Plato and Diogenes and Zeno, and all who are praised for having undertaken to say something about these matters” took over Lycurgus’ plan [ὑπόθεσις] for the πολιτεία, *Lycurgus* 31.)³² One way to collect similarities is to compare Plato’s descriptions of the ideal city with Xenophon’s *Πολιτεία of the Spartans*, the best sample we have of the early Laconizing literature. Both Xenophon’s and Plato’s ideal cities have an elite population (for Xenophon the Spartiates, for Plato the rulers and auxiliaries—I will say “guardians” for both) which is forbidden to engage in trade or production and devotes itself full-time to military and civic activity and to various forms of training, while the producers are excluded from political life.³³ While Xenophon may stress the military function of his elite more than Plato does, Xenophon’s main emphasis is not on military activity but on the all-encompassing training for virtue that occupies the whole life of the elite (Lycurgus “compelled all [the Spartiates] to practice all the virtues publicly,” *Resp. Lac.* X 4); and Plato too first introduces the guardians as military specialists (*Republic* II, 373e-374e) and describes the temperament and education they will need to fulfill that function well—only later does he distinguish the guardians into rulers and auxiliaries, and propose to give the rulers a mathematical and dialectical training beyond the common education that they get along with the auxiliaries.

Both in Xenophon and in Plato, much of the account of the πολιτεία is devoted to the education of the elite at different stages of their life, proceeding in roughly chronological sequence through their life-cycle (Xenophon *Resp. Lac.* I 3 is apparently following Critias’ *Πολιτεία of the Spartans* DK88 B32 in saying that we must begin with the generation of offspring; Plato defers this to Book V). This does not seem to have been a standard way of describing πολιτεία in general: rather, it is particularly appropriate for describing Sparta (as the Laconizers imagined it) and Cal-

³² Although the ὑπόθεσις here seems to be the goal (the persistence of the citizens in a life of virtue and concord, allowing them to maintain their collective freedom and happiness) rather than the details of execution. Plutarch’s picture of Lycurgus’ goals is of course itself influenced by Platonic and Stoic ideals.

³³ Actually Xenophon’s *Resp. Lac.* keeps almost complete silence about the helots and perioeci (“perioeci” mentioned once incidentally, XV 3, “slaves” three times incidentally but “helots” never, though Xenophon uses the word in other texts); so we must fill in information about them from other sources. *Resp. Lac.* XI-XIII manage to give the strong impression that the Spartan army was composed entirely of Spartiate full citizens, which was far from being true. (Lipka 2002, 99 may be right that the treatise distinguishes “Sparta” from “Lacedaemon” as nouns, but, contra Lipka, Xenophon cannot intend “Lacedaemonians” to include the perioeci [especially at XIV 2 this would make no sense], and I have had no scruples in translating the word as “Spartans.”)

lipolis, in both of which the whole civic life is geared toward forming the desired type of human beings, first in producing appropriate offspring (by eugenic regulation, and for Xenophon by the regimen observed by the women) and then in educating them at each stage. Because the *πολιτεία* makes this its aim, it does not leave reproduction or education to the whims of private individuals, as ordinary cities do, but strictly regulates them and indeed carries out much of the process publicly and collectively. Both Xenophon and Plato eugenically regulate the production of offspring (Plato abolishing permanent marriages for the guardians and having the state fix temporary marriages for eugenic reasons, Xenophon accepting traditional marriage but allowing or requiring citizens to have sex with other citizens' wives for eugenic reasons, I 6-9; both Plato and Xenophon are particularly concerned with regulating the ages of the parents), and both sharply limit the opportunities for sexual intercourse (Xenophon I 5). Both in Xenophon and in Plato the children of the elite are not left under the control of their parents, but live collectively and are subject to a common state education (cf. Xenophon II 1-2 on education governed not by a slave appointed by the parents, but by one of the highest magistrates, echoed *Laws* VI, 765d4-766b1, and cp. *Rep.* IV, 424bff on the guardians guarding over education much more than over contracts and lawsuits and the like).³⁴ Indeed, the elite citizens remain subject to a common discipline, presided over by elder persons of authority, not only in childhood but at every stage of their lives. Both for Xenophon and for Plato, the stratification of society into different age-classes, sharing much of their daily activities and subordinated to older groups, becomes more important than the division into different households (which Plato entirely abolishes); in a particularly bizarre parallel, both Xenophon and Plato encourage their young people to get into physical fights with each other (so they have to stay fit), while they must yield to their elders (*Rep.* V, 464e-465a, Xenophon IV 6).

Both in Xenophon and in Plato, adult members of the elite remain under a strict military discipline and are required to eat in common messes. For Xenophon the common life and common discipline of each age-class of the citizenry applies primarily to the males, but he does stress that Lycurgus imposed at least a common gymnastic discipline for the women as

³⁴ Note also that *Republic* V, 459e3 speaks of the “herd [*ἀγέλη*] of guardians,” using the word used by Ephorus (*FGrHist* #70 F149 = Strabo X iv 20) for the Cretan boys and by Plutarch (*Lycurgus* 16) also for the Spartan boys; cp. *Republic* V, 460c1-3 for the “rearing pen” [*σηκός*] established in a separate part of the city where the young are brought to be raised.

well (I 3-4); Plato, who explicitly criticizes the Spartans for not regulating the women citizens as much as the men (*Laws* VII, 805e7-806c7), brings both girls and boys, women and men, under the same discipline. For Xenophon, the common life of the Spartiates extends to common rights of use of each other's property: they may use each other's slaves, dogs and horses; may command and even beat each other's children as if they were their own; and, as we have seen, may under some circumstances have sex with each other's wives for eugenic reasons; in addition, the social effect of differences of wealth is minimized by requiring all to eat the same food in the common messes and by prohibiting the elite from owning gold or silver. Plato, of course, radicalizes this by entirely abolishing the οἶκος (the household as family, and the private house with attached agricultural land and slaves) for the guardians, so that they will all say "mine" and "thine" of the same things, and of the same people. But even in Xenophon the boys in their groups and the men on military duty and in their common messes spend very little time on their private estates, and if the girls and women are subjected to the same discipline, the οἶκος may have little remaining role.³⁵

(If we turn to Plutarch's *Lycurgus* we find yet other features in common with Plato: girls exercising naked like the boys; a musical and even intellectual component to the education, with much emphasis on songs of praise and blame; a strongly egalitarian picture of the life of the Spartiate citizens; rather desperate claims that the laws were originally intended for virtue in general rather than specifically for warfare, and were originally not harsh toward the helots [that came only after the revolt of 464!]. However, Plutarch is not necessarily an independent witness to the Laconizing tradition, since some of the literature he draws on—perhaps especially the Stoic Sphaerus' *Πολιτεία of the Spartans*, written in the service of the revolutionary/"restorative" program of Cleomenes III—may itself have been influenced by Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*.)

Plato is, obviously, well aware of these similarities between Callipolis and the Laconizers' Sparta. In some cases he explicitly says that some practice is retained from the best πολιτεία when it degenerates into a timocracy. The timocracy, "being in between, will imitate the prior πολιτεία [i.e., Plato's ideal πολιτεία] in some respects and the oligarchy in others, and will also have something peculiar to itself" (*Rep.* VIII, 547d1-2): it will agree with the best πολιτεία "in honoring the magistrates/rulers, and in that its fighting element abstains from farming and handicrafts and

³⁵ On the limited role of the Spartan οἶκος, with the citizen males spending as much time as possible collectively in public space, see Cartledge 2001.

other moneymaking, and in establishing common messes in devotion to gymnastics and to training for war” (547d4-8). That means that Plato has taken these features from what people say about Sparta, and has decided that he approves of them and wishes to preserve them in his ideal *πολιτεία*.

On the other hand, the elite of the timocracy, who correspond to the guardians of Callipolis (no longer ruled by philosophers specially selected from among them) and are imagined as arising out of them, will fall short in their devotion to musical and then even to gymnastic training (546d6-8). They will no longer renounce private possessions, but “distribute and privatize [ιδιώσασθαι] the land and the houses, and, enslaving those whom they previously guarded as free friends and nourishers [= the producers of Callipolis], keep them as perioeci and servants, and devote themselves to war and to guarding [their slaves]” (547b8-c4). And the *πολιτεία* will “be afraid to call wise people to the magistracies/positions of power ... and will incline to spirited [θυμοειδείς] and simpler people, those who are naturally disposed more to war than to peace; it will hold in honor the plots and deceptions of war and spend its whole lifetime at war; it will have most of these [features] peculiar to itself” (547e1-548a3). That means that Plato notes that even the idealized Spartiates, despite how much they share and their renunciation of leisure and luxury, continue to own private houses and estates and an unfree workforce; that the Spartan *πολιτεία* is designed for war and values war as an end in itself and as a means to keeping the subject population enslaved rather than as a means to protecting the “musical” pursuits of peaceful leisure; and that it chooses and trains its leaders for warlike virtues rather than for “musical” or philosophical wisdom. And Plato has decided that these are bad features of the Spartan ideal, and must be changed to yield an acceptable Socratic *πολιτεία*.

Finally, despite the official prohibition of most moneymaking activities and presumably of the possession of gold and silver, “these people will be desirous [ἐπιθυμητά] of money/possessions, like those in oligarchies, and wildly honoring gold and silver under cover of darkness, since they possess storehouses and private treasuries where they can put [gold and silver] to hide them, and also possess enclosed dwellings, verily private nests, where they may expend them, lavishing much on women and on whoever else they want” (548a5-b2); “they are sparing of money, since they honor it and cannot acquire it openly, but on account of ἐπιθυμία they are fond of spending other people’s [money], enjoying pleasures in secret, like boys running away from their father the law, since, having been educated not by persuasion but by violence, they have neglected what belongs to the true Muse who is associated with discourse and philosophy, and

have honored gymnastics prior to music” (548b4-c2). These are features that timocracy shares with oligarchy, and show the private behavior of the Spartan elite, when not under public scrutiny, defecting from the official Spartan ideals and towards the behavior of rich ruling elites elsewhere.

Here again Plato is drawing on what is commonly said about Sparta. Even as consistent a Laconizer as Xenophon, in *Πολιτεία of the Spartans* XIV, says that the Spartans these days no longer observe the laws of Lycurgus, that “previously the Spartans chose to live together at home with modest possessions rather than [as now] to be flattered and corrupted serving as harmosts in the [subject] cities,” that “previously they were afraid to be caught possessing gold, but now there are some who even pride themselves on having it” (XIV 2-3), and so on. The difference is that, for Xenophon, this is an inexplicable decay from the days when the Spartans lived by Lycurgus’ laws, and explains why the other Greeks now resent the Spartans; this is supposed to support Xenophon’s general argument that Lycurgus’ laws were the cause of the Spartans’ success.³⁶ Plato, by contrast, traces back what is wrong with present-day corrupt Sparta to a deficiency in the original Lycurgan ideal, to the failure of its educational system to instill the right ideals (even Xenophon implicitly admits that the ideals had not been fully internalized, since he claims not that in the old days the Spartans were not desirous of gold or did not possess gold, but only that they were afraid to be caught with it; but Xenophon finds nothing wrong in the ideals themselves). Indeed, if the timocracy begins by

³⁶ On the comparison with the end of the *Cyropaedia*, and the contrast with Plato, see Dorion 2002. Xenophon is arguing not simply for the Spartan πολιτεία, but for the “Lycurgan” values of his patron Agesilaus, by contrast with the values of Lysander and perhaps also of Pausanias, whose Πολιτεία he may well be answering. The polemics of chapter XIV against the corruption of the harmosts and the new influx of gold from the Spartan empire seem to be directed specifically against Lysander and his partisans. Xenophon stresses the obedience of the hereditary kings to the ephors, whereas Lysander wanted to make the kingship elective and Pausanias wanted to abolish the ephorate. *Resp. Lac.* XV stresses that the king and his contract with the city, represented especially by the ephors, have remained unchanged since the days of Lycurgus, and this seems to be implicitly polemical against anyone who maintains that any of these institutions are post-Lycurgan corruptions. (XV 1 [and its parallel Xenophon *Agesilaus* I 4] mean not, as is sometimes said, that only the Spartan kingship has remained unchanged and other Spartan magistracies have not, but rather that only the Spartan πολιτεία has remained unchanged and the πολιτεία of other cities have not; the contract between the king and the city, limiting the king by law, is supposed to be a key to that permanence.) Xenophon also stresses the importance of the ἀγωγή in forming the Spartans’ character and their spontaneous obedience to their laws and magistrates, and this seems also to be an important part of his ideal of Spartan kingship, but, as Plutarch tells us, Spartan kings did *not* usually go through the ἀγωγή, and Agesilaus was exceptional in having done so (Plutarch *Agesilaus* 1, see Cartledge 1987, and cp. Lipka 2002, 34).

enslaving its workforce, and then devotes itself to war for the sake of conquering and enslaving its neighbors and guarding those it has already enslaved (and indeed there is no firm line between the Spartans' attitudes toward the Laconian helots and toward the Messenians),³⁷ then it is valuing collective *πλεονεξία*, and it is no surprise if this leads to covert valuing of individual *πλεονεξία* as well. The point is well made by Aristotle:

just as most people esteem despotic rule [i.e. rule as of a master over slaves] over many people because it brings a great supply of the goods of fortune, so Thibron seems to admire the legislator of the Spartans—and all the others who write about their *πολιτεία* too—on the ground that they ruled over many through exercising themselves for danger [these writers] do not judge rightly about the kind of rule that the legislator should honor: for rule over free people is more noble and accompanied by more virtue than despotic rule; and one ought not to think a city happy, or praise its legislator, because he trained them to conquer so as to rule their neighbors, for these things involve great harm: for it is clear that any of the citizens who is able would also pursue this, how he might rule over his own city, which is what the Spartans accuse King Pausanias of, although he [already] had so much honor. (*Pol.* VII 14, 1333b16-35)³⁸

It follows that the Spartan *πολιτεία* is not a Socratic *πολιτεία*, and is all too close to the Thrasymachean *πολιτεία* or rather *δεσποτεία*, oligarchy and democracy and tyranny. The timocracy is not a pure Thrasymachean *πολιτεία*, because it is not ruled simply for the economic advantage of its rulers, who willingly submit to a harsh discipline, and it is important for Socrates' argument against Thrasymachus to show that this is possible. But the timocracy remains a *δεσποτεία*, because the Spartans rule despotically over the perioeci and especially the helots, that is, ruling them as a master rules slaves and not as a citizen magistrate rules free fellow-citizens, thus not in the interests of the ruled. Plato had said earlier that every city other than his ideal is really two mutually warring cities of the

³⁷ On the difficulty of distinguishing “Messenians” from “helots” see Figueira 1999.

³⁸ Despite the word “king,” this must be Pausanias the regent of the 470's, not Pausanias the king of the 390's (who is the person I have called simply “Pausanias” elsewhere in this essay); Jacoby *FGrHist* #582 T2 actually brackets “king” as an interpolation. Compare *Pol.* VII 15, 1334a40-b4: the Spartans practice virtue, not because they do not agree with people elsewhere that external things are the greatest of goods, but because they think that these are best acquired through “some kind of virtue.” Isocrates consistently associates the Spartans with *πλεονεξία* (*Busiris* 20, *Plataicus* 19-20, *Philippus* 147-8, *Panathenaicus* 241 and 243 [this last text praising Spartan *πλεονεξία*]; besides texts not using “*πλεονεξία*” or its cognates, such as *Panathenaicus* 188, “the Spartans ... look to nothing but how they can seize as much as possible of other people's property”), and this was probably just as much a commonplace of the fourth century as praise of Spartan virtue.

rich and the poor (*Rep.* IV 422e3-423a5),³⁹ and the clearest illustration would be Sparta, where the helots and perioeci are denied Spartan citizenship (the perioeci belong to their own “cities,” Xenophon *Resp. Lac.* XV 3), and (according to Aristotle’s *Πολιτεία of the Spartans*, Plutarch *Lycurgus* 28 = Fr. 538 Rose) each year’s ephors formally declare war on the helots, so that they can lawfully be killed. The *Republic* is on this point more radical in its critique of Sparta than the *Laws*, which says that the Spartan πολιτεία is a true πολιτεία and not a δεσποτεία. The reason for the divergence is that the *Laws* is considering only the Spartiates’ rule over fellow-Spartiates, regarding their rule over the perioeci and helots as part of their foreign relations rather than their internal πολιτεία, presumably on the grounds that these people are defeated Messenians, or aboriginal inhabitants of the Peloponnesus from before the return of the Heraclids (or Dorian invasion).⁴⁰ The *Republic*, by contrast, regards the perioeci and helots (not really distinguishing them) as enslaved members of the original Spartan community,⁴¹ so that the oppression of the helots is a graver charge from the standpoint of the *Republic* than of the *Laws*. And this difference is because, while the *Laws*’ own ideal community would contain only citizens corresponding roughly to the Spartiates or to the guardians of the *Republic* (they can farm but not engage in handicrafts or trade, and they will probably not do much manual labor on their farms), the *Republic* wants to show the possibility of an entirely self-sufficient community, including producers as well as soldiers and rulers, which is ruled for the benefit of all its members, and so it is important for the *Republic* to bring out the Spartan deviation from this ideal.

However, if Plato wishes to reform the Spartan πολιτεία so that it will not be devoted to πλεονεξία or to warfare for its own sake, and will rule in the interests of the ruled, he will need more than narrowly “political”

³⁹ Since several readers have told me that Plato says this only about the oligarchic city, let me stress that this is not true: *Rep.* VIII, 551d5-7 says that the oligarchic city is two conflicting cities, but *Rep.* IV, 422e3-423a5 says this about every city other than the ideal.

⁴⁰ See the (often bizarre) analysis of Peloponnesian history at *Laws* III, 683c8-693c5, where apparently it was all the Messenians’ own fault, because they corrupted their original πολιτεία and laws as they were established after the Dorian invasion, and broke their alliance with the Spartans.

⁴¹ However, it is possible that when Plato speaks of the guardians “enslaving those whom they previously guarded as free friends and nourishers” and “keeping them as perioeci and servants” (*Rep.* VIII, 547c1-3), he is thinking not of the Spartan perioeci but of a Cretan group corresponding to the Spartan helots (Aristotle *Pol.* II 10, 1271b40-1272a1), who might more appropriately be described as enslaved. It is nonetheless true that the Spartan perioeci had no civil rights at Sparta, could be put to death without trial, and so on.

means. Plato wants to show that a Socratic πολιτεία is *possible*, and this means showing that it is psychologically possible to get people to act in the desired way. This is already a concern of the Laconizing literature: the Spartans (allegedly) behave in ways very different from everyone else, in ways we might have thought psychologically impossible, and so we try to explain how this comes about by stressing the power of the common state education to shape people's character into a new mold. Plato wishes to keep state control of education but change the content of that education. This is because he, like the Laconizers, thinks that the τρόπος τῆς πολιτείας is founded on the τρόπος τοῦ βίου of individual citizens, that is, on their character as formed by their education: perhaps the greatest insight of the Spartans is that the highest goal of the πολιτεία is to form the character of the citizens, although unfortunately it is not the right character-type that they are molding their citizens into. So Plato is concerned with different character-types as well as, and in parallel to, the different types of πολιτεία. This works at two levels: he is concerned with the psychology of the different members of each πολιτεία, especially the ruling members who determine the collective decisions; he is also interested in the psychology of the individual who *admires* each type of πολιτεία, even if he does not himself live in a πολιτεία of that type, and uses it to guide his actions where he does live.

In the terms of the *Republic*, the timocracy, and its ruling members, are governed by θυμός, while the oligarchy, democracy and tyranny and their rulers are governed by ἐπιθυμία; and this is a psychological explanation of why the timocracy is not a merely Thrasymachean πολιτεία, since θυμός is the force in the soul that leads to action in pursuit of the ideals one has heard praised as noble, and if necessary suppression of action to satisfy bodily needs. Plato is not here simply imposing his own independently developed psychology in an attempt to explain the Spartans. On the contrary, in his account of θυμός and ἐπιθυμία (though not in his account of their relation to reason), Plato is elaborating a psychology that is at least implicit in the Laconizing texts themselves. Xenophon starts his *Πολιτεία of the Spartans* by speaking of Lycurgus' laws as making his city "pre-eminent in happiness [προέχουσιν εὐδαιμονίᾳ]," and he emphasizes that happiness came to the Spartans by obedience to the law, that is, by virtue: not simply because obedience to law is a virtue (a point stressed in the *Memorabilia*) but because the laws of the Spartans in particular are designed to foster all the virtues. "Since [Lycurgus] recognized that those who choose to devote themselves to virtue individually are not sufficient to make the nation great, he compelled all [the Spartiates] to practice all the virtues publicly: for as individuals who train [in virtue] surpass in vir-

tue individuals who neglect it, so naturally Sparta surpasses all cities in virtue, since it alone publicly practices excellence [καλοκάγαθία],” the laws imposing penalties on anyone who “neglects to be as good as possible,” and compelling all to practice “every political virtue” (X 4-7). Any Spartan who is virtuous in this way will also be happy: Lycurgus “conspicuously held out happiness [as a reward] for the good, and unhappiness for the bad” (IX 3). That sounds Platonic, or Socratic, enough, but virtue produces happiness not “naturally” by perfecting the soul, but “artificially,” because the legislator has contrived that public honor will attend virtue, and especially that public censures of all kinds will attend vice. By making honor correspond to virtue, Lycurgus “brought it about in the city that a noble [καλόν] death is more choiceworthy than a base [αἰσχρόν] life when such dishonor [ἀτιμία] is attached to the bad, I do not at all wonder that death is there preferred to such a dishonored and shamed [ἐπονείδιστος] life” (IX 1 and IX 6). Xenophon does not seem to notice any conceptual gap between being noble or honorable and being in fact honored, between being base or shameful and being in fact shamed. The virtuous are those who prefer the noble, or, it seems equivalently, who prefer being praised, to pleasure or wealth or long life: “having made it noble [καλόν] to steal as many cheeses as possible from [the altar of Artemis] Orthia, he commanded others to whip these, wishing in this too to show that it is possible by suffering pain for a short time to delight in good fame [εὐδοκιμοῦντα εὐφραίνεσθαι] for a long time” (II 9). Now the conflict between a desire for pleasure and a desire for honor or the honorable is by no means restricted to Laconizing literature (we find it for instance in Prodicus’ “Choice of Heracles” in Xenophon *Mem.* II i 21-34, and in Heraclitus B29). But it is particularly important there, because the Spartans as the Laconizers imagine them are the theoretical extreme of the triumph of honor-values over pleasure-values, and the Laconizing literature tries to explain this triumph by giving a psychological account of the kind of education that would produce it.

In setting out his tripartite psychology, in *Republic* VIII and earlier in *Republic* IV, Plato seems much more concerned to correct this simple bipartite psychology than he is to correct what is sometimes described as the Socratic unitary psychology. Being a Socratic did not stop anyone from positing plural sources of motivation within the soul; it did not stop Xenophon from going so far as to posit two souls within each of us, a good soul pursuing noble works and a bad soul pursuing base works (*Cyropaedia* VI i 41), and in several dialogues before the *Republic* Plato had experimented

with a contrast between rational and non-rational motivation,⁴² but none of this had led him to tripartition. Rather than describing Plato in the *Republic* as correcting Socratic psychology (which could not explain why the new psychology is tripartite, but at most why it is non-unitary), I would prefer to describe him as Socratizing the psychology of the Laconizers, as the *Republic* as a whole Socratizes the Laconizing πολιτεία-literature both in form and in content. *Republic* VIII describes the elite of the timocracy as “enjoying pleasures in secret, like boys running away from their father the law, since, having been educated not by persuasion but by violence, they have neglected what belongs to the true Muse who is associated with discourse and philosophy, and have honored gymnastics prior to music” (548b6-c2), and says of the timocratic person that “such a person when young would despise money [or possessions], but as he becomes older he would embrace it through sharing in the money-loving nature and not being pure as to virtue, since he has abandoned the best guardian,” namely “discourse blended with music, which alone, when it has come to be in someone, will dwell within its possessor as a savior/preserver of virtue throughout life” (549a9-b7). That is to say: θυμός-motivation may be sufficient to produce “political courage” (as Plato calls it, *Rep.* IV, 430c2-4), the virtue for which the Spartans are most famous, but it is not sufficient to preserve an individual or a city from degenerating into πλεονεξία or (as Plato equally stresses) into arbitrary aggression against subordinates or neighbors, the vices for which the Spartans are most notorious. To preserve virtue reliably in an individual or a city, θυμός must be controlled by reason: not by a reason which aims merely at maximizing long-term satisfaction of ἐπιθυμία or θυμός, but by a reason that has a desire of its own, for philosophical contemplation or more generally for peaceful “musical”

⁴² At *Charmides* 167e1-5 the object of ἐπιθυμία is pleasure and the object of βούλησις is the good. At *Protagoras* 356c4-e4 there is a contrast between two motivating powers, the measuring art and the power of appearance; *Rep.* X, 602c7-603a8 picks up this passage, developing it more fully, but with no sign of rejecting the *Protagoras*. *Gorgias* 467c5-468c8 argues that βούλησις is always of the good (the real good, not the apparent good); but 464b2-465e1 contrasts arts aiming at the best with pseudo-arts aiming at what is pleasant, and if the body were not governed by a soul which can distinguish the arts from their imitators, “but rather the body itself judged/distinguished, measuring by the gratification [χάρις] for it,” chaos would result; at 493a3-b3 “the part of the soul where the ἐπιθυμῖαι are,” and which can be persuaded in contrary directions, is like a leaky jar. At *Phaedo* 94b4-e6 the soul contradicts and overrules bodily affections such as hunger and thirst, and “converses with ἐπιθυμῖαι and passions and fears as one thing speaking to another,” as when Odysseus commands his heart to endure. I do not mean to suggest that these passages put forward a consistent theory, for instance on how far ἐπιθυμία is due to the soul or to the body.

pursuits, so that aggression does not degenerate into an end in itself or into a means to πλεονεξία.

On the other hand, while Plato is saying against the Laconizers that θυμός-motivation needs to be controlled by philosophical reason, he is also saying that θυμός-motivation *can* be controlled by reason in a way that ἐπιθυμία-motivation cannot, so that characters and πολιτεία governed by θυμός need only an extra layer of rational control to make them Socratic, while oligarchy and democracy and tyranny and the corresponding characters governed by ἐπιθυμία would require more radical transformations. As *Republic* IV puts it, “in the civil conflict within the soul, [θυμός] bears arms for the rational part,” should conflict break out between reason and ἐπιθυμία (440e1-6, cp. 440a8-b7); or, more cautiously, the θυμός “is an auxiliary by nature to the rational part, *unless [the θυμός] is corrupted by a bad upbringing*” (441a2-3). The Spartan πολιτεία and Spartan education, as the Laconizers imagine them, are an amazingly effective machinery for developing and harnessing the power of θυμός to control ἐπιθυμία; unfortunately, the machinery is not being used for the philosophically correct purpose, but if the machinery could be captured by philosophical reason, the best πολιτεία would result. This plan of exploiting the power of θυμός to bring ἐπιθυμία under the control of reason does not seem to occur to Plato anywhere before the *Republic*: the *Phaedo* contrasts the person who abstains from bodily ἐπιθυμίας from philosophical virtue with the politically virtuous people who abstain “fearing bankruptcy and poverty, like the many, the lovers of money ... [or] fearing dishonor and the reputation of wickedness, like the lovers of rule and honor” (82c5-8, cp. 82c2-5 and 82a11-b3), as if there was no value-difference between what the *Republic* will call the timocratic and oligarchic characters; reason in the *Phaedo* seems to dominate all the passions, when it does so, equally directly. We may say that Plato’s new understanding of the role of θυμός comes out of critical reflection on the Laconizing ideology, or, conversely, that it was this new understanding of θυμός that led him to reflect on the Spartan πολιτεία and on how it could be improved.⁴³

From *Republic* VIII’s criticisms of the Spartan πολιτεία and of the character of the elite it produces, we could infer, even if we did not have the

⁴³ Note that if Plato’s starting-point in introducing tripartition were in reflection on individual moral psychology rather than on politics, he would more plausibly have proceeded by first distinguishing rational from irrational sources of motivation, and only then subdividing the irrational soul. Instead he starts by distinguishing the producers from guardians, and ἐπιθυμία from θυμός, and only then separates out the philosophers and reason from the auxiliaries and θυμός.

earlier books of the *Republic*, how Plato thought the Spartan ideal would need to be emended to turn it into a Socratic πολιτεία. First, the Spartan education does well at making their military guardian class θυμοειδείς and fierce towards enemies, but not at making them gentle toward their own people, as they must be if they are truly to guard them, and not be like sheep-dogs who attack their own sheep (*Rep.* II, 375b9-d1, and III, 416a2-7, without explicit reference to Sparta); so we must take great care over the education of the guardians so that they do not turn from benevolent allies into harsh masters [δεσπόται] of the people (III, 416b1-6). In *Republic* III the solution seems to be that their education must balance gymnastics, which develops the body but also the θυμοειδές part of the soul and makes people brave but risks making them excessively harsh, with “musical” education, which develops the “philosophical” or wisdom-loving part of the soul and makes people temperate but risks making them excessively soft (410a7-412a7).⁴⁴ It is especially the ruler or “overseer” of the city who will have to be formed in this way, “if the πολιτεία is going to be saved/preserved” (412a9-10), and it is such a ruler who is most truly a “guardian,” since he will not only guard the city militarily against threats from without, but will also be the guardian of the πολιτεία against any changes in the practices of its citizens which could destabilize it from within (414b1-6).

For this reason the city must be ruled, not simply by the military class, but by suitably formed characters carefully selected from among them. This is not in itself any criticism of Sparta, where, as in other Greek cities, there are specially selected rulers/magistrates (holding office for life, like the kings and gerontes, or for a year, like the ephors and nauarchs), and indeed the Laconizing literature stresses the prompt obedience of all Spartiates (even the kings) to those in authority over them. So it is too simple to say that Plato replaces a Spartan duality of unfree producers and arms-bearing citizens with a triple division of producers, auxiliaries and rulers; Plato and the Laconizers equally accept a duality of producers and military

⁴⁴ Compare the criticisms of Sparta in *Laws* I-II: the Spartan legislator instituted many practices to develop courage, but what did he institute to develop temperance? The Spartans are, in a way, temperate, since they forgo many pleasures in adhering to their military or quasi-military discipline, and since in public none are allowed to consume more conspicuously than others; but when they are freed from this discipline or are in private, since they have not really moderated their appetites but have merely overwhelmed them with θυμός-motivations, they indulge themselves without limit. This is the point of departure for the odd-sounding criticism of the Spartans for not allowing drinking or symposia; but presumably the symposium is not simply an occasion for moderation in drinking, but also a vehicle of the musical education that the Spartans are missing.

guardians, with rulers/magistrates selected out of the military class.⁴⁵ The question, however, is how they are to be selected, and in particular what special education is needed to make a good ruler, beyond the common education imposed on the whole military class.⁴⁶ Already in *Republic* III Plato stresses that the ruler, even more than other guardians, needs not only gymnastic but also musical education, or as Plato also says “philosophy” (so 411c5); in later books, of course, he specifies the content of this philosophy, saying that in order to preserve the *πολιτεία* the ruler must know eternal paradigms and especially the good for the sake of which everything else is done, and specifying the curriculum, mathematics followed by dialectic, that is necessary to bring the rulers to this knowledge. (We might thus reverse Dicaearchus’ dictum cited above, and say that Plato corrected Lycurgus by mixing him with Pythagoras [mathematics] and Socrates [dialectic].) Plato is not simply adding philosopher-rulers on the Socratic grounds that the ruler must have knowledge of the good, that stable right action requires knowledge and not mere true opinion, that the many can be guaranteed to have true opinion only if they follow someone who has knowledge. Plato is *also* adding music and philosophy to the Spartan *πολιτεία* to ensure that the rulers and fighters have something better to do than ruling and fighting, philosophical contemplation in the strict sense for the rulers and “musical” or cultural pursuits for the others; only in this way can they be trusted not to make ruling or fighting ends in themselves.

Finally, to ensure that the rulers and the military class, whose power the producers are unable to check, will not use this power for *πλεονεξία* but will rule in the interest of the ruled, Plato finds it necessary to abolish the *οἶκος* and private property for the guardians, to “undo” the crucial step

⁴⁵ The *Timaeus*’ summary of the *Republic*, 17c1-19b2, reports a bipartition of society into producers and guardians, rather than a tripartition, suggesting that Plato sees this bipartition as the more basic division of the society.

⁴⁶ Here Plato is picking up a theme of the so-called *περὶ βασιλείας* or “mirrors for princes” literature, describing how the ideal king will act and how he must first be trained: examples would be Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, Isocrates’ Cyprian orations, and the lost *Cyrus* or *περὶ βασιλείας* by Antisthenes (whether these were written before or after the *Republic*). There are also later lost works *περὶ βασιλείας* by Aristotle, Theophrastus, Strato, Cleanthes, Persaeus, Sphaerus and the Megarian Euphantus, and a separate *On the Education of a King* by Theophrastus, all cited by Diogenes Laertius in the corresponding lives, and much later extant texts, notably by Dio Chrysostom. These texts would be related to *πολιτεία* texts, but differ in being at least sometimes dedicated to a king, and in assuming unlimited monarchy rather than discussing the merits of different *πολιτεῖαι*. For a brief but helpful discussion of Plato’s *Republic* and the *περὶ βασιλείας* literature see Ferrari in Ferrari and Griffith 2000, xviii-xx.

that turned the Callipolis into the timocracy, namely the guardians' division of the land and crops and animals and human beings of the city among themselves as their own property. As Plato says at the end of *Republic* III, immediately after giving the standard Laconizing rules that the guardians must eat in common messes and must not possess gold or silver, "in this way they would be saved/preserved and would save/preserve the city; but when they acquire their own [ἰδίαν] land and houses and currency, they will be household managers [οἰκονόμοι] and farmers instead of guardians, and will become hostile masters [δεσπότες] instead of allies of the other citizens, and they will spend their whole lives hating and being hated and plotting and being plotted against, fearing more enemies from within than from without, and fearing them more: and thus both they and the rest of the city have already come very close to destruction" (417a5-b6). The Spartiates do of course have their own land and houses (and at least bronze currency, with the temptation to gold and silver), and Plato is saying that this leads them to a conflict of interest with their assigned task of guarding the city and the producing class. Farming sounds innocuous, but the Spartiates are not plowing their land themselves (and if they did they would not have time for their civic-military duties); rather, they are supervising a landed estate and the workers who are bound to that land; they are trying to extract a surplus of produce beyond what they must grant for the survival and reproduction of their workforce, and their interests will conflict with those of their workers and also with the larger interests of the city.

The tension that Plato evokes here between οἰκονομική and πολιτική, between managing one's estate, exercising arbitrary authority over slaves in one's own private interest, and participating in the governance of the city, exercising authority within the law over free and equal citizens in the common interest of rulers and ruled, is a Greek commonplace, as is the criticism of those who retire to preside over their estate instead of devoting themselves to the common good of the city.⁴⁷ The Laconizers especially

⁴⁷ For the differences between οἰκονομική and πολιτική see especially Aristotle *Pol.* I. Xenophon in *Oikonomikos* 13 defends the deliberately paradoxical thesis that the rule of a master or a slave steward over slaves requires the same skill as the rule of a statesman or a king over free citizens; the Eleatic Stranger in the *Statesman* starts by defending this thesis too (258e8-259c4), but then apparently repents of it after his recantation at 274e1-4; *Pol.* I starts by citing, and setting out to refute, this shared thesis. Οἰκονομική is often identified with the art of moneymaking [χρηματιστική]; Aristotle, while mostly trying to distinguish οἰκονομική from the more noble πολιτική, also argues that the best and truest kind of οἰκονομική is something better than χρηματιστική. For criticism of people retiring to their estates rather than taking part in democratic politics, see Carter 1986.

stress the priority of the Spartiates' duty to the city, and their freedom from conflicting private duties and interests which could get in the way of πολιτικὴ ἀρετή. But, says Plato, the continuing institution of the οἶκος contradicts this. As we saw in *Republic VIII*, the founding act of the timocracy is when the guardians “distribute and privatize [ιδιώσασθαι] the land and the houses, and, enslaving those whom they previously guarded as free friends and nourishers, keep them as perioeci and servants, and devote themselves to war and to guarding [their slaves]” (547b8-c4): while the (presumably equal and inalienable) division of land in the Spartan πολιτεία is usually praised,⁴⁸ for Plato it represents the violent dispossession and enslavement of the producers, and the corruption of the guardians, who are now landowners with an economic self-interest instead of pure Socratic rulers ruling in the interest of the ruled. And the private οἶκος is the place where the Spartiates can indulge in consumption immune to public scrutiny and to Spartan discipline: Plato speaks of “enclosed dwellings, verily private nests, where they may expend [gold and silver], lavishing much on women and on whoever else they want” (548a9-b2). The Spartan women are here especially singled out because they remain on the estate and are not subject to the public discipline and communal living of Spartan boys and men; indeed, they are likely to wind up managing the estate when the men are away. Plato in *Laws VII* criticizes the Spartans for not subjecting the women to the same discipline as the men: he admits that the Spartans do better than other Greeks in making their girls take part in athletics, but “whoever wishes to praise your legislators [= Lycurgus and Minos] for these things, let him praise, but I will not speak otherwise: the legislator must be complete and not diminished by half, but if he allows the females to enjoy luxuries and to spend in a

⁴⁸ The argument of Hodkinson 2000, 19-64, that Spartan equality in land-ownership was a myth invented by the revolutionaries around Cleomenes III in the late third century, is stimulating and useful but exaggerated. I agree that it was a myth. Hodkinson is right that Aristotle's critique of Sparta in *Pol. II 9* makes clear that the Spartan landed allotment was not equal and inalienable and indivisible; it may have been close to inalienable within the owner's lifetime (it is striking that Aristotle does *not* talk about people losing their land through debt), but it could be divided or combined with other property in inheritance, so that if the division of land among the Spartiates had ever been equal, it had ceased to be so by any time for which we have real evidence. However, the myth is earlier than Cleomenes: it is clearly there at *Laws III*, 684d4-685a4, despite Hodkinson's attempts at denial (32 with 61n17), and it does not look like an invention of Plato's, though certainly egalitarian aspects of the Spartan legend (like other aspects) grow in the telling. Polybius also speaks of the Spartan equality of landholding, VI xlv 3 and xlviii 3, and Hodkinson's claim, 51, that Polybius was fooled into this by the Spartan revolutionaries (whom he detested) is implausible.

disordered regimen, and takes care only of the males, he has almost completely neglected half of a happy life for the city, instead of [taking care for] twice that” (806c1-7; Aristotle will develop this criticism of the Spartans in *Politics* II 9, and sees the non-discipline of the women as a main cause leading the Spartans to honor wealth). By subjecting the girls and women to the same discipline and same communal living as the boys and men, Plato aims to bring οἶκος-values into submission to πόλις-values; and if there is neither desire nor leisure for either guardian men or women to consume in private on the οἶκος, the elimination of the guardian οἶκος altogether, and the entrusting of the oversight of the producers and their land to the state, will be an easy next step.

IV.

The generic background of Laconizing πολιτεία-literature helps us in interpreting the *Republic* by allowing us to see what expectations Plato assumes in his readers as he constructs his best πολιτεία. Plato partly confirms those expectations, sketching a πολιτεία with many familiar Laconizing features; but he partly defeats the expectations, pointedly rejecting other familiar features of the Spartan πολιτεία. His πολιτεία starts by sounding Spartan enough—particularly with the separation of a specialist military class who are barred from money-making pursuits, while the others are barred from military activity—and it gradually diverges; it may be some time before the Laconizing reader realizes that something has gone wrong. Where Plato does criticize the Spartan model, his criticisms are typically “internal,” as they are in the *Laws*: that is, he starts with some value which the Laconizing reader can be assumed to share (e.g., the rejection of πλεονεξία, the importance of an all-encompassing discipline of virtue), and shows that some correction to Spartan institutions is needed to fully realize that value. (Some of these “internal criticisms” will only work if the reader assumes that the city which the guardians are serving comprises the producers too as citizens and not only the guardians; but this premiss is secured by the way Plato derives the guardians and the other groups in the city he is constructing, as different specializations mutually dependent and all needed for the good of the whole.) Without this background we would be liable to what Schleiermacher calls “quantitative

misunderstanding,” that is, to missing where the emphasis is supposed to fall.⁴⁹

But in discerning the expectations of Plato’s intended audience, we are not entirely dependent on what we can reconstruct (based especially on Xenophon) of the history of the *πολιτεία*-genre. Plato directly shows us the character of his intended readers in the persons of Glaucon and Adeimantus, who are stand-ins for the reader, as Clinias and Megillus are in the *Laws* (noted above). Glaucon and Adeimantus are not given strongly contrasting characterizations, and take turns functioning cooperatively as Socrates’ interlocutor for a single developing argument, but it is clear that Glaucon is the dominant personality (it is Glaucon who first challenges Socrates to give a more persuasive account of justice and not rest content with defeating Thrasymachus, and Socrates then comments that Glaucon is “always most courageous in all encounters” [II, 357a2-3]; Glaucon and not Adeimantus walks down to the Piraeus with Socrates at the beginning of the dialogue; Adeimantus is three times described as “Glaucon’s brother” [II, 327c2, 362d2, 376d4], never vice versa; the poet who praises them both at II, 368a4, is *Glaucon’s* lover; also Xenophon mentions Glaucon but not Adeimantus as a companion of Socrates, and Diogenes Laertius attributes to Glaucon a series of Socratic dialogues—including a *Cephalus*!). Glaucon is the interlocutor for the philosophical and political high-points of the dialogue, while Adeimantus seems more concerned with culture and religion. And Plato expressly describes Glaucon’s character: when Socrates asks what the person corresponding to the timocratic *πολιτεία* will be like, Adeimantus immediately volunteers that he’ll be like Glaucon; Socrates replies that while they’ll be alike in their love of victory, the timocrat will be less given to “music” and discourse, and therefore more inclined to be savage to slaves, and more likely to fall into a love of money (VIII, 548d6-549b10). Glaucon is thus like the timocrat but somewhat better: he is able to see the faults that Socrates points out in the timocratic city and the timocratic character, and can be persuaded to look to a better, philosophical, collective and individual way of life.

The timocrat is the Laconizer. That is, when Plato describes types of soul as corresponding to types of *πολιτεία*, the individual corresponds, not

⁴⁹ More particularly, being democrats ourselves, we are naturally inclined to put the emphasis on Plato’s criticisms of democracy. But Plato has no hope of persuading the democrats, and his criticisms of democracy are mostly conventional sarcasms; his emphasis is rather on persuading the people closest to him, the Laconizers, whose ideal has very little pull on us now. (So, rightly, Tigerstedt I 274-5.)

necessarily to the πολιτεία he lives in (each πολιτεία will contain many types of individuals, although its ruling group will typically be of the corresponding type), but to the πολιτεία that he admires and would prefer to live in as one of its rulers, believing that these rulers are happy.⁵⁰ Thus Thrasymachus is clearly portrayed as a tyrannical person, and thinks that the tyrant is happiest (I, 344a3-c4); the philosopher will think that the philosopher-rulers of Callipolis are the happiest; and the timocrat will think that the (idealized) Spartiates are the happiest. Plato does not expect actual Spartan readers and does not care about actual Spartans (and he surely believes no more than Xenophon did that the “Lycurgan” ideal was realized in the Sparta of his own time); he is writing in the first instance for the Laconizers at Athens and elsewhere, and he wants to persuade them to admire something different from the Spartan ideal. After Glaucon and Adeimantus present their initial challenge to Socrates at the beginning of Book II, they for the most part allow themselves to be persuaded by Socrates’ construction of the ideal city; but they intervene with objections at four crucial junctures. Glaucon successfully objects to the minimalist “city of pigs” (II, 372c2-e1), requiring civilized luxuries and thus leading to further specialization and expansion, demands on neighboring territories, and thus the introduction of a Spartan-style military class, which motivates all the rest of the construction. Glaucon and Adeimantus accept that construction until the end of Book III, where Socrates, radicalizing the Spartan model, proposes the abolition of private property for the guardians: Glaucon accepts this, but Adeimantus, at the beginning of Book IV, objects that “these men ... whose city it really is [*N.B.* something that Socrates has *not* said], enjoy none of the goods of the city,” and that Socrates is making the rest of the population happy at the expense of the guardians (419a1-420a1). This prompts Socrates to defend the principle that we must construct the city (and the guardians must rule it) for the sake of the whole city’s happiness rather than just the guardians’, and also to try to bring his interlocutors to see the guardians of the Callipolis as truly happy. Likewise, the brothers (on behalf of the whole audience) protest at Socrates’ two further radicalizations of the Spartan model, the abolition of the family at the end of Book IV and beginning of Book V, and the introduction

⁵⁰ For the idea that persons of different character would also prefer to live in different kinds of city, compare the pseudo-Xenophon: the δῆμος can be forgiven for wanting to live in a democratic city, but “whoever, not being of the δῆμος, chooses to live in a democratic city rather than in an oligarchic one, has prepared to do injustice and has recognised that it is easier to escape notice when one is bad in a democratic city than in an oligarchic one” (II 20).

of philosopher-kings at V, 473-4, prompting Socrates' elaboration and defense of each of these radicalizations, which take up all of Books V-VII. Glaucon promises that he will be a particularly helpful and receptive interlocutor for this argument (474a6-b2, and cp. 450b6-d7), and he is indeed persuaded.

What πολιτεία one admires, and what city's rulers one believes to be happy, make a difference for one's own τρόπος τοῦ βίου: even if one lives in some other city, one can live looking to the παράδειγμα of some other πολιτεία. The democratic city in particular, where "people of all varieties would most of all arise," "contains all kinds of πολιτεῖαι on account of its liberty," so that anyone "who wishes to construct a city" need only "come to the democratic city and select whichever τρόπος he likes, as if coming to the bazaar of πολιτεῖαι, and establish/colonize [κατοικίξειν] the one he has selected"; "he would not lack for παραδείγματα" (VIII, 557c1-2, d4-e1; likewise, the βίος of the democratic man "contains the most παραδείγματα of πολιτεῖαι and τρόποι, 561e6-7). So we must see democratic Athens as filled, not only with democratic people admiring the democratic πολιτεία, but also with many dissident types each admiring, and trying to live as if they inhabited, some other type of πολιτεία. Thus the Athenian Laconizers will look to their idealized Sparta, the oligarchic people in the democratic city (explicitly described 565b2-c4) will look to oligarchy, and tyrannical people like Thrasymachus will look to tyranny as their παραδείγματα.⁵¹ And we must see a great debate at Athens, particularly among those dissatisfied with the democracy, about what counter-παράδειγμα one should look toward. Just as it was Thrasymachus and not Socrates who introduced πολιτεῖαι into the discussion, so it was Thrasymachus who introduced παραδείγματα (though not using that word), when he says that to see that injustice is more advantageous than justice, we must look not to a petty thief but to the most "perfect" or "complete" [τελεωτάτη] injustice, namely tyranny, to see that the most unjust person is also the happiest (I, 343e7-344c4).⁵² This gives Socrates the task of

⁵¹ An anonymous referee points out to me that there is a contradiction between the nobler things that the timocratic person admires, and the baser things that he has a tendency to pursue. This is true, but the same contradiction exists in the rulers of the timocratic city. The timocratic man professes to admire the Spartan devotion to civic virtue, but, as Plato and Aristotle try to bring out, this is mixed with a less open admiration for Spartan πλεονεξία as well.

⁵² So too Glaucon at II, 360e1-361d3: to compare and decide whether the just or the unjust βίος is happier, we must first posit "perfect" or "complete" and "extreme" versions of each, the cunning and powerful unjust person who appears just, and the just person who appears unjust and suffers the consequences. This is what sets Socrates' task.

constructing a counter-παράδειγμα of a city and an individual, which will be both most just and happiest, and will allow us to see that justice is more advantageous than injustice: this παράδειγμα will be shown to be more just and happier than the Laconizing παράδειγμα (which is conceded to be more just and happier than the democratic παράδειγμα), and it will also be shown that the tyrannical παράδειγμα, which Thrasymachus agrees to be the most unjust, is also the most miserable (more precisely, the tyrannical person is more miserable than any other character-type, and the tyrannical person who succeeds in acquiring a tyranny is even more so, IX, 578b4-c3). Socrates gives this comparative evaluation of individual and collective παραδείγματα an eschatological significance when he imagines that after death we will be given a choice among all the “παραδείγματα of βίῳ” (X, 618a1), and that those who have correctly studied what circumstances of βίῳ make a soul most just and therefore happiest are the people who will be happy in the next life (618b6-619b1; note that someone “who has lived in the previous life in an ordered πολιτεία, participating in virtue by habituation without philosophy” is likely to choose wrong in the next life, 619b7-d3).

Now while we might be tempted to connect this talk of παραδείγματα with the Platonic theory of Forms, in fact it does not seem to be peculiarly Platonic. Xenophon says that “if plumbline and straightedge [στάθμη, κανών] are a noble [καλόν] invention for human beings for producing good works, the virtue of Agesilaus seems to me to be a noble παράδειγμα for those who wish to practice excellence [ἀνδραγαθία]” (*Agesilaus* X 2); he goes on to speak of “imitating” Agesilaus and suggests that Agesilaus’ main task as king was not military leadership but leading his fellow-citizens to virtue, presumably by offering himself as παράδειγμα. Presumably Xenophon also sees Lycurgan Sparta as a collective παράδειγμα when he says that “everyone praises such practices, but no city is willing to imitate them” (*Resp. Lac.* X 8); Isocrates too speaks of παραδείγματα, sometimes meaning merely an example in an inductive argument, but sometimes a model for admiration and imitation (Nicoles’ virtue or τρόπος will be a παράδειγμα for his fellow-citizens, *Ad Nicoclem* 31 and *Nicoles* 37; ancient Athens provided a παράδειγμα of laws and πολιτεία to the other Greeks, *Panegyricus* 39). Different Athenians will admire different individual and collective παραδείγματα, and this will make a difference to the kind of political action, or inaction, that they pursue at Athens. Socrates tells Callicles that just as to succeed politically (to avoid suffering injustice) under a tyranny, one must make oneself a friend to the tyrant by making oneself similar to him in character, so to succeed politically in the Athenian democracy one must make oneself as similar as possible to

the πολιτεία, that is, to the δῆμος (*Gorgias* 510a6-511a3, 512e4-513c3). Since Callicles thinks himself superior to the δῆμος and would not want to become like it in character, this is supposed to dissuade him—and other Athenian dissidents—from pursuing a political career at Athens. Some may try it anyway, thinking that they can avoid the consequences; others may retreat from politics (like the father of the timocratic youth at *Republic* VIII, 549c, or the uncorrupted philosophical natures, and Socrates prevented by his δαιμόνιον, at VI, 496a-e) because they realize that if they intervened in politics without lowering themselves to the character of the established πολιτεία they would be destroyed before they could accomplish anything; yet others may attempt clandestine action to subvert the established πολιτεία (like the oligarchic people whose attempt to resist their dispossession by subverting the democracy leads disastrously to στάσις and the rise of tyranny at VIII, 565b2-566d3).

By contrast with other dissidents admiring other πολιτεῖαι, the philosophical person, who “looks to the πολιτεία within himself, and guards lest anything overturn it” by way of wealth or honors, “will not be willing to practice politics [τὰ πολιτικὰ πράττειν]” (IX, 591e1-5). Or so Glaucon says, but Socrates corrects him to say that “in his own city [he will practice politics], but not in his fatherland, unless some divine good fortune occurs” (592a7-9): “his own city” is the city in λόγοι which Socrates and his interlocutors have been describing, which may exist nowhere on earth (592a10-b1), but of which “a παράδειγμα is perhaps stored up in heaven for one who wishes to see it, and, having seen it, to settle himself there; it makes no difference whether it is or will be anywhere, he would practice [the politics] of this city alone and of no other” (592b2-5). Presumably the way to “practice the politics” of the Callipolis while living in Athens is to do what Socrates is doing when he says in the *Gorgias* that he, and he alone of the Athenians of his time, truly practices politics (521d6-8): namely, to pursue philosophical inquiry and ask dialectical questions, and especially to cross-examine people like Callicles and Alcibiades who are planning political careers, and persuade them to pursue philosophy first or instead.

The political, or anti-political, consequences of Plato’s critique of previous παραδείγματα have particular significance in Plato’s immediate political context; and this too is reflected in the *dramatis personae* of the *Republic*. Many people in Plato’s immediate circle of family and friends, disaffected with the democracy, would have looked to the Spartan παράδειγμα; most obviously his cousin Critias (whose talk about Sparta was described above). Plato speaks of Critias, without naming him, in the *Seventh Letter*:

some of [the Thirty] were relatives and familiars of mine, and they straightway exhorted me [to sharing in their political undertaking] as if it were my duty. And, given my youth, what I experienced was nothing surprising: I thought they would govern the city so as to lead it from an unjust βίος to a just τρόπος,⁵³ and so I paid close attention to see what they would do. And [I saw] these men in a short time reveal the previous [democratic] πολιτεία as a thing golden [in comparison]. (*Epist.* VII, 325d1-8)

So Plato withdrew from politics; when the democracy was restored, and the democrats proved themselves surprisingly mild toward those who had fought for the oligarchy, Plato again felt drawn (less intensely) toward politics, but after the execution of Socrates he again withdrew, concluding that just and effective political action was impossible, that “it is not possible to act without friends and faithful/reliable ἑταῖροι” (325d1-2), that no such good people could be found in so corrupt a city and that it would not be easy to produce new ones; until “finally I was compelled to say, in praise of right philosophy, that from it [alone] would it be possible to discern all that is politically and individually just” (326a5-7), and that no good would come of the human race until philosophers became rulers or vice versa. The turn to philosophy thus appears reluctant, and as a result of the exhaustion of available political παραδείγματα. Plato finds the democracy irredeemably corrupt, but the disastrous rule of the Thirty, beginning with noble political talk, had utterly discredited the cause of oligarchy and of the Laconizers; and Plato and Xenophon and many others, who had stayed in the city and in all likelihood fought for the oligarchy against the men from the Piraeus, find themselves suspect perhaps as soon as they engage in politics, certainly as soon as they say anything critical of democracy. Both for Plato and for Xenophon, Socrates represents a personal παράδειγμα, an alternative to both democratic and oligarchic politicians: although Socrates was accused of having educated the most outrageous figures on both sides, Critias and Alcibiades, Plato and Xenophon say that while Socrates associated with unsavory politicians, he never encouraged their illegalities, but on the contrary challenged their credentials to rule and so stimulated them to improve themselves (and that it is not his fault if they did not always follow through on his advice). The real or mythologized events of Socrates’ life serve to mark the course that Plato and Xenophon want to steer, disassociating themselves from both sides of the conflict. Thus the *Seventh Letter* uses the Thirty’s attempt to involve Soc-

⁵³ This certainly reflects the actual propaganda of the Thirty: Lysias *Against Eratosthenes* 5 bitterly recalls that the Thirty promised to “make the city pure of unjust men, and turn the remaining citizens toward virtue and justice”.

rates in the unlawful execution of Leon of Salamis (surely not the greatest of the Thirty's crimes) to explain Plato's alienation from the oligarchy, and it uses the execution of Socrates to explain his alienation from the restored democracy; elsewhere also Socrates' refusal to put the fate of the generals at Arginusae to an unlawful vote of the δῆμος is used as a symbolic disavowal of the illegalities of the democracy, just as his refusal to participate in the arrest of Leon is used as a symbolic disavowal of the illegalities of the oligarchy.⁵⁴

Xenophon tried to defend his honor, linking himself with Socrates and Theramenes rather than Critias, with Agesilaus rather than Lysander; but Xenophon also left Athens, and then was exiled and could not return for decades. Plato also seems to have left Athens, but returned and set up a school in the Academy, with both Athenian and other Greek students, many of them politically ambitious people, who, like so many people that Socrates talks with in both Plato and Xenophon, have been persuaded that they need philosophy to improve themselves first before they will be able to accomplish anything in politics. Glaucon and Adeimantus represent the kind of (Athenian) student that will come to the Academy. (Glaucon is in fact one of the people that Xenophon's Socrates persuades to pursue philosophy before politics, *Mem.* III vi.)

⁵⁴ Socrates in Plato's *Apology* reminds the dikasts first of his resistance to the unlawful demands of the δῆμος in the case of the generals (32a9-c4), and then of his resistance to the unlawful demands of the Thirty about Leon (32c4-e1). Xenophon *Mem.* IV iv 2-3 also combines what must be references to the case of the generals and to Leon in much the same way. There are explicit descriptions of Socrates' conduct in the case of the generals at *Mem.* I i 18 (in a defense of Socrates) and *Hell.* I vii 15 (in a long historical account of the trial, with Socrates mentioned only briefly), and what must be a reference to the case at *Gorgias* 473e6-474a1. There is, however, confusion about what Socrates actually did at the assembly where the δῆμος demanded a single collective vote to condemn all the generals: the two *Memorabilia* passages say, and the *Gorgias* passage implies, that Socrates was the presiding officer [ἐπιστάτης] chosen by lot out of the tribe holding the presidency of the βουλή to preside on that day, in which case he should have been able, at least temporarily, to prevent the issue from being put to the vote of the δῆμος, but the *Apology* and *Hellenica* passages imply that Socrates was merely one of the presiding group [πρυτάνεις] and not the presiding officer, and that while he protested he had no authority to block the vote. It seems clear that the *Apology* and *Hellenica* passages are closer to the historical facts, and that the event has been mythologized in the *Gorgias* and *Memorabilia*, as also (and even more so) in other later sources. On all this see Dodds 1959, 247-8. The *Seventh Letter* mentions only Leon and not Arginusae, because, writing to Dion's partisans in Syracuse, Plato's burden is not to explain why he does not get involved in democratic politics (Socrates' execution is more than enough for that), but only why he is not going to get involved in oligarchic politics, and why he thinks those of his friends who do get involved are making a mistake (and why he did get involved both with Dion and with Dionysius II to the extent that he did).

Glaucon and Adeimantus are Plato's brothers, but by the same token they are Critias' cousins (and the usual scholarly guess is that the lover of Glaucon who wrote elegiac verses praising Glaucon's and Adeimantus' bravery at the battle of Megara, II, 368a1-4, was Critias). They could go either way: disaffected with the democracy, they could turn either to philosophical quietism or to oligarchic subversion. They are disaffected with the democracy and its talk of law and justice and social concord, not because they are partisans of some other *πολιτεία*, but because the sophistic discourse represented by Thrasymachus has quite rightly opened their eyes to the emptiness of all this talk. When Socrates hears them say what people say against justice, he marvels and concludes that they have experienced some divine favor, since Socrates knows, from their *τρόποι* rather than from what they say, that they do not really believe that injustice is better than justice, although they are able to argue that case so powerfully (368a5-b4). Such divine favor is however notoriously unstable, and the opinion that justice is better than injustice needs to be tied down with arguments; and Glaucon and Adeimantus appeal to Socrates for help.⁵⁵

When Glaucon and Adeimantus beg Socrates to convince them fully that justice is to be chosen for itself and not merely for the social consequences of appearing just, that it is better to be just and appear unjust and therefore suffer injustice than to get away with doing injustice by appearing just, they are in part asking for reasons not to become like Critias. While Glaucon and Adeimantus are often taken to be asking why *I* shouldn't act unjustly in such a way as to seem just to everyone else, they are also asking why *we* collectively shouldn't act unjustly in such a way as to seem just to everyone outside our group: as Adeimantus says, "to remain concealed, we will gather *συνωμοσίαι* and *ἐταιρίαι*" (II, 365d2-3). These *ἐταιρίαι* or *ἐταιρείαι*, the clubs (sometimes oath-bound, as "*συνωμοσία*" implies) that were the basis of much political action at Athens and elsewhere, with members supporting each other in the assembly or courts according to a common plan of action, were also capable of criminal or revolutionary conspiracies, and were the nuclei of the oligarchic revolutions of 411 and 404.⁵⁶ The *ἐταιρείαι* resemble the clubs [*φιδίτια*] in

⁵⁵ On Glaucon and Adeimantus compare Ferrari 2003, 11-36. On a range of issues, notably about the relation between each type of person and the corresponding type of city and its rulers, where Ferrari and I have been thinking mostly independently, and coming sometimes to similar and sometimes to divergent conclusions, discussion will have to await a fuller treatment.

⁵⁶ Thucydides VIII 49 and 65 describe the role of *ἐταιρείαι* or *συνωμοσίαι* in the revolution of 411 (the mutilation of the Herms was also blamed on a *συνωμοσία* to overthrow the democracy, VI 27). Plutarch *Lysander* 5 says Lysander urged people wishing revolt in the

which the Spartiates had their common meals, and the *ἐταιρεῖαι* collectively could see themselves as forming the equivalent of a Spartiate citizen elite that could come to power through revolution. Thus Lysias *Against Eratosthenes* 43 says that the revolution of the Thirty began with “five ephors [the same title and number as at Sparta; Critias was one of the five] ... established by the so-called *ἐταῖροι* as collectors of the ‘citizens’ [*πολιταί*] and leaders of the conspirators [*συνωμόται*]”; Aristotle *Πολιτεία of the Athenians* 34 says that at this time (after the Athenian surrender) the notables who belonged to the *ἐταιρεῖαι* wanted an oligarchy, while the ordinary people wanted to preserve the democracy and those who did not belong to *ἐταιρεῖαι* but thought themselves otherwise not socially inferior wanted a middle ground (the “*πάτριος πολιτεία*”). But if Plato’s arguments succeed with the readers represented by Glaucon and Adeimantus, they will not be tempted to follow the lead of Critias, looking to Spartan or oligarchic models and forming groups to subvert the democracy. Instead, they will do what Socrates persuades Glaucon to do at Xenophon *Memorabilia* III vi: instead of planning how to gain honour by becoming the leader of the city, he will work at acquiring knowledge and improving himself so that he will be worthy to lead the city, should it ever ask.

Plato is not entirely rejecting the idea of *ἐταιρεῖαι*: we have seen the *Seventh Letter* say that political action requires “friends and faithful/reliable *ἐταῖροι*” (325d1-2), that these cannot be found at Athens and that it is not easy to produce new ones; and the Academy can be seen as a way of producing such *ἐταῖροι*. We can thus say that Plato’s *Republic*, like the *Πολιτεῖαι* of the Athenian Laconizers, invites its readers to see themselves as members of a society of friends which might someday be the nucleus of a new *πολιτεία* (the Academy becoming the philosophers of the Callipolis). But the Academy will be a *ἐταιρεία* with a crucial difference; Plato sharply contrasts this kind of friendship (the kind that he had notably with Dion) with those who “do not become friends from philosophy, but from the casual companionship [*ἐταιρία*] of most friends, which they pursue from [formal] guest-friendships and from being initiated and seeing [mystery rituals together]” (*Epist.* VII, 333e1-4, here said of Callippus, who joined Dion in his invasion of Sicily and later assassinated him). The Academy, like the Pythagorean society, is a *ἐταιρεία* founded on knowledge and on the justice which that knowledge is supposed to produce, and it will remain within the limits of justice. It will nurture people from many

democratic cities of the Athenian alliance to form *ἐταιρικά* and ready themselves for political action when the time came, and Lysander put the decarchies together out of these *ἐταιρεῖαι* (*Lysander* 13).

different Greek cities who are capable of ruling, and some of those cities may someday be in enough trouble that they will invite the Academics to give laws or settle their quarrels, as the Athenians had invited Solon (on a number of occasions Academics were in fact invited to legislate, as other philosophers had been and would be [e.g., Protagoras, Demetrius of Phalerum], in founding a colony or reestablishing a city that had been destroyed, or in making peace like Solon after *στασις*; naturally this does not mean that they were given a blank slate on which to create utopia).⁵⁷ But Platonic friends will not plot to acquire power, and if they are never invited to rule they will be just as happy contemplating: indeed, it is only because they would rather not rule that it is safe to invite them.

People often prefer to read the *Republic* without reference to this political background, not simply because of the uncertainty of the historical evidence, but because they do not like bringing Plato so close to the Laconizers and to oligarchic revolutionaries like Dion: they are afraid that reading the *Republic* this way will turn it into a mere piece of political ideology, an expression of class interests and a justification for political action, failing to respect its integrity as a work of philosophy. Of course such crude readings of the *Republic* have been given often enough. But I do not think this is the real result of reading the *Republic* against the political background I have been sketching. The *Republic* is not a mere expression of the class ideology in which Plato grew up, but a sharp and effective critique of that ideology. It is not a justification for political action, and to the extent that it has immediate political counsels, they are counsels *against* political action, although it never forecloses the possibility of eventual political action, under the right circumstances, to bring about some imitation of the ideal. But political philosophy and political ideology do not have entirely independent histories; what we see here is that political ideology can provide the background from which political philosophy emerges, because a political ideology like that of the Laconizers sets up normative standards against which it can itself be judged and found wanting. Plato is responding in the first instance not to political events but to

⁵⁷ For a detailed survey of reports of political activity by reported Academics, see Trampedach 1994. Notably Aristotle and Eudoxus are said to have given laws to their native cities, and Plutarch *Against Colotes* 1126c reports the same for Menedemus of Pyrrha, Phormion of Elis and Aristonymus of Arcadia. To Trampedach's list should be added Demophanes and Ekdelus or Ekdemus, the students of Arcesilaus who are supposed to have legislated and restored peace in Cyrene, and to have been involved in the overthrow of tyrannies in Megalopolis and Sicyon (Plutarch *Philopoemen* 1 and Polybius X 22). Trampedach (besides doubting some of these reports) rejects the idea of an overall Academic political program, but that is another question.

political discourse, and his *Πολιτεία* addresses the Glaucons and Adeimantuses of its audience by working within the discourse of the *πολιτεία* of the Spartans, exposing the contradictions between Spartan praise of virtue and Spartan despotism and *πλεονεξία*, and bringing its audience to a rational and Socratic transformation of the Spartan ideal. This is what makes it a *παράδειγμα* of political philosophy.⁵⁸

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⁵⁸ Let me add here a few words in reply to Sara Monson's comments, which I appreciate not only for her kind words and accurate restatement of my main thrust, but also for her very interesting observations about Thrasymachus and the question of realizability. I agree with Monson that the possibility of realization in an actual city is important for Plato's task of answering Thrasymachus. But since such realization is improbable in the short term, it is worth stressing that the more probable second-best kinds of realization are not limited to "realization" within a single soul: there might be an *imperfect* realization in a whole city (yielding perhaps something more like Magnesia than like Callipolis), and the ideal might also be "realized" in a society of friends smaller than a city, within a city or cutting across the divisions between actual cities. The Academy might be one such "realization," and so might the invisible community to which the *Republic* invites its readers to see themselves as belonging.

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