

¹"Plato's Politics"

I. Introduction

The dialogues of Plato that are of the most obvious importance for his political philosophy include: the Apology, the Crito, the Gorgias, the Laws, the Republic, and the Statesman. Further, there are many questions of political philosophy that Plato discusses in his dialogues (and for others, even if they are not explicitly discussed, we can form reasonable judgments about Plato's views on them). These topics include, among others: (1) the ultimate ends of the city's laws and political institutions, (2) who should rule, and the forms of constitution and their ranking, (3) the nature and extent of citizens' obligation to obey the laws, (4) the proper extent of citizenship, (5) the political and social status of women, (6) the purposes of punishment, (7) aspects of the citizens' material well-being, including the benefits and costs of private property, and (8) slavery.

In a short essay such as this, I cannot explore all of even the most important works in detail and cannot sketch Plato's views on all of the relevant topics without resorting to brief, potted summaries. Whatever other good purposes

such overviews can serve, they are deeply antithetical to the basic spirit underlying all of Plato's dialogues: that is, in order to understand anything, the reader must consider all the arguments carefully, working out possible objections and lines of reply. In other words, she must herself engage in doing philosophy.

Although I hope to provide an overall impression of Plato's political philosophy, my aim is not to give a précis of the dialogues that could be read in their stead, but rather to concentrate on a few of what seem to me to be the most fundamental and persisting issues. In doing so, I shall focus on three moments in Plato's thought: the "Socratic" dialogues, including the Apology, and the Crito; the great middle-period work, the Republic, along with the Phaedo; and finally two works from Plato's last period, the Laws, and the Statesman.²

II. The "Socratic" Plato

Let me begin with two sets of quotations that will introduce one of the central topics of the political theory of the Socratic dialogues. In the Apology, Socrates compares himself to a gadfly that is set upon the great horse of Athens.

It is to fulfill some such function [i.e. the gadfly's] that I believe the god has placed me in the city. I never cease to rouse each and every one of you, to persuade and reproach you all day long and everywhere I find myself in your company³ (30E6-31A2).

What is the content of this persuasion?

I went to each of you privately and conferred upon him what I say is the greatest benefit, by trying to persuade him not to care for any of his belongings before caring that he himself should be as good and as wise as possible, not to care for the city's possessions more than for the city itself, and to care for other things in the same way (Apol. 36C4-D1, cf. 29DE and 36DE).

What is especially worth noting here is that Socrates claims to benefit Athens by benefiting its citizens, and that this benefit consists in getting them to examine themselves and their lives with regard to virtue. Since Plato, throughout his career, believed that virtue was by far the most

important contributor to happiness, and that the ultimate end of all of a person's rational actions is that person's own greatest happiness, such encouragement to virtue seems a reasonable way to proceed for anyone seeking really to benefit his fellow citizens.⁴

But we also find the following passages in the same work.

It may seem strange that while I go around and give this advice privately and interfere in private affairs, I do not venture to go to the assembly and there advise the city . . . Be sure, men of Athens, that if I had long ago attempted to take part in politics, I should have died long ago, and benefited neither you nor myself. Do not be angry with me for speaking the truth; no man will survive who genuinely opposes you or any other crowd and prevents the occurrence of many unjust and illegal happenings in the city. A man who really fights for justice, must lead a private, not a public, life if he is to survive for even a short time (Apol. 31C4-32A3, cf. 32E-33A).

. . . I have deliberately not led a quiet life, but have neglected what occupies most people: wealth, household affairs, the position of general or public orator or the other offices, the political clubs and factions that exist in the city. I thought myself too decent to survive if I occupied myself with those things. I did not follow that path that would have made no use either to you or to myself . . . (Apol. 36B5-C3, the close of this passage immediately precedes 36C4-D1 quoted above).

In the previous passages quoted, Socrates claims that he (i) is a divine gift to the city, and (ii) benefits the city. In these latter passages, Socrates (a) suggests that the current state of politics is very bad and apparently must remain so, and (b) contrasts his own activity with practicing or engaging in politics.

But there is a natural line of thought that suggests there at least ought to be a connection between politics and benefiting the city. We might hold, to a first approximation, that the proper task of a lawgiver or a statesman is to benefit the city as much as possible and the best way of doing this is by making the citizens virtuous

and happy.⁵ In the Gorgias, we find Socrates suggesting exactly such a line of thought.

I believe that I am one of a few Athenians—so as not to say I am the only one, but the only one among our contemporaries—to undertake the true political art and practice the true politics. This is because the speeches I make on each occasion do not aim at gratification, but at what is best (Gorg. 521D6-E1, cf. 502E-503B).

That is, Socrates attempts "to care for the city and its citizens with the aim of making them as good as possible" (Gorg. 513E5-7) and thinks that unless the city is tended in this way, no other action can benefit the citizens (513E8-A3).⁶

Here, unlike in the Apology, Socrates claims to undertake the practice of the true art of politics. Understanding Socrates' activities in this way, we can now consider the relation of such a project to Plato's famous claim in the Republic that philosophers must rule in a just city. (I leave aside the obvious difference that while

philosophers do rule in the Republic's just city, Socrates certainly does not rule in Athens.)

In the Gorgias, Socrates emphasizes his devotion to philosophy, but does not claim to know, e.g., what justice is, nor does he advocate a political and educational program designed to produce rulers who possess such knowledge. The philosopher rulers of the Republic do know the Forms, and this is an important part of why they should rule. In both the Apology and the Gorgias, Socrates claims that he tries to make the citizens virtuous, but he does not claim to have achieved much success in doing so. If he were able to make others virtuous, this would have striking implications. It is usually thought that in the Socratic dialogues, Plato holds that the virtuous person must know the definitions of the virtues. Further, only if one knows, e.g., the definition of justice will one be able to know of an act whether it is just or not and know what is true of justice, e.g., that it is a virtue. Knowledge of the definition is thus necessary for such further knowledge. But Socrates also thinks that people having knowledge of such definitions will succeed: they will have knowledge in ordinary cases where they previously may only have had confident belief and be able to settle hard cases. It will

also allow them to know such highly controversial truths such as that it is better to suffer than to do injustice.⁷

There is no attempt in the Socratic dialogues to describe the best possible city or a fully just city. In the Republic, this becomes perhaps fundamental task of political philosophy and Plato revisits the issue in his later works, the Statesman and the Laws. In this way, the political philosophy of the Socratic dialogues is radically incomplete. But we can try to work, drawing on claims and principles found in the Socratic dialogues, what the best possible city would look like. In doing so, we shall both more deeply understand the political implications of Plato's ethical views in these dialogues and come to see that their unresolved issues help set an agenda that carries through the rest of Plato's political philosophy.⁸

Before turning to this topic, however, we must consider Socrates' famous denial of knowledge. Throughout the Socratic dialogues, Socrates claims not to know the definitions of the virtues or principles, such as that it is better to suffer wrong than to do it, and, in my view, this is not to be dismissed as merely "ironic."⁹ He has nothing analogous to the knowledge that craftsmen have of their craft, or the sort of knowledge possessed by

mathematicians of mathematics. So how should he proceed while lacking knowledge? Socrates provides a general answer in the Crito when he responds to his friend's advice to escape from jail before his own death sentence is carried out.

We must therefore examine whether we should act in this way or not, as not only now but at all times I am the kind of man who listens to nothing within me but the argument that on reflection seems best to me. I cannot, now that this fate has come upon me, discard the arguments I used; they seem to me much the same. I revere and honor the same principles as before, and if we have no better arguments to bring up at this moment, be sure that I shall not agree with you (Crito 46B3-C3).

What Socrates has found, in several dialogues, is that some of his beliefs concerning how to be and how to act have never been refuted in elenctic examination, while beliefs inconsistent with his, when elenctically examined, are inconsistent with other beliefs held by the one examined (and the interlocutor tends to respond by giving up the

claim that is inconsistent with Socrates' beliefs). So Socrates intends to continue acting on these beliefs and principles at least until something better comes along. Although we receive no worked out argument that this is the only (or the most) rational way of proceeding, it is, I think, a reasonable reaction to Socrates' circumstances.¹⁰ Socrates can, it seems, reasonably act in this way without supposing that he possesses knowledge.

In what follows, I shall take Socrates' epistemic limitations as a constraint on my discussion, that is, I shall ask what is the best sort of city humanly possible given that no one in it possesses ethical knowledge and no one is (significantly) epistemically better off than Socrates. To put it vividly, what would the best possible city founded by Socrates look like?¹¹ To begin, we face the issue of what changes—however desirable they may be—are actually implementable. There are some reasons for Socrates to be deeply pessimistic.¹² First, the above quotation from Apology 31C-32A suggests that Socrates thinks that it is impossible for him, or others like him who would act to advance justice, to come to rule in Athens and that even any attempts to change laws and institutions for the better (or to prevent them from becoming worse) will lead to the

destruction of those trying to do so before they can achieve anything.

Second, in the Crito, Socrates claims that

One should never do wrong in return, nor injure any man, whatever injury one has suffered at his hands I know that only a few people hold this view or will hold it, and there is no common deliberation [boulê] between those who hold this view and those who do not, but they inevitably despise each other's resolutions and designs (49C10-D5).

The word for deliberation that Socrates uses, boulê, in addition to meaning "advice" or "deliberation", is politically highly loaded: it is the name of the Council or Senate in Athens.¹³ It is sometimes thought that all Socrates means here is that most people will not agree with this principle about not doing wrong until they undergo the elenchus; but given the actual effects of the elenchus on many of Socrates' interlocutors (they leave or grow angry or, even if during the conversation they call their beliefs into question, this seems to have little lasting impact), it is not clear why he would think this. If such changes do not, or

cannot, occur, however, those disagreeing over this principle will be unable to engage in the sort of deliberation needed for good collective decision-making. They might not only disagree over a wide range of political issues (e.g. those connected with punishment or warfare or, more generally, with ideals of how to be and how to act), but may not even be able to sustain productive rational discussion.

This is a good instance of how an unresolved issue in the Socratic dialogues leads to considerable political indeterminacy. From a political point of view, to go further, we need answers to questions such as: (i) if enough experience of the elenchus would persuade all (or most) citizens, is it permissible to coerce those who are unwilling to undergo that amount of elenchus?, (ii) is there some education (different from that of current Greek cities) that would make citizens more likely to benefit from the elenchus?, (iii) if not, and there are people who cannot improve in these ways, should they be citizens, and what, if any, political functions could they have, and what restrictions should they live under in the best city?, (iv) is there some sort of education not employing the elenchus

that benefits such people sufficiently so as to allow them to be citizens and exercise political functions?

If the likelihood of educational success in Athens and other extant cities is sufficiently low and the costs of trying sufficiently high, Socrates might reasonably recommend withdrawal from public activity. But that only answers the relatively specific question of what Socrates and others like him should do in circumstances such as those in which Socrates actually finds himself. It does not answer what the best humanly possible city would be on Socrates' principles, or what would be possible, if great changes were made to the laws and political institutions of an existing city or a new colony were founded (a common enough possibility in ancient Greece).

So what would such a city look like? We find no answer to this in the Socratic dialogues and, as I have suggested and we shall see again, this is not accidental, since we would need to come to some conclusions about issues that are left unaddressed in these dialogues. The first, minimalist option is that Socrates (and others like him) carry out elenctic discussions, but have no greater hopes than persuading probably only a few by means of such conversations.

This is not, however, the only option compatible with Plato's commitments in the Socratic dialogues. There are a number of ethical beliefs that Socrates has that have passed elenctic examination. These include:

- a) it is better for a person to suffer injustice than to do injustice,
- b) if one commits an injustice it is better to be punished than to escape punishment,
- c) virtue is fine and good for its possessor,
- d) no one does wrong willingly, and
- e) virtue is necessary for happiness and is the most fundamental part of happiness.

In these dialogues, Plato also accepts some claims as obvious with little disagreement and thus little elenctic defense, such as the Principle of Rational Eudaimonism, i.e. that the ultimate aim of all of a person's rational actions is his or her own greatest happiness.¹⁴

It is quite reasonable to ask, even if Plato does not in the Socratic dialogues, what a city might look like if these principles were embodied in its laws. Doing so leads us to four especially important questions.

- (1) If these principles are embodied in laws and political institutions, they will require

sanctions and will sometimes require the people subject to them to give up decision-making authority over various parts of their lives. What legitimates such coercion and removal of decision-making authority? (The Crito has arguments for an obligation to obey the law in general. Here I want to consider what specific grounds there may be for coercing people in accordance with Socratic principles.)¹⁵

- (2) In putting Socratic principles into effect, the aim is to make the citizens virtuous and happy. Will all citizens benefit equally or will the benefit be highly uneven?
- (3) As we have seen, Plato is pessimistic about the possibility of sustained public action on behalf of justice. How stable could a city based on such laws be?
- (4) The previous questions focus on what such a city would look like, but we must also consider questions of motivation; in particular, does political activity compete with the development of one's own virtue so that

Socrates could not rationally pursue activity in support of such laws?

Coercion

To simplify, I shall focus on the costs and benefits to the person to whom the law or institution applies and shall not attempt to characterize coercion precisely. If coercion could have the result that the coerced person comes to have knowledge, it is not clear that the Plato of the Socratic dialogues would object. In the Euthydemus, Socrates says, "Let him destroy me, or if he likes, boil me or do whatever he wants, but he must make me good" (285C4-6).

For the more common and politically more important cases in which the person does not come to possess knowledge, consider these passages from the Charmides and the Lysis.

Of those matters which we really understand something everybody . . . will turn them over to us, and there we shall act just as we choose, and nobody will want to get in our way (Lysis 210A9-B4).

In the Charmides, Socrates considers some of the implications of a proposed definition of moderation as knowing what it is that one knows and does not know. If this definition were correct,

it would be of the greatest benefit to us to be moderate, because those of us who had moderation would live lives free from error and so would all those who were under our rule. Neither would we ourselves be attempting to do things we did not understand—rather we would find those who did understand and turn the matter over to them—nor would we trust those over whom we ruled to do anything except what they would do correctly, and this would be that of which they possessed understanding (Charm. 171D5-E5).¹⁶

What is striking in these passages from the Lysis and the Charmides is that Socrates does not seem to take into account the costs of giving up one's decision-making power to someone else. Neither actual coercion nor simply giving up such power would be objected to by Plato as a violation of rights or autonomy if these are understood

independently of a person's good. But even in the Republic, and especially in the Laws, Plato does take it to be vastly better, all other things being equal, to be ruled by oneself than by others.¹⁷ Perhaps something like this is suggested by the passage at Crito 46BC quoted above, but Socrates there does not distinguish the value of acting on one's own reasoned judgments from the idea that such a way of proceeding gives one the best chance at correctness.

Yet Plato in the Socratic dialogues also faces a problem: if virtue is knowledge and one benefits through approximating it by having fewer false, and especially, more true beliefs, then doing the right thing for the wrong reason stands in particular need of justification as a benefit. Such justification would seem easier, if the knowledge that virtue consists of is simply instrumentally valuable. (But this is a very controversial claim to attribute to Plato in the Socratic dialogues and I myself would not do so.¹⁸) One might also appeal to the idea that we have non-rational motivations that are not open to the full range of rational considerations, e.g., we might be subject to shame, but that emotion might be sensitive only to thoughts of what others might say of us and not to the ultimate grounds of thinking an action good or bad. It

might be possible to argue that a person whose non-rational motivations have been attached to the right objects is better off than one not so trained. But many scholars, rightly I think, hold that Plato does not recognize such motivations in the Socratic dialogues.¹⁹

Nevertheless, Socrates in the Gorgias seems to be confident that ordinary legal punishments, for crimes such as theft, typically improve those subject to them (e.g. 478D-480D). For those scholars who think that Socrates does not have sufficient confidence in his other distinctive beliefs to enforce them by law, perhaps the main change from Athens that he could endorse would be a much more vigilant police force and a more efficient method of public prosecution. If we find this implausible, we should be less inclined to think that Socrates' epistemic limitations require him to reject changing the laws in accordance with some of his other principles.

Benefit

Determining who in the city can benefit and in what ways they can benefit will require answering a number of challenging philosophical questions. As we have seen, we need to know how many citizens can be brought to have

knowledge and how closely the rest can approximate to it. Given the actual results of the elenchus, we might find it hard to be optimistic that Euthyphro, Hippias, or Callicles would be improved by more elenchus. But why are there so many failures? It might be that the defect is simply epistemic; the knowledge that is necessary for virtue may be as hard to attain as knowledge that a proof of Poincaré's Conjecture is correct, so even with the best efforts, few can attain it. Or is the defect owed in part to the effect that non-rational motivations can have in originating and sustaining false beliefs? (As we have noted, there is a serious question as to whether the Socratic dialogues accept the existence of such motivations.) At least an important part of the problem is that the elenchus as practiced by Socrates, by necessity, takes people as they are, but is there any sort of education that might enable people to make greater progress? To settle these questions, Plato needs to explore, and ultimately to answer, various questions in psychology, epistemology, and the theory of education and learning.

Finally, and perhaps most important, Socrates does not offer definitions or accounts of virtue and happiness in the Socratic dialogues. Even if we grant, for example, that

virtue is knowledge of what is good and bad for human beings and that happiness is one's optimal condition, these accounts remain purely formal until we get an account of the good.²⁰ Without more substantive accounts, it is especially difficult to determine who can benefit, and how much they can benefit, from the various ways in which Socratic principles might be embodied in laws and institutions.

Stability

Here again, determining the stability of such laws and political institutions requires answering some of our previous questions. How far is there a coincidence of interests among the citizens and how far can the citizens come to realize that there is such a coincidence? In addition to the question of whether citizens can come to accept the existence of such a harmony of interests, we would need to consider whether their acceptance could rest on what Socrates would count as good reasons. We shall also need to draw on answers about what benefits the citizens in order to determine what are the effective and just means of reducing conflict in the city.

Own Perfection

Some scholars think that in the Socratic dialogues there is an especially strong tension for someone like Socrates between his own perfection and undertaking political action.²¹ There are two specific worries here: (1) since Socrates does not have knowledge, would he not be better off attending to his soul rather than engaging in political action?, and (2) since Socrates lacks knowledge, should he be confident enough to enforce his principles on others?

To take up (2) first, although there are some passages that suggest that one should not undertake politics until one possesses the relevant knowledge, given Socrates' confidence in the Athenian system of punishment, there is no reason to think that it would always be wrong to enforce laws embodying the principles that have survived the elenchus.²² With respect to (1), some have argued that the improvement of Socrates' own soul takes nearly absolute priority over benefiting others. Here again, to see whether this is so, we need answers to questions that Plato does not fully address in the Socratic dialogues.

1. Without a theory of happiness, we cannot answer how far others' happiness must compete with mine or whether it could be consistent with, or even a part of, mine.
2. We need to know how far others can benefit from the political activity I might undertake. If the mere enforcement of Athenian laws against, e.g., theft, constitutes a significant benefit to the Athenians, how much more would they benefit from laws based on Socratic principles? Other things being equal, it seems that the greater the benefit to others, the stronger will be Socrates' reasons for helping.
3. How much improvement is possible for Socrates? Does he think it possible that human beings can attain knowledge of the definitions of the virtues? If not, how much does he benefit from engaging in further elenchus? How long has it been since his ethical beliefs have changed? Would just more elenchus with the sorts of interlocutors he has already had discussions with really be of significant benefit to him: would he not eventually just come to see them make the same mistakes again or others at least as easy to refute?
4. Finally, how valuable to Socrates is it simply to think about the beliefs and arguments that he already possesses?

In later dialogues, Plato makes it clear that he thinks that there is enormous value in contemplating the truth. Does Socrates have good reason to believe that the same is true for thinking about his own system of (ethical) beliefs?

III. The Middle Dialogues

In the most famous of the middle-period dialogues, the Republic, Plato invokes philosophers' knowledge of Platonic Forms as part of the reason why philosophers should rule. But the Phaedo, which is not usually thought to have much political importance, invokes the Forms in distinguishing the two basic groups of people and in giving more content to the notions of virtue and happiness. We can better see the Phaedo's significance if we consider it as a successor of the Socratic dialogues and a predecessor of the Republic. In particular, the Phaedo helps to give first answers to the sorts of questions noted above that were left unanswered in the Socratic dialogues.

The Phaedo

In the Phaedo, Plato thinks that knowledge of Forms is possible (and may come in gradations); knowing, e.g., the Form of Justice will involve knowing the 'real' definition of

justice. The Forms allow Plato to distinguish two basic kinds of people: philosophers who seek, and may at least partially attain, knowledge of Forms and who believe that having such knowledge is a prominent part of their ultimate end, and non-philosophers, none of whom accept the existence of Forms, and who have as their ultimate ends the goods of the body, i.e. wealth and honor (e.g. Phd. 68BC and 82D-83E). True virtue require one to value wisdom, that is, knowledge of the Forms for its own sake, and to use wisdom to guide one's choices. Thus only philosophers possess real virtue, while non-philosophers have only a "shadow-painting of virtue that is really slavish and contains nothing healthy or true" (Phd. 69B7-8). Since happiness for Plato crucially depends on real virtue, only philosophers can be happy. The lives of non-philosophers are necessarily wretched, and in the afterlife "they lie in mud" (Phd. 69C3-6) which is, regardless of the exact details of Plato's views about the afterlife, another way of characterizing the value of the lives they have on earth. Nothing except being a philosopher can significantly ameliorate this terrible condition, and Plato does not seem to think that the elenchus, or any other education, can succeed in turning most people into philosophers.

Given these views, we can make some progress on the relevant questions left by the Socratic dialogues.

Coercion and Benefit

There seems to be very little that a city can do to improve significantly the lives of the vast majority of its citizens; no non-philosopher can have a life that is really worth living for a human being. When they undergo reincarnation, the very best of the non-philosophers return as bees or ants or members of some other tame and cooperative race (Phd. 82AD). If coercion can make some of their characters less bad than they might otherwise be, it can still be justified by minimizing the harm to the person coerced, but the laws and other institutions can bring about no significant benefit for them.

Stability

Philosophers and non-philosophers will differ radically in what they take virtue and happiness to be. Such a city cannot be a common association aimed at furthering a shared conception of happiness among the citizens. It could not realize what is commonly thought of as the goal of the city in classical political philosophy: it could not be

a shared association in which all the citizens aim at the genuine common good, that is, developing and fostering virtue in each other. Indeed, it is difficult to see how such a city could be stable for long, unless the laws and institutions were simply set by non-philosophers.

Own perfection

On the Phaedo's account of knowledge and its conception of the centrality of reason in undeformed human nature, there would be great value to the individual philosopher not only in improving and perfecting his knowledge, but also in continued contemplation of his existing knowledge. Even if he advances no further, the great value of such contemplation would seem to compete strongly with any kind of political action. Also, since so little improvement is possible for non-philosophers, the tension between seeking one's own good and seeking the good of the city will be all the greater.

Plato's views about non-philosophers in the Phaedo have often been dismissed as a case of Plato simply being caught up in a burst of transcendental enthusiasm. But they are, rather, the consequences of the Phaedo's epistemological and psychological views, and they form the

background against which to read the Republic. What the Phaedo would seem to advise for Socrates and those like him is as complete a withdrawal from politics as possible. This is hardly what the Republic recommends for philosophers.

The Republic

The Republic is so well-known that a detailed description of it is not necessary here, but I shall sketch the points most important for us.²³ The city of the Republic is divided into three classes of citizens (there are probably non-citizen slaves as well): (i) the philosopher rulers, (ii) the auxiliaries, and (iii) the producers. All political and legal authority rests with the philosophers. The auxiliaries protect the city from enemies within and without, and the producers engage in the economic activities needed for the city's material life. In the two upper classes (and only there), all private property is abolished, along with the private family. Procreation takes place via eugenically approved temporary matches made by the philosopher rulers; the children are raised communally and the parents are supposed to be unaware of who their biological children are.

Similarly, education differs for the three classes: for the philosophers it includes a long education in mathematics, culminating in knowledge of the Forms. The auxiliaries have received an education in music and poetry that

educated the guardians through habits. Its harmonies gave them a certain harmoniousness, not knowledge; its rhythms gave them a certain rhythmical quality; and its stories whether fictional or nearer the truth, cultivated other habits akin to these (Rep. 522A4-9).

But there is nothing in such an education to lead people to have any grasp of the Forms or the non-sensible properties that make things fine or good. Such a grasp of non-sensible properties is initiated by the study of mathematics, and culminates in the dialectical study of the Forms. Only philosophers receive such an education and thus the auxiliaries do not have any grasp of non-sensible value properties. The producers do not seem to receive even the musical education that the auxiliaries do.

In Book 4, Plato finally gives an account of the four virtues--courage, justice, moderation, and wisdom--and he

does so in terms of parts of the soul. The soul, like the city, has three parts: the Reasoning part, the Spirited part and the Appetitive part. These parts are the ultimate, non-derivative bearers of things such as beliefs, desires, emotions and psychic activities. The conventional names for the parts may be misleading: not all beliefs are located in the Reasoning part, and all three parts have desires. It is in terms of the actions and affections of these that Plato proceeds to define the virtues.

Courage, for example, consists in the power of the Spirited part to preserve, through pleasure and pain, the correct orders of the Reasoning part; justice requires that all three parts of the soul do their own job well and thus requires the presence of the other three virtues (Rep. 429C-435C). Since there is no wisdom (sophia) without knowledge or scientific understanding (epistêmê), only philosophers can possess the virtues. (Whether or not Plato restricted knowledge to Forms in the Republic, it is widely accepted that he there thinks that at least knowledge of some Forms is required to know anything at all.) Plato does not offer a complete and exhaustive account of happiness. Nevertheless, the Republic's understanding of human nature places at its center the ability to know the

truth and the love of the truth, and both genuine virtue and genuine happiness require the realization of these most fundamental aspects of human nature. Thus genuine virtue requires the possession of knowledge and philosophic contemplation is a major component of human happiness.

Coercion and Benefits

In the Republic, Plato holds that the city's ultimate aim is the greatest happiness of all the citizens (421BC) and these include members of all three classes. So we should expect that the members of all three classes are better off in the ideal city than in others. It is clear that the philosopher rulers benefit by possessing the virtues and engaging in contemplation (I shall return below to the question whether they benefit by ruling). What of the other two classes? They benefit, rather, by approximating in some way the condition of the philosophers (and Plato gives an ordinal ranking of lives that increase in badness with distance from the philosophic life, Rep. 580AC).

The citizens of the two lower classes are not ruled by their own reason, but their characters and especially their Spirited and Appetitive parts, are trained by the philosopher rulers so that such people are better off, or at

least less badly off, than non-philosophers in ordinary cities. The auxiliaries' education leads them to love some subset of fine things, although they do not love them for what actually makes them fine. The producers are educated and regulated so that they reliably pursue the orderly satisfaction of their decent appetitive desires. Whatever coercion is involved in this education and regulation as adults, along with the complete denial to both groups of political decision-making authority as well as decision-making authority over a vast range of other activities, will have to be justified by this sort of improvement of their characters.

But how good or bad are their lives really? They (i) fail to satisfy the Book 4 definitions of the virtues, (ii) they do not grasp the Forms at all, and (iii) their ends are set, directly or indirectly, by the lower parts of the soul and do not include that which is genuinely good in itself. The deeper explanation of these limitations rests on Plato's epistemology and metaphysics: since non-philosophers do not grasp the Forms at all, they do not grasp at all the properties that really make anything fine or good. Consequently, they do not value what is genuinely good

and have the further deep misfortune of valuing what lacks genuine value.

These claims about Plato's epistemology, metaphysics and psychology are controversial.²⁴ But even leaving aside such controversial claims that explain, I think, why Plato is so pessimistic about the virtue and happiness of the two lower classes, one famous passage from the Republic makes it clear that he is very pessimistic:

when he [one who has left the Cave] reminds himself of his first dwelling place and what passed for wisdom there, and of his fellow prisoners, do you not think that he would count himself happy because of the change and pity the others? . . . would he not feel with Homer that he would greatly prefer to 'work the earth as a serf to another, one without possessions' and go through any sufferings, rather than share their opinions and live their life? (Rep. 516C4-D7)

This is an echo of the famous passage in Homer's Odyssey, in which the summoned shade of Achilles tells Odysseus of how deeply undesirable life in Hades is (Od. 11.488-91). In the Republic, the philosopher and the philosopher alone

leaves the Cave. The Cave analogy is not only an epistemological analogy, but is intended to give us a picture of human life, and the picture for non-philosophers remains bleak.²⁵

Stability

The basic problem from the Phaedo remains: the citizens have very different and incompatible views about the good life, and the large majority of them lack genuine virtue. But in the Republic, Plato makes a remarkable effort to show that despite this, a just city can exist and remain in existence for some time. There are two especially important ways that Plato tries to ensure the city's stability. First, he thinks that the abolition of private property and families will lead people to extend outward to others the caring attitudes they typically have for family members. Unsure of who one's biological brother is, an auxiliary will treat all those in the appropriate age group as brothers. Whether this could be successful is controversial, but it would only apply to the first two classes, since producers have private property and families and have not received a musical education. Second, Plato thinks that each class benefits from the political association and that

this will tend to keep the city together. A significant worry here is whether the two lower classes, given their different conceptions of the good, can recognize this coincidence of interests.

In both of these lines of defense, Plato is helped by the fact that in the Republic—unlike the Socratic dialogues—he accepts the existence of non-rational motivations. Love of one's own family and affection for benefactors are both emotions that one can feel independently of reason's distinct activity of determining what is best using its own resources. These emotions, in those trained and habituated from birth onwards, Plato might plausibly think, can lead many in the just city to have concern for their fellow citizens, even if they have the wrong reasons for doing so. Plato in the Republic tries to show that a good city is possible, even while holding epistemological and metaphysical views that are, broadly speaking, similar to those of the Phaedo. The worry remains, however, that the lower classes' faulty conceptions of the good and inability to truly understand why they are benefited will ultimately prove destabilizing.

Perfection

This is one of the most controversial issues in the Republic.²⁶ At Republic 519C-521C, Socrates announces that in order for the just city to come into being, philosophers, once they have grasped the Form of the Good, must be "compelled" to return to the Cave and rule. There has been much debate over whether Plato here requires philosophers to make a sacrifice of their happiness in order to serve their fellow citizens, or whether he thinks that ruling in these circumstances is in fact what most conduces to their own good. Fortunately, we need not resolve this issue, but we should note that the problem is especially acute because the philosopher has to return to the Cave. There are only a few people that he will be able to bring up to the light (i.e. to grasp the Forms and have knowledge of them), but for the rest all he can do is make their existence in the Cave less bad. It remains, however, very difficult to see how a life spent entirely in the Cave could be in itself a significant good for a human being, and thus one's own perfection, for philosophers, seems still to compete strongly with any political activity open to them.

IV. The Late Dialogues

Throughout most of the 20th century, the ethical and especially the political aspects of Plato's views in the late dialogues have received little attention. Moreover, what has been written has tended to focus on fairly narrow and, in my view, less than fundamental issues. But in the past twenty years, interest and scholarship have grown, although much needs to be done and a scholarly consensus has yet to form on many issues.

The Statesman

The Statesman's declared goal is to provide an account of the ideal statesman (politikos), and it proceeds by trying to find an account of the art or science that he possesses.²⁷ Nevertheless, especially towards its end, the dialogue takes up basic issues such as the nature of a good political community, the nature of the relations among citizens, the revisability of laws and other rules, as well as important topics in Plato's psychology and views about education.

There are, the Statesman tells us, two basic kinds of people, the "courageous" and the "moderate": the former are quick and spirited, while the latter are slower and more intent on leading a private life. Both of these character types, before receiving a very specific sort of

education, are defective and prone to ethical and political errors: the courageous tend to violence and the moderate are unwilling to assert themselves even when they should (Stsmn. 307D-308B). The fact that those having such characters go wrong in these ways shows that they are not genuine and full virtues. Indeed, the seriousness of these mistakes shows that the original forms of courage and moderation do not even closely approximate genuine virtues. Plato's views about how such characters can and must be improved are bound up with significant changes in his conception of citizenship from the Republic.

One of the most fundamental differences between the Republic and the Statesman is that in the latter, citizenship has much greater ethical significance, and the qualifications for it are much higher. The just city of the Republic, as we saw, counted as citizens the members of the two lower classes, and none of them had just characters. The Statesman, however, gives a criterion for citizenship in terms of character: only just people can be citizens in a good or just city (Stsmn. 309E-310A). Those who cannot become genuinely virtuous are entirely excluded from citizenship (Stsmn. 308E-309A). Thus those having the original character types of "courage" and

"moderation" cannot be citizens; only those whose characters have been moderated and improved so that they come to possess genuine virtue will be citizens.

The most important way of effecting such improvement is by education, specifically one that results in their having "really true and secure opinion about what is fine, just, and good" (Stsmn. 309C5-7). This education, unlike that in the Republic, is common to all the citizens of the good city. Because of this sameness of education and similarity of finished characters, the just city is not stratified by class as it was in the Republic. Indeed, with the exception of the single ruler who possesses scientific knowledge, there are no classes of citizens differentiated by their conceptions of happiness or the kind of virtue they can attain.²⁸

In this city, all citizens are permitted to have private families and property; possessions are not held in common, at least all able male citizens perform military service; and both the courageous and the moderate serve in political offices on roughly equal terms (Statesman 311A). All citizens are expected to possess a high level of virtue. Given the important place of virtue in happiness, the same conclusion holds, mutatis mutandis, for happiness.

In sum, with regard to citizenship, the Statesman takes a crucial step. It redraws the boundaries of the city so that the just political association has become a community of the virtuous. Political science takes as its task drawing the citizens of a just or good city together "by concord and friendship into a common life" (Stsmn. 311B9-C1). It is only in this way that political science can bring about a "happy city" (Stsmn. 311C5-6). In such a city, the citizens share the same ultimate goal of fostering virtue in all the citizens. This is only possible because all citizens receive the same education that aims at giving them "really true and secure opinion about what is fine, just, and good." We cannot determine precisely what such opinions are or how they are inculcated, but they appear to rest much more on reasoned explanations than the musical education of the auxiliaries in the Republic.²⁹

These changes from the Republic are what I think is most important for us in understanding Plato's political philosophy. But I shall briefly discuss another issue that has received considerable attention. Some scholars think that, in the Statesman (297C-302B), Plato holds that all cities that are not ruled by someone with scientific understanding should never change any of their laws. But

this is an implausible view to attribute to Plato. After all, some of the established laws of extant constitutions can surely be highly defective: the laws may be self-contradictory or outmoded; they may require the commission of flagrant and serious acts of injustice. Why would Plato forbid changing any of them? Even if there is now no scientific ruler available to correct them on the basis of knowledge, this does not place contemporary citizens at an epistemic disadvantage to the original establishers, since they too lacked knowledge. Indeed, if Plato thinks that there are ethical differences among people who still fall short of knowledge, contemporaries may well be ethically superior to those who originally established the laws. I can think of no plausible line of thought that would show that the costs of change must always outweigh any possible gain.

We see in the Statesman some significant changes in Plato's political theory with regard to the education of the citizens, the political activity allowed to them, and the goal of city. If it is right, we need some explanation of them. Are they simply changes in Plato's political philosophy that stand alone, or do they rest on developments or revisions in Plato's ethics, psychology and

epistemology? I shall return to this point in the Laws section. But we saw that Plato's middle-period political views depend on deeper aspects of his psychology and epistemology. It would be surprising if his late period political views did not also rest on other aspects of his philosophy.

The Laws

In addition to the stylometric evidence, we have Aristotle's testimony that the Laws is later than the Republic. The Laws' text shows some signs of being unfinished; there is some ancient evidence that Plato died while composing it and, given that it is the longest of the dialogues, it is reasonable to think that its composition overlapped with some of his other late works.³⁰ Let us begin with the most quoted passage from the Laws in which Plato characterizes the city he will go on to describe.

Anyone who uses reason and experience will recognize that a second-best city is to be constructed. . . . That city and that constitution are first, and the laws are best, where the old proverb holds as much as possible throughout the whole city: it is said that the things of friends really are in

common. . . . If the constitution we have been dealing with now came into being, it would be, in a way, the nearest to immortality and second in point of unity. . . . First, let them divide up the land and the households, and not farm in common, since such a thing would be too demanding for the birth, nurture, and education that we have now specified (Laws 739A3-740A2).

Scholars have sometimes assumed that this passage settles the question of the relation between the political theory of the Republic and that of the Laws. Plato here endorses the city sketched in the Republic as the best possible city, but now thinks that the demands it places on its inhabitants are too high: the city in the Laws is the second-best, although it is the best that is likely to be compatible with human nature.

But such an interpretation clearly misreads the passage. What is most important is that Plato here does not in fact endorse the Republic's method for making the city one by introducing a certain kind of community of property and families. In the Republic, these institutions are restricted to the first two classes, but are rejected for the third class, the producers. The Laws passage presents

as the "first-best" city, not that of the Republic, but one in which there is, throughout the entire city, a community of property and of women and children. So the claim that the city sketched in the Laws is second-best does not suggest that the Republic still represents Plato's ideal political arrangement. What the Laws represents as the ideal-- which is to be approximated as closely as possible--is a city in which all citizens are subject to the same high ethical demands. The Laws thus early on rejects the notion that the Republic's city is the ideal. Something new is going on here, although it is easy to overlook or dismiss it as a sign of the carelessness of Plato's old age, especially if one comes to the text of the Laws with the implicit assumption that the more canonical Republic (which almost all students and scholars have read first and far more often) represents the essence of Plato's political thought.

The Laws also announces, with great fanfare, an innovation in the relation between the laws and the citizens: "none of the lawgivers has ever reflected on the fact that it is possible to use two means of giving laws, persuasion and force . . . They have used only the latter; failing to mix compulsion with persuasion in their lawgiving, they have employed unmitigated force alone"

(Laws 722B5-C2). In several earlier dialogues, Plato appealed to the analogy between the statesman and the doctor to justify harsh treatment and coercion of citizens for their own ultimate benefit.³¹ The doctor should employ cuttings and burnings and so on to benefit the patient even if, as is typically the case, the patient does not see that the treatment is beneficial and so is unwilling to undergo it. This same analogy of the statesman as doctor is used to make a very different point in the Laws (the Athenian Visitor in general speaks for Plato in the Laws).

Athenian: What pertains to the laying down of laws has never been worked out correctly in any way. . . . What do we mean by this? We did not make a bad image, when we compared all those living under legislation that now exists to slaves being doctored by slaves. For one must understand this well: if one of those doctors who practices medicine on the basis of experience without the aid of theory should ever encounter a free doctor conversing with a free man who was sick--using arguments that come close to philosophizing, grasping the disease from its source, and going back up to the whole nature of bodies--he

would swiftly burst out laughing and would say nothing other than what is always said about such things by most of the so-called doctors. For he would declare, 'Idiot! You are not doctoring the sick man, you are practically educating him, as if what he needed were to become a doctor, rather than healthy!'

Kleinias: Would he not be speaking correctly when he said such things?

Athenian: Maybe--if at any rate, he went on to reflect that this man who goes through the laws in the way we are doing now, is educating the citizens, but not legislating (Laws 857C2-E5).³²

In the Laws, Plato proposes attaching persuasive precludes to the individual laws and the law code as a whole. One of their main purposes is to give to all the citizens a rational understanding of the laws and of the more general political and ethical principles underlying them.³³ The rest of the citizens' education has the same aim and it includes the study of calculation and arithmetic, measurement of lengths, surfaces and solids, and astronomy (Laws 817E-818A), as well as the study of plane and solid geometry, acoustics and kinetics. Such an

education fosters in all the citizen the awareness that there are non-sensible properties, in the first place mathematical ones.

The sophisticated cosmological and theological arguments found in Book 10 (which are intended as a prelude to the laws on impiety) draw on this education and are meant to be studied, repeatedly, by all the citizens (Laws 890E-891A). They are designed to bring the entire body of citizens to recognize that souls exist and are non-material and non-sensible first causes of change in the universe, and that the universe itself has been structured by god in a beautiful and orderly way in accordance with mathematical principles and properties. The citizens should thus come to recognize that these non-sensible principles are themselves principles of order and value. This mathematical education goes far beyond anything that the Republic's auxiliaries received and in the Republic it was a mathematical education, as we saw above, that marked the transition to grasping non-sensible value properties. (In the Laws, those whose education and work are similar to that of the producer class in the Republic are visiting workers with no political rights.)³⁴

The differences from Plato's middle-period positions are clear. The Laws' view that non-philosophical citizens can be educated to have, to some significant extent, a reasoned grasp of basic ethical and political truths extends the line of thought found in the Statesman, and it is a crucial difference from the Phaedo and the Republic. This difference has important implications for Plato's political philosophy; I shall note two of them. First, we saw that in the Statesman Plato suggested a new conception of a good city as an association in which all citizens aim at leading virtuous lives and at fostering virtue in the other citizens. In the Laws, Plato is much clearer and more emphatic in building on this conception of a good city and, as we have seen, restructures the citizens' education accordingly.

Second, since the citizens are more capable of exercising good ethical and political judgment and engaging in rational discussion, they will be able to hold office and exercise political authority. The Laws' just city is not ruled by a single philosopher or a group of philosophers. There is an Assembly open to all the citizens and a Council elected from the citizen body. There are also a wide variety of other political and judicial offices open to the citizens. Such political participation is not only

something that is now possible for the citizens, but it is also good in itself for them as a central expression of their virtue.³⁵

There is also a second important set of differences from Plato's middle-period views. In the Phaedo and the Republic, Plato's characterization of non-philosophers rests on his epistemology and psychology. The developments and changes I have suggested that we see in the Statesman and the Laws thus should also rest on developments in Plato's epistemology and psychology. Although examining these issues would take us far afield here, I think that this is correct. In particular, in the later dialogues we see two important shifts in Plato's views. First, he comes to think that a grasp of non-sensible properties is much more deeply embedded in human thought and is not restricted to mathematical or philosophical knowledge. Thus there is no longer such a sharp discontinuity between the ethical cognitive capacities of philosophers and non-philosophers. Second, Plato develops a more unified conception of the soul that emphasizes the role of reason in shaping all of the soul's capacities.³⁶

Accepting, at least in broad outline, the account of the Laws that I have sketched—especially the account of the citizens' education and of what they can attain—let us return for a final time to our questions.

Benefit and Coercion

If this interpretation is correct, we can see why Plato would think that he had made considerable progress on the issues of coercion and benefit. It is, of course, the case that there will be criminals in the city of the Laws who must be coerced and citizens too stupid or too absorbed in their non-rational desires and emotions to benefit from the preludes and the system of education more generally. But Plato accepts that many citizens will benefit from the preludes and the education and acquire some grasp, even if not a full understanding, of the ethical principles underlying the laws (of the sort that the auxiliaries in the Republic never attained).

Although the laws still have sanctions, Plato explicitly and sharply contrasts coercion with the sort of persuasion embodied in the preludes and the citizens' education. Citizens will benefit precisely because they are rationally persuaded and educated, and not coerced. Moreover, the

possible benefit to citizens is much greater than before. Their grasp of ethical and value principles will enable them to lead lives that are genuinely and significantly good for them.

Stability

In the Laws Plato is perhaps more acutely aware of human frailty than he is in any other dialogue. He is especially sensitive to the influence that pleasure and pain have on the character and the choices of all human beings (662D-664C, 732D-734E) and is highly doubtful that it is possible for anyone, even one possessing full philosophical knowledge, to withstand the temptations of autocratic rule (689B, 691CD, 713CD, 875AD, 902AB). Nevertheless, this city should be considerably more stable than previous ones, since the citizens' education fosters a common conception of the good. In particular, it inculcates the understanding of a city as a shared association in which all aim at fostering and maintaining virtue in all their fellow citizens.

Perfection

For similar reasons, the conflict between one's own perfection and political activity will be minimized even for

the highest officials. Most of the citizens of the Laws' city will engage in political activities and sometimes exercise legal and judicial authority. Since such activities are a primary way in which their virtue is expressed, they will benefit the citizens. And insofar as political activity can help bring about genuinely virtuous states in others, the value to the agent of so acting seems to increase. This lack of competition between political activity and one's own perfection is emphasized by the theology of Book 10. There human ethical and political activity is seen as a form of cooperation with god in bringing good order to the universe as a whole and god acts to guarantee that it is always the case that what is best for the individual is best, not merely for the whole city, but for the whole cosmos (e.g. Laws 906AB and 903BD).

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that we can gain a deeper understanding of Plato's political philosophy by seeing it as, at least in part, a response to certain unresolved issues and problems that arise in the Socratic dialogues. In particular, I have argued that Plato tries to address these issues in the political views of the Socratic

dialogues by using the resources developed in the epistemological, metaphysical and psychological theories found in dialogues such as the Phaedo and the Republic. I have also argued that some of Plato's views on these fundamental issues—especially those concerning coercing and benefiting citizens, the nature and stability of the political association, and the tension between one's own perfection and political activity—change and develop in later dialogues, such as the Statesman and the Laws. I have also suggested that these later views themselves depend on developments in other parts of Plato's philosophy, especially his epistemology and psychology.

As I have noted, a number of aspects of the account that I have offered are controversial and may be modified by future research. This is an exciting time in the study of Plato's political philosophy. Greater attention is now being paid to the Statesman and the Laws and these later dialogues are, at last, being read in the context of the psychology, epistemology, ethical theory, and metaphysics (including the metaphysics of value) of the other late dialogues. This increased discussion of the late dialogues should also lead to more work on the issues and problems that recur throughout Plato's political philosophy from the

Apology and the Crito to the Statesman and the Laws. As scholarly debate on these topics increases and new lines of research are identified, our understanding of Plato's political philosophy should grow.

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² I take the Apology and the Crito to antedate the Phaedo, and the Republic and the Statesman and the Laws (probably in that order) to follow the Phaedo. The Gorgias' place is more controversial, but I would place it between the Apology and the Crito on the one hand, and the Phaedo and the Republic on the other. More important for this chapter is not the relative date of the Gorgias, but the fact that it, like the Apology and the Crito, does not appeal to philosophers as knowers of Platonic Forms, while the Phaedo and the Republic do. For further discussion of chronology, see Irwin in this volume.

³ For quotations from Plato, my translations draw upon those in Cooper (1997), except for the Laws where I draw

upon Bury (1926) and Pangle (1980). For discussions of Plato's political philosophy from all periods, see Barker (1960), Irwin (1995), Samaras (2002) and Schofield (2006); for discussions, especially of the Socratic dialogues, with references, see Brickhouse and Smith (1999, 185-229) and Kraut (1984).

⁴ Socrates gives priority to the well-being of his fellow-citizens, Apol. 30A. The literature on Plato's attitude towards rational eudaimonism and the connection between virtue and happiness is extensive, see Bobonich (2002) and Irwin (1995). Here, and throughout, I try to cite work, often more recent, that itself gives further references. In my view, Plato, in all periods, thinks that virtue is the fundamental component of happiness, while accepting that there are other parts or components; for discussion of different interpretations, see Bobonich (2002) and Irwin (1995).

⁵ Cf. Hipp. Maj. 284BD and Lysis 209CE. On the relation of this idea to historical understandings of the Greek city, see Manville (1990, 35-54).

⁶ This is related to a fundamental ethical claim of Plato, the Dependency Thesis, that is, nothing benefits a person

who lacks wisdom or knowledge of the good, see Euthydemus 278E-282A and Meno 87C-89A.

⁷ These claims are controversial, for a defense of them and discussion of other interpretations, see Benson (2000, 99-163).

⁸ There has been in recent years a valuable literature on the more specific question of Socrates' attitude towards the Athenian democracy and its historical rivals. For one of the latest contributions, see Ober (1998, 156-213).

⁹ In my view, Socrates thinks that there is a better epistemic state than the one he is in and does not claim confidence that no human can attain it. For some starting points on the extensive literature on knowledge in the Socratic dialogues, see Benson (2000) and Brickhouse and Smith (1999, 99-121), as well as Matthews and Taylor in this volume. On the necessity of knowing the definition of, e.g. courage for knowing what actions or people are courageous and for knowing what is true of courage, see n. 6.

¹⁰ At times, Socrates seems more unwilling to act without better settling the questions under discussion, e.g. Laches 200C-201B, cf. 179A-180A. But this only shows that, in

some circumstances, there is no action preferable to further inquiry, not that this is always so. In the Laches, the initial options are not exhaustive and neither seems especially attractive.

¹¹ I put it this way, rather than asking what the best city ruled by Socrates would look like, since we should not assume, without argument, that Socratic principles entail that he should rule in the best city, much less that he should do so without the participation of others. I discuss this issue further below in connection with coercion. Since the ethical expert referred to at, e.g., Crito 47A-48A has knowledge of the virtues, I shall not consider a city founded by such a person.

¹² Cf. Kraut (1984, 194-309).

¹³ For other political language, see Crito 49 D2-3; there is a common boulê for Socrates and Crito, see 47C11. For boulê as a political term, see Hansen (1991, 246) and Aristotle Politics 1322b12-17.

¹⁴ Controversies surround Plato's views on eudaimonism, for some discussion, see Bobonich (forthcoming) and Irwin (1995).

¹⁵ On the Crito's arguments, see Harte (1999) and Kraut (1984).

¹⁶ Socrates may not accept this definition, but that does not affect the point.

¹⁷ E.g. Rep. 590CD and Laws 857CE, see Bobonich (2002, 203-5).

¹⁸ See Devereux in this volume.

¹⁹ See Bobonich (forthcoming) and Devereux in this volume.

²⁰ Bobonich (forthcoming) argues that on the account of virtue that the Socratic dialogues seem to be moving towards, that is, knowledge of good and bad, it is difficult to sustain the claims we find there of the priority of virtue, the necessity and sufficiency of virtue for happiness, and the Dependency Thesis. Plato's middle-period conception of human beings as most fundamentally rational creatures, his understanding of rationality as involving love and knowledge of the truth, and his conception of knowledge as requiring a grasp of Forms are one response to this gap. In the next section, we shall consider some of the political implications of these middle-period views.

²¹ E.g. Kraut (1984, 207-15).

²² E.g. the disputed Alcibiades I 118A ff., and Xenophon Memorabilia 4.2.2 and 4.6.

²³ In addition to the references in n. 2, on the Republic, see Annas (1981).

²⁴ For a defense of these claims and, more generally, of this interpretation of the Republic, see Bobonich (2002).

²⁵ For a more optimistic assessment of the auxiliaries' lives, see Kamtekar (1998).

²⁶ For a recent discussion, see Brown (2000).

²⁷ In addition to the references in n. 2, on the Statesman specifically, see Annas (1995), Cooper (1999), Rowe (1995a) and (1995b).

²⁸ We are not told how large the city in the Statesman will be, but it is large enough to provide for its own defense. The citizen body will thus be much larger than the class of philosopher rulers in the Republic; the city described in the Laws will have 5,040 citizen households (737Eff.).

²⁹ For support, see Bobonich (2002, 412-6), and Cooper (1999). McCabe (1997) and Nightingale (1996) suggest that a related lesson can be drawn from the Statesman's cosmological myths.

³⁰ Aristotle, Politics 2.6. For the report that the Laws was unfinished at Plato's death, see Diogenes Laertius 3.37. In addition to the references in n. 2, on the Laws specifically, see Laks (2005) and Saunders (1981).

³¹ E.g. Gorg. 515B-522B, Rep. 389BC, and Stsmn. 296A-297B, but as Cooper (1999, 188-9) notes, it is not clear that the Statesman is in genuine tension with the Laws.

³² Karl Popper (1971, 139 and 270), for example, is so convinced that the Laws must hold the same view as the Republic that he claims that the remark beginning with "Idiot!" states Plato's own view. But Plato clearly rejects it and attributes it to an ignorant slave doctor who treats slaves (Laws 720BE and 857CE).

³³ For a defense of this view, see Bobonich (2002, 97-119) and Samaras (2002, 305-30); for different interpretations, see Laks (1990) and (2005), and Nightingale (1993).

³⁴ Bobonich (2002, 378).

³⁵ The Laws' account of political institutions is complex. Its views on changing the laws, the Nocturnal Council, property classes, and women complicate the above picture, but do not, I think, change its essentials. Regardless of how disputes about the role of women and the use of

property classes are to be settled, political office is not restricted to philosophers. With respect to the Nocturnal Council, I do not think that it exercises sole or dominant political authority, and it is not composed exclusively or predominantly of fully trained philosophers. For a defense of these views with references to other interpretations, see Bobonich (2002, 374-408); on the goodness of political activity, see Bobonich (2002, 450-73).

³⁶ Plato's later epistemological and psychological views are controversial, for interpretations that differ in some respects from that in the text, see Lorenz in this volume and Scott (1995). I would like to thank Alex Coley, Aditi Iyer, and Christine Kim for their comments, and I am especially indebted to Gail Fine for her many helpful suggestions.