

ESSAYS IN ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY III

PLATO

*edited by*

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## INTRODUCTION

This third volume of essays presented to the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy represents a new departure in two ways. First, it is a collection of essays all concerned with one ancient philosopher, Plato. It is our intention to put together subsequent volumes on Aristotle, post-Aristotelian philosophy, and pre-Socratic philosophy. We started with Plato because we felt that we had a sufficient collection of papers presented at various meetings of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy or at meetings which our Society sponsored and held conjointly with other learned societies. Most of the papers printed in this volume have not been published elsewhere.

This volume also represents a new departure in that the papers presented here were given at larger number of meetings in a shorter period of time than were those in the first two volumes. Prior to the production of *Essays II*, the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy sponsored sessions (for many years) at the annual meeting of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association and at the annual meeting of the American Philological Association. During the period of time covered by this volume, the Society has also been sponsoring sessions at the Western (now Central) and Pacific Divisions of the American Philosophical Association. In addition, the SAGP has been cooperating with the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science and other organizations in sponsoring a yearly conference on philosophy in antiquity and the middle ages. There have been five such conferences in the years covered by this volume.

Ancient Greek philosophy is one of the areas in which the influence of contemporary European philosophy has been increasing; the study of Plato has benefited especially from cross-fertilization between the analytic and hermeneutic traditions. We can see evidence of that relationship in the present volume—for example, in the essays by Dorter and Cobb-Stevens. While there continues to be a deep interest in the dogmatic structure of Plato's thought, as in Gerson's essay, there is also an increasing tendency to interpret Plato's method and objectives, as in the essays by Turnbull, Zembaty, and West, for example. In addition, Plato's mature political thought has in recent years gotten more attention; in this volume, we may mention the essays by Lee and Griswold.

Research in ancient Greek philosophy has been enriched substantially during the current decade not only as a result of the systematic application of analytical tools and hermeneutic approaches, but also with vigorous philological studies of the extant texts and historical and archaeological findings. One very effective interpretive direction of philosophical work has

## Politikē Epistēmē in Plato's *Statesman*

Charles L. Griswold, Jr.

My purpose in this essay is to analyze the meaning of "politikē epistēmē" as it is developed in the *Statesman* by the Eleatic Stranger. The theme of "political science" (the usual translation of the phrase) pervades the *Statesman*, and I shall therefore comment on several sections of the text. This complex and relatively neglected dialogue presents the interpreter with many intriguing but vexing puzzles. After outlining the basic problem to be discussed as well as its general context, I turn in Section II to the definition of political science set out in the opening divisions of the *Statesman*. In Section III, I focus on the Eleatic Stranger's long and exotic myth, in Section IV on his analysis of "measure," and in Section V on his discussion of law. In Section VI, I adumbrate the unexpected conclusion about the nature of the "best" political regime suggested, on my interpretation, by the *Statesman*.

### I. Introductory Comments: Philosophy and Political Science

At the beginning of the *Sophist* Socrates states that the *genos* "philosopher" is very hard to discern.<sup>1</sup> On account of the general ignorance of mankind, philosophers at times appear to be worthless, at times they seem to be statesmen, at times sophists, and at times simply mad. Socrates turns to the Eleatic Stranger (ES) and asks him the question which leads to, and provides the main topics for, the ensuing two dialogues: do those from the ES's region divide the *genē* "sophist," "statesman," and "philosopher" into three, just as the names indicate? The ES answers affirmatively, and accepts Socrates' invitation to define each of these types. The ES will also accept the order of exposition just suggested by Socrates (first the sophist, then the statesman, and finally the philosopher), and indeed will conduct the first discourse with a young person (Theaetetus) suggested by him (see *Soph.* 218b, 253e-254b; *Stsm.* 257c2-4, 258b, 285d).<sup>2</sup> In answer to Socrates' question the ES asserts that the three *genē* can be analyzed separately. Having so quickly given shape to the ensuing discussion, Socrates then sits back and listens. He speaks once again at the start of the *Statesman*, in part

to strongly endorse the selection of Young Socrates (YS) as the ES's next interlocutor, and then is heard from no more in that dialogue. Socrates' extraordinary silence, and his uncharacteristic deferral to the *Xenos*, are quite "dramatic."

There is good reason for Socrates to listen carefully to the ES's definition of the three *genē*, for Socrates has just been indicted (in dramatic time) on the preceding afternoon (*Theae.* 210d and *Euthyphro* 2a–3b). The trial of Socrates is key to the intricate dramatic framework of the *Statesman*.<sup>3</sup> The thrust of the indictment is, in effect, that Socrates is both a sophist who corrupts the youth and a sham statesman who falsely claims to know what is best for *polis* and citizen. If Socrates is a philosopher, then Athens asserts that sophist, statesman, and philosopher are two—for philosophy and sophistry are indistinguishable. Socrates' claim in the *Gorgias* (521d) that he alone (presumably by virtue of his philosophical abilities) possesses the true *politikē technē* has been called into question, and the *polis* will soon pronounce on the claim's validity in a court of law.<sup>4</sup> In the *Gorgias* Socrates predicts that his trial will resemble that of a doctor prosecuted by a cook before a jury of children. If by contrast the *Sophist* and *Statesman* represent the "distinctively philosophical version of Socrates' trial"—as one commentator has argued recently<sup>5</sup>—then the outcome of this trial is difficult to ascertain. For Plato decided that the *Philosopher* was not to take place. That dialogue would have made it evident whether or not the Stranger from Elea thought of philosophy in a way that would have clearly described Socrates' life work and so would have provided an apology for him. I shall return briefly to the problem for which the drama prepares us, namely, that of relating to each other the *epistēmai* of statesman and philosopher.

At the start of the *Statesman* the ES right away turns the search for a definition of the *genos* "statesman" into a search for the *technē* or *epistēmē politikē*.<sup>6</sup> His rationale for doing so is evidently the belief that possession of political science is the sufficient condition for someone's being a statesman. Hence the ES argues that a person need not possess political power in order to be a true statesman (259b). Correspondingly, the ES says virtually nothing about the statesman's character, education, or soul, or how he is to get hold of political power—topics which Socrates discusses at length in the *Republic* when treating of political science.

In order to establish the guiding assumption that the statesman possesses "political science," the ES asks YS, "Must we set him {the *politikon andra*} down too as one of the knowers (*epistēmonōn*), or how?" YS answers, "In this way." At the start it is very unclear in what sense this "science" of politics may be said to exist. It is initially unclear whether the ES wishes to define the "true" or "ideal" statesman, a sort of unattainable paradigm; whether he is to define the characteristics of the "statesmen" we are so

familiar with; or finally whether the object of the analysis is a "statesman" who is attainable, but only rarely and with difficulty.<sup>7</sup> As we might also put the point, it is unclear what the meaning of "genos" or "eidos" is: in analyzing the species "statesman" are we analyzing an "Idea" in the sense in which the term is used by Socrates in the middle books of the *Republic*? Or are we permitted to interpret the term as meaning, loosely speaking, something like "family" (as at 310b10), tribe, kind, group? Or does the ES use the terms in both senses?<sup>8</sup>

The term "politikos" does not settle the matter, since it is capable of a variety of connotations. Socrates uses it in the *Apology* (21c) in the sense of "politician." No actual statesmen or politicians are mentioned in the *Statesman*, and clearly the ES does not describe a "political science" that is commonly practiced. As the ES points out, in fact, the true statesman is very easily confused with any of the large *genos* of sophistical imitators. Many of these deceivers "bear a resemblance to lions, centaurs, and others of this sort, and a very large number to satyrs and the weak and wily beasts, and they quickly exchange their looks (*ideai*) and capacity with one another" (291a8–b3).<sup>9</sup> It is fair to say that many of those called "statesman" are actually imitators of statesmen. The ES is therefore searching either for the "ideal," or at least superhuman, political science suitable for the gods; or an excellent and occasionally attainable political science suitable for men as they have become (see 292d ff.); or both. A remarkable feature of the *Statesman* is that the ES presents us with the last of these alternatives, that is, with *both* of these descriptions of political science. Further, the ES contrasts the two in such a way as to show the relative weaknesses and strengths of each; the relationship between the two is not simply that of best and next best. Much of the dialogue's complexity and richness lies in the interplay of the ES's dual description of political science.

Before turning to the dialogue, a further preliminary comment is necessary. The opening diairesis of the *Statesman* shows that political science is a part of *epistēmē*.<sup>10</sup> Consequently it would seem that to fully understand political science we would have to know what *epistēmē* is. Unfortunately the ES never does define *epistēmē* or *technē*, though he divides "one whole *epistēmē*" (258e6–7) in order to define a part of it. While his references to an *epistēmē* of rhetoric (304c10–d2), and to the *technē* or *epistēmē* of priestly ministration (*diakonou*; 290c5–d3—of which the *mantikē epistēmē* has a part) suggest that he allows the term a variety of senses, he does not specify the core *idea* of these senses. He seems to want to distinguish between true opinion and *epistēmē* (e.g., 301a10–b3). Further clues might be gathered from the ES's discussions of diairesis and dialectic (285a–d, 286d–287a),<sup>11</sup> as well as from the various digressions about paradigms (277a–278e) and measure (283c–287a).<sup>12</sup> Rather than pull all these clues together into a definition of "*epistēmē* itself," I shall

follow the ES in allowing the meaning of “*politikē epistēmē*” to emerge in the course of my discussion.<sup>13</sup>

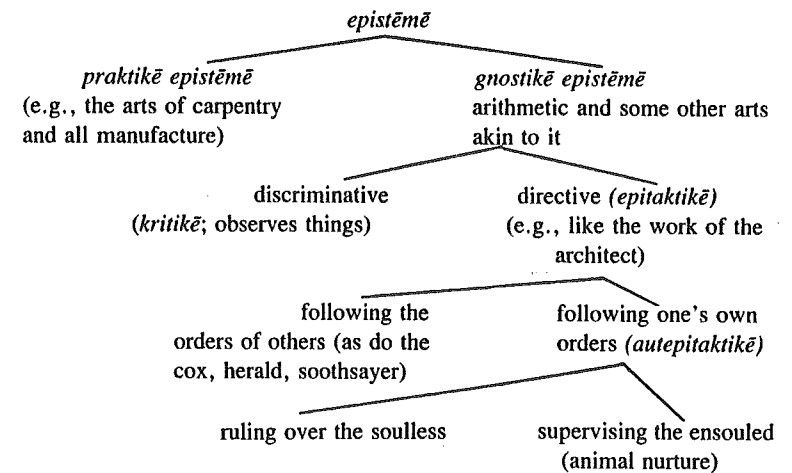
## II. The Opening Diareseis of the *Statesman*

The opening diareseis of our dialogue stretch from 258b3–267c3. At 267b–c the ES “weaves together” the genealogy of the statesman into a definition, the substance of which is as follows: The statesman possesses the gnostic science of giving his own orders for the nurturing and grazing of the two-footed pedestrian hornless non-interbreeding herd of animals.<sup>14</sup> As we might also summarize it: political science is the art of ruling featherless bipeds. The ES then asks YS whether this definition is satisfactory, and YS responds affirmatively. The ES immediately proceeds to cast doubt on the definition and so on YS’ uncritical acceptance of it (for a similar event see 277a). In imitation of Socratic pedagogy, the Stranger has led YS up the proverbial garden path, and in a way that should be instructive to the young mathematician. YS’ answers to the ES in the course of the diareseis may be brief, but there is a world of difference between “yes” and “no.” It is in the nature of diareisis to demand at each step a choice of direction, and YS had had ample opportunity to make his wishes known. We may fairly say, then, that YS bears responsibility for the unacceptable results the diareseis led to. Having spelled out the substance of YS’ unreflective but not entirely uncommon opinion that the statesman is like an all-knowing “scientific” (*epistēmonōn*; 258b4) shepherd who possesses a quasi-mathematical “gnostic” *epistēmē* of ruling over sheep-like citizens (who would therefore be different in species from the shepherd; cf. 275b–c), the ES immediately criticizes the definition and so puts YS in a state of *aporia*. Having undermined YS’ prejudices about political life, the ES produces his magnificent myth, a story which provides YS with a vision of things sufficiently broad to allow him to see the limitations of his previous opinion.

The error of the opening diareseis which the ES specifies before embarking on the myth (he specifies still other errors once he has completed the myth; 274e–276e), and which he cites as a reason for rejecting the definition I summarized above, comes as a bit of a surprise. The ES says that the definition is defective because it has failed to isolate an *epistēmē* to which the statesman alone can indisputably lay claim. “Thousands” of other types of people will claim to be “statesmen” in the sense specified so far (267e–268c).<sup>15</sup> We would have expected the ES to say that rulers as we know them are not in fact different in kind from the ruled, that there is a fundamental difference between human beings and the other animals, that the whole issue of the *freedom* of the citizens must also be considered.<sup>16</sup> He does come to all this right *after* the myth, once

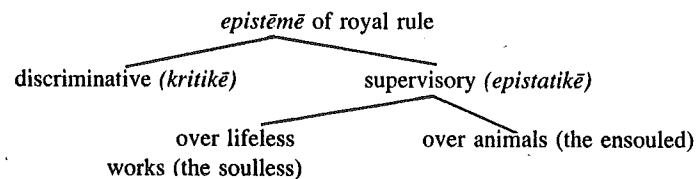
the human condition is, as it were, put into perspective. We may tentatively infer that the myth and the cosmology it depicts are somehow necessary for this perspective. The point the ES makes now, however, does prepare us for these deeper objections. The phenomenon of disagreement, which so thoroughly pervades every aspect of life as we know it, signals a certain liberty of thinking and acting which seems distinctively human and which a statesman must know how to guide. It also signals the absence of divine *politikē epistēmē* from our world; as the ES says at 301d4–6, if the exceptional statesman appeared “he would be welcomed warmly and in piloting with precision would be the only one to manage with happiness the right regime.” Unfortunately, no such welcome survives long in the age that we presently inhabit (following the myth, we may call our age the “cycle of Zeus”). The picture of the all knowing shepherd of the sheep-like people, therefore, seems inappropriate to our world. As we might also put it, the *Statesman*’s opening definition of political science has little to do with politics. It is a strangely apolitical definition. Hence in the myth the ES will locate that picture of political science in the cosmos’ cycle of Cronos (as he makes explicit at 274e10–275a6), as distinguished from the political science appropriate to the present cycle of Zeus.

The duality of the *Statesman*’s treatment of political science is present in the very first diareisis of the dialogue. The first four diareseis (starting at 258b3 and proceeding up to the errors committed at 261d–262b) run as follows:



Of the arts in the first cut of the left-hand branch the ES says that they “possess their science as if it naturally inheres in their actions, and they bring to completion along with their actions the bodies that come to be through

them and were not before" (258d8–e2). Of the right-hand branch, the ES says that they are "stripped of actions and furnish only cognition" (258d4–6). Since the diaireseis up to the myth pursue political science (along with the arts of the household-manager and slavemaster that are the same as it; 259b) under the "*gnostikē epistēmē*" branch, political science is first thought of as being more like arithmetic than carpentry. After the myth, however, the paradigm for political science changes from shepherding to weaving (the weaving of woolen cloak, to be precise; 279b1–5), and weaving is clearly a productive art and brings something into being. Thus, although the ES never explicitly acknowledges the change, it seems safe to say that after the myth political science is pursued under the branch of "*praktikē epistēmē*" rather than "*gnostikē epistēmē*." As we shall see, the myth provides further evidence for this view. When in a later section of the dialogue the ES summarizes the first two diaireseis, he conspicuously omits the division between "gnostic" and "practical" (one might better say "productive") science, as if to concede that mentioning it now would require an explicit and long revision of the divisions (292b3–c3). That summary runs:



I do not mean to imply that the two conceptions of political science are completely different. The ES maintains from beginning to end, for example, that the statesman possesses an *epistēmē*, that this *epistēmē* is the art of ruling, that he rules through force of mind, that he gives his own orders only (260e, 305d1–4). Political science is an "architectonic" (259e8) kind of knowledge. Moreover, the ES throughout maintains that the possession of *epistēmē* is the sole criterion of legitimate rule; the consent of the ruled is a strictly secondary matter (292c5–9; hence the equation of the sciences of king and slavemaster at 259b). Nevertheless there is a fundamental difference between political science as productive and as gnostic. The opening division of the *Statesman*, then, anticipates the central puzzles of the dialogue's treatment of political science. Is the science of politics "theoretical" or "practical/productive"? Is it a form of knowledge that is more like discovering or one that is more like making? Or are we meant to conclude that political science is, somehow, both theoretical and practical/productive?

The duality in question permeates the dialogue. Indeed, the dialogue

appears to fall into two parts, the pre-myth and the post-myth "halves." The myth which, like a joint, connects them pictures a cosmos divided into two cycles; there are two paradigms (shepherding and weaving); there are two kinds of measure, the arithmetical and mean (283d). Even though the *Statesman* provides us with examples of nonbifurcatory diairesis (see 287c ff.), bifurcatory diairesis seems to exert its power throughout the dialogue in the ways just adumbrated. At the same time, the division of the *Statesman* into two is too simple, since the myth itself constitutes a third section, and several of the digressions which follow it (those on paradigms and on measure) interrupt the sequence of divisions.

The myth demonstrates that the apparent exclusivity of the two alternatives presented by diairesis is not final. For the myth shows what diairesis seems to exclude, namely that political science fall under *both* branches. As I have already indicated, the conception of political science produced by the pre-myth series of diaireseis is appropriate to the cosmos' cycle of Cronos. The post-myth series of diaireseis produce a conception of political science appropriate to the present cycle of Zeus. Thus while diairesis heavily influences the substance of the *Statesman*, the myth is ultimately the controlling discourse of the dialogue. It forms the basis for putting the results of diairesis (and perhaps even the method of diairesis) into perspective, for it gives us a basis for evaluating the results produced by diairesis. This point is particularly evident in the section on law and the regimes (291d–303c). I shall briefly discuss that section below.

The myth's cosmological setting for our understanding of political science in no way neutralizes the questions about the science of politics mentioned above. On the contrary, it supplies us with a deeper formulation of them. For in the ways I shall examine in a moment, the myth teaches not just that the cycles are separate; it also leads us to ask whether the present cycle ought to be modeled on the cycle of Cronos. Certainly the *Statesman* shows that to *confuse* one cycle with the other—and in particular to think, as YS does, that the paradigm of shepherding is appropriate for our times—is to invite catastrophe. A person in our cycle of the cosmos who thinks that he possesses Cronos's *epistēmē*, that he is different in kind from the ruled, and that the ruled are animals comparable to sheep, is nothing other than a tyrant, and tyranny is the worst of regimes not founded on lawfulness (276e, 301b10–c4, 302d–e).

The ES analyzes the meaning of political science in part by specifying what this science is *of*. The object of this science is man. Consequently the opening series of diaireseis in our dialogue falls into two sections, the first mapping out the relevant kinds of *epistēmē* (258b3–261a1), the second dividing up the various kinds of animals until the distinctively human animal is isolated (261a3–266e11). In these pre-myth diaireseis man is distinguished

from the animals *only* by perceptually visible, physical characteristics. The *Statesman* therefore begins with a reduction of what we would like to think of as the uniquely human to the level of information about the biological attributes which combine in various ways so as to delineate the species of the animal kingdom. As we may also put the point, if there is a "form" of man, in the pre-myth section of the *Statesman* it is determined solely by attributes of the sensible world. Therefore, the ES's revision of the first series of diareseis will require not just a different sense of political science, but a different conception of the human animal.

What is the connection between the conceptions of *politikē epistēmē* and of human nature suggested by the *Statesman's* opening series of diareseis? Why should a "gnostic" science similar to arithmetic lead the ES to conceive of man as a featherless biped? The answers to these questions are complex, but I tentatively suggest the following: the objects of arithmetic and kindred arts are inert in the sense that they do not change; they possess no potentiality, no freedom. These objects (say, geometrical figures) do not differ "ontologically" from each other. The geometrician or arithmetician treats them as things to be manipulated or used as he wishes (within the constraints of their constitution, of course). So too does the shepherd treat the sheep (and recall again that the art of the shepherd-like statesman is initially said to be the same as that of the slavemaster; 259b). The objects of his art are inert in a sense similar to that just mentioned. I note in passing that at 272b YS is not sure which cycle of the cosmos is happier; he does not yet see the defects of the first definitions of political science and man. That these definitions reflect his own, mathematically oriented, nature, helps to explain the reference at 267a1–3 to the debt repaid; the first definitions of the *Statesman* are in a real sense Young Socrates' own.

To anticipate somewhat, there also exists a connection between the ES's post-myth conception of political science as a practical/productive art and the accompanying conception of man that is familiar and nonreductive. The carpenter brings out a potentiality of wood in a way that may clearly distinguish it from the tree with which it originally was continuous. The carpenter's product may be made to serve the purpose of protection against nature. The weaver takes materials originally derived from nature and subjected to a complex refining process that brings out its most serviceable and finest characteristics, and then produces an object that looks like the perfection of these (originally rough) materials. This quasi-natural object also serves as protection against nature. Similarly, the statesman or royal weaver produces citizens out of potentially political animals. The "woolen cloak" of laws, customs, and true opinions serve to protect man from nature, including the more dangerous aspects of human nature. The second half of the *Statesman* teaches, that is, that political beings are in a certain sense artifacts

produced by political science (which is itself an artifact). This production of a "second nature" realizes the potentiality of the human animal and thereby distinguishes man from the other animals. Man's nature is malleable, accessible to the artifices of man's political science. Differently stated, man can make himself differ from the other animals. Man is the animal capable of *technē*, including the much disputed *technē* of politics. This is what "political science" and "man" as originally conceived in the *Statesman* ignore. Consequently, "productive" political science and "gnostic" political science will also differ in that the former, unlike the latter, is necessarily oriented by some understanding of what is needed by and is best for its object (man).

To pursue the differences between the *Statesman's* two notions of political science further requires a brief discussion of the myth, to which I therefore turn.

### III. The Myth

The myth in the *Statesman* must surely rank among the strangest in Plato's dialogues.<sup>17</sup> My comments about it will be very selective and incomplete. I suggest that we divide the myth into the following sections: (1) Prologue (268d5–269c3) (2) Introductory Argument about the nature of the god and demiurge (269c4–270b2; here the ES tries to explain why the cosmos has both a cycle and countercycle, why one is regulated by god and the other by the cosmos itself) (3) the description of the two cycles of the cosmos (270b3–274e3), which I shall refer to as the "cycle of Cronos" and the "cycle of Zeus." In the prologue the ES claims in a typically philosophical way that he will explain the origins of several well-known myths, for these myths are dim recollections of a cosmological situation which the ES's supramyth describes. The three popular myths the ES mentions are the struggle between Atreus and Thyestes; the story about the age of Cronos and the first of the five ages of man; and the story about the beings who were generated not from men, but in an unnatural way, directly from the earth. Precisely by providing an account of the common source of these traditional myths the ES's myth is not traditional. Nevertheless, the ES's picture of the cosmos seems heavily indebted to Hesiod's picture.

To begin with, the ES avails himself of the Hesiodic view that in the course of time things progressively degenerate so far as man is concerned. Indeed, the ES's cosmos exhibits an inevitable trend towards entropy in *both* of its cycles. The cycle of Cronos is compelled to end for predetermined reasons (272e, 269c4–7). A violent and near total destruction of all living things ensues. Cronos has fully wound up the cosmos, like a spindle hanging



from a thread (cf. *Rep.* 617c), and the destructive transition to the cycle of Zeus results from the sudden reversal of motion as the cosmos begins to unwind on its own. By this point Cronos and all his helper gods have abandoned their posts and have left the cosmos to regulate itself “automatically” (269c7). The ensuing cycle of Zeus necessarily comes to an end due to the inherent defect of the “body” of the cosmos.<sup>18</sup> What “beautiful things” the cosmos possesses are put into it by the demiurge; that is, the cosmos is not naturally good (273b7–c2; the demiurge does not, of course, have to furnish the cosmos with a body). Even the cosmos’ life is put into it, and periodically restored, by the demiurge (270a3–5; and 273e1–4 and context). The return to the cycle of Cronos—and so the continued existence of the cosmos in any form—seems completely dependent on the “care” of god who made it (273d–e). Looking down on his now chaotic “cosmos” the god feels moved to intervene and grab hold again of the tiller. He then proceeds to once more wind up the universe (the switch of metaphors is the ES’s), thus causing a reversal of the cosmos’ motion which utterly destroys all living things.

The second crucial sense in which the ES’s picture of the cosmos is Hesiodic is the following. In Hesiod, “murky Chaos” is originated first. This “chasm” or “gap” seems unknowable, as is *its* origin (from what was it born?). There seems little we (or Hesiod) can say about it as it is in and of itself. This origin of things, along with its disputatious progeny (among whom a “gap” always seems to reappear), seems never entirely overcome in Hesiod’s cosmology. Hence Hesiod’s constant emphasis on work, moderation, the scarcity of good things, the ever present danger of losing them, and so forth. Likewise the ES’s cosmos is brought into being out of a sort of chaos (here taken to be the undifferentiated, formless, and disorganized matter), though by a “demiurge.”<sup>19</sup> This chaos periodically recurs, as does the reenactment of the imposition of order—an order fated to end. In neither Hesiod’s nor the ES’s cosmos is there a condition of perfection towards which the cosmos tends. Indeed, as I will show below, it is very difficult to determine what the perfection, fulfillment, or happiness of the ES’s cosmic “animal” (269d1) might be. As we might also put the point, in neither picture of things is the cosmos informed by an Idea of the Good, or indeed by any Ideas. In the *Statesman*, in fact, it is arguably the case that the ES never refers to the Ideas or Forms in the sense discussed by the Socrates of the *Republic* (Books V–VII), *Phaedrus*, and *Symposium*.<sup>20</sup> Stated in one final way, the ES represents the cosmos as endless *process* (endless if the god keeps intervening and winds it up again). Herein lies, I think, a fundamental difference between the ES’s cosmology and that of Socrates (consider the myth of Er, for example), as well as a striking difference between their respective notions of political science and of dialectic.

As I have mentioned repeatedly, the cycle of Cronos embodies the conceptions of both political science and of man articulated by the opening diareseis of the *Statesman* (as is made explicit at 274e–275a). In those diareseis as well as in the myth’s description of the cycle of Cronos the ruler is also household manager and slavemaster. His art is perfectly efficient and operates with precision one would associate with a mathematician. At 271d we are told that Cronos’s lieutenants divide up completely the cosmos “*kata genē*”—like perfect diareticians, each one of these *daimones* completely regulating and providing for the given herd. In this state of affairs there is no disagreement or competition among men. There is no private property, no family, no work, no sexuality (people are generated out of the earth), and no war (271e–272a). There was no reason to develop any of the arts, not even the arts of agriculture or of clothesmaking; men in those times went about naked and found food without effort. Far from needing the art of weaving woolen cloaks, there seems not to have been a winter (272a5–b1). Evidently men possessed no sense of shame.

It is safe to infer that in the cycle of Cronos there existed no politics. Men and animals could converse with one another (272c). It would seem that the only difference between men and pigs was the number of feet each possessed (see 266a–e). Just as now men graze the inferior species, so then the god grazed men (271e5–7). As in the earlier diareseis of the *Statesman*, “man” is definable solely with reference to his physical characteristics. Since in Cronos’s cycle men are born full grown and then become younger, it would seem that there is no learning in it, only forgetting. As the ES says, no one possessed any memory of preceding generations (271e8–272a2); that is, there existed no sense of history or continuity with the past, no tradition.

When the ES asks YS in which cycle of the cosmos human life is happier, he provides the undecided YS with the following criterion: If those in the age of Cronos possessed philosophy “in their association with beasts and one another, and learning by inquiry from every nature whether each with its own kind of private capacity was aware of something different from all the rest for the gathering and collection of *phronēsis*,” then they were far happier than we are now (272c1–5; this is the only mention by the ES of “philosophy” in all of the *Statesman*; cf. 257a5, c1). The ES leaves it up to YS to discern whether the featherless bipeds of the cycle of Cronos possessed philosophy. It seems perfectly clear that they did not (it also seems probable that they did not possess religion or a sense of piety, anymore than sheep or other animals do). In the age of Cronos, man lived by bread alone.

I infer from all this that the golden ages of Cronos were not in fact desirable in every sense, and so that the statesman of our times ought not simply to seek to pattern his political science on that of Cronos. Our political science cannot simply be the art of living according to nature, whether

“nature” be that of the age of Zeus or that of the age of Cronos.<sup>21</sup> In order to understand the *Statesman’s* teaching it is crucial to see that “ideal” statesmanship of our times cannot simply be understood as an effort to imitate Cronos’s statesmanship, as though our statesman is to strive to institute shepherd-like rule and to treat the citizens as sheep. The rule of Cronos is not just impossible, it is not wholly desirable. We are therefore left with the question: how is convention to imitate nature? Or again, what is the standard relative to which the statesman measures the worth of conventions?

At the beginning of the cycle of Zeus men are able to recall somewhat the instructions of the cosmos’ “father,” and for a while things go well (273b). But the gods are absent, forgetfulness sets in, and humans—just like the cosmos—are compelled to rely on their own devices for survival. This is the genesis of all the arts (274b–c), including the political art and philosophy. They are all forms of autotherapy, all ways of containing as long as possible the inevitable decay. And this is surely the major (though not the only) reason why the ES chooses the weaving of woolen cloaks as the paradigm for the political science of the age of Zeus.<sup>22</sup> Woolens are necessary when nature is most hostile, in bitter winter. The ES explicitly classifies the weaving of woolens as a defensive art and indeed virtually identifies weaving with the weaving of woolen cloaks. Likewise, he says there, he wishes to identify the royal art with the political art (279c–280a). Political science is the art of defending the citizens from a fundamentally hostile nature. This conception of political science, grounded in the ES’s cosmology, guides the ES’s later discussions of law and virtue. There too the ES makes clear that the lawgiver’s purpose is to keep the citizens safe both from themselves (human nature tends to destroy itself) and from threats posed by competing cities (below). Hence the references in the myth to “illness” and the problem of fending it off (273e2).<sup>23</sup> In the section on law the metaphor of medicine is extensively used, as is the nautical metaphor (e.g., at 302a the ES refers to cities that “sink below like ships and perish and have perished and will still go on perishing on account of the sorry state of their captains and crews”). Similarly, the myth refers to the “rudder” of the cosmos, and the divine “helmsman” who prevents the cosmos from sinking into the “sea, which is limitless, of dissimilarities” (273d6–e1).

What then is the meaning of the “*epistēmē*” or “*technē*” which the statesman of our times is to possess? To anticipate somewhat, the key to political science in the cycle of Zeus is *prudence* (*phronēsis*), the “practical” knowledge of how to produce a *polis* that will withstand the challenges of the age. It is the knowledge of what to do and when in order to keep the polis safe. The cosmos possesses *phronēsis* (269d1), and in the cycle of Zeus man is to imitate the cosmos’ effort to care for itself (274d). This is rather far, of course, from Aristotle’s notion of *phronēsis* (which is not an *epistēmē* or

*technē* for him); in particular, the ES’s political science does not seem guided by “moral virtue,” at least not in any sense of “virtue” more edified than that useful to a city and its citizens for their survival. And this is tied to the striking, and otherwise perplexing, absence from the *Statesman* of any definitions of the soul, of virtue, and of justice. As I have already intimated, in this respect the *Statesman’s* treatment of political science also differs markedly from that of Socrates as it is presented in the *Republic*.<sup>24</sup>

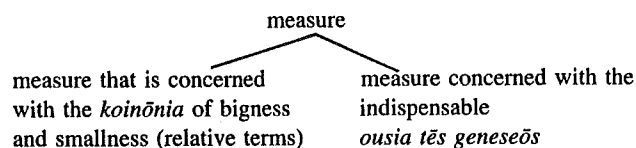
In the *Statesman* political science of the age of Zeus is prudence informed by an understanding of the dangers to man of conditions in *both* cycles of the cosmos. Still more subtly, political science must be informed by an awareness of the limitations of each cycle, and, therefore, by the complex differences between the two cycles. I have mentioned above that the “utopia” of the cycle of Cronos is not only unrealizable in the present age, it would not be desirable to try to realize it without qualification. As becomes explicit in the ES’s discussion of law, the *Statesman’s* teaching about political science necessarily moderates any passion for perfect justice. This does not contradict the ES’s argument at the end of the dialogue to the effect that moderation unmixed with courage may lead to disaster. The wisdom of our statesman’s conservatism (in the literal sense of the term) will depend heavily on his grasp of the cosmological and human situation described in the myth. The ES will also argue that a prime achievement of statesmanship is the rule of law. The rule of law becomes justifiable only when we fully understand both its limitation and its virtues in relation to both what is achievable in this age and what life would be like in the sort of situation pertaining in the age of Cronos. This is a complex proposition, and the highly dialectical section on law is correspondingly complex.

As is evident from the above, political science is an invention of man in the cycle of Zeus, and in that sense is an artifice. The same must be said, on the ES’s account, for philosophy and religion. Thus the arts of politics, philosophy, and religion become necessary when the god (Cronos) is absent from the cosmos. These arts are all forms of self-care, to use the ES’s language (274d2–6). The art of politics, consequently, cannot claim divine guidance as the source of its knowledge. As the ES insists throughout, the statesman gives his *own* orders only; the recipients of these orders include the priests and soothsayers (260d–e, 290c–e). In our age political science is a secular art.

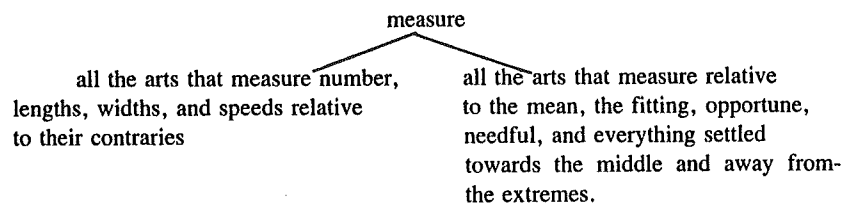
In order to bring out more clearly the prudential character of the political science presented in the post-myth section of the *Statesman*, I would like to make several brief comments about the ES’s discussions of measure and law. Each of those sections is extremely complicated in itself, and once again my few remarks about them in no way claim to constitute a full interpretation.

## IV. Measure

The section on measure naturally falls into two parts, 283c3–285c3, 285c4–287b2. Most of my comments are directed to the first part. At 283d the ES proposes that the “art of measure” (*metrikē*) be divided into two. The ES places very great weight on this diairesis, perhaps more than on any other diairesis in the *Statesman*, and sharply criticizes certain unnamed “clever” thinkers who fail to make the division (285a). The ES’s division at 283d of the art of measure is as follows:



At 284e the ES once again divides the art:



The terms used in the right hand branch of the second diairesis are, *to metrion*, *to prepon*, *ho kairos*, *to deon*, *to meson*. While it is not completely clear whether or not the fifth in the series is intended as a separate term or as a way of summarizing the other four, the balance of evidence lies in favor of the former alternative.<sup>25</sup>

The left hand branch in both formulations of the diairesis would seem to correspond to *gnostikē epistēmē*. The ES indicates that the right hand branch is closely connected with becoming. The ES goes on to indicate that political science relies heavily on measure relative to the mean. At 284c2 he states that the statesman ought to be a “scientific knower in matters of actions” (another indication that political science cannot be solely gnostic, or consist solely of the diaretical analysis of the “bodiless things”). The connection between the mean and becoming is also suggested by the ES’s difficult and twice-repeated phrase to the effect that this form of measure is relative to “the becoming of the mean” (*pros tēn tou metriou genesin*; 284c1, d6).<sup>26</sup> The measure is the *ousia* of *genesis*, not *genesis* itself. Measure presupposes

stability. Yet it also seems that the mean must change relative to the context. The “*anagkaia ousia*” (283d8) is *not* an Idea or Form, or even an *eidos* in the ES’s sense. What counts as the “mean” will depend on the situation; it will be what is timely, suitable, appropriate for the occasion. And in this sense the mean may be said to “become.” Becoming *can* be measured in this sense, which means that *genesis* is not simply unintelligible. At the same time it would seem that measure relative to the mean requires *some* standard other than the becoming in question. The obvious candidate in the *Statesman* for that standard is the mysterious “precise itself” (*auto takribes*) mentioned at 284d2, the analysis of which the ES defers to some future occasion. Knowledge of the “precise itself” may amount to this: the ability to judge in each and every case what is best for that case, as distinguished from the ability to apply general rules to particular situations. The distinction amounts to that drawn in the section on law between wise and precise rule by fiat on the one hand, and the imprecise rule according to written law on the other.<sup>27</sup>

Rule according to law, unavoidable in the age of Zeus, is necessarily imprecise. The present day statesman does not possess the knowledge which could, so to speak, allow him to make a law for each case (295a). In our age the “precise itself” is known and instituted imprecisely. In the light of this orienting view of things, written law comes to light as the *meson* appropriate to our times. It is the mean between wise rule without law and ignorant, lawless rule. Given the movement of the cosmic cycles towards entropy, the statesman’s primary goal will be safety of body and property, and whatever degree of ease is achievable. As we learn in both the myth (274c–d) and the section on law (299e and context), this latter goal will require progress in the arts. The weaver cannot weave beautifully if the arts (including the military art) are crude. The “mean” will be determined in an imprecise way relative to these ends, as they are brought to light by the statesman’s understanding of what in general is possible. The ES provides no further standards or rules in the *Statesman*. Evidently the statesman must rely heavily on *phronēsis* in the sense adumbrated above.

Thus to want peace in a manner that is “more untimely (*akairoteron*) than it ought to be,” for example, will lead to a loss of measure in civic life—in the worst case, to enslavement by a foreign power (307e7 and context). Judging what is timely is a matter of political prudence. Statesmanship must include the ability to judge which arts are to be practiced within the city, and which are needed at a given time. Political science as measurement would know how to order the city into a whole (as the ES later says, how to give orders to, among others, generals, rhetoricians, and judges). The statesman must know what law to make, and when; which persons to intermarry, which children to exchange (310b); which mythologies rhetoricians are to tell, and when (304c–d). He must be able

justly to measure punishments to crimes (here the two branches of measurement are connected). In sum, knowing what to do, when, and how is the prudence which knowledge of measurement relative to the mean, that is, political science, will give the statesman.

### V. Law

As mentioned above, this complicated section of the *Statesman* unrolls dialectically.<sup>28</sup> Once again, my comments will be selective. This entire digression on the regimes and law becomes necessary because of the extreme difficulty of separating out the true statesman from the “sophists of sophists,” that is, the “greatest imitators and greatest enchanters” who falsely claim to be legitimate rulers (see 291c and 303c). The problem of images, so prominent in the *Sophist*, now shows itself to be central to our understanding of political life also. The ES will argue, among things, that any political science which fails to grasp this problem of images and respond to it adequately terminates in disaster. In the worst case, the result is tyranny. The tyrant confuses original and imitation. The ES defines the tyrant not as someone who rules over unwilling subjects but someone who rules without established law in the belief that he possesses the true political science (301c). The tyrant exhibits ignorance of his ignorance in the highest degree.

The aspect of this discussion of greatest relevance here is the contrast between the regime of the true statesman and the various regimes dependent on inferior types of political science. The ES does not tell us whether or not the “true statesman” spoken of in this passage is identical with Cronos. I think that we can safely say that the ES is now presenting us with the contrast between *one* characteristic of the divine rule of Cronos and the imperfect rule of men in the age of Zeus. An understanding of this contrast becomes the key to our judicious acceptance of the rule of law produced by the prudent political art. To put the point in Socratic terms, we can reconcile ourselves to an admittedly imperfect reality only if our evaluation of political life is informed by knowledge of ignorance. To understand why political science is so closely tied to the rule of law it is necessary to understand what is *and* what is not needed by, timely for, and appropriate to the present times. What is not appropriate to attempt is what is either beyond our limits or undesirable. On the whole the *Statesman* suggests not just that it is extremely difficult, especially in a political context, to distinguish those who have true opinion from those who have *epistēmē*, but also that in the cycle of Zeus no one possesses the fully “precise” political science which is one characteristic of Cronos. Still further, the *Statesman* suggests that the age ruled by a

statesman that did possess perfect *politikē epistēmē*—the age of Cronos—is not every way desirable.

The ES establishes at the start that “a multitude in a city” is not “capable of acquiring this science” (292e; the point is repeated at 297b7–c4), and indeed that in any art perhaps barely five percent will excel (292e). This seems consistent with Socrates’ famous statement at *Republic* 494a that “it’s impossible that the multitude be philosophic.” The ES goes still further when he says that “there is no king that comes to be in the cities, as we in point of fact assert, . . . who’s of the sort that naturally arises in hives—one who’s right from the start exceptional in his body and his soul . . .” (301d8–e2). By the “king” he means here the true statesman. The ES also states that we are to separate out the true regime from all the imitations as one would a god from human beings (303b). The most striking characteristic of the true god-like statesman is that he rules without written law: “Although it’s plain enough that in a certain sense the legislative (art) belongs to the royal (art), the best thing is not for the laws but for a man—the king with *phronēsis*—to have strength” (294a6–8). Like the captain of a ship the prudent (*emphrōn*) statesman rules not by written law but by fiat, and without error “as long as they always distribute to those in the city that which with *nous* and *technē* is more just, and can keep them safe and make them better from worse as far as possible” (297a5–b3). Knowledge without law is *technē* based on *phronēsis* and *nous*. The true statesman supplies “his *technē* as law (*nomos*), and keeps his fellow sailors safe and sound” (297a2).

What is so commendable about this kind of rule is that it circumvents an overwhelming defect of law: “law would never be capable of comprehending with precision for all simultaneously the best and the most just and enjoining the best, for dissimilarities of human beings and of their actions and the fact that almost none of the human things is ever at rest do not allow any art whatsoever to declare in any case anything simple about all and over the entire time.” The law is like a “self-willing and foolish human being who allows no one to do anything contrary to his order or even for anyone to ask a question, not even if it turns out that, after all, something new is better for someone contrary to the speech which he himself enjoined” (294b10–c4). Hence the ES three times links “precision” with what is “suitable” (*prosēkon*), so as to contrast suitable precision with the rule of law (295a2, b2, 294d11).

It seems reasonable to suppose that the true statesman being referred to in these passages is, *with respect to his superhumanly precise political science*, the equivalent of Cronos, and that the imitators of the true statesman are all statesmen possible in the age of Zeus. The latter are not simply the run of the mill *politikoi*; the ES would seem to want to include most of *them* in the large band of sophists and other pretenders. The statesmen who can to

some extent transcribe the true laws of the “knower” into an idiom appropriate for our age are captains of a “second sailing” (300c). If their writings “run after the traces of the truest regime” (301e3–4) then their regimes deserve praise as the best possible *under the circumstances*.

The ES is clear about the hierarchy of imperfect regimes relative to the perfect one which they “imitate.” The sole criterion for the ranking is *politikē epistēmē*. The imitative regimes may be governed according to law or lawlessly (without laws, contrary to laws) as follows:

	lawful regimes	lawless regimes
by one person	monarchy	tyranny
by several	aristocracy	oligarchy
by many	democracy	democracy

A 303a we are told that the regime of the few is the “*meson*” between the others, and at 302e10–11 that monarchy is the best *if it is governed by good writings or laws*. At 303a–b we learn that in a situation which is lawless and intemperate, democracy is best, for while it is not capable of the greatest goods, neither is it capable of the worst evils. If we simply order the regimes from best to worst, we get a somewhat different picture of the hierarchy:

(according to law)	_____	{	monarchy
			aristocracy
			democracy
(lawlessly)	_____	{	democracy
			oligarchy
			tyranny

From this perspective it is clear that democracy is the mean in the sense of the “middle.” It is certainly possible that any of the lawful regimes *might* be the “mean” appropriate to the context at a given point in the age of Zeus. At the start of the age of Zeus, for example, when the instructions of the “father” are still remembered, monarchy might have been best. But since, as the ES’s cosmological myth suggests, human affairs are never at rest and always tend to degenerate from law into lawlessness, from remembrance to forgetfulness, it seems extremely unlikely that further on in the cycle a wise monarch will be found. Such is the situation in our own time. In addition to the already quoted passage at 301d8–e4, in which the ES says that “there is

no king that comes to be in the cities” and “they {the citizens} must, it seems, once they’ve come together, write up writings while they run after the traces of the truest regime,” the ES remarks at 301c8–d2 that people simply “don’t trust that anyone would ever prove to be worthy of a rule of that {kingly} sort, so as to be willing and able as ruler with virtue and science to distribute correctly the just and holy things to all . . . .” The people call anyone claiming to a monarch a “tyrant.” Thus the lawful regime appropriate to our stage in the degenerating cycle of Zeus will be either an aristocracy or a democracy. It seems to me that the very same objection the ES articulates against the claim by one person to absolute rule would *a fortiori* hold against the claims of a few such persons. Consequently the ES’s argument suggests that the prudent statesman will aim for a democracy governed by law—perhaps a sort of constitutional democracy or republic. The ES does not make this suggestion explicit, though much else in his discussion of law seems to assume a *polis* in which the laws are made by the people (more on this point below).

While the ES speaks repeatedly of “justice” in this section he never defines the term. Ruling with justice would seem at least to mean giving each his due (a standard attained best by the wise rule without law). Given the heavy emphasis put on keeping the city safe, and on the constant dangers posed by unrestrained self-interest, civil strife, tyranny, and other “illnesses,” it would seem that the purpose of justice is safety of the citizen body, and so that the *summum bonum* is the good of the *polis*. Justice must therefore have much to do with the regulation of private property (cf. the reference to “mutual contracts” at 294e8–295a2). The cosmology of the myth, that is, continues to shape the ES’s notion of political science. As the ES says, both mythology (304c) and the “divine bonds” of true opinion about the “beautiful, just, and good things (and about their contraries)” will be necessary for this Hephaistean statesman of our time to forge in the souls of the multitude (309c). This may well include many sorts of religious sanctions against breaking the law; the priests too should be ruled by the statesman (290c8–d3). Inspired by the “muse of the royal art” (309d2–3) to apply the “drug” (310a3) of correct opinion, the statesman will prevent the citizens from becoming utterly dissimilar or succumbing to the two warring parts of virtue (310a and context), so saving them from becoming enslaved (307e–308a).

The logic of the ES’s ultimate vindication of the rule of law becomes clear by 300e and context: if true statesmen rule, then rule without law is best. If anyone possessing less than perfect knowledge rules, then law is necessary (301a10–b3 thus points to a contrast between the true king’s *epistēmē* with the imitative king’s true *doxa*). Obedience to the law is possible on the basis of knowledge of ignorance; the law is the “mean”

appropriate to our admittedly nondivine, human, and contentious context. As in the myth, politics and legislation are necessary because the god is absent. Political science of our age must be understood as an imitation of the true *epistēmē*, and as inseparable from legislation. Laws are part of the cloak that protects us against nature, including human nature (cf. 310a). Laws are not ideal, but are better than lawlessness in an age where perfect knowledge is absent. What remains to be determined is how the laws are best formulated, and so what regime affords us the best chance of good legislation. They must be formulated on the basis of "much trial and error" (300b1), and in such a way that *poleis* not "sink below like ships and perish . . . on account of the sorry state of their captains and crews" (302a6–8). Improvement of the useful arts must be encouraged even as the desire for power of those who believe themselves possessors of the political art must be checked. It would seem then that it would be best if political power were shared among citizens schooled both to moderate their claims to knowledge and to embolden their desire for knowledge.

## VI. Concluding Remarks

These observations bring me to a difficult aspect of the ES's treatment of political science, one that has traditionally disturbed readers of the dialogue. By way of conclusion I would like to briefly sketch the problem. To the end the ES is not completely clear about the status of the freedom of the citizens. On the one hand, the ES consistently distinguishes between slave and freeman (including in his very last description of the statesman at 311c), and indicates that it is far better to be free than enslaved (307e–308a). The slave is a tool and in no way competes with the statesman for title to rule, whereas all of the free do dispute with the statesman (289c ff.). That is, the free see themselves as capable of directing their lives *qua* citizens. While the tyrant is bad because he rules without knowledge (and does not even know that he lacks knowledge), the ES also says that the tyrant is evil because he kills or harms whoever he wants (301d). At one point, shortly after the conclusion of the myth, he said that the distinction between forcible and voluntary rule is crucial and should have been incorporated into the earlier diareseis (276d–e).

On the other hand, the ES also insists that *epistēmē* alone is the relevant criterion of rule. Questions about the distinction between the forcible and voluntary, poverty and wealth, law and lawlessness, and the one, few and many, are not relevant (292a, 293a). Just as a doctor can, because he possesses the medical art, cure us whether we are willing or unwilling (293b), so too in the "outstandingly right regime, and the only regime in

which one might find the rulers truly with know-how and not only seeming to have it, regardless of whether they rule in conformity with laws or without laws, and over willing or unwilling (subjects), and themselves poor or rich, for one must not calculate in terms of any correctness any of these things in any way as a factor" (293c5–d2). As long as they employ "*epistēmē* and the just and, in keeping {the polis} safe, make it better from worse to the best of their ability," the *true* statesman may kill or exile citizens as he sees fit (293d4–e5). According to this line of reasoning (and this line predominates in the *Statesman*) the *only* thing which distinguishes the tyrant from true statesman-king is the later's possession of *politikē epistēmē*. There are no limits to the true statesman's power except those established by his *epistēmē*, and the true statesman alone is the judge of what those limits are. The ES's failure to discuss at any length the nature of the soul, justice, form, philosophy, the education of citizen and guardians, seems to represent the flip side of the view that the statesman's power is limited only to the extent that he (knowledgeably) says it is. It is not easy to see what the distinction between slave and freeman amounts to in the *true* statesman's regime.

However, the benefit of an age from which the true statesman and perfectly precise political science are absent is that the freedom of the citizens becomes a possibility (whereas in the age of Cronos it is not even that). Indeed, given that the ideal political science is not available to men in this age, and that statesmen therefore rule with imperfect knowledge (and in the best case with the awareness that their knowledge *is* imperfect), is not the consent of the ruled indispensable to just rule? If knowledge is imperfect, no man can claim without qualification to be the ruler of another. Further, is not the freedom of the citizens to develop the arts indispensable to the survival of the city? If knowledge is imperfect, then opportunities to improve it must be encouraged. We learned at the end of the myth (274c) that when men were *atechnoi* life was difficult and dangerous, and at 299e that a system of laws which excluded progress in the arts would ultimately lead to the destruction of the city (the very result the laws are instituted to avoid). If the perfect statesman is absent, then we are faced with the problem of finding the regime which will provide incentives for those predisposed to statesmanship to develop their talents and then to put them at the disposal of the *polis*. At the same time, the regime must provide incentives for the rest of the citizens to habituate themselves to the discipline of responsible citizenship—a discipline which, as the ES notes, will require the proper combination of moderation, courage, and true opinion. The considerations of prudence and utility I have sketched suggest that a degree of political liberty will also be required. If this line of argument is true to the text, then the *Statesman* points us to a

proposition not normally associated with Platonic political philosophy:<sup>29</sup> *politikē epistēmē* and the virtues will best flourish in the context of a democracy ruled by law.

### Notes

1. In this essay I shall be referring only to the Platonic "Socrates." Unless otherwise noted, all page references in the text advert to the *Stsm.* Except where indicated, all translations of the *Theae.*, *Soph.*, and *Stsm.* are those of S. Bernardete, *The Being of the Beautiful: Plato's Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

2. While the ES, like Socrates (257b2–4), seems to think that the order of the three topics is not arbitrary, Theodorus treats the three *genē* as interchangeable units of equal worth which can therefore be taken in any order—an error for which Socrates reprimands him (*Stsm.* 257a–b).

3. The dramatic context of the *Stsm.* is worked out at length by M. Miller in his *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1980). Further commentary on the dramatic context of both *Soph.* and *Stsm.* is available in S. Rosen's *Plato's Sophist: the Drama of Original and Image* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983). See also G.K. Plochmann's "Socrates, the Stranger from Elea, and Some Others," *Classical Philology* 49 (1954): 223–231.

4. To the best of my knowledge, in the Platonic dialogues only two characters claim to possess the true *epistēmē* or *technē* of politics: Socrates (*Gorg.* 521d), and Protagoras (*Prot.* 319a).

5. Miller, *The Philosopher*, p. 2.

6. In the *Stsm.*, "technē" and "epistēmē" seem to be used synonymously, at least with respect to the knowledge possessed by the statesman. E.g., at 258e10 the statesman is said to have a *technē*; at 259b1, a royal *epistēmē*; at 259b4–5, we are told that possession of this *technē* makes a man royal.

7. Cf. Aristotle's thesis in the *Politics* (1288b10–1289a1) that political science must distinguish between the best constitution simply; the best in relation to actual conditions; and those which presently exist. Political science must also study improvements which can be made in existing states, the causes of the decay of states, and so forth.

8. On the meaning of "genos," consider *Stsm.* 285b, the two uses of *genē* at 310b10 and d2; and also *Soph.* 218c–d, where the ES speaks both of the "phylon" and "genos" of the sophist (see too *Stsm.* 260d7). While it is natural to assume that the ES thinks of the "statesman" as a *genos* (especially since he and not just Socrates refers to the sophist as a *genos*), the ES never actually refers to a "genos" or "eidos" of the "statesman" (in the *Stsm.* "genos" and "eidos" seem used interchangeably

within the context of *diareseis*). But cf. 260d1, 303d5 and 259d3–4. Since the ES intends to search for the statesman through the use of the method of *diarexis*, the meaning of "genos" is a question intimately connected to our evaluation of the method. What kind of *genos*, so to speak, does the method of *diarexis* sort out? See K.M. Sayre, *Plato's Analytic Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 187–92; J. Moravcsik, "The Anatomy of Plato's Divisions," in *Exegesis and Argument, Phronesis Suppl.* vol. I (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), pp. 324–48; H. Cherniss, *The Riddle of the Early Academy* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1945); and F.M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), p. 262ff.; and my *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 168–97.

9. The entire section on law (291a8–303d2) is devoted to separating out the true statesman from the "sophists of sophists" (see the beginning and the conclusion of that section). The sophists are "the greatest imitators" of the true "scientific regime."

10. In the final section of the *Sophist* the ES supplied us with a comprehensive *diarexis*. He now states without explanation (*Stsm.* 258b9–10) that a new *diarexis* is necessary. Why is that? Are the *diareseis* of the *Soph.* and *Stsm.* reconcilable? Would yet another opening *diarexis* be required in the *Philosopher*?

11. While dialectic is not called an "*epistēmē*" in the *Stsm.*, it is in the *Soph.* (253c7–8: "*epistēmē tōn eleutherōn*") and is identified with philosophy (253e4–6: it is the art of "whoever philosophizes purely and justly").

12. A full interpretation of the *Stsm.* would have to explain not just the constant interruption of the *diareseis* by the digressions, but also the many acknowledged errors which interrupt the *diareseis* and force the ES and YS to retrace their steps or revise their results.

13. Several commentators on the *Stsm.* have argued that political science and our philosophical knowledge of political science are the same, and so that the *Statesman* is the "missing" *Philosopher*. See R.K. Sprague, *Plato's Philosopher King* (University of South Carolina Press, 1976), p. 100; and J. Klein, *Plato's Trilogy* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1977), p. 177. I find the thesis in question implausible. To mention only the obvious, the ES not only never provides any explicit evidence in favor of it (there is no reference in the *Stsm.* to a "philosopher king"), he also postpones crucial elements of his discussion about the method of *diarexis* for a later time—presumably for the *Philosopher* (see 263a–b, 284d). The ES also treats the sophist, statesman, and philosopher as three separate *genē* to which three separate *logoi* belong.

14. This "*sumplekein*" or "*sunagagein*" (267b6) omits several of the genera in the statesman's genealogy. Particularly important among these is the distinction between wild and tame animals already omitted once by mistake and retroactively introduced into the divisions with some fanfare (263e–264a). As if to minimize the difference between men and the other animals, the ES also omits here his distinction between soulless and ensouled animals (made earlier at 261c). Interestingly enough,

the ES had justified his decision to pursue the statesman under the branch of the rule of ensouled animals on the grounds that the statesman's royal science is "nobler and grander" than any *epistēmē* which supervises soulless things (261c). Yet at the conclusion of the opening diareseis political science does not seem noble or grand at all, scarcely more impressive than the science or ruling over slaves with which it was originally grouped (259b; cf. Aristotle's *Politics* 1255b31–37).

15. Why does the ES not solve this problem with further divisions? Why turn to *myth*, which he compares to child's play? He simply says that they are to do so, and that afterwards they will resume the diareseis (268d5–e2). While I cannot pursue this topic here, I mention the following as a possible answer to this question. Myth stands to diareisis as weaving to carding, or whole to part. The ES emphasizes that every form is a part but that not every part is a form (263b). The forms are parts of the "all" or "cosmos" depicted in the myth; i.e., of the "whole" which, because it is not a part, is not a form. Myth provides the "synthetic" discourse about the "whole." The opening diareseis of the dialogue make especially clear that one cannot divide without some general story in mind which informs as to where to divide and towards what end.

16. Aristotle's *Politics* begins (1255b17–21) with a criticism of the equation (made at the start of the *Stsm.*, 258e) of the arts of the statesman, household manager, and slavemaster. I am arguing in the present essay that the *Stsm.* itself presents us with its own criticisms of the objectionable equation.

17. I refer to this part of the dialogue as a "myth," but the ES refers to it as both a "mythos" (268d9–e4, 272d5, 274e1, 277b7) and a "logos" (274b1, 277c1). However, at 286a the ES makes clear that there exists no image for the "greatest things"—only *logos* is capable of articulating them adequately. At 277c the ES contrasts *logos* (by which he clearly means diareisis) and eikastic myth.

18. *Stsm.* 273b4–c2. That matter is the cause of the cosmos' self-destruction is convincingly argued by R.D. Mohr, "Disorderly Motion in Plato's *Statesman*," *Phoenix* 35 (1981): 199–215.

19. One of the puzzles of the ES's myth concerns the identity of the demiurge and his relationship to Cronos. At 270a3–5 the ES refers to the "divine cause" and the "demiurge" who takes hold of the cosmos again and restores the life to it; at 273d4 we hear that "the god who made the all a cosmos" takes the rudder. This "helmsman of the all" (272e4, 273c3) would seem to be Cronos. Thus, the Demiurge and Cronos are the same. The ES also says that the "leader of all moving things" twists "itself around forever" in a single direction (269e5–6). Neither the cosmos nor its demiurgic Cronos is ever at rest.

20. At *Rep.* 377e–378a Socrates says that Hesiod told "the biggest lie about the biggest things . . . how Uranus did what Hesiod says he did, and how Cronos in his turn took revenge on him. And Cronos' deeds and his suffering at the hands of his son, not even if they were true would I suppose they should so easily be told to thoughtless young things . . ." (trans. A. Bloom, New York: Basic Books,

1968). The ES's appropriation of Hesiod certainly purifies Hesiod's tale by removing from it the strife between the gods; but the ES's reformulation seems not to include an explicit place for the Good or the Ideas, and is thus not as radical a critique as that supplied by Socrates in the *Rep.* We are told in the ES's myth that the cosmos gets all its "beautiful things" (273b7) and "blessed things" (269d8) from the demiurge; these things might be artifices of the demiurge, however. There is no suggestion in the myth that the demiurge looks to any form in putting together the cosmos. In the ES's myth there is only one possible allusion to the Ideas, namely, 269d5–6. The allusion is telegraphic, and could possibly describe "the god," since it does not necessarily entail that the entity in question is at rest, only that it (unlike the cosmos) is self-same in respect of its being, a being which could be an activity (cf. 269e5–7). Outside of the myth, the obvious candidates for allusions to the Forms are the "precise itself" of 284d2, and the "bodiless things" of 286a5. I shall offer a suggestion below about the meaning of the "precise itself," one that does not require that it be conceived of as a Form. The ES does not give any examples of the "bodiless things" here, but his reference to them as "greatest" (*megista*; 286a6) is perhaps meant to signal their inclusion among the *megista genē* of the *Soph.* Even if that is so, it is controversial as to whether the *megista genē* are "Forms" in the sense of *Rep.* VI. I would argue that the ES's "*genē*" are more like concepts than Forms, but since I cannot produce the argument here I shall rest with the observation that the unlike Socrates, the ES finds it possible to analyze "political science" while leaving the "metaphysical" status of his "forms" largely undetermined. Could he have done so if he thought of them as Forms?

21. The *Stsm.* discards the usual claims to the divinity and desirability of political rule, thereby taking much of the honor out of politics (even Cronos, it seems would prefer to theorize in this *periopē*). As R. Brague puts it, "Le mythe du *Politique* sert ainsi à démythiser la politique" (*Du Temps chez Platon et Aristote* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982], p. 93). While the *Rep.* does the same in its own way (philosophers must be compelled to engage in the drudgery of ruling), it does so in the name of another activity (philosophy) whose nature and worth are explained at length. The ES provides no comparable explanation. Perhaps he would have done so in the *Philosopher*.

22. In a rather nice touch, Plato has the ES swear by Zeus as he (the ES) comes up with weaving as the paradigm for political science (279b1; this is the only oath in the *Stsm.*).

23. I offer the speculation that the ES's notion of dialectic is also influenced by his cosmology. The ES stresses very heavily that dialectic is required lest we confuse the same with the other (285a–b; *Soph.* 253d). This emphasis becomes less otiose if we picture a universe in which the "letters" or constituents (*stoicheia*, 277e6 *et passim*, especially 278d1 "*ta tōn pantōn stoicheia*") tend to lose their identity. In such a universe clarity and stability of intelligible concepts would be constantly threatened by the loss of *measure* (and it is in the section on measure that the ES discusses dialectic and diareisis). At 283b7 the ES comments on the "illness" of the preceding diareseis about weaving, and then begins the digression on measure and dialectic.



24. Not that Socrates fails to speak of a progressive degeneration of things; *Rep.* VIII does so at length (and at 547b ff. Socrates refers explicitly to Hesiod's races). At 546a Socrates remarks on the impossibility of the guardians mastering the cycle of generation. To that extent Socrates too would view political science as a form of "autotherapy" designed to contain as long as possible the inevitable decay brought on by *genesis*. Socrates too stresses the integrative aspect of statesmanship implied by the ES's metaphor of weaving. Nevertheless, Socrates' cosmos is governed by the Good and is populated by Ideas, and Socrates correspondingly emphasizes (e.g., in the myth of Er) the importance of choosing a morally good life based on knowledge of the Ideas. The ES never emphasizes any such thing. Nor does he connect dialectic with leading a morally good life.

25. The point is made convincingly by Miller, *The Philosopher*, p. 66, n. 55. On the "mean" as the "middle," cf. *Rep.* 619a. The ES also refers to "*to prosēkon*" (294d11, 295a2, b2), a word which also seems to denote the mean, and at 303a3 to the *meson*. Further, at 284b1 the ES refers to *to metron*, a term which seems to connote "mean" in the most general sense, at 286d2 again to *to prepon*, and at 283e11 again to *metrion*.

26. Skemp translates 284c1 as "in respect of attainment of a norm or due measure" (*Plato's Statesman*, with an Introduction by M. Ostwald [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1979], p. 47). Since "genesis" can also mean "production," the phrase might also be translated "relative to the production of the mean."

27. The "precise" is associated with the wise rule without law at 295a2, b2 (where the *prosēkon* is also mentioned), and 301d5. At 294b1 we are told that law cannot be precise. Cf. the reference in the myth (273b3) to the cosmos' progressive loss of "precision" in its self-rule as the cycle of Zeus unwinds. This unwinding and loss leads to the need for imprecise laws to hold together the social fabric (laws would be one expression of the bonds of "true opinion" the ES speaks of at the end of the *Stsm.*). On the question of precision, measure, and dialectic, it would be fruitful to compare the present section of the *Stsm.* with *Philebus* 59a ff. I limit myself to noting that unlike the ES, Socrates clearly connects measure relative to the mean with knowledge of the Good and Ideas. How are we going to realize "precisely" some form in a given situation without knowing what form (such as the "courage" mentioned at the end of the *Stsm.*) is good for that situation (such as the *polis* at a certain stage of the cycle of Zeus), and without knowing how *best* to instantiate it?

28. I suggest that the section be divided into seven parts. (1) 291d1–293e7: five types of regimes, and the difference between the true standards and the false for classifying them; the natural inequality of men in any activity (in any activity only a few people will be competent). The right regime is based on the rule of knowledge for the sake of justice and the safety of the citizens, without regard for the wealth or consent of the ruled, and without regard for written law. (2) 293e8–294c9: the praise of *phronēsis* and the criticisms of law. Law is imprecise and resembles an obstinate and foolish man. (3) 294c10–295b9: why is law necessary if it is so inadequate? A qualified praise of law by analogy with gymnastics: the lawgiver cannot take into

account every variation between individuals and situations. (4) 295b10–297b6: return to the criticism of law. If a doctor wrote a prescription and went away on a trip with orders that the prescription not be changed, it would be silly to forbid him from changing it if he came back early and found the patient in an altered condition. Law is like the unchangeable prescription. (5) 297b7–299e9: defense of law. The regimes that are attainable for man are "imitations" of the best regime; there thus exist imperfect regimes which, if they imitate the true regime sufficiently well, may still be superior to the alternatives. The alternatives are anarchy and rampant self-interest. Absolute laws might be formulated on the basis of the testimony of experts but then be used to regulate every aspect of the arts. But this would ultimately entail suppression of all the arts and would therefore make life still more painful than it already is. (6) 300a1–302b4: laws may also be superior to the lawlessness of the tyrant. The ES implicitly allows that the laws will not suppress all progress in the arts. If a regime follows in the "tracks" of the true statesman, and lives according to laws that permit the expansion of the arts, then the rule of law can be justified. Even though it does not yield the perfect regime, such a regime is superior to the alternatives. (7) 302b5–303b7: with this in mind, the ES once again sorts out and ranks the various regimes (this time seven types of regimes emerge).

29. Exceptions include F.J. Crosson's "Plato's *Statesman*: Unity and Pluralism," *New Scholasticism* 37 (1963): 28–43; and R. Kraut's *Socrates and the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 208. Kraut also remarks that "it is inaccurate to portray Socrates as either a simple enemy or a simple friend of democracy. He thinks that the many will always rule badly, and he would prefer a society run by moral experts. But he sees little hope for anything better than democracy, and he values the intellectual freedom provided by this political system" (p. 244). And, "The founding of a new political order was not the sole or even the most important aim of Socratic conversation. To fulfill such a utopian fantasy, the limits of human nature would have to be transcended" (p. 309). Substantially the same conclusions are reached by A. Bloom in the "Interpretive Essay" that accompanies his translation of the *Rep.* (see pp. 409–10). See also D. Clay's "Reading the *Republic*," in *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings*, ed. C. Griswold (N.Y.: Routledge Chapman and Hall, 1988), pp. 19–33. If the argument in the present essay is right, then the *Stsm.* points to the same conclusion about democracy which Kraut attributes to Socrates (but which he, in my opinion mistakenly, denies to Plato), although the ES's premises, at least as they are expressed in the *Stsm.*, are not identical with Socrates'. The ES's line of reasoning too leads to a rejection of utopianism as a basis for political action. From a contemporary perspective, the ES's position would seem to entail something like a synthesis of E. Burke's conservative suspicion of both rapid political change and radical social engineering on the one hand, with J.S. Mill's utilitarian arguments in favor of freedom of inquiry on the other.

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