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The Politics of a Sophistic Rhetorician

V. Tejera

Plato's Dialogism and the Subject-Matter of the Politicus

Any philologist, historian or thinker of sensibility must begin by rejecting H.N. Fowler's philistine judgment that "in this dialogue, as in the *Sophist*, the dramatic form is hardly more than a convention"¹. On the contrary, any reading (not excluding 'philosophic' readings) of the *Politicus* conducted with what is now called 'literary competence' has to grant that the dialogical or dramatic form which Plato gave it is of supreme relevance. But if by a 'philosophic' reading we mean one that seeks only for 'doctrine', it follows that the doctrines which such readings come up with will simply be those of the Eleatic visitor in the fiction of the dialogue. Alternatively, if by philosophic readings we mean those that apply only a logical analysis to the arguments of the visitor, we will have neglected the rhetorical dimension of a discursive interaction in which the copious main speaker is a rhetorician. And we see that to call such readings 'philosophic' is a presumptuous impoverishment of the art and science of responsive reflection, because it is less than fully reflective and less than adequately responsive.

This essay also has to begin with the suggestion that the title of M. Miller's book on our dialogue should have been 'The Sophist in Plato's *Politicus*', rather than 'The Philosopher in Plato's *Statesman*'². This is because to call the subject-matter of the Eleatic visitor's discourse 'the statesman' is (i) to transpose 'the political man' (τὸν πολιτικὸν ἄνδρα, 258B4) for whom the visitor says he will seek at the beginning of his discourse, into 'the man of real knowledge' (τις ... ἐπιστήμων ὄντως ὧν, 301B5) whom he invokes as a standard or ideal later in his dis-

¹ *Politicus Philebus*, ed. & tr. H.N. Fowler, 1952, p. 2.

² M. Miller, *The Philosopher in Plato's 'Statesman'*, The Hague 1980.

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course. And to do this is (ii) to beg the question of the whole dialogue. For, if by statesman we mean the visitor's one true, kingly man of knowledge who manages the state with justice and benefaction, then it cannot be to the political man in this sense that Socrates junior applies the term πολιτικοῦς at 303C5-6, *since the interlocutors agree that such a man of knowledge is not to be found on earth* (275C). He also makes it explicit at 303C6-7 (following the lead of the Eleatic) that quote: "this term 'sophist' then comes round quite rightly to fall upon the πολιτικός". But neither is it to the latter man that the terms σοφὸς καὶ ἀγαθός (296E5) are applied by the Eleatic, as we shall see; for these are applied in that passage to the 'kingly' ruler whose 'science' obviates the need for laws. The sophistic visitor's equivocation between 'the political man' and 'the kingly man' is so subtly done, however, that it needs to be caught at its very beginning. He has just said that having found out yesterday (258A4) the nature of the Sophist, it is now necessary to search out (διαζητεῖν) that of the politician (τὸν πολιτικὸν ἄνδρα), thus implying some sort of kinship between them³. So πολιτικός means here – as it will mean in the course of the dialogue – administrator of one of the six *imitations* of the true form of government⁴.

We notice at once that the Sophist's search for 'the political man' has become, by 268B10, "our discourse about the king", and a dia-

³ The characterization of the Sophist in that dialogue is not entirely negative: he was there called a *masterful* contriver or contereiter and a *knowing* imitator of what is true and what is excellent. Being a *rhetorical* Sophist himself, it was the disputatious or eristic Sophists (with whom he tacitly classifies the elder Socrates) who are derogated by him. The visitor's special severity with Sophists who "garrulously dispute" for "no pay" at all makes the allusion to Socrates explicit.

⁴ We will see that he is called σοφὸς καὶ ἀγαθός (296E) by the visitor as part of the equivocation between 'the political man' and 'the kingly man of knowledge who doesn't exist on this earth that the Eleatic is bringing off. The one, true form of governance is the godlike rulership of the 'scientific' monarch. The lawful imitations are constitutional monarch, aristocracy, and democracy. The lawless imitations are tyranny, oligarchy, and demagogic democracy. In English, 'statesman' has an honorific connotation and 'politician' a derogatory one; just as those who wish to translate τὸν πολιτικὸν ἄνδρα with statesman claim there is a neutral use of it in which it means 'man of politics', so those who prefer to translate with 'politician' say that there is a non-judgmental use of this term too. Since it's not really possible to overcome the favorable connotation of 'statesman', I use the latter to apply only to the man of politics who is supernally competent and above 'politics' (not just 'party') in the sense that Solon was.

gramming of “a sort of kingly shape” at 268C6. Already by 262C the sophistic visitor has forgotten the political man and is talking only about ‘the kingly man’ (τὸν βασιλικόν) whose art (τέχνη at 259B5, ἐπιστήμη at 264A5) is kingly (βασιλική) “if he is a true king”. We also observe that the phrase at 264A5 “the knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) we are hunting (θηρούμεν) for”, is forcing *technē* to mean something more than the ‘knowledgeable practice’ which *politikē* was in classical Athens. It is pushing what we would call an ‘art’ – the art of politics or of applied ‘political science’ – to mean something more theoretical and more capable of certainty. And it is this that justifies the translation of *epistēmē* as ‘science’⁵, which is not a Greek word. We ourselves, however, should not fall into the Sophist’s trap, by going on to privilege theoretical knowledge over the other kinds, and make it – as neopositivists and pythagorists do – the model or standard for all other knowledges. For, that would be sheer scientism.

We see that the visitor (unnoticed by Socrates junior) has switched over from a search for ‘the political man’ to a search for ‘those who are *really* political and kingly’ by 291C (τῶν ὄντως ὄντων πολιτικῶν καὶ βασιλικῶν), when he says that the latter have to be separated from the troop of charlatans and sophists who busy themselves with the affairs of the state. But now we have to remember that at 259C1-4 he had said:

it seems that all these are the scope of one knowledge (μία ἐπιστήμη), whether we call it kingship (βασιλικήν) or politics (πολιτικήν) or management (οἰκονομικήν).

Of course, with his subsumption of “all these” under one ‘science’, and in one breath, the sophistic visitor is reinforcing a fundamental equivocation: management is a practical ‘science’, and political *theory* is different from the practice of governance. But again, the critical reader or auditor – unlike young Socrates – doesn’t have to accept it. Nonsophistic readers or auditors of the *Politicus* will, of course, be in the position that Plato has put his Socrates in the dialogue, namely, in a position to decide for themselves about the cogency or persuasiveness of the Eleatic’s arguments. Such a reader will also catch the points at which the latter is tacitly directing his quips *against* the silent Socrates.

⁵ It also anticipates Aristotle’s distinctions between the theoretical, practical, and productive knowledges while unAristotelianly elevating theoretical knowledge above the other two kinds of knowledge.

For this is what Plato the author has done for his auditor with this dialogue: he has put on exhibit before us a pythagorizing sophist at his rhetorical best, in order that we may judge him *on 'his' own words* without dialectical prompting from Socrates. It should not escape our notice that, so fair and virtuoso is Plato about this, that we feel he is probably giving the visitor's arguments sharper formulations than an original Sophist could have given them himself.

Let us pause to note that just as Gorgias's words in the *Gorgias* are *idiolectically* Gorgian and Polus and Meno, in their turn, sound like Gorgian disciples, so is the discourse of Plato's Eleate entirely in character and brilliantly sophistic in Plato's presentation. The contrast our dialogue makes with the *Euthydemus* confirms our sense of Plato's fairness; for in that dialogue Plato puts on exhibit before us two professional word-mongers at their sophistic worst. But with his *Sophist* and *Politicus* Plato gives rhetorical, political and pythagorizing Sophistic the fairest hearing his ingenuity is capable of. And the reader who can agree to this will be ready to agree that the right attitude to take to the discourse of the visitor in the *Politicus* is that which Plato's Socrates takes *within* it, namely, one of skeptical detachment combined with a consciousness that when a sophistic rhetorician speaks his listeners *not the truth* are his targets. Also, since the Eleate feels himself to be on display because of Socrates' presence and the prideful manner in which Theodorus introduced him, Plato's reader can take the visitor's discourse to be a defense of his own profession and assumptions. This artistic strategy of Plato's is what Bakhtin called, in the case of Dostoyevsky, his *dialogism*, namely, his ability to honor his characters' subjectivity by having them speak out of *their* own worlds and *their own assumptions*. Plato's characters, like Dostoyevsky's, are not simply constructed from an observed point-of-view but are experienced as the valid centers of *their* own lives and concerns, whose voices are on a par with those of the reader and author. Their voices are, thus, in dialogue both with other characters and with the reader and author⁶. They are subjects not objects; when they speak the world is seen as in *their* consciousness. It is this authenticity and their talking in the first person that confuses readers into taking them to speak *for* Plato, instead of *with* or *to* him or us.

⁶ M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* (1929), tr. C. Emerson, Minnesota U.P. 1984; and *The Dialogical Imagination* (1975), tr. Emerson & Holquist, Minnesota U.P. 1981.

The Political Art as a Pythagorist 'Science'

We now return to the text of our dialogue by noting that, according to the Eleatic visitor at 260C, what the kingly man has to have is “an art of command” (ἐπιτακτικὴν τέχνην). This art is quickly (and fallaciously) distinguished by the rhetorical Sophist as a theoretical skill as follows: at 259C10 it is “rather more intellectual than manual” (τῆς δὴ γνωστικῆς μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς χειροτεχνικῆς). Then at 259D7 it is simply assumed to be plain “intellectual science” (τὴν γνωστικὴν); but by 259E3 it has become “most certainly one of the intellectual arts” (τῶν γνωστικῶν γε... παντάπασι τεχνῶν).

The visitor then assigns the kingly man to the art of commanding which “judges as a ruler” (ἐν τῇ κριτικῇ ... δεσπόζοντά γε) rather than “as a spectator” (καθάπερ τινὰ θεατήν). Next the art of the king (βασιλικήν) is (260D-E) separated from that of the interpreter, the boatswain, the prophet, the herald and other such craftsmen, because it is “the ‘science’ of giving orders of one’s own” (τὴν αὐτεπιτακτικὴν). – We are reminded by the downgrading of prophecy here, that just as the Sophists were in competition with the wealthy on the ground of having an expertise which most such eligibles lacked, so were they also as advisors to the city-state in competition with the oracles⁷.

Again the kingly man is nobler (γενναιότερον) than the architect (e.g.) because “the power he holds is ever over living things” (261C) rather than inanimate materials. And we note that *gennaioteros* has a dynastic flavor to it that available synonyms such as *esthlos* or *agathos* do not have. Next the kingly man is said to be analogous to a herdsman or shepherd rather than a groom because his art could be said to be “a kind of community management” (κοινοτροφικὴν τινα 261E3). On Socrates junior’s agreeing to “whatever name might go with it”, the clever visitor takes a moment to praise the youngster’s indifference to names. – With this Plato is allowing the reader to see that the visitor is pleased the youth is letting him give things the names that suit *his* rhetorical purposes. However, when his tractable respondent proposes to divide the art of herding into the care of men on one hand and that of beasts on the other, the Sophist abruptly tells him he is in error – even though the reader can see that, for purposes of the inquiry, it’s an acceptable divi-

⁷ It’s worth noting that, in contrast to the Sophists, we don’t find Plato’s Socrates downgrading prophecy or the oracle.

sion given that it dichotomizes according to a principle⁸. It becomes clear that the visitor wants to divagate upon the subject of dichotomous division; his objections bear more on “dividing through the middle” (μεσοτομεῖν) – and being virtuoso about it – than on dividing according to a principle⁹.

More, the great fuss he makes about how *parts* of a set aren’t always *classes*, how divisions must be *apt* and how they must correspond to divisions in nature, serves to alert the reader that in the dichotomizing to which the Sophist now proceeds he does not follow his own admonitions, clever as some of his classifications are. It is he who goes off track here, not young Socrates whose suggestion is perfectly apt that the art they are after is one that applies to humans. It must be, we hypothesize that the visitor wishes to show off his mastery of the method of diairesis, *and* that Plato is letting his reader see how easy it is to go wrong with it. The Sophist is a master of the method in the sense that he can satirize the Greeks (for ethnic chauvinism) while practising it. At the same time, his doctrinal tendentiousness persists with so light a touch that just as it would have been unnoticeable to some contemporaries, so it has remained for too many of Plato’s readers. By making sure, for instance, that young Socrates agree that the kingly art holds sway over “tame” (θρέμμασιν, 264A) animals, the Sophist is setting aside the need to discuss, or grant, the right to rebellion against tyranny. And he has to do this because the one-man rule (μοναρχία) based on pythagorist ‘science’ which he favors and which is above the laws is, from a nonmonarchist point of view, simply another form of tyranny.

That the visitor can make virtuosity amusing is shown by his pythagorean-style comparison of biped-herding (πεζονομικήν) to an *even number*, and by his characterizing the objects of the king’s ‘science’ as hornless bipeds that can’t cross-breed. He protracts the humorous note by suggesting that the division of the two species they haven’t covered is a matter of geometry requiring the help of the young geometer Theaetetus. He means, he explains, that they must cut them

⁸ A principle that can be stated but which the youngster fails to adduce, namely, that politics has to do, or should have to do, in the first place with human beings (as Socrates maintains it should in the *Gorgias*).

⁹ As L. Campbell, taking the dialogue with total literalism, seems to have believed: II 17 ff. *The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato*, Rev. text w. Engl. notes, Oxford 1867. Note the choice of μεσοῦσιν at 265B3 as subliminally echoing μεσοτομεῖν at 265A5.

by the diameter, of course, and again by the diameter of the square of the diameter (τῇ διαμέτρῳ ... καὶ πάλιν τῇ τῆς διαμέτρου διαμέτρῳ, 266A).

The joke is twofold; first, the Eleate has found a ‘geometrical’ way of distinguishing between biped (δίπους) animals and “the other remaining species” (quadrupeds) which is felicitous. The latter, since it is their nature to have twice two feet, are divided off

from the point of view of their root (i.e. their ‘power’) [by] the diameter of the square of our root (or ‘power’) (κατὰ δύναμιν αὐτῆς ἡμετέρας δυνάμεως διάμετρος, εἴπερ δυοῖν γέ ἐστι ποδοῖν δις πεφυκυῖα).

Mathematically speaking, this is well-derived (*bien traído*, as we would say in Spanish), rather than far-fetched. For δίπους means two-footed as well as the two-foot square whose root is the diameter $\sqrt{2}$. But we cannot miss the compresent sexual innuendo if we think of “power” as “potency” and remember not only that the “root” also customarily means the organ of reproduction, but that bulls are a symbol of sexual potency. There has just been a reference to these in the distinction between horny and unhorned animals.

However, both the reader and young Socrates are distracted from the Sophist’s raciness here by his going on to say that there is a well-reputed (εὐδοκιμησάντων) and amusing corollary attached to his mathematics. This is that the human race has ended up in the same class as the race of placid porkers, because we share with it the attribute of being εὐχερέστατος! The pun on which this depends is that *eucherestatos* means both most ‘dexterous’ or ‘easy-to-handle’ and most ‘licentious’. And just as pigs can be as *gennaiotatoi* (well-bred, 266C4) as men because they are *carefully* matched by their breeders, so men can be as licentious (εὐχερέστατος) as pigs because they are dexterous (εὐχερής) and easy to handle.

That this *also* results in an equipairing of the life of a king with the lax life of a swineherd, only proves to the Sophist that diairesis is a “value-free” (in modern terms) method of classification which “always leads to the perfect truth” (267D). Because of the unseemliness of the comparison, however, the Sophist gives himself permission to take “the shorter road” to the definition of the king “without any asking” by his respondent. We ought at the beginning, he now says, to have divided walking animals into biped and quadruped and then the bipeds into

feathered and unfeathered so as to get quickly to human beings and the art of herding them (τῆς ἀνθρωπονομικῆς τέχνης)¹⁰. – We note that they could have gotten there *more* quickly by not rejecting young Socrates' dichotomy between the care of men and the care of beasts, back at 262B-C. – And having reached the art of herding human beings, the Sophist continues, “we should insert the kingly political man (τὸν πολιτικὸν καὶ βασιλικόν) as a charioteer into the division and turn over to him the reins of the city-state as befits the ‘science’ proper to him” (266E)¹¹.

To this young Socrates responds that “this explanation has paid [him] back in full, and with the digression as interest”. These words confirm how very tractable and tame (!) young Socrates is, and how charismatic and persuasive the sophistic visitor must be to him. For, the digression was not *logically* more justified than young Socrates's dichotomy. Since it could at most only be justified pedagogically, we see that it is as much a result of authorial structuring of the interaction (which accommodates the readily-displayed skills of the visiting Sophist) as it is plausible, given the Eleate's dominance over the youngster.

Isolating and ‘Purifying’ the Kingship

On plaiting back together for purposes of a definition the several strands they have separated, the visitor finds that, as a definition of the political art, “the ‘science’ of giving one's own commands in the tending of human herds” (ἀνθρώπων κοινοτροφικὴν ἐπιστήμην) is *not* in every way complete. For, would not merchants, farmers, grain distributors, trainers, physicians and a myriad others dispute the claim that the king is the *only* tenderer of the human herd? Our outline of the kingly shape will not be accurate, the Sophist now says, until we have *isolated*

¹⁰ This distinction in its relevance to the *human* species is as little or as much ‘according to nature’ or arbitrary as that between horned and unhorned or shell-encased and non-armored. We've seen the dramatic reason for ‘horned/unhorned’; the reason for ‘feathered/unfeathered’ must be to show the flipness of the Eleate's attitude to the method of diareisis. Zoologically, it makes no more sense than stopping to separate humans off from armored or proboscis-owning species.

¹¹ Καὶ τότε ἤδη τῆς ἀνθρωπονομικῆς δηλωθείσης τέχνης, φέροντα τὸν πολιτικὸν καὶ βασιλικὸν οἷον ἡνίοχον εἰς αὐτὴν ἐνστήσαντα, παραδοῦναι τὰς τῆς πόλεως ἡνίας ὡς οἰκείας καὶ αὐτῷ ταύτης οὔσης τῆς ἐπιστήμης.

and purified¹² him from the crowd pressing around him for a share of the herdsman'ship. We must make a new beginning and take a different, quite amusing road on which it'll be our duty to mix into our dichotomizing part of a grand story until we get to the summit of our search.

The story the Sophist now tells "will be well suited to delineating (the nature of) the king" (τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως ... πρέψει ῥηθέν, 269C). The moral they draw from it is that

we see that our definition of the ruler is not only incomplete, but that we erred in confusing the political man with the Divine Shepherd. When we were asking ourselves about the king and the political man of the present cyclic and generation (τῆς νῦν περιφορᾶς καὶ γενέσεως) we spoke of the shepherd of the human flock at the time of the reverse movement (ἐκ τῆς ἐναντίας περιόδου ποιμένα) and he was a God not a man. We also failed to describe the manner of his rule (275A).

More, they find (275D-276B) that they would be misnaming the man of politics (ἀγγελαιοτροφικήν); nor would they have separated him from his competitors. The political man doesn't *feed* the human herd, like some of the latter. But he does have a care (ἐπιμέλεια) for it, says the Sophist, as we must agree *all* the others do. Also no matter how much we believed that there's an art of raising (θρεπτικήν τέχνην) the human herd (ἀγέλης), "we ought not to have called it kingship-and-statecraft (βασιλικήν ... καὶ πολιτικήν) so hastily" (276C8). For, there's a division (τμήσις) we have to apply between the *Divine* Shepherd (τὸν θεῖον ... νομέα) and the *human* herder (ἀνθρώπινον ἐπιμελητήν). – The great story just told has given the Sophist's auditors what they need to know about the Divine Shepherd. – Their second, lesser mistake in the discussion was that they didn't specify in any detail the manner of ruling¹³. Next, the caring (ἐπιμελητικήν) has to be

¹² Taking into account the pythagorist connotations of καθαρόν, the subtext of this clause would be "until we have isolated and pythagorized him".

¹³ The pun here is between *-komikes* (from κομίζω, superintend) and *komikos* (comic), in phrases such as τοῦ τῆς ἀγγελαιοκομικῆς ὀνόματος. Doesn't the verbal play which the Eleate practices here imply an attitude of superiority toward the very ruler he is busy distinguishing from the crowd of men who "provide for" or "feed" other men? This seems to confirm the feeling behind the Eleate's earlier assertion (259A) that the clever (δεινός) individual – like himself – who advises the ruler can be said to possess the kingly 'science'. In connection with the repeated and sometimes outrageous

divided into voluntary and involuntary, because if it isn't we're putting the king together with the tyrant: but their modes of ruling are quite different.

Now if we call the use of force 'tyrannical', and the care of willing bipeds 'political' (πολιτικόν), it's the man who has *this* art of caring who will appear to be really kingly-and-political (βασιλέα καὶ πολιτικόν, 276E13). "But still I think our figure of the king is not yet complete"; like some statue-makers we have used more of our mythic material than is proportionate, "fancying that the use of grand illustrations was proper in the case of the king" (277B). Our outline (περιγραφὴν), however, seems adequate; except that the exposition of any great idea does require examples;

for, it seems that each of us knows all he knows as if in a dream, but when awake we seem again unknowing.

"There now", the visitor interrupts himself, "seem to be falling into the current, absurd discussion of the pathology of knowledge" (καὶ μάλ' ἀτόπως ἔοικά γε ἐν τῷ παρόντι κινήσας τὸ περὶ τῆς ἐπιστήμης πάθος ἐν ἡμῖν)¹⁴.

This is because, he explains to young Socrates, my example itself requires an exemplification. Please proceed with it, says the latter. The example invoked is that of the art of weaving which, so the Eleate says, involves the same sort of activities as the political art (ἔχον τὴν αὐτὴν πολιτικὴν πραγματείαν). Here the thing to notice is the conclusion, and its cola, which the visitor reaches after dichotomizing weaving by reference to the materials it works on as well as with reference to the way in which it works them: "just as we called statecraft (πολιτικὴν) or politics the art concerned with the state (πόλεως) or city, so weaving – the greatest part of which is concerned with making clothes – *differs in name only* from clothes-making" (280A). He adds "just so, as in the other case, the kingly 'science' (βασιλικὴν) differed [in name only]

wordplay of the sophistic rhetorician, the hypothesis suggest itself that, with it, Plato is helping his auditor or reader to perceive – behind the veil of its virtuosity – the essential frivolity of the Eleate's persuasive enterprise.

¹⁴ Since explaining by means of example and explaining one example by means of another are not problematic, we gather that, with this allusion, the Eleate is simply being up-to-date and topical. Allusions like this (sometimes more particular, sometimes more generalized) are so frequent in other dialogues as well, that Plato seems unable to resist the temptation to let his speakers be allusively topical.

from the political art (πολιτικῆς)". We see how difficult it's going to be for the Sophist's auditors (or readers) to keep track of the continuing equivocation between *politike* and *basilike*; he sometimes synonymizes and sometimes distinguishes them.

After four more Stephanus-pages of dichotomizing fun and wordplay¹⁵ with the art of weaving, the Sophist says, "it is now pretty clear to everybody" that we may call weaving "the art which directs the process of making woollen clothes". So why in the world, he asks himself at 283B, "did we go around in circles making futile distinctions?". To my mind, good visitor, nothing said seemed futile. You may change your mind, the visitor replies. Let me propose a principle to apply to cases of excess and deficiency, says the visitor, as he plunges into still another round of dichotomies about size and measure. – It is by now abundantly clear that the sophistic rhetorician from Elea is both as much a master at the method of diairesis as anybody and that he is very conscious of it. But it is visible to his reader, as it is not to young Socrates, that he is either abusing or satirizing the method. But if he is doing the latter rather than the former, then his dichotomies are sometimes shallow and not according to nature for reasons, and not from lack of intelligence. Like other talented Sophists, this one is *deinos* in the sense of "formidable", just because he is intelligent *and* a special pleader, not a sincere knowledge-seeker like Plato's Socrates. To grasp this is to see why there is no question left over of why he often comes on as a sincere a problem-solver (as at 286D-E)¹⁶; for, it is part of his sophistic art. To be believed he must be indistinguishable from the true knowledge-seeker. Had he not said at the end of the *Sophist* that the eristic Sophist *imitates* the man of knowledge (*sophos*), from whom he gets his name (*sophistes*) paronymously? And the species of Sophist which he himself is (namely, rhetorical) does not escape the stricture which the Eleate has applied to the genus, even though it is eristic Sophists that he had in mind.

Now the purpose of his distinction-making here was to establish, or get agreement to, the postulation of the mean and the reality of excesses and deficiencies over or under it (283E). There are two ways of doing this, the Sophist continues, one by taking them relatively to each

¹⁵ Such as between ξυνεργῶν and ξυγγενῶν; or between περιβολῇ and ὑποβολῇ.

¹⁶ Note the overtone of defensiveness that can be picked up in a detached reading of this simulation of sincerity.

other (πρὸς ἄλληλα), the other by reference to the standard of the mean (πρὸς τὸ μέτριον). But you must never take the first way without the second; for, *not* to relate too-much and too-little to the standard of the mean would be to abolish the arts-and-sciences, given that in practice all these solve their difficulties by referring to what they consider proportionate. So, he now says, “just as in the case of the Sophist we were forced to assert that not-being exists”, are we not forced now to categorically assert the reality of the existence of the mean because without it “we could not say that there is such a thing as a politician (πολιτικόν) or that there is anyone with knowledge (ἐπιστήμονα) of practical affairs” as there would then be no art of politics or of practice (284C)? We notice that the visitor makes no reference to *basilike* here, and that practices are being assimilated to the knowledges *epistemai*. And his reasoning, that if excesses and deficits exist so must the mean really exist *in the same sense*, has not been objected to. But, of course, the mean exists only in the sense that categories exist: excess and deficiency are things perceived, whereas categories are things postulated and, therefore, hypothetical. Nor was the visitor in the (*Sophist*) “forced” to assert the contradiction that non-existence exists, except by his own sophistic need to differ from Parmenides.

But then between 286D2 and 287A he switches to a functional and situational understanding of brevity and prolixity while also asserting that

the first and most important thing by far is to exalt the method itself of being able to divide according to classes (εἶδη).

He now pronounces the kingly art (βασιλική) – not that of the *politikos* just mentioned – to have been distinguished from most of those relating to herding; but adds that what’s left are the arts relating to the city itself and, among these, to distinguish between those that are causative (αἰτίων) and those that are auxiliary (ξυναιτίων). “Although without the latter”, he says at 287D, “there would be no city and no art of politics (πολιτική) we will not grant that any of them are the job of the kingly art (βασιλική)”. The detached reader has to ask, is this a lapse from the visitor’s monarchist apologetics in so far as it implicitly recognizes the art of the king (βασιλική) to be a *species* only of the political art (πολιτική). We must note, moreover, that the distinction between instrumental or auxiliary arts and causative arts forced them to *abandon* the method of division down the middle in favor of division “by joints” (κατὰ μέλη).

The reader now bumps into a series of seven (!) dichotomizations *kata mele* – from 287E to 289A – performed in a riddling and punning way, the ostensible purpose of which is to finish eliminating the auxiliary arts from the political art, but the real purpose of which, the reader sees, is to distract from the failure of the previously exalted method of division by the middle. That they are so amusing, involving a triple pun and a bathroom joke, confirms the reader in his suspicion that it is an exercise in tergiversation on the part of the Sophist. The joke is that *thākos* means both ‘throne’ and ‘privy’; the triple pun is between *periblemata*, *proboles* and *problema*. The series also allows the Eleate to classify the delight-giving arts of ornamentation, music and painting as non-serious amusement (*παιδιά, παίγνιόν πού*). And this is yet another move characteristic of Pythagorean or pythagorizing thought which clues us in to the intellectual affiliations of our Eleatic rhetorician. And we notice again that it is the kingly ‘science’ (*βασιλικῆς ἐπιστήμης*) that is exempted from responsibility for the auxiliary arts at 288E6-7, but that at 289A5 it is the political art (*πολιτική*) that is so exempted, while at 289D1 the reference is to the *practice* (*πράξεως*) of both (*τε καὶ*) king and politician.

The Eleate points out next that there are going to be some among the slaves and servants who will mob (*ἀμφισβητοῦντας*) the king over the weaving itself. Bought servants are of course excluded from the kingly art (*βασιλικῆς τέχνης*, 289E1). But do those who serve for pay have a claim to some sort of statecraft (*πολιτικῆς*)? Shopkeepers and laborers won’t claim any share in *basilike* (290A6). But what about heralds and those skilled in writing or who serve in public offices? These are servitors too, ventures young Socrates, because they are not rulers (*ἄρχοντας*) in their city. Prophets or diviners (*μαντική*) have a kind of ancillary ‘science’ (*ἐπιστήμης διακόνου*); for they interpret the Gods to men. And priests are knowing (*ἐπιστῆμον*) about attending the Gods and have the art (*τέχνης*) of praying on our behalf. They are proud and well-esteemed because of the majesty of their enterprise, are they not? And in Athens the Archon who performs the most solemn and patriotic sacrifices, is he not called a King (*βασιλεύς*)? These, and one more group that I’ll have to delineate, will have to be sorted out from the really political and kingly men (*ἀπὸ τῶν ὄντως ὄντων πολιτικῶν καὶ βασιλικῶν*) if we are to see clearly what we seek. This troop is called by our rhetorical “of all the men-of-knowlege or sophists (*σοφιστῶν*) the greatest magicians (*γοήτα*) and the most experienced in their art” (*τέχνη*). It will not escape the non-snobbish reader that implicit in the

Eleate's last set of distinctions is the feeling that *service* is incompatible with governance.

Constitutional Government or Sophistic 'Science'

We note next that the visitor from Elea has no name with which to distinguish the consensual (ἐκουσίως, 292A1) or lawful form of democracy from the demagogic, when they rehearse the six recognized forms of government: monarchy and tyranny, aristocracy and oligarchy, and the two forms of democracy. He says *here* that there are only five (291D8), not bothering with the distinction between the coerced and uncoerced forms that he makes in the case of one-man rule and rule-by-the few; for, "no one ever habitually changes the name [in this case]". Well, perhaps no one did in the pythagorized climate of opinion of such Western Greek cities as Elea; but the ordinary Athenian who had enjoyed democracy since the reforms of Kleisthenes at the end of the sixth century, would not have omitted the distinction and he would have remembered that the two exceptions to their decades of democracy – the purportedly-moderate oligarchal revolution of Antiphon and the Spartan-sponsored tyranny of the Thirty at the end of the fifth century – as disastrous alternatives to the lawful and moderate democracy by which the majority abided under the heading of the 'ancestral constitution'¹⁷.

"We said that royal rule" (βασιλικὴν ἀρχήν), the visitor reminds young Socrates, "was one of the 'sciences' " (τῶν ἐπιστημῶν, 292B5) – even though we haven't yet sufficiently defined 'science'. And it's a matter of judging and commanding. But, the visitor now announces, if we are to be consistent the forms-of-government just reviewed ought to have been distinguished on the basis of some 'science' (τινα ἐπιστήμην). So we must ask which of these forms engenders the 'science' of ruling men, the greatest and hardest to acquire. We must know this in order to see which men are to be separated from the wise

¹⁷ Dramatically speaking, the long obtenance of the ancestral constitution makes Athenian democracy in the *Sophist's* redefinitions one of the lawful imitations of the 'one perfect, truly scientific form of government' which he deploys in the sequel. At 303B (Athenian) democracy will, naturally, emerge as the worse among the lawful forms of government. But guest that he is, the Elean will compensate his Athenian auditors by letting it be the best available form among governments when *all* are without laws. When the Eleate criticizes unwritten 'patriotic' observances, he is implicitly attacking the 'ancestral constitution' ἡ πατριος πολιτεία.

(φρόνιμος) king, for many claim to be political or statesmanly (πολιτικοί) who are not. And since a city of ten thousand could never produce 150 expert draughts players, don't expect it to produce even a lesser number of kings: I'm including, the Sophist specifies, those who have 'science' (ἐπιστήμη) among the kingly whether they rule or not.

So we have "to look for the right kind of rule wherever it occurs among one or two or very few men" (293A). And these must be supposed to rule according to some art (κατὰ τέχνην ἡντινοῦν). – We notice here that our Sophist is still, or again, operating with an equivocation between *episteme* and *technē*. – In the same way are physicians called physicians whether they cut or burn, with or without written rules, whether the patient is willing or not, and whether *they* are rich or poor. As long as they *purify* (καθαίροντες) us by art or 'science' (ἐπιστατοῦντες τέχνη) and do us good and make us better. Only in this way can medicine be rightly identified or any other kind of regimen whatever. The Eleate now reaches his grand conclusion (293C6-D2):

It necessarily follows, it would seem, that among differing forms-of-government (πολιτειῶν) the one and only right polity is that in which the rulers are found truly to have 'science' (ἐπιστήμονας)..., whether they rule according to laws or without them, with or without consent, and whether they are rich or poor, these things being no way relevant to an account of the most right method.

He strengthens his medical comparison with the analogy of beehive organization, "so long as they act in accordance with 'science' (ἐπιστήμη) and justice ... that must be said to be the only right form of government (μόνην ὀρθὴν πολιτείαν). All other forms", he continues,

must be said to be not legitimate (γνησίας) or real but to be imitating this form; and we call [states] well-governed (εὐνόμους) or more deformed (αἰσχιόνα) according to their success in imitating this form (293E3-6).

But young Socrates finds it hard to accept that there should be government without laws. The visitor's answer is that the art of legislation is part of kingcraft (βασιλικῆς); "but the best is not for the laws to be in power (ἰσχύειν), but for a kingly man of wisdom to be" (294A). Why? Because the changefulness of human life and the differences (ἀνομοιότητες) among men and cases prevent any art (τέχνη) from

proclaiming anything unconditionally about everything¹⁸. In this respect law is stubborn and unknowing. True, says young Socrates naively, the law treats each of us *atechnos*, with plain indistinction. – If we note the punning antithesis between *atechnos* and *techne*, we also have to note that it undermines the claim that law-making is a part of kingcraft if kingcraft is an art (*techne*) or ‘science’. Or else, the antithesis implies that when the king legislates he is being ‘unscientific’¹⁹. But the consequence of this is that there can be no Pythagorean legislation, if Pythagoreanism is a ‘science’. In contrast the Sophist’s explicit reasoning is that if law is unconditional, then it cannot apply to what is conditional, as are human affairs (294C6-7). There is an appeal to individualism in this part of the Sophist’s discourse; it also associates the law with the herd of “the many”, making it (he hopes) distasteful to the élite few. He argues further that *writing* the laws down makes them unchangeable, and (at 296A) that Greek procedure makes it difficult to change a law.

But if like a physician with correct art (ἔχων ... ὀρθῶς ... τέχνην) you *forced* a cure or improvement upon a patient, would that be called an “unscientific error” (παρὰ τὴν τέχνην ... ἀμάρτημα, 296B9) and harmful? Is not unscientific error (παρὰ τὴν πολιτικὴν τέχνην ἀμάρτημα) evil, injustice and shameful (τὸ αἰσχρόν)? And if people *are* to do what is juster and nobler contrary to written laws or tradition, it would be ridiculous to say that they’ve suffered unjust or evil treatment. So, if a man by persuasion or force does what’s for the good, won’t this be the truest form of right administration (διοικήσεως) “with which the good, wise man will administer the affairs of the ruled” (296E)? Just as the navigator makes his science the law for the ship, so may men establish a right polity (πολιτεία) by making the strength of ‘science’ (τέχνης) greater than the laws.

And whatever the wise rulers do there can be no mistake, as long as they defend this one thing: always to distribute (διανέμοντες) full justice with intelligence and ‘science’ (μετὰ νοῦ καὶ τέχνης) and both safeguard the citizens and bring them the better out of the worse as far as possible (297A-B).

¹⁸ Note the echo which tacitly allows ἀνομοιότητες to resonate with ἀνομος or ἀνομία (lawless, lawlessness).

¹⁹ And the Eleate’s “scientific law-maker” (ὁ μετὰ τέχνης γράψας, 295E8) is a contradiction in terms.

Astonishingly, but in character, young Socrates says to this: “there is no refuting what you have just said”. It’s astonishing to the reader because he has just approved of one-man rule or oligarchy unlimited by law or accountability, as long as the rulers can claim to possess true ‘science’ (ἐπιστήμη) or a kind of professional expertise (τέχνη). The Sophist’s proviso that such rule be administered “with intelligence”, is, of course, his escape-clause; for, won’t any kind of administration be a success that acts intelligently and with full justice (δικαιοσύνη), and that knows how to maximize good and minimize the worse (297A-B)? The fallacy in the Sophist’s defense of monarchy and oligarchy here is that it is also a defense of *any* form of government. It would be non-refutable, i.e., tautological but for its factual claim that large numbers of men cannot be intelligent administrators. And as political philosophy it completely overlooks Aristotle’s point that, as with some productive arts and practices, the judges of quality are the *users* of the product not the makers of it. The Sophist’s neglect of this point is simply a corollary of his abolishment of the principle of the accountability of rulers.

The Eleate now proceeds to make good an omission, and clarify for young Socrates what he means by imitations of the form of a polity. Granting that the polity just described is the only right form, you see that other forms will have to employ written laws if they are to survive – even though, as I’ve said, obeying written laws isn’t the best thing to do. It’s only the second option, he says. But for us readers, the latter is the ‘existential’ option; in contrast, we will call the first the ‘utopian’ option because it is mythopoetic or speculative and *perfectionist*²⁰. We notice, further, that as the Sophist evaluates kinds of polity, his usage (from 298 on) is never to mention the *demos* by itself, but always in counterpoise with the wealthy: he lacks the constitutional Athenian notion that the *demos* includes *all* the people (298C4, 298E7, 299A1-2, 300E8).

The Sophist now excludes all who take part in existential governments (which to him are imitations and unreal) from being real men of

²⁰ To redefine and distinguish all the kinds of polity by the idea of how well they approximate the τὴν τοῦ ἐνὸς μετὰ τέχνης ἀρχοντος πολιτείαν, is circular; it makes all polities inferior to *this one*. The Sophist’s speeches also mask the fallacy of perfectionism or utopianism: that both good and bad are inferior to ‘best’. But ‘inferior to best’ isn’t necessarily bad, especially when the best is speculative or unattainable – in fact or by definition, as here. The Eleate’s “seventh” kind of polity (302C10), implicitly delegitimizes as well as explicitly revises the standard Greek list of six polities.

politics (ὥς οὐκ ὄντας πολιτικούς). They are just partisans, party-men (στασιαστικούς). They head up “the greatest counterfeits” (εἰδώλων μεγίστων) and are themselves the biggest illusionists (γόητας) and supreme sophists (τῶν σοφιστῶν σοφιστάς, 303C1-4). “This term [sophist] seems to have come round”, agrees young Socrates, “rightly to apply to the *so-called* (λεγομένους) men of politics”. This seems to exclude all earthly politicians (πολιτικοί) – whether they are good and knowledgeable or partisans and pleaders (στασιαστικοί) – from being ‘statesmen’ (βασιλικοί) in the Sophist’s sense of ‘kingly’ and ‘scientific’ (ἐπιστήμων). As he goes on to say “all that is other and counter and not akin to the ‘science of politics’ (πολιτικῆς ἐπιστήμης) has now been refined out” (303E8-10).

This leaves for elimination only military science, jurisprudence, “and the kind of oratory that shares in the kingly science because it leads to justice and helps to steer the state”. Since rhetoric *serves* the political power (δύναμις, 304D8) and military science is ruled over by kingcraft (βασιλική, 305A6), they themselves cannot be the *science* of politics (πολιτική, 305A8-9). Nor, the Sophist continues, can jurisprudence be, since it takes the existing laws from the king lawgiver (νομοθέτου βασιλέως, 305B6): the power of judges is not kingly (οὐ βασιλικήν, 305C6) either. At 305C10-E6, finally, we get the Sophist’s outright equation between political ‘science’ (*politike*) and kingcraft *basilike*. In a short but interesting coda to the equation, he concludes that the special knowledges are quite properly called ‘special’ because they rule over *neither* one another *nor* themselves (305E). – Moderns may be allowed to read this as a reminder to positivists and physicalists that no single special science – not sociology, not physics or mathematics – is regulative over the rest of knowledge.

The Sophist’s Kingly Craft as Methoria

In the Eleate’s sophistic style of pythagorized thinking, then, *basilike* is the ‘science’ which governs all other arts and practices. As politics or political ‘science’, its responsibility is to weave the web of the political community, just as it is described as doing in the last five Stephanus-pages of our dialogue (305E-311C). But as reflection, we see how idealist (i.e., how pythagorist) it is, in turning the art-and-science of reflective politics – and all the other arts and sciences – into ancillary or subservient techne (*technai*) rather than true knowledges (*epistemai*) because they cannot grasp the relation between what they

themselves do and the good of the political community. The valid core of this is that the special sciences must, indeed, be subsumed under the study of ethics-and-aesthetics – as thinkers from Aristotle to Peirce and Santayana have always known. But it is Sophistic because the alternative it offers as the inclusive, regulative ‘science’ has been validated as such by an *unfalsifiable* story which invests its practitioner with unchallengeable divinity. We will see that as only the ‘professor’ of this theory rather than its implementor or practitioner, our rhetorician is *not* – contrary to his own claim, but in his own terms – a kingly craftsman *basilike*, but only a borderliner (μεθόριος) between philosophy and politics, in Socrates’ term at *Euthydemus* 305C. With all his methodic wiliness (μεθοδεία) his craft is only *μεθόρια*.

But not within the limits of the *Politicus* itself either, is his craft validated by the results it produces for the city-state: these the Eleate deploys for young Socrates as the consequence of *basilike* from 306A to the end. At 311B “the end of the web” of its practice is declared to be the good weaving (or knowledgeable interbreeding) together of hardy-courageous characters with prudent-decorous characters (ἀνδρείων καὶ σωφρόνων ἀνθρώπων ἥθος) simultaneously with the implantation of the friendship and concord that will produce the best-textured possible mantle with which to cover and watch over all in the happy city whether slave or free. This is not only promissory, theoretical and based on a mere analogy, but its two central kingly technes are the inexact ‘sciences’ of eugenics and group indoctrination. Most ironically of all, in point of the “happiness” with which the process mantles city, the free become indistinguishable from the slaves.

If we go now to *Euthydemus* 290A-D, we find Plato’s Socrates leading Kleinias on, through a question about generalship to the rejection of it – and calculation and geometry and astronomy – as the master art that governs the special knowledges. Further, in that dialogue’s report to Crito of his exchanges with Kleinias and the Sophistic word-mongers, Socrates smilingly and knowingly *explicitly* includes the art of monarchy (τὴν βασιλικήν) among those they decided did *not* produce happiness. Socrates had just asked at 289C9-10, perhaps ironically, could it be, as the Gods are my witness, that if we learnt the art-and-science of speechmaking this art would make us happy? When Kleinias says no, speechwriters don’t know how to use the arguments they themselves make up, Socrates confesses that when with them they impress him as superwise (ὑπέρσοφοι), out-of-reach; their art seems a branch of the enchanter’s, and they’re able to spellbind and sway mass juries,

assemblies and other crowds. If these words deliberately echo those of the Eleatic visitor about the Sophist as a word-wizard in the *Sophist*, they are a due clue to the *dramatic* order in which the latter dialogue, the *Politicus* and the *Euthydemus* should be read. And this would imply that the epilogue of *Euthydemus* is not only an exchange about education with Crito, but also one in which Plato gives his Socrates “equal time” to respond to the impressive pretensions of the would-be Eleatic man-of-knowledge and statesman in *his* two dialogues. But if *Euthydemus* is read before *Sophystes* and *Politicus*, its epilogue serves to alert the reader to pretensions of the brilliant visitor from Elea.

The fact that Socrates identifies the *basilike techne* with *politike* at 291C6 strengthens the hypothesis that he is alluding to the identification of the two by the Eleatic in *Politicus*. That’s why, Socrates had continued at 305C, Prodicus called them “inbetweeners” on the borders (μεθόρια) between knowledge and politics. They think themselves the wisest, and believe they’d be accounted so if it weren’t for the philosophic men – whom they therefore downgrade. But when they meet a refutationist like Euthydemus, they are silenced²¹. It’s natural for these inbetweeners, continues Socrates, to believe themselves wise, for they’ve absorbed some philosophy and some political knowledge. But since they take no risks (i.e., do not practice politics) and avoid competition, they enjoy only the benefits of their knowledge. Still, says Crito, you can’t deny that there’s some propriety in their account of themselves. – Here the reader will remember the effort it took (without Socrates help) to see through the impressive rhetoric of the Eleatic Sophist, and how well-persuaded he kept his bright young respondents. Yes Crito, says Socrates it’s a question of *appearing* seemly rather than of holding to the truth (306A).

Pythagorism and the Idea of Monarchy in the Fourth Century B.C.

There is no doubt that the *Politicus* is somehow related to the renewal of Pythagoreanism in the Fourth century, as well as to a new interest in Athens in the idea of monarchy. The idea of legitimating sovereignty by ‘science’ or knowledge probably did exist among Pythagoreans (whatever the state of their school) and others before Pla-

²¹ However, the reader has just been shown by Socrates (in the *Euthydemus*) that someone who really cares for knowledge rather than display, *can* match a pair of Sophists and not be silenced by them.

to's time. But the passages which Stobaeus (5th c. A.D.) has preserved of Pythagorean doctrine about monarchy are all later than Plato's dialogue, and could have been influenced by it or the Academic interpretation of it²². But what development it might have received among presocratic Pythagoreans, or Sophists, independently of Plato's dialogues and the Academy is undocumentable.

In matters political, readers can be sure that tensions in the climate of opinion will also be operating in any work before them. Given that at 276D-E and 284C-285C the Eleate is treating the same topics as Xenophon in his *Hiero* and at the end of the *Oeconomicus*, and with the same obliviousness to the relevance of law to rulership, the question becomes whether Xenophon is reformulating in his own unintellectual and understated way views similar to those of the pythagorizing Sophist from Elea, or whether Plato is using this Eleatic rhetorician to make explicit for purposes of critical reflection the rationale behind these views. Whatever the chronological priorities between Plato and Xenophon, it is the conception of the ruling-class farmer – not exclusive to Xenophon's *Ischomachus* – that is being played with by the visitor. The initial tip-off to this is the idea of the ruler as man-herd. But, while Xenophon and the Eleate are both antidemocratic, it is clear that the latter – with his pythagorizing claims to knowledge – is intellectualizing the common oligarchal idea. Secondly, Xenophon held *his* views in the context of a laid-back paternalist *paideia*, where the Eleate as a paid professional must operate by results-getting (and covered-up) persuasion.

A contemporary reader or auditor of the *Politicus* would have noted (at 293D) the occurrence or reoccurrence of the image of the King-bee which is also found in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* V 1, 24-26. He would also have recognized the Eleate's mention, at 260E1, of the boatswain as not a commander but only a transmitter of orders, as more exact than the reference at *Oeconomicus* XXI 2 to knowing versus unknowing boatswains – Xenophon, characteristically, is talking practice; the Eleatic persuader must give the appearance of theorizing. I mean 'more exact' in *his* pythagorizing parlance, but his dissociation of knowing from lowly practices comes out as more oligarchal. If Plato expected his readers to assume that the Eleate knew Xenophon's work, then we can take this speaker's project in the dialogue as an attempt to improve on Xenophon's views by intellectualizing them. But if Xenophon's

²² *Florilegium* (2 vol. in one), Tauschnitz ed. of 1838; *Peri Basileas* II 61-65.

works are themselves indifferent to or indirect responses to Plato's, then we have to see them as a 'depythagorization' or de-intellectualization of pythagorist or Sophistic defenses of monarchy²³. We must remember that, as a *real* oligarch and spartanizer, he would not have been predisposed to favor either Sophists or Pythagoreans. It is also not implausible to take our Eleatic rhetorician as speaking against the condemnation of tyranny by Antisthenes the semi-Socratic, if Xenophon's use of him to condemn predatory despots has a historical basis (*Symp.* IV 36-37). In any case, one of the common beliefs that the Eleate is combatting is that of the inevitable *unhappiness* of the tyrant.

This brings us to the two or three significant conceptions that the gentleman-militarist and the rhetorician from Elea *do* share. Xenophon's Socrates, at *Memorabilia* II 3, makes the *arete* of the kingly general depend entirely on his ability to make his followers happy. The condemnation at the end of the *Oeconomicus* of the tyrant who rules over unwilling subjects, shows that this consentingness is a matter of importance to Xenophon. And in the *Hiero*, the difference between a tyrant and a monarch depends on the willingness of his subjects to be ruled by him. This of course blocks, as it did in the discourse of the Eleatic visitor, any development of the place of law in reflective politics, whether in Xenophon's *praktike* or the Eleate's *episteme*. But as to the happiness of the monarch the Eleate's Divine Shepherd, possessed as he is of *basilike* knowledge and a happy kingdom, he can be presumed not to lack it. Nor is Xenophon's Hiero kept from happiness as long as he knows how to keep the consent of his subjects.

Nonetheless we find Hiero's interlocutor Simonides agreeing strongly to the need of the monarch for a mercenary guard which, however, will be put to uses that are good for his subjects as well; while Hiero well knows that the despost is "forced to maintain an army, or perish" (IV 11). The implication, in Xenophon at least, is that the consent of the subjects (given human nature) is not enough to *sustain* a monarch who has it, even if it seems to legitimate him. For the Sophist, it is his 'science' or knowledge that legitimates the one-man ruler; and the presumed success of the latter's inclusive 'science' (which has included the supervision of generals, judges, administrators and other

²³ Aulus Gellius suggests that Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* was his response to Plato's *Republic* or part of it. *Attic Nights* I-III, Text & Tr. J.C. Rolfe (Harvard 1948-1954). Note that if Xenophon was indirectly countering Plato's *Republic*, he must have taken it in a sense inimical to his own preference for oligarchy and monarchy.

city-state functionaries) keeps the subject of the monopoly of force from arising in his discourse. But, of course, only a non-constitutional monarchist will believe that the *kingly* man's intelligence and great store of 'scientific' ability is enough to legitimate his rule. And only a paternalist like Xenophon, with a militarist model of state administration, would rationalize a tacitly dominationist system as something willingly consented to by those dominated.

Finally, should any of the Eleate's auditors find some allusiveness in his words to the pan-Hellenic politics of Isocrates, we know that the latter was interested in monarchy, not for the individual cities of Hellas but for purposes only of a unifying foreign-policy and defensive alliance or confederation. The normative conception by means of which *this* orator and man of politics implicitly criticized the weaknesses of fourth century democracy was constitutional: "the constitution is the soul of the city, the life of the state" (ἔστι γὰρ ψυχὴ πόλεως οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἢ πολιτεία, *Areop.* 14, *Panathenaicus* 138). His repeated use of the phrase the "administration (διοίκησις) of our city" – instead of the standard 'ancestral constitution' – protected his ability to mediate among all parties, and like the much-used *dioikeo*, was well-chosen in its connotation of 'home-governance' of the city's affairs. For, he knew that extremists, oligarchs and the more conservative were appealing away from the 'ancestral constitution' to the new-fangled notion of the 'ideal constitution' which Plato extensively and elegantly satirizes in the *Republic*. But the king Isocrates had in mind was a war-leader to be entrusted with the supreme command over a Hellenic alliance, not with the governance of any cities but his own. And the purpose of the alliance was not only to prevent faction at home and avoid hegemonic disputes among the allies, but also to actualize the potential greatness of the Greeks vis-à-vis the rest of the world. It does strike us, however, that had some contemporary wished to provide a rationale for the taking of power by such a supreme commander over all of Greece, *regardless of home-constitutions*, he could hardly have done better than the sophistic rhetorician from Elea does, in the virtuoso discourse that Plato invented for him and *for our response*. And we remember that young Socrates' *only noticeably loud* objection, among his many easily-muted difficulties, was to just this proposal to do away with constitutions written or traditional.

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