

Facets of Right Measure

Cognitive Images and Leadership of Minds in Plato's *Statesman*

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

The University of Leeds
School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
Classics

May 2018

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Acknowledgements

Throughout my PhD I have benefitted from the generous support and guidance of a vast number of people, to whom I am grateful beyond measure. My supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Pender, has guided me with her encyclopedic knowledge of Platonic imagery and allowed me to develop my research skills with unyielding patience. Prof. Malcolm Heath has offered me fundamental guidance on rhetorical figures and poetical studies. Prof. Linda Napolitano Valditara has encouraged me to pursue this project and often supported me with her wise advice. Dr. Milena Bontempi and Prof. Jamie Dow have offered me further chances to discuss Platonic philosophy from different angles. I have relished my discussions with Francesco Benoni, friend and companion in training, whose expertise in Plato's educational doctrines has been for me a guide and an inspiration. My gratitude extends to all my colleagues and friends in the Classics Department, the Philosophy Department, the Yorkshire Ancient Philosophy Network, and the fellow members of the research group 'Reading the Fantastic', for allowing me to expand my academic interests.

I am deeply grateful to my dearest friends in Leeds for their constant encouragement and proximity. Adam Roberts has offered me much needed feedback, advice, and room for literary discussions. Ikhlas Abdul Hadi has been an ever-flowing source of insights on folklore and fantastic literature. Beatrice Ivey has helped me to scrutinise imagery and philosophy from a contemporary standpoint. Their friendship has shaped my study and immensely enriched my life in Leeds. I also wish to thank Francesca Di Presa for her friendly support and loving care during the last two years of my research. Many other friends have supported me throughout various stages of my PhD and I am grateful to all of them: Christopher Green, Ben Chwistek, Clara Stella, Alice Franzon, Valentina Ragni, Maria Haley, Sofia Daraselia, Shifa Al Askari, Huwaida Issa, and Thom Milson. I thank all my friends in Verona for still reminding me what is important. My most heartfelt gratitude goes to my sister and my mother, whose affectionate support is always invaluable to me.

Finally, my gratitude goes to the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies (Classics) at the University of Leeds for fully funding my project.

Abstract

This thesis illuminates two underexplored facets of Plato's notion of right measure in the *Statesman*: the cognitive role of imagery and the correct leadership of minds for individuals and political communities.

The central chapters of this thesis argue that the cognitive function of images is grounded on their well-articulated combination. The first and last chapters serve to frame this study of imagery within the main subject of the dialogue, namely the correct guidance of human minds. This study is thus divided in five chapters that explore the different facets of right measure in different contexts.

The first chapter examines the structure of the *Statesman* as representing a disrupted dialectical process aimed at discovering the right measure of philosophical judgments. The second chapter studies the notions of *paradeigmata* and *eikones* as images to be artfully combined in a cohesive, measured whole. The third chapter accounts for the value of mythical *paidia* as productive of a clash of images that corrects excesses and invites to seek for measured judgments. The fourth chapter examines Plato's usage of contrasting images of divine steering and cosmic balance to represent an expert communication of inner harmony. Finally, the last chapter returns to the *Statesman* as a whole, examining how Plato represents education and educational leadership as communication of a well-composed balance to the mind and to the political community.

This project illuminates a frequently overlooked of Plato's philosophy: its nuanced and flexible attention to the guidance of human minds in need of psychological and political equilibrium.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Abstract.....	4
General Introduction.....	8
0.1. The Underlying Philosophical Principle of the <i>Statesman</i> – Right Measure.....	9
0.2. Line of Study (a): Leadership of Minds.....	12
0.3. Line of Study (b): Cognitive Imagery.....	14
0.4. Scholarship on the <i>Statesman</i>	20
0.4.1. Scholarship on Right Measure and its Prismatic Character.....	20
0.4.2. Scholarship on Leadership of Minds.....	22
0.4.3. Scholarship on Models and their Cognitive Function.....	23
0.4.4. Scholarship on Imagery in the Myth and its Cognitive Function.....	25
0.5. Project Outline.....	28
Chapter 1 – Right Measure in the Structure of the <i>Statesman</i>	32
Introduction.....	32
1.1. The Structure of the <i>Statesman</i> and Its Philosophical Principle.....	33
1.2. Right Measure in the Central Stage as Organising Principle.....	43
1.3. Right Measure in the Different Sections of the Dialogue.....	48
Conclusion.....	59
Chapter 2 – Cognitive Imagery in the <i>Statesman</i> : Measured Combination of Images...	60
Introduction.....	60
2.1. Cognitive Models: The Canonical Interpretation and Its Limit.....	61
2.2. A Theory of Models: Composition, Variation and Recognition.....	65
Conclusion.....	85
Chapter 3 – The Importance of Being Playful: <i>Paidia</i> as Ambivalent Image.....	87
Introduction.....	87
3.1. <i>Paidia</i> as Response to Intellectual Limits: Recent Scholarly Contributions.....	91
3.2. <i>Paidia</i> as Cognitive Hindrance: The Conflation of Opposites.....	95
3.3. Educational <i>Paidia</i> : Clash of Opposites as Cognitive Stimulus.....	104
3.3.1. Forms of <i>Paidia</i> throughout the <i>Statesman</i>	105
3.3.2. <i>Paidia</i> as Cognitive Stimulus: The Clash of Opposites.....	112
Conclusion.....	124
Chapter 4 – Mightier than Atlas: Images of Control and Autonomy.....	126
Introduction.....	126
4.1. Opposite Cosmic Images: Balance and Steering.....	128
4.2. Clashing Cosmic Images: the Tension of Autonomy and Control.....	144

4.3. Cognitive Cosmic Images: a Delicate Philosophical Freedom	156
Conclusion	161
Chapter 5 – Models of Leadership of Minds: Leading to Balance	163
Introduction	163
5.1. Preliminary Remarks: A Two-Sided Educational Process	166
5.2. The <i>Statesman</i> as a Model of Dialectics	169
5.2.1. A Shared Exercise of Cognitive Stability	171
5.2.2. The Inquiring Mind and its Circular Motion	178
5.3. Educational Leadership and Political Balance	186
5.3.1. Leadership of Minds as Meta-leadership.....	187
5.3.2. A Revolutionary Political Account	189
5.3.3. Leading to Balance: A Tension of Control and Autonomy	193
5.3.4. Which Methods for Leading Minds?.....	203
5.4. The Common Trait of Education and Leadership	207
Conclusion	211
Conclusions – Multifaceted Balance: Combining Images and Leading Minds	214
6.1. Scope of the Project: Right Measure as Principle of Balance.....	214
6.2. Cognitive Images: Combination and Clash of Perspectives	217
6.3. Leadership of Minds: Educating to Inner Balance	222
Bibliography	226
Primary Sources	226
Secondary Sources	227

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

(T. S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*)

General Introduction

This project illuminates two underexplored aspects of Plato's notion of right measure (*τὸ μέτριον*) in the *Statesman*: the cognitive role of imagery and the correct leadership of minds for individuals and political communities. My focus on the *Statesman* has revealed that, in this dialogue, the notion of right measure is inseparable from images as much as from psychological guidance. Plato furnishes an account of right measure in the very central section of this dialogue (277a3-287b3), presenting it as the criterion for judging (among other things) whether images and models are correct and enlightening or excessive and misleading instruments. Nonetheless, he offers no conclusive definition of right measure, either in the *Statesman* or elsewhere.¹ No grasp of this concept is possible without interpreting Plato's meandering writing style, which includes dialogical interchanges, critical reflections, images, examples, and frequent errors and corrections. The nuances of his stance on right measure are best clarified by exploring its different facets in different contexts, seeking to tease out their *contextual relevance* rather than universal definitions. This thesis is thus an effort of textual interpretation that focuses on two different but interwoven issues. I have chosen to explore right measure in the two concrete instances of cognitive imagery and leadership of minds, offering a detailed examination of the various ways in which Plato represents right measure as the underlying principle of correct guidance of the human mind.

In order to support this reading, I will articulate my thesis along two lines: (a) a study of the educational leadership of minds presented in the *Statesman*; and (b) a study of the cognitive role of imagery in this dialogue. These two aspects are inextricably interwoven, insofar as Plato has constantly represented *through images and models* how a correct leadership works, but also presented imagery as an instrument to educate and *lead* the mind towards knowledge. While imagery constitutes the central subject of this thesis, the most enlightening way of interpreting it is, I propose, to present it within the broader context of the dialogue. Therefore, I shall frame the main object of my dissertation, namely imagery, within the broader concern with measured psychological leadership. The first and last chapters of my thesis will provide this conceptual frame, showing how Plato has explored the right measure of individual and collective guidance, either as a criterion of correct philosophical and political judgments (Chapter 1) or as a criterion of psychological and political equilibrium (Chapter 5). In both cases, Plato's concern is how to *produce* a correct psychological condition, which underlies

¹ Bontempi, 2009, pp.23-26; Brumbaugh, 1962, p.167.

both successful philosophical inquiries and good political orders. In the central chapters (2, 3, and 4) I will show that in the *Statesman* (277a3-278e11) Plato has presented images and models as cognitive instruments useful to lead the mind closer to the truth, insofar as they are part of the human ‘experience about knowledge’ (τὸ περὶ τῆς ἐπιστήμης πάθος, 277d7). I will argue that this cognitive function does not consist in providing a unique or direct access to truth, but rather in creating a measured middle ground between the extremes of definitive knowledge and complete confusion, correcting excesses in thought and language, and opening novel perspectives without triggering disorientation. Ultimately, my thesis will show that Plato’s main concern in this dialogue is with good leadership: a correct guidance that seeks to counteract excesses and promote the achievement of balance between detrimental extremes, namely a measured condition, within individuals and communities alike.

In the following sections, I will illustrate the methodological stance of my thesis in relation to right measure (section 1) and to my two lines of study: leadership of minds (section 2) and imagery (section 3). In addition, I will present a review of the most recent scholarly contributions to these fields of inquiry (4).

0.1. The Underlying Philosophical Principle of the Statesman – Right Measure

The notions of a right measure (μέτριον) and of a normative measure (μέτρον)² of every good and fine reality pervade Plato’s entire corpus, and they are present in any aspect of his philosophy.³ In general, Plato presents right measure as a normative principle of wise, reasonable, and intelligent actions, and to well-composed, harmonious or balanced realities (artefacts, physical phenomena, discourses, good psychological states and political communities) as the results of such actions. Throughout his dialogues, he explores the possibility of finding an objective philosophical criterion for correct, good, and beautiful activities and of determining its range of validity. In the *Statesman*, he

² For the distinction between right measure and measure in itself, cf. Sayre, 2006, pp.142-3 and 171-190; Migliori, 1996, pp.340-342. Plato uses the adjective μέτριον to indicate indifferently ‘what is in due measure’ or the principle of right measure conceived more abstractly. ‘Measure’ (μέτρον) itself denotes rational exactness and an absolute principle of cosmic and ethical order; however, it is only mentioned twice in the *Statesman* (269c6; 284b1) and never accounted for independently from right measure. Therefore, its definition lies beyond the scope of this study.

³ Bontempi (2009) has shown the pervasiveness of the language of measure in Plato’s corpus (see her *Appendix*, pp.329-368, for a complete terminological list). In her introduction to this study, Linda Napolitano Valditara has remarked that the ‘centrality’ of right measure in all of Plato’s dialogues is typical of ancient Greek culture in general, which was broadly characterised by polar notions such as limit-excess, norm-*hubris*, harmony-disharmony (p.5, tr. mine). On the notions related to measure in ancient Greek culture, cf. Tredé-Boulmer, 1992; Senzasono, 1983; Schaefer, 1981; Prier, 1976; Kurz, 1970; Koyré, 1967; Pohlenz, 1965.

presents right measure as the criterion of every expert *practical* activity, namely every art that succeeds in producing something good; this principle is a measure not in the mathematical sense of quantitative determinations as such (like numbers, lengths or velocities), but in the sense of a *normative but flexible standard* for the generation of good and fine realities (283e-284e). The notion of right measure thus contrasts moral and epistemological relativism, of the kind promoted by rhetoricians or sophists such as Gorgias and Protagoras, whereby no independent norm of behaviour and truth exists or can be found. Indeed, Plato's philosophy can be seen as an ongoing effort to contrast the relativistic idea that 'man is the measure of all things' (πάντων χρημάτων ἄνθρωπον μέτρον εἶναι, *Theaet.* 160d9),⁴ as Protagoras argued, in ethical, aesthetical and epistemological terms. By contrast, Plato seeks to identify – *as far as possible* – a normative principle of truth, goodness, and beauty, rejecting absolute arbitrariness but also embracing the uncertainties of genuine inquiry.

Given the broad range of philosophical concerns related to right measure, this notion has been examined, even in the *Statesman* alone, under different respects: metaphysics,⁵ dialectic,⁶ philosophical education,⁷ rhetoric,⁸ moral psychology and politics.⁹ To my knowledge, only Milena Bontempi (2009) has completed a synoptic study of this concept in Plato's philosophy, outlining it as a flexible standard of correct organisation of discourses, psychological states and, in particular, political constitutions (pp.178-196). According to current scholarly agreement, outlined in Section 0.4.1., the *Statesman* presents it as a normative principle of contextual correctness (opportunity, adequacy) and avoidance/correction of excesses and deficiencies in practical and theoretical contexts. The question of how its various aspects are related is nonetheless far from settled, and it is even doubtful whether it *can* be settled once and for all.

In the *Statesman*, indeed, right measure appears as inherently multifaceted and difficult to define univocally. Plato here juxtaposes various synonyms for the same principle: 'right measure, the fitting, the opportune, the needful, and everything that

⁴ That Plato's philosophy constitutes a challenge to sophistic relativism is undoubted, but the precise scope of this challenge is more problematic. For instance, Guthrie (1971) considers Plato's idealism as radically hostile to sophistic scepticism (pp.50-52). Gomperz (1901) considers the same hostility as grounded on Plato's preference for the Socratic method of inquiry (v.1, pp.418-422). Differently, Capizzi (1955) argues that Plato's response to sophistry is an act of mediation between scepticism and dogmatism (pp.404-6). On the nuances of the sophistic notion of opportune measure, see also Untersteiner (1996); Neumann (1938), and cf. Bontempi (2009), p.373, n.34.

⁵ Sayre, 2006; Migliori, 1996.

⁶ Lafrance, 1995.

⁷ Santa-Cruz, 1995.

⁸ Tordesillas, 1995.

⁹ Lane, 1998 and 1995.

removes itself from the extremes to the middle' (284e6-8; tr. Rowe, *adapted*).¹⁰ This terminological variety testifies Plato's awareness that this principle cannot be naïvely reduced to a single account. Accordingly, Bontempi (2009) has observed that it possesses an 'essentially prismatic character' (p.140, tr. mine): right measure is irreducible to any *single* definition but needs – by its very nature – to be investigated in distinct contexts, under different respects.¹¹ This approach does not necessarily contrast unitary definitions of right measure. It restrains us, however, from drawing univocal conclusions that might obscure the inherent variety of this principle. Acknowledging the prismatic character of right measure is not only a matter of interpretive prudence, but also a method for illuminating and articulating its complexity.

In agreement with this view, I will contribute to the current debate on right measure by teasing out its various *instances* in the *Statesman*, in order to show that it constitutes the *underlying philosophical principle* of this dialogue. I will analyse it under different respects: as a criterion of philosophical and political judgment (Chapter 1); as the middle-point between radical confusion and complete knowledge provided by imagery (Chapter 2); as the playful yet troubling convergence of opposite images in the myth (Chapter 3); as the delicate condition of cosmic balance (Chapter 4); and as the correct composition of both the individual mind and the social order (Chapter 5). My programme will be to avoid conflating all of these instances under a univocal and conclusive definition. This stance respects the explicit methodological indication of the leading character in the *Statesman*, the Eleatic Stranger:

[I mean] that at some time we shall need what has now been said with regard to the demonstration about what is itself precisely exact. But as for what is being shown beautifully and sufficiently with regard to our present concerns, this account seems to me to assist us in a magnificent fashion: that we must equally consider that all the arts exist and, at the same time, that greater and less are measured not only in relation to each other but also in relation to the generation of what is in due measure.

ὥς ποτε δεήσει τοῦ νῦν λεχθέντος πρὸς τὴν περὶ αὐτὸ τὰκριβὲς ἀπόδειξιν. ὅτι δὲ πρὸς τὰ νῦν καλῶς καὶ ἰκανῶς δείκνυται, δοκεῖ μοι βοηθεῖν μεγαλοπρεπῶς ἡμῖν οὗτος ὁ λόγος, ὡς ἄρα ἡγητέον ὁμοίως τὰς τέχνας πάσας εἶναι, μεῖζόν τε

¹⁰ Cf. Bontempi, 2009, p.140.

¹¹ See also: Sayre, 2006, pp.147-148 and 171-173; Lane, 1998, p.186; Migliori, 1996, pp.120-121; Lafrance, 1995, pp.93-94; Santa Cruz, 1995, pp.193-194.

ἅμα καὶ ἔλαττον μετρεῖσθαι μὴ πρὸς ἄλληλα μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ μετρίου γένεσιν (284d1-6, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The Stranger here posits that every art is based on the normative criterion of right measure and on the objective of producing well-measured objects. He presents this account as a *helpful* one, capable to assist (βοηθεῖν) the inquirers in their search for the political art. Therefore, he is admittedly not concerned with absolute exactness. In fact, he clearly distinguishes complete demonstration (ἀπόδειξις) of what is exact from the act of having shown sufficiently (ικανῶς δείκνυται) that right measure is a helpful criterion to give account of any kind of expertise. The approach that Plato takes in the *Statesman* is not dogmatic, but exploratory and reliant on *sufficient and instrumental* accounts, without claims to complete knowledge. Right measure fully belongs to the field of sufficiency, adequacy, and approximation to truth, rather than to complete exactness.¹² Again, this does not mean that we cannot reach cohesive conclusions about it. It means, rather, that our understanding of it cannot rest on the surface-level of conclusive definitions and doctrines, but benefits from constantly problematizing every single account. When I speak of ‘underlying philosophical principle’, thus, I do not refer to esoteric or unwritten doctrines hidden behind Plato’s exoteric writing, but to a notion that must be *shown*, case by case, to operate in particular contexts without claims to absolute closure.

0.2. Line of Study (a): Leadership of Minds

The *Statesman* tackles two interwoven concerns: (1) the definition of correct political leadership, as its subject-matter; and (2) the educational methods of philosophical inquiry, represented in its dialogue-scene. The dialogue scene represents an Eleatic Stranger who didactically leads the character of Young Socrates (namesake of the older philosopher) in the effort of ‘discovering the path to statecraft’ (τὴν οὖν πολιτικὴν ἀτραπὸν [...] ἀνευρήσει, 258c3, tr. Rowe, *adapted*). He resorts to different methods of inquiry and frequent digressions, while the youth is mostly (but not always) a quiet recipient of his discourses. The main methods on which the Stranger relies are *diairesis* (division in couples of mutually exclusive ideas)¹³ and *paradeigmata* (models used to

¹² For the distinct notions of exactness and right measure in ancient Greece, cf. Kurz, 1970 and Koyré, 1967.

¹³ Sayre, 2006, pp.11-15; Pender, 2000, pp.47-48.

represent a certain common feature between two distinct objects).¹⁴ Elizabeth Pender (2000), accordingly, has observed that the ‘art of recognising likenesses and differences underpins much of the discussion’ in the *Statesman* (p.47). The process of collection and division constitutes the methodological focus of this dialogue.

Scholars often consider this process as the central doctrine of the *Statesman*.¹⁵ Plato’s attention to methods in this dialogue, however, is as undeniable as it is problematic: the complexities of political life, to which Plato dedicates various books in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, become here mainly the object of formal categorisations, they are seldom explored in extensive detail, and never truly debated. Accordingly, Lane (1998) has observed that the ‘discourse on political theory’ in the *Statesman* seems ‘pallid beside the poignancy of the *Apology* or the *Crito*, the vitriol of the *Gorgias*, the grandeur of the *Republic*, and the monumentality of the *Laws*’ (pp.1-2).¹⁶ While other dialogues leave extensive room for debate about political doctrines and for exploring the nuances of political leadership, the *Statesman* may appear unduly austere in its didactic approach to its subject matter. Lane has responded to this problem by observing that the political art addressed in this dialogue is, like philosophy, the ability to discover the various differences between those who live in the city and to combine them in the best possible way. This similarity, Lane observes, grants the unity between philosophical methods and political practices in the *Statesman* (pp.201-202).¹⁷ Albeit certainly austere and somewhat didactic, the *Statesman* constitutes a consistent exploration of both philosophical methods and political actions.

While philosophical methods in the *Statesman* have been extensively studied, a further philosophical concern of Plato’s has not received extensive attention: the correct and expert guidance of the human mind. I aim to show that the educational scene and political argument of this dialogue are connected not only by Plato’s concern with collection and division, but also by his attention to the condition of the human mind, both at the individual and at the social level. In the *Statesman*, Plato presents the correct guidance of minds either from the individual angle of philosophical education or from the political angle of correct leadership. He explicitly presents the usage of images and models as a tool to manage what happens in ‘our soul’ (ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχῆ, 278c8)¹⁸ when it

¹⁴ Sayre, 2006, pp.28-35; Pender, 2000, pp.48-49.

¹⁵ E.g.: Sayre, 2006, pp.28-35; Lane, 1998, pp.201-202; Migliori, 1996, pp.198-199; Rowe, 1995a, pp.8-11; Santa Cruz, 1995, pp.191-193; Taylor, 1961, p.9. *Contra* Stefanini, 1949, pp.216-218.

¹⁶ Cf. Rowe, 2000, pp.171-178; Santa Cruz, 1995, pp.190-193.

¹⁷ Cf. Pender, 2000, p.48.

¹⁸ Cf. 258c7; 286a2.

seeks for knowledge, and politics as, first and foremost, an art of leading the dispositions ‘in the souls’ (ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς, 307c6)¹⁹ of the citizens towards harmonious coexistence. This connection has gone hitherto unremarked despite the extensive scholarship on this dialogue. The widespread focus on formal methods, rather, has obscured Plato’s pervasive concern with ‘the right measure internal to the soul’ (Bontempi, 2009, p.188, tr. mine) as much as to political orders. Nonetheless, it can be shown that Plato’s interest in moral psychology, in the mind’s need for correct orientation and thus for expert guidance, is a fundamental element in the composition and doctrine of *Statesman*.

The first and last chapters of my thesis are designed to outline this element of psychological (cognitive and emotional) guidance. Chapter 1 will focus on the articulation of the *Statesman* as a whole, demonstrating how Plato has presented this philosophical inquiry as a series of *organised disruptions* that coincide with moments of critical reflection. I will show that this organisation is philosophically significant, insofar as each moment of reflection, constitutes an instance in which philosophical and political problems need to refer to right measure as a criterion of judgment. I will thus show that Plato has artfully represented the activity of the inquiring mind as inherently open to disruption, and in need of right measure whenever it stands ‘in the middle’ of divergent alternatives. Chapter 5 will focus, instead, on the parallel between the portrayal of cognitive processes and political dynamics. I will demonstrate that Plato has represented them both as in need of balance: on the one hand, the inquiring mind, dragged around by apparently digressive discourses, needs to attain a stable, well-composed movement; on the other hand, the minds of the citizens inclining to courage and moderation need to work as mutual counterweights in order to achieve a stable self-regulation. Right measure will thus appear as the *dynamic* middle point between complete confusion and definitive stability.

0.3. Line of Study (b): Cognitive Imagery

The *Statesman* presents imagery as a cognitive instrument suitable to leading the mind towards knowledge and truth. This dialogue relies on various images and models for the political art, and on an elaborate myth composed of various traditional images. The character of the Stranger indeed variously assimilates the statesman to producers of

¹⁹ Cf. 309c2; 309c7; 309d10; 310d10.

goods, herdsmen, weavers, trainers of gymnastic, doctors and helmsmen, and he uses some of these images in the construction of his myth. The Stranger explains at 277a3-287b3 that the usage of ‘models’ (παραδείγμασι, 277d1) is integral to ‘the experience about knowledge’ (τὸ περὶ τῆς ἐπιστήμης πάθος, 277d7) entailed by this philosophical inquiry. Moreover, he claims that his myth is as effective as conceptual divisions in making an individual ‘more capable to discover’ (εὐρετικώτερον, 286e2)²⁰ some truth about philosophical problems. My purpose will be to account for these claims, expanding the most recent scholarly contributions (outlined below) through close textual analyses of his theories about imagery and of the inherent articulation of the various images he uses.

The fundamental problem to tackle when addressing Plato’s imagery is its definition. To study imagery, indeed, means to address a flexible object with no clear-cut boundaries. In addition, in the philosopher’s corpus we find no univocal definition of what an image is. Plato in fact uses different terms related to visual representations and appearances to describe his usage of imagery: εἰκόν (‘likeness’, ‘image’), εἰδῶλα λεγόμενα (‘spoken images’, either deceitful or credible), παράδειγμα (‘model’), σχῆμα (‘figure’ or ‘pattern’), and παιδιὰ (playful account, imitative art or representational performance). Moreover, he blurs the boundaries between these terms, never identifying categories such as analogy, simile, or metaphor. Accordingly, in her encompassing study of Plato’s imagery, Elizabeth Pender (2000) has observed that the term εἰκόν describes, without differentiation, comparisons, similes, metaphors, artistic representations, reflections or shadows, and copies or imitations (p.42). Melissa Lane (1998) has noted that Plato constantly relies on ‘images, analogies, similarities, comparisons of all kinds’ (p.18), without ever distinguishing precisely one from the other but evaluating all as they provide comparative arguments. More radically, Linda Napolitano Valditara (2007) has remarked that modern distinctions among myths, metaphors, analogies, and allegories do not capture the fundamental philosophical significance of Plato’s imagery, which is always bent to contextual usages and not susceptible of universal categorisations (pp.VII-VIII). Accordingly, I will not seek to crystallise the fluidity of Plato’s language but I will privilege the textual *datum* as irreducible to complete terminological consistency.

Nonetheless, it is possible to establish some instrumental parameters that will be relevant for my study of the *Statesman*. 1) Plato uses the term εἰκόν (‘image’) in order

²⁰ Cf. 287a4.

to assimilate language, especially *but not exclusively* figurative language, to pictorial and artistic representations and mark the difference between imitation and reality.²¹ 2) He uses the term παράδειγμα ('model') when referring to an object that is compared to another in order to recognise their mutual similarities and differences, or to furnish an ideal exemplar, as opposed to providing its definition through conceptual divisions.²² 3) He resorts to the term σχῆμα ('figure') either as a general term for illustrations or, more specifically, for geometrical patterns (especially the circle).²³ 4) Finally, he uses the term παιδιά ('game') to describe myths, provisional accounts, and joking remarks with no claim to definitive truthfulness, as much as visual arts, children's mimicry and musical or theatrical performances that imitate certain aspects of reality.²⁴ These parameters are purely instrumental, insofar as the boundaries between them shift and overlap in the *Statesman*. The Stranger introduces weaving as a model (παράδειγμά, 279a7) of statecraft, but then speaks of the threads of the social fabric, on which statecraft acts, as an image (εἰκόνα, 309b5). He introduces a cosmic myth about pastoral, pre-political ages as a game (παιδιάν, 268d8) but he also claims that it belongs to the field of 'greatest models' (μεγάλα παραδείγματα, 277b4), because it is an excessive representation of statecraft *qua* akin to herding. He uses the 'images' (εἰκόνας, 297a8) of physicians and helmsmen, 'to which, by necessity, we must always compare our kingly rulers' (αἷς ἀναγκαῖον ἀπεικάζειν ἀεὶ τοὺς βασιλικοὺς ἄρχοντας, 297e8-9) in the same way as his other political models, namely to allow a comparative evaluation of statecraft. And he speaks indifferently of a figure (σχῆμα) when he describes the image of the divine herdsman (275c1),²⁵ the image of statecraft, akin to a painting (277a4-6),²⁶ the circular pattern of heavenly motions (269a5),²⁷ and the images of immoral doctors and helmsmen (297e12-13).²⁸ We can avoid formalising Plato's fluid language while acknowledging that imagery, however named, is an object that he clearly identifies as distinct from logical argumentations and completely truthful

²¹ E.g. *Crat.* 432d: 'Do you not perceive that images are very far from having qualities which are the exact counterparts of the realities which they represent?' Cf. *Crat.* 439a7-b3; *Resp.* 533a1-4; Pender, 2000, p.41.

²² E.g. *Soph.* 233d; *Resp.* 592b.

²³ E.g. *Pol.* 269a5; *Tim.* 33b1. But the circular pattern is also named 'image' (εἰκόνα) at *Leg.* X.897e1.

²⁴ E.g. *Tim.* 59d; *Euthyd.* 277d; cf. *Resp.* X.602b; *Pol.* 288c; *Leg.* I.642b-643d; VII.793d-794d.

²⁵ 'This figure of the divine herdsman' (τὸ σχῆμα τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ νομέως).

²⁶ 'And now, according to my view, the king does not yet seem to have a complete figure for us' (νῦν δὲ κατὰ γε τὴν ἐμὴν οὐπω φαίνεται τέλειον ὁ βασιλεὺς ἡμῶν σχῆμα ἔχειν).

²⁷ 'The present figure' (τὸ νῦν σχῆμα).

²⁸ 'Let us look at the matter by fashioning a kind of figure, using these as material' (κατίδωμεν γὰρ δὴ τι σχῆμα ἐν τοῦτοις αὐτοῖς πλασάμενοι).

accounts. Like a visual representation, imagery is distinct from the object it represents but has the capacity to evoke it.²⁹

Thus, my study of imagery in the *Statesman* distances itself from influential scholarly approaches that deny any cognitive value to Plato's imagery, beyond its decorative status or, at best, emotional influence. Such a position is endorsed in particular by Luc Brisson (2004), who claims that the images of myth (gods, heroes, souls, the otherworld and the distant past) are employed by Plato mainly because of their communicative and persuasive power (p.16-19), without intrinsic relation to philosophical truth, because they are unverifiable (pp.20-23) and purely narrative (pp.25-26).³⁰ However, abundant textual evidence contradicts similar views. As Napolitano Valditara (2013) observes, in the *Symposium* the character of Alcibiades says that he is going to praise Socrates 'through images' (δι' εικόνων, 215a5) and compares him to Silenus-figures, claiming that 'the image will be said for the sake of truth, not laughter' (ἔσται δ' ἡ εἰκὼν τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἕνεκα, οὐ τοῦ γελοίου, 215a6). In the *Gorgias* Socrates addresses the rhetorician Callicles with a myth of the otherworld and claims: 'Perhaps, though, you will consider this a myth, of the sort that old wives tell, and despise it; and there would be no wonder in despising it if, as we search, we could somehow find anything better and truer than this' (τάχα δ' οὖν ταῦτα μῦθος σοι δοκεῖ λέγεσθαι ὥσπερ γραδὸς καὶ καταφρονεῖς αὐτῶν, καὶ οὐδέν γ' ἂν ἦν θαυμαστὸν καταφρονεῖν τούτων, εἴ πη ζητοῦντες εἶχομεν αὐτῶν βελτίω καὶ ἀληθέστερα εὑρεῖν, 523a5-8).³¹ Indeed, Socrates had formerly claimed that, while Callicles might consider his account a myth, he considers it an 'argument' (λόγον, 523a2), presenting it 'as if it were in fact true' (ὡς ἀληθῆ γὰρ ὄντα, 523a2-3).³² And again, in the *Republic* Socrates distinguishes the false images of his myths from the 'true falsehood' (ἀληθῶς ψεῦδος, 382b8) of deceitful words, which bring about 'ignorance in the soul of the deceived' (ἡ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἄγνοια ἢ τοῦ ἐψευσμένου, 382b8-9). By contrast, he claims that 'the falsehood that lies in words is but an imitation of the deceit that affects the soul and a second-born image, not an altogether unmixed falsehood (τό γε ἐν τοῖς λόγοις μίμημά τι τοῦ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἐστὶν παθήματος καὶ ὕστερον γεγονὸς εἰδωλον, οὐ πάνυ ἄκρατον ψεῦδος, 382b9-c1). Socrates posits that there is a form of 'false' language, namely the language of myths, whose falsity lies on the mere level of literal expression, but which can nonetheless produce some truth 'in the soul' of the receivers, namely provide a

²⁹ Cf. Pender, 2000, pp.59-60.

³⁰ Cf. Schofield, 2009; Rowe, 2010, pp.308-312.

³¹ Napolitano Valditara, 2013, p.X.

³² Cf. Morgan, 2000, pp.156-157.

relative cognitive gain. Myths and images alike are often used by Plato as arguments for the sake of truth or at least mingled strictly with arguments, and any rigid distinction between *muthos* or *eikon* and *logos* fails to account for their problematic relation. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge that Plato credits imagery, mythological or not, with *at least some* relation to truth and knowledge, some specific cognitive force, even when it appears playful, inadequate, or even (if taken as a literal account) outright false.

My study aligns with the most recent attempts to evaluate Plato's figurative language as a properly theoretical instrument, capable of providing a cognitive gain. Such studies include, in particular, Napolitano Valditara (2007), Pender (2000), and Lane (1998). Napolitano's work, focused on *Soph.* and *Resp.*, explains the heuristic role of 'spoken images' (εἰδῶλα λεγόμενα, *Soph.* 234c6) by identifying a contrast between a delusionary 'apparition' (φάντασμα, 236c3) and genuine representative 'images' (εἰκόνα, 236c3).³³ According to Napolitano, Plato's evaluation of imagery as cognitive instrument depends on a binary judgment. Certain images conceal elements of the truth they claim to represent and are deceitfully presented as fully exhaustive accounts, *identical* – as it were – to the object they represent; but others are attempts to represent their object faithfully, as far as possible without distortions, and they reveal their partiality. The mark of their truthfulness does not lie in the direct correspondence with the object they serve partially to reveal, but rather in the informative intentions of the speaker and in their cognitive *effect* on the mind of the receiver.³⁴ Pender and Lane have studied the cognitive effect of images in the *Statesman*, where they are named models (παραδείγματα). According to their interpretation, models point out, comparatively, objective features of an object of inquiry, reveal its similarities with another object and thus clarify the unknown and prevent errors of judgment. Pender and Lane agree that models are *heuristic*, not because they can provide a demonstration or lead to novel propositions and perspectives, but because they serve to impose a novel and clear structure on an unclear object with which they share objectively acknowledgeable features.³⁵ Ultimately, the most recent acquisitions about the cognitive value of Plato's imagery identify it as a partial representation of an obscure object of inquiry, which counteracts either deceit or confusion.

³³ Thereby distinguishing between a 'fantastic', delusionary art (φανταστικήν, 236c7), and an 'iconic', representative one (εικαστικήν, 236c7).

³⁴ Napolitano Valditara, 2007, pp.12-19.

³⁵ Pender, 2000, pp. 56-57. Lane, 1998, pp.69-70.

I will expand our current understanding of the heuristic and cognitive role of imagery in Plato, and examine an overlooked aspect of the *Statesman*: the dynamic interaction of different images. I will present it as either their *combination*, when they are irreducibly different, or their *clash*, when they are conceptually opposite. The theory whereby images and metaphors perform a cognitive role by establishing a convergence of divergent or clashing concepts has attracted increasing interest in recent years in the study of semantics and rhetoric, based on I. A. Richards's seminal work *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936).³⁶ In particular, Max Black's (1962) interactionist theory states that metaphorical accounts can provide novel insights by restructuring the assumed relationships between two designated subjects (p.33). Paul Ricoeur (1978) interprets this phenomenon as a 'semantic clash' that produces a 'new predicative meaning which emerges from the collapse of the literal meaning'. (p.146). More moderately, Eva Kittay (1987) argues that the cognitive role of metaphor consists in providing novel perspectives on familiar ideas, namely not 'new information about the world' but a '(re)conceptualisation of information that is already available for us' (p.39). Pender (2000) remarks that, according to this interpretation, 'metaphor plays a unique role in cognition, as its distinctive expressive and cognitive capacities provide a special kind of epistemic access which other forms of discourse cannot provide', because it does not merely point out a similarity between two different subjects, but it restructures 'one concept in terms of another' (p.19). While my study does not engage directly with modern semantics and rhetorical studies, it shows that the Stranger's theory and usage of images as cognitive tools is comparably grounded on their combination and clash. Concerning models, I will show how current studies have failed to articulate in its entirety the dynamic process that makes imagery heuristic: recognition, variation and combination of different images. Concerning the mythical game (*παίδιον*, 268d8), I will show how current studies err in considering it an 'excessive', inarticulate accumulation of images, and display its carefully constructed structure. In both cases, my methodological stance will privilege the *difference* (and even the contrast) among images as the prime reason for their cognitive efficacy.

³⁶ Cf. Pender, 2000, pp.18-23. My overview of the modern developments in the study of images and metaphors is based on Pender's account of the 'epistemic thesis', whereby imagery provides a unique or irreducible cognitive access to knowledge.

0.4. Scholarship on the Statesman

The scholarship on the *Statesman* is differentiated according to various interpretive angles. Scholarly approaches to this dialogue range from analytical readings such as Lane's (1998) and Sayre's (2006), focused on dialectical methods and metaphysics, to the studies of imagery and myth, such as Pender's (2000) and Morgan's (2000). Regardless of interpretive angle, the *Statesman* has received increasing attention in recent years, in particular due to its extensive exploration of imagery and the notion of right measure. Its focus on ethical psychology, instead, has received less attention. For the sake of clarity, I will privilege here the most recent monographic studies about either the *Statesman* as a whole or about my main objects of study. Concerning imagery, itself widely studied, my attention will be limited to studies that sought to explain its cognitive and heuristic role.

0.4.1. Scholarship on Right Measure and its Prismatic Character

In the last two decades, four monographic studies have accounted for right measure in the *Statesman*: Migliori (1996); Lane (1998); Sayre (2006); and Bontempi (2009).³⁷ All of them present it as the underpinning philosophical concern of this dialogue. Migliori's and Sayre's studies are focused on metaphysics and present right measure as a theoretical object of knowledge, while Lane's and Bontempi's are focused on politics and explain right measure in terms of practical actions and ethical psychology.

Maurizio Migliori's and Kenneth Sayre's interpretations address the metaphysics of the *Statesman*. Migliori outlines five essential features of right measure. (1) It is a criterion of avoidance of excesses and defects both in philosophical discourses and other practical activities, including politics (pp.118-119). (2) It refers not to a mathematical or geometrical measurement of 'the more and the less', namely of abstract quantitative determinations, but to what is fitting, opportune, adequate to concrete circumstances, subjects, and purposes (pp.123-124). (3) As a consequence, it functions as a criterion of judgment, through which the extremes of excess and defect are condemned and the mean is accepted (*ibid.*). (4) It depends in the last instance not on practical or empirical determinations, but on metaphysical principles: the twofold Principle of 'Great and Small' and the univocal Principle of 'Measure' in itself (pp.340-343). (5) It is inherently polyvalent, because it applies to a wide range of practical concerns, from the correctness of philosophical discourses to political activities and

³⁷ See also: Lafrance (1995) on right measure and dialectic; Tordesillas (1995) on the rhetorical *kairos*; Santa Cruz (1995) on the contextual opportunity of didactic methods.

every form of craftsmanship (pp.343-345). Similarly, Sayre's interpretation focuses on the metaphysics of Excess and Deficiency, (pp.149-150), and considers them aspects of 'the Great and the Small' as metaphysical objects (pp.154-170). His metaphysical reading (Sayre, pp.171-190) is consistent with Migliori's, but he also remarks that *diairesis*, the art of finding 'the middle' between opposite conceptual fields, constitutes a method that relies on right measure (pp.235-240).

Melissa Lane and Milena Bontempi are concerned with the political, and thus practical, aspects of right measure. They agree with the view that right measure serves as criterion of judgment irreducible to quantitative determinations (e.g. Lane, pp.186-187; Bontempi, pp.139-141), but they do not seek to provide metaphysical accounts. Rather, they observe that every practical effort of avoiding excesses and deficiencies is necessarily contextual; right measure is always partial and comprehensible only in specific circumstances. Lane observes how right measure, albeit presented as an object of purely 'objective knowledge', is nonetheless always 'obliquely' applied to particular situations and different temporal moments (p.186). Lane emphasises one aspect of right measure, its temporal nature as *kairos* (right moment, correct timing, the eternal Good in time; p.164). Bontempi, similarly, remarks that right measure is a criterion that needs to be 'acquired through a praxis and a judgment' and thus depends on an 'intrinsic and decisive nexus with particularity, punctual and irreducible' (p.141, tr. mine).³⁸ In addition, she emphasises how the intrinsic obliquity and blurriness of right measure makes it necessarily prismatic and impossible to understand *fully* without reference to partial angles of inquiry (p.140). Her account is incompatible with Lane's reduction of right measure to the temporal *kairos*, but affirms the necessity to explore its further nuances. Nevertheless, both scholars agree on the fundamental feature of right measure, namely its multifaceted character.

In agreement with these latter contributions, I will disentangle two specific facets of right measure: the correct guidance of human minds and the usage of imagery as cognitive tool. Despite widespread scholarly attention to right measure as a metaphysical and political concept, its relation to imagery and psychological guidance has gone unremarked and deserves further exploration. My study thus offers a broader account of right measure and illuminates some of its yet unexplored aspects.

³⁸ Cf. Santa Cruz 1995, p.193.

0.4.2. Scholarship on Leadership of Minds

To my knowledge, no studies have attempted to identify the measured guidance of human minds, common to both philosophical education and political leadership, theorised in the *Statesman*. The idea that Plato's political thought reflects educational concerns with the harmony of the mind was supported by Lodge (1947), who provided extensive evidence from the *Republic* and the *Laws*, but his insight has not been hitherto applied to the *Statesman*. Recently, nonetheless, three scholars have highlighted Plato's the bond between politics and education of the mind: Melissa Lane (1995), Christopher Bobonich (1995), and Milena Bontempi (2009). I shall focus my review on these studies because they directly evaluate statecraft as guidance of the citizens' psychological dispositions.³⁹

Lane claims that the *Statesman* presents an original account of 'moral psychology' as a mode of conflict management (p.281). This dialogue focuses on the potential conflict between moderate and courageous citizens, whose emotionally-driven and one-sided preferences for mild or aggressive policies can be equally detrimental for the city's survival and stability. Thus, Lane claims, correct statecraft consists in an effort to 'moderate conflict' and to allow a timely 'dynamic alternation' between these two factions in the command of the city, in order to allow them to exert power correctly (p.282). To Lane, the *Statesman* is concerned with human psychology, fundamental for the correct order of the city, and this correctness is a matter of right measure *qua* timeliness of actions and policies. Bobonich notices that the *Statesman* addresses the 'education of non-philosophers' (p.328) from the standpoint of 'ethical psychology' (p.329). Like Lane, he remarks that the role of the statesman is to counteract the distortions of judgment (excesses or deficiencies) caused by the emotionally-driven and conflicting attitudes of the citizens. However, he reads it as an effort to 'inculcate' or implant a correct opinion in the citizens' distorted 'psychological mechanism', so that they may achieve individual virtue and happiness (p.328). Unlike Lane, Bobonich fails to grasp the role of right measure in the *Statesman*, as a principle not merely of individual goodness but also of collective harmony. Finally, Bontempi claims that statecraft aims to harmonise 'the different components of the citizens' souls [with each other], in order to interweave their opposite characters' (p.145, tr. mine). In her reading,

³⁹ Other studies have marginally acknowledged this political function. For instance Accattino (1995) and Weiss (1995) both account for it, but their focus rests respectively on political authority and political knowledge. Hobbs (2000) briefly addresses the problematic status of aggressiveness as difficult to guide in the *Statesman*, but her concern is reconstructing Plato's notion of heroism in diverse dialogues.

the *Statesman* focuses on the political management of moral psychology, because the purpose of statecraft is to generate ‘unitary cohesiveness’ among different citizens (p.146, tr. mine). Like in Lane’s reading, statecraft aims to generate right measure in the political community. However, Bontempi interprets it not only as a matter of timely alternation and moderation of conflicts, but as the positive construction of ‘a composite reality’ made of heterogeneous elements, a ‘correct *koinonia*’ (community, fellowship) whereby opposite groups of citizens contribute *at once* to the cohesiveness of the city (*ibid.*, tr. mine).

These recent developments in Platonic scholarship highlight the fundamental element of political activity as Plato presents it in the *Statesman*, namely the guidance of the citizens’ psychological dispositions in view of a harmonious political order. However, no scholar has yet observed that Plato’s focus on correct psychological dispositions is not limited, here, to political order, but encompasses philosophical practices as well. My aim will be to show that, in both cases, Plato’s underlying concern is the need for the mind to eschew detrimental confusion and achieve harmonious equilibrium. Without this common element of philosophical and political praxes, the *Statesman* cannot but appear an unfocused philosophical text, divided between theoretical concerns and political interests, while in fact Plato’s attention rests on a single educational concern: the beneficial leadership of human minds. My thesis will thus expand our current understanding of Plato’s moral psychology and of its guiding criterion: right measure as balance.

0.4.3. *Scholarship on Models and their Cognitive Function*

The most complete accounts of the cognitive role of imagery in Plato’s *Statesman* are limited to three studies: Goldschmidt (1947, ed. 2003); Lane (1998), and Pender (2000).⁴⁰ All these studies focus on the Stranger’s account of models (*paradeigmata*) in the central section of the dialogue (277a3-278e11). I include Goldschmidt’s more dated study due to its still influential status, albeit now superseded by closer textual readings. None of these studies, it must be noticed, accounts for the broader terminology used by Plato to refer to images in the *Statesman*, and all focus on his example of the comparative juxtaposition of simple and complex syllables in order to recognise individual letters.

⁴⁰ See also: Lloyd (1966) on analogy; Owen (1973) on the ‘undepictable’. Their arguments about, respectively, analogical reasoning and representation of concepts credit a limited cognitive role to imagery. However, their theoretical focus on similarity (as either analogy or representation) does not allow us to tackle the combination of differences theorised in the *Statesman*. Cf. Pender, 2000, pp.12-14; Lane 1998, pp.70-75. Additional minor studies: Kato (1995); Palumbo (1995); Hirsch (1995).

Victor Goldschmidt's study focuses on Plato's *Sophist* (218c-d) and *Statesman* (277d-279b; 285c-286b). He considers the account of models in the *Statesman* as a theoretical refinement of the one in the *Sophist*; therefore, I shall focus solely on his interpretation of the former. Goldschmidt suggests that models are didactic exercises directed at achieving a synoptic understanding of a particular object of inquiry (p.18). He considers them as discursive tools that serve to illustrate similarities between different objects, such as weaving and statecraft *qua* combinatory arts (pp.66-72). To him models are not heuristic in the sense that they provide a demonstration, which must always rely on independent logical or empirical verification (pp.53-58). However, he argues that, insofar as they highlight an intelligible shared element between two objects, they provide a distinct cognitive gain according to Plato's philosophy: by establishing a useful conceptual detour from one object of inquiry to a comparable one, they train the mind in seeking for the intelligible Forms of every reality (pp.58-86). Goldschmidt relies heavily on inter-textual reconstruction of Plato's doctrines, rather than contextualising the Stranger's account of imagery within one single dialogue, and thus fails to explore the autonomous cognitive efficacy of this conceptual 'detour' (p.74).⁴¹

Differently, Lane (1998) and Pender (2000) account for the heuristic role of models within the context of the *Statesman* alone. They both consider models as instruments that project a conceptual structure from a familiar conceptual field to a different and more obscure one. Lane considers them a 'remedy' against conceptual confusion, counteracted by a 'dynamic method of comparison' (p.63). By comparing two heterogeneous objects such as statecraft and shepherding or weaving, models are useful correctives against unreflective assumptions, and thus grant a distinctive 'epistemic gain': the very reflection on constitutive elements of an object of inquiry that conceptual divisions alone do not allow (p.68). This comparative process does not consist in 'merely transmitting knowledge' which someone has 'discovered by a (necessarily) different route', but in actively reflecting in comparative terms (*ibid.*). In simpler terms, conceptual distinctions alone do not allow us to compare the elements of an object with another one and may obscure implicit (and unwarranted) assumptions; models, instead, allow further awareness about such assumptions. However, they do not guarantee, *per se*, the objective validity of the similarity they reveal. Therefore, they do

⁴¹ This process itself is debatable. Recently, Kato (1995) has argued against the relevance of the doctrine of Forms in the *Statesman*. However, Sayre (2006) and Migliori (1996) have independently demonstrated that there is a distinct account of Forms in this dialogue. The problem of Plato's doctrine of Forms and of its variation through different dialogues is not object of this study. Cf. Gonzalez (2003) and Sayre (1993) on the inexistence of a *single and definitive* theory of Forms in Plato's corpus.

not directly provide access to knowledge but must remain open to discussion and re-examination (pp.76-97). Similarly, Pender argues that models are used as instruments to recognise, comparatively, ‘the same thing in something different and distinct’ (p.49). They are part of a process of collection and division of ideas based on their objective similarities and differences, and thus constitute an integral part of dialectic (pp.47-48). Finally, they are ‘heuristic and not just didactic [i.e. illustrative]’ devices, insofar as they serve ‘to impose a [novel] structure on an object’ with which they have objectively ‘common features’ in order to advance an inquiry (p.56). Their heuristic role is moderate and limited: not a direct or unique access to truth, let alone a demonstration, but an indirect access to it (‘if used in the correct way’, in combination with accurate *diairesis*), a ‘second-best’ account that helps in ‘furthering exploration and discovery’ (p.58). Ultimately, Lane and Pender agree that, by restructuring and revising given opinions as correctly as possible (in given dialectical contexts), but without claims to definitive closure, models serve as important cognitive stimuli.

While Goldschmidt reduces models to didactic exercises that rely on metaphysical knowledge, Lane and Pender credit them with an intrinsic cognitive role and heuristic potential. Their reading is sounder because it accounts for the strong textual evidence that models contribute to cognitive experiences, without postulating an extra-textual level of doctrinal contents. However, as I will show, this interpretation does not account for the variety of *different* terms that Plato uses to describe imagery, and its exclusive focus on comparison unduly reduces the Stranger’s more complex account. In my study, therefore, I shall rely on these contributions but expand them to a more complex account of images and of *their correct, measured combination*, in order to show that their cognitive role is ultimately an instance of right measure.

0.4.4. *Scholarship on Imagery in the Myth and its Cognitive Function*

Studying the images that Plato embeds in his myths causes additional difficulties, since his narrations are often extremely elaborate accounts that reinvent a wide variety of images. This is particularly evident in the *Statesman*, in which the Stranger elaborates a novel myth of origins drawing from three traditional myths: the birth of humans from the earth, the primordial rule of Cronus, and the miraculous inversion of heavenly movements. The articulation of different images within a single myth requires accurate study, which few scholars have attempted. Most interpretations, in fact, simply point out how the myth provides a utopian frame for politics against which the characters examine statecraft in the real world. Here, I will address the most recent accounts of the

cognitive role credited to this myth by Lane (1998), Morgan (2000), and Pender (2000), with particular attention to the interaction of different images within it.⁴²

Lane and Morgan espouse the widespread reading of the myth of the *Statesman* as a corrective tool. They agree that: (1) the myth is a particular heuristic device akin to a *paradeigma* (*Pol.* 277b4), albeit more ambiguous;⁴³ and (2) it is presented as excessive (277a6-c6), insofar as it includes a great variety of images, creatively combined to represent a utopian age of human life. Lane argues that the narration about imaginary primordial ages is introduced, at least apparently, as a ‘grand, childish, and inconclusive *paradeigma*’ (p.101) and a ‘pivotal’ moment of inquiry used to correct theoretical errors (p.120). She claims that this myth, precisely because it is grand and over-elaborate, serves to present as excessive the identification of statecraft as a form of human herding (pp.99-101) and to reject traditional images of pastoral authority (pp.111-114). To her, its ultimate function is to establish, narratively rather than logically, a ‘distinction between possible and actual’ conditions of human life and politics (p.116). She thus considers the presence of numerous ‘trappings of divinity and cosmology’ in this narration (p.122) as a ‘structural weakness’ (p.123), intentionally included by Plato as a method of highlighting an excess. Similarly, Morgan argues that the Stranger here ‘elaborates a theory of myth as paradigm’, a ‘heuristic device’ used to correct the earlier definition of the statesman as ‘shepherd of the human flock’ (pp.253-254). However, like Lane, she observes that mythical narration displays a ‘tendency to move beyond the confines of simple illustrative paradigm’ (p.253) and it becomes even the ‘opposite to the method of paradigms’ because it describes a grand and complex object rather than proceeding from simple examples to more difficult subjects (p.255). Lane’s and Morgan’s interpretations reflect the predominant reading of the cognitive role of this myth: a utopian or idealised story meant to correct an excessive certain perspective on statecraft,⁴⁴ and whose elaborate imagery is an instance of creative and potentially confusing exaggeration.⁴⁵

⁴² My focus on imagery excludes two other related fields of inquiry: (1) cosmology and (2) utopian readings of the golden age. On (1): Carone, 2005; Mohr, 1985; Vlastos, 1975; Skemp, 1952. On (2): Horn, 2012; El Murr, 2010; Kahn, 2009; Brisson, 1995; Ferrari, 1995. Both fields are undoubtedly linked to imagery, but they do not account for how it is used *within* a single narration. Rather, cosmological reconstruction aims to decipher imagery in terms of Plato’s theoretical doctrines, while utopian readings are concerned with the immediate impact of narrations about imaginary ages on political arguments. Neither concern is directly addressed in my thesis.

⁴³ See also: Goldschmidt, 1947 (ed. 2003), p.29; Kato, 1995, pp.165-166.

⁴⁴ Cf. Kahn, 2009, p.162.

⁴⁵ Lane, 1998, p.111: ‘imperative of invention’; Morgan, 2000, p.259: ‘narrative compulsion’ and ‘desire for narrative magnificence’. On the image of reversed aging, cf. Kahn, 2009 pp.150 and 152: ‘comic

By contrast, Pender (2000) argues that the complex articulation of images within this myth (and others) serves the specific purpose of presenting effectively Plato's philosophical positions.⁴⁶ Her focus rests on Plato's different images for the supreme god and his activity in this myth: the ruler of a community, a helmsman, the father of a living being, and a craftsman who creates a fine artefact (p.139). To Pender, the fact that 'different images are closely interwoven' in the myth testifies the complexity of Plato's philosophical account (p.139). She observes that Plato, by representing the god in a multifaceted way, effectively displays different aspects of what he conceives as the directive power of the universe, which would be incompatible if taken literally: supreme command over a complex community, beneficial guidance that prevents calamities at sea, benevolent care of a child to be left independent at the right moment, and expert construction of a fine object (pp.138-139). To her, this combination of *incompatible* aspects allows Plato 'to create extended pictures of divine activity and to achieve particular rhetorical effects', namely to articulate effectively 'all the threads of his thought' (p. 139). Precisely the variety of images he uses is 'an invaluable guide' for understanding his philosophical positions (*ibid.*). Pender's conclusion can be formally extended to any instance in which Plato avails himself of different images to represent one and the same subject.

The predominant readings of the myth of the *Statesman* present it as a corrective tool and deny any positive cognitive role to the various images that compose it. Only Pender credits them with the cognitive function of presenting multifaceted accounts about philosophical subjects. However, she does not identify any coherent theory of Plato's in regard to the *combination* of images in the *Statesman*.⁴⁷ A persistent gap remains between Plato's *usage* of images in his myths and his *theories* about them. My study of imagery in the myth of the *Statesman* aims to demonstrate not only that it performs a positive cognitive role not reducible to mere correction, but also that Plato coherently presents it as a cognitive stimulus. To this end, I will offer a novel account of

elements' of 'Plato's comic imagination', and a 'picturesque story'; Migliori, 1996, p.219: 'extraordinary elements' given 'an intentionally excessive development' but devoid of inherent philosophical meaning (tr. mine); Dillon, 1992, p.29: 'a delightful piece of whimsy' and a 'piece of foolery'.

⁴⁶ Kahn (2009) also acknowledges the variety of images in this myth: traditional stories of remote ages, but also the Empedoclean image of opposite cosmic ages, references to reincarnation, cosmological figures akin to the *Timaeus*, the birth of culture thanks to divine gifts, and Plato's original invention of counter-aging humans (pp.149-152). However, he does not credit it with any specific function beyond creative portrayal of utopian ages.

⁴⁷ Notice that Pender (2003) grants that not only similarities but also differences between object and image or among various images contribute to the cognitive role of imagery. What Pender does not textually identify is exclusively Plato's notion of combination—a notion, however, of fundamental significance in the *Statesman*.

the myth as a playful image (*paidia*) that relies on clashing notions, and I will examine the opposite images of divine guidance and cosmic balance that Plato combines in this myth. I will show that Plato construes imagery as a cognitive tool that is only apparently excessive, but actually capable of opening novel conceptual spaces in a measured, not disorienting way. Indeed, it can be shown that the cosmic images in the *Statesman* serve to illuminate the notion of right measure itself, envisaged as delicate balance.

0.5. Project Outline

This dissertation is structured in five chapters. The first chapter analyses the *Statesman* as a whole, with particular focus on its structure, in order to illuminate how right measure works as a criterion of judgment, always ‘in the middle’ of divergent alternatives. The central chapters articulate the heuristic and cognitive force of imagery as theorised and used by Plato, focusing respectively on the measured combination of models and images (Chapter 2), the myth as a playful image composed of clashing notions (Chapter 3), and the images of the divine helmsman and cosmic balance (Chapter 4). The last chapter returns to the *Statesman* as a whole, analysing the notion of leadership of minds, namely the production of right measure as balance in the mind and in the political community.

Chapter 1 demonstrates that the *Statesman* is organised according to a specific structure of pairs of contraposed dialectical paths, each divided by a moment of critical reflection. Expanding the studies of its structure undertaken by Diés (1935), Brumbaugh (1962), and Migliori (1996), this chapter demonstrates that the structure of the *Statesman* reflects its underlying philosophical principle of right measure. It shows that, on the macroscopic level, this dialogue is divided between the inquiry on statecraft as akin first to herding and second to weaving, with these contraposed paths disrupted by a reflection on right measure as evaluative criterion. In addition, it shows that analogous disruptions operate on a more detailed level, always reflecting a philosophical need for measured judgments, e.g. to distinguish ideas correctly, to discern the happiness of the human condition in the ages of Cronus and Zeus, or to evaluate the relation between a flexible political authority and fixed norms. This chapter thus demonstrates that the inquiry of the *Statesman* is not structured only according to methodological distinctions, as commonly assumed by scholars. In fact, it demonstrates that the *Statesman* embeds, in a structure of organised disruptions, its underlying philosophical principle: right measure as criterion of judgment to be employed at critical moments of reflection.

Chapter 2 demonstrates that the heuristic function of images and models in the *Statesman* depends on a complex process of recognition, variation, and ultimate combination of different aspects of an object of inquiry (in this context, statecraft) theorised in the central section of the dialogue. This chapter thus challenges the limits of contemporary scholarship, whereby models are comparative tools whose function is essentially to illustrate or at best to restructure given opinions. It interprets the role of many different images of the statesman (producer of goods, herdsman, weaver, trainer of gymnastic, doctor and helmsman) as the best way to present a single subject from various angles, without either flattening it upon a single account or renouncing the possibility of understanding it. It thus demonstrates that images and models are heuristic because they are dynamically combined in a measured way, avoiding at once reduction to one-sided accounts and cognitive disorientation among different perspectives.

Chapter 3 demonstrates that the myth of the *Statesman*, in its formal characteristics, is not only used as an excessive model, as commonly assumed by scholars, but as a specific tool with an inherent cognitive power: a discursive game or a form of playfulness (*paidia*) that puzzlingly combines opposite images and makes them clash. By contrast with the interpretation of myths and games as childish tools, directed at immature individuals, this chapter supports Kathryn Morgan's (2000) reading of discursive games as philosophical instrument, used to address complex objects of inquiry, acknowledging and challenging cognitive limits. Moreover, it expands Morgan's account by analysing the specific formal features of *paidia* as presented by the Stranger in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. It shows that playfulness is presented by the Stranger as an ambivalent instrument, capable of creating either a deceptive conflation of opposite ideas, conceptual determinations or perspectives (cf. Napolitano Valditara, 2007), or a cognitively stimulating clash of opposites that puzzles the mind and invites it to seek for correct, measured judgments. It shows that the account of a playful use of images in the *Statesman* is positive: a beneficial emotional enchantment, the pleasure of works of art, the non-conflictive opposition of courageous and moderate citizens, and an instrument to test an individual's virtue. It ultimately demonstrates that playfulness in the *Statesman* performs, in a marked cognitive sense, all these positive functions and thus subverts the sophistic conflation of opposites into a positive tool of intellectual challenge and stimulation. In the *Statesman*, *paidia* constitutes not an exaggerated and confusing myth, as frequently assumed by scholars, but a precisely organised articulation of images that serves as cognitive stimulus. Thus, the playful

usage of imagery is itself measured, not excessive or deceitful, whenever it is used to tease out an implicit ambivalence and to stimulate critical thought.

Once the features of imagery have been established and evidence of their interaction provided, Chapter 4 will offer an original reading of imagery in the myth of the *Statesman*. This chapter demonstrates that, in his playful myth, Plato has presented two opposite metaphorical accounts of the cosmic movement, in order to create a clash of opposite perspectives on control and measured self-regulation. My study highlights the interaction of two opposite images to describe the same figure of cosmic motion, namely circularity: on the one hand, the steering of a helm by a divine figure, and on the other hand the delicate balance of a revolving body. It analyses how they express ideas of benevolent control and measured autonomy, with reference to pre-Socratic sources and inter-textual evidence from Plato's corpus. It thus shows that an inherent ambivalence is at work in the myth, whereby the notion of self-control is envisaged as both depending on and contrasting with previous external control. It demonstrates that the coexistence, in a single narration, of opposite images of power and control determines a positive cognitive gain. Thus, it shows the cognitive power of images in triggering an autonomous intellectual response in the receivers and in creating novel conceptual spaces through their clash.

Chapter 5 returns to the *Statesman* as a whole and analyses its focus on the leadership of minds both in its scene and in its argument. Eschewing the predominant scholarly focus on methods and didactic concerns, it analyses the images that Plato used to describe the movement of the mind, both at the individual and at the political level. With regard to the individual soul, it shows how Plato has represented it as being carried around in circles (ἐν κύκλῳ, 283b3; 286b5) by complex philosophical discourses, and thus as in need to compose itself (συνίσταται, 278d2) maintaining a correct inner order and stability. With regard to politics, it shows how he has represented the citizens' minds as being carried in opposite directions (ἐπὶ τὰ ἐναντία φερομένων, 310a5) by divergent emotional drives, and thus in need of a well-balanced composition (σύγκρασις, 308e7). Ultimately, this chapter highlights the common trait of philosophical and political leadership as represented in the *Statesman*: the challenge of detrimental drives to confusion and conflict, and the establishment of a condition of inner order of mind and society by creating a cohesive, balanced whole.

Overall, I will offer a radically novel reading of the *Statesman* and elucidate three fundamental aspects of Plato's philosophy. I will show that the notion of right

measure is the underlying philosophical principle of this dialogue and will articulate its multifaceted complexity. I will analyse Plato's focus on the correct guidance of the human mind, both on the individual and on the social level. Finally, I will analyse the cognitive function of imagery as directed at representing an object from different angles and opening novel perspectives. My interpretation will thus suggest a new line of Platonic interpretation, by showing the importance of reading his works with a first and foremost attention to right measure, ethical psychology, and imagery as strictly interwoven. All these aspects challenge the still pervasive image of Plato's philosophy as a dogmatic (and dead) metaphysical system. They demonstrate, in fact, his nuanced (and still challenging) attention to human psychology and society, with their irreducible and fertile complexities.

Chapter 1 – Right Measure in the Structure of the *Statesman*

Every discourse must be composed, like a living being, with a body of its own, so as not to be, as it were, headless or footless, but to have middle parts [*mesa*] and members, written in fitting relation [*preponta*] to each other and to the whole (*Phaedr.* 264c2-5).

Introduction

This chapter analyses the structure of the *Statesman*, both as a hermeneutic tool to locate the different stages and sections of argument, and as a compositional technique that reflects the philosophical criterion of right measure. I will argue that, as different scholars have partially shown, there is a consistent articulation of the dialogue both on a macroscopic level and on a more detailed one; and I will show that this articulation reflects on the one hand a distinction of different philosophical methods, and on the other a unifying philosophical principle that recurs throughout the *Statesman*, i.e. right measure. I will therefore analyse first the structure as a whole (1.1), and then evaluate the unifying principle on the two levels of dialogic articulation (1.2 and 1.3).

A methodological premise is opportune: analysing the articulation of Plato's dialogues is not an arbitrary subdivision of sections (which are, in fact, absent due to the dialogical form); it is rather an attempt to identify consistent parts of the dialogue based on textual philosophical criteria. Plato has repeatedly been shown to be aware of criteria of composition and of their philosophical value: we can recall the *Symposium* with its succession of different eulogies of Eros up to the wonderful synthesis of Diotima and the following disruption caused by Alcibiades; the *Phaedrus* and the ironical interplay of Socrates's two discourses on love, separated by a divine inspiration; the *Republic* and the three shocking 'waves' of argument on sexual equality, shared marriages and philosophical rule; or finally the *Timaeus*, with its three sections on the creation of the universe, the material principle, and the nature of humans. The most evident proof of Plato's compositional awareness are the words that his Socrates pronounces in the *Phaedrus*: 'every discourse must be organized, like a living being, with a body of its own, so as not to be, as it were, headless or footless, but to have a middle and members [μέσα τε ἔχειν καὶ ἄκρα], composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole [πρέποντα ἀλλήλοις καὶ τῷ ὅλῳ]' (264c2-5). Whatever we may think of Plato's distance from his characters' voices, his awareness of compositional criteria is undeniable; and the strong claim that a fitting (*prepon*) organisation depends on the philosophical adherence to the truth (262c1-3), combined with Plato's evident mastery of composition

in so many dialogues, leaves little room to doubt of his attention to the structure of his works. Friedländer (1969b), accordingly, claimed that in the *Statesman* ‘a coherent structure is visible behind what looks, if viewed from the outside, like an incoherent juxtaposition of parts’ (p.294). My interpretation rests on the persuasion that it is possible to trace a structure that reflects Plato’s philosophical conception of right measure, in strict textual consistency with the very same dialogue analysed. The following study is an attempt to validate this methodological hypothesis in relation to a particular dialogue not yet extensively studied through this lens.

1.1. The Structure of the Statesman and Its Philosophical Principle

Various scholars have analysed this dialogue as a whole, remarking the different stages that structure the discussion. The main studies that offer an encompassing view of the *Statesman* and its structure are by Diés (1935), Brumbaugh (1962), and Migliori (1996). As usual with Plato’s dialogical form, there is no definitive agreement on the structure of this dialogue. Indeed, Plato never follows a fully systematic account, explicitly divided in chapters or thematic units. Sometimes it is possible to identify thematic sections through textual evidence, for instance, whenever a character highlights the introduction of a new problem or a shift of perspective;⁴⁸ but more often the distinctions are not that sharp, because Plato tends to ‘trail’ future discussion topics before they begin more formally, having his characters anticipate problems that will be scrutinised (or even posed as problems) only later. This is most evidently the case with the *Statesman*, which indeed begins with an error, by defining the statesman as a kind of ‘herdsman’ of human beings, and only much later discards this definition as a misleading model (268b8-c10). However, the attempt to distinguish different stages is valuable, not only as an instrument for the reader, but also as a way to understand Plato’s composition and the reasons that underlie his non-systematic approach.

Diés has presented a clear-cut structure of the *Statesman*, which he divides in three great stages of inquiry (p.8). The first stage (258d-277d) presents statecraft as an art akin to the herdsman’s; the central section (277d-287b) consists in a theorisation of the role of models (*paradeigmata*) as instruments for philosophical inquiry, and of the

⁴⁸ E.g. ‘Then we must travel some other route, starting from another point’ (268d5); ‘Let’s take the following point in turn’ (309b10).

criterion of right measure;⁴⁹ the last section (287b-311c) identifies the specific features of correct statecraft by assimilating it to the weaver's art, and defining it as a unification of the citizens' opposite dispositions. Diés's structure is effective because it provides an account of the difference between the first and the last stages of discussion: while at first the interlocutors assume the model of a herdsman as valid, after the central theorisation of *paradeigmata* they follow a different model. Diés does not, in fact, express this difference in terms of models, but of definitions; nonetheless, the character of the Stranger explicitly points out that the change of perspective between the first and the last stages of discussion is a change of models: 'this figure of the divine herdsman is still greater than that of a king' (274b-c), comments the Stranger, because the interlocutors believed that the king deserved 'great models' (μεγάλα παραδείγματα, 277b); but given that the great model was excessive, the Stranger asks: 'So what very small model [...] could be compared [to statecraft] in order to discover adequately the object of research? By Zeus, Socrates, if we don't have anything else to hand, well, there is weaving' (279a-b). Ultimately, Diés's classification shows that the dialogue is a cohesive unity, because it is a succession of two different models, divided by a theoretical reflection on the role of models for knowledge. The *Statesman* is a consistent process through different stages, from an erroneous (or rather inadequate) definition to a precise conclusion on the object at hand.

Brumbaugh's overview of the *Statesman* pays more attention to smaller stages of discussion, and in particular to the divide between the initial, argumentative method, and the introduction of a myth. He presents the dialogue as divided in four stages. 'The discussion begins by a straightforward definition by subclassification of the statesman as the custodian of a human herd' (p.164); but since this classification is problematic, insofar as such a custodian should master an impossible variety of arts, 'the Stranger tells a long myth to show why the definition failed' (*ibid.*), i.e. presenting the custodians' art as divine, above human possibilities. Afterwards, the Stranger 'proceeds to try to describe the ruler by a further set of formal classifications', taking the weaver's art as a model for political activity and distinguishing the activities of 'various citizens'

⁴⁹ Significantly, this procedure is the exact opposite of the one adopted by Socrates in the *Republic* (368d-369a; 592a-b), where the greater *paradeigma* of the best city is employed to understand the smaller subject of the individual soul. Both Socrates and the Stranger justify their opposite choices as educationally sound, through a comparison to letters: in the *Republic*, a larger model is said to be clearer, just as big letters are more easily discerned than small ones; in the *Statesman* (277a-287b), a smaller model is preferred, because it does not confuse the intellect as the greater ones do, just like complex syllables confuse young students more than short, simple ones. The contradiction is remarkable, because it suggests that Plato does not put forward theories on *paradeigmata* primarily in view of theoretical consistency, but of *contextual* educational efficacy.

(p.165) from that of the ruler. Brumbaugh claims that the limit, here, is excessive formality and inclusiveness (pp.166 and 168), which cannot directly account for the concrete and specific art of the statesman. Beyond these ‘three techniques of definition’ (p.165), Brumbaugh identifies one last stage of discussion, which presents statecraft as an art that aims at a concrete production: ‘the true statesman will be guided by his vision of the product of his art’, so that the definition requires to account for the ‘concrete facts’ of political life (laws, constitutions, personalities). Plato’s ideal statecraft is a knowledgeable activity that aims at ‘the public good’ always through ‘the medium of a particular situation’ (p.166), and thus relates problematically to the fixed stability of laws, the doubtful knowledge of existing constitutions, and the potentially conflicting personalities and virtues of the citizens. Eventually, ‘neither logic nor myth alone is adequate’ (p.166), but a more complex account is necessary. To this scholar, the succession of the four methods of discussion (‘too ideal, too empirical,⁵⁰ too formal, and finally just right’, p.168) makes this dialogue ‘an *example* of the “art of normative measure”, for which Plato never seems to have written out a set of formal rules’ (p.167). Brumbaugh’s reading is valuable because it points out its consistence with Plato’s idea of the right measure, which is to be acquired through a discontinuous discussion, slowly correcting inadequacies and achieving more precise understanding. Compared to Diés, Brumbaugh explicates the development from ‘inadequate’ to ‘correct’ definitions that the French scholar leaves implicit. Moreover, it highlights the function of Plato’s dialogical writing style as expressive of philosophical concepts that Plato himself has not exhibited through literal language or linear definitions. Unfortunately, Brumbaugh does not offer textual indications of the passages that correspond to the different stages, but assumes the reader’s familiarity with the dialogue. Thus, although his point is reasonable and consistent, his study has a limited value for textual analysis; in particular, after the first two stages of classification (i.e. *diairesis*) and myth, it is difficult to understand *exactly*⁵¹ to which parts of the dialogue Brumbaugh is referring.

The most succinct classification is offered by Migliori, who distinguishes two stages: the first stage (257a-287b) ‘is committed to searching, through the diairetic

⁵⁰ Brumbaugh uses the term ‘empirical’ in relation to the myth, because it establishes the conditions of *actual* political life as opposed to the mythical framework of the Age of Cronus.

⁵¹ This might even be intentional on Brumbaugh’s part, given the inherent lack of complete exactness (*akribeia*) of right measure. It may be reasonably argued that *too close* an analysis of Plato’s text, an excessive demand for mathematical exactness in his composition, misconstrues the flexibility of the dialectical process that he has represented and imposes rigid textual boundaries where there are none. Nonetheless, I hold that the attempt to identify *as exactly as possible* different sections and moments of dialectical inquiry, however flexible, provides further insights in Plato’s compositional technique and philosophy alike.

procedure, a correct definition of the statesman' (p.32), whose limit is shown through a myth, and which gives way to the new model of the weaver; the second stage (287b-311c) 'takes on a development more adequate to the topic' (p.33), analysing laws, constitutions and the actions of a good statesman. Migliori presents his division as an instrumental tool of clarification, merely distinguishing a more abstract philosophical analysis (made of definitions, corrections and theoretical reflections) from a 'political disquisition in the strict sense' (p.32, n.1).⁵² In this sense, Migliori's study (just like Brumbaugh's) remarks an evolution from a less concrete, appropriate discussion of a political theme, to a more 'strict' and adequate outcome. Diés's division, however, is more valuable if we aim to understand the reasons of Plato's composition, since it is true that the dialogue includes a theoretical section (277d-287b), which deals with problems of correct knowledge, distinguished from the political stages that precede and follow it.

Diés's classification of three different stages is preferable for two reasons. First, it provides a useful instrument to distinguish the initial, inadequate definition of the statesman from the final definition accepted by the characters. Second, and more important, it distinguishes these two political stages from the central stage, which is more markedly philosophical, insofar as it deals with theoretical issues of correct acquisition of knowledge. The essential merit of this observation is its textual consistence: the difference between the first stage of political discussion and the following theoretical digression is confirmed by the characters themselves. Once the Stranger defines statecraft as an art of 'herd-keeping' that is voluntary and relates to willing human subjects (276e10-13), Young Socrates believes the inquiry is concluded ('and it's likely that in this way our demonstration concerning the statesman is complete', 277a1-2). Yet the Stranger, at 277a3-d6, remarks that 'our discussion does not yet seem to have given a complete shape to the king', and that this incompleteness has 'very strangely stirred up the problem of what happens to us when we have knowledge'. The Stranger thus characterises the discussion starting at 277d9 as a philosophical digression from the main argument (the political art). Indeed, it concerns a specifically philosophical problem, i.e. what the conditions of knowledge are and how models should be used to acquire it without error; and it digresses even further explaining the criterion of right measure as foundational of philosophy as much as of politics. The entire digression ends at 287b3, with the Stranger's invite to 'go back

⁵² Cf. Rowe, 1995, p.14.

again to the statesman, applying to him the model of weaving’, and Young Socrates’s agreement. This observation is important because Plato himself, through his characters, remarks that the central stage of the dialogue is different from the rest of the political inquiry, both the preceding (and less correct) discussion, and the subsequent one. Diés’s structure is not a mere instrument for the reader, but it reflects Plato’s criteria of composition and his awareness of the different stages of the dialogue. Bearing on his study, the three stages can then be summarised as follows:

1. Initial definition of statecraft: the model of the herdsman	258a7-277a2
2. Theoretical digression: models and right measure	277a3-287b3
3. Final definition of statecraft: the model of the weaver	287b4-311c8

Notice that, in my reading, I mark the beginning of the digression at 277a2, when the Stranger criticises the definition of the statesman as an incomplete picture. Differently, Diés marks it when the Stranger’s theoretical argument in fact begins (277d9), excluding his introductory critique. This is one of the cases where Plato’s style of blurring formal distinctions is more evident; but it seems to me that Young Socrates’s strong conclusive remark justifies my reading, and that the Stranger’s remark on the incompleteness of the research is an important part of his overall theoretical argument about the cognitive role of images.⁵³

The further textual distinctions highlighted by Brumbaugh complicate Diés’s overview. In particular, the strong distinction of *diairesis* and myth in the first stage of discussion cannot be ignored: the Stranger forcefully insists on it by introducing the myth as ‘some other route, starting from another point’ (268d5). Diés’s structure is not more superficial than Brumbaugh’s, but it simply encompasses minor differences from a broader perspective, dealing with the overall alternation of political and theoretical discussions. It is, in fact, possible to integrate a more general reading of the dialogue and a more detailed one. If we pay attention to the smaller stages of discussion, we can see that they are nonetheless organised in a way that is compatible with Diés’s reading.

In fact, we can take Brumbaugh’s reading one step further and see how, on a more detailed level, the dialogue is divided in *five* sections. The first stage, dealing with the model of the herdsman, utilises the two different instruments of inquiry of *diairesis* and myth. At 257a7-268d4 the discussion proceeds on purely argumentative grounds:

⁵³ See Chapter 2.

statecraft is defined through *diairesis* as a rearing of human beings (*anthroponomikon*, 267c1), and criticised as excessive and imprecise (267c5-268d4). Conversely, at 268d5-277a2, the Stranger avails himself of a myth of the golden age to show that the current condition of humanity ('the statesmen in our present age are much more similar to their subjects in their natures', 275c1-3) does not allow any human ruler to act like a herdsman to human subjects. Thus, the first stage of discussion is divided in two by a radical change of method:

1. The model of the herdsman (258a7-277a2)	1.1. <i>Diairesis</i> (258a7-268d4)
	1.2. Myth (268d5-277a2)

Once the myth is concluded, and the relevant philosophical considerations drawn from it, the Stranger introduces a long theoretical digression on the role of models and the criterion of right measure (277a3-287b3), which corresponds to Diés's second stage. This stage consistently maintains an argumentative style and, despite the different topics explored,⁵⁴ it is not sharply divided into different modes of inquiry. The last stage of the dialogue, instead, includes two essentially different sections. Here the difference is not between argument and myth, but between separation and unification. In the section dealing with arts, laws and constitutions, i.e. the political 'concrete facts' of Brumbaugh's account, the Stranger is in fact 'separating' every aspect of the *polis* that does not coincide with statecraft as such. He remarks this repeatedly, starting at 287b4-8: 'the king has been separated off from the many kinds of arts that share his field – or rather from all of them concerned with herds; there remain [...] those in the city itself that are contributory causes and those that are causes [of the political order]'. With this sentence, the Stranger begins his distinction of all the various arts that are necessary for the existence of a *polis* (from architecture to art and nurture). At 291b6-c7, the process of separation moves on to the 'chorus of those concerned with the affairs of cities [...] [who] we must be separated from all those who are really statesmanlike and kingly men', i.e. the group of all those who take part in the various constitutions of Plato's time (democracy, aristocracy and oligarchy, monarchy and tyranny). Finally, at 303e7 the Stranger recapitulates the various distinctions so far, and introduces the last one: 'it seems that [...] we have now separated off those things that are different from the knowledge of statecraft, and those that are alien and hostile to it, and that there remain

⁵⁴ The cognitive role of *paradeigmata* and the concept of *metrion*.

those that are precious and related to it', i.e. the arts of the general, the judge and the rhetorician. Only when all these separations are completed, that is, when the inquiry has taken into account every concrete aspect of political life, it is possible to 'describe [...] the kingly art of weaving, its nature, the way in which it combines the threads, and the kind of fabric it produces' (306a1-3). Thus the Stranger introduces the last section of the dialogue, focused on the specific object of inquiry alone, and he presents the true political art as an intertwining of the citizens' different virtues into a cohesive social fabric. We can, thus, accept Brumbaugh's insight of a textual progress in the *Statesman*, which moves from an abstract definition of statecraft to a concrete account of all the factors related to it; but we must also pay closer attention to the text, observing that this concrete account is twofold: on the one hand, the distinction of all elements that do not coincide with statecraft *per se*; on the other hand, the description of the unifying procedure of the 'kingly art'. This twofold account coincides with Diés's third stage:

3. The model of the weaver (287b4-311c8)	3.1. Separation of political arts (287b4-305e7)
	3.2. Statecraft as unification of virtues (305e8-311c8)

Overall, the structure of the dialogue seems to be organised according to an explicit criterion, which depends on the different methodological steps used by the Stranger to reach a final definition. On the macroscopic level, Diés's study is correct in outlining three stages: the discussion on the model of the herdsman; the theoretical digression; the discussion on the model of the weaver. On a more detailed level, however, we must distinguish five different methodological sections: the initial argument, led mainly through *diairesis*; the myth; the central digression; the separation of political arts; and finally the description of statecraft. The two levels are related as follows:

1. The model of the herdsman (258a7-277a2)	1.1. Argument (258a7-268d4)
	1.2. Myth (268d5-277a2)
2. Theoretical digression (277a3-287b3)	2. Theoretical digression (277a3-287b3)
3. The model of the weaver (287b4-311c8)	3.1. Separation of political arts (287b4-305e7)
	3.2. Statecraft as unification of virtues (305e8-311c8)

This clear-cut outline of three dialogical stages and five sections describes how different methods of inquiry succeed one another, without many disruptions typical of Socratic dialogues. However, it should not be taken as an explicit division of the text in thematic chapters. In fact, it is possible to raise many objections against an excessive systematisation of the *Statesman*. Above all, the various methods here outlined, despite being based on the explicit remarks of the Stranger, are not universally applied: the argumentative section on the art of the statesman as herdsman-like consists both of (purely theoretical) *diairesis* and of a critique of its results based on a concrete problem (which of the many arts that claim to ‘tend’ human beings is truly political, i.e. directed at producing a good society?); the myth itself includes and is followed by theoretical arguments and problems; the separation of various political arts is interrupted by a reflection on laws and their limits in respect to the statesman’s knowledge. Moreover, some disruptions are caused by the interlocutors’ subjective uncertainties: the *diairesis* of human beings as political subjects is interrupted by the Stranger when Young Socrates hastily distinguishes humans from all other beings (262a3-4), without reflecting on the reasons for this distinction, and gives way to a digression on the criteria for a correct *diairesis*; and again, the separation of political arts gives way to the reflection on laws because of Young Socrates’s resistance to the idea that political knowledge be independent from laws (293e6-7). The former disruption is justified by the educational scene of the dialogue (a philosopher training a young man in the philosophical art), rather than by a purely logical necessity; and the latter is not only based on a character’s reaction, but it ignores other logical problems such as the independence of knowledge from consensus and wealth, which will receive attention only in the *Laws*.⁵⁵ These objections are significant, insofar as they point out that, despite the explicit declarations of Plato’s characters, other factors intervene in the organisation of the dialogue; and, most important, they prevent us from interpreting the dialogue’s stages as *purely logical* sections, while they are in fact justified by the dramatic scene.

Nonetheless, the stages and sections remarked by the Stranger follow a consistent plan of composition. They are not only effective ways of summarising the contents of the dialogue and to follow its arguments, nor do they merely respect textual indications about methods and digressions. They also reflect an intrinsic principle of organisation, which is valid *despite* the disruptions of the dialogical form. More

⁵⁵ *Leg.* 857b-864a; 724a-745e.

precisely, we can conceive it as a way of *organising* the various dialogical disruptions, which are possible only within the different stages: Young Socrates's error of division is possible only within the first, mostly diairetic, section;⁵⁶ and his reaction to the *radical* independence of knowledge from laws fits perfectly the context of radically separating the political knowledge from any element external to it. We may speak, then, of *organised disruptions*, which do not contradict the overall organisation of the dialogue.

This organisation has one evident philosophical implication: it points out distinctions of method that are philosophically grounded. As the characters' inquiring minds face different theoretical problems, different methods of exposition and inquiry become opportune. On the broader level, one conception (the statesman as herdsman) is abandoned in favour of a different one (the statesman as weaver), as a consequence of the philosophical digression, which posits the error of the first definition in terms of models, and radically reorients the inquiry. On the more detailed level, the first argument gives way to a myth, raising the problem of the interaction between the two forms and the necessity to justify the role of mythical images in a philosophical inquiry. In this case, the myth allows a correction of the former, excessive definition: 'Let us end our myth, then, and we will use it to see how great our mistake was' (274e1-3). There is, thus, a philosophical use of myth, represented by the dialogue's second section. Similarly, the identification of correct statecraft through the previous separation of different, but related, elements, is coherent with the Stranger's reflection on the procedure of any art (281d8-e5):

[There are] two arts that exist in relation to everything that is done [...] One which is a contributory cause to production, and one which is itself a cause [...] Those which do not craft the thing itself, but which provide tools for those that do, [...] are what I mean by contributory causes, while those that produce the thing itself are causes.

δύο τέχνας οὔσας περὶ πάντα τὰ δρώμενα θεασώμεθα [...] τὴν μὲν γενέσεως οὔσαν συναίτιον, τὴν δ' αὐτὴν αἰτίαν [...] ὅσαι μὲν τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ μὴ δημιουργοῦσι, ταῖς δὲ δημιουργοῦσαις ὄργανα παρασκευάζουσιν [...] ταύτας μὲν συναιτίους, τὰς δὲ αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα ἀπεργαζομένας αἰτίας (tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

⁵⁶ The fact that he does not commit any more errors of division in the following stages of the dialogue supports its reading as a didactic scene: Socrates is slowly learning throughout the various sections (and errors).

The Stranger acknowledges, at 287c7-d3, that the philosophical procedure through separation replicates that method:

Just as before: all the arts that provided tools to weaving, we put down as contributory causes [...] We must do the same thing now too [...] for we must put down all those arts that produce any tool in the city, whether small or large, as being contributory causes.

ὥσπερ ἔμπροσθεν, ὅποσαι παρείχοντο ὄργανα περὶ τὴν ὑφαντικὴν, πάσας δήπου τότε ἐτίθεμεν ὡς συναιτίους [...] καὶ νῦν δὴ ταῦτόν μὲν τοῦτο [...] ὅσαι γὰρ μικρὸν ἢ μέγα τι δημιουργοῦσι κατὰ πόλιν ὄργανον, θετέον ἀπάσας ταύτας ὡς οὔσας συναιτίους (tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

Similarly, the separation of jurisdiction, the general's art and rhetoric is compared to the purification of gold at 303d6-e5: 'we seem to me to be in a situation similar to that of those who refine gold', because 'the removal of [other metals] through repeated smelting and testing leaves the 'unalloyed' gold [...] there for us to see, itself alone by itself', just like the distinction of the most important political arts will finally let the interlocutors see clearly the statesman by itself. Distinguishing the different procedures utilised by the characters, then, is not a mere hermeneutic tool; it rather means to understand an explicit stance on the methods of inquiry and their order. The first, misguided argument is corrected through a myth, then the whole perspective is corrected through a shift of models, and finally an adequate definition is reached indirectly, through a long process of separation-purification. We must take seriously the Stranger's shifts of method, because they reflect distinct philosophical procedures; they provide the contextual *reasons* for the usage of various kinds of argumentation and their interaction.

Beyond the methodological distinction, there is a deeper philosophical implication, which becomes evident when we pay attention to digressions and disruptions. I will show in the following sections that, both on the macroscopic and on the detailed levels of inquiry, the methodological shifts of the dialogue are organised around the central concept of right measure. Brumbaugh's insight that this dialogue constitutes an example of right measure *in act* holds indeed not only for the overall succession of arguments, refining methods and perspectives, but also for the *critical* moments of each section, whenever the inquiry requires the interlocutors to judge (*krinein*) correctly how to proceed.

1.2. Right Measure in the Central Stage as Organising Principle

The concept of right measure is presented in the central stage of the dialogue (277a3-287b3), which is central not only in a positional sense, but also qualitatively: it serves as an organising principle of the inquiry represented in the *Statesman*. As we have seen, on the macroscopic level the dialogue is divided in two alternative stages of inquiry, which coincide with the different models of the statesman as a herdsman and as a weaver, by a great digression on the role of models and the criterion of *metrion*. The central stage does not start immediately with the problem of right measure; it rather starts with a reflection on the error committed in conceiving the statesman as a herdsman, thus originating an essential reflection on the cognitive role of models. This is the philosophical ‘problem of the experience about knowledge within ourselves’ (τὸ περὶ τῆς ἐπιστήμης πάθος ἐν ἡμῖν) (277d6-7). The Stranger remarks that this theoretical issue has been introduced ‘in a very perplexing way’ (μάλ’ ἀτόπως) in the political inquiry, because it is a digression from the task of defining statecraft. This stage will digress even further with a long reflection on the role of right measure in any art. However, at the end of the central section, the Stranger claims that this digression, no matter how long and apparently ‘overwrought’ (περίεργα, 286c1) is necessary for a good dialectician and has been rightly introduced in the dialogue. We should not let us be troubled by the ‘going round in circles’ of discourses (τὰς ἐν κύκλῳ περιόδους, 286e5), as if they were literally out of place (*a-topoi*), but try to understand the *common* reason of their presence in the dialogue.

The recurring element of this philosophical digression, from the very beginning, is the reference to right measure. The passage on models anticipates it indirectly, by introducing the ideas of excess and appropriateness in philosophical discourses (277a3-c6). The Stranger claims that ‘the king does not yet have a complete figure’ (τέλειον [...] σχῆμα) because the inquiry so far has led the interlocutors to utilise ‘great models’ (μεγάλα παραδείγματα) for the statesman, using ‘a greater part than the appropriate’ (μείζονι τοῦ δέοντος). He remarks that ‘in order to [...] show the error in our former route [i.e. in the dialectical analysis of arts], we have made our demonstration longer [μακροτέραν], and have not brought our myth to an end [τέλος], and our account, just like a portrait, seems to have an adequate [ικανῶς] outline, but not yet to have received its proper clarity’. The Stranger claims they have acted like painters or sculptors who wished, ‘beyond measure’ (παρὰ καιρὸν), to add ‘more and bigger [embellishments] than needed’ (πλείω καὶ μείζω τοῦ δέοντος). The language here is noticeably consistent:

the figure of the king is not complete (*teleon*) because the myth has not been brought to an end (*telos*); and this happened because the discussion so far, i.e. the conjunction of dialectical divisions and mythical account,⁵⁷ has made necessary for them (*ēnankasthēmen*, 277b5) to exceed the appropriate (*kairos*, *deon*) and be only superficially accurate (*ikanos*). The reason why the first model is not appropriate to a king has already been exposed by the Stranger: ‘this figure [σχῆμα] of the divine herdsman is still greater [μείζον] than that of a king, and the statesmen who belong to our present era are much more like their subjects in their natures and have shared in an education and nurture closer to theirs’ (275b8-c4). What is new here is not the acknowledgment that a human cannot act like a herdsman to other humans, but the inscription of this difference within the field of the right measure of models. Indeed, the terms *kairos* and *deon* anticipate later results of the digression on right measure, a criterion for ‘all those arts which measure in relation to what is measured, fitting, opportune, appropriate’ [τὸ μέτριον καὶ τὸ πρόπον καὶ τὸν καιρὸν καὶ τὸ δέον], and everything that removes itself from the extremes to the middle [τὸ μέσον]’ (284e2-8). A safer way to acquire knowledge, the Stranger suggests, is to move from smaller (*helattonon*) models to the greatest (*megiston*) one of political art (278e4-10).

By introducing the notion of greater and smaller models, the Stranger establishes a new perspective on the former (misguided) inquiry. Not only does he declare the former divisions and myth *insufficient* to reach a satisfactory definition, but he also explains *the reason of their inadequacy*, by reframing the dialectical process within the field of models and the requirements of right measure: the former inquiry took for granted that statecraft had features identical to the art of herding, but that was not the case. Rather, the art of a herdsman requires him to be superior in nature and abilities in respect to his subjects, because he needs to take care of every single need of his herd, a condition which no real-life human being could ever meet, and which is rather satisfied by a community of different people who master different arts. The former definition, hence, was not *appropriate* to a human statesman, *measured* against the needs of a real-life society and abilities of real-life humans; it was rather more appropriate to mythical beings like gods and daemons, and to a condition of life which would exist only in a Golden Age devoid of toil and contrasts. The error committed by Young Socrates, thus,

⁵⁷ Notice that, insofar as the myth serves to ‘indicate’ (ἐνδείξαιτο) and see more clearly (ἐναργέστερον ἴδοιμεν) (275b1-4) elements ignored in the dialectical divisions, and to ‘show the error’ (δηλώσαιμεν τὸ [...] ἀμάρτημα) (277b2-3) thus committed, it is part of a single process which includes both moments. The excess does not depend on myth alone, but on the greater model of the herdsman.

was to consider statecraft as a straightforward subclass of herding, thereby hindering the possibility to evaluate it from a more adequate perspective.

All these errors had already been remarked by the Stranger, and contrasted to the mythical figure; but now they are subsumed into a theory of models, thus requiring that the analysis proceed through an opposite sort of model:

What model, then, occupied in the same activities as statecraft, and **very small**, should be set before us in order to find **adequately** the object of our research?

τί δῆτα παράδειγμά τις ἄν, ἔχον τὴν αὐτὴν πολιτικῆ πραγματείαν, **σμικρότατον** παραθέμενος **ικανῶς** ἂν εὔροι τὸ ζητούμενον; (279a7-b1, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The new model, as anticipated, is that of a weaver, which will lead the Stranger to offer an articulate analysis of this artisan's skills, finally identifying it as the process of interlacing warp and woof. Once again, the concern is with a measure that will prove adequate (*ikanos*) to the research. Coherently, the Stranger introduces then a reflection on excess and deficiency, as an antidote against the 'malady' of considering lengthy discussions as useless, excessive discourses (283b7-c1). As I have explained in the General Introduction, right measure constitutes a normative criterion of judgment and evaluation of excesses and deficiencies, postulated in alternative to any measuring that simply compares greatness and smallness. This means that the Stranger contrasts any kind of 'mathematical' measuring of what is big or small, long or short, quick or slow, and any other couple of 'relative' determinations, to a kind of measuring that (a) aims at a *concrete* practical result, like a fine garment or a good state, and (b) determines the quality of such a product, namely whether it is truly good and fine, or rather excessive or defective in some ways. The Stranger knows how provocative it is to consider such a criterion as a kind of 'measuring', and indeed at 284b7-c3 he presents his opinion as a postulate, a necessary discourse through which he is 'forcing' (προσαναγκαστέον) his language to describe not calculations but also the existence of a principle of 'opportune measure' for every art (just as, in the *Sophist*, he was forced to admit the existence of Non-being). He thus admits a general object of knowledge that all practical arts need to share, in different ways, an expertise that allows any craftsman to produce good and fine realities. Dialectic itself falls within this categorisation of arts, because the length of a discourse should not be judged, according to the Stranger, in itself, appearing as an excessive digression; rather:

you and I must be careful to remember what we have now said, and rebuke or praise both brevity and length of anything we ever discuss, **judging** lengths not in relation to each other, but according to the part of **the art of measuring** which we said we must remember, in relation to **what is fitting**.

χρή δὴ μεμνημένους ἐμὲ καὶ σὲ τῶν νῦν εἰρημένων τόν τε ψόγον ἐκάστοτε καὶ ἔπαινον ποιῆσθαι βραχύτητος ἅμα καὶ μήκους ὧν ἂν ἀεὶ περὶ λέγωμεν, μὴ πρὸς ἄλληλα τὰ μήκη **κρίνοντες** ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ **τῆς μετρητικῆς** μέρος ὃ τότε ἔφαμεν δεῖν μεμνηθῆναι, πρὸς τὸ **πρέπον** (286c5-d2, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

It is particularly relevant to notice that *metrion* applies to philosophy as a production of correct discourses, thus locating it in the same conceptual field as any other productive activity (if on a higher level of importance). Dialectic is an exercise (*meletē*) in giving and receiving account (*logon*) of realities, especially those of the highest value (including, but not limited to, the art of statecraft);⁵⁸ not a purely theoretical activity, but also a practical one whose value must be judged on the results it produces, i.e. on its ability to communicate effectively and understand correctly discourses on philosophical topics. The Stranger's theory of models, then, is part of his concerns with the correct guidance of mind, which needs to exercise its capacity for measured judgment of discourses. The length of philosophical discourses should not be judged in itself, but related to what is appropriate. This claim cannot be reduced to the somewhat banal idea that the search for truth necessarily requires long discussions, in order to determine as precisely as possible what is true about the object at hand. In fact, there is more: the appropriateness of a philosophical discourse can be rightly judged only by bearing in mind the principle of right measure and the contextual effects of discourses on the mind.

In other words, on a superficial level the Stranger means that philosophers need to be patient both in giving or receiving account of realities, distinguishing differences and similarities (285a1-b6) in the long process of collection and division that characterises *diairesis*.⁵⁹ A philosophical account will be judged adequate (independently from its length), if it produces correct distinctions and conjunctions of

⁵⁸ 'We need to exercise at being able to give and receive account of each thing' (δεῖ μελετᾶν λόγον ἐκάστου δυνατόν εἶναι δοῦναι καὶ δεξασθαι, 286a4-5).

⁵⁹ Both division *and* collection are parts of *diairesis*, since they are the two sides of a single process: dividing correctly means locating differences in two opposite forms, for instance *distinguishing* natural numbers into even and odd ones; but the division at the same time is a collection, based on similarity, because even numbers are *unified* by their common divisibility by two. Correct *diairesis* identifies through division classes of objects that share a common feature. It collects *at the same time* as it divides. Cf. Pender, 2000, p.47; Sayre, 2006, p.235.

ideas. But the criterion of *metrion* cannot be conceived as limited to *diairesis*; in fact, the Stranger justifies his reflection on *metrion* also in reference to mythical discourse:

Let's remind ourselves of the reasons why we have said all these things on these subjects [...] Not least because of the nauseated revulsion we felt there was in our **lengthy talk** about weaving, and of **that about the reversal of the universe**, and that of the sophist about the essence of non-being.

ὦν τοίνυν χάριν ἅπανθ' ἡμῖν ταῦτ' ἐρρήθη περὶ τούτων, μνησθῶμεν [...] ταύτης τε οὐχ ἥκιστα αὐτῆς ἔνεκα τῆς δυσχερείας ἦν περὶ τὴν **μακρολογίαν** τὴν περὶ τὴν ὑφαντικὴν ἀπεδεξάμεθα δυσχερῶς, καὶ **τὴν περὶ τὴν τοῦ παντὸς ἀνείλιξιν** καὶ τὴν τοῦ σοφιστοῦ πέρι τῆς τοῦ μὴ ὄντος οὐσίας (286b4-10, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The Stranger then goes on to say what I have already introduced, i.e. that length must be judged based on its appropriateness to the subject. The fact that he includes his myth on the cosmic reversal is then surprising: long discourses do not include only strenuous divisions, but also a myth. Both kinds of discourse have the same emotional effect, i.e. a kind of nauseated 'revulsion' (*δυσχερείας*),⁶⁰ and both should be sustained by remembering the reason of their presence in the inquiry, i.e. right measure. Again, we see the Stranger insisting on the necessity to train the mind in evaluating correctly the right measure of discourses, even when they may trigger unpleasant emotional responses. This is surprising not only because a myth is put on the same level of dialectical *diairesis*, but also because this very myth was earlier judged as excessive, insofar as it represented a model *too great* for human statecraft. Is the myth a 'puzzling bulk' (277b4) of material which was not even brought to an end, or is it a *makrologia* whose length is nonetheless appropriate?

I argue that the antinomy can be resolved by understanding the different fields of inquiry: as long as the model of the herdsman, fully actualised through the myth, was used to represent statecraft, it was inadequate, excessive, lacking of measure; but when we consider philosophical inquiry *as such*, it is not. On a deeper level of analysis, then, the appropriateness of a lengthy discourse does not depend only on its necessity for a correct, detailed and toilsome dialectical process; it also depends on understanding its

⁶⁰ Lane (1998) and Schofield (1971) translate *duscherēia* as 'disagreeableness' or 'squeamishness', namely the sensation caused by something hard to stomach. I choose 'revulsion' better to highlight its visceral force as 'rejectionist impulse' directed against either toxic substances, reminders of mortality, or shameful behaviours (Lateiner 2017; Lateiner and Spatharas 2016). Cf. *Resp.* IV.439e-44a.

philosophical significance in the acquisition of truth, a significance which is not limited to *diairesis*. *Politically*, the myth represents an impossible condition where a god governs over humans and humans have no need of arts because they live in a toil-less world, where ultimately ‘there were no political constitutions’ (πολιτεῖαι τε οὐκ ἦσαν, 271e8); it is then radically inadequate to a political perspective. But *philosophically*, it is as appropriate a tool as *diairesis*, and indeed it is used to ‘show the error of the former exposition (δηλώσοιμεν τὸ τῆς ἔμπροσθεν ἀμάρτημα διεξόδου, 277b2-3); it can be accepted, then, for its philosophical contribution to the research. The evaluation of discourses in terms of right measure, thus, cannot be simply reduced to a matter of methodological correctness, but consists in the ability to judge them for their value *relative to* different problems and to consider them from different angles.

Ultimately, on the macroscopic level the central digression on measure divides the dialogue in two, not only composition-wise but also theoretically; it opposes a former, ‘excessive’ model to a more adequate one; it reframes the error committed in the first part as a lack of measure, i.e. not simply an error of definition, as if ‘herdsman’ were inherently contradictory to ‘statesman’, but a problem of adequacy, insofar as the requirements of the art of a herdsman are inadequate to the art of the statesman. The central stage constitutes a reflection on philosophical inquiry itself, which will reorient it through a new movement from what is ‘smaller’, easier to describe and understand, towards what is more complex. It is thus a moment of cognitive reorientation based on right measure as evaluative criterion, a necessary training of the mind in finding the correct way to judge and restructure given opinions.

1.3. Right measure in the Different Sections of the Dialogue

The centrality of *metrion* works not only on the macroscopic level, but also within each section of the dialogue. Different scholars have acknowledged different moments in which an explicit reflection on right measure emerges in the dialogue, in particular regarding *diairesis* and the contrast of true statecraft and laws;⁶¹ but it can be shown that this concept recurs in essential moments throughout the entire dialogue and constitutes the underlying philosophical concern of this work. I will explore here the five sections of the dialogue in detail, showing how each includes a moment of reflection that ultimately depends on *metrion*.

⁶¹ Sayre, 2006, pp.139-240; Lane, 1998, pp.146-155.

The first section consists mainly of divisions of arts in search for a definition of statecraft, with a final critique of the inadequacy of this first definition. We can summarise the various parts of the inquiry as follows:

- Initial definition of politics: the art of rearing living beings (258a7-262a4)
- Methodological reflection: the criteria for a correct *diairesis* (262a5-263e5)
- Final definition of politics: the art of rearing human communities (263e6-267c4)
- Critique of the research so far: inadequacy of the definition (267c5-268d1)

At 261e the statesman is said to be concerned with ‘herd-rearing’ (*agelaiotrophia*) or ‘collective-rearing’ (*koinotrophikē*), indifferently. When Young Socrates tries to distinguish the rearing (*trophē*) of humans from that of animals, the Stranger criticises this division as too hasty, because it took too small a part (*smikron morion*), discarding many large ones (*megala*):

‘It’s a most beautiful thing to separate off immediately what one is searching for from all the rest – as you thought you had the right division, just before, and hurried the argument on, seeing it leading to human beings; but in fact, my friend, it’s not safe to make thin cuts; it’s safer to go along **cutting through the middle of things**, and that way one will be more likely to encounter forms⁶²

κάλλιστον μὲν γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων εὐθὺς διαχωρίζειν τὸ ζητούμενον, ἂν ὀρθῶς ἔχη, καθάπερ ὀλίγον σὺ πρότερον οἰηθεὶς ἔχειν τὴν διαίρεσιν ἐπέσπευσας τὸν λόγον, ἰδὼν ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπους πορευόμενον: ἀλλὰ γάρ, ὦ φίλε, λεπτοῦργεῖν οὐκ ἀσφαλές, **διὰ μέσων** δὲ ἀσφαλέστερον ἵεναι **τέμνοντας**, καὶ μᾶλλον ιδέαις ἂν τις προστυγχάνοι (262b2-7, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

Thus the Stranger introduces a reflection on the *correct* method of *diairesis*. He does not provide a fully-fledged definition of it (‘it is impossible to show now what I mean with absolute completeness’, 262c4-5), but offers two examples: first, within the human species it is meaningless to distinguish Greeks and barbarians, while for instance it is possible to distinguish the masculine and feminine sex as possessing, naturally, diverse and mutually exclusive characteristics; second, within the set of natural numbers, it is

⁶² I translate *ideais* as ‘Forms’, with Sayre (2006), rather than ‘classes’, with Rowe (1995a). The issue of the doctrine of Forms and its variations throughout the corpus is a complex one, that cannot be examined here. But I hold that, with an author like Plato who pays constant attention to his terminology, it is safer to maintain a consistent translation of the term *idea*. Relations of similarity or difference between the various acceptations of the term can be explored much more clearly without imposing artificially different terminologies to different texts.

meaningless to distinguish (for instance), '10,000' from all the rest, because this division does not qualify either 10,000 or the remaining set of numbers; while dividing, for instance, even and odd numbers *does* qualify the two sets, as the members of the two sets all share common, mutually exclusive properties (divisibility by two, or not).⁶³

As Sayre remarks in his study of dialectical method in the *Statesman*, these divisions in two do not depend on quantitative considerations, since there is no reason to think that men and women are in the *exact* same number; or to divide the set of natural numbers into different, quantitatively equal groups that share no essential common feature.⁶⁴ They are rather *qualitative* in nature.⁶⁵ This qualitative division in two is what the Stranger refers to when he suggests that 'cutting through the middle of things' (διὰ μέσων [...] τέμνοντας, 262b6) is the safest way to reach 'Forms' (ιδέαις).⁶⁶ Therefore *diairesis*, a qualitative, non-mathematical understanding of 'the middle', can be interpreted as part of 'everything that removes itself from the extremes to the middle [τὸ μέσον]' (284e7), namely as an enactment of right measure. Sayre shows that the qualitative division operated by *diairesis* is consistent with the non-quantitative measure of practical arts: the distinction of male and female human beings, for instance, identifies classes of objects which can be defined *independently* from each other, while Greeks and barbarians have meaning *only in opposition* to each other (Greek is everything that is *not* barbarian, and vice-versa).⁶⁷ The difference is the same as that between the art of measuring that makes 'the more and the less [...] measurable [...] in relation to each other' and that which measures them 'in relation to the generation of what is in due measure' (284b9-c1). Thus, the methodological reflection at 262a5-263e5 is consistent with the central notion of *metrion*, and operates according to the same criteria: finding the 'middle' as a qualitative, non-mathematical point; and understanding terms not purely in a relation of opposition to each other, but independently and in relation to some other element (the middle, the measured) that qualifies them.

⁶³ Sayre 2006, pp.214-219.

⁶⁴ For instance [1-2; 5-6; ...] and [3-4; 7-8; ...].

⁶⁵ For instances of non-mathematical, quantitative divisions, and 'middle-points', see Sayre 2006, pp.230-232.

⁶⁶ For the metaphysical implications of this passage, see Sayre, 2006, pp.223-240. What kind of metaphysics is presupposed by this passage and to what extent Plato supported it needs not concern us here. My concern is purely methodological: the Stranger's reliance on qualitative right measure even for conceptual divisions (regardless of whether these lead to metaphysical entities or mere conceptual classes).

⁶⁷ Sayre, 2006, pp.219-222.

It is through this more accurate *diairesis* that the inquiry proceeds again, reorienting the successive divisions. While earlier the subject was the knowledge of the statesman, now the focus shifts to human nature (from a purely physical perspective); and the conclusion, perhaps with a hint of irony, defines human beings as either hornless mammals or featherless bipeds.⁶⁸ Indeed, this set of divisions is immediately criticised because, by assimilating the statesman to a herdsman and the subjects to a herd, it enters in conflict with many different arts that can be said to ‘rear’ humans.

The second section of the dialogue includes another decisive moment of reflection, which interrupts the mythical narration at a critical point:

- First section of the myth: the Age of Cronus (268d2-272b3)
- Ethical reflection: happiness in the Ages of Cronus and Zeus (272b3-d6)
- Final section of the myth: the Age of Zeus (272d6-274e4)
- Correction of the error: the initial definition was excessive (274e5-275b7)
- Redefinition of politics in light of the myth (275b8-277a3)

Firstly, the Stranger describes the universe as periodically moving backwards, originating a different age in which all living beings grow younger, the earth is bountiful, the climate mild and the gods watch over humans and animals. Such hypothetical human condition is pre-political, devoid both of conflicts and of possibilities for self-determination. ‘What you are hearing, Socrates, is the life of those who lived in the time of Cronus’ (272b3), remarks the Stranger to conclude the first part of his narration, and immediately invites Young Socrates (and the reader) to a reflection:

As for this one, which they say is in the time of Zeus, **the current one**, you experience it because you are present here. Would you be able and willing **to judge** which one of the two is happier?

τόνδε δ’ ὄν λόγος ἐπὶ Διὸς εἶναι, **τὸν νυνί**, παρὼν αὐτὸς ἥσθησαι: **κρίναι** δ’ αὐτοῖν τὸν εὐδαιμονέστερον ἄρ’ ἂν δύναίό τε καὶ ἐθελήσῃας; (272b3-4, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

This reflection is an act of critical judgment, *krisis*, between two alternatives. One of the alternatives, though, is not described: it is experienced by Young Socrates as his present

⁶⁸ A definition so provocative that it originated an ironical anecdote: Diogenes the Cynic was said to have plucked a chicken and declared: ‘Here is Plato’s man’ (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Πλάτωνος ἄνθρωπος). D.L. 6.2.40.

(*nun*) and it is to be judged in comparison to the mythical image. While Young Socrates admits he cannot answer, and the Stranger offers to judge (*diakrinō*) in his stead, the judgment remains quite ambiguous. ‘If the nurslings of Cronus used all these advantages to philosophise’, i.e. to dialogue with each other and *even with the animals* in order to discern the best kind of life, then ‘the judgment is easy [εὐκριτον]: those who lived then were far, far more happy than those who live now’ (272b8-c5). But if they did not philosophise, and rather spent their time eating and telling myths, ‘this too is very easily judged [καὶ μάλ’ εὐκριτον]’ (272d2), by which the Stranger implies that, in contrast to the happiness of a philosophical age of Cronus, a non-philosophical one would be inferior to our own despite all its eases. Overall, the conditional judgments of the Stranger depend on a critical factor which is left intentionally unexplored:

let us set aside these matters, until such time as someone appears to witness **adequately** whether or not the people of that time had desire for knowledge and the use of discourse.

ὁμως δ’ οὖν ταῦτα μὲν ἀφῶμεν, ἕως ἂν ἡμῖν μηνυτής τις **ἰκανὸς** φανῆ, ποτέρως οἱ τότε τὰς ἐπιθυμίας εἶχον περί τε ἐπιστημῶν καὶ τῆς τῶν λόγων χρείας (272d2-4, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The Stranger then abandons this moment of *krisis*, and narrates the origins of our *present* age. Now the universe governs itself, and we humans must imitate it and govern ourselves, deprived of the direct supervision of the gods but gifted with various arts that help us survive (272d6-274e4). The inquiry will proceed on this basis, eliminate the excess of conceiving the statesman as a superior being and redefine politics as a voluntary act of care (*epimeleia*) of voluntary subjects. But why does Plato have the Stranger raise a critical question, of fundamental importance, without concluding the judgment? Is it simply because the mythical form does not allow ‘rational’ reflection on its contents? This seems unlikely, since it is Plato himself who, through the Stranger, invites to reflect upon the myth. And who could be an adequate ‘witness’ (μηνυτής) of the mythical age of Cronus? The question does not receive an explicit answer, but we can see that the problem is once again one of an adequate account. The possibility to judge correctly is the same evoked in the central stage on *metrion*, when the Stranger argues for ‘judging [κρίνοντες] lengths not in relation to each other, but [...] in relation to what is appropriate [τὸ πρέπον]’ (286c8-d2). The problem of judging the two ages in relation to each other (which one is happier?), similarly, finds a partial answer *not* in their opposed features (easy life and divine governance against complex life and

autonomy), but in relation to philosophical dialogue itself. It is particularly significant that Plato has the Stranger refer to an external criterion of judgment about human happiness not as an absolute metaphysical norm, but rather as the *practice* of dialogue: the key to a good and happy life, to him, is the (uncertain) capability of mutual discussion⁶⁹ and of questioning the value of one's life—a skill that blissful creatures governed by a totalising authority might even not possess.

As we have seen, the entire third section, i.e. the central stage that separates the model of the herdsman from that of the weaver, is entirely dependent on the concept of right measure: a correct model must not be excessively 'large', and the dialectician needs to be aware of the distinction between the two ways of judging just recalled. The section is then concluded with the remark that, as weaving is a model to politics, so politics is a model to philosophy. The entire section can be outlined as follows:

- Explanation of the role of *paradeigmata*: adequate models from small to great (277a3-278e11)
- Analysis of the weaver's art: interlacing warp and woof (279a1-283b5)
- Theoretical reflection on excess and defect: the criterion of right measure (283b6-285c3)
- Function of the models: from weaving to politics, from politics to philosophy (285c4-287b3)

There is no need to linger again on this section, but to stress that, once again, the problem which opens the section (the adequacy of models) leads to a reflection on right measure and correct judgment, and only afterwards moves back on the problem of models, now conceived in function of philosophy ('for the sake of becoming more able dialecticians', 285d5-6). In addition, we may observe that bearing in mind the principle of *metrion* is, to the Stranger, an antidote 'against such a malady' (*nosēma*, 283b7) as that which leads to judge long discourses as digressions and feel 'revulsion' at their superfluity (*dusphereia*, 286b7). This judgment and this revulsion both stem from the ignorance of right measure, and are corrected by orienting the mind towards it as evaluative criterion.

The fourth section of the *Statesman* is a long process of separation of different arts, but it also presents an application of the concept of right measure in contrast with the rigidity of written laws:

⁶⁹ Cf. Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2.

- Research through separation: various arts necessary to a polis (287b4-290e9)
- Research through separation: various constitutions (291a1-293e5)
- Political reflection: the relation between political knowledge and laws (293e6-300c4)
- Reprise of separation: constitutions in relation to political knowledge (300c5-303d3)
- Final separation: four arts akin to politics (303d4-305e7)

Again, we find a moment of reflection triggered by a hesitation of Young Socrates. When the Stranger remarks that the true art of statecraft should be independent from laws (as well as from wealth and even consensus), the young contests:

The rest of it, Stranger, seems to have been said **in due measure**; but that ruling **must** be carried on even without laws, is too hard a notion to hear.

τὰ μὲν ἄλλα, ὧ̃ ξένε, **μετρίως** ἔοικεν εἰρησθαι: τὸ δὲ καὶ ἄνευ νόμων **δεῖν** ἄρχειν χαλεπώτερον ἀκούειν ἐρρήθη (293e6-7, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The Stranger welcomes Young Socrates's doubt, with these words:

You have preceded me just a little with your question, Socrates. For I was about to ask whether you accept all of this, or whether in fact **you feel revulsion** at any of the things we have said; but now it's clear that we will prefer to discuss the **correctness** of those who rule without laws.

μικρόν γε ἔφθης με ἐρόμενος, ὧ̃ Σώκρατες. ἔμελλον γάρ σε διερωτήσῃ ταῦτα πότερον ἀποδέχηι πάντα, ἢ τι καὶ **δυσχεραίνεις** τῶν λεχθέντων: νῦν δ' ἤδη φανερόν ὅτι τοῦτο βουλευσόμεθα τὸ περὶ τῆς τῶν ἄνευ νόμων ἀρχόντων **ὀρθότητος** διελεθεῖν ἡμᾶς (293e7-294a4, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

Notice that Young Socrates questions the correctness of the Stranger's claim in terms of *metrion* and *deon*; and the Stranger names his reaction one of revulsion (*duscheria*), the same 'malady' of those who cannot take long philosophical discourses because they fail to understand their correct measure. The Stranger's fundamental concern, again, is not just with formal methods, but with his interlocutor's cognitive ability to guide his own mind in the correct way, being aware of the psychological effects of discourses and orienting philosophical discussions accordingly. The Stranger then dismisses the potential contrast of the true statecraft with issues of wealth and popular consensus. As

Lane observed, he presses here ‘the rivalry between law and knowledge’ (1998, p.149) in terms of the precision of right measure; if law should not prevail, it is because:

law could never **accurately** embrace what is excellent and most just for all at the same time, and so prescribe what is best; for the **dissimilarities** between human beings and their actions, and the fact that, as the saying goes, nothing in human affairs ever is at peace, prevent any kind of art whatsoever from making any simple decision in any sphere **that covers all cases** and will last **for all time**.

νόμος οὐκ ἂν ποτε δύναίτο τό τε ἄριστον καὶ τὸ δικαιοτάτον **ἀκριβῶς** πᾶσιν ἅμα περιλαβὼν τὸ βέλτιστον ἐπιτάττειν: αἱ γὰρ **ἀνομοιότητες** τῶν τε ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν πράξεων καὶ τὸ μηδέποτε μηδὲν ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἡσυχίαν ἄγειν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων οὐδὲν ἐῷσιν ἀπλοῦν ἐν οὐδενὶ **περὶ ὅπαντων** καὶ **ἐπὶ πάντα τὸν χρόνον** ἀποφαίνεσθαι τέχνην οὐδ’ ἡντινοῦν (294a10-b6, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The Stranger is talking here about an absolutely stable kind of law, which requires constant obeisance to traditional dispensations, and denies any possible alteration.⁷⁰ A good political art, performed ‘with wisdom’ (μετὰ φρονήσεως, 294a8), should rather be able to accommodate two different conditions: the dissimilarities among human beings, and the change that their ‘affairs’ (πράξεων) undergo through time. Lane focuses on the latter temporal aspect, claiming that ‘it is these dissimilarities in action over time [...] which resist comprehensive and unchanging dispensations’ (p.150). But there is more: not only the change through time, but also the variety among individuals poses problems to any attempt at giving accurate dispositions: ‘it is impossible for what is always simple [τὸ διὰ παντὸς γιγνόμενον ἀπλοῦν] to be useful in relation to what is never simple [τὰ μηδέποτε ἀπλᾶ]’ (294c7-8).

The discussion here, clearly, tries to reach, through a negative movement, the positive characters of an effective political action:⁷¹ such an action, ideally, should be able to embrace *with complete accuracy* (akribeia) the shifting and various necessities of a multitude of human beings throughout time. The ideal knowledge of a good statesman should achieve this result, but law, insofar as it is simple, cannot. No law-

⁷⁰ This description of law stands in sharp contrast with documented Athenian practices (Lane, 1998, pp.150-152). It is not justified by the historical context, but rather by the premises of the reasoning: any action that alters the law is itself taken *independently* from the law, either with knowledge or in ignorance of what is best for human beings (300c8-e6).

⁷¹ Gill (1995) analyses this process in terms of ‘*defamiliarization* and *theorized reconstitution*’ (p.304).

giver could ever ‘be capable [ικανὸς] [...] of sitting beside each individual perpetually throughout their life and prescribing with accuracy [δι’ ἀκριβείας] what is appropriate to them [τὸ προσήκον]’ (295a9-b2). This passage describes a specific sort of *appropriateness* which, even if not described through the language of the central part of the dialogue, still depends on a knowledge and a capacity of action that adapts the precise simplicity of a stable norm to a more complex reality; so complex that, in fact, a single individual cannot be adequate (*ikanos*) to the task of giving *absolutely precise* norms to each subject. This is the political aspect of right measure, which emerges here only negatively, by contrast with the rigidity of laws. Lane calls this aspect *kairos*, as the ability to ‘discern correctly’ all the dissimilarities and changes of human actions over time (p.150); however, as we have seen, the preoccupation of the Stranger is not only with temporal changes, but also with the individual particularities or dissimilarities which, according to the myth, are constantly increasing through time, as the universe moves away from the Age of Cronus towards the ‘boundless sea of dissimilarity’ (273d6-e1). It is the knowledge of right measure that can manage not only the necessary changes in human activities, but also the multiplicity of human conditions, and adapts (or should adapt) accordingly. The contrast of political knowledge and laws, then, is not a radical opposition between an unrestrained freedom and the coercion of laws, but the problematic interplay of an independent action that aims at what is better (300c9-d2) and the unchanging, generic stability of fixed rules.

The last section of the dialogue abandons all considerations of laws and constitutions, and focuses on social virtues. Again, we find distinct moments of inquiry:

- Description of the true political art: opposition of aggressiveness and mildness (305e8-308b9)
- Conclusive reflection: the criterion of political art (308b10-308e3)
- Description of the true political art: conjunction of courage and moderation (308e4-311c8)

Firstly the Stranger contrasts courage and animosity with moderation and mildness, arguing that their inherent rivalry can be harmful for a state; and then he suggests that the statesman’s action should aim at producing a harmony of those two virtues. The two moments are again separated by a methodological reflection, in which the Stranger again compares statecraft to productive arts:

Then let's take the following point in turn [...] Whether somewhere any of the kinds of knowledge that involve composition, voluntarily puts together any of the thing it produces, even the least important, out of bad and good things, or whether every kind of knowledge everywhere throws away the bad so far as it can, and takes what is suitable and good, and from these, **both similar and dissimilar**, bringing them all together into one, crafts a single form with a single capacity.

τόδε τοίνυν αὖ λάβωμεν [...] εἴ τις που τῶν συνθετικῶν ἐπιστημῶν πράγμα ὅτιοῦν τῶν αὐτῆς ἔργων, κἂν εἰ τὸ φαυλότατον, ἐκοῦσα ἐκ μοχθηρῶν καὶ χρηστῶν τιῶν συνίστησιν, ἢ πᾶσα ἐπιστήμη πανταχοῦ τὰ μὲν μοχθηρὰ εἰς δύναμιν ἀποβάλλει, τὰ δὲ ἐπιτήδεια καὶ τὰ χρηστὰ ἔλαβεν, ἐκ τούτων δὲ **καὶ ὁμοίων καὶ ἀνομοίων** ὄντων, πάντα εἰς ἓν αὐτὰ συνάγουσα, μίαν τινὰ δύναμιν καὶ ἰδέαν δημιουργεῖ (308b10-c7, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

This art that rejects what is bad and unifies what is good is then specifically assimilated to weaving (308d6), and the central model finally operates directly in the definition. The model of weaving provides a criterion for political action, determining what kind of activity it should perform and what aim it should pursue. The Stranger thus argues (308d6-309a3) that correct political action should first entrust the citizens to educators who can test and develop their virtues, based on their own inner disposition (while excluding, even violently, from political participation anyone who inherently tends to unrestrained behaviours and opinions). The final aim is to 'bind together and intertwine' natures 'with opposite tendencies' towards animosity or mildness (309b6), in accordance with the image of the weaver introduced in the central part of the dialogue. The presence of right measure here is evident, and its object of action is clearly defined: not laws or constitutions, but the harmonisation of virtues and dispositions determine, above all, a good society.

Examining in detail the different sections of the dialogue, we can see not only that they are successive methodological moments, but also that they are structured in a consistent way, parallel to the macroscopic structure. In each of them, indeed, we can find 'units of meaning' structured around a central moment of reflection on right measure (in its *different* acceptations). The initial *diairesis* is divided in two by a reflection on how to 'cut through the middle' the objects of inquiry, and this moment marks a shift from a *diairesis* of statecraft *per se* to one of human nature. The myth opposes the age of Cronus, when the universe moved backwards and the gods were in

charge of every reality, to the so-called age of Zeus, when all realities are autonomous; and again, the two narrations are separated by a critical reflection that calls for a way to judge between two alternatives. The central section moves from the theory of models, in search for an adequate one, to a general theory of right measure itself, which grounds the acceptance (and endurance) of long philosophical discourses. The fourth section, consistently, interrupts the separation of arts and constitutions with a reflection on the relation between laws and the knowledge of *metrion* (here conceived as accuracy and appropriateness through time and dissimilarities). Finally, the last section opposes a moment of inquiry where courage and moderation are said to be inherently conflictive, to a moment where political art is defined as the harmonious interlacing of those opposite realities; and it is the model of weaving, recalled in the central reflection, that serves as a criterion for this action. There seems to be a recurrent pattern of ‘units of meaning’ throughout the dialogue, which can be generalised as:

Alternative A	Critical Reflection	Alternative B
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This pattern is stunningly consistent with the more generic opposition of the models of the herdsman and the weaver, as well as with the general Eleatic Stranger’s dialectical practice. Such a precise articulation of arguments cannot be considered a simple chance, but must in my view be attributed to Plato’s writing technique; albeit certainly this articulation is not rigid, as it includes other elements that do not depend directly on the ‘critical reflection’,⁷² it can be considered a compositional application of the very concept of right measure. I therefore agree with Brumbaugh’s claim that this dialogue is itself a model of right measure in action; I also add that it is not such only for its progression from incorrect to correct methods, but also for its structural coherence. This structural coherence serves to portray the characters’ (evolving) capability to evaluate philosophical discourses at pivotal moments of *krisis*, and thus stresses the foundational importance of right measure as criterion for a correct cognitive orientation. The structure of the *Statesman* perfectly exemplifies a doctrine that Plato never fully exhibited, but whose significance is evident throughout its many different applications – one of which is this dialogue itself.

⁷² Such as the critique that follow the first *diairesis* (267c5-268d1) or the corrections entailed by the myth (274e5-277a3).

Conclusion

Looking at this dialogue's structure provides insight into Plato's compositional technique and its underlying philosophical principle. While we can agree with Diés's articulation of three dialogical stages, it is also evident that the dialogue has many smaller sections which pose problems to a universally acknowledgeable structure. These problems can be solved if we observe that the dialogue is divided on the macroscopic level in three stages and on a more detailed scale in five methodological sections. This articulation is not merely a hermeneutic tool, but it reflects two philosophical preoccupations: first, the distinction of different methods of inquiry; second, and more important, the enactment of the principle of right measure.

This principle acts on both levels: on the surface, the shift from the model of the herdsman to that of the weaver is explained as a movement from excessive greatness to adequate smallness; more deeply, the centrality of *metrion* constantly divides 'units of meaning' in two alternative moments of inquiry. Sometimes we can also see that the reflections on *metrion* re-orientate the following inquiry: beyond the evident shift of models, also the first *diairesis* shifts its object from political art to human nature, and the final definition from the contrast to the unification of virtues. As I observed, these shifts, far from being pure disruptions (or worse, interrupted by disruptions), are actually organised around a common criterion. The matter is more complex for the sections of myth and separation, and it would require a more detailed account that was impossible to complete here; the task of determining whether and how a shift occurs is open to future research, but at present we can observe the presence of a consistent division through a moment of critical reflection. Overall, the coherence of the structure is also a coherence of philosophical criteria: the *Statesman* is organised according to the principles it exposes. This dialogue artfully represents the difficulties faced by inquiring minds, the necessity for critical disruptions, and the need to refer to right measure whenever correct cognitive orientation becomes problematic. Structure and content are thus unified through the underlying principle of right measure. It does not seem unlikely (and is rather a mark of philosophical consistency) that Plato has composed the *Statesman* just like the Divine Artificer of the *Timaeus* composed the cosmos, holding that 'the most beautiful of bonds is that which most perfectly makes one out of itself and what is bound' (31c2-3).⁷³

⁷³ Plato's concern with right measure and with 'the middle' are interwoven in the *Timaeus* as well. Here, the Artificer binds the material elements in mathematical proportion, because 'it is not possible that two things

Chapter 2 – Cognitive Imagery in the *Statesman*: Measured Combination of Images

Every combination (*sunkrasis*), of any kind, which does not happen to attain its measure (*metrou*) and its proportionate (*summetrou*) nature destroys by necessity its components and itself in the first place; for in this case there would be no mixture (*krasis*) at all but a disconnected (*akratos*) jumble, on each occasion the ruin of what it contains (*Phil.* 64d9-14).

Introduction

In this chapter, I will study the cognitive role of images and models in the *Statesman*. This dialogue presents the most explicit theorisation, in Plato's corpus, of the value of imagery in contributing to knowledge and the acquisition of truth. At 277c7-d7, indeed, the character of the Stranger introduces them as an extremely useful, albeit not always necessary, part of 'the experience about knowledge within ourselves' (τὸ περὶ τῆς ἐπιστήμης πάθος ἐν ἡμῖν, 277d7) and explains how they positively contribute to it. While Plato certainly does not credit imagery with any *demonstrative* power,⁷⁴ the fact that he presents it as a positive cognitive instrument has drawn increasing scholarly attention. The *Statesman* is indeed paradigmatic of Plato's appreciation of imagery as a cognitive tool, and arguably fundamental for understanding how he uses it in different dialogues.⁷⁵ All scholars that have examined this topic in detail conceive models as instruments to highlight similarities between two different objects of knowledge. This interpretation, however, ultimately reduces imagery to an illustrative or didactic tool, or at best an instrument of revision of ideas but incapable of offering novel insights into a radically unknown object.

The aim of this chapter is to show that this interpretation is too limited, and to offer a more complete and textually sound account of the cognitive role of models as threefold process: variation, recognition, and combination of different images of the same complex object of inquiry. It will show that this process serves to achieve a cognitive 'right measure' between complete knowledge and radical ignorance of the object of inquiry *as a whole*. The Stranger's account of knowledge and ignorance, as I

alone should be conjoined without a third; for there must needs be *a bond in the middle* to bring both together [δεσμὸν γὰρ ἐν μέσῳ δεῖ τινα ἀμφοῖν συναγωγὸν γίνεσθαι] (31c1). Proportion unifies all terms in the middle: a:b=b:c; thereby b:c=a:b. Extremes can become middle points, and vice-versa: 'the middle term [τὸ μέσον] becomes in turn the first and the last, while the first and last become in turn middle terms [μέσα], and by necessity it follows that all terms are the same, and having become the same to each other, all are one [ἐν πάντα ἔσται]' (32a3-7).

⁷⁴ Pender, 2000, p.58; Goldschmidt, 1947 (ed. 2003), pp.53-58. Cf. Lane, 1998, pp.38-39.

⁷⁵ Lane, 1998, pp.18-20.

will show, is inherently related to a concern not just with single elements of knowledge (e.g. particular opinions or sensual impressions), but with the whole object of knowledge, conceived as a holistic plexus of different elements, which dialectic seeks not only to clarify independently but also to articulate correctly. As Migliori (1996) has remarked: ‘The dialectic under consideration [in the *Statesman*] must not be conceived as a technical ability, but as the philosophical activity itself, attentive not to single aspects detached from their context, but to the whole. This “whole”, dialectically grasped, does not exclude its parts, but gives them value, because only within this frame the parts are what they are: parts of a whole’ (p.195, tr. mine). Plato indeed often extends his attention to the harmony of ‘whole’, composite realities, whereby different elements constitute a cohesive (non-contradictory and proportionate) plexus.⁷⁶ In particular, in the *Philebus* (64d9-14) the character of Socrates argues that every artful combination (σύγκρασις) needs to attain measure (μέτρου) and a proportionate (συμμέτρου) nature, if it is to survive and preserve the very existence of its parts. In absence of measure and internal harmony, he claims, we do not have a mixture (κρᾶσις) of parts, but a disconnected or unmixed (ἄκρατος) heap of unrelated elements.⁷⁷ As I will show, the same idea applies to the *Statesman*. This notion is not only epistemological, but aesthetical and ethical; it applies not only to the diairetical and more strictly logical aspects of dialectic, but to images themselves and to their effect on the human mind. My study will thus show that Plato, in the *Statesman*, has presented imagery as cognitively productive, insofar as it produces not only a recognition of similarities but also a measured (and *elegant*)⁷⁸ combination of different points of view on the same subject, which effectively expands knowledge.

2.1. Cognitive Models: The Canonical Interpretation and Its Limit

As I have shown in my General Introduction (0.3 and 0.4.3.), the three major studies of images and models in the *Statesman* tend to reduce their cognitive role to an illustration

⁷⁶ Mereology, the study of the relations between parts and wholes as epistemological and ontological objects, is fundamental for a correct understanding of Plato’s theoretical and ethical philosophy. For the theoretical implications of mereology (reality as a composite structure), cf. Harte (2002); for its ethical and psychological meaning (the self as a plexus of faculties and relations with others), cf. Napolitano Valditara (2010).

⁷⁷ I cannot tackle here the problem of the strict relation between the *Statesman* and the *Philebus*. Their main common concerns are epistemology (collection as measured unity of multiple elements; Sayre 2006, pp.48-51) and ethics/politics (good direction of life as production of intersubjective harmony, Bontempi 2009, pp.160-170).

⁷⁸ Accordingly, Hobbs (2000) observes that, in the *Republic* (486d), Socrates grounds the cognitive acquisition of truth on the inquiring subjects’ possession of ‘proportion and grace’ in their minds (p.227). The same idea recurs at *Soph.* 227e-228d.

of objective similarities between a familiar object and a more obscure object of inquiry, and this interpretation has not been challenged so far. Therefore, I shall refer to the following studies as the ‘canonical interpretation’ of the cognitive role of models in the *Statesman*. Goldschmidt (1947, ed.2003) considers models a didactic exercise in the ‘discovery of resemblances’ (p.22, tr. mine) between a minor (simpler) and a major (more complex) object of inquiry. To him, their cognitive value consists in the fact that they train the mind in seeking for the objective self-identical essences that underpin different realities, namely the metaphysical Forms (pp.22-29 and 72-86). Similarly, Lane (1998) argues that models serve to allow ‘a process of active comparison’ (p.66) between simple and complex object of inquiry. To her, their cognitive role is ‘to fix certain similarities as salient’ for the inquiry, and allow their further exploration, distinction, and refinement through conceptual divisions (p.76). In the same vein, Pender (2000) presents models as an essential part of the dialectical process of collection and division, ‘the art of recognising likenesses and differences’ that underpins the whole dialogue (p.47). Models are tools that illustrate clearly an objective similarity between two objects, in order to ‘impose a structure on a concept’ that would be otherwise obscure (p.56). To Pender, therefore, they are ‘extremely useful cognitive tools’ (p.59) insofar as they elucidate and restructure complex concepts, but they cannot provide direct access to knowledge or even open novel perspectives. As Pender summarises:

Plato’s assessment of the power of models [in the *Statesman*] is cautious and conservative, claiming only that models help to provide understanding through the recognition of common elements. Plato makes no claims that models can offer insight into objects that are radically unknown (p.47).

Pender’s claim teases out the limit of the canonical interpretation: not only models are not instrument of demonstration of the truth, but their cognitive power is also limited to illustration, clarification, and revision of existing opinions. In the canonical interpretation models not only do not guarantee the objective truth of the similarities they highlight (and Plato never claims that they do),⁷⁹ but they also fail to open novel perspectives upon objects on which one is radically ignorant.

⁷⁹ Pender, 2000, p.57: ‘It is notable that in the discussion of the nature and function of models in the *Politicus* there is no discussion of their truth status’. Pender observes that, rather, the *Statesman* refers to opinion, judgment, discovery, as well as ‘showing’ and ‘revealing’, all terms that do not entail proof. Lane (1998) also observes that Plato, in other dialogues and particularly in the *Protagoras*, raises ‘perplexities about similarity’ and addresses the limits of analogical reasoning: similarities do not

While this canonical reading is logically consistent, my research has revealed that its textual focus is too limited, because the cognitive role of models in the *Statesman* is broader than currently granted. This interpretation, in fact, is grounded solely on the Stranger's account of models as comparative tools, exemplified by the activity of students that learn how to read correctly complex, unfamiliar syllables by comparing them to simpler, familiar ones (277c7-278e10).⁸⁰ But the Stranger's account is in fact more articulate, as it exemplifies the usage of models through three different comparisons: (1) the completion of a work of visual art; (2) the confusing experience of awakening; (3) the juxtaposition of simple and complex syllables. I will show that these examples serve to propose a more complex theory of cognitive imagery than usually accepted, insofar as they outline a threefold process of (1) composition, (2) variation, and (3) recognition of *different* facets of an object of inquiry (in our context, statecraft). Thus, I will show that the canonical focus on *similarities* alone does not exhaust the whole range of cognitive effects that Plato attributes to imagery, because he also grants a cognitive role to the interaction of *differences* among various images, which can grant (if correctly managed) novel insights. Thus, I will not seek to reject the canonical interpretation of models, but to expand it towards an evaluation of perspectival difference as cognitively valuable.

The idea that imagery allows to restructure existing ideas and open new perspectives is in fact common in modern studies of rhetorical figures, and constitutes what Pender (2000) has named the 'epistemic thesis' regarding models and metaphors.⁸¹ For instance, Eva Kittay's perspectival theory (1987) attributes this epistemic force to metaphor, *qua* conflation of *different* linguistic and conceptual domains:

To call our theory perspectival is to name it for the function metaphor serves: to provide a perspective from which to gain an understanding of that which is metaphorically portrayed. This is a distinctively cognitive role [...] the speaker makes use of one linguistically articulated domain to gain an understanding of another experiential or conceptual domain and similarly, it is the means by which a hearer grasps such an understanding (p.14).⁸²

constitute proofs, and arguments by analogy can be rejected simply by positing a different analogy (pp.76-83).

⁸⁰ Pender, 2000, p.48; Lane, 1998, p.61; Goldschmidt, 1947 (ed. 2003), pp.10-13.

⁸¹ See Pender, 2000, pp.18-23

⁸² Also quoted in Pender, 2000, p.20. However, she does not identify any coherence between Kittay's perspectival theory and the theory of models in the *Statesman*.

To Kittay, metaphors are cognitive tools not only because they transpose a structure from one field of experience to another, e.g., in Plato, by assimilating intellectual knowledge to sight or education to midwifery (pp.275-287). Rather, she argues, the very *difference* between the two assimilated fields forces a *re*-structuring of familiar ideas, a ‘reconceptualisation’ or ‘perspectival shift’ that produces new meanings (p.301). Notice that this cognitive gain does not consist in the objective discovery of a completely new object, but more moderately in presenting *new aspects* of what is already, to some extent, known or familiar to a reader or interlocutor.⁸³

Pender (2000) observes that Plato relies on this cognitive power of images at least when speaking about the gods in different ways and using the metaphors of craftsmen, fathers, governors, owners, and helmsmen (pp.100-114):

By interweaving his different metaphors Plato is able to achieve cognitive and rhetorical effects which he could not achieve by each metaphor alone [...] Once he has established a multiplicity of images for the gods, Plato can move freely between them, using one particular metaphor to achieve a certain effect and then switching easily to another to make a further point in his argument (pp.118-119).⁸⁴

The focus here rests on the irreducible multiplicity of images, each of which represents (albeit obviously not demonstrating it) a different aspect of the same object of discussion. Pender embraces a perspectival interpretation, observing that the employment of different metaphors, which are *incompatible* if taken literally, allows Plato the rhetorical and philosophical freedom to explore different facets of the same subject, to ‘flesh out and to enlarge upon’ his theological beliefs (p.148). According to Kittay and Pender, the role of images is not to demonstrate the validity of a specific opinion (such as the existence of benevolent gods, the possibility of objective metaphysical knowledge, or the maieutic nature of education), but to expand ideas and create broader semantic fields.

While neither Kittay nor Pender argue that Plato ever proposed an *explicit* perspectival theory, I hold that his account of images and models in the *Statesman* is coherent with a perspectival understanding of imagery. This dialogue certainly does not address metaphor as such, and conflates similes, analogies, and metaphors under

⁸³ Kittay, 1987, p.313; Pender, 2000, p.21.

⁸⁴ Interactionist interpretations are offered also by Lloyd, 1966 and de Marignac, 1951.

various terms, such as ‘model’ (παράδειγμα) and ‘image’ (εικόν), but it nonetheless presents imagery as a tool that restructures given ideas in *different* ways, in order to show the same subject from a variety of new angles.

2.2. *A Theory of Models: Composition, Variation and Recognition*

As I have anticipated, the canonical interpretation makes Plato’s account of models coincide with the example of children learning how to read by comparing syllables, starting at 277c. However, in the dialogue scene, the Stranger introduces the theory of models some lines earlier (277a), through a different example: the attempted completion of a sculpture and of a painting, through the adequate combination of materials and colours. As I have shown in Chapter 1, this happens because Plato writes in a fragmented, discontinuous way and trails discussions before articulating them more formally. His account of models cannot be fully reconstructed without disentangling it precisely from its dialogical context.

Therefore, a brief recapitulation of the dialogue is necessary to understand the meaning of that example. The characters initially tackle the problem of defining the knowledge of the statesman through conceptual divisions (258a7-277a2). From the very beginning, the characters agree to ‘search for the political man’ (πολιτικὸν τὸν ἄνδρα διαζητεῖν, 258b4) among ‘those who possess knowledge’ (τῶν ἐπιστημόνων, 258b4) about their specific activity, and never question this hypothetical assumption throughout the whole inquiry.⁸⁵ Having defined statecraft as the art of herding human communities (267a7-c3), they face the difficulty of identifying precisely *what kind* of art it is, since in the city different experts tend to human nourishment and education (267c5-268d4). As a consequence, the Stranger changes method of inquiry: he narrates and interprets the myth of a golden age, in which both statecraft and all other arts did not exist, because gods took charge of all living beings as their herdsmen and nature was so bountiful that no human expertise was needed (268d5-277a2). This myth serves to show that the initial definition was misleading in two respects: (a) it credited too much power and knowledge to the statesman and made him identical to a god; and (b) it failed to

⁸⁵ As Gill (1995) observes, this assumption is maintained at *Pol.* 293d8-e2, 296e3-4, 297a6-b3; cf. also 311b-c (p.293, n.7). The idea that *there is* such a thing as a political science capable to determine the objective good of a community (like a doctor would determine the health of a body) is contentious and heavy with presuppositions. Plato takes it for granted in the *Statesman*, but he problematizes it, for instance, at *Meno* (95a-100c).

pinpoint the exact mode of his rule (274e5-275a).⁸⁶ One point must be stressed here: this correction does not mean that the initial definition was objectively wrong, as the characters do maintain that statecraft is a form of collective rule throughout the whole dialogue. Rather, it means that it was in one respect excessive, and in another respect defective, because it construed statecraft as too encompassing a control over human groups, while also failing to be precise about its activities. Finally, the Stranger revises the initial definition of statecraft, naming it, more generically, as the art of voluntarily taking charge (ἐπιμέλειαν, 276d1) of groups of human beings with their consent, and Young Socrates holds the inquiry to be concluded (275c9-277a2).

It is at this point that the Stranger introduces his theory of models. He contradicts Young Socrates and claims that the political inquiry is yet incomplete, because it has furnished an inadequate image of statecraft:

And now, according to my view, the king does not yet seem to have a complete figure for us, but just as sculptors sometimes hurry at the wrong moment and actually slow down by making additions and increasing the size of the various elements of the work beyond what is appropriate, so too in our case now, I suppose in order to show quickly and magnificently the mistake in the route we previously took, we thought it was fitting to the king to give great models, and took upon ourselves a puzzling bulk of material in the figure of our myth, so forcing ourselves to use a greater part than necessary. Thus we have made our demonstration longer, and have in every way failed to bring our myth to an end; and our account, simply like the portrait of an animal, seems adequate in terms of its superficial outline, but not yet to have received its proper clarity, as it were with paints and the mixture of colours.

νῦν δὲ κατὰ γε τὴν ἐμὴν οὐπω φαίνεται τέλος ὁ βασιλεὺς ἡμῶν σχῆμα ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ καθάπερ ἀνδριαντοποιοὶ παρὰ καιρὸν ἐνίοτε σπεύδοντες πλείω καὶ μείζω τοῦ δέοντος ἕκαστα τῶν ἔργων ἐπεμβαλλόμενοι βραδύνουσι, καὶ νῦν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα δὴ πρὸς τῷ ταχὺ καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶς δηλώσαιμεν τὸ τῆς ἔμπροσθεν ἀμάρτημα διεξόδου, τῷ βασιλεῖ νομίσαντες πρέπειν μεγάλα παραδείγματα ποιεῖσθαι, θαυμαστὸν ὄγκον ἀράμενοι τοῦ μύθου, μείζονι τοῦ δέοντος ἠναγκάσθημεν αὐτοῦ μέρει προσχρησασθαι· διὸ μακροτέραν τὴν ἀπόδειξιν πεποιήκαμεν καὶ πάντως τῷ μύθῳ τέλος οὐκ ἐπέθεμεν, ἀλλ' ἀτεχνῶς ὁ λόγος ἡμῶν ὥσπερ ζῶον

⁸⁶ Cf. Kahn, 2009, p.149.

τὴν ἔξωθεν μὲν περιγραφὴν ἔοικεν ἰκανῶς ἔχειν, τὴν δὲ οἶον τοῖς φαρμάκοις καὶ τῇ συγκράσει τῶν χρωμάτων ἐνάργειαν οὐκ ἀπειληφέναι πῶ' (277a4-c3, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

This passage has often been interpreted as a comment on the myth alone,⁸⁷ but it is actually a comment on the whole ‘previous course’ (τῆς ἔμπροσθεν [...] διεξόδου) of inquiry, the error (ἀμάρτημα) just committed, and the final objective of the dialogue, the demonstration (ἀπόδειξις) of the nature of statecraft. It does not refer to conceptual divisions and definitions, but it presents the former error as a mistake in presenting great and inadequate ‘models’ (παραδείγματα), and the purpose of the inquiry as the construction of a ‘figure’ (σχῆμα) of the statesman. This passage thus serves to introduce an extensive methodological reflection on this *whole* philosophical inquiry and to reframe it in terms of images. The Stranger makes three claims about the whole inquiry so far: (a) it is not complete; (b) it has included excessive claims about statecraft, which have diverted, at length, the inquiry from its original path; and (c) it has not detailed sufficiently the pertinent elements of statecraft. Thus, the Stranger’s judgment is not just a condemnation of an objective error (statecraft has been misrepresented), but also an evaluation of the relevance or irrelevance of the theoretical efforts undergone so far by himself and Young Socrates. His judgment refers to the very specific context of this inquiry, and does not constitute a claim about knowledge or dialectic in general. His purpose is to refine the methods of inquiry in order to avoid repeating the previous errors and to achieve sufficient ‘clarity’ (ἐνάργειαν). Crucially, his concern with models as a method of inquiry begins when this inquiry is at an *impasse*: imagery constitutes a response to cognitive disorientation and a necessary supplement to mere conceptual divisions.

We find here important methodological remarks about the function of models, which foreground the following discussion. The aspects of models on which this passage insists are two: (a) their excess and deficiency;⁸⁸ (b) the variety of their elements. On the one hand, the Stranger reflects on the ‘measure’ and the ‘opportunity’ of images: the characters have added a large number of details ‘at the wrong moment’ (παρὰ καιρὸν) and ‘beyond what is appropriate’ (μείζω τοῦ δέοντος; μείζονι τοῦ δέοντος); they have represented statecraft ‘magnificently’ (μεγαλοπρεπῶς), because

⁸⁷ Morgan, 2000, pp.255-261; Lane, 1998, pp.125-132; Rowe, 1995a, p.200 (comment to 277b1).

⁸⁸ Morgan (2000) emphasises the twofold nature of this example: ‘The analogy with the statue-makers implies that the myth was, in some sections, too elaborate. The analogy with the painters suggests that their discussion has been too sketchy’ (p.256).

they thought ‘it was fitting to produce great models’ (πρέπειν μεγάλα παραδείγματα ποιῆσθαι) for the king; and finally they furnished an outline of statecraft that is only *superficially* ‘sufficient’ (ικανῶς), but not a complete figure (τέλεον [...] σχῆμα). On the other hand, the Stranger illustrates the necessity to deal correctly with the *variety* of elements that contribute to the inquiry: the ‘various elements of the work’ (ἕκαστα τῶν ἔργων) need to be carefully selected, its ‘parts’ (μέρει) evaluated, and ultimately composed as accurately as possible, ‘as it were with paints and the mixture of colours’ (τοῖς φαρμάκοις καὶ τῇ συγκράσει τῶν χρωμάτων). This passage, thus, furnishes the first methodological criterion for evaluating images and models: aiming at a measured *combination of elements* by eschewing excess (irrelevance, over-elaboration) and deficiency (superficiality, lack of clarity). Again, we find *not* a comment on objective knowledge of reality or universal features of language, but rather on contextual usages and cognitive effects of images. Instead of a definition of knowledge, that is, we find a concrete description of the *opportune* ways to avoid errors and confusions. I therefore take the Stranger’s comments about error in a very moderate, contextual, and non-prescriptive sense. To him, erroneous and lacking measure is what the interlocutors determine as irrelevant or superficial *through former inquiries*, not what fails to meet objective standards such as reference to criteria of truth formally defined once and for all. Moreover, we can see that the Stranger’s first and foremost methodological observation is about diversity and variety within a single ‘figure’, not immediately (as in the canonical interpretation) on objective similarities or factual truth. The Stranger’s example of sculpture and painting allows him to avoid the thorny problem of defining truth, and to present instead a criterion of ‘right measure’ to judge the validity of an image.

The Stranger’s second methodological remark focuses, similarly, on variation. When Young Socrates asks him to clarify in what sense the account was incomplete, he introduces the example of awakening:

It’s a hard thing, my fine friend, to sufficiently indicate any of the greater subjects without using models. There’s the risk that each of us, knowing everything as in a dream, then again is ignorant of everything like in waking vision.

χαλεπόν, ὦ δαιμόνιε, μὴ παραδείγμασι χρώμενον ἱκανῶς ἐνδείκνυσθαί τι τῶν μειζόνων. κινδυνεύει γὰρ ἡμῶν ἕκαστος οἷον ὄναρ εἰδὼς ἅπαντα πάντ’ αὖ πάλιν ὥσπερ ὕπαρ ἀγνοεῖν’ (277d1-4, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The first line of this passage is clear: models are instrumental methods of inquiry that can ‘sufficiently indicate’ (ικανῶς ἐνδείκνυσθαι)⁸⁹ complex subjects, not demonstrative instruments. The second line, instead, has triggered frequent confusion, because the example of awakening is usually interpreted as describing the attainment of clarity or as a progress from true opinions to knowledge.⁹⁰ But the text is clearly referring to a negative experience: the immediate result of awakening from the apparent knowledge of dreams is to ‘be ignorant of everything’ (πάντ’ [...] ἀγνοεῖν). By contrast with Pender’s reading (2000), the Stranger does in fact present models as adequate responses to a state of radical ignorance (p.47). Pender only grants that the Stranger’s ‘move from the statement about models to that of our general poor state of knowledge suggests that models can form part of our [i.e. generically human]⁹¹ attempts to gain knowledge’ (p.51). However, the Stranger refers explicitly to complete ignorance, not to a generic poor state of human knowledge. The complexity of this passage is the root of Pender’s misunderstanding: when the Stranger speaks of ‘being ignorant’, here, he does not mean ‘knowing absolutely nothing’ about an object; rather he refers to the articulation of its ‘totality’ (πάντ’). Yet this remark remains mostly obscure, and only the Stranger’s third and last methodological example fully clarifies it.

This last example describes a comparative process between simple and complex objects, directed at illustrating their similar elements and making them clearly recognisable. To describe this cognitive experience, the Stranger relies on the example of pupils who train in reading. Pupils, he posits, understand adequately the letters of shorter and simpler syllables, but commit errors when trying to read and write correctly more complex ones (277e2-8). His concern, once again, is not how to define knowledge, but the ‘easiest and most beautiful way of leading them on to the things they are not yet recognizing’ (ῥᾶστον καὶ κάλλιστον ἐπάγειν αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τὰ μήπω γινωσκόμενα, 278a5-6):

To lead them first back to those cases in which they held correct opinions, and having led them back, to put these cases beside the ones that have not been recognised, and by comparing them demonstrate that there is the same kind of

⁸⁹ I translate ‘ἐνδείκνυσθαι’ as ‘indicate’ to mark its difference from the complete ‘demonstration’ (ἀπόδειξις) posited as the purpose of inquiry at 269c2 and 277a4-c3.

⁹⁰ E.g. White, 2007, p.65; Sayre, 2006, pp.85-86; Pender, 2000, p.51 and n.115; Kato, 1995, pp.156-167.

⁹¹ It seems more accurate to interpret the phrase ‘each of us’ (ἡμῶν ἕκαστος) as referring exclusively to Young Socrates’s and the Stranger’s attempt to gain knowledge. The validity of the Stranger’s observation remains nonetheless paradigmatic of other comparable cognitive experiences, and thus Pender’s generalisation remains valid as long as it is not taken as a universal theory of discursive images.

thing with similar features in both combinations, until the things on which they have true opinions have been shown set beside all the ones that they don't know, and once they have been shown like this, and so become models, they bring it about that each of all the letters is called always in the same way as itself, in all the syllables, on the one hand the different as it is different from the others, on the other the identical as it is identical.

ἀνάγειν πρῶτον ἐπ' ἐκεῖνα ἐν οἷς ταῦτα ταῦτα ὀρθῶς ἐδόξαζον, ἀναγαγόντας δὲ τιθέναι παρὰ τὰ μήπω γινωσκόμενα, καὶ παραβάλλοντας ἐνδεικνύουσι τὴν αὐτὴν ὁμοιότητα καὶ φύσιν ἐν ἀμφοτέροις οὕσαν ταῖς συμπλοκαῖς, μέχρι περ ἂν πᾶσι τοῖς ἀγνοουμένοις τὰ δοξαζόμενα ἀληθῶς παρατιθέμενα δειχθῆ, δειχθέντα δέ, παραδείγματα οὕτω γινόμενα, ποιήσῃ τῶν στοιχείων ἕκαστον πάντων ἐν πάσαις ταῖς συλλαβαῖς τὸ μὲν ἕτερον ὡς τῶν ἄλλων ἕτερον ὄν, τὸ δὲ ταῦτόν ὡς ταῦτόν ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτα ἑαυτῷ προσαγορεύεσθαι (278a8-c1, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

It is evident that this passage does not address cognition in general, but specifically *recognition*. The Stranger describes here a very specific moment of the cognitive experience: the ability to discern clearly the objective 'similarities' (ὁμοιότητα) between two different objects of learning, one of which is already known. This ability requires learners, whenever confusions emerge, to return to cases in which they 'held correct opinions' (ὀρθῶς ἐδόξαζον) and try to clarify more complex subjects by identifying their similar elements. As the canonical interpretation correctly shows, his concern here is indeed the possibility to overcome confusion by 'juxtaposing' (παρατιθέμενα) what is yet (partially) unknown to clearer objects, which thus serve as 'models' (παραδείγματα). Notice that even in the case of the objects taken as models, the Stranger speaks only of correct opinion. He does not demand firm knowledge in any step of this process, not even in the selection of sufficiently clear models. As the canonical interpretation highlights, he describes a comparative process that relies on similarities and correct opinions in order to prevent or correct errors and confusions.

Yet his focus is not on similarity alone. Rather, it rests on 'each of all the letters' (τῶν στοιχείων ἕκαστον πάντων), namely on all the single and distinct elements of a composite object of knowledge. Again, the Stranger's main preoccupation is the practical way of leading the mind as far as possible towards *complete* knowledge, by managing correctly a variety of elements. He remarks that the purpose of learning consists in calling each element 'always by the same name' (ἀεὶ [...] ἑαυτῷ), discerning

it either by *differentiation* or by assimilation: ‘on the one hand the different as it is different from the others, on the other the same as it is the same’ (τὸ μὲν ἕτερον ὡς τῶν ἄλλων ἕτερον ὄν, τὸ δὲ ταῦτόν ὡς ταῦτόν).⁹² Once again, the Stranger does not claim that models produce knowledge, but only a ‘single true opinion’ (μίαν ἀληθῆ δόξαν, 278c6) about each of the compared subjects and both together. This is why he did not introduce this method as providing the truest possible account of a subject, but more moderately as the ‘most beautiful’ (κάλλιστον) instrument of human understanding. Yet he does claim that comparisons counteract ignorance, now presented as failed recognition: the complex syllables that are ‘not recognised’ (μήπω γινωσκόμενα) by the pupils are also ‘the ones that they don’t know’ (τοῖς ἀγνοουμένοις). This passage clarifies what the aforementioned radical ignorance is. It is the misapprehension of a composite whole (like a syllable) due to confusion about its partial elements (like letters). ‘Ignoring everything’ does not mean, therefore, ignoring each and every element of an object, but rather not knowing the composite object *as a whole*. It means radically ignoring what the *combinations* (συμπλοκαῖς) of partial elements are, just like in the example of visual arts erring meant failing to achieve the correct *mixture* (συγκράσει) of elements within a complex picture. The Stranger, thus, does not establish a polar contrast between knowing *everything with absolute certainty* and knowing *nothing at all*, but between the cognitive experiences of ignoring composite realities in their entirety and of recognising correctly only some of their various elements.

I wish further to clarify this point about ignorance of the whole, by relying on a non-Platonic but coherent example of the whole-parts relation. The Buddhist scripture *Udāna* (6:4)⁹³ addresses the problem of sectarian disputes about the nature of the universe and of the soul; in order to illustrate the underlying reason for these disputes, the Buddha narrates of a king who asked several blind men to describe an elephant. Each of them, we are told, touched a part of the elephant, and thus offered different descriptions of the animal. They variously claimed that it was like a pot (the head), a winnowing basket (the ear), a plow (the trunk), a post (the leg), and so on. The point of

⁹² The abstract language of this passage is difficult to interpret. Nonetheless, expanding the example of letters can clarify it: the letter ‘o’ can be recognised as identical in ‘ode’ and ‘exodus’. Thus, the similarity of the two words indicates the identity of the single letter. However, similarity can also be deceptive, and difference illuminating: consider the word ‘Question’ and the misspelled ‘Ouestion’. In this case, the letters ‘Q’ and ‘O’ could easily be confused if observed superficially, or by someone who had never seen the former symbol. Only their mutual difference allows to discern their individual identity correctly.

⁹³ I refer to the free-distribution edition and translation by Bhikkhu (2012).

this tale is that ‘people seeing only one side’⁹⁴ of a more complex whole (here, cosmic and spiritual truth) are radically ignorant (metaphorically blind) in relation to it. I hold that the Stranger’s theoretical⁹⁵ point about ignorance is exactly the same: a complex object of inquiry such as statecraft is inherently multifaceted, similar to different realities under different respects, so that in order to overcome ignorance it is necessary to conceive its parts as aspects of a larger whole. One crucial difference distinguishes the Stranger’s account from the Buddhist tale: he makes no claim that the attempt to reconstruct a whole out of different parts will ever reveal the nature of the object of inquiry itself (the statesman), but only its ‘complete figure’ (τέλειον [...] σχῆμα), aptly compared to ‘the painting of an animal’ (ζῶον τὴν [...] περιγραφὴν). The Stranger, thus, carefully avoids any claim that discourse, however correct, can ever attain full knowledge of any reality in itself, and maintains language on the level of representations of reality.⁹⁶ The fundamental coherence of these two examples remains nonetheless enlightening, because both construe ignorance not as absolute lack of knowledge or familiarity with an object, but rather as the failure to understand its nature as a complex whole. The Buddhist example shows more vividly in what sense failing to see the ‘combinations’ (συμπλοκαῖς) of partial aspects of a multifaceted object can be reasonably considered as a form of radical ignorance.⁹⁷

Finally, the Stranger concludes his methodological account by returning to the example of awakening, but this time with a positive turn:

Well, if that’s the nature of things, you and I will not at all be in the wrong, having first attempted to see the nature of the model as a whole according to the part of a different small model, if we are going to transfer, from somewhere, the form that is the same as that of the king, a very great one,

⁹⁴ Bhikkhu, 2012, p.97.

⁹⁵ Notice however that the implications of this example are also political: dissent emerges as a consequence of the multifaceted nature of truth combined with human cognitive limitations. Cf. *Pol.* 301a-303d on political dissent as result of ignorance. It is worth noticing that, while the Buddhist text refers to a political figure, a king, as he who *knows* (but does not communicate) the objective truth, the *Statesman* problematizes the very nature of political knowledge.

⁹⁶ Cf. *Crat.* 439a-b.

⁹⁷ The *Seventh Letter* (342b-343e) furnishes a comparable but more elaborate theoretical account of cognitive ‘obscurity and complete ignorance’ (ἀπορίας τε καὶ ἀσαφείας [...] πάσης, 343c4-5). Here, ignorance is said to depend on the human reliance on language and visual images to attain knowledge of any reality, because each word, definition, image or cognitive act can only capture the contingent qualities (τοῦ ποιοῦ, *ibid.*) of an object, and not its objective essence (τοῦ ὄντος, 343b8) in itself. While the authorship of the *Seventh Letter* is controversial, the affinity between these two accounts is undeniable. It is possible that the *Statesman* reflects the extremely demanding criteria for knowledge postulated in the *Seventh Letter*, whereby every form of *partial* understanding is limited and easy to refute, in a Socratic spirit, by demanding a complete objective definition.

starting from smaller ones, in an attempt once more to recognize through a model what the artful care of those in the city is, so that it may be present to us in waking vision rather than in a dream.

οὐκοῦν ταῦτα εἰ ταύτη πέφυκεν, οὐδὲν δὴ πλημμελοῖμεν ἂν ἐγὼ τε καὶ σὺ πρῶτον μὲν ἐπιχειρήσαντες ὅλου παραδείγματος ἰδεῖν τὴν φύσιν ἐν σμικρῷ κατὰ μέρος ἄλλω παραδείγματι, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα μέλλοντες, ἐπὶ τὸ τοῦ βασιλέως μέγιστον ὄν ταῦτὸν εἶδος ἀπ' ἐλαττόνων φέροντές ποθεν, διὰ παραδείγματος ἐπιχειρεῖν αὖ τὴν τῶν κατὰ πόλιν θεραπείαν τέχνη γνωρίζειν, ἵνα ὕπαρ ἀντ' ὀνείρατος ἡμῖν γίγνηται; (278e4-10, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The Stranger ultimately recommends the usage of models as properly heuristic tools, which lead to grasp the complex, 'greatest' nature of the statesman by starting from small models and transferring the same 'form' (εἶδος)⁹⁸ to it. 'Awakening' here assumes the more familiar meaning of clarification or enlightenment, but only as the result of a measured process of discernment. The cognitive process here described is threefold: from a state of radical ignorance, caused by the complexity of a *composite* object, through moments of accurate recognition of similarities and differences, towards a final clarification of the whole object of inquiry. Notice, again, the Stranger's insistence on the *variety* of elements within this process, and on how it requires a *measured* attention to their relative complexity: the transference of similarities moves 'from smaller' (ἀπ' ἐλαττόνων), simpler and partial subjects (plural) towards a single greater one, complex and complete. Notice how the Stranger refers both to his current attempt to show the cognitive role of models and to his purpose to use other models in the same way in relation to statecraft. His language confirms my interpretation: he speaks of the 'model [of cognition] as a whole' (ὅλου παραδείγματος) as displayed, partially, through a 'part' (μέρος) of a 'different model' (ἄλλω παραδείγματι). Again, his concern is with attempting to attain knowledge of a well-structured *whole* composed of the parts sufficient to broaden its understanding. The cognitive process allowed by models is thus not a mere comparison, but an act of composition of different parts within a complex whole. Pender (2000) also highlights the non-prescriptive nature of this process: the Stranger speaks of 'attempting' (ἐπιχειρεῖν) to reach the knowledge of a cohesive whole, not of a rigid method that *guarantees* success (p.52). Therefore the cognitive

⁹⁸ It is not my purpose to determine whether the Stranger's account of models depends on or illuminates Plato's doctrine of Forms. On this doctrine (or a version of it), cf. Sayre (2006), Migliori (1996), and Goldschmidt (1947, ed. 2003). Kato (1995) unsatisfactorily discards the problem because the doctrine is not fully articulated in the *Statesman*, but this fact does not suffice to prove that its characters do not implicitly assume it as valid.

process of combining images is an *approximative* instrument to attain knowledge as completely as possible, not a certain path to truth.

It must be highlighted that the Stranger's focus rests constantly on education and psychology, concerned as he is with the cognitive experience of seeking lucid awareness and challenging ignorance:

Then would we be puzzled if our soul by its nature experienced this same thing in relation to the individual letters of everything, now composing itself in some cases with the aid of truth in relation to each single thing, now, in others, being carried around everything, and somehow or other having correct opinions about the constituents of the combinations themselves, but once again not knowing the same things when they are transferred into the long syllables of things and the ones that are not easy?

θαυμάζοιμεν ἂν οὖν εἰ ταὐτὸν τοῦτο ἡμῶν ἢ ψυχῇ φύσει περὶ τὰ τῶν πάντων στοιχεῖα πεπονθυῖα τοτὲ μὲν ὑπ' ἀληθείας περὶ ἕνα ἕκαστον ἔν τισι συνίσταται, τοτὲ δὲ περὶ ἅπαντα ἔν ἑτέροις αὖ φέρεται, καὶ τὰ μὲν αὐτῶν ἀμῆ γέ πη τῶν συγκράσεων ὀρθῶς δοξάζει, μετατιθέμενα δ' εἰς τὰς τῶν πραγμάτων μακρὰς καὶ μὴ ῥαδίους συλλαβὰς ταῦτα ταῦτα πάλιν ἀγνοεῖ; (278c8-d6, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The Stranger relates his threefold example of composition (συγκράσεων), variation, and recognition of different images to the *universal* cognitive experience in relation to 'everything' (τῶν πάντων). His purpose is not to define what knowledge is in itself, but to articulate the specific condition of the mind ('our soul' ἡμῶν ἢ ψυχῇ) in facing cognitive disorientation, 'being carried around everything' (περὶ ἅπαντα [...] φέρεται) in certain circumstances, and 'composing itself' (συνίσταται)⁹⁹ in others. He claims that this is the natural psychological condition that arises when inquiring into a complex totality of elements. Notice the parallel between the combination of different images and the composition of the soul: as the different facets of the object of inquiry require accurate combination, so the mind that explores them requires correct composition. The Stranger's fundamental concern is for the human mind to acquire the ability to face disorienting intricacies without losing sight of the truth (ἀληθείας) it is looking for, and

⁹⁹ This verb refers consistently to artful compositions of parts in the *Statesman*. It appears at 271b6, where men in the Age of Cronus are said to be 'composed again and brought back to life' (πάλιν ἐκεῖ συνισταμένους καὶ ἀναβιωσκομένους) thanks to the divinely-guided order of reality. At 274a5 the same phenomenon (συνιστάντων) is said to be absent from the Age of Zeus. Finally, at 308c3 'composition' (συνίστησις) denotes the purpose of all productive arts, including statecraft and philosophical discourses.

to maintain itself as lucid and orderly as possible. He does not account for the characteristics of truth in itself. Instead, he insists on the *nature* (φύσει) of psychological phenomena: the radically confusing effect of *all* the *multiple* elements that the mind needs to understand, even when inquiring into a single topic, and the stabilizing effect of seeking for composition and combination. To him, the mind ‘is ignorant’ (ἀγνοεῖ) of an object of inquiry not because this is intrinsically obscure, but because its complexity has not been articulated clearly enough, so that it entails radical ignorance. The cognitive effect of models, thus, is neither to attain absolute truth nor to illustrate, didactically, a specific similarity, but to allow the mind to stand composed between radical ignorance and complete knowledge of the truth.

This is an aspect of his theory that current studies such as Lane’s (1998) and Pender’s (2000) have overlooked, focused as they are on determining the *linguistic* features of images and models as comparative tools. Certainly, the Stranger’s argument is *also* about the power of language to show abstract concepts or incorporeal realities. At 285d10-286b1 he argues that ‘the things that are without body, which are the most beautiful and greatest, are shown clearly only by verbal means and by nothing else’ (τὰ γὰρ ἀσώματα, κάλλιστα ὄντα καὶ μέγιστα, λόγῳ μόνον ἄλλῳ δὲ οὐδενὶ σαφῶς δείκνυται, 286a5). He thus credits language with a privileged status for philosophical inquiries on conceptual (and perhaps divine or spiritual) realities, superior for instance to visual illustrations and concrete models.¹⁰⁰ But while the linguistic aspect is inescapable, I hold that the Stranger’s (and Plato’s) ultimate interest is the psychological effect of certain forms of discourse. His account of models is not a general linguistic or epistemological theory, but an evaluation of the *contextual* efficacy of images and models in orienting the mind in specific circumstances. Verbal models remain, as I have observed, on the level of instrumental tools that represent reality as clearly as possible. They constitute *the best possible instrument* for representing a complex subject, they constitute the ‘easiest and most beautiful’ (ῥᾶστον καὶ κάλλιστον) method of inquiry, they counteract inarticulate confusion with elegant simplicity, but nothing more. Only the Stranger’s psychological claim is in fact universal: models are heuristic tools insofar as they orient the mind towards the truth, by leading it to seek a correct composition of images (not a straightforward identification of truth), and by preventing the radical disorientation (‘ignorance’) brought about by an inarticulate totality of elements.

¹⁰⁰ See Pender (2000) for a more extensive account of language and conceptual realities in the *Statesman* (pp.52-55).

I argue that this cognitive process grounds the pervasiveness of images and models in the *Statesman*. As Luigi Stefanini (1949) has observed, this dialogue constantly relies on images as instruments of conceptual acquisition, not just as didactic tools of illustration: '[the *Statesman*] extracts from paradigms every concept about the constitution of the State and the function of laws' (p.217, tr. mine). The image¹⁰¹ of the producers of goods, distinct from retailers, illustrates the art of the statesman in giving orders by himself, without relying on commands received from others (260e). The image¹⁰² of the herdsman who tends expertly to his herd represents the art of the statesman in 'taking care [of living beings] not as individuals but as a community' (οὐ μὴν ἰδίᾳ γε ἀλλὰ κοινῇ τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ἔχουσιν, 275c10-d2). This image is not criticised as objectively incorrect by the Stranger, but rather as excessive and insufficiently clear. The more adequate model¹⁰³ of weaving represents an expertise that requires the cooperation of other preparatory arts in order to realise a fine product, just like the statesman needs to cooperate with all the arts in his community to realise a good city (281d-e and 287c). The same model also represents an art that combines the opposite elements of rigid warp and flexible woof, like statecraft aims to create a bond between citizens of opposite inclinations towards courage and moderation (282b-283a), and thus a cohesive social 'fabric' (ὄφασμα, 310e11). It thus fleshes out the specific modes of political activity that the model of the herdsman had left superficially untouched: cooperation with equal humans, not rule over inferior beasts, and combination of psychological traits within the community.¹⁰⁴ The analogy with the trainer of gymnastic, who gives uniform and generic instructions to groups rather than individual prescriptions, represents the inescapable imprecision of the statesman's legislative function (294d-e).¹⁰⁵ Finally, the images¹⁰⁶ of the doctor and the helmsman, whose expertise and authority can be used to heal and save their subjects but also to harm and kill them, represent the independence of knowledge from fixed norms but also the need to resort to legislation as a second-best solution in absence of worthy rulers (297e-298a).¹⁰⁷ While I cannot address, here, the specific implications of all these images in their contexts, their variety and pervasiveness in the *Statesman* testifies the necessity,

¹⁰¹ 'According to what we have represented in an image just now' (καθάπερ ἠκάζομεν νυνδὴ, 260e3).

¹⁰² 'Great models' (μεγάλα παραδείγματα, 277b4); 'this figure of the divine herdsman' (τὸ σχῆμα τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ νομῶς, 275c1).

¹⁰³ 'Smallest model' (παράδειγμά [...] σμικρότατον, 279a7-8).

¹⁰⁴ Lane, 1998, pp.60-61.

¹⁰⁵ In this case, the Stranger does not speak in terms of images, figures, or models, but his practice remains the same. Cf. Lane, 1998, pp.152-153.

¹⁰⁶ 'Let's go back to the images to which we must always compare our kingly rulers' (εἰς δὴ τὰς εἰκόνας ἐπανίωμεν πάλιν, αἷς ἀναγκαῖον ἀπεικάζειν αἰεὶ τοὺς βασιλικούς ἄρχοντας, 297e8-9).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Lane, 1998, pp.156-163; Gill, 1995.

theorised by the Stranger, to represent the same concept in a multifaceted fashion, without ever flattening it upon a single account or claiming definitive truthfulness.¹⁰⁸

The *Statesman* articulates the subject of statecraft according to a ‘one-many-whole’ dynamic: one single subject needs to be represented under many respects, in many images that require cohesive combination.¹⁰⁹ All these images, certainly, are examples of ‘those who possess knowledge’ (τῶν ἐπιστημόνων, 258b4), and thus they illustrate the *single* underlying assumption of the *Statesman*: politics is an expertise with inherent criteria, functions, and objectives.¹¹⁰ But they illustrate it *from different angles*. The *Statesman* never reduces statecraft to a single image or model, let alone to literal accounts, precisely in order to illustrate various aspects of statecraft as they become relevant at different moments of inquiry. These aspects may be characterised by simple difference, such as between the autonomous production of goods (producers) and the command of a group of living beings (herdsman). But they may also be characterised by direct incompatibility, such as between the potential harmfulness of prescriptions (medicine) and the inherent benefit of producing a fine fabric for the benefit of the community, thanks to the bond between carefully selected components (weaving). Even if individual images are merely illustrative, taken together they serve to provide further depth and complexity to the broader figure of statecraft. Precisely their differences force the intellect to seek for a *broader conceptual field* that may encompass them all, without reducing them to literal accounts or enumerations of similarities. The *Statesman* thus invites us to consider its subject as a multifaceted one, best represented through images rather than direct accounts.

The conclusion of the *Statesman* confirms this reading. In response to the Stranger’s description of statecraft as the art of producing a social fabric of courageous and moderate people, Young Socrates comments:

‘In the most beautiful way, Stranger, you have completed for us the kingly and political man.

¹⁰⁸ Stefanini, 1949, pp.217-218.

¹⁰⁹ Napolitano Valditara (2010) suggests that Plato’s notion of ‘wholeness’ is distinct from his notion of ‘totality’, the former being a combination of different parts according to ‘a unitary and dynamic rule that can bind them to one another’ and the latter the mere ‘paratactic description or quantitative enumeration’ (p.150, tr. mine). This distinction seems to be reflected, in the *Statesman*, by the Stranger’s account of ‘everything’ (*pan*) as a potentially confusing accumulation of elements and of ‘combination’ (*sunkrasis*, *sumploke*) as the object of correct opinion or representation of reality. Cf. Migliori (2014).

¹¹⁰ Lane, 1998, pp.50-51; Weiss, 1995.

κάλλιστα αὖ τὸν βασιλικὸν ἀπετέλεσας ἄνδρα ἡμῖν, ὃ ξένε, καὶ τὸν πολιτικόν’
(311c7, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

Notice how Young Socrates’s language reflects the Stranger’s account of models and his theoretical cautions. It does not refer to a definitive demonstration but to an exposition that is ‘most beautiful’ like accounts that rely on models, and ‘complete’ like the figure that was sought for. Young Socrates also avoids universal judgments about the validity of this account, claiming only that it is complete ‘for us’, and thus not necessarily for everyone else or in every circumstance. This caution had been suggested by the Stranger at 260b7-8: ‘But if people are doing something together, it is enough if they agree with one another [...] So for as long as we are sharing in the present task, we should set aside the opinions of others’ (ἀλλὰ μὴν τοῖς γε κοινῇ τι πράττουσιν ἀγαπητὸν ὁμονοεῖν [...] τούτου τοίνυν μέχριπερ ἂν αὐτοὶ κοινωνῶμεν, ἐατέον τά γε τῶν ἄλλων δοξάσματα χαίρειν). The characters conceive the figure of statecraft here presented as still partial and provisional, but in the positive sense of a correct cognitive acquisition characterised by awareness of its own limitations. Lane (1998) argues that the characters’ ‘goal is a portrait of a single art, sufficiently clear and detailed for these purposes, not a panorama of them all’ (p.37). But while she takes this merely as a ‘teleological framework’ for the inquiry (*ibid.*), namely a goal used to select what is relevant and what is not, the significance of this procedure is broader. In fact, it qualifies *the whole inquiry* as the construction of a conceptual figure *for the interlocutors alone*—and nobody else. Therefore, the *Statesman* as a whole cannot be taken as representing the conclusive attainment of a definition or of knowledge, not even in Lane’s moderate sense. Rather, it leaves open the possibility that the figure of the statesman be altered, perfected once again in different contexts, from different angles, and *for different people*.¹¹¹ The whole *Statesman* constitutes an effort to achieve a conceptual figure of its subject-matter that appears complete and satisfactory to both the interlocutors and them alone, through the combination of its different facets, and with constant awareness of its provisional status.

The bearing of visual language on this provisional and partial attempt to achieve a *beautiful* image seems to reflect a widespread concern, in Classical Greece, with representation and beauty, with the difficulty of finding ideal perfection and the need for

¹¹¹ Wallach (2001) accordingly presents Plato’s politics as a multifaceted subject that he explores from different angles in different dialogues. *Contra* Kahn (2009), who supports a linear evolution of Plato’s thought throughout his political dialogues.

creative combinations.¹¹² Xenophon documents this concern and attributes it to the painter Parrhasius, as interrogated by Socrates:

‘Thus, on entering the house of Parrhasius the painter one day, he [Socrates] asked in the course of a conversation with him: “Is painting a representation of things seen, Parrhasius? Anyhow, you painters with your colours represent and reproduce figures high and low, in light and in shadow, hard and soft, rough and smooth, young and old. – True. – And further, when you copy beautiful forms, since it is not easy to stumble upon a single person that possesses all the perfections, you combine the most beautiful details of several, and thus contrive to make the whole bodies look beautiful. – Yes, we do.

είσελθὼν μὲν γάρ ποτε πρὸς Παρράσιον τὸν ζωγράφον καὶ διαλεγόμενος αὐτῷ, ἄρα, ἔφη, ὦ Παρράσιε, γραφικὴ ἐστὶν εἰκασία τῶν ὄρωμένων; τὰ γοῦν κοῖλα καὶ τὰ ὑψηλὰ καὶ τὰ σκοτεινὰ καὶ τὰ φωτεινὰ καὶ τὰ σκληρὰ καὶ τὰ μαλακὰ καὶ τὰ τραχέα καὶ τὰ λεῖα καὶ τὰ νέα καὶ τὰ παλαιὰ σώματα διὰ τῶν χρωμάτων ἀπεικάζοντες ἐκμιμεῖσθε. ἀληθῆ λέγεις, ἔφη. καὶ μὴν τά γε καλὰ εἶδη ἀφομοιοῦντες, ἐπειδὴ οὐ ῥάδιον ἐνὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτυχεῖν ἄμεμπτα πάντα ἔχοντι, ἐκ πολλῶν συνάγοντες τὰ ἐξ ἐκάστου κάλλιστα οὕτως ὅλα τὰ σώματα καλὰ ποιεῖτε φαίνεσθαι. ποιοῦμεν γάρ, ἔφη, οὕτως’ (Xen. *Mem.* 3.10.1-3, tr. Marchant, *adapted*).

This ‘combinatory’ method in reproducing perfect beauty came to be attributed by different Hellenistic and Latin sources to Zeuxis’s representation of Helen of Troy;¹¹³ therefore, it does not seem to constitute exclusively a Socratic interest, but probably a historical phase of ancient aesthetics. Notice the closeness between Socrates’s questions and Plato’s language in the *Statesman*: the totality (πάντα) of a perfect representation, when a single adequate model is absent, can be obtained through an act of combination (συνάγοντες) of the various opportune elements (ἐκάστου), the most beautiful (κάλλιστα) available from a multitude of sources (πολλῶν). Significantly, Xenophon’s account goes on to document Socrates’s concern with the possibility to express, visually, the invisible motions of the soul like joys and sorrows, virtues and vices (3.10-3.8),¹¹⁴ so that we find a partial overlapping between Socrates’s and Plato’s interests

¹¹² Matelli, 2015; Siebert, 2009.

¹¹³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Imitation*, 1.4; Cicero, *On Invention*, 2.1-3; Plinius, *Natural History*, 35.6. Cf. Matelli, 2015, p.43.

¹¹⁴ Cf. *Pol.* 306c10-d4 on visual expressionism of beauty and virtue (see Section 3.3.1.).

with invisible, incorporeal realities.¹¹⁵ Notice also the implicit reference to right measure: painters have the skill to represent, arbitrarily, any kind of opposite features of their subjects, but this skill is bent to a selection and *evaluation of what is opportune* for the sake of the most beautiful result. Plato's manipulation of visual language, however, is more poignant and theoretically developed than in Xenophon's account. Plato indeed assumes terms related to visual arts and turns them into a metaphorical account of the cognitive role of images, here in relation to the concept of statecraft. His awareness of the creative power of images in presenting more elaborate ideal realities, thus, is not only documented theoretically by the *Statesman*, but also consistent with the cultural environment of Athenian high culture and possibly an elaboration of Socratic reflections. This parallelism is fundamental fully to understand Plato's notion of *verbal* images, as not limited to linguistic considerations but also contaminated by notions of perfection, beauty, and harmonious composition, which he draws directly from the field of visual art and credits, through a metaphorical shift, to the field of linguistic and psychological phenomena. The Stranger's account of *paradeigmata*, indeed, is itself a *paradeigma* and as such it must be understood. His account is not *purely* linguistic, in the sense that the purity of a linguistic account is contaminated by different images that serve to articulate the complexity of a *cognitive* (not just discursive) phenomenon. When the Stranger speaks of completeness and beauty, then, he does not refer to full theoretical closure or to the conclusion of an argument. Rather, he refers to the creative attainment of a harmonious combination of different elements and of a stable clarity of intellectual vision.

Accordingly, I have kept my account of imagery in the *Statesman* intentionally on the broader level of its theoretical examination, and presented the pervasiveness of images in the *Statesman* as an instance of a cognitive dynamic that articulates one subject from many angles. I have thus left open three possible routes of further analysis: (a) examining in detail each and every image that the Stranger introduces in the political discussion;¹¹⁶ (b) distinguishing between analogies, metaphors, and narrations in their specific features; and (c) pinpointing the (always different) relations between images, conceptual divisions, and various theoretical arguments. In fact, I agree with Lane

¹¹⁵ Owen (1973) interprets the account of models in the *Statesman* as concerned with the contrast between depictable and undepictable realities. Notice however that the Stranger does not posit all invisible realities as inherently undepictable; in fact, at *Pol.* 306c10-d4 he argues that virtues can be represented in paintings, just like Socrates does in Xenophon's account. On pictorial expressionism in ancient Greece, cf. Schuhl, 1933; Havelock, C. M. 1978.

¹¹⁶ Lane (1998) provides an exhaustive account of these various images (with the exception of the image of producers and sellers), but without examining the cognitive role of combination.

(1998) that, if we were to examine any single image, we would come across illustrative examples that didactically highlight a specific aspect of statecraft as the Stranger conceives it, merely fixing relevant similarities as structural contributions to the inquiry (pp.56-61), occasionally correcting errors (pp.45-46), and complementing conceptual divisions (pp. 44 and 53-56). Certainly, the role that images perform in every context and the cultural nuances of the activities they describe deserve further exploration. Too close an analysis, however, would risk to obscure the ‘whole’ broader figure that individual images compose. Most importantly, from this broader level alone is it evident that there is no rigidly prescriptive norm behind the Stranger’s usage of images, because he introduces them at different moments, with or without explicit qualification of their status, at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of an inquiry. He simply insists on introducing them in different places because he considers them the most elegant and accessible way to explore a single subject from different perspectives. The criterion of his practice is not a definitive set of rules, but the possibility of combining images in the most harmonious way, always responding to implicit theoretical problems and contextual doubts or hesitations.

On the more general level, indeed, we can see clearly that the variety of images is consistent with the Stranger’s account of knowledge-acquisition, as a composition of different elements, facets, or images of a single complex concept. Better, this variety testifies his theoretical commitment to a ‘perspectival’ understanding of human cognition and philosophical discourses. To him, a philosophical inquiry must, by necessity, explore the different facets of its subject separately, but without losing track of the ‘whole’ they compose. His language of images, models, and figures underscores such perspectival understanding. On the one hand, each facet, precisely because it is merely an image of the truth, wards off any claim to definitive knowledge; on the other, each contributes to the creation of a broader conceptual figure that cannot be reduced to any of its single aspects. Even if the Stranger does not claim that *only* images and models allow this process, he does nonetheless consider them the best possible way to inquire into statecraft from different angles and solve different problems as they progressively emerge. Images are the best instruments to achieve a cognitive right measure between the extremes of radical ignorance and complete knowledge. This conclusion contradicts the canonical interpretation in two respects. On the one hand, it means that images are not didactic tools, which can only illustrate the truth or at best restructure given opinions, but which can be superseded once complete knowledge has

been attained. On the other hand, it means that images are not instruments that can ever lead to definitive knowledge, by revising existing opinions in such a way as to lead to definitive truth, but they do not need to in order to lead *closer* to the truth.

Pender's (2000) account, focused on similarities (likenesses) alone, correctly points out how they can be used in order to structure familiar concepts in novel ways. However, this focus is narrower than the Stranger grants, and does not allow to grasp why he credits images with more than a preliminary function on the path towards knowledge and truth. As Pender claims:

Throughout [the account of models in the *Statesman*], Plato is careful to distinguish direct accounts of reality from accounts involving images or likenesses of it, and images are at best for him a heuristic device, able to offer an indirect access to the truth if used in the correct way – namely, as preliminary steps in an inquiry (p.59).

Notice that the term 'heuristic', to Pender, refers to the purely instrumental function of models in restructuring, through similarity, complex ideas.¹¹⁷ She thus argues that, once a model has exhausted its restructuring and clarifying function, the necessity to rely on comparison presumably disappears (p.58). But if, as I suggest, their function is to allow a stable cognitive movement among different facets of a more complex whole, and to respond to necessarily different angles of inquiry, they could not be disposed of even if complete knowledge were achieved (an event that, in any case, does not occur in the *Statesman*). In fact, articulating this complexity even from a position of knowledge would still require a recourse to partial images. Pender's interpretation is correct insofar as she acknowledges the inescapable discrepancy between image and truth, together with the cognitive power of likenesses in rearranging concepts. But her claim that an image is correct only as *preliminary* step of inquiry is limitative. In fact, images pervade *every* step of inquiry in the *Statesman*. The image of producers and retailers appears in the course of conceptual divisions (260c-261a), the mythical figure of the divine herdsman serves to correct inadequate conclusions (275b-c), and the very end of the dialogue is not a definition but a metaphorical description of the political fabric that binds courageous and moderate citizens and holds the rest safely together (311b-c). The

¹¹⁷ Cf. Pender (2000): 'Therefore when it is claimed that Plato in the *Politicus* sees models as heuristic and not just didactic, it must be clarified that the model in question (weaving) is heuristic in a limited sense. The model does not cast up pro-positions and perspectives out of the blue but serves to impose a structure on a concept with which – it is implied – it has common elements' (p.56). Pender construes this limit in a *positive* sense: models lead the mind *as close as possible* to knowledge, albeit without attaining it completely and forever.

Stranger's theoretical distinction between images and truth, accordingly, does not posit images as preliminary steps that can be 'dispensed with' (p.59) once knowledge has been fully achieved, as Pender claims, but rather as limited parts of a more complex conceptual figure.

'Limited' does not mean 'provisional', 'partial' does not mean 'preliminary'. The materials of a statue, the colours of a painting, and the letters of a syllable, once *correctly* identified and combined, do not cease to be elements of the whole, and the perception of their diversified combination remains cognitively necessary to their correct contextual understanding. Analogously, images in the *Statesman* are never superseded by the broader conceptual figure they form, and the Stranger never claims that they should. It is true that he does not present models as unique tools of conceptual acquisition and that he allows for a more difficult and direct cognitive access to truth, but he offers not positive suggestion about whether images would really become disposable once truth is fully acquired. It may still be appropriate to speak of images as provisional, but only in the sense of a *positive provisionality*, one which is necessary to cognition and which constantly recurs in any intellectual and dialectical effort, rather than one which should ideally wane once truth has been acquired. It is undeniable that truth and complete knowledge remain the Stranger's ideal objectives, on which the usage of images (like the practice of dialectical inquiry in general) must depend if it is to be meaningful. However, the fact that human cognition needs to be understood as perspectival, and thus always to some extent bound to images of the truth, seems to be his irreducible pragmatical (if not theoretical) stance.¹¹⁸

Differently from Pender, Lane (1998) interprets models as capable of leading towards definitive knowledge, and thus exceeds in the opposite direction:

Example [i.e. the usage of models] is presented as the path from true belief [i.e. opinion] to knowledge, a path which clarifies and extends those beliefs rather than rejecting them; example also interacts with division, which effects revisions of common sense and expectations in the service of gaining a genuine understanding of the character or activity being investigated. Together the two

¹¹⁸ Migliori (2014) argues for an even stronger theoretical claim: reality itself is, to Plato, a whole that combines unity and multiplicity, so that the same object can, by its nature, appear in different and even opposite ways when seen from different angles (pp.197-199). Cf. *Phil.* 14c8-10, 15d4-8. The *Statesman* does not offer any direct metaphysical indication in this regard, but the Stranger's insistence that the best cognitive experience takes into account different perspectives is consistent with Migliori's stance and can be said to support it.

constitute a method which retains true beliefs but achieves knowledge by drastically revising them (p.65).

Lane correctly acknowledges that the similarities illustrated through models provide true opinions that the characters never discard; however, the Stranger makes no claim that models ever allow to overcome true opinion. He claims that they contribute positively to cognitive experiences and that they elucidate ideas, but this does not mean that they factually lead to knowledge itself (however defined). The Stranger in fact never speaks of ‘drastically revising’ any opinion, but rather of combining and recognising different images of the truth, in order to achieve as synoptic an understanding of it as possible. Precisely by using *three different models* of the cognitive function of models, he prevents any straightforward reduction of his account to a linear cognitive movement from opinion to knowledge, of the kind envisaged in the *Republic* through the image of the line and the allegory of the cave. Lane in fact interprets models as tools to revise opinions and attain definitive knowledge because the Stranger uses the model of weaving to correct and reframe the definition of statecraft as akin to herding (pp.56-61). However, his usage of images is much more general and it does not necessarily coincide with the correction and restructuring of opinions. He does claim that using images counteracts radical ignorance, namely the ignorance of a *whole* composed by different elements, but not that this process leads *all the way through* on the path towards truth. In fact, the explicit result of his and Young Socrates’s inquiry is the attainment of a correct figure of statecraft, not the absolute and definitive truth about it. Lane thus misconstrues the cognitive acquisitions that images and models in fact allow: not the drastic revision of existing opinions, but the factual opening of novel perspectives, novel angles of inquiry about the same subject, as long as an inquiry requires it.

These two opposite errors depend on the failure of the canonical interpretation to address the threefold cognitive process described by the Stranger. Since images and models are not only illustrations of similarities, but different facets of a composite whole, they function neither as preliminary accounts nor as paths to revise opinion and reach definitive knowledge. Rather, they function as ‘measured’ instruments of cognitive orientation and exploration of one conceptual object under different respects.

Conclusion

The *Statesman* presents images and models as the most simple and elegant (albeit not always necessary) heuristic instruments, which provide a cognitive gain through a threefold process of combination, variation, and recognition. In agreement with the canonical interpretation, it is evident that Plato presents them neither as instruments of demonstration and direct acquisition of truth, nor as irreplaceable forms of discourse. Their function is rather the attainment of sufficient clarity and cognitive stability. Contrary to the canonical interpretation, however, models do not serve exclusively to recognise similarities between two objects, but also to combine correctly the variety of aspects of a multifaceted subject. The Stranger's account is indeed more articulated than scholars usually acknowledge: it insists on the *multiplicity of facets* that require accurate, 'measured' combination in order to improve our knowledge, on the initially confusing effect of *shifting* from one facet to another, and on recognising the identity of a facet both by assimilation and *by differentiation* of ideas. This account thus describes the contribution of images and models to a complex cognitive process: the accurate *recognition* of the *diverse* aspects of a multifaceted object of inquiry, directed at grasping it as a *composite* whole. Their cognitive role, ultimately, consists in countering the human 'radical ignorance' in relation to 'the whole' of which we see, case by case, only single facets.

Therefore, the Stranger's theory is consistent with modern perspectival (or interactionist) theories such as Kittay's (1998) and Pender's (2000), whereby the interaction of different images and models provides cognitive gains by opening broader conceptual spaces for thought and language. However, the Stranger's appreciation of images remains cautious, for three reasons. First, images do not provide any demonstration of the truth about their object but only, at best, correct opinions. Second, they do not allow complete freedom in manipulating similarities and providing novel perspectives, because they depend on strict hypothetical assumptions about the nature of the subject represented (statecraft *is* knowledge). Third, they also depend on the assumption that inquiries are directed, at least tentatively, to the attainment of an objectively complete conceptual figure of their object. Perspectivism, to the Stranger, does not mean relativism of opinions, but acknowledgement of the partiality of points of view about a single objective reality. The Stranger does not appreciate images as rhetorical tools that restructure ideas in general, but only as long as they are correctly used within a dialectical process that aims (ideally) at complete knowledge. Thus,

images are not tools of completely free ‘reconceptualisation’, but instruments that allow to counteract radical ignorance about the *totality* of an object of inquiry, while preventing unduly claims to definitive knowledge. They are what allows an inquiring mind to preserve the right measure between knowledge and ignorance and thus to maintain what Plato arguably considered a genuinely philosophical disposition.

Chapter 3 – The Importance of Being Playful: *Paidia* as Ambivalent Image

Every man and woman must [*dein*] live his or her life playing the finest possible games [*paizonta hoti kallistas paidia*], as opposed to what people think nowadays (*Leg.* VII.803c6-8).

Introduction

This chapter will explore the instrument of *paidia* (game, playfulness), in relation to the educational usage of imagery in the myth of the *Statesman*.¹¹⁹ A crucial fact widely overlooked by current scholarship is that the Stranger does not immediately introduce this narration either as a myth or as a model of political activity, but as a playful account radically distinct from other dialectical procedures such as *diairesis* and logical argumentation. As soon as the attempt at formally defining statecraft fails, he states:

Then we must travel some other route, starting from some other point [...] By mixing in, as it were, a game: we must bring in a large part of a great myth, and as for the rest, we must then – as in what went before – take away part from part in each case and so arrive at the summit of what we are looking for.

πάλιν τοίνυν ἐξ ἄλλης ἀρχῆς δεῖ καθ' ἑτέραν ὁδὸν πορευθῆναι τινα [...] σχεδὸν παιδιὰν ἐγκερασάμενους: συχνῶ γὰρ μέρει δεῖ μεγάλου μύθου προσχρήσασθαι, καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν δὴ, καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν, μέρος ἀεὶ μέρος ἀφαιρουμένους ἐπ' ἄκρον ἀφικνεῖσθαι τὸ ζητούμενον (268d5-e2, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

Three aspects of this introduction are noticeable. First, the playful usage of a myth is methodologically distinct from the previous usage of *diairesis* and argument. Second, there is no direct identification between game and myth; rather, the myth is the form of game chosen by the Stranger to allow the inquiry to continue; better, by using it as a game he can metaphorically concoct a mixture of playfulness and philosophy (‘*σχεδὸν*

¹¹⁹ My focus rests exclusively on occurrences of *paidia* as discursive practice. Plato presents several other instances of educational playfulness, including dramatic ‘plays’ and music (*Resp.* X.602b6-10; *Pol.* 288c1-4), convivial gatherings and rituals (*Euthyd.* 277d4-e2; *Leg.* I.646d8-648e4), and children’s games (*Leg.* I.642b2-643d4; VII.793d7-794d3). The notion of ‘playing’, as imitative or representational performance that provides recreation, featured in Plato roughly the same polyvalence that it has maintained in English, French (*jouer*), and German (*spielen*). Plato’s broad notion of *paidia* thus encompasses not only its recreational aspect, but also its representational and performative features. Jaeger (1945) remains to date the best study on the connection between game (*paidia*) and education (*paideia*), not limited to children but pervasive of ancient Greek culture.

παιδιὰν ἐγκερασάμενους’).¹²⁰ He does not posit, therefore, a radical separation between *muthos* and *logos*, but rather a combination of distinct paths of argumentation and discourse, with their different levels of seriousness. Third, the Stranger explicitly invites an analytical approach to his narration, a focus on the constitutive parts of the myth in order for the political inquiry to achieve, as far as possible, its objective. Among the prevalent methodological concerns of this dialogue, the presence of a playful narration is nonetheless surprising and demands explanation. I will therefore introduce here the prevalent interpretations of mythological *paidia*, as a tool that responds to a variety of intellectual limits, before moving on to illustrate the inherent features of *paidia* as either a deceitful instrument or an educational one. I will not address the widespread and often misleading concern about the specific objects of mythological *paidia*. It has been observed that Plato *generically* presents ‘myth’ (μῦθος) as a narrative (not logical) account about objects that escape direct investigation, such as the otherworld, the gods and the mythical origins of humankind or of the cosmos.¹²¹ Nonetheless, the presence of none of these objects justifies the conception of myth as a *playful* (not only narrative or unverifiable) discourse. In fact, Plato uses playful forms of discourse, throughout his corpus, to address all sorts of different objects (logical, epistemological, cosmological, and metaphysical). The meaning of *paidia* in Plato’s corpus is extremely nuanced, as a description of a playful usage of language that does not coincide *immediately* with myths or childish fables.¹²² The presence of *paidia* within a philosophical inquiry, by consequence, must be explained not as dependent on inherently ‘mythical’ objects (however defined), but as related to the interlocutors’ intellectual abilities and psychological dispositions. This chapter thus addresses the *formal* and *educational* features of playful discourses, as opposed to focusing in details on their various *contents*.

Plato held the educational value of playfulness in the highest esteem, as testified by the *Laws* (VII.803c6-8) where ‘playing the finest possible games’ (παίζοντα ὅτι καλλίστας παιδιὰς) is the mark of a good life, the condition of education (*paideia*), and

¹²⁰ Traditionally, the verb *enkerannumi* refers to the mixing of wine and water (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 8.189). It is etimologically related to *krasis/sunkrasis* (correct mixture) and *akratos* (unmixed, in the sense of either pure element or disjointed plexus). It thus echoes the combination of images addressed in Chapter 2, but refers more broadly to the interrelation of playful images and philosophy.

¹²¹ Brisson (2004), pp.15-16. Plato, however, often blurs the distinction between μῦθος and λόγος (e.g. *Gorg.* 523a1-3; *Tim.* 29c4-d2). The category of myth, like that of image, is always fluid and polyvalent, and determinations of its meaning vary in different contexts. Cf. Morgan, 2000, pp.156-161.

¹²² On the historical trend of regarding myths as children’s fables and old wives tales in Classical Athens, see Friedländer (1969a), pp.171-173; Brisson (2004), pp.16-17 and 19; cf. *Phaedr.* 229b-230a, *Lysis* 205b-d.

thus the duty (δεῖν) of ideal citizens. Throughout his corpus, Plato associates *paidia* in particular with images and imitations, with constant concern about their educational role. Just like dramatic plays consist in the imitation of certain aspects of real life on the stage,¹²³ and children's games often replicate, in an enjoyable way, the more serious activities of adult life,¹²⁴ so all imitative and performative arts belong to the realm of playfulness. In the *Republic* (X.600e), for instance, Socrates compares the poets to painters, presenting them as 'imitators of images of virtue' (μιμητὰς εἰδώλων ἀρετῆς)¹²⁵ and arguing that 'imitation is a kind of play, not a serious effort' (εἶναι παιδίαν τινα καὶ οὐ σπουδὴν τὴν μίμησιν), both because it does not necessarily entail adequate and effortful knowledge of the object it imitates and because it is pleasant and charming. Similarly, in the *Sophist* (234b), the Stranger presents the 'imitative' art (τὸ μιμητικόν), such as that of painters or of capable sophists, as the most skilful and enjoyable form of 'play' (παιδιᾶς). In the *Statesman* (288c), moreover, he includes all sorts of arts that produce 'imitations' (μιμήματα), like 'painting' (γραφικὴν) and 'music' (μουσικῆ), under the category of 'game' (παίγνιον). In general terms, the notion of game entails the idea that a more serious or real object is being imitated or presented in images, for the sake of pleasure and artistic charm, without effort and complete seriousness, as well as without a rational guarantee that the playful image is a faithful or exact replica of reality.

This notion applies as much to the *literal* creation of images and representations, as to the production of discourses that try to replicate, through language, a particular object of serious discussion and to persuade about its truth. Friedländer (1969a) observed that, if we accept that any production of written discourses is akin to a playful creation of images, without serious claims to complete theoretical closure, then Plato's entire written production can be read as a *paidia*.¹²⁶ The writing of dialogues, to Friedländer, is distinct from the serious efforts of a philosophical life, 'and yet serious play – precisely because it is related, under the aspect of imitation, to genuine seriousness' and thus constitutes 'in some way, a form of education' (p.123). Recent Platonic research, accordingly, is increasingly acknowledging that Plato's notions of imitation and playful image-making are not inherently negative, but are positive when

¹²³ *Resp.* X.602b6-10; cf. *Ion* 535d-536d.

¹²⁴ *Leg.* I.642b2-643d4.

¹²⁵ Poets as the traditional educators and teachers of virtue: Detienne (2006).

¹²⁶ Cf. *Phaedr.* 276b-277a.

the imitation is adequately performed and its object itself is good.¹²⁷ Plato's reliance on rhetorical and poetical forms of expression, despite his recurring criticism of rhetoric and traditional poetry, becomes theoretically consistent insofar as it constitutes a playful attempt to imitate more serious objects of knowledge and to represent his philosophical ideals of a good life. However, the specific definition of an imitation or a discourse as a *paidia* is inherently problematic, because it emphasises the idea that the imitator or the speaker is not acting purely for the sake of truth and may be attempting to charm or, as I will show, even deceive his addressees. I will thus show that *paidia* is an inherently ambivalent instrument, which can serve both as a delusionary tool and as a cognitive stimulus.

A brief methodological note is opportune. My interpretation of *paidia* in the *Statesman* will be focused on its function as educational instrument, whose foremost characteristic is puzzling ambivalence. I will thus emphasise the relation of *paidia* to the presence of *contradictory* elements within a single account and outline the cognitive effects that Plato credits to them. Nonetheless, the object of this study is specifically a narration, not a sequence of logical arguments; therefore, I am not directly concerned with broader theoretical issues about Plato's understanding of contradiction and logical consistency. Various passages from Plato's corpus testify his awareness of the principle of non-contradiction and of its logical and rhetorical efficacy in evaluating the soundness of an argument. In particular, in the *Republic* this principle grounds the distinction of different parts within the human soul, because this is subjected to contradictory impulses (IV.436b-c); and in the *Sophist* it constitutes the main tool of the art of refutation, namely the capacity to reveal implicit contradictions in an interlocutor's statement (230b). Besides these major examples, many other passages rely on the principle of non-contradiction as a logical, and even demonstrative, tool, such as for the contradiction between life and death in the *Phaedo* (102e-105e) or the opposition of pains and pleasures, as well as illness and health, in the *Gorgias* (496e).¹²⁸

¹²⁷ E.g. Notomi (2011); Normandeu (2008); Napolitano Valditara (2007); Lodge (1947). I cannot explore here the full range of 'positive' imitations or clarify this notion in detail. Suffice it to notice that while to Plato imitations are ontologically inferior to the reality they represent (e.g. *Resp.* X.596d-598d; *Symp.* 211e-212a; *Tim.* 28e-29d) they are also valuable when they succeed in replicating positive objects such as the Forms, the harmonious cosmic order, the gods, or the life of the wise. E.g.: sensible universe as imitation of intelligible reality: *Tim.* 28c-31a; 39e; 48e-49a. Cosmic time as the moving image of eternity: 38a. Human body as partial imitation of the cosmic body: 44d. Minor gods imitating the Divine Artificer: 41c; 42e; 69c. Moral and intellectual excellence as imitation of the gods or of the Forms: *Phaedr.* 253b-c; *Resp.* 500c; *Tim.* 47a-c. Best constitutions as imitation of the rule of the gods or of the wise: *Leg.* 713b; 817b; *Pol.* 293e.

¹²⁸ Cf. Napolitano Valditara, 2010, pp.123-132. Napolitano Valditara speaks of a 'heuristic usage of contradiction' (p.126) insofar as, given a pair of contradictory statements (A and -A) and in absence of a

However, Plato never formulated this principle in a rigorous and explicit fashion. Moreover, different modes of contradiction and conceptual oppositions appear in different dialogues (and are assessed differently by different characters).¹²⁹ It is certainly possible to reconstruct Plato's broader stance on contradiction as a logical and rhetorical tool, but my focus in this chapter (as in my whole thesis) is purely contextual, and directed at one *educational* usage of ambivalence. Contextual evaluation is always fundamental further to enlighten Plato's writing. Plato's interests, at least in this dialogue, are indeed not only focused on the logical soundness of arguments but also on the psychological (cognitive *and* emotional) effects of discourses. The purpose of this chapter, thus, is to reconstruct these effects in the context of the *Statesman* alone and in relation to the narrative ambivalence of its myth.

3.1. *Paidia as Response to Intellectual Limits: Recent Scholarly Contributions*

A large number of scholars interpret the myth of the *Statesman* as either a concession to Young Socrates's intellectual immaturity, an acknowledgment of cognitive limits in the large majority of people, or a hypothetical and moderate discourse whereby philosophers themselves acknowledge their own limitations. In this sense, it is called a *paidia* because it addresses individuals whose intellectual limits, or unruly emotional dispositions, can be compared to those of immature children (*παῖδες*). It is also an appropriate description of myth, if we interpret it as the telling of fables and stories of the kind that are addressed to children, in strict contrast with the argumentative rigour of dialectic. As anticipated, Brisson is the major supporter of this interpretation, as he identifies Plato's myths exclusively as rhetorical instruments to persuade irrational individuals and multitudes and lead them, through a non rational influence, towards rational behaviours and opinions.¹³⁰ Other interpreters read the role of myth and *paidia* as a response to universal cognitive limits that affect philosophers as well, whenever the object of philosophical discourse lies beyond the reach of discursive reason. This

third alternative, demonstrating that one (A) is self-contradictory means demonstrating *ad absurdum* the truth of the other (-A).

¹²⁹ Napolitano Valditara (2010) observes, for instance, that in Plato's corpus some polar opposites are presented as contradictory and without middle-ground (e.g. health and illness, good and evil, or life and death) and others as extremes of a fluctuation band (e.g. pain and pleasure, whose middle-ground is quietness, or black and white, whose middle-ground is grey; pp.124-126). Precise contextual evaluation is always necessary to establish what kind of opposition or contradiction is addressed in any dialogue. Cf. Lloyd (1966) on the ancient Greek notion of polarity as foundational of, but also distinct from, a scientific understanding of contradiction.

¹³⁰ Brisson, 1998, p.75; 2004, p.19.

interpretation is supported, for instance, by Morgan (2000) and Lane (1998).¹³¹ All these approaches find solid textual evidence in the *Statesman*. The Eleatic Stranger explicitly refers to his interlocutor's youth as a reason for him to accept 'childish games' (παιδιᾶς, 268e5). Immediately afterwards, he claims that myths about human origins are apt to largest 'multitudes' (πολλῶν, 271b3), who nonetheless tend to 'wrongly mistrust' them (οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἀπιστοῦνται, *ibid.*). He thus recommends myths as valid ways to produce in the multitudes, if not philosophical knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), at least a level of trust (πίστις) in correct opinions.¹³² However, he also considers his myth as a valid contribution to dialectic, capable of saving his political argument (λόγον, 268d3) from failing, and of allowing himself and Young Socrates 'to see how great our mistake was' (πρὸς τὸ κατιδεῖν ὅσον ἡμάρτομεν, 274e1-3). While the first two interpretations may be seen as compatible, insofar as youths and unphilosophical multitudes may be conceived as equally 'immature', the third instance is certainly more problematic. In fact, it requires us to accept that philosophical inquiry, i.e. a search for knowledge, benefits from the playful telling of myths.

As Morgan (2000) demonstrates, this is not a unique case in Plato's corpus, because Plato has frequently represented mature philosophers as relying on playful discourses as they inquire into extremely weighty matters (pp.164-184). For instance, the effortful succession of opposite metaphysical arguments about Being and Non-Being, in the *Parmenides*, is considered by the leading character, an aged and venerable philosopher, a 'laborious game' (πραγματειώδη παιδιάν, 137b2). Similarly, the cosmological account of the *Timaeus* is called by the eponymous character, himself aged and knowledgeable, a 'measured and wise game' (μέτριον [...] παιδιάν καὶ φρόνιμον, 59d1-2) as well as a myth.¹³³ In both cases, the term *paidia* is employed by mature philosophers in order to acknowledge *their own* cognitive limits, in relation to complex objects of inquiry. The *Parmenides* deals, through logical tools, with the metaphysical problem and contradictory ideas about Being and Non-Being, and is ultimately aporetic. The *Timaeus*, instead, describes the ethical order of the empirical universe, an ever-changing object that lacks the clarity and stability of eternal intellectual realities such as mathematical and geometrical objects (29b5-d2). In both cases, the characters do not claim complete knowledge of the object of inquiry, and they rely on tentative forms of discourse without excessively serious claims to definitive

¹³¹ Morgan 2000, pp.164-184; Lane 1998, pp.115-117.

¹³² Cf. *Pol.* 304c10-d3.

¹³³ E.g. *Tim.* 29c4-d2.

truth. Similarly, in the *Philebus* (28c1-4 and 30e6-7), Socrates judges the role of playfulness in describing the cosmic order as ‘a relief from the seriousness’ (ἀνάπαυλα [...] τῆς σπουδῆς, 30e6) of weighty inquiries, because it does not entail claims of complete knowledge. It does not matter whether a discourse is addressed to logical, metaphysical, or cosmological issues, for Plato to call it playful. The essential feature of *paidia*, rather, is the interlocutors’ disavowal of a *direct* attempt to attain complete knowledge. This is the fundamental reason why, in Plato, *paidia* can assume the different nuances of ‘play’, ‘wordplay’, or ‘jest’: such forms of language do not express definitive knowledge, but constitute *indirect* discursive attempts to achieve some cognitive gain. In this sense, the status of *paidia* as a philosophical instrument can be assimilated to forms of *paidia* addressed to immature individuals, because certain objects hinder even the intellectual reach of expert philosophers. It is, thus, a measured and moderate discursive practice, appropriate to complex objects of which no complete knowledge is (for different reasons) available.

I thus agree with Morgan (2000) that *paidia* is a discursive response to different intellectual limits, be they subjective and provisional or part of human nature. Morgan observes that *paidia* can be either addressed by skilled philosophers to immature subjects, in order to encourage them to persist in an effortful inquiry (e.g. *Euthyd.* 277d4-e2; 278b2-c7), or consciously adopted by philosophers themselves, in acknowledgment that their own knowledge is limited and fallible. In particular, she has remarked that the intellectual status of philosophers is child-like, to Plato, when compared to realities such as the immortal soul and the divine order of the cosmos, with their immense time scales and metaphysical complexity (pp.176-179; cf. *Resp.* 498d3-6; *Leg.* 803b3-804b4). For this notion, I add, Plato seems to have expanded an idea already present in Greek culture and expressed most vividly by Heraclitus (DK B79): ‘Man is called an infant by god, just as a child is by man’ (ἄνθρωπος νήπιος ἤκουσε πρὸς δαίμονος ὅκωσπερ παῖς πρὸς ἄνδρός).¹³⁴ In either case, Morgan remarks, *paidia* and myth serve to ‘ward off certainty and keep the philosophical quest alive in terms that acknowledge its fragility’ (p.184). While an abundance of dialogues can show how widespread this

¹³⁴ Plato frequently insists on the association between quasi-religious accounts and the child-like status of human beings. In the *Timaeus* (22b), for instance, an Egyptian priest claims that the Greeks are ‘always children’ (ἀεὶ παῖδες) and ‘young in soul’ (νέοι [...] τὰς ψυχὰς) because they lack memory of their heroic past and periodically lose their cultural memory due to recurring catastrophes. In the *Statesman* (270e), similarly, the direct intervention of the supreme god in the cosmic order causes animals and humans literally to grow ‘younger and more tender’ (νεώτερον καὶ ἀπαλώτερον), slowly reverting to the state of newborns ‘both in relation to the soul and to the body’ (κατὰ τε τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα), and losing all memory of their past (272a).

conception is in Plato's corpus,¹³⁵ it is sufficient to observe here that this definition applies perfectly to the myth of the *Statesman*, as philosophical tool. Its role, indeed, is to save the argument from failure and to allow the inquiry to continue, while at the same time acknowledging that the myth is addressing a problematic object without any pretence of complete knowledge. The object of this myth is exactly the same as that of the *Timaeus*: the condition of the universe in relation to both the divinity and humankind. I stress the fact that such object is not only cosmological, treated as a tentative hypothesis, but also ethical, treated as an emotionally and intellectually straining account of the human position in the universe. Both in the *Timaeus* and in the *Statesman*, indeed, humanity stands in an 'imitative' relation to the cosmic order (*Tim.* 44d; *Pol.* 274d-e), whereby the human micro-cosmos reflects the structure of the macro-cosmos, and depends on it for both its material sustenance and ethical happiness. It is a mark of Plato's theoretical consistency, then, that the Stranger choose to disavow knowledge about this ethical object, while at the same time considering his account a fundamental contribution to his inquiry.

However, it is not enough for a discourse to be tentative for it to be a serious game, as if its playfulness consisted purely in its hypothetical status; rather, it is necessary to identify the precise features that make it playful. Indeed, there is no compelling reason to consider a speech playful simply because it addresses objects beyond one's cognitive limits, except for the fact that the speakers may be signalling their lack of serious commitment to their own words. In fact it would have been perfectly possible, for Plato, to describe such discourses as merely hypothetical,¹³⁶ without claiming that they are games, or tricks, or jokes. Their introduction as playful, instead, does not merely demarcate a hypothetical account from a certain one, an image from what it represents, or a narration from a demonstration, but is significant in itself. I agree with Morgan that it is not enough to 'regard myth or play as the mask behind which serious wisdom lies, or as the face we put on to make philosophy palatable' (*ibid.*). It is necessary, instead, to consider *paidia* itself as *a valuable vehicle of philosophical wisdom*, endowed with specific formal characteristics and capable of

¹³⁵ E.g. *Resp.* X.621b8-c2; *Tim.* 29c4-d2; *Gorg.* 527a5-7.

¹³⁶ Cf. in particular *Resp.* VI.510c6. In a technical sense, hypotheses (*hypotheseis*) are the undemonstrated axioms of arithmetical and geometrical knowledge, used as instruments to obtain rational conclusions, but not dialectically examined. The term however does not apply exclusively to mathematical axioms, but to any tentative account that requires dialectical probing. Cf. *Phaed.* 92d6, 101d2-3 on the value and limits of hypothetical premises; *Parm.* 136a1 on the philosophical praxis of testing the soundness of all hypothetical premises, including contradictory ones (namely, the 'laborious game' introduced by Parmenides).

triggering determinate cognitive effects. In the following sections, therefore, I will analyse discursive *paidia*, in close relation to the *Statesman*, in order to determine what *formal* characteristics make it playful in Plato's terms, and why they are philosophically relevant. The importance of playfulness is testified by the fact that, in certain contexts, Plato treats it as a dangerous tool of deception and hindrance of intellectual development, while in others he elevates it to the role of an educational instrument, capable of challenging the intellect and provoking critical thought. I will thus integrate the current scholarly agreement on the serious contributions of *paidia* to Plato's philosophy, with a coherent account of its formal features; I will show that discursive *paidia* often consists in either conflation or clash of divergent ideas, which can be used, respectively, either to hinder or to stimulate the intellect.

3.2. *Paidia as Cognitive Hindrance: The Conflation of Opposites*

To Plato, one way of responding to intellectual limitations, either one's own or others', is to indulge in tricks and illusions, creating distorted images of reality. Plato often uses the term *paidia* to describe similar discursive practices, as pertaining in particular to sophistry. For instance, in the *Euthydemus*, two debaters are engaging in a series of sophistic refutations against a young man, Clinias. Socrates here describes their refutations as a playfully agonistic effort of making the interlocutor 'stumble' upon words and contradictions, thus creating the delusionary impression of being more knowledgeable than him (277d4-e2; 278b2-c7). He calls this practice a game or trick (*παιδιά*, 277d9) in order to argue that it lacks any claim to serious knowledge, because it is merely wordplay performed in an agonistic (and even *antagonistic*) spirit. In this context, the description of an account as playful does not merely entail an acknowledgment of an interlocutor's intellectual limits, but also their exploitation for antagonistic purposes. The same acceptance of sophistry as a delusionary and antagonistic trick appears in the *Sophist*, where we also find an extensive illustration of its formal features. The *Sophist* is particularly relevant in relation to the *Statesman*, insofar as they both share the same leading character and narrative scene. In both dialogues, the Stranger is educating young men through attempts at philosophical definition, and in both he introduces them to critical reflections on the cognitive value and limits of language. His definition of *paidia* as a sophistic practice in the *Sophist*, narratively prior to his usage of *paidia* itself in the *Statesman*, can therefore illuminate the features of *paidia* as a discursive practice. I will argue here that *paidia* is qualified

by the Stranger as deceitful, because it conflates opposite ideas, thus potentially hindering the intellect of the recipients.

Throughout the *Sophist*, the Stranger offers various definitions of sophistry. At 232b1-236c8, he defines it as the art of controversy (ἀντιλογικῆς τέχνης, 232e3) and disputation (ἀμφισβήτησιν, 232e4) about every possible subject (περὶ πάντων, *ibid.*). It is crucial to notice that he defines sophistry as a technique that can allow one to speak and appear knowledgeable *about everything*, insofar as the expertise in disputation can, formally, address any subject by highlighting its inherent contradictions. The Stranger holds that a claim to such totalising ability is a game, joke, or trick (παιδιᾶν, 234a8), because it creates a deceitful impression of universal knowledge by refuting everyone else's pretensions to knowledge. In the former definition, he had agreed with his young interlocutor, Theaetetus, that sophistry is an art through which people collect and compare opinions, and:

by setting them [besides one another] they show that they contradict one another about the same things, in relation to the same things and in respect to the same things

τιθέντες δὲ ἐπιδεικνύουσιν αὐτὰς αὐταῖς ἅμα περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ κατὰ ταῦτα ἐναντίας (230b7-8, tr. Burnet, *adapted*).

According to this definition, sophistry is an art of comparison that can show the logical inconsistency of opposite opinions, by pointing out implicit contradictions.¹³⁷ It is in fact similar to the skilful usage of *paradeigmata* in the *Statesman*, but opposite in purpose: while *paradeigmata* aim, by comparison, at showing similarities between concepts, sophistry compares them in order to display contradictions. In this sense, sophistry reacts to intellectual limitations, whereby contradictions are not evident, by exhibiting them (ἐπιδεικνύουσιν). The Stranger therefore considers it an art of purification (καθάρσεών, 230d7-8) from misguided opinions, in a way that aligns with the Socratic method of refutation.

But in the following definition sophistry is reframed as an art of illusion, because refutation can be applied to *any* opinion, thus creating an appearance of

¹³⁷ This passage constitutes one of the first formulations of the non-contradiction principle, which will be later formalised by Aristotle as a logical axiom: 'It is impossible for the same thing to belong and not to belong at the same time to the same thing and in the same respect' (τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ ἅμα ὑπάρχειν τε καὶ μὴ ὑπάρχειν ἀδύνατον τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτό, *Metaphysics* IV 1005b19–20). Plato however charges contradiction with further ethical implications, insofar as it underpins a state of psychological disharmony involving not only opinions, but also desires, impulses, pleasures and pains (*Soph.* 228b).

universal knowledge. Refutation is a formal procedure directed at highlighting contradiction, and therefore can be applied to all arguments *regardless of knowledge on their contents*. He vividly exaggerates this definition, by comparing it to a pictorial art that (re)produces everything that exists, including living beings, geographical features, the heavens and the gods (233d9-234a5)—in other words, the whole universe (another possible translation of πάντων). In this sense, the Stranger compares sophistry to imitative arts:

And is there any more artful or pleasant form of game than the imitative kind?

παιδιᾶς δὲ ἔχεις ἢ τι τεχνικώτερον ἢ καὶ χαριέστερον εἶδος ἢ τὸ μιμητικόν;
(234b1-2, tr. Burnet, *adapted*).

Again, the Stranger insists on describing sophistry as a playful activity. Moreover, he establishes a focus on a specific kind of playfulness, namely imitative arts and, thus, the creation of images or representations. The polyvalence of this kind of *paidia* is highlighted by Theaetetus, who at first supposes that the Stranger jokes (παιδιὰν λέγεις τινά, 234a6), and then observes that the imitative form of game is ‘very encompassing and, as it were, many-coloured’ (πάμπολυ [...] καὶ σχεδὸν ποικιλώτατον, 234b4). Notice that the Stranger’s notion of *paidia* is in no way dismissive: this form of playfulness is expert and artful, employing technical expertise towards specific results, such as (in this case) pleasant and beautiful representations. The Stranger illustrates this technical capacity through a comparison with illusionistic painting:

And so we recognize that he who professes to be able by virtue of a single art to make all things will be able by virtue of the painter's art, to make imitations which have the same names as the real things, and by showing the pictures at a distance will be able to bewitch those, among young children, who lack intellect into the belief that he is perfectly capable to accomplish in fact anything he wishes to perform.

οὐκοῦν τὸν γ' ὑπισχνούμενον δυνατόν εἶναι μᾶ τέχνη πάντα ποιεῖν γινώσκομέν που τοῦτο, ὅτι μιμήματα καὶ ὁμώνυμα τῶν ὄντων ἀπεργαζόμενος τῇ γραφικῇ τέχνῃ δυνατός ἔσται τοὺς ἀνοήτους τῶν νέων παίδων, πόρρωθεν τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐπιδεικνύς, λανθάνειν ὡς ὅτιπερ ἂν βουλευθῆ δρᾶν, τοῦτο ἰκανώτατος ὢν ἀποτελεῖν ἔργῳ (234b5-10, tr. Burnet, *adapted*).

This passage describes the trick of simulating universal knowledge as a way of showing representations from a distance (πόρρωθεν), in order to make them appear identical to the real things. It is, in fact, an art of conflation of representation and reality, whereby they become ‘namesakes’ (ὁμώνυμα) and cannot be intellectually distinguished. It is thus a way of tricking ‘those, among young children, who lack intellect (τοὺς ἀνοήτους τῶν νέων παίδων)’ into believing in the reality of mere appearances. It creates the appearance that the trickster is perfectly capable or, better, perfectly adequate (ικανώτατος) to the task of representing precisely every reality. Notice that the Stranger does not claim that all children are subject to potential deception, but only those that fail to pay attention to the cognitive conditions that allow deception, so that there is no *inherent* and *necessary* bond between childhood (or childishness) and playfulness, but only a contingent one based on an intellectual lack.

The Stranger does not explain, directly, how this conflation is produced in discourses. Instead, he illustrates it through the model¹³⁸ of a perceptual phenomenon, whereby the proportions of objects vary according to their proximity and distance from the subject who perceives them. He claims that visual artists can replicate the proportions of their object faithfully, but not all of them do:

Not those who produce some large work of sculpture or painting. For if they reproduced the true proportions of beautiful forms, the upper parts, you know, would seem smaller and the lower parts larger than they ought, because we see the former from a distance, the latter from near at hand.

οὐκ οὖν οἱ ὅσοι γε τῶν μεγάλων πού τι πλάττουσιν ἔργων ἢ γράφουσιν. εἰ γὰρ ἀποδιδόειν τὴν τῶν καλῶν ἀληθινὴν συμμετρίαν, οἷσθ’ ὅτι σμικρότερα μὲν τοῦ δέοντος τὰ ἄνω, μείζω δὲ τὰ κάτω φαίνοιτ’ ἂν διὰ τὸ τὰ μὲν πόρρωθεν, τὰ δ’ ἐγγύθεν ὑφ’ ἡμῶν ὀρᾶσθαι’ (235e5-236a2, tr. Burnet, *adapted*).

Here the Stranger appeals to a notion of right measure (which he will further articulate in the *Statesman*), by exemplifying it as a visual feature: what is appropriate (τοῦ δέοντος) to a beautiful proportion (συμμετρίαν) needs to be distorted in certain representations, if these works are sufficiently large (μεγάλων).¹³⁹ Sophistic playfulness is presented as a distorted image, an imitation that lacks the right measure and does not

¹³⁸ ‘Let us then take a clearer model about this’ (Λάβωμεν τοίνυν σαφέστερόν τι παράδειγμα περὶ τούτων, 233d3-4).

¹³⁹ The association of metaphors of distance-proximity and greatness-smallness with right measure is not typical of Plato alone. Cf. for instance Euripides’s *Ion* (585-647).

represent its object adequately. As Napolitano Valditara (2007) has recently observed, this distortion responds to aesthetic criteria that were well known in Classical Athens: visual artefacts like statues for high colonnades, pediments, and theatre backcloths require proportions to be adapted to the point of view of the observer, as they were to be observed from afar and from below.¹⁴⁰ Napolitano Valditara refers in particular to the Byzantine Tzetzes's account regarding Phidias's statue of Athena (*Chil.* VIII 53). According to this late source, Phidias and a rival sculptor entered a contest for the creation of the most beautiful statue of the goddess Athena, which was to be placed in the Parthenon. Phidias's statue, compared to his rival's, appeared unpleasing, because its head was disproportionately big in respect to the body. But this statue was designed for a high colonnade: once observed from afar and from below, it appeared proportionate and more beautiful than Phidias's rival's. In the end, Phidias's Athena gained more appreciation from the Athenians, precisely because of an optical illusion of the kind that the Stranger describes.¹⁴¹ Plato is thus relying on conceptions of artistic illusions, in order to illustrate his conception of linguistic ones: as long as it is possible not only to *represent*, in discourses, all realities, but also to *distort* them, by relying on inherent cognitive limits of the recipients, imitation can turn into deception. The Stranger, accordingly, considers those who produce similar effects as 'illusionists' or, more literally 'wonder-workers' (θαυματοποιῶν, 235b5), insofar as their conflation of opposite impressions puzzles the intellect. Therefore, representation can be realised either respecting the proportions of its model, regardless of how they may appear to a distant observer, or disregarding them, in order to produce a pleasant but false subjective impression. In the former case, the Stranger names it *iconic* (εἰκαστικήν, 236c7) representation, insofar as it produces faithful images (εἰκόνα, 236c3); in the latter, he names it *fantastic* (φανταστικήν, 236c7), because it realises a delusionary apparition (φάντασμα, 236c3).¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Napolitano Valditara, 2007, pp.13-14. Napolitano's study of the aesthetics of visual illusion in Ancient Greece provides further evidence for the Greeks' 'geometrically well-founded' awareness of visual distortion and projection of shapes, in pre-Classical and Classical times (pp.12-13, tr. mine). Cf. Thales, DK11A1 = Plinius, *Natural History* XXXV 1,82 = D.L. I 27; Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae*, v.652. See also: Schuhl 1933, pp.77-78.

¹⁴¹ The Byzantine source dates to the XII Century C.E., and cannot be considered direct historical evidence. The convergence of the two aesthetical phenomena described by Tzetzes and Plato, however, is undeniable. Even if the anecdote about Phidias cannot be taken as documenting a historical fact, it provides accessory evidence of technical reflections on the aesthetics of vision in Classical Greece.

¹⁴² Cf. Notomi, 2011.

The fundamental idea expressed by this model is that sophistic illusions produce a conflation of opposite determinations. The Stranger indeed focuses on a series of polarities on which the art of illusion relies:

<i>Position of the illusionistic work</i>	Up-down (ἄνω-κάτω)
<i>Dimensions of the work</i>	Smaller-larger (σμικρότερα-μείζω)
<i>Position of the observer</i>	Distance-closeness (πόρρωθεν-ἐγγύθεν)
<i>Illusion</i>	Imitations-realities (μιμήματα-ὄντων)

He chooses the example of optical illusions, of the kind attributed to Phidias, in order to furnish a perceptual analogy for the conceptual and discursive conflation of polar opposites. The apparent dimensions of larger and smaller objects can shift and be inverted, based on their position of height-lowness or distance-closeness, relative to the observer. The perspectival deceit produced by visual illusions underscores, to the Stranger, the fundamental cognitive limit of a purely subjective position, whereby the subjects content themselves with the contingent *appearance* of beautiful proportions. In order for an illusionistic form to remain proportionate, it is necessary that the observers be bound to a specific point of view, *far from and below* the image they observe. Only such a distance, combined with an inherent cognitive limit of the human perception, allows the illusionist to conflate greatness and smallness. An analogous phenomenon, the Stranger holds, affects the human intellect, when the discourses it receives or has recourse to do not allow it to distinguish between contradictory ideas.¹⁴³ In this sense, the sophistic expertise in controversy and debate can be bent to a pure trick that, far from exposing contradictions, conflates them and exploits a natural difficulty in distinguishing them.

The Stranger's educational concern with the experience of a deceived mind is seemingly the reason why he only provides an illustrative model, and not further concrete accounts. He is not concerned with explaining which specific discourses conflate ideas or what features they possess. His prime aim, rather, is to invite his interlocutor to maintain a critical attitude towards discourses in general, and to allow for the possibility that any discourse might, upon *closer* scrutiny, create opposite opinions:

¹⁴³ On the art of controversy as game, cf. *Phaedr.* 261c4-262c2. Socrates here defines this art as the ability to deceive the hearers by exploiting similarities between different and even opposite ideas, in order to make them appear the same and produce a cognitive 'experience' or 'condition' (πάθος 262b3) of delusion. At 262d2 he describes it as a kind of wordplay (προσπαίζων ἐν λόγοις).

Many among the hearers, Theaetetus, when they have lived longer and grown older, will by necessity come closer to realities and will be forced by experience openly to lay hold on realities; they will have to overturn the opinions which they had at first accepted, so that what was great will appear small and what was easy, difficult, and all the apparent truths in arguments will be turned upside-down by the facts that have come upon them in practical actions. Is not this true?

τοὺς πολλοὺς οὖν, ὃ Θεαίτητε, τῶν τότε ἀκουόντων ἄρ' οὐκ ἀνάγκη χρόνου τε ἐπελθόντος αὐτοῖς ἱκανοῦ καὶ προϊούσης ἡλικίας τοῖς τε οὔσι προσπίπτοντας ἐγγύθεν καὶ διὰ παθημάτων ἀναγκαζομένους ἐναργῶς ἐφάπτεσθαι τῶν ὄντων, μεταβάλλειν τὰς τότε γενομένας δόξας, ὥστε σμικρὰ μὲν φαίνεσθαι τὰ μεγάλα, χαλεπὰ δὲ τὰ ῥάδια, καὶ πάντα πάντη ἀνατετράφθαι τὰ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις φαντάσματα ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν ἔργων παραγενομένων; (*Soph.* 234d2-e2, tr. Burnet, *adapted*).

Like in the *Statesman* (277d7), the Stranger's philosophical focus is on cognitive 'experiences' or 'conditions' (παθημάτων). He is not interested in defining *how* the conflation of divergent opinions is produced by sophistry. He provides, instead, an experiential criterion for recognising *when* this conflation has been produced: the passing of time and a closer (ἐγγύθεν) scrutiny of reality can in fact overturn (μεταβάλλειν) former opinions, thus revealing them for what they are—illusions. The Stranger argues that, in a sense, aging brings about a level of disillusionment, as accumulation of conflicting opinions without necessary resolution. Notice that this experience is not one of direct acquisition of knowledge, but a troubling one, which radically subverts appearances by its compelling force (ἀνάγκη). There is no implication that aging, as such, leads to more *knowledge*: the lived experience is simply said to *overturn* the opinions (δόξας) and verbal apparitions (ἐν τοῖς λόγοις φαντάσματα) that the subject formerly held true. They do not cease to be opinions and images, as the perceived proportion of a work of art, even when seen closely, does not cease to be perceptual impressions. The delusion produced by the trick of conflation, then, is not revealed through a direct reference to the represented object itself, namely by showing the original and pointing out that its image is different from it. It is rather demystified through a *cognitive experience* of disorientation and subversion of opinions, originated by close scrutiny. The revelatory mark of delusionary tricks is not their inadequacy to the represented object, but the confusing distortion of opinions they produce, by

exploiting *inherent cognitive limits* of the human mind. In this sense, the Stranger actually addresses intellectual limits that are not peculiar to youth alone. Proper of (some) youths is only a lack of critical attitude towards general limitations both of discourses and of the subjective mind. Instead, the cognitive state of confusion that ensues from increased experience pertains to a more general majority (τοὺς πολλοὺς), which is equally untrained in judging what is true and is lost between conflicting impressions.

Napolitano Valditara (2007) has observed that the Stranger's criticism of sophistry is parallel to Socrates's criticism of poetry in the *Republic*, and teases out the same cognitive problem: the difficulty for the human intellect to measure correctly contradictory appearances.¹⁴⁴ At X.602c-603b, Socrates argues that the rational faculty of the human mind has inherent cognitive limits, and exemplifies it through visual models. He points out that the same magnitude can appear greater or smaller based on the observer's distance, that the same object can appear either curved or straight when it is observed either in the water or out, and that other optical illusions can make it appear concave or convex (602c-d). This distortion, he highlights, exists only in the mind, and it can be counteracted by measuring the object (602d-e). However, and here is the crux of the argument:

Even when this [rational faculty] has measured and indicates that some things are bigger or smaller than the others, or equal, often opposite appearances are presented at the same time about the same things.

τούτω δὲ πολλάκις μετρήσαντι καὶ σημαίνοντι μείζω ἅττα εἶναι ἢ ἐλάττω ἕτερα ἑτέρων ἢ ἴσα τὰναντία φαίνεται ἅμα περὶ ταῦτά.

(602e4-6, tr. Burnet, *adapted*)

Even rational measurement is not sufficient to dispel the natural appearance of opposite determinations regarding the same object. Socrates's visual example, like the Stranger's, is meant to address the intrinsic cognitive limitation that allows certain speakers (sophists or poets) to persuade through deceitful accounts. The intellect does never fully dispel illusions and contradictory impressions, and this is an *inherent trait* of the human mind. Just like human sight is open to perspectival illusions, so the mind is prone to being confused by implicitly contradictory discourses even when the intellect

¹⁴⁴ Notomi (2011) also draws a parallelism between *Resp. X* and *Soph.*, but he limits his observations to the distinction between iconic and fantastic images.

has measured them. Compatibly with the Stranger's account, it seems legitimate to credit Plato with the persuasion that the human intellect is limited *not only* in the sense that it does not possess a complete, totalising or 'divine' knowledge of reality, but in the more radical sense that it remains constantly open to the possibility of deceit dictated by the difficulty to judge correctly contradictory ideas. The remedy against this condition, explicitly pointed out by the Stranger, is not just seeking an objective correspondence between image and reality, but rather preserving a watchful, critical attitude and being aware that the need to measure the images that affect our minds never subsides.

The context of the Stranger's account is, again, educational, insofar as he is concerned with practices of cognitive disillusionment. In the former definition of sophistry, the exhibition of implicit contradictions performed an educational role, insofar as it exposed the inconsistent adherence to divergent ideas. Conversely, here, the same cognitive experience prevents the trick of *deceitful* sophistry from being effective, by exposing it as an illusion. In both cases, however, the experience does not lead to stable knowledge of the truth, but it reveals the subversive relativity of partial points of view. Like the subjective perception of proportion or disproportion, exemplified by great sculptures and paintings, the experience of conflicting opinions simply marks a shifting point of view, and does not provide a definitive criterion of judgment. Accordingly, the Stranger's educational purpose is to lead the young Theaetetus 'as close as possible (ὡς ἐγγύτατα, 234e6) to a sound judgment, even 'without those experiences' (ἄνευ τῶν παθημάτων, *ibid.*) that would trouble him if happened upon 'in practical actions' (ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν, 234e2). Like in the *Statesman*, his purpose is to put a young mind to the test, by exploring in dialogue (and not in *praxis*) the consistency and stability of its opinions. The Stranger's description of *paidia*, ultimately, is an invitation to attain a more critical awareness concerning 'great' and complex objects of discourse and to pay close attention to implicit contradictions.

In the *Sophist*, then, *paidia* appears in a strongly negative role, as a trick played on inexperienced minds, unaware of their own cognitive limits. It is a bewitching act addressed in particular to children and youths, because their lack of experience *can* lead them to disregard the implicit conflict of divergent ideas as well as the inherent relativity of their own perspective. It is an image that lacks the right measure, because its proportions are distorted in order to disguise implicit contradictions. However, this does not mean that it is described as childish, in a pejorative sense. In fact, first, it requires skilful ability, in order to produce a technical conflation of opposite ideas, like

‘great and small’, ‘difficult and easy’ and, ultimately, ‘image and reality’. Second, it does not rely on the recipients’ young age *per se*, but rather on a lack of critical awareness and close scrutiny, which *depends* on inexperience but which can also be counteracted by philosophical education. This counteracting, I wish to highlight, does not consist in a definitive possession of truth, but rather in the awareness of one’s own cognitive limitations and of the need for critical judgment. *Paidia* is therefore a practice that a philosopher needs to take very seriously, because it has the potential of deceiving the uncritical mind and hindering its judgment. Formally, its deceptive potential depends on two conditions:

(a) the artful conflation of opposite ideas, on the deceiver’s part;

(b) the lack of a critical intellect and of close scrutiny on the recipient’s part.

The kind of philosophical awareness required by the Stranger is, above all, a recognition of the *inherent* limits of the intellect. Such as perception is naturally perspectival and subject to distortions, so the mind is naturally prone to confusion between inherently relative determinations. Attention to *paidia*, then, is not only recommended to immature subjects as such, but to all philosophers who concern themselves with vast and complex ideas.

3.3. Educational Paidia: Clash of Opposites as Cognitive Stimulus

Despite the Stranger’s negative judgment of *paidia* in the *Sophist*, he chooses to include it among valid philosophical methods in the *Statesman*. Different scholars have highlighted the problematic nature of this choice. Brisson, Lane, and Morgan, for instance, have remarked that the myth’s narrative form is inadequate to the demands of clear-cut distinctions of dialectic and to the acquisition of demonstrable definitions.¹⁴⁵ The problem, however, runs deeper: not only its narrative form, but also its *playful* status call its contribution to dialectic into doubt. It is true that a narrative does not organise ideas in a logical and universally necessary manner, but presents them as temporal events that unfold contingently, based on their relevance in the story. It is also true, as we have seen (Sections 1.2. and 2.2), that the myth contributes to the inquiry as an inadequate *paradeigma* of statecraft, by showing the contextual excess of the model of the herdsman. Thus, all the details of the story that transcend this limited role also seem to transcend philosophical relevance in this dialogue. However, the Stranger’s

¹⁴⁵ Brisson, 2004, p.26; Morgan, 2000, pp.258-260; Lane, 1998, pp.99-101 and 123-124.

conception of *paidia*, as exhibited in the *Sophist*, illumines a more fundamental issue: the presence of implicit contrasts between divergent ideas, which *can* be used to exploit intellectual limits to hinder the mind from critical judgment. The fact that the Stranger decides to employ a form of *paidia*, thus, underscores a more fundamental and textually sound contrast than the one between myth and argument. It reveals the difference between deceptive and educational *usages* of playful discourses. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate in what sense the Stranger can consider *paidia* an educational instrument, despite and even *thanks to* its troubling effect on the inquiring mind.

3.3.1. *Forms of Paidia throughout the Statesman*

In the *Statesman*, the Stranger does not define his own *paidia* in any explicit way. He does, however, provide different significant acceptations of this multifaceted term, in various contexts throughout the dialogue. I will explore here the four aspects of *paidia* that appear in the *Statesman* as related, respectively, to emotional impact, artistic pleasure, conflict of ideas, and philosophical testing. None of these instances refer, at least explicitly, to the usage of language, but they nonetheless show that the Stranger credits the usage of playfulness with a fundamental educational role.

At 268b1-5, he describes the emotional influence that music can exert on tame animals as a form of *paidia*. To some extent, he claims, animals ‘partake by nature in play and music’ (παιδιᾶς καὶ μουσικῆς (...) φύσει μετείληφεν). Based on this assumption, he argues that an expert herdsman can avail himself of their playful disposition in order to direct their emotional states, ‘encouraging and soothing them with his incantations’ (παραμυθεῖσθαι καὶ κηλῶν πραῦνειν). In this sense, *paidia* is related not simply to artistic activities that can procure delectation (to animals as much as to humans); but in particular to an emotional sensitivity to non rational influences, which can be used to communicate the opposite emotions of courage or calm. Both these aspects parallel, in relation to music, one of the main purposes of playful activities throughout Plato’s corpus. On the one hand, encouraging or comforting (παραμυθεῖσθαι) is a form of emotional guidance that triggers a reaction against difficulties and fears; on the other hand, soothing (πραῦνειν) guides emotions in the opposite direction, attenuating impulsive reactions of anger and aggressiveness. For instance, as Morgan notices, in the *Republic* Socrates ‘speaks of “encouraging” (παραμυθουμένη, [IV] 442a2) the spirited part of the human soul with music and

gymnastics'.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, Socrates also observes that anger can sometimes be retained and soothed (πραῦνθῆ, 440d3) by reason, just like a herdsman retains his dogs.¹⁴⁷ The Stranger maintains the same language of opposite emotional influences, but (crucially) without any direct overlap of political and emotional guidance. In fact, he is concerned with *distinguishing* the political art from pastoral guidance, because herdsmen act on their subjects from a position of intellectual superiority which is not possible (at least, not directly) in human communities. Only at the end of the *Statesman* will he identify statecraft as the art of combining the citizens' courageous and moderate dispositions (310e7-311a2); and even then, only *at the level of social interactions*, not within the individual subject. The very art of 'persuading the multitudes and crowds through the telling of myths' (τὸ πειστικὸν [...] πλῆθους τε καὶ ὄχλου διὰ μυθολογίας 304c-d), the Stranger holds, is to be entrusted to rhetoricians, whom statecraft merely directs without sharing in their expertise directly. There is no suggestion, in the *Statesman*, that *paidia* is appropriate to human communities as a *direct* non rational influence, in a way comparable to the guidance of animals. Unlike the *Republic*, the political argument of the *Statesman* is focused on the guidance of communities towards a virtuous arrangement of life, not on the guidance of individuals towards personal virtue. Consistently, *paidia* as enchantment does not appear as a valid political model of rational control of emotions, but only as an activity that *cannot* be imitated, without specification, by the statesman.

The crucial specificity of *human* communities and human playfulness is confirmed later, when the Stranger offers a definition of *paidia* in terms of artistic ornament and pleasure. Among the crafts necessary for the existence of a *polis* he includes 'play' (παίγνιον, 288c6) in the sense of artistic activity:

the sort of craft pertaining to ornament, painting, and those imitations that are completed by the use of this, and of music, which have been brought to perfection only for our pleasures.

τὸ περὶ τὸν κόσμον καὶ γραφικὴν θεῖναι καὶ ὅσα ταύτῃ προσχρώμενα καὶ μουσικῇ μιμήματα τελεῖται, πρὸς τὰς ἡδονὰς μόνον ἡμῶν ἀπειργασμένα (288c1-4, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

¹⁴⁶ Morgan, 2000, pp.165-166. Cf. also *Resp.* IV.476e1 (dialectic as a gentle exhortation to distinguish opinion and belief) and 499e1-2 (the encouragement of multitudes to embrace philosophical rule).

¹⁴⁷ Cf. also *Resp.* IV.572a, and *Leg.* V.731d1 (restraint of anger); and *Resp.* VI.501c (persuasion that calms popular indignation at the idea of philosophical rule).

Pleasures and arts are, to the Stranger, an essential part of human life—a judgment that Plato expresses in various occasions through different characters.¹⁴⁸ The notion of a political and formative role of arts is, indeed, typical of the Classical age, when poets and artists were conceived as public educators, visual representations manifested ethical, religious and social ideals, and music and dance were formative exercises for noble and fine men.¹⁴⁹ Significantly, however, artistic pleasures constitute here a social good *in themselves*, and not just a means to an end. According to the literal Greek, it is ‘towards’ (πρὸς) pleasure that arts have been ‘perfected’ (τελεῖται). Arts are a valuable part of social life ‘not for the sake of serious commitment, but for the sake of playfulness’ (οὐ γὰρ σπουδῆς οὐδὲν [...] χάριν, ἀλλὰ παιδιᾶς ἕνεκα, 288c9-10). Doubtless, in other dialogues Plato’s characters evaluate the arts also for their formative effect, but in this context they are considered exclusively as an innocent form of playfulness, and accepted without further considerations. More precisely, the distinction of playfulness and seriousness in the realm of art is the first condition of its full appreciation. It is remarkable that Plato here seems to anticipate the modern conception of ‘art for art’s sake’; but this fact does not imply a form of hedonism in contrast with his pervasive educational concerns. On the contrary, it underpins the difference between educational methods appropriate to an animal community and those adequate to humans. *Certain* artistic pleasures and leisurely imitations of reality exist to make human life pleasant, and are not used in a purely instrumental sense, unlike music as used by the herdsman. This aspect of *paidia* therefore stands in stern contrast to the former one, unless we recognise the change of perspective from all-encompassing to cooperative rule. *If* the usage of *paidia* were exerted from a position of superior understanding, it could include the direction of emotions; from a strict position of equality, instead, it exists for the sake of a pleasant life.

Notice however that visual arts *can* have a limited educational purpose, according to the Stranger. At 277c3-6, he argues for the superiority of discourse over painting and other kinds of handicrafts in illustrating philosophical ideas, but only ‘for those who are able to follow’ (τοῖς δυναμένοις ἔπεσθαι); for anyone else, instead, ‘handicrafts’ (χειρουργιῶν) of that sort are valuable non-verbal forms of expression. Consistently, at 306c10-d4 he considers painting and music as expressing, ‘in images’ (ἐν εἰδώλοις), quickness and speed of bodies, which generically entice praise. Images can represent ‘all those aspects we call beautiful’ (ὅσα καλὰ [...] λέγομεν, 306c7) in a

¹⁴⁸ E.g. *Phil.* 50e-53c; *Leg.* 635e4-636e3 and 795d6-817e4. Cf. also *Criti.* 116b2-5.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Havelock, C. M. 1978, pp.102-103; Detienne, 2006.

human body, expressing qualities that lead people to praise them (ἐπαινοῦντος, 306d4).¹⁵⁰ The Stranger thus considers them an adequate, if limited, example of what people appreciate as part of a virtuous and noble disposition. In this sense, the arts *can* instruct non-philosophers, displaying certain ethical behaviours and influencing ethical judgments. They can therefore be elevated, in the appropriate context, to educational instruments. This fact, though, does not alter his former definition of arts as playful activities, because they are considered a form of *paidia* for the pleasure they produce, *and for it alone*, not for their instructive potential. Conversely, it is not their playfulness that gives them educational value, but their illustrative and expressive potential (not dissimilar, in this respect, to that of graphic signs in general, including letters, but enhanced by the emotional impact of their expressivity).

The Stranger's focus on human communities, then, would seem to relegate *paidia* outside of philosophy, at least in the strict sense of intellectually demanding inquiry. But in fact he also embraces a notion of game that relates to the theoretical field. At 307d6, he uses the term *paidia* to describe the cognitively troubling conflict between courage and moderation. Claiming that two virtues can conflict, to him, is indeed a 'puzzling account' (θαυμαστόν [...] λόγον, 306b6), a discourse that triggers a level of confusion or puzzlement. Both courage and moderation, the Stranger claims, are generally considered and praised as parts of virtue (μέρος ἐν ἀρετῆς, 306b1); but they describe radically opposite (ὑπεναντίως, 306e3) ways of life, in reference either to 'speed and vigour and quickness of thought and body' (τάχος καὶ σφοδρότητα καὶ ὀξύτητα διανοήσεώς τε καὶ σώματος 306e4-5) or to 'actions that are slow and gentle' (πράξεις αὖ βραδέα καὶ μαλακά, 307a9). The identical denomination, and equal praise, of two opposite kinds of behaviours, the Stranger remarks, is in fact easy for disputers (ἀμφισβητητικοῖς, 306a9) to criticize because it seems contradictory, and thus requires further justification. Notice that his mention of disputers is parallel to his description of sophistry as an art of contradiction and dispute (ἀμφισβήτησιν) in the *Sophist* (232e4): it reflects the same ethical preoccupation with the exploitation of contradictions in an antagonistic spirit. Thus, the Stranger's concern is at once theoretical and practical. The puzzling identification of courage and moderation as virtues is a twofold linguistic practice, both descriptive and prescriptive, since it involves both the problematic equal

¹⁵⁰ See Schuhl 1933, pp.81-82 on artistic expressionism of psychological states (Xen., *Mem.* 3.10). See Havelock, C. M. 1978, pp.99-103 for lifelike visual arts and their ethical impact. Cf. Section 2.2.

denomination¹⁵¹ of opposite sets of behaviour and the mutual praise or blame of opposite social groups.¹⁵² Their potential contrast, in parallel, hinders both a correct denomination, based on the recognition of what the two virtues have in common, and a peaceful coexistence of people with opposite dispositions:

For I think because of their affinity to either set of qualities, they praise some things as belonging to their own kin, and censure those of their opponents as alien, and engage in a great deal of hostility towards each other, and about a many great things.

κατὰ γὰρ οἶμαι τὴν αὐτῶν ἑκατέροις συγγένειαν τὰ μὲν ἐπαινοῦντες ὡς οἰκεῖα σφέτερα, τὰ δὲ τῶν διαφόρων ψέγοντες ὡς ἀλλότρια, πολλὴν εἰς ἔχθραν ἀλλήλοις καὶ πολλῶν περὶ καθίστανται (307d1, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

Linguistic divergence about virtues, to the Stranger, also entails a concrete hostility (ἔχθραν) between different ways of life, because it is not a merely descriptive act, but also a performative one which evaluates a certain set of behaviours over another.

His response to the contrast, accordingly, is both theoretical and ethical. On the one hand, he appeals to the notion of right measure or timely opportunity. Either disposition should not be followed when it is ‘more untimely’ (ἀκαιρότερον, 307e7) or exceeds ‘what is appropriate’ (τοῦ δέοντος, 308a6) in a given circumstance, lest the community face impotent submission or dangerous rivalry with other communities. Rather, people of opposite inclinations should stand in mutual connection, holding the shared opinion that they are in need of each other for the benefit of their community (310e7-311a2). The prime objective of a statesman, accordingly, is to produce this univocal ethical persuasion in his subjects, not by altering their dispositions, but by directing them towards a shared endpoint: the happiness (*eudaimonia*) of the whole *polis*.¹⁵³ On the other hand, and *before* arguing for a correct political guidance, the Stranger also introduces a fundamental ethical distinction between hostility and *paidia*:

Well, this divergence between these two forms [of life] is a game; but in relation to the greatest concerns it happens to become a malady which is the most hateful of all for cities.

¹⁵¹ E.g. ‘saying’ (λέγοντες, 307a4); ‘we say’ (φαμεν, 307a7); ‘imparting names’ (ἀπονέμοντες τοῖς ὀνόμασιν, 307b7).

¹⁵² E.g. ‘we praise’ (ἐπαινοῦμεν, 306e11); ‘exalting’ (ἀγασθέντες, 307a8); ‘we blame’ (ψέγομεν, 307b6); ‘they praise’ (ἐπαινοῦντες, 307d2); ‘blaming’ (ψέγοντες, 307d3).

¹⁵³ *Pol.* 272c5, 301d5, 311c8. See Section 5.3.1.

παιδιά τοίνυν αὕτη γέ τις ἡ διαφορὰ τούτων ἐστὶ τῶν εἰδῶν· περὶ δὲ τὰ μέγιστα νόσος συμβαίνει πασῶν ἐχθίστη γίγνεσθαι ταῖς πόλεσιν (307d6-8, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

Paidia stands here in opposition to hostility, conceived as a political malady ‘in relation to the organisation of life as a whole’ (περὶ ὅλην [...] τὴν τοῦ ζῆν παρασκευήν, 307e1). In this passage, the Stranger makes the remarkable claim that the opposition of ethical dispositions, as such, is not *necessarily* equal to hostility or to a detrimental condition. The possibility of a non-hostile and non-detrimental opposition is crucial to the ethical message of the *Statesman* and it constitutes a recurring concern in this dialogue. Contradictory denominations of virtue, opposite views and behaviours, to the Stranger, are not inherently disruptive or detrimental, but they can become so *if they are not correctly enacted, named and understood*. What is detrimental about opposite virtues is their tendency to lack of measure, to appear as absolutes that are always valid in any circumstance, rather than as parts of a more complex and encompassing virtue, which presents itself in opposite ways under different circumstances. Playfulness thus possesses a fundamental political value, insofar as it construes opposition as something peaceful and devoid of danger. Certainly, the Stranger’s evaluation of this form of *paidia* is very cautious, because he is wary of its possible degeneration into conflict and he calls for its accurate management by a good leader. Nonetheless, *paidia* remains a positive (if fragile) practice, in the right circumstances, insofar as it constitutes a form of peaceful and less-than-serious contrast that eschews conflict.¹⁵⁴

Finally, the Stranger credits *paidia* with a fundamental educational role in the construction of a just city. He claims that statecraft needs to discern the individuals’ ethical dispositions, distinguishing the ‘honest’ (χρηστῶν, 308d2) from the ‘base’ (κακῶν, *ibid.*) excluding (or even purging) from the city all those that are irrevocably drawn towards godlessness,¹⁵⁵ overbearing violence, and injustice, and only combining

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *Leg.* 803a on the absence of both game (*paidia*) and education (*paideia*) in war; and 803c-e on the foundational role of life’s ‘finest games’ (καλλίστα παιδιὰς) over conflict. The leading character argues here that only leisurely exercises and games allow to develop, safely and without danger, the citizens’ virtues and skills—including the very military skills and courage that are necessary in a war.

¹⁵⁵ Plato’s violent rejection of atheism/godlessness (ἀθεότης) as unredeemable vice seems to impose a strong limit to the value he attributes to dialogue. The same judgment is the object of the entire book X of the *Laws*, and possibly reflects Plato’s own religious inclinations (cf. *Phaed.* 99c1-6; *Resp.* II.378e4-383c7; *Soph.* 266b2-4). This matter is too complex to be explored here, but it must be noticed that, while morality and religiosity are deeply entwined in Plato’s philosophy, his conception of the divine generally coincides with a principle of measure and harmony at the individual, social, and cosmic levels. It does not constitute a preference for religious belief *as such*, but an evaluation of harmony as ‘divine’ reality. Cf. *Leg.* IV.716c4-5: ‘For us god will be the measure of all things [or: of the universe] in the highest degree’ (ὁ δὲ θεὸς ἡμῖν πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἂν εἴη μάλιστα). The notion of the divinity as a principle of

those that display dispositions towards virtue (308d1-309a2). This practical distinction does not coincide with the combining art of statecraft, but is preliminary to it because it serves to exclude from the just city every individual whose dispositions are inherently lacking of measure. It is thus a fundamental test to discern the individuals' inner openness to right measure and education through game:

[Good statecraft] will first put them to the test in play, and after the test it will in turn hand them over to those with the capacity to educate them and serve it towards this particular end, itself laying down prescriptions for the educators and directing them

παιδιᾶ πρῶτον βασανιεῖ, μετὰ δὲ τὴν βᾶσανον αὖ τοῖς δυναμένοις παιδεύειν καὶ ὑπηρετεῖν πρὸς τοῦτ' αὐτὸ παραδώσει, προστάπτουσα καὶ ἐπιστατοῦσα αὐτή (308d3-6, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

Paidia performs here a propaedeutic role: it does not coincide directly with education or with political activity, but it grounds them both. The Stranger does not clarify what sort of practices he has in mind, but it is evident that he considers *paidia* a valid form of test (βᾶσανον). The Greek term *basanos* literally means 'touchstone', a tool for the identification of gold: rubbed against the touchstone, gold will impress a yellow streak and therefore reveal itself as authentic. Plato elsewhere identifies this process as a troublesome one: in the *Gorgias* (486d2-7), for instance, Socrates considers disagreement and debate, even when harsh, as a touchstone for his own convictions, insofar as an honest opposition can put him to the test. Testing, in this sense, is an activity that involves a certain level of contrast, like in the rubbing together of stone and metal, or in the conflict of opinions. But while the attitude towards conflict can be harsh and adversarial, it can also be accepted peacefully and playfully, in the conviction that opposition is not a serious matter or an end in itself, but a preliminary step towards more valuable cognitive and emotional outcomes. The acceptance of *paidia* as *basanos* is therefore consistent with the Stranger's former remark that opposition is a kind of game, when performed in a friendly spirit and not for the sake of hostility. Like in the

measure justifies the juxtaposition, in the *Statesman*, of godlessness to violence (ὑβριν) and injustice (ἀδικίαν): godlessness is not mere lack of belief in the divine order of things, but coextensive to a lack of measure within one's inner order and dispositions towards others. Plato's concern with ethical harmony, I argue, has priority over his concern with unqualified religious belief and disbelief as such. We can perhaps distinguish, to some extent, 'atheism' as a set of positive opinions regarding the gods, and 'godlessness' as an absence of divine/harmonious order. A modern, albeit certainly more flexible, version of this principle has been expressed by Gandhi: 'God is ethics and morality [...] God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist' (Y7, 5-3-25. 81; Bose, 1948). For the possibility of a dialogue between theism and atheism in Plato: Hobbs, 2017. On measure and divinity: Bontempi, 2009, pp.306-310.

former case, moreover, it reflects the Stranger's general attitude throughout the dialogue, whereby he is testing Young Socrates's philosophical inclinations. The Stranger coherently insists that a good philosophical interlocutor needs to resist the haste to reach a conclusion, as well as the difficulties of round-about discourses, never losing the sense of right measure, of their contextual opportunity and appropriateness to positive outcomes (286d4-287a6). Certain forms of discursive *paidia* constitute a *benevolent* challenge to the interlocutors.

Ultimately, to the Stranger *paidia* is always a tool of educational guidance and evaluation, at least in the political field. It can be used to guide emotions, provide valuable pleasure, furnish a way to indulge in oppositions without hostility (albeit a fragile one), and serve as a test of psychological dispositions. In the next section, I will show how this is true also of *paidia* as a philosophical instrument.

3.3.2. *Paidia as Cognitive Stimulus: The Clash of Opposites*

Throughout the *Statesman*, the Stranger exhibits different aspects of the multifaceted practice of *paidia*; but do they illuminate his otherwise unqualified usage of myth as a game? I argue that it is possible to understand the mythical *paidia* as including all these aspects, as part of a cognitive instrument. Emotional impact, artistic creation, playful opposition, and testing function are all present, and they all cooperate to produce a questioning critical attitude.

In the first place, we need to notice that the Stranger embeds three traditional stories in his elaborate narrative, with a single philosophical concern in mind:

- a) the miraculous inversion of the stars' movements;
- b) the rule of gods over all animals, including humans;
- c) the birth of all animals from the earth.

The Stranger's narrative procedure draws upon and expands three traditional motifs: the story of Atreus and Thyestes, according to which the two brothers quarrelled for the kingship over Mycenae and Zeus inverted the course of the sun and the Pleiades as a sign of his favour for the former; the tradition of the ancient kingship of Cronus over humans; and the myth of an original birth of human beings from the earth, which

traditionally served to ground claims to political autochthony.¹⁵⁶ These are not the only components of the myth, which includes complex imagery from a variety of poetical and philosophical sources, but they are the ones that the Stranger highlights explicitly. He unifies these three traditions in a single narration in order to locate them within a cohesive but ambivalent account: the universe periodically moves in opposite directions (ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου, 269a4),¹⁵⁷ either on its own or under divine guidance; consequently, the gods periodically govern the mortals and periodically abandon them to a harsh environment; and at different times the mortals either age backwards, being reborn out of the earth and growing younger, or they grow and die in the customary way. The unity of the narration reflects the Stranger's focus on a single cosmic 'event', 'experience', or 'condition' (πάθους, 269b5; πάθος, 269c1): the periodic reversal of cosmic movement, which brings along the reversal of the aging process of all animals.

The three elements of his myth, we can notice, also reflect a threefold philosophical and ethical concern with:

- a) the divinities' actions and nature;
- b) the relation between divinities and humans;
- c) the human condition within the cosmos.

All these concerns have been explored by Plato throughout most, if not all, of his works. Each involves extreme intellectual complexities in itself, and their combination in the *Statesman* exponentially increases the difficulty, insofar as they are presented as part of a single ethical problem. The originality of this myth, indeed, consists in their unification in a single picture: here reality is like a pendulum of opposite conditions that succeed one another in eternal ambivalence.

Presenting this ambivalence as a pendular oscillation, the Stranger subsumes in his narration the traditional ambiguity of primordial human ages. As Erwin Panofsky (1955) observed:

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *Menex.* 237b2ff.; Isocrates, *Panegyric* 24; Lane, 1998, pp.105-106.

¹⁵⁷ The notion of opposite movements or conditions recurs at: 249d, e; 270a, b, d, e; 271b; 273a, d, e; 274e; it returns in the account of right measure (283c, 284e) and in the description of opposite dispositions towards courage and moderation (306b, c, e; 307a, b; 309c; 310a). In particular, at 273d2 'opposite' (ἐναντίων) are the positive state of cosmic order and the detrimental condition of disharmony. It must be noticed, however, that the opposites described in the myth are not only good-bad or order-disorder, but they include the impulse of divine guidance (which providentially *establishes* the cosmic order) and the cosmic drive toward autonomy (which by necessity *tends to* increasing disorder). Cf. Stefanini, 1949, pp.223-224.

there had been, from the beginning of classical speculation, two contrasting opinions about the natural [i.e. pre-political] state of man [...] One view, termed “soft” primitivism [...] conceives of primitive life as a golden age of plenty, innocence and happiness—in other words, as civilized life purged of its vices. The other, “hard” form of primitivism conceives of primitive life as an almost sub-human existence full of terrible hardships and devoid of all comforts—in other words, as civilised life stripped of its virtues (p.297).

Vidal-Naquet (1983) has similarly noticed that the assimilation of primitive humans to animals, typical of the myth of Cronus and of the Golden Age, could be interpreted either as joyous simplicity or as bestial savagery, thus entailing an ambiguity between nostalgic and subversive political interpretations of this image (cf. Lane 1998, pp.111-113). More recently, El Murr (2010) has also interpreted the spontaneous life of the Age of Cronus in the *Statesman* as inherently ambivalent, because devoid of toils and conflicts but also of autonomous human rationality, at least in political matters (pp.293-294). It is not my purpose, here, to address directly the contents of this myth in relation to pre-Platonic literature, either seeking for recurrent cultural structures or for poetical affinities among various texts. My point is exclusively formal and regards the nature of *paidia* as an ambivalent discursive game. Whether we read this myth through the lenses of structuralism or we seek exclusively to interpret Plato’s particular philosophical stance, one *datum* is evident: this mythical account relies on deeply ambivalent images and indeed stresses them, by representing an eternally oscillating cosmic order and an equally oscillating human condition. I therefore hold that this ambivalence is the consistent trait of the imagery chosen by the Stranger, and that its availability to opposite evaluations of both the cosmic order and human life is his underlying reason for employing it.

The ambiguity of the Age of Cronus thus turns, in the Stranger’s hands, into an oscillating ambivalence that affects every level of his narration. Concerning the divinity (a), the benevolent intervention and withdrawal of the cosmic god is also the cause of terrible catastrophes. When the god assumes control of the heavens, ‘great destructions’ (φθοραὶ [...] μέγιστα, 270c11) ensue on earth; and when he withdraws, the cosmos undergoes ‘confusions and tumult and tremors’ (θορύβων τε καὶ παραχῆς [...] καὶ τῶν σεισμῶν, 273a5-6). Divine governance is thus presented as problematic, insofar as it brings about destructive consequences whenever the god assumes control or abandons his power. Cosmic autonomy is equally ambivalent, because the Stranger credits the

cosmos with wise intelligence (φρόνησιν, 269d1) but also with an ‘innate desire’ (σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία, 272e6) and a level of inherent disorder (ἀταξίας, 273b5) that slowly push it towards complete disarray (ἀνομοιότητος, 273d6).¹⁵⁸ Concerning the relationship of humans and gods (b), divine governance allows a peaceful and toil-less life but completely overrules political self-determination,¹⁵⁹ while human beings on their own are fragile¹⁶⁰ and depend on the acquisition of technical abilities to survive the harshness of nature. Concerning the human condition itself (c), the mythical autochthony appears here as a literal resurrection of human beings, whereby birth does not require unsettling sexual needs and life flows in a spontaneous way. Yet it is also subverted into an image of individuals that age backwards, in a process of physical and mental regression towards infancy: mortals ‘went back to the form of new-born children, becoming like them both in soul and in body’ (πάλιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ νεογενοῦς παιδὸς φύσιν ἀπήει, κατὰ τε τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα ἀφομοιούμενα, 270d-e). The opposite condition is equally problematic, because conflict for political rule is presented as inherent to human attempts at self-regulation: since no divine governor exists, ‘everyone now disputes this function [of kingship] with the person we are looking for’ (πάντες αὐτῆς ἀμφισβητοῦσι τῷ ζητουμένῳ τὰ νῦν, 275b2-3). Current scholarship, accordingly, is still divided between contrasting interpretations. While some scholars, such as Rowe and Brisson, see the god as ultimately providential, others, such as Lane and Kahn, evaluate human and cosmic independence from divine direction as a positive (if traumatic) condition.¹⁶¹ Similarly, the Age of Cronus has been interpreted either as an idealised, utopian figure of blissfulness or as an ironical, dystopian account of human immaturity.¹⁶² Ultimately, it is still perplexingly unclear whether the Stranger is presenting divine governance as a desirable state to be sought for, or as an impossible condition to be warded off for the sake of human autonomy.

Such a perplexing lack of clarity is not a coincidence to be explained away by choosing one or the other interpretation. In fact, I argue that it constitutes an irreducible and original aspect of this myth, which any reduction to non-Platonic imagery or to other Platonic accounts risks to obscure. The Stranger’s ambivalent narration can in fact

¹⁵⁸ Literally ‘dissimilarity’, in the sense of a lack of balanced equality of forces within its own body, which threatens to tear it apart (see Chapter 4).

¹⁵⁹ ‘There were no political constitutions’ (πολιτεῖαι τε οὐκ ἦσαν, 272a).

¹⁶⁰ ‘Humans [were] weak and defenceless’ (ἀσθενεῖς ἄνθρωποι καὶ ἀφύλακτοι, 274b7-8).

¹⁶¹ Providential divine rule: Carone, 2005; Brisson, 1995; and Rowe, 1995. Positive cosmic independence: Kahn, 2009; Morgan 2000; Lane 1998.

¹⁶² Idealistic or utopian readings: Kahn 2009; Morgan 2000; Migliori 1996. Ironical or dystopian readings: El Murr 2010; Rowe 2010; Lane 1998.

be easily construed as similar both to utopian stories and dystopian ones, to the point that highlighting one or the other kind of parallelism does not really solve the quandary. Causing perplexity is indeed the Stranger's explicit intention for using a discursive *paidia*. In psychological terms, indeed, he presents the events he narrates as perplexing or, better, puzzling (θαυμαστότερα, 269b6; θαυμαστῶν, 270b4; θαυμαστά, 270d2), as he does regarding his myth as a whole: (θαυμαστόν, 277b4). This qualification cannot be taken as a mere appeal to a generic sense of marvel triggered by a fantastic narration. In fact, the adjective *thaumaston* and the verb *thaumazein* refer to a troubling intellectual condition of puzzlement or questioning wonder causes by contradictory ideas. These terms appear repeatedly in the *Statesman*, always in association with moments of confusion that could hinder the inquiry.¹⁶³ In particular, '*thaumaston*' refers to moments of inquiry when two opposite ways of thinking about the same subject appear at the same time. As we have seen, the Stranger presents the contrast between courage and moderation as a 'puzzling account' (θαυμαστόν [...] λόγον, 306b6) because it construes two opposite sets of behaviours as equally virtuous, and can be bent to the sophistic disputation and contradiction. Similarly, at 265a8, he calls Young Socrates a 'wonderful man' (θαυμαστέ), for his apparent suggestion to follow *at the same time* two opposite paths for the theoretical division of human nature, one shorter and swifter to cover (θάπτω, 265a3), and one longer (μακροτέραν, 265a5). The sense of puzzled wonder that the Stranger describes is therefore one caused by ambivalence, whereby the mind is caught between two opposite determinations that are difficult or even impossible to disentangle.¹⁶⁴ It is the same cognitive condition described in the *Sophist* as the consequence of the deceitful *paidia* produced by sophistic 'wonder-workers' (θαυματοποιῶν, 235b5), who conflate opposite ideas in a single account and can exploit contradiction in an antagonistic spirit. The puzzlement created by the ambivalence of virtues, however, is resolved as a matter of contextual opportunity, since the Stranger argues that citizens of each disposition are only virtuous in the appropriate circumstances, and should cooperate with their opposite. Similarly, the longer and shorter ways of defining humanity are tackled separately, one at a time, and thus leave no ground for confusion. In these cases, the ambivalence is resolved by distinguishing each horn of the contrast and evaluating it separately, in different moments. By contrast, the myth is not an instrument of analytical division, but a narrative construction that

¹⁶³ 278c8; 278d7; 283b6; 283b8; 301e6; 302a2. In all these cases puzzlement is associated to intellectual or political disorientation, directly counteracted by the Stranger's dialectical clarity.

¹⁶⁴ Lane names it 'estrangement' (1998, p.114), thus recalling the second property of *paradeigmata* as estranging movement between two different perspectives. Cf. Morgan, 2000, p.259.

demands further analysis but does not, *per se*, present clear-cut distinctions. It thus enhances, rather than dissolving, the impression of intellectual puzzlement that originates from ambivalent accounts.

The mythological *paidia* creates a productive intellectual strain, a stimulus to closer philosophical inquiry. Both Plato and Aristotle famously credited the origin of philosophy precisely to puzzled wonder.¹⁶⁵ In the *Theaetetus*, the eponymous character confesses his confusion and puzzlement in the face of contradictions, and Socrates states that ‘wondering: this condition is typical of the philosopher; for there is no other origin of philosophy but this (μάλα γὰρ φιλοσόφου τοῦτο τὸ πάθος, τὸ θαυμάζειν: οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη ἀρχὴ φιλοσοφίας ἢ αὕτη, 155d). Aristotle expanded this claim in his *Metaphysics*, and construed puzzled wonder as the *historical* cause of the birth of philosophy. He argued that ‘through wondering men both in our times begin and in the origin began to philosophize’ (διὰ γὰρ τὸ θαυμάζειν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ νῦν καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἤρξαντο φιλοσοφεῖν; A.982b), stimulated by the perception of their own ignorance in relation to ‘oddities’ or ‘objects of perplexity’ (ἀτόπων), such as the rising and setting of the stars or the origin of the universe. Significantly, Aristotle himself assimilated the lover of wisdom (*philosophos*) to the lover of myths (*philomuthos*), insofar as both attractions are grounded on puzzlement: ‘so even the *philomuthos* is in a certain respect a philosopher, for myth is composed of wonders’ (διὸ καὶ ὁ φιλόμυθος φιλόσοφος πῶς ἐστίν: ὁ γὰρ μῦθος σύγκειται ἐκ θαυμασίων; *ibid.*). Notice that similar cosmological concerns are central to the myth of the *Statesman*, grounded as it is on the puzzling notion of a reversal of cosmic motions. Aristotle’s reception of Plato’s notion of wonder reflects not only the latter’s understanding of philosophical inquiry but also his appreciation of cosmological puzzles as necessary stimuli to inquiry. It must be highlighted, however, that Plato presented puzzled wonder not as the start of a historical process but only as a subjective experience, which repeats itself whenever an intellect faces unsolved contradictions.

Accordingly, Napolitano Valditara (2014) observes that, in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates credits this psychological condition to the presence of ideas that ‘fight with one another in our souls’ (μάχεται αὐτὰ αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ψυχῇ, 155b4-5), namely lead to contradictory ideas that require further distinctions. In this context, Socrates claims that unsolved contradictions can appear ‘puzzling and ridiculous’ (θαυμαστά τε καὶ

¹⁶⁵ Napolitano Valditara 2014; Berti 2008.

γελοῖα, 154b6),¹⁶⁶ and offers a ‘small model’ (σμικρὸν [...] παράδειγμα, 154c1) to clarify his claim. He imagines to compare six dice to four, and then to twelve: in the former case, the six dice are rightly said to be ‘more [πλείους]’ (than the four), in the latter they are rightly said to be ‘less [ἐλάττους]’ (than the twelve). But these claims seem to contradict a different claim on which the characters also agree, namely that nothing can ‘become greater or more in any other way than by being increased’ (μεῖζον ἢ πλεον γίγνεται ἄλλως ἢ αὐξηθέν, 154c8-9). This contradiction could be phrased as a question that would sound either as a naïve doubt or as a good puzzle: ‘How can six dice become more without increasing in number?’ The puzzling and laughable contradiction, here, is patently based on the sophistic¹⁶⁷ trick of taking the same acceptation of ‘becoming greater or more’ in two opposite senses at once: in the former case as becoming greater *than something else*, in the second as becoming greater *than oneself*.¹⁶⁸ Thus Socrates’ trick serves to reveal that the linguistic expression ‘becoming greater’ can be understood under two opposite respects, and that it is necessary to be aware of them in order to avoid a genuine contradiction of ideas (as opposed to a mere contradiction in words, due to the relative inadequacy of language). The kind of measurement in which philosophical judgment is involved is not just a determination of relative greatness and smallness, but the complex (and always context-dependent) understanding of *in what senses* or *under what respects* one and the same thing can be said to be great or small (or any other couple of relative opposites).

Therefore, the playful practice of inducing puzzlement and perplexity is philosophically fundamental, insofar as it fosters in the interlocutor the necessity of a self-aware usage of language, an attention to the implicit contradictions to which unreflective discourses might lead. As Napolitano Valditara (2014) comments:

¹⁶⁶ Notice how the reference to ridiculousness strengthens the association between play and wonder, insofar as puzzling claims may also appear as a joke. Heath (forthcoming) observes that Plato describes as laughable (γελοῖον) and ridiculous (καταγέλαστον) behaviours that include incompetence (*Gorg.* 473e6-4a2), unwarranted claims to knowledge (*Prot.* 323a7-b1), specialised knowledge that others do not recognise (*Euthphr.* 3b9-c2) and, most significantly in our context, *contradicting oneself* or being lured into *paradoxes* (e.g. *Parm.* 138c7-2; *Phil.* 14d8-e4). Morgan (2000) remarks that Socratic irony itself (namely, the practice of feigning ignorance in order to lead interlocutors into contradictions or paradoxes and thus perplex them) is associated with playfulness at *Symp.* 216e4 (Socrates as ‘being ironical and playing [or: joking]’ [εἰρωνευόμενος δὲ καὶ παίζων] throughout his entire life). Morgan thus considers irony as ‘analogous to philosophical myth’ (p.169), precisely insofar as both display a perplexing convergence of playfulness and seriousness.

¹⁶⁷ Socrates immediately refers to sophistry as an antagonistic usage of similar tricks (154e1-2).

¹⁶⁸ A comparable ‘sophistic’ contradiction is suggested by Socrates in the *Phaedo* (102c-d), where he observes that the Pythagorean Simmias can be said to be at once great and small, when he stands between Socrates and Phaedo, because he is taller than the former and shorter than the latter.

‘this state can be translated as “perplexity” [...] as long as we acknowledge *its fundamentally aporetic character*, namely the emergence of this condition, which Plato names *pathos*, in the face of hypotheses that come to “fight with one another in our soul”, as Socrates claims in the *Theatetus*, to the point [...] making one grope in the dark” (p.141, tr. mine).

Napolitano Valditara examines this psychological effect in particular with regard to logical quandaries, whereby accepted premises lead to contradictory conclusions. However, just like Aristotle will claim that objects of wonder are present as much in myths as in philosophical inquiries, so Plato explicitly includes them in the myth of the *Statesman*, even if he avoids explicit philosophical argumentation about their contradictory status. The character of the Stranger, rather than leading his interlocutor into contradiction (a typically Socratic practice), avails himself of an ambivalent account of divine actions, cosmic states, and human conditions that still possess the power of causing perplexity in those who scrutinize it closely. Like a sophistic trick, the Stranger’s myth is a playful account that triggers puzzlement in its more watchful receivers. I therefore suggest that the myth of the *Statesman* is a form of *paidia* precisely insofar as it is designed to trigger this very psychological condition, this particular cognitive-emotional state, through an accurate employment of narrative ambivalence. It cannot be reduced to a game of imagination, an emotionally persuasive device, or a simple hypothetical account that ‘imitates’ reality as closely as possible. Rather, it performs a properly philosophical function as a psychological drive towards further critical awareness, precisely because it creates a tension between opposite accounts without directly resolving it. It is, in a sense, a model of correct political leadership, but a problematic and perplexing one.

The great divide between opposite contemporary interpretations of the myth, idealised/utopian or ironical/dystopian, constitutes an effect *inherent* to *paidia* and it is intentionally designed by the Stranger. He narrates his myth in order to create a strong ambivalence within the three ethical concerns mentioned above:

- a) controlled cosmic order against autonomous tendency to disharmony;
- b) direct divine governance against human autonomy;
- c) peaceful human regression to infancy against conflictive human development.

The myth does neither promote divine governance and perfect peace nor praise the cosmic and human tendency towards disharmony and conflict. It rather puzzles its interpreters because it expresses, at once, conflicting ideas. Unlike *paradeigmata* and conceptual divisions, it does not provide any clear-cut way to judge between opposite and clashing alternatives. It simply unifies them within a single narration and offers no straightforward solution.

This fact justifies the Stranger's claim that the myth is incomplete and his refusal to judge its ethical meaning. As artful creation, compared to sculptures and paintings,¹⁶⁹ the myth is judged by the Stranger as unfinished, insofar as it does not fully clarify its subject matter: 'We have in every way failed to apply an end to our myth (πάντως τῷ μύθῳ τέλος οὐκ ἐπέθεμεν, 277b7). Precisely due to its ambivalence, it leaves the condition of the universe and of life within it unclarified, at least in terms of its ethical significance. While works of art are forms of *paidia* for the pleasure they provide when they are brought to completion (τελεῖται, 288c2), this myth has not reached its endpoint (τέλος) because it does not illustrate its object clearly enough. Accordingly, the Stranger raises the ethical question about human happiness under Cronus and Zeus, but leaves it unanswered (272b-d). The myth does not contain any *explicit* term of evaluation, and the Stranger invites Young Socrates to suspend the judgment until the appearance of an elusive 'witness' (μηνυτής, 272d3) of the human condition under Cronus. Therefore this myth is extremely different from, for instance, from the cosmological account of the *Timaeus*, which the leading character brings to an end,¹⁷⁰ by presenting a harmonious and beautiful image of the whole universe.¹⁷¹ Instead, the myth of the *Statesman* describes a cosmos caught in a pendulum between dangerous autonomy and direct divine control, whereby judging which kind of life is happier (εὐδαιμονέστερον, 272b3) becomes extremely problematic *with regard to either age*. This myth is characterised by a fundamental incompleteness because it raises ethical questions and demands evaluation of conflicting alternatives which remain unsolved.

For these reasons, the widespread interpretation of this myth as an excessive image and an insufficient narrative, namely an account that lacks of measure and fails to contribute to the political inquiry, must be corrected. In particular, Lane (1998) and

¹⁶⁹ 277a3-c3.

¹⁷⁰ *Tim.* 92c4: 'and now we may say that our account concerning the universe has reached its end-point (καὶ δὴ καὶ τέλος περὶ τοῦ παντός νῦν ἤδη τὸν λόγον ἡμῖν φῶμεν ἔχειν).

¹⁷¹ *Tim.* 92c7-8: 'greatest, most noble and beautiful, and most perfect' (μέγιστος καὶ ἄριστος κάλλιστος τε καὶ τελεώτατος).

Morgan (2000) focus on the fact that the Stranger introduces his story as a great myth (268d-e) and concludes by criticising it as an excessively great model (277a-c). Lane identifies its positive role, beyond mere correction of dialectical errors, as a methodological contribution to the inquiry: by presenting this grand image of divine government, the Stranger can introduce the notions of models and right measure that will become fundamental for the rest of the dialogue (p.101). More radically, Morgan concludes that the grandeur of this mythological narration is not suited to exact definition, and therefore inadequate and even misleading (p.261). It is certainly true that, among other things, the myth serves to present the model of herding as beyond human reach and thus inappropriate to a political perspective. Yet the cognitive role of this myth transcends methodological concerns with exactness, correct division, and even the role of models. Its purpose is precisely to trigger perplexity,¹⁷² and its relation to right measure is not just one of excess. Rather, it consists in the fact that such a perplexity, like the one triggered by the idea of dice that ‘become more’ without ‘increasing’, *calls into question* the interpreter’s very ability to measure and judge correctly. Just like a sophistic account, its manipulation of contradictions makes it difficult to evaluate opposites; but unlike it, its purpose is not to confuse or attack, but rather to trigger further philosophical awareness. The puzzled wonder fostered by opposite ideas entertained at once is precisely the (always recurrent) beginning of a philosophical attitude, a habit to question critically the implicit problems of accepted accounts. Nor is this just a matter of cognitive abilities in general, inherently irrelevant to the political argument. In fact, what the myth questions is a crucial political issue: whether a rational and benevolent leader’s control is preferable to human autonomy. The Stranger’s *paidia* is thus neither an exercise in excess and narrative magnificence, nor a leisurely theoretical puzzle, but a very precise philosophical instrument designed to tease out the ambivalence of political rule.

The fundamental feature of the myth is the presence of *unsolved* oppositions, which playfully test Young Socrates’s (and the readers’) judgment about political matters. Divine governance, the human condition, and their mutual relation are construed as ambivalent, as they involve a contrast between peaceful but submissive dependence on wise authority and a self-determined but conflictive independence. This ambivalence is both intellectually demanding and politically serious, but the game does not suggest any explicit solution. The playful frame indeed allows the Stranger to

¹⁷² Lane (1998) acknowledges the perplexing status of the myth, but reduces it to the fact that it is ‘ill-timed [and] badly-finished’ (pp.99-110).

present such a contrast in a measured, moderate way, eschewing serious diatribes about political preferences, while at the same time reinforcing the need for pondered evaluation. It does so not only through an appeal to emotions and to expectations of artistic completeness, but in particular through the vivid inclusion of unsolved quandaries. In this sense, the use of myth as *paidia* coincides more strictly with the philosophical and educational acceptations of the term. Its inner oppositions are parallel to the contrast between courage and moderation, playful insofar as it does not entail partisan divisions. Its cognitive and emotional effect of puzzlement, and the open-ended demand for ethical judgment, are parallel to the idea of a playful test.

The notion that the Stranger intentionally presents clashing ideas faces a significant objection: a clash of opposite ideas is the exact opposite of his rigorous practice of *diairesis*. In fact, the Stranger's methodological insistence on the value of *diairesis* is directed at warding off the risk of conflating opposite ideas, as well as of incorrectly distinguishing them. People who are not accustomed at dividing concepts in this way, he argues:

both throw these things together straight away, despite the degree of difference between them, thinking them alike, and correspondingly they do the opposite of this by dividing other things not according to [their proper] parts.

τοσοῦτον διαφέροντα συμβάλλουσιν εὐθὺς εἰς ταῦτόν ὅμοια νομίσαντες, καὶ τοῦναντίον αὖ τούτου δρῶσιν ἕτερα οὐ κατὰ μέρη διαιροῦντες (285a5-7, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

We have seen in Chapter 1 that the Stranger recommends distinguishing concepts that are *qualitatively* opposite, such as odd and even numbers or the masculine and feminine sexes. In this way, to him, it is possible to eschew the risk of opposing categories based on arbitrary oppositions, such as between Greeks and Barbarians. The opposite error is also possible: conflating ideas despite their divergence, as sophistry does. The Stranger describes this error metaphorically, as a 'throwing together' (συμβάλλουσιν) of different determinations. The unreflective conjunction, in language and thought, of qualitatively divergent ideas is aptly assimilated to a literal clash, as an instantaneous and disruptive event that brings together incompatible objects 'straight away' (εὐθὺς). Therefore, it seems difficult to presume that he might employ a similar practice, when he explicitly recommends avoiding it through methodological accuracy (in the *Statesman*) and critical awareness (in the *Sophist*). Nonetheless, he can conceive of the

myth itself as an appropriate method, precisely insofar as it is a distinct philosophical path, whose cognitive function is different from that of *diairesis*. The Stranger can thus present, in a different form and *for different reasons*, the same kind of clash that he criticises as inappropriate to divisions. In fact, he vividly reveals that a conceptual clash is present in his narrative:

as [the cosmos] turned upside-down and clashed, urged on by the contrary impulse both of the beginning and of the end, it produced a great tremor in itself, which in turn brought about another destruction of all sorts of animals.

ὁ δὲ μεταστρεφόμενος καὶ συμβάλλων, ἀρχῆς τε καὶ τελευτῆς ἐναντίαν ὀρμὴν ὀρμηθεὶς, σεισμὸν πολὺν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ποιῶν ἄλλην αὖ φθορὰν ζώων παντοίων ἀπηργάσατο (273a1, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

I will return on this passage below (Section 4.1). I present it here to point out that the clashing (συμβάλλων) of the cosmos is described in the same physical terms that the Stranger uses to describe clashing ideas. The clash is a physical event that can adequately describe a linguistic and cognitive experience of unsolved ambivalence. In the myth, accordingly, the clash is presented as a concrete event that arises when opposite cosmic conditions suddenly converge. Indeed, the cosmos clashes when opposite impulses converge within its body: on the one hand, the former impulse of a guiding god, and on the other its own ‘drive’ or ‘desire’ (ἐπιθυμία, 272e6) to move autonomously. By using the vivid image of a cosmic clash, the Stranger alerts us that a convergence of opposite ideas is under way: on the one hand, an orderly impulse of control, and on the other a disruptive impulse of autonomy. The Stranger is thus very transparent in his usage of clashing ideas. He is not trying, by way of sophistry, to prevent accurate divisions. On the contrary, he is vividly drawing attention to the clash as disruptive and problematic. He explicitly abandons the rigidity of divisions for the unity of a playful narrative, in order to emphasise the moment of perplexing convergence of opposites. Therefore, I am not claiming that the interpreter can be satisfied with ambiguity, and not try to attain a definitive meaning of the myth. Rather, I argue that its inherent clash must be accepted as fundamental for its cognitive efficacy, precisely insofar as it stimulates further intellectual efforts. Most importantly, it triggers the necessity to understand ideas *under different respects* (just like Socrates’s example of dice ‘becoming greater’), and not just to differentiate ideas themselves. It foreshadows the need for a more complex and important cognitive skill than *diairesis*, namely for the art of right measure as ability of critical judgment.

The myth thus reflects *all* the different acceptations of *paidia* employed by the Stranger throughout the *Statesman*, but in a distinctively cognitive sense. First, it is emotionally impactful, because it touches themes of human happiness, conflict and autonomy and questions the human condition in the cosmos. Yet it does not produce any clear-cut emotional response like courage or moderation (unlike pastoral guidance), but a state of puzzled wonder, parallel to that produced in those who are watchful enough by sophistic delusions. Second, it can be evaluated as a representative work, i.e. an image, because it represents, narratively, the condition (*πάθος*) of the cosmos and of its parts. And yet it is incomplete as such, because it does not provide a *conclusive and perfect* representation of its object, but it provokes puzzled wonder and demands the recipients' judgment. Third, it is a playful way of dealing with serious contrasts, such as control and autonomy. It does not solve the contrast, but merely makes it part of a single narrative. Finally, it is also a playful intellectual test, by which the interpreters' understanding of the cosmic order and of the human condition is called into question, without explicit resolution but also without detrimental antagonism. The fundamental result of the myth, as *paidia*, is to emphasise the intellectual limitations of its receivers, thereby provoking pondered critical reflection about the quandaries of political rule. *Paidia* thus becomes a tool of philosophical and political education, the measured mixture of seriousness and playfulness.

Conclusion

The *Statesman* shows that discursive *paidia* is a valid cognitive tool for a philosophical inquiry, provided that it is used correctly. While Plato mentions other forms of *paidia* in the sense of playful or childlike activities, I have focused here on such practices in the field of discourses. Plato indeed distinguishes incorrect and correct uses of discursive games, based on their formal features and on the purpose for which they are employed. On the one hand, an incorrect usage of *paidia* coincides with a delusionary practice, which exploits the interlocutors' intellectual limitations. In this sense, *paidia* is addressed to children, actual or metaphorical, as subjects who lack philosophical understanding to various degrees, *in order to preserve their condition of intellectual inferiority*. Plato thus condemns similar forms of discursive game as educationally detrimental. On the other hand, a correct usage of *paidia* constitutes to him a valid educational practice, which aims to *challenge* the interlocutors' intellectual limitations. It does not provide analytical or illustrative tools like *diairesis* and *paradeigmata*, but a

way of enticing puzzlement and a critical attitude. Educational *paidia*, then, is addressed to interlocutors who lack philosophical understanding of a certain subject, but it works as the opposite of a deceitful trick.

Deceitful and educational usages of *paidia* are characterised by perfectly specular determinations:

Formal determinations	Deceitful <i>paidia</i>	Educational <i>paidia</i>
<i>Internal articulation</i>	Conflation of opposite ideas	Clash of opposite ideas
<i>Cognitive effect</i>	Cognitive hindrance	Cognitive stimulus

Deceitful *paidia* is obscure in both its determinations: it is a practice of hiding contradictions and an effort of obscuring an interlocutor's intellect. On the contrary, educational *paidia* aims at revealing its inherent limits and the contrasts it includes, albeit not at resolving them. The case of the *Statesman* is exemplary in this regard: the myth presents an explicit clash of opposite ideas, in order to trigger a response of puzzled wonder. While different scholars have remarked the fundamental incompleteness and estranging features of this myth, the prevalent judgment is that they subtract from its philosophical validity and political relevance alike. But the notion of *paidia* as a two-faced device, capable of either hindering or challenging the intellect, restores its full philosophical value: a fundamental stimulus to a critical attitude.

In this chapter, I have studied the formal determinations of *paidia* as an ambivalent image, in order to attain hermeneutic instruments for interpreting how Plato concretely relies on imagery and to what ends. For the sake of clarity, I have also outlined the general contrasts within the contents of this myth: providential cosmic order against chaotic events; control against autonomy; and regression against development. Their clash is the most apparent feature of the myth, and I have argued that it performs a distinct educational role. Nonetheless, in order to demonstrate how its cognitive effect works it is necessary to analyse these contents in concrete detail. In the next chapter, therefore, I will show the internal articulation of the figure of cosmic movement, represented through the clashing images of centred balance and peripheral steering. I will thus demonstrate that the myth's ambivalence works as an effective instrument to stimulate the intellect toward autonomous conceptual gains.

Chapter 4 – Mightier than Atlas: Images of Control and Autonomy

They think they can find a new Atlas more powerful and more immortal than this, and in truth they do not think that what is good and right [*to agathon kai deon*] binds and holds together all things (*Phaed.* 99c).

Introduction

This chapter will provide a study of the cosmic imagery used by Plato in the myth of the *Statesman*. I will analyse the two-sided figure (*schema*) of the circular movement of the universe, as due either to a perfectly centred balance or to the steering action of a cosmic god. This figure is part of an intricate interweaving of cosmological and anthropological images, representing how different cosmic revolutions originate different human ages, a mythical past governed by the gods and a present deprived of divine guidance. According to the most widespread interpretation of the function of this myth, it serves merely to correct, imaginatively and playfully, a dialectical error: the excessive identification of the good statesman with a herdsman of human herds, an ideal ruler who does not exist in the actual world.¹⁷³ In particular, Lane (1998) considers it a ‘grand, childish, and inconclusive *paradeigma*’ (p.101) of statecraft, and claims that its corrective role consists precisely in portraying the herding of human beings as an excessively elaborate story about political matters. She thus claims that its imaginative narrative ‘develops a momentum and complexity of its own, unrelated to any articulation which its putative target [statecraft] might possess’ (p.120),¹⁷⁴ and makes cosmic imagery, in particular, appear puzzlingly out of place (p.122).¹⁷⁵ Lane’s position, albeit more radical than other interpretations of the myth, displays the limits of considering it merely a corrective accumulation of images that offer no *positive* contribution to the inquiry about statecraft. In fact, if we do not identify any correspondence between the complexity of images and the articulation of their object, accordingly we must deny or severely limit their cognitive value in illuminating the latter. By contrast, I will show that the carefully constructed combination of images serves to represent, *from two opposite angles*, a notion of measured, wise guidance, and thus to provide a positive cognitive gain.

¹⁷³ Kahn (2009): ‘locating the ideal ruler in a mythical age of Cronus’ (p.161); Morgan (2000): ‘the myth has revealed that the former divisions were idealistic’ (p.255); Lane (1998): ‘the temporal and cosmic gulf between our own world and the possible world of Kronos’, p.115.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Morgan (2000): ‘There is, however, a misfit between those [theoretical/methodological] ends and its narrative form’ (p.253).

¹⁷⁵ Lane’s analysis is ambiguous on this point, insofar as she also argues that the Stranger has ‘carefully constructed this artful narrative’ (p.113), but she suggests no *positive* correspondance of such a careful articulation with the object of inquiry. Instead, she argues that they are designed to alienate contemporary readers from traditional myths (p.114).

Methodologically, this approach is grounded on a specific premise: imagery can be analysed as such, and it needs to if we aim to clarify the whole set of meanings that Plato embeds in his dialogue, through forms of writing that are not limited to the logical procedures of *diairesis* and argumentation. Mythical imagery is not a preliminary account of a more rational truth located somewhere else, e.g. in other dialogues, literal accounts, or unwritten doctrines, but it can be shown to possess its own *internal* and *contextual* reasons, not directly dependent on an external *logos*.¹⁷⁶ As Napolitano Valditara (2007) has observed, ‘context, [textually reconstructed] purpose, and internal coherence’ constitute the “‘reasons’” of the image’, which determine the linguistic and cultural materials to trace *and select* in order to understand its general history and illuminate its specific meaning (pp.X-XI). In our case, the Stranger presents his myth, certainly, as a corrective instrument (274e-275c), but also as a figure of the cosmic order available to human imitation (274d-e) and thus *ethically* significant in itself.¹⁷⁷ Regarding its internal structure, the Stranger explicitly highlights its composite nature, made of ‘disseminated’ (διεσπαρμένα, 269b7)¹⁷⁸ fragments and traditional stories that, taken together, illustrate an event or condition (πάθος, 269c1) that ‘will be fitting to the demonstration of the king’ (εἰς γὰρ τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως ἀπόδειξιν πρέψει, 269c2). The Stranger’s composition of mythical imagery, therefore, certainly has a positive function, because it provides an ethical model and it illuminates the nature of statecraft by virtue of its ‘fitting’ (*prepon*), and thus ‘measured’ (*metrion*), correspondence to it. Mythical imagery thus needs to be evaluated rigorously in its own cultural contours and internal articulation, in order to show its positive significance.

My evaluation will proceed in three steps. First, I will show how the cosmic imagery is construed in the myth of the *Statesman*, identifying its specific features within the narrative context of the myth and broader cultural context. Second, I will demonstrate that the different images of cosmic balance and divine steering diverge and clash, again with reference to their cultural contours. Third, I will argue that its cognitive role derives precisely from the interweaving of two clashing, opposite images of one and the same figure, which provides a broader understanding of correct guidance and autonomous self-control.

¹⁷⁶ *Contra*: Brisson 1998, p.111; Migliori 1996, pp.217-222.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Lane, 1998, pp.109-110. Carone (2005) also highlight the ethical dimensions of the cosmological order, but not in terms of imagery.

¹⁷⁸ Lane (1998) observes that models serve to unify and compare ‘scattered’ (διεσπασμένω, 278c5) elements, but she wrongly claims that ‘no such careful juxtaposition is made in the construction of the story’ (pp.119-120). In truth, the construction of models and of the myth is methodologically the same in the *Statesman*.

4.1. *Opposite Cosmic Images: Balance and Steering*

As I have anticipated, the myth of the *Statesman* presents an exceptionally composite imagery. Not only does it describe an intricately layered story, where animal and human lives are bound to cosmic movements; not only does it merge different kinds of stories in a mosaic of human origins, divine actions, and utopian ages; but it also complicates the description of such stories with a set of different, and often divergent, metaphors and analogies. Kahn (2009) and Pender (2000) have remarked, respectively, that various images of cosmic movements and primordial ages, and different images of divine actions, converge and often overlap. Pender (2000), in particular, has argued that the ‘interweaving’ of ‘different metaphors’ within a single myth allows Plato to expand his theoretical accounts of divine activity in a nuanced, many-sided way, irreducible to any single image (p.118). In order to clarify this intricate combination of images, therefore, I will first offer a brief summary of the myth, which will allow us to locate the imagery object of this study (balance and steering) in its precise narrative context.

The Eleatic Stranger narrates that, in a remote past *and in the future*, extraordinary events happened *and will always*¹⁷⁹ *happen* to the cosmic order: drawing from a traditional story, he claims that the movement of the sun and stars once changed, *and will always change again*, its direction; in the mythical period or counter-movement, the gods rule over the human race, and people are born out of the earth, as if from their graves, grow younger, and then disappear altogether. Differently from the traditional myth, the Stranger claims, the apparently extraordinary change of direction of stars and planets does not depend on the occasional whim of a god, but on the nature of the universe itself: since it is bodily, he argues, it is unable to preserve its own movement forever and would eventually stop, if it were not for an external divine cause that periodically restores it to life, guiding it in the opposite direction and then letting it go again (269d-270a). Similarly, the birth from the earth is not a specific, unnatural event that happens in a localised time and space, but it is the universal effect of this change in cosmic motion; the age of all living beings visibly¹⁸⁰ stops increasing, as they grow ‘as it were younger, more tender’ (270d-e). This extraordinary period of cosmic

¹⁷⁹ *Pol.* 273c: ‘always at the time closest to its release (τὸν ἐγγύτατα χρόνον ἀεὶ τῆς ἀφέσεως)’ does the cosmos produce many good realities, while as time goes by its internal disharmony increases. Equally, animal lives follow and imitate the universe ‘for the eternity of time (τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον)’ (274d). This is the clearest indication that the cosmic cycle recurs eternally, with no teleological optimism in the sense of a permanent return of the providential god (*contra* Brisson, 1995).

¹⁸⁰ *Pol.* 270d-e. While Plato uses here a language of appearance (*idein*, 270d), the animals in the Age of Cronus nonetheless grow younger both in body *and in soul* (270e). Their reversed aging is an appearance, surely, but coextensive to their psychological state; thus, it is not a mere illusion (*contra* Rowe, 1995, p.190).

events is separated from the present one by a series of dramatic catastrophes, an earthly correlate of the change of heavenly movement, which erased most memories of the past by killing off most of the living beings, and left the present humans only with mythical fragments of what originally happened (270c-271c). Finally, in the age of counter-movement, the gods are in charge of all realities: a sovereign god governs the cosmic motion in order to save it from dissolution, while minor gods acts as shepherds of all creatures (271d-271e). In this age, everything is therefore more orderly and ‘benevolent’ than in the present, since nature is bountiful and mild, and all the creatures are peaceful and tame (272e-272b). All the opposite features are true in the current period: the gods are absent, aging runs from youth to old age, birth does not happen spontaneously but through sexual intercourse, nature is harsh, and creatures do not live in peaceful terms (274b-c).

It must be noted that all these extraordinary events are justified in a philosophical way, as descending ‘from the same condition’ (ἐκ ταύτου πάθους, 269b), the perennial oscillation of the cosmos. The tremendous reversal of the heavens is ‘responsible (αἴτιον)’ for changes and destructions (270b); the birth from the earth and perplexing reversal of aging in the opposite direction happen ‘following along with (συνεπόμενον)’ with such change (270d); the gods’ governance of the particular parts of the world is ‘the same (ταυτόν)’ as the sovereign god’s rule and care of the cosmos as a whole (271d); finally, the autonomy of humans and animals proceeds ‘under the same direction (ὑπὸ τῆς ὁμοίας ἀγωγῆς)’ as the cosmic autonomous motion (274a). The philosophical bond of all these perplexing events is not simply one of direct causality, but one of coherent resemblance: just *as* the universe turned backwards, *so* did the ages of animals;¹⁸¹ just *as* the cosmic change of movement is greatest and perplexing, *so* are the changes that happen on earth; just *as* a god directed the cosmic motion, *so* did the minor gods rule over particular cosmic regions; just *as* the universe started taking care of itself after the change, *so* did animals and humans. Human lives, like any other event in the universe, proceed ‘imitating and following [the cosmos] for all time (συμμιμούμενοι καὶ συνεπόμενοι τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον)’ (274d). The mosaic of different themes and images of this myth is therefore constructed by the Stranger through

¹⁸¹ This is the most fundamental reason against Brisson’s, Rowe’s, and Carone’s suggestion of a three-stage cycle with a final return of the divinity. Animal life imitates the cosmic movement; but if we postulate three heavenly movements (backwards/forwards/backwards), and only two kinds of animal life (reverse aging/normal aging), the resemblance is necessarily broken. The three-stage interpretation thus sacrifices the principle of universal harmony to the ideal of divine governance, in a way that is completely alien to Plato’s style and philosophy alike.

repeated appeals to a principle of universal similarity.¹⁸² What differentiates his myth from the traditional stories is a profound unity whereby no event, however perplexing, appears as an independent and arbitrary ‘miracle’, but rather as a single thread of a carefully intertwined texture of correlate changes, of which it is possible to provide coherent and correlate reasons.

By constructing his narrative texture this way, the Stranger follows a fundamental Platonic concern with similarities and differences, entangled at different levels. It is impossible simply to isolate a single mythical theme or image, without thereby touching the entire texture, and it is therefore necessary to keep an eye on this intertwined structure when dealing with any single element. The images of this study rest at the broader level of such correlations: the balanced turning and divine steering of the universe are depicted as the first and foremost events that determine all the other changes in the story. I will then focus my study on them, with attention to this principle of profound unity.

As I have anticipated, there are two main sets of images that the Stranger employs to describe the cosmic movement, and they correspond very strictly to different moments of his narration. When he first starts providing reasons for the changes in heavenly motions, he relies consistently on images of reversal, circular movement, balance, and even motions akin to walking. This set of images is introduced with the traditional story of Atreus and Thyestes, whose quarrel was judged by Zeus in favour of the former through a miracle:

The reversal of the setting and rising of the sun and other stars, as they began setting in the region from which they now rise, and rising from the opposite region; and after having given witness in favour of Atreus the god reversed it to its present figure

¹⁸² Friedländer (1969b) draws attention to the fact that ‘the myth links the order in the state and in the true statesman with the order in the universe’ and he recognises in this link the seriousness of this mythological game (p.285); Stefanini (1949) remarks that a strong bond of ‘homology’ unifies cosmos, state, and laws (pp.215-220; tr. mine). I argue that this bond is not only a metaphysical principle, but the very formal principle that structures Plato’s narration and distinguishes it from the poetical fragments he weaves together: there is no arbitrary event, but a chain of correlated events, unified by their similarity. This philosophical principle holds even if the events it correlates are completely mythical and hardly believable in rationalistic terms. *Contra* Lane (1998), who emphasises human independence over its ties to a given cosmic order (p.110). It is true that independence is the main ethical content of the myth, but Lane overlooks the fact that human autonomy is also an imitation of cosmic self-regulation and, *qua* imitation, it always depends on it.

τὸ περὶ τῆς μεταβολῆς δύσεώς τε καὶ ἀνατολῆς ἡλίου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἄστρον,
ὡς ἄρα ὅθεν μὲν ἀνατέλλει νῦν εἰς τοῦτον τότε τὸν τόπον ἐδύετο, ἀνέτελλε δ'
ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου, τότε δὲ δὴ μαρτυρήσας ἄρα ὁ θεὸς Ἄτρεϊ μετέβαλεν αὐτὸ ἐπὶ
τὸ νῦν σχῆμα)' (269a, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

This mythological fragment is chosen by the Stranger specifically for its depiction of a polar reversal (*metabolē*). The terms *metabolē* and *metaballein* can be used to express a simple change, but they more often denote, in Plato, a *radical overturning* of an existing order into its polar opposite. Plato uses this acceptation very frequently in crucial passages of his dialogues. In the *Philebus* (43b), for instance, Socrates calls the bodily movements of fillings and depletions, which cause us pleasures and pains, ‘upwards and downwards reversals (μεταβολαὶ κάτω τε καὶ ἄνω)’, hence our term ‘metabolism’. In the *Gorgias* (481d7-e1), again, Socrates describes Callicles as ever ‘reversing up and down (ἄνω καὶ κάτω μεταβαλλομένου)’ his speeches, in a continuous overturning of his publicly displayed opinions to please the Athenian people. Similarly, in the *Parmenides* (162c), the metaphysical hypothesis of the One undergoes a ‘reversal from being to not-being (μεταβολὴν ἐκ τοῦ εἶναι ἐπὶ τὸ μὴ εἶναι)’; one final example is found in the *Republic* (563e-564a): Socrates claims that, since ‘anything that is done in excess tends to bring about, in turn, a great change in the opposite direction (τῷ ὄντι τὸ ἄγαν τι ποιεῖν μεγάλην φιλεῖ εἰς τοῦναντίον μεταβολὴν ἀνταποδιδόναι)’, then likely ‘excessive freedom is overturned into excessive servitude (ἄγαν ἐλευθερία ἔοικεν οὐκ εἰς ἄλλο τι ἢ εἰς ἄγαν δουλείαν μεταβάλλειν); and he argues (565d) that this is entailed by the ‘turning of a protector [of freedom] into a tyrant (μεταβολῆς ἐκ προστάτου ἐπὶ τύραννον)’. In these contexts, a radical change from pleasure to pain, from up to down, from existence to inexistence, from freedom to servitude, and from protection to tyranny, qualifies *metabolē* as a movement (physical or metaphorical) between polar opposites, more than as a simple change among nuanced possibilities. In the *Statesman*, the Stranger’s choice of a myth of polar exchange (between rising and setting) constitutes a vivid image of such overturning. A fragment of traditional mythology, in his hands, becomes an independent figure of radical reversal.

His appropriation of this fragment, though, is not limited to the establishment of a polar contrast, but is widened to a broader figure of circular motions:

Listen then. This universe the god himself sometimes accompanies, leading it on its march and moving together with it in a circle, while at other times he lets

it go, when its circuits have completed the measure of the time allotted to it, and of its own accord it turns backwards, in the opposite direction.

ἀκούοις ἄν. τὸ γὰρ πᾶν τόδε τοτὲ μὲν αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς συμποδηγεῖ πορευόμενον καὶ συγκυκλεῖ, τοτὲ δὲ ἀνῆκεν, ὅταν αἱ περίοδοι τοῦ προσήκοντος αὐτῷ μέτρον εἰλήφωσιν ἤδη χρόνου, τὸ δὲ πάλιν αὐτόματον εἰς τὰναντία περιάγεται (269c, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

‘Listen, then’, the Stranger begins: with this formulaic appeal to an audience, he remarks that he is now building *his own* story, expanding the image of cosmic overturning. His wider image is first of all one of two opposed circular movements: the unnamed sovereign god, who takes the place of Zeus in the story of Atreus, periodically ‘moves together [with the universe] in a circle (συγκυκλεῖ)’, while in other ‘rotations (περίοδοι)’ the universe ‘turns (περιάγεται)’ on its own.¹⁸³ The polarity of rising-setting of the stars, here, is expanded into an opposition of two circles, which move ‘in the opposite direction (εἰς τὰναντία)’ and ‘backwards (πάλιν) in relation to one another. The Stranger thus creates a very complex image where the circularity of heavenly motions is not only a temporal cycle in its own right (a ‘period’, *peri-hodos*, literally a round-about path), but is also part of a polar cycle of two opposite, yet otherwise indistinguishable, rotations. The association of the *metabolē* of the original myth with the mutual *turning backwards* of two circles is not banal: what in the story of Atreus was just an (occasional) opposition is here subsumed within *one and the same* figure, the circle. The Stranger had implicitly anticipated such an image when he said: ‘after having given witness in favour of Atreus the god reversed it [the course of stars and sun] to its present figure (σχῆμα)’ (269a); here he tells us what this figure is, enabling us to see (if we had not already imagined it) the *common* element behind an apparent contrast.

We can also notice that the movement of turning (*periagein*) backwards in the opposite direction is one of Plato’s most significant images, not only in the cosmological context but also in relation to the activity of knowledge. At *Leg.* 898d the Athenian Stranger claims that a single ‘soul carries around everything (‘ψυχὴ περιάγει

¹⁸³ The Stranger later (269e-270c) insists on this image, speaking again of ‘reversal (μεταβολῆς)’ but also of ‘recurrence (ἀνακύκλησιν)’ and ‘alternation (παράλλαξιν)’, describing the cosmos as it ‘revolves (κυκλεῖται)’, and using astronomical language associated with circularity such as, again, ‘rotations (περιόδων)’, ‘opposite [heavenly] motion (τὰναντία φορᾶν)’ and ‘turnings (τροπῶν; τροπήν)’. Even the more neutral term *phora* (motion, impulse, etymologically associated with the act of bearing, *pherein*) refers, in Plato’s *corpus*, eminently to stars and planets being ‘carried around’ by the heavens or by the cosmic soul (e.g. *Crat.* 421b; *Gorg.* 451c; *Symp.* 188b; *Resp.* 617b; *Tim.* 39b; *Leg.* 897c); in particular, it is distinguished from generic motion, *kinesis*, at *Crat.* 434c and *Theaet.* 152d, and used for the ‘spinnings of a turned globe (σφαίρας ἐντόρνου [...] φοραῖς)’, image of the intellect, at *Leg.* 898b.

πάντα)’ in the heavens, with the very same movement Timaeus attributes to it at *Tim.* 34a and 36c (‘περιαγαγών’, ‘περιαγομένη’). At *Phaedr.* 247c1, ‘the revolution [of the heavens] carries around (περιάγει ἢ περιφορά)’ those philosophical souls that reached the top of the universe and managed to behold the Forms outside of it. Finally, in the image of the cave, Socrates famously describes a prisoner being ‘freed from his chains and forced to suddenly stand up and turn his neck around (περιάγειν τὸν ἀχένα) and walk and look up towards the light’ (*Resp.* 515c), while other prisoners are ‘prevented by the chains from turning their heads around in circle (κύκλω δὲ τὰς κεφαλὰς ὑπὸ τοῦ δεσμοῦ ἀδυνάτους περιάγειν)’ (514c) and can only stare at shadows. In the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*, the movement of circular *periagein* belongs to intellect in its utmost perfection, the very principle that animates the whole universe at all its levels (but most effectively in the heavens); in the *Phaedrus*, the cosmic movement also allows inferior souls to partake of it, and rely on it in order to contemplate the ideal Forms of all reality; differently, in the *Republic* the image is purely human, as the turning of the neck, head, and eyes away from the darkness of delusion to the light of truer knowledge. *Periagein* can thus have two divergent implications: a circular perfection of an unchanging movement, or the radical polarity of a movement that turns from one condition to its opposite. Uniquely, the myth of the *Statesman* combines both elements: on the one hand, the perfection of the heavenly movement, and on the other the potential opposition of ‘turning around’ from divine guidance to self-directed motion. Just like in the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*, the universe is ‘a living creature (ζῷον) [...] having had wisdom (φρόνησιν) assigned to it by the one who fitted it together in the beginning’ (269c-d), a life and intellect of its own, which allow it to preserve its *own* circular movement; but differently from those dialogues, here it is also subject to the most radical of all possible changes. The *Statesman* is therefore a unique case in Plato’s images of cosmic movements,¹⁸⁴ because it deploys the ambivalent figure of circular motion in order to express *both* divine order *and* radical overturning.

The ambivalence of this image has led some scholars to imagine a radical opposition between two forms of cosmic life, either as a positive feature or as a negative one to be explained away. So Lane (1998) reads the opposition between the two cycles as a ‘temporal and cosmic gulf’ between ‘possible and actual’ worlds (pp.115-16), between the apolitical Utopia of Cronus and our political present; she thus evaluates the

¹⁸⁴ E.g. *Phil.* 28c-31b; *Tim.* 48a; *Leg.* 966d-967e (cf. Carone 2005, p.240, n.4).

element of opposition as a positive ‘turn’ towards full autonomy in the universe.¹⁸⁵ Differently, Brisson (1995), Rowe (1995), and Carone (2005) read it as an erroneous, non-Platonic opposition between the benevolent will of god and the potential chaos of a life not directed by the divine principle;¹⁸⁶ hence their suggestion of a more correct three-stage interpretation, according to which the cosmic god ultimately regains definitive control. But there is no need to alter the textual reading because of this opposition, as if it entailed a radical separation between two completely opposite alternatives; rather, an attentive textual analysis of imagery shows that the element of opposition is intentionally subsumed by the Stranger under the single figure (*schema*) of circularity, with its twofold symbolism of unchanging perfection and most radical change. As the Stranger himself says, this image of an opposition between two equal movements represents at the same time ‘the smallest possible variation of [the cosmic] movement’ (269e), because the overall figure does not change, and ‘the greatest and the most perfect turning of all’ (270b-c), because the opposition of direction is the most radical that is possible to imagine. The text itself points out an ambivalence of perspective within one and the same figure. Ambivalence is *built into* this image, because it is possible to consider it from two alternative points of view. In order to see the complete figure (*schema*), then, it is necessary not to discard either of them, but to see them both in their profound unity: the identical structure and opposite enactment of divine guidance and cosmic autonomy.

A third set of images expresses the unity of the two movements in a single *schema*: the cosmic movement as a kind of ‘travelling’ made possible by its perfect balance. The Stranger’s universe is alive, and its movement is consistently represented not as a mere mechanical event, but also as a kind of intentional or conscious action:

at times it is helped by the guidance of another, divine, cause, acquiring life once more and receiving a restored immortality from its craftsman, while at other times, when it is let go, it proceeds on its own along itself,¹⁸⁷ having

¹⁸⁵ A similarly Utopian reading is maintained, albeit with some minor differences, by Kahn (2009) and Morgan (2000), p.255.

¹⁸⁶ Carone, 2005, p.126; Brisson, 1995, pp.349-352; Rowe, 1995, pp.11-13. These scholars read the withdrawal of the god and the opposite directions of divine and cosmic circular movements as representing the absence of rational providence. I argue, instead, that they represent two opposite modes of enacting *one and the same* figure of rationality enacted in *two different and opposite* ways.

¹⁸⁷ The Greek ‘δι’ ἑαυτοῦ αὐτὸν ἰέναι’ is translated by Rowe as ‘it goes on its own way under its own power’. Like in Rowe’s translation ‘δι’ ἑαυτοῦ (on its own way), expresses the idea of moving ‘through’ a space or ‘along’ a direction; I choose the translation ‘along itself’ better to express the idea that, once left free, the universe follows a path determined by its own spherical body. ‘Through itself’ would have been, perhaps, a translation of greater philosophical (and scientific) significance, since it expresses the

been let loose at such a right moment, as to travel backwards for many myriads of revolutions because, greatest and most perfectly balanced as it is, it proceeds walking on the smallest foot.

τοτὲ μὲν ὑπ' ἄλλης συμποδηγεῖσθαι θείας αἰτίας, τὸ ζῆν πάλιν ἐπικτώμενον καὶ λαμβάνοντα ἀθανασίαν ἐπισκευαστὴν παρὰ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ, τοτὲ δ' ὅταν ἀνεθῆ, δι' ἑαυτοῦ αὐτὸν ἰέναι, κατὰ καιρὸν ἀφεθέντα τοιοῦτον, ὥστε ἀνάπαλιν πορεύεσθαι πολλὰς περιόδων μυριάδας διὰ δὴ τὸ μέγιστον ὄν καὶ ἰσορροπώτατον ἐπὶ μικροτάτου βαῖνον ποδὸς ἰέναι (270a, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

Consistently with the former passage, here the Stranger describes a cosmos imbued with life (ζῆν) and even immortality (ἀθανασίαν), and narrates its movement accordingly: the universe is accompanied in its walk (συμποδηγεῖσθαι)¹⁸⁸ by a god, just as earlier the god was shown 'leading [the universe] as it travels (συμποδηγεῖ πορευόμενον)' (269c). The god thus behaves like a shepherd, who is guiding along a very particular animal. We can thus see a similarity between (on the one hand) god and cosmos, and (on the other) shepherd and herd; indeed, the former representation of the statesman as a shepherd was ridiculed by the Stranger, for the absurdity of a tame animal pretending to guide similar animals, with similar words:

the king looks even more ridiculous, when he runs along with his herd and walks together with the man who, for his part, is best trained for the easy-going life.

ἔτι γελοιώτερος ὁ βασιλεὺς φαίνεται μετὰ τῆς ἀγέλης συνδιαθέων καὶ σύνδρομα πεπορευμένος τῷ τῶν ἀνδρῶν αὖ πρὸς τὸν εὐχερῆ βίον ἄριστα γεγυμνασμένῳ (266c, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The shepherd, or the shepherd-like king, walks alongside his animals just like the god in the myth accompanies the universe in its walk. Both the shepherd and the god are

puzzling idea that the whole universe, outside of which nothing physical exists, materially moves through its own space and coincides perfectly with it; but perhaps it would credit this myth with a theoretical complexity that we only find, fully developed, in the *Timaeus* (31a-b) and in Aristotle's *Physics* Δ and θ. Based on my research, the earliest instance of this notion appears in Heraclitus, fr.41 = D.L.9.1: 'One thing is wisdom, to understand intelligence, by which all things are steered through [or: along] all things (ἐν τὸ σοφόν, ἐπίστασθαι γνώμην, ὅτι ἐκυβέρνησε πάντα διὰ πάντων)'.

¹⁸⁸ The term *sumpodegeisthai* is rare; my research identified only one other occurrence in Sophocles, *Ichneutae*, fr.314 v.169: 'Father, walk beside me, so you'll know whether I'm really a coward (πάτερ, παρὼν αὐτός με συμποδηγέτε[ι, ἴν' εἴ κατείδης εἴ τίς ἐστι δειλία)'. This is the cry of a *chorus* of satyrs, scared by the unfamiliar sound of the newly invented lyre, appealing for the god Silenus to guide them. The god then offers to 'approach (προσβιβῶ)' the sound and 'walk (βάσιν)' with them. Given the pastoral setting (a hunt for Hermes who stole Apollo's cattle) whereby the satyrs are treated like Silenus's hounds, the term describes the behaviour of a shepherd or a hunter walking alongside his animals. Notice also the association with the idea that being guided by a wiser leader is beneficial in the face of distressing changes in the subject's familiar experience of the world.

described through verbs of physical living movements (*diathein*, *dromein*, *podegein*), and as sharing them (*sun-*) with the creatures they take care of; in this way, in the myth, the Stranger reinforces the idea of a shared figure (*schema*) of movement for guide and guided. There is no insistence on other possible traits of a shepherd or an animal, in the description of the god and the cosmos: the focus is exclusively on motion, but as a *living* one.

It does not come as a surprise, then, that when the universe ‘is let go (ἀνεθῆ)’ and ‘let loose (ἀφεθέντα)’ it moves like a living being: it ‘travels backwards (ἀνάπαλιν πορεύεσθαι)’ with its own, particular movement of ‘rotations (περιόδων)’, ‘walking on the smallest foot (ἐπὶ μικροτάτου βαῖνον ποδός)’. The whole scene of cosmic movement, either guided or autonomous, is described through terms of animal-like motion, to the extent that the universe has a very small ‘foot’. While it might be possible to take all of these terms figuratively, as simply pointing to mechanical motion around a geometrical basis,¹⁸⁹ the context of living activity is clear and should not be obscured; in this image, the universe walks in a circular motion for a time, guided and accompanied by a shepherd-like god, and when the time is opportune (*kata kairon*) it manages to move itself on its own accord, standing autonomously on its own foot.¹⁹⁰ This is a curious but consistent image of a cosmic ‘foot’, on which the universe travels (*poreuesthai*), when the god stops *sumpodegein*, walking along it as if on feet. Only on its foot does the universe find, as a condition of its very movement and life, its own perfect balance, in a strong contrast between its huge size and the minuscule point of balance itself.

This first narration of the cosmic movement requires a strong effort of imagination, due to the multifaceted nature of the images employed: first of all, a polar contrast of rising and setting of stars and planets; then, two contrasting ways for the universe to move along one identical pattern; finally, the image of a living cosmos accompanied by a god or walking on its own, in an effort to find autonomous living

¹⁸⁹ Notice that Plato could have expressed the geometrical notion of ‘basis’ without resorting to more metaphorical terms: at *Tim.* 55b, he describes the icosahedron as ‘having twenty equilateral triangular bases (εἴκοσι βάσεις ἔχον ἰσοπλεύρους τριγώνους γέγονεν)’. When it refers to a part of a physical body, the term *basis* generically denotes a stable (*bebaios*) position on which the body stands or steps, with more focus on stability and fixedness than on movement (cf. *Crat.* 437a; but the meaning is more nuanced at *Resp.* 399e and *Leg.* 670d).

¹⁹⁰ The terminology of a foot belonging to the cosmic ‘animal’ is also consistent with the puzzling categorization, in the former divisions, of human beings based on the number of their feet (266b-e): here, the dialogue is also prompting us to imagine the physical constitution of living beings as a possible way to understand what they are. The identification of humanity in respect to other forms of life is reached through a process of comparison, first with the animal realm, then with the living cosmos.

balance on its own foot. All these images share a physical language, thereby framing the description as a quasi-scientific account of purely physical movements that succeed one another, based on physical reasons. However, the language of ‘walking’ also introduces an aspect of organic life, picturing the physical movements of the universe and of the directing divinity as some sort of conscious and intentional action. We cannot obliterate this difference: the physical, bodily movement is also a living, organic one, and not merely that of a cosmic machinery, periodically ‘recharged’ by an external agent. Nonetheless, the mechanistic and organic images are consistent in focusing on the purely physical reasons of the movements; there is no mention, yet, of the guiding god as a providential and benevolent agent, whose action saves the universe from losing its life by losing the regularity of its movement. At this stage of the narration, rather, the Stranger simply offers to Young Socrates a physical description of the cosmic changes, as the reason behind the myth of Atreus and Thyestes; the whole process of cosmic turning and counter-turning is fully described, but the narration is by no means complete.

After this physical description, the Stranger abandons for a while the great cosmic narration, and focuses on the earthly (physical and political) events that the change entails. He describes the two dramatic events caused by the reversal of circular motion: the destruction of many animals, including most of humankind (270c-d), and the reversal of their ageing. This time is also, the Stranger further claims, the mythical Age of Cronus, when divine beings directed all life and movement, no political constitutions existed, and life was easy and peaceful (271e-272a). The Stranger, in addition, asks Young Socrates for a judgment on the happiness of the two ways of life under Cronus and in the present, and argues that happiness depends on the practice of philosophical dialogue, not on the inherent physical conditions just described (272b-d). Here the focus, then, is earthly life, and human/political life in particular. This focus is indeed crucial for the political dialogue, but the Stranger dismisses the question of happiness in political or apolitical contexts as impossible for him to answer, and moves back to the cosmic imagery.

The shift of perspective is explicit and abrupt:

We must now state the point of our rousing our myth into action, in order to move forward and bring what follows to its end. When the time of all these things had been completed and the hour for change had come, and in particular all the earth-born race had been used up, each soul having rendered its sum of

births, falling to the earth as seed as many times as had been laid down for each, at that point the pilot of the universe, after letting go, as it were, of the bar of the helm, retired to his observation-post, and as for the cosmos, its allotted and innate desire turned it back again in the opposite direction.

οὗ δ' ἔνεκα τὸν μῦθον ἠγείραμεν, τοῦτο λεκτέον, ἵνα τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο εἰς τὸ πρόσθεν περαίνωμεν. ἐπειδὴ γὰρ πάντων τούτων χρόνος ἐτελεώθη καὶ μεταβολὴν ἔδει γίνεσθαι καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸ γήινον ἤδη πᾶν ἀνήλωτο γένος, πάσας ἐκάστης τῆς ψυχῆς τὰς γενέσεις ἀποδεδωκυίας, ὅσα ἦν ἐκάστη προσταχθὲν τοσαῦτα εἰς γῆν σπέρματα πεσοῦσης, τότε δὴ τοῦ παντὸς ὁ μὲν κυβερνήτης, οἷον πηδαλίων οἶακος ἀφέμενος, εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ περιωπὴν ἀπέστη, τὸν δὲ δὴ κόσμον πάλιν ἀνέστρεφεν εἰμαρμένη τε καὶ σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία (272d-e, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

In the former narrative shift, the perspective moved from the heavenly changes to the earthly effects of which they were the cause; now it moves back to the counter-movement of the universe, when the time of earthly events is mature. Once again, heavenly and earthly events are represented in mutual correlation: broader cosmic reversals cause dramatic effects on earth, and the completion of the earthly cycle of counter-aging is the necessary condition for the beginning of a new cosmic cycle. The story of the Stranger is not linear, but moves according to different shifts of focus, between the macro-cosmos and earth, moving away from the broader perspective only to return again to it.

In this second account of universal circular motion, we find a sudden introduction of unexpected nautical imagery. This is surprising, because the pastoral myth of Cronus was initially introduced to correct the model of the shepherd, by showing in which ways it is inadequate to political activity; but the myth *exceeds* this narrow limit when it is used to locate human life within a broader cosmic context. Yet the Stranger considers this context, too, as a reason for 'rousing our myth into action', i.e. an element that is significant for the overall meaning of the myth. Paying attention to the shift in imagery, then, means evaluating the whole set of meanings at work in the story. Here, the cosmic god, formerly described as a craftsman who walked together with the living cosmos, is imagined as a ship's pilot (*kubernētēs*) who at the right time lets go of the bar of the cosmic helm, thus leaving the cosmos free to turn back, following its own innate and destined desire (*epithumia*).

Once again, the image is composite: despite being portrayed as guided in a mechanical way, just like a helm, the universe is nonetheless alive, and it is desire that moves it once it is let go, not just a physical tension. We find at the same time (a) a traditional representation of cosmic guidance as the action of a divine pilot, and (b) a convergence of terms about emotional states with mechanical images of steering. As Pender (2000, p.98) observes, ‘in the early Greek literary tradition Zeus is represented as a helmsman’: for instance, Pindar describes Zeus as steering the fate of his dear ones (*Pythian* 5, vv.122-3), and an unnamed god as the desirable helmsman who could direct political leaders (*Pythian* 4, v.274). But only in Pre-Socratic philosophy the divine direction of events becomes a matter of universal order: Heraclitus (frs.41 and 64), Parmenides (fr.12), and Diogenes of Apollonia (fr.5) all use the image of the helmsman for the divine direction of everything (*pan*). To Heraclitus, intelligence ‘steers all things (ἐκυβέρνησε πάντα)’ in the universe, and so does the divine thunderbolt (‘τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰακίζει κεραθνός’); to Parmenides, it is a goddess who steers everything (‘δαίμον ἢ πάντα κυβερνᾷ’); and so does, to Diogenes, the intelligent principle of air (‘καὶ μοι δοκεῖ [...] ὁ ἀήρ [...] ὑπο τούτου πάντα καὶ κυβερνᾶσθαι καὶ πάντων κρατεῖν’).¹⁹¹

While this image (a) is generally used to emphasize the supreme governance of ‘individuals in a position of sole direction’ (Brock 2013, p.55), and thus fits perfectly the idea of a sovereign cosmic god, it becomes more nuanced when it is related to the emotional states of human individuals. The convergence of psychological terms and nautical imagery (b) was also very frequent in Greek poetry and myth, but not associated as such to the universe: as Pender (2000, pp.98-99) observes, in Sophocles’s *Ajax* Odysseus professes to Athena: ‘sometimes I am struck out of my senses [ἐκπέπληγμαι] [...] But you arrive right in time [καρὸν δ’ ἐφήκεις], for in all matters, both past and future ones, I am steered by your hand [σῆ κυβερνώμαι χερὶ]’ (vv.33-35). Odysseus thus opposes his own condition of confusion to the divine direction of a goddess, who knows when it is opportune to intervene and guide him. In the same vein, in Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon*, the chorus describes the eponymous, unwise king as ‘not rightly guiding the helm of [his] mind [οὐδ’ εὖ πραπίδων οἶακα νέμων]’ (v.802). Here the nautical image of the helm consists of the same association of a mechanical act to a psychological state, but it is used to symbolise (absent) self-control, not the external control of a god. Euripides also uses the image of the helm in a dialogue between the frenzied king Orestes and his closest friend Pylades: ‘I will take care of you [κηδέω

¹⁹¹ Pender, 2000, pp.98-100.

σ' ἐγώ]', Pylades promises when Orestes laments his own 'frantic rage [οἷστρω]', so the king finally accepts his support and calls him 'helm of my course [οἷαξ ποδός μοι]' (*Orestes*, vv.790-795). The nautical image is, again, one of external, more lucid direction of a frenzied mind. Plato himself, in the *Critias*,¹⁹² represents the gods as directing, with benevolence, the minds of ancient humans:

[The gods] would not make physical violence to the bodies, just as shepherds who lead their herds with blows, but they rather steered the course of the animal from the stern, where it is best turned-about, and they laid hold of its soul by persuasion according to their own thought, thus piloting every mortal creature.

οὐ σώμασι σώματα βιάζόμενοι, καθάπερ ποιμένες κτήνη πληγῆ νέμοντες, ἀλλ' ἢ μάλιστα εὖστροφον ζῶον, ἐκ πρύμνης ἀπευθύνοντες, οἷον οἷακι πειθοῖ ψυχῆς ἐφαπτόμενοι κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν διάνοιαν, οὕτως ἄγοντες τὸ θνητὸν πᾶν ἐκυβέρνων (109b-c, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

In all these examples, the act of divine or human guidance of a soul is represented as a benevolent, and better advised, steering of a helm to the best advantage of the guided subjects. Brock points out that 'although the basic notion of the helmsman would seem to be one of control, [...] this is usually linked to notions of superior skill or wisdom' (2013, p.56); we can observe, similarly, that in these examples it is the possession of a mind unhindered by confusion or irrational drives that makes the guidance of the 'pilot of the soul' valuable to, and desired by, the guided person. But there is more: as Plato explicitly argues, this direction is not only one of skill, but also one of benevolence; Athena with her *protégé* Odysseus, Pylades with his best friend Orestes, and the gods with a race of mortals that deserve the privilege of persuasion (*peithō*) instead of brute force (*bia*), represent cases in which the image of the helm is one of smooth, unhindered, and not forceful guidance. The helm does not resist the hand of the skilled pilot, just as the acceptance of a benevolent persuasion does not hinder the act of guidance, and the benevolent act itself restrains from harsh measures. When associated with emotional states, the image of a smooth, skilful, and benevolent guidance stands in opposition to the harshness of both irrational psychological states and violent behaviours.

¹⁹² Cf. Pender 2000, p.121.

The combination of nautical images and emotional states in the *Statesman*, then, is not surprising. The original element is the attribution of emotional states to the universe itself, so that divine guidance cannot be taken for granted (as in the Pre-Socratics). The opposition of the two circular movements of the universe is represented as a contrast between the skilful art of a pilot and the autonomous drives of a living being, in perfect continuity with poetical images of human beings. The sudden lack of an external direction, and the contrast with an opposite one, indeed trigger at first harsh consequences:

as it turned upside-down and clashed with itself, urged on by the contrary impulse both of the beginning and of the end, it produced a great tremor in itself, which in turn brought about another destruction of all sorts of animals.

ὁ δὲ μεταστρεφόμενος καὶ συμβάλλων, ἀρχῆς τε καὶ τελευτῆς ἐναντίαν ὀρμὴν ὀρμηθεὶς, σεισμὸν πολὺν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ποιῶν ἄλλην αὖ φθορὰν ζώων παντοίων ἀπηργάσατο (273a, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The former *anastrephein*, turning backwards, of the universe, here becomes a dramatic *metastrephein*, a turning upside-down which ensues terrible quakes and deaths; and the *metaballein*, reversing, of the myth of Atreus now becomes a *sumballein*, a clashing together of opposite physical impulses. Control leaves way to violence. Only after the shock for the sudden lack of guidance, and for the impulses that clash in opposite directions, does the universe find rest again, as when it was piloted by the god:

After this, when an adequate time had elapsed, it began to cease from tumults and confusion and attained calm from its tremors, and set itself in order, into the accustomed course that belongs to it, itself taking charge and control of the things within it and itself, because it remembered so far as it could the teaching of its craftsman and father.

μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα προελθόντος ἱκανοῦ χρόνου, θορύβων τε καὶ ταραχῆς ἤδη παύμενος καὶ τῶν σεισμῶν γαλήνης ἐπιλαβόμενος εἰς τε τὸν εἰωθότα δρόμον τὸν ἑαυτοῦ κατακοσμούμενος ἦει, ἐπιμέλειαν καὶ κράτος ἔχων αὐτὸς τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ τε καὶ ἑαυτοῦ, τὴν τοῦ δημιουργοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἀπομνημονεύων διδαχὴν εἰς δύναμιν (273a-b, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

It takes time, the Stranger narrates, for the universe to resume the same orderly course (*dromon*) as when it was piloted by the god; but it is nonetheless possible: tremendous

disorders do ensue from the contrast of directed and autonomous guidance, but they are not permanent. Just as the god had let go of the universe at the right moment (*kairos*), now the universe can find the accustomed course after an adequate time (*hikanos chronos*), remembering as best as it can what it was like. Again, the nautical imagery overlaps with anthropomorphic terms, since the universe is a living creature endowed with impulses (*hormeis*), and capable of responsible care (*epimeleia*), control (*kratos*), and memory (*mnēmē*). When the time is mature, the harsh effects brought about by the cosmic desire fade away, and a new smooth order takes place, not through the external command of the pilot, but through the ability of the universe to take charge and control over itself, and to remember its former condition. The opposition of rational control and violent impulses, traditionally expressed through the opposition of nautical direction and frenzied confusion, finds here a middle ground in self-control through adequate remembering.

The nautical imagery becomes prominent again when the Stranger goes back to the god's benevolent intervention to safeguard the life of the cosmos. In the absence of the helmsman, cosmic forgetfulness (*lēthē*) increases, and disharmony (*anarmostias*) gains control again, verging on utmost destruction (273c). It is in this context that nautical images resurface:

It is for this reason that now the god who ordered it, seeing it at loss in dire straits, and concerned that it should not, storm-tossed as it is, be broken apart in confusion and sink into the boundless sea of dissimilarity, takes his position again at its steering-oars, and having turned around what had become diseased and been broken apart in the previous rotation, when it was left to itself, orders it and by setting it straight renders it immortal and ageless.

διὸ δὴ καὶ τότε ἤδη θεὸς ὁ κοσμήσας αὐτόν, καθορῶν ἐν ἀπορίαις ὄντα, κηδόμενος ἵνα μὴ χειμασθεῖς ὑπὸ ταραχῆς διαλυθεῖς εἰς τὸν τῆς ἀνομοιότητος ἄπειρον ὄντα πόντον δύη, πάλιν ἔφεδρος αὐτοῦ τῶν πηδαλίων γιγνόμενος, τὰ νοσήσαντα καὶ λυθέντα ἐν τῇ καθ' ἑαυτὸν προτέρᾳ περιόδῳ στρέψας, κοσμεῖ τε καὶ ἐπανορθῶν ἀθάνατον αὐτόν καὶ ἀγήρων ἀπεργάζεται (273c-e, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The cosmic god is here pictured again as steering the cosmic helm, and the possible destruction of the whole universe appears in the guise of an unbounded sea, in which the storm-tossed cosmos can get lost. The divine intervention, then, aims to restore its

round-about path (*periodos*), as the god turns the universe itself like a helm, and prevents it from getting lost in dire straits (*en aporiais*),¹⁹³ i.e. in the absence of any possible direction of travel (*poreia*), ultimately sinking and being destroyed. The focus is here not on the conditions of possibility of the cosmic movement, but on those of its *impossibility*: forgetfulness of what the original motion was like would not only restore the former confused condition, but also dramatically destroy any homogeneity in the cosmic movement itself. The real danger is not a clash between two opposite directions, but an utmost *lack of* direction, aptly imagined as a sea with no limits. The purpose of the nautical imagery, then, is threefold:

- (a) expressing the presence of a skilful and benevolent controller;
- (b) recalling the cosmic circularity akin to the turning of a helm;
- (c) visualizing an absolute lack of direction (*aporia*).

In the sea-storm and unbound maritime expanse we do not see, simply, the opposition between a wise and good direction and contrasting, confused impulses, as in traditional poetry; we see the more troubling image of impulses which go in no direction, which are unable to maintain a consistent course, and are at loss within a wholly confusing space with no way out. The divine, benevolent, providential intervention is not represented as an antidote to simple confusion, but to outright loss and destruction.

Here, then, the focus of the narration shifts, as the Stranger radically changes the imagery chosen to represent cosmic movement. While, through the image of circularity, we saw an opposition of motions subsumed under a single figure (*schema*), in the nautical imagery we see both the contrast of a benevolent direction to autonomous impulses, and the dramatic possibility of utmost loss of direction. The images of circularity, although anthropomorphised, were physical, and made no reference to the dangers of the loss of such motion, or to the providential nature of the external divine guidance. Their focus was the unity of two opposed movements, together with the condition of possibility of autonomous cosmic rotation (balance). The nautical images, instead, are used to describe the role of the divine guide, in contrast with the desire for autonomous motion, and the dangerous events that would ensue from such autonomy,

¹⁹³ I diverge here in particular from Rowe's (1995a) translation ('in difficulties'), insofar as the clear representation of a ship-like universe lost at sea demands a consistent translation of the term *aporia*. *Aporia* is not simply a generic condition of difficulty, but a real lack of possible ways of travelling (*poreiai*) or passages (*poroi*); it is the specific kind of difficulty a traveller would face when movement in any direction is impossible, like a physical 'strait'; it is what periodically hinders the cosmos from being independent master (*autokratora*) of its own course (*tēs hautou poreias*, 274a). Cf. *Theaet.* 174c; Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 5.6.10.

were it not for the benevolent return of the guide. Here, the presence of a divine guide is not justified simply by the argued impossibility for a material object to move itself forever; it is justified also as an action of intentional care towards a living being in danger. *Only* when the universe is in danger does the helmsman intervene; otherwise he lets it go at the right moment. Even the single shared feature of the two images, the life of the universe, diverges: first, it depicts the god as walking side by side to the cosmos, and then as physically controlling it. Overall, the two images have two divergent reasons within a single narration: on the one hand, to represent the conditions under which the universe is able to preserve the same figure of motion; on the other hand, to represent the benevolent intervention of an external guiding force, which grants the conservation of such motion.

In this section, I have simply described the two images in their own right; but their divergence demands explanation. The myth, as such, does not provide explicit reasons for it, even if it makes clear that the two images belong to somewhat different sub-narratives. The explanation is made all the more necessary because the myth itself sets the universal motion as a model for human imitation ('[humans] had to live their lives through their own resources and take care for themselves, just like the cosmos as a whole, which we imitate and follow for all time', 274d), and as a tool to understand statecraft itself. In the next two sections, therefore, I will analyse the relation between the two divergent images of balanced circular movement and nautical guidance, showing what their presence in a unified narration means for the philosophical stance of the *Statesman*.

4.2. Clashing Cosmic Images: the Tension of Autonomy and Control

In this section, I will focus on the crucial elements within the divergent images of cosmic motion in the myth of the *Statesman*: centred balance and peripheral steering. I will show that these elements underscore the fundamental reasons for the divergence in imagery, and relate to each other in a visual way, as alternative perspectives on the perfect circularity of cosmic movement. While, as we have seen, the figure of cosmic movement is one and the same, i.e. a circle, the *Statesman* also dramatizes a unique contrast between two opposing *directions* of circularity; it originally depicts *one* temporal cycle of *two* spatial circles. In the image of centred balance the focus on autonomous cosmic movement prevails, while the nautical image of steering focuses more on the motion directed from outside. In other words, the ability of the universe to

find balance is the *condition of possibility* of its autonomous preservation of the circular figure (*schema*), while the benevolent intervention of an external helmsman is a reaction to the *impossibility* of such preservation when certain factors (lack of memory, increase of disorder, inability to replicate a similarity) do not allow it. I will show that both images express a concern with the preservation of right measure, but in radically opposite ways that express the paradoxical, inherently ambivalent, status of philosophical autonomy and wisdom (*phronēsis*).

Cosmic-centred balance has influential antecedents in both mythology and philosophy. Even before the universe started being conceived as a series of concentric spheres, the idea of the central space of the cosmos as *locus* of stability and a means to directions, was deeply rooted in Greek culture. In a series of essays on the ancient Greek organisation of space, Vernant (1985, pp.152-260) devotes extensive study to the cosmic image of the centre; he observes that the traditional Hesiodic image of the universe is one of vertical tri-partition, with the earth marking the middle-point between heavens and underworld. In Hesiod's description, the deepest region of the underworld, Tartarus, is located

as far beneath the earth as heaven is above earth [...] For a brazen anvil falling down from heaven nine nights and days would reach the earth upon the tenth: and again, a brazen anvil falling from earth nine nights and days would reach Tartarus upon the tenth.

τόσσον ἔνερθ' ὑπὸ γῆς, ὅσον οὐρανός ἐστ' ἀπὸ γαίης [...] ἔννεα γὰρ νύκτας τε καὶ ἡμέατα χάλκεος ἄκμων οὐρανόθεν κατιῶν δεκάτη κ' ἐς γαῖαν ἴκοιτο· ἔννεα δ' αὖ νύκτας τε καὶ ἡμέατα χάλκεος ἄκμων ἐκ γαίης κατιῶν δεκάτη κ' ἐς Τάρταρον ἴκοι (*Theogony*, vv.720-725, tr. Evelyn-White).

Earth is thus located in the precise position of mathematical equidistance between the superior and inferior limits of the universe, measured with the correspondence of times and (significantly) weights; moreover, earth (the divine *Gaia*) is also described as 'the ever-sure seat of all [πάντων ἔδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ]' (v.117, tr. Evelyn-White, adapted)¹⁹⁴. The Hesiodic image of the earth is one of fundamental, original stability, in the middle of the universe, bringing forth and sustaining all life, and separating the blissful abodes

¹⁹⁴ The Hesiodic passage on Gaia as ever-sure seat of the cosmos was demonstrably known to Plato, who quotes it at *Symp.* 178b. The alternative reading 'seat of all the immortals (πάντων ἔδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ ἀθανάτων, vv.117-118), not documented in Plato, is probably a late interpolation. Rather, Gaia is depicted as the first goddess which brings forth and supports *all* life and natural objects (vv.126-139). In any case, the earth occupies a central position in the universe also as the origin of all primordial life.

of the immortals from the dark underworld where Titans and unforgivable sinners are imprisoned. It is part of a *polar* image of the universe, where the opposite directions of up and down, separated by the unshaken middle-ground, are constitutive aspects of the cosmic order.¹⁹⁵

This image will change in the philosophical accounts of Anaximander and Parmenides, who conceived the universe as a spherical body, but the cosmic centre remains for them a *locus* of stability and power. Vernant (1985, pp.218-227) has observed that Anaximander, as reported by Hippolytus, presented a cosmology in which ‘the earth is aloft, not dominated by anything; it remains in place because of the similar distance from all points [of the celestial circumference]’ (τὴν δὲ γῆν εἶναι μετέωρον ὑπὸ μηδενός κρατουμένην, μένουσαν δὲ διὰ τὴν ὁμοίαν πάντων ἀπόστασιν).¹⁹⁶ Although the language of this description could be a late interpolation,¹⁹⁷ it is faithful to Anaximander’s clear conception and image: the earth is not ‘dominated’ by any other body, but maintains its own position only through its own power, determined by its equidistance from rest of the universe. While Thales before him had (seemingly) argued that the earth is sustained by water,¹⁹⁸ Anaximander locates the earth alone in the middle of everything (*panta*), and claims that its position is, in itself, sufficient to make it stand stable. Earth requires no physical substrate or substance to preserve its place and power; instead, it is purely dependent on geometrical¹⁹⁹ conditions that are inherent to its very position: its autonomous force simply depends on *the right place*. A position of power within the whole universe, originating from its centre, is also credited by Parmenides to his steering goddess: ‘in the middle of those [celestial circles] the goddess who steers all things governs all works of wretched childbirth and mixture’ (ἐν δὲ μέσῳ τούτων δαίμων ἢ πάντα κυβερνᾷ πάντ’ἔργα στυγεροῦ τόκου καὶ μίξιος ἄρχει).²⁰⁰ In this passage, Parmenides associates cosmic centrality,²⁰¹ steering, and

¹⁹⁵ Vernant, 1985, p.206: ‘L’espace d’en haut est complètement différent de celui du milieu et de celui d’en bas.’

¹⁹⁶ Diels & Krantz 12A11 = Hippol. *Haer.* I 6, 3-5. Kahn, 1960, p.76.

¹⁹⁷ Vernant (1985) supports the historical reliability of this language, observing that it agrees with a pre-Socratic conception of the universe as a dynamic relation of different forces (*kratoi*) e.g. at *Od.* XXIII, 46; XI, 597 (pp.221-222).

¹⁹⁸ Kirk, Raven and Schofield 84-85. Historical development of pre-Socratic cosmologies: Kahn (1960).

¹⁹⁹ Kahn (1960) distinguishes Anaximander’s geometrical rationalism from the later Ionians’ empiricism and assimilates it to Pythagoreanism.

²⁰⁰ DK 22B12.3-4 (tr. adapted).

²⁰¹ The interpretation of ‘in the centre’ as referring to the centre of the whole universe was established by Diels, 1897, p.107, based on the testimony of Simplicius (*Phys.* 144.25), who probably had access to the whole context (cf. *Phys.* 144.25 = DK 28A21). Simplicius explains that Parmenides’s goddess is the universal cause of generation and has her abode in the middle of everything (*en mesōi pantōn hidrumenēn*).

governance over generation, making the central point of the cosmic sphere a *locus* of divine power. Moreover, he represents Being itself, beyond the delusionary appearances of a moving cosmos, as a perfect sphere, ‘evenly balanced in all directions starting from its centre’ (μεσσόθεν ἰσοπαλῆς πάντη).²⁰² The centre, to Parmenides, is a *locus* of pervasive power and equality that characterises the whole reality, both as it appears to the senses and as it is in itself. The stable balance of reality and the generative movement of the cosmos both depend on the central point of a cosmic/metaphysical sphere.

While in Anaximander the *locus* is explicitly occupied by the earth, Parmenides’s conception only refers to it as the origin of divine governance and universal balance. In both authors, however, it is associated with power (*kratos*, *archē*), and with equality (*homoiotēs*, *isotēs*) of distances and forces. Unlike in the Hesiodic myth, this centre is not part of a vertical and polar figure, but of a circular one; the centre is not such in comparison to upwards and downwards directions, but to the all-encompassing points of a sphere; its position is one of equidistance *from the whole frame of reality*, conceived as a uniform totality, and not from two opposite spaces with uneven characters. The middle point is not located *between* up and down, but *within* a spherical frame.

The image of cosmic balance has strong ethical and political connotations. Vlastos and Vernant²⁰³ have shown that the structure of the *polis* and the democratic language between the sixth and fifth century were characterised by the centre (*meson*) as a space of equality and shared power under a common law: both to Anaximander and Parmenides, the cosmic sphere is ‘a whole whose parts are all equal among themselves, so that none can dominate any other’, and ‘absolute homogeneity means an internally secure equilibrium’ (Vlastos 1947, p.162); equally, ‘what indeed characterises the space of the city is that it appears organised around a centre’, i.e. ‘the domain of the common, the public, the ζυγόν [what is shared]’ (Vernant 1985, pp.216-217; tr. mine). The shift from a vertical, hierarchic image of the universe, to a circular, centred one, whereby power depends on equality of forces in the cosmic body, is stunningly parallel to the

²⁰² DK 28B8.44 (quoted by Plato at *Soph.* 244e). It is unclear whether Parmenides is speaking, in materialistic terms, of the physical universe as it really is, beyond all impressions of the senses, or of a metaphysical intellectual reality that only *appears* as a physical cosmos. Nonetheless, the image of a spherical Being and the description of a spherical universe converge, since Parmenides’s theory of real being and apparent nature are explained in dependence on the same epistemological principles.

²⁰³ Vlastos, 1947, pp.161-162; Vernant, 1985 pp.207-212. Cf. Lévêcque and Vidal-Naquet (1964) on political reforms and cosmology from Cleisthenes to Plato.

democratic developments of the Greek *polis*. These associations, however significant and corroborated by contextual evidence, remain nonetheless implicit in pre-Socratic poets and philosophers alike. What Hesiod, Anaximander, and Parmenides present is a developing theory of the cosmos, which is related to the development of political thought and practices though consistent imagery; but they offer, as far as we know, no *explicit* reflection on the convergence of cosmic and political images. The common image of the cosmic and political space has thus been explained in anthropological terms, as a change in mentality whereby categories of equality similarly influenced both cosmology and politics. Plato, by contrast, deploys these spatial notions as images and credits them with explicit ethical and political meanings; only in Plato's dialogues, that is to say, we find *not* a mere *convergence* of world-views, but *a self-aware usage of imagery* to complement philosophical investigations.

As remarked by Vernant (1985, pp.236-237) and Pender (2013, p.50), we find a crucial image of balance (*isorropia*), with ethical implications, in Plato's *Phaedo*. Here, as part of an eschatological myth of the post-mortem destinations of the souls, Socrates describes to Simmias what the 'form' (ιδέα, 108d) of the earth is according to his belief:

I am persuaded, then – he said – that firstly, if the earth is in the centre of the heavens and rounded, it needs neither the air nor any other constraint such as this in order not to fall, but that to hold it in place the equality of the heavens to themselves on all sides and its own balance are sufficient; indeed, a balanced object placed in the centre of something which is equal cannot incline either more or less in any direction, but it will remain equally unswerving.

πέπεισμαι τοίνυν, ἢ δ' ὅς, ἐγὼ ὡς πρῶτον μὲν, εἰ ἔστιν ἐν μέσῳ τῷ οὐρανῷ περιφερῆς οὖσα, μηδὲν αὐτῇ δεῖν μήτε ἀέρος πρὸς τὸ μὴ πεσεῖν μήτε ἄλλης ἀνάγκης μηδεμιᾶς τοιαύτης, ἀλλὰ ικανὴν εἶναι αὐτὴν ἴσχειν τὴν ὁμοίότητα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ αὐτοῦ ἑαυτῷ πάντα καὶ τῆς γῆς αὐτῆς τὴν ἰσορροπίαν· ἰσόρροπον γὰρ πρᾶγμα ὁμοίου τινὸς ἐν μέσῳ τεθὲν οὐχ ἔξει μᾶλλον οὐδ' ἤττον οὐδαμῶσε κλιθῆναι, ὁμοίως δ' ἔχον ἀκλινὲς μενεῖ (*Phaed.* 108e-109a, tr. based on Reale).

Socrates's image of the earth within the universe is one of self-sufficiency based on equality: the earth, evenly 'rounded (περιφερῆς)',²⁰⁴ is located 'in the centre (ἐν μέσῳ)'

²⁰⁴ The term *peripherēs*, in this context, could also mean 'evenly surrounded'. Socrates is describing not only the form of the earth, but its position in relation to the heavens. I choose the translation 'rounded' because Socrates has just said he was going to tell Simmias what *the earth itself* is like, and because its

of the heavens, in a position of equidistance that grants it ‘balance (ἰσορροπίαν)’, equipoise, literally the equality (*isotēs*) of inclinations (*rhopai*). The heavens themselves are equal in all parts, i.e. homogenous, and are part of the complex cosmic equality that grants earth its own stability. Socrates also polemically contrasts his image with those pre-Socratic theories, like Anaximenes’s and Anaxagoras’s, which posited a physical substrate to support the earth.²⁰⁵ He rather claims that no constraining physical necessity (*ananke*) is required to hold fast (*ischein*) and keep it in its place; it does not require (*dein*) a material element such as air or water, but the sufficient, adequate (*ikanēn*) condition of its stability is its homogeneous position (and shape).

As Socrates had said earlier in this dialogue, he is not satisfied with Anaxagoras’s materialistic philosophy, since it does not teach ‘the cause and the necessity (τὴν αἰτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνάγκην)’ of the earth’s position, nor, ‘if he said the earth was in the centre (ἐν μέσῳ)’, why it is ‘best (ἄμεινον) for it to be in the centre (ἐν μέσῳ)’ (97e-98a).²⁰⁶ Socrates here criticises a certain kind of materialistic philosophy, because it does not include an ethical concern for the best, i.e. a non-physical principle for the position of material bodies. This concern is also dramatically existential for him, since he compares this explanation to his own position in a cell, condemned to death for impiety: describing nerves and bones as they sit on the cell’s bed, air and hearing as they are the material conditions of a philosophical conversation, is not enough to explain *why* Socrates has been condemned and has accepted this outcome (98c-99a); similarly, he requires a teleological explanation concerning the *reasons* why the universe is ordered in the way it is. But philosophers like Anaxagoras

do not search for the power which causes things to be now placed as it is best for them to be placed, nor do they think it has any divine power, but they think they can find a new Atlas more powerful and more immortal than this, and more capable to hold everything together, and in truth they do not think that what is good and right binds and holds together all things.

τὴν δὲ τοῦ ὡς οἶόν τε βέλτιστα αὐτὰ τεθῆναι δύναμιν οὕτω νῦν κείσθαι, ταύτην οὔτε ζητοῦσιν οὔτε τινὰ οἶονται δαιμονίαν ἰσχὺν ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ ἡγοῦνται τούτου Ἄτλαντα ἄν ποτε ἰσχυρότερον καὶ ἀθανατώτερον καὶ μᾶλλον ἅπαντα

position is already sufficiently described by the words ‘in the middle of the heavens’, so that ‘surrounded’ would be pleonastic.

²⁰⁵ Socrates makes explicit mention of Anaxagoras at 97b-c. At 99b-c he alludes to the cosmologies of Empedocles, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, and Democritus, all of which ground the earth on some material element (cf. Aristotle, *De Caelo*, II 13, 294b-295a).

²⁰⁶ Reale (2000) identifies this passage as an allusion to Anaximander’s cosmology (p.128, n.104).

συνέχοντα ἐξευρεῖν, καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ δέον συνδεῖν καὶ συνέχειν οὐδὲν οἴονται (*Phaed.* 99c, tr. based on Reale).

We find here the reasons of Socrates's cosmic image: he wants to describe a cosmic power (*ischun*) that is capable to hold fast (*ischein*) with sufficient strength the cosmic order, not just in a mutual relation of forces where one binds the other, but in a harmonious totality whereby things are held and bound together.²⁰⁷ *To agathon kai deon*, the good and right, or the good and needful, is the power that Socrates describes as binding together (*sun-dein*) the order of things.²⁰⁸ If the earth is stable and has self-control, it is because it occupies *the right position*; there is no need for a stronger power to hold it, or the heavens, like the Titan Atlas did in traditional mythology. The earth, within a cosmic homogeneous order, is self-sustained; its power depends not on another substance, but simply on the correct, adequate location within a frame of cosmic equality. In Socrates's myth, then, equality of forces is genuinely *mightier than Atlas*, because it is not an external constraint, but an inherent capacity of self-sustenance and self-grounding, which requires only *a correct position*. Vernant is right in observing that the earth is self-sustaining because, balanced at equal distance from everything, it does not need any material constraint (pp.213-214); but we must notice that only in Plato's dramatic representation the *right position* becomes an ethical model.²⁰⁹ The cosmic image becomes in Plato a model for the search of a precise position that allows stability, conceived as an ethical good. His preference for an image similar to Anaximander's or Parmenides's is justified by a concern for a cosmic explanation that can also, under different conditions, serve as an ethical model for existential choices. Such as the earth's position 'in the centre', Socrates's position in a cell, waiting to die, is the material outcome of an immaterial principle with ethical significance, a philosophical autonomy which holds fast to an ethical position ('Because, by the dog, I think these bones and sinews of mine would have been in Megara or Boeotia a long time ago, carried (φερόμενα) by an opinion of what was best (βελτίστου), if I had not judged that it was more just and beautiful (δικαιότερον [...] καὶ κάλλιον), rather than to

²⁰⁷ Pender (2013) observes that the imagery of balance extends homogeneously from the cosmic order to afterlife punishments themselves, since the terrific flowing and counter-flowing of infernal rivers 'are set in reciprocal balance' and 'rhythmic regularity', following 'the *same* order and balance' and 'the same principles of order as the earth as a whole' (p.50 = *Phaed.* 111d-113c).

²⁰⁸ Cf. Pender 2013, pp.56-58 on intertextuality with *Resp.* 616b1-c5 (cosmic axis as bond of heaven) and *Phaed.* 112b3 and *Tim.* 40b8-c1 (rotation of the earth around its axis, previously studied by Burnet).

²⁰⁹ While Plato is the first explicitly to turn cosmological accounts into ethical *images*, pre-Socratic theories conceived the cosmos also as an ethical order, based on a universal law of Justice (*Dikē*) holding things in their rightful place (Vlastos, 1947; cf. Napolitano Valditara, 2009, p.5; Long, 2009, p.109). The difference between Plato and earlier cosmologists consists in his explicit indications that he is crafting myths and images, thus inviting self-aware philosophical reflection on their validity as expressive tools.

escape and run away, to sustain (ὑπέχειν) any penalty inflicted by the city’, 99a). The image of cosmic balance, then, in Plato assumes explicit ethical tones of self-regulation, unwavering stability, and just ethical positions, exemplified both by the earth standing stable in the centre of the heavens, and by Socrates sitting calmly in his cell.

Plato uses the same image, for similar purposes, in the *Statesman*, but expands it to the whole universe. Here it is the cosmos that, let loose ‘at the right moment (κατὰ καιρὸν)’, is able to proceed on its own for thousands of thousands of years, thanks to its most balanced (ἰσορροπώτατον) movement. It is this ability that allows it ‘to be independent master of its own course (αὐτοκράτορα εἶναι τῆς αὐτοῦ πορείας)’ (274a) and for the creatures that are part of it ‘to take care of themselves by themselves, just like the cosmos as a whole (τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν αὐτοῦς αὐτῶν ἔχειν καθάπερ ὅλος ὁ κόσμος)’ (274d). The focus is, once again, on self-regulation and autonomy: just like the earth in the *Phaedo* had no Atlas to rely upon nor external constraints to hold it fast, but depended on its own right position, so the cosmos in the *Statesman*, periodically deprived of its divine controller, depends on its own balance to keep moving and living. Even more explicitly than in the *Phaedo*, the insistence on the prefix/pronoun *auto* makes the image of cosmic balance an explicit instance of autonomy, independent self-regulation, and care over oneself. The myth of the *Statesman*, in a sense, seems to dramatize the absence of ‘a mightier Atlas’ who supports the heavens, making it the periodical absence of the universe’s cosmic guide. Without an external, more powerful force to move it, the universe needs to find balance on the right point, the ‘smallest foot (μικροτάτου [...] ποδός)’ that can support its whole ‘greatest (μέγιστον)’ mass (270a). The cosmos needs to find the force to support *itself by itself*, and can do so only through a correct, harmonious position.

The Stranger does not describe the spatial location of this small point of balance, but it seems reasonable to locate it in the very middle point of the heavenly spheres. We have seen that, in Greek philosophical thought, the notion of cosmic balance is explicitly linked to the existence of a middle point; and the *Phaedo* explicitly portrays the mutual position of the earth in the centre and of the heavens that surround it. The myth of the *Statesman* requires, perhaps intentionally on Plato’s part, a hermeneutic effort to imagine where the point of perfect balance is; but it is beyond doubt that, in Plato’s various descriptions (like in Parmenides’s), circular and spherical bodies find their equipoise in their centre. We can find different examples of centred equipoise: at *Resp.* 436d-e, Plato represents spinning-tops as standing still on one point, revolving

around their own axis: they can be said to be at the same time still and moving, because they are fixed under the respect of the ‘straight line (εὐθύς)’ of their axis, without inclination, but they rotate under the respect of their ‘circumference (περιφερὲς)’. A spinning top keeps moving in circles in the same place, because it maintains its balance at the straight line that passes through its centre (i.e. its axis). At *Leg.* 893c, Plato describes, in similar terms, circular bodies as apt images for the soul, and in particular the cosmic one (principle of its movement):

those things that possess the power of standing in the centre move in one location, as when the circumference of circles, which are said to stand still, revolves.

τὰ τὴν τῶν ἐστῶτων ἐν μέσῳ λαμβάνοντα δύναμιν [...] ἐν ἐνὶ κινεῖσθαι, καθάπερ ἢ τῶν ἐστάναι λεγομένων κύκλων στρέφεται περιφορὰ (tr. Burnet, *adapted*).

It is clear that, when Plato imagines bodies characterised by circular movement, the standing point of their stability is inevitably in their centre; so when we are to understand where the pivot of the universe is, it is inevitable to imagine it as its very centre. As the circumference revolves, the central point, through which its axis passes, remains still; analogously, as the greatest cosmic sphere revolves, its centre remains unchanged, thus granting the continuity of movement. The self-moving cosmos does not stand upon any external surface (it is, in fact, *everything* there is, without any other external body), but it stands upon the very core of its all-encompassing body. Delicate as it is, the balancing of a macroscopic spherical body on its microscopic centre constitutes a perfect visual example of the measured and precise accuracy, holding together opposite qualities, which Plato names *metrion*.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ I am grateful to Dr Jamie Dow for an enlightening conversation about the phenomenon of balance in revolving bodies. In the *Republic* (436d-e), the balance of a spinning-top is used by Socrates to indicate the inseparable coexistence of two opposite conditions *in one and the same object* and *at the same time*, in analogy with the experience of psychological conflict. In the *Laws* (X.893c-d), the balanced rotation of circular bodies is used by the Athenian Stranger in the same way, but with further emphasis on the fact that larger and smaller circumferences *within the same object* possess proportionally different velocities, despite the fact that only *a single impulse of motion* has been communicated to all of them. This phenomenon is thus an eminent example among those that trigger the philosophical *thaumazein*, because the same event can and in fact needs to be described, even geometrically, in opposite ways at the same time (cf. Chapter 3). As Dr Dow remarked, the puzzlement is enhanced by the fact that, unlike in the case of bodies that stand still while only *some of their parts* move, in a spinning body the regular movement of the whole is necessary for the stability of the axis and vice-versa. Here opposites are not only predicated of the same thing but physically imply each other; the coexistence of two opposite descriptions is thus not a mere sophistic trick but a very cogent necessity of geometrical formalisation.

This imagery of balance is not limited to spatial considerations of stable movements, but also extends to temporal concerns of timing, thus marking a crucial difference from the myth of the *Phaedo*. While in the *Phaedo* the earth is represented as balanced *as such*, inherently without need for an external constraining power, the universe in the *Statesman* is not. The introduction, unique to this myth, of a periodical dependence on an external divinity draws attention to a temporal aspect. There is not only a *right position* for the universe to preserve its movement, but also a *right time* when it can be left alone. The letting loose of the universe is a passive condition on which it has no direct control, since it depends on the external divinity, but it is not arbitrary: it happens *kata kairon* (270a), according to the moment when it is *opportune* to let it go. The Stranger takes up this idea again at 272d-e: when the time (*chronos*) of all the mutations brought about the divine intervention is complete (*eteleōthe*), i.e. when the conditions inside the universe are mature (each earthly soul having repeatedly reincarnated), the divine steersman retires to his observation post and let the universe unfold on its own. After a moment of confusion and catastrophes, the universe is able to maintain a regular movement when the time is adequate (*ikanou chronou*; 273a); and exactly when the time of its autonomy is complete (*teleutōntos [...] tou chronou*; 273d), when it risks to bring about definitive destruction, the steersman resumes his position and saves it from sinking into a sea of confusion. The universe is then portrayed as not fully autonomous, or rather not autonomous *as such*, but in dependence of external guidance, because its movement varies in different moments. The cosmic autonomy is, we may say, temporally conditional.

The narrative focus on this temporal element marks the shift of imagery from balance to steering: it is the description of a steering god that coincides with the Stranger's narration of different *times* of divine intervention and cosmic autonomy. While the image of balance only included a cursory, obscure remark on the god letting the universe go at the right moment, the image of the steersman is part of a narration that describes explicitly the different times when the god intervenes or withdraws. First, he withdraws when a temporal cycle of incarnations is mature; then, the universe needs to reach the adequate time for a movement devoid of catastrophes; and finally, its movement risks to go out of control and it is opportune for the steersman to come back again. This association of right moments of intervention with nautical imagery is not casual, but it is based on a cultural association of the skilful art of a pilot and the ability to discern the precise moments for a successful voyage. We have seen that, in

Sophocles, the metaphor of Athena guiding the mind of Odysseus depended on her skill to know exactly the right time when her intervention was needed: ‘But you arrive right in time (καιρὸν δ’ ἐφήκεις), for in all matters, both past and future ones, I am steered by your hand (σῆ κυβερνῶμαι χερὶ)’ (vv.34-35). This association seems to originate from the difficulty of maritime voyages, which are dependent on the external conditions of the sea and of the climate, in turn depending on the particular time of the year when the pilot decides to set sail. We find an explicit advice about this difficulty, which requires the knowledge of *kairos*, in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*:

You yourself wait until the season for sailing is come, and then haul your swift ship down to the sea [...] But you, Perses, remember all works in their season but sailing especially [...] I will show you the measures of the loud-roaring sea [...] I will tell you the mind of Zeus who holds the aegis; for the Muses have taught me to sing in marvellous song. Fifty days after the solstice, when the season of wearisome heat is come to an end, is the right time for mortals to go sailing. Then you will not wreck your ship, nor will the sea destroy the sailors.

αὐτὸς δ’ ὠραῖον μίμνειν πλόον, εἰσόκεν ἔλθῃ· καὶ τότε νῆα θοὴν ἄλαδ’ ἐλκέμεν [...] τύνη δ’, ᾧ Πέρση, ἔργων μεμνημένος εἶναι ὠραίων πάντων, περὶ ναυτιλίας δὲ μάλιστα [...] δείξω δὴ τοι μέτρα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης [...] ὣς ἐρέω Ζηνὸς νόον αἰγιόχοιο· Μοῦσαι γάρ μ’ ἐδίδαξαν ἀθέσφατον ὕμνον ἀεΐδειν. ἤματα πεντήκοντα μετὰ τροπᾶς ἡελίοιο, ἐς τέλος ἐλθόντος θέρους καματώδεος ὥρης, ὠραῖος πέλεται θνητοῖς πλόος· οὔτε κε νῆα καυάξαις οὔτ’ ἄνδρας ἀποφθείσειε θάλασσα (vv.630-666, tr. Evelyn-White, *adapted*).

Hesiod’s advice to his brother Perses is clear: the sea is dangerous to mortals, but shipwrecks can be avoided through attention and memory of the right seasons (*horai*), the opportune (*horaios*) time for sailing, which depends on basic astronomical and geographical knowledge, here expressed as the *measures* (*metra*) of the sea and as the mind (*noos*) of the sky god Zeus.²¹¹ The poet is here using the sea as an example for a general attention to due measure and right timing. Indeed, this advice on nautical skill, about which the poet admits his inexperience, ultimately leads to a universal maxim on *kairos* which became traditional in Greek culture:

²¹¹ In this poem, the problem of dealing with shifting circumstances is ultimately framed as the problem of understanding the divine will of Zeus, which is an instance of cosmic justice (the ‘true judgements which are of Zeus and are the noblest [δίκης, αἵ τ’ ἐκ Διὸς εἰσιν ἄρισται]’, v.36, tr. Evelyn-White, *adapted*).

Observe due measures: and the right time is most noble in all things

μέτρα φυλάσσεσθαι· καιρὸς δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἄριστος (v.694, t. Evelyn-White, *adapted*).

Hesiod uses the image of nautical skill to represent a universal criterion of action: *metron* and *kairos*, which should direct to success *all* actions (*ergon panton; pasin*). His poem indeed also includes examples from farming, which depends on the correct seasons (vv.381-640), and religious piety, which depends on traditional days of celebration (vv.765-828). *Works and Days*, above all, is a set of didactic examples used to show (*deiknunai*) that there are specific moments (days or seasons) for all human works (like farming, sailing, or venerating the gods); it is an exhortation to the art of *kairos*. The nautical image provides a perfectly vivid example of such art, which not only achieves success but also avoids deathly dangers.

Employing a nautical image for the conditions of cosmic movement, Plato relies heavily on this cultural background. The action of the divine steersman, like the Sophoclean Athena's and the Hesiodic sailor's, is first of all a *kairotic* action, a skill of identifying the opportune conditions and moments that can direct a voyage (real or metaphorical) to success, and avoid confusion and destruction. The act of steering (*strephein*) is chosen by Plato not only because it reflects the circular movement of the heavens, but also because it represents, in the figure of a steersman, the ability to understand right measure and act accordingly. It is not, however, a permanent feature of the universe, like Parmenides's steering goddess who sits at the centre of all things; but it is an external power that intervenes only *periodically* and *from outside*.

External divine intervention strongly diverges from the image of a divinity that always moves in circles, since it portrays the god as capable of abandoning and coming back to the universe. Here, the analogy between a steersman and a power moving purely in circles breaks down, because the steersman can always step back from the helm or return to it, when the *kairos* requires it. Similarly, the image of an all-encompassing cosmos is at odds with the representation of an external space in which it may founder and lose its internal movement (i.e. its life). The two moments of the myth, despite their narrative unity, stand in a relation of disanalogy, insofar as they represent incompatible images of the cosmos and of its guiding principle.

4.3. Cognitive Cosmic Images: a Delicate Philosophical Freedom

The clash of imagery is necessary for the cognitive efficacy of the mythical account. The power of *strephein*, precisely because it is one that mainly observes the conditions of the universe from outside, and intervenes only when time is mature, is radically *peripheral* and *circumstantial*. It is neither an immanent power of the universe, focalised in its centre, nor a force that constantly acts on the universe from within. Rather, it is a transcendent force, acting on its circumference like a steersman would act on a helm, and only when it is opportune to do so. Similarly, the introduction of a possible deathly danger at sea, with the risk that the universe be storm-tossed like a ship, forever losing its course (*poreias*) and sinking, diverges from the visual image of the cosmos as a circular body, which could eventually lose its balanced movement, but certainly not sink in an external space. In order to introduce the theme of *kairos*, the Stranger must imagine that the unchanging perfection of a self-identical movement *can change* and let go, and that the all-encompassing universe lies within an external space, which threatens its autonomy and makes it conditional.

Ultimately, the two images that Plato chooses for the single figure (*schema*) of celestial movement are radically opposite, both visually and conceptually. Visually, we are first presented with an image of balance, whereby the ultimate condition of circular movement is a stability around a central pivot or axis; but afterwards, we are presented with a divine force which turns around the universe from outside, like a helm. Conceptually, we are first led to think of the conditions that allow a self-moving spherical body to maintain its motion; these are a matter of equipoise on a cosmic centre; but later, we are led to think of the timely action of a steersman, who always acts only in dependence of a criterion of correct timing. The two images, in this sense, represent different enactments of the right measure (fitting, opportune, and appropriate) defined in the middle of the *Statesman* (284a-285c). However, they do so in radically opposite ways. First of all, one image is spatial, while the other introduces a concern for temporal action. Moreover, in terms of visualisation, the second image introduces the features, incompatible with the first, of a sea external to the universe and of a divine movement that steps back from its circular guidance. Finally, the combination of these images entails a shift of attention from the centre to the periphery, from a movement that only requires a stable central point, to one that depends on the peripheral action of an external power.

In agreement with these incompatible shifts of focus, the conceptual implications of the two images are radically opposite. On the one hand, we have the condition of a self-directed right measure, a dominion of the living universe over itself through its stability on an *internal* point of itself. The universe, when it moves on its own, requires a status of internal perfect equipoise between its whole macroscopic body and the microscopic foot/pivot on which it can stand. Its movement is fully a matter of internal harmony. On the other hand, we have the possibility of radical destruction, which calls for an external measured direction, not concerned at all with the point of balance itself, but with preserving the orderly movement of the cosmic body as a whole, which could get lost in an external unlimited space. This order is not grounded on the internal harmony between big and small, but on the external imposition of a figure of movement.

The two images of right measure, overall, are not only divergent but clashing, as they portray irreducible and incompatible events or features:

- (a) movements in one direction and in the opposite;
- (b) spatial right position and temporal right moment;
- (c) eternally identical divine movement and withdrawal from the helm;
- (d) internal movement and external forces.

Since the two images are part of a narration, where they succeed one another in time, their different features do not seem to clash strongly; the myth does not employ two radically opposite images to describe one and the same object, as if the universe were *at the same time* self-moving and controlled. The two opposite movements (a) and the right measure in space or time (b) are in fact simply distinguished. They only clash physically, as the Stranger represents the universe clashing (*sumballōn*, 273a) with itself when the controlled movement is overturned. The opposition of controlled and autonomous movements is so radical that it directly destabilises the cosmic order, causing various catastrophes. But the properly metaphorical clash is a convergence of the disanalogous features (c) and (d): the disanalogy between a spinning, all-compassing body, and a ship-like object that can founder in an external sea cannot be reconciled; nor can the perfectly circular movement of the god, and its *kairotic* moving back and forth, abandoning or returning to the cosmic helm.²¹² This clash produces a

²¹² This movement back and forth could itself be pictured as circular, insofar as it is cyclical. Even so, it could not be equal to an unchanging *sunkuklein*, revolving together alongside the cosmos, but should include a moment of rupture; and it could not explain the physical taking hold or letting go of the bodily cosmos, either. The two depictions of the god inevitably clash, thus originating a metaphorical meaning.

conceptual space where two opposite instances converge, i.e. where the independence of the cosmic movement can be shown as dependent on an external power. The universe at the same time needs to find its own inner right measure to be autonomous, and can find it through an external, timely action, which is incompatibly directive. Conceptually, the clash of imagery is one between:

(e) freedom (as autonomy) and control (as guidance).

Between these two incompatible images, we find a conceptual space where the cosmos, in its independence, replicates the figure of its former dependence. Through its ‘memory’, i.e. through its ability to preserve and re-enact the past, it can move in perfect circularity without either relying on a god, or dispersing its motion in an unlimited space.

Schuhl (1968) has correctly identified the ongoing cosmic dependence within its balance, envisaging the universe as a kind of spherical spindle suspended to a string. This mechanism, available in Plato’s time, might have influenced many of his cosmic representations, but the one in the *Statesman* in particular:

the machine revolves, the string to which it is suspended is twisted; when the artisan [who was spinning it] steps aside, the string, quite naturally, tends to untwist; at first, the movement continues without interruption, and then, after a moment of turmoil, when the two impulses oppose each other (272e-273a), ‘its allotted and innate desire turned it back again in the opposite direction’ (p.84, tr. mine).

As an external hand spins this mechanism in one direction, the string keeps twisting until, once the controlling hand stops moving it, it finally untwists in the opposite direction, and lets the mechanism turn *on its own* thanks to the accumulated tension on its axis. Since untwisting cannot exist without previous twisting, the autonomous movement of this mechanism would not be possible without the external, opposite impulse. This image is in fact a perfect analogy for the idea of a cosmic ‘memory’, which can incorporate and preserve the impulse of the god. The scholar justifies his appeal to this physical model, noticing that the Stranger explicitly appeals to images in order to visualise abstract, invisible realities (285e-286a); he compares this mechanism to the universe in the *Republic*, represented as a spherical spindle used by the Fates to weave mortal destinies (616c); and he also observes that the torsion (*strephein*)²¹³ of the

²¹³ Cf. 272e, 273a, 273e.

cosmos is physically the same as the wool-strings' torsion later described in this dialogue (*streptikon*, 282d).

To some extent these justifications are textually weak, since they rely on elements that, in this dialogue, are not described or even alluded to. In a way, Schuhl forces the textual evidence, imagining a mechanical model that Plato *might* have had in mind, and bracketing the description of the living cosmos. Nonetheless, it is true that the Stranger is also representing the universe as an artefact, periodically subject to an external force in a mechanical way, and periodically reacting thanks to its own inner drive. While there is no textual evidence for the twisted string, such an image provides a valid mechanical analogy for the dynamic of action-reaction here described. Migliori, who criticises the excessive one-sidedness of Schuhl's reading, nonetheless admits that it is very likely that Plato had in mind a machine or a sort of spinning-top in picturing the universe in this way.²¹⁴ Indeed, the Stranger combines images of conscious life and artificial dynamism. We can therefore reconnect Schuhl's mechanical image, undoubtedly too limited, to the dynamic of living freedom and mechanical control expressed by the two clashing images of balance and steering. If, under the power of an external steering hand, the universe is passively twisted, it is the 'tension' accumulated in its centre (Schuhl's string) that allows it to replicate on its own the very same figure of motion. Cosmic balance is actually a tension of two opposite drives.

This dynamic is cognitively productive, because it establishes a clash or a tension between opposite, incompatible ideas. It does not merely illustrate a set of similarities, but it demands that the recipients *autonomously* recognise its philosophical implications: autonomous movement is the result of a process, temporally and spatially conditioned. Independence is not independent. As a physical and living body, the universe opposes to the directing god its own fated tension and innate desire (*epithumia*, 272e). The circular motion imposed from outside *does* act on the cosmic body as on a mechanism, but it clashes with the universe's living impulse, creating a tension which is resolved, *at the right time*, when the universe is let go. To correct Schuhl's one-sided image, what we see in the myth is not a mechanism attached to a string; it is rather a clash of peripheral and central forces, one directing the universe from outside and communicating to it, mechanically, a circular figure of motion, and the other unfolding

²¹⁴ Migliori (1996): 'The fact that Plato, anyway, might have written [this passage] having a machine, or a sort of spinning-top, in his mind is even likely' (p.322 n.31, tr. mine). Cf. Brisson, 1995, pp.356-357. While Migliori judges this comparison irrelevant to any demonstration, the mechanical dynamics studies by Schuhl highlight a crucial educational process: the correct transference (at the right time) and acquisition (through tense axial balance) of a wise intellectual movement.

in the contrary direction, but replicating perfectly the same figure because it equilibrates the forces of its macroscopic revolving mass in its stable microscopic centre. The universe thus incorporates the external control, and makes it its own. What we see, in a sense, is a transfer of force from the circumference to the centre, and a transfer of power and authority from the controller to his subject. This transfer of power is visualised both as a mechanical process and as a living exchange of authority and control. The divine control is not control for its own sake, but it is directed to the autonomous movement of the universe; on its part, the universe needs to preserve that motion, i.e. to preserve the tension between the received impulse and its own contrasting drive. As the tension physically declines, ‘forgetfulness’ increases because the replication of movement becomes impossible, and the god needs to intervene again. The movement through tension is therefore also dangerous, because the tension can fade away and, in absence of all strings and constraints, it needs to be restored from outside to prevent its utmost loss.

Only if we recognise this clash or tension, visually expressed as a dynamic of peripheral steering and central balance, the full meaning of this imagery emerges. The possibility of maintaining the right movement, of autonomously enacting right measure, is conditional; it depends on the ability to maintain two opposite drives at the same time. Hegel, as an insightful if not always impartial Platonic interpreter, correctly commented that to Plato rationality is essentially characterised by the ability to ‘sustain within itself the Contradiction [or: the Opposite] (den Gegensatz in sich ertragen)’, i.e. to accept that contradiction is constitutive of itself.²¹⁵ Rational freedom from constraints depends on its own constraining conditions. Correct external control is directed only at internal self-control. Accordingly, the Stranger does not portray either balance or guidance as an immediate, natural given, and does not underplay the clash between them. Rather, he shows that the cosmic right movement does not depend *exclusively* on an objective criterion, on a correct figure of movement that is always available and can be imposed by all means. He shows, instead, that there is a problematic and even dangerous possibility for the cosmos to find *its own right position*. The cosmic movement is an action that requires attentive care (*epimeleia*) and practical wisdom

²¹⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *GPh XIV. Plato*, p.240 (211); quoted in Cicero (1998), pp.216-217, n.47 (translation mine). Notice that Hegel is referring here to the role of contradiction in Plato’s *Philebus*, but his comment is meant as a general interpretation of Plato’s philosophy. Hegel’s idealistic reading, nonetheless, must be moderated in one respect: the measured convergence of contradictory impulses is not, in Plato, exclusively an immanent property of reality but it also depends on the actions of an external divinity. The cosmos cannot find its own right measure simply thanks to its own internal dynamics, but it needs to imitate or be directed by an external divine principle.

(*phronesis*), and an autonomy that depends on an inherent tension. Cosmic freedom is not a given to be taken for granted; rather, it is part of a cycle of emerging and subsiding right conditions, fleeting right moments. The preservation of the circular motion is thus a *conditional* possibility, not an unchanging rule. This is the original philosophical message of this myth: even within the figure of circular motion, the most perfect rule of eternal self-equality, there is an element of opposition, which is the necessary condition for fully autonomous self-equality and self-regulation. Originally elaborating existing imagery of cosmic balance and guidance, Plato creates a wholly-new model for the paradoxical concept of an *acquired* autonomy, a difficult self-regulation that can be communicated from outside and needs attentive wisdom to be maintained. His usage of imagery communicates, with cognitive efficacy, the delicate status of philosophical freedom.

Conclusion

This analysis of the Stranger's usage of cosmic imagery in the *Statesman* demonstrates that it produces a clash of apparently mutually exclusive ideas, whose cognitive value lies in the triggering of autonomous intellectual responses in the recipients. The Stranger resorts to *two* images, balanced circularity and steering, to represent a *single* circular figure (σχήμα) of cosmic movement. Both images are associated with right measure, either as spatial equipoise or timely intervention; but they also communicate radically opposed and incompatible ideas. On the one hand, then, the mythical figure displays a conceptual unity, as it represents one and the same cosmic condition (πάθος), dependent on right measure. But on the other hand this condition is radically problematized by a set of conceptual contrasts *inherent* to the notion of right measure, and represented through opposite images. This contrast makes the myth puzzling, in accordance with its function as *paidia*, thus demanding the interpreter's cognitive engagement.

I have shown that the Stranger avails himself of images of balanced circularity and steering, in two different moments of his narration. Balanced circularity constitutes for him a way to subsume the image of polar reversals, such as the inversion of heavenly motions, under a univocal image of orderly movement. Cosmic steering, differently, represents circular motion as a matter of external direction. With reference to pre-Socratic philosophy and poetry, I have shown that the conceptual and ethical implications of these two images are opposite. In the former case, we find an image of

stable and powerful self-control, grounded on pre-Socratic notions of the organisation of cosmic space around a steady centre. In the latter, we find an image of expert and benevolent *external* control, grounded on pre-Socratic notions of timely response to danger and confusion. Based on these opposite implications, I have argued that the myth communicates a set of clashing notions: (a) divergent movements that come to a *physical* clash; (b) spatial against temporal instantiations of right measure; (c) eternally identical divine movement against periodical divine withdrawal; and (d) internal cosmic movement against external forces acting upon it. The fundamental common trait of all these clashes is a contrast between (e) freedom (as autonomous independence) and control (as heteronomous dependence).

The mythical *paidia*, thus, embeds a conceptual clash within a unified narration. In this way, it produces a novel and puzzling philosophical notion: independence is dependent on conditions of measured control. Self-regulation, by definition, is at the same time an act of submission to and of control oneself. It is not an immediate given, but the result of a process of inner harmonisation of divergent drives. As the cosmos, in its independence, replicates the figure of its former dependence, so autonomy needs to be acquired. Wisdom (φρόνησις) and care (ἐπιμέλεια) of oneself consist in the preservation of such a delicate tension. In his composition, Plato does not resort to explicit arguments, precisely in order to preserve the puzzling ambivalence of this notion. Instead of presenting a definitive ethical criterion, or a set of formal determinations, he *produces* the conditions whereby the recipients of his myth are demanded, even forced, to *discover* and *recognise* the point of balance on their own. He has thus ensured that the interpreters' mind needs to find a way to orientate itself amidst divergent ideas or be irrevocably at a loss. The cognitive value of his playful and puzzling myth ultimately consists precisely in triggering an autonomous and self-orienting intellectual response to the delicate ambivalence of self-direction.

Chapter 5 – Models of Leadership of Minds: Leading to Balance

Do you believe that the constitutions of cities are born out of an oak or a rock, rather than from the citizens' dispositions [*ēthōn*], which, so to speak, tip the scales [*rhepsanta*] and drag the rest after them? (*Resp.* 544d7-e2).

Introduction

This chapter examines the *Statesman* in order to illuminate the notion of leadership of minds. My interpretation of this dialogue takes into account its scene as much as its contents, in the persuasion that the dialogue form further illuminates the arguments. I will argue that this dialogue presents a guidance of human minds directed at enabling autonomous psychological (cognitive and emotional) balance in the guided subjects. I will observe that Plato presents the same form of guidance as beneficial to both individual minds and political communities. To support this claim, I will outline the common trait that Plato identifies between individual education and political leadership: the production of a balanced combination of different perspectives. Since in both cases leadership of minds aims to enable a form of well-composed equilibrium, it is in effect a way of generating right measure in the souls of the guided subjects. Thus, this chapter further articulates the notion of right measure by teasing out its concrete instantiations at the individual and political level, as Plato represents them in the *Statesman*.

The correct leadership of minds is Plato's major educational concern in the *Statesman* as much as in his other political dialogues. As I have observed in my General Introduction, three recent studies of the *Statesman* have examined the notion of psychological leadership. Two studies have presented it as a matter of methodological and doctrinal instruction (Lane 1998, Bobonich 1995), thereby emphasising its cognitive aspects and presenting emotions in particular as subordinate or distorting factors. One study has presented leadership as production of social harmony and as attentive to the constructive role of emotional influences (Bontempi 2009). None has highlighted the common traits between individual and political education. Lodge's (1947) more dated study has shown that Plato's other political dialogues, the *Republic* and the *Laws*, are concerned with 'the life of the self', namely with the interaction and development of different psychological subjects within a complex 'social tissue of civic life', influenced by biological, social and other nonlogical factors (p.232). Lodge has demonstrated that, to Plato, the first and foremost political concern is educational: educating professional members of society (pp.41-59), educating good citizens (pp.60-

87), educating philosophers and leaders (pp.88-113), in each case availing not only of technical and notional instruction but also of imagination (pp.114-137), artistic techniques (pp.150-183), and above all pedagogical and psychological care (pp.184-233). All these educational concerns, culminating in the leadership of minds, aim to enable a good life for individuals and communities alike. I will show that the same educational and psychological concern shapes the dialogue scene and political account of the *Statesman*.

This overlapping of education and politics may be unfamiliar to modern readers.²¹⁶ Careful semantic distinctions are therefore necessary to preserve this connection while avoiding confusion. Certainly, it is possible to think of politics and education as belonging to distinct fields of expertise and performing separate functions. Political leadership and subjection to given political institutions are matters of collective and institutional order, and the idea of educational development does not *immediately* coincide with this framework.²¹⁷ Education, in fact, aims to instruct and shape individuals, through the communication of technical or intellectual notions and the development of vocational, cognitive or emotional skills. Various fields of political action are not related, without mediation, to educational concerns: for instance, social conflict, economic processes, legislation and criminality, or the modalities of participation to power. However, this divide is not present in the ultimate political account of the *Statesman*. Here education constitutes, as I will show, a bridge-concept that conjoins individual and political guidance. In particular, to Plato psychological factors (cognition, opinions, and emotions) orientate and influence political choices, societal dynamics, and resulting institutions. Thus, Plato's major political concern is the education of the mind. In order to avoid confusion, then, I will adhere to the following terminological distinction. I will use the term 'education' for the individual practice and 'educational leadership' for the restructured and expanded figure of political leadership that Plato represents. While I draw important parallels between the two, I also

²¹⁶ Lodge (1947) similarly comments that speaking of 'education for citizenship' may seem unclear to modern readers, because to us every individual always already *is* a citizen, namely a democratic subject (p.60).

²¹⁷ I cannot tackle here the problem, largely ideological, of the compatibility between a modern liberal democratic framework and an educational understanding of politics. This problem, famously raised by Popper (1945), has been recently revived by Lane (1998, pp.5-6). Charging political authorities with a role of evaluation and guidance of the citizens can be seen, by modern readers, as paternalistic and oppressive of individual liberties. The theoretical root of this problem is a contrast between the notions of *negative* freedom (freedom *from* the constraints of authority and their potential abuse) and *positive* freedom (freedom *to* live and flourish in a community as well-organised as possible). Plato's political thought belongs firmly to the latter framework, and any modern evaluation of his doctrines must take into account its historical distance from current notions of liberty (cf. Lodge 1947, pp.224-225; 234-259).

acknowledge that there are differences, most notably in that political leadership addresses a community and involves further functions beyond education. Therefore the distinction that my terminology draws is the one between our familiar idea of education and Plato's original view of political rule as educational leadership.

My aim is to identify the common traits between education of the mind and political leadership. The parallel between the order (or confusion) of the mind and of the city is a central tenet of Plato's political philosophy, and it is explicitly theorised in the *Republic*. Here, the character of Socrates describes the constitution of a city as model (παράδειγμα, 9.592b) of the individual mind, insofar as they both encompass a plexus of factors, parts, or aspects that determine their inner order or confusion (cf. *Resp.* 367e-369a). The constitutive complexity of both city and psyche, to Plato, requires both leaders and educators to eschew exclusive reliance on doctrinal or dogmatic contents, and to seek for adequate means of education such as music, narrations, images and artistic composition to bring both society and mind to harmony.²¹⁸ While in the *Statesman* the Stranger does not envisage any *explicit* analogy of this sort, it can be shown that he nonetheless describes the conditions of both fields in the same terms, thereby presenting their inherent difficulties and potentials as comparable. I therefore hold that identifying their comparable traits is necessary to illuminate how Plato configures, in this dialogue, a practice of leadership that directs and improves both individual and social psychology.

I will articulate this comparison in four sections. First, I will foreground the overarching connection between dialogue scene and political contents through a critical engagement with recent scholarship on the *Statesman* (5.1.). Second, I will study the education of the individual mind as represented in this dialogue (5.2.). This section will address both the dialogue scene as a model of education (5.2.1.) and the image of the inquiring mind as representing its optimal cognitive condition (5.2.2.). Third, I will study the educational leadership of the political community (5.3.). This section will consist of four steps: isolating the notion of educational leadership (5.3.1); assessing its political significance (5.3.2.); examining the concept of political balance (5.3.3.); and addressing the problem of the methods of educational leadership (5.3.4). Finally, I will identify the common traits that emerge from the above accounts (5.4.). My comparison of education and leadership is thus indirect. It does not consist in establishing a point-by-point assimilation of the two fields, thus overshadowing their differences. It is rather

²¹⁸ Cf. Lodge (1947), pp.150-183.

a hermeneutical effort of reconstruction, demanded by Plato's dialogical writing. It first examines how individual education and political leadership are independently configured in the *Statesman*, and only as a last step it teases out their fundamental common trait.

The purpose of this novel comparison is twofold. On the one hand, it will reinforce my thesis that images and models are cognitively fundamental to understand Plato's philosophical position in the *Statesman*. We cannot fully appreciate the notion of educational leadership of minds without looking at how Plato represents, in this paradigmatic dialogue as much as in his images, the dynamic processes of mind and society. My study will thus show that Plato's creativity and appeal to imagination is fundamental in the construction of a complete figure of leadership. On the other hand, this comparison further illuminates the concrete and dynamic aspects of right measure. It shows that individual education and political leadership equally aim to combine different perspectives in a correctly balanced fashion. The educational efforts that Plato represents in the *Statesman* are ultimately grounded on the notion of right measure as equilibrium, which eschews detrimental confusion and conflict, and allows a harmonious self-regulation.

5.1. Preliminary Remarks: A Two-Sided Educational Process

The purpose of this chapter is to show that the *Statesman* presents a two-sided educational process between guides and guided subjects. My reading of this dialogue contradicts the scholars' widespread one-sided attention to the formal features of philosophical and political guidance alone, without sufficient study of their *concrete relation* with the guided individuals or groups. Rather than identifying formal methodologies or doctrinal contents,²¹⁹ my novel study aims to tease out the characteristics of dialectical and political *praxes*. It focuses on the concrete and dynamic aspects of education and educational leadership, which (at least in the context of the *Statesman*) are irreducible to rigid formal accounts and have been thus *represented* by Plato in their living movement.

²¹⁹ Weiss (1995) argues for the assimilation of the statesman to a Socratic 'physician of the soul' (p.213), thereby implicitly accepting the parallelism of social and individual education (conceived as healing, corrective act). However, she makes no attempt to ground this parallelism on textual evidence, and thus fails to grasp the multifaceted dynamics described by the Stranger, which are not exclusively curative.

This living movement has been widely overlooked by current research on the *Statesman*. For instance, Sayre (2006) and Lane (1998) have devoted their studies to methodology and theoretical knowledge as the central elements of the dialogue. Sayre reads the political dialogue from the exclusive angle of methodology, dialectics and metaphysics, to which he devotes all his attention to the detriment of their bond with political contents (p.6). Lane identifies the similarities between dialectical methodology ('exemplifying and dividing, and [...] finding the mean') and political knowledge whereby, she concludes, 'method and politics [...] become one' (p.202).²²⁰ Similarly, Weiss (1995) focuses exclusively on the definition of the statesman as ἐπιστημῶν, possessor of technical knowledge, analysing his understanding of 'the just, beautiful, and holy' as ethical principles that guide his actions (p.222). A particular case is represented by Bobonich's (1995) interpretation, which does in fact focus on 'the education of non-philosophers' (p.328), but construes it as a methodical indoctrination whereby opinions are 'implanted' or 'inculcate[d]' in ignorant multitudes (p.321). In all such cases, we observe a lack of attention, if not towards the subjects themselves, at least towards their *independent* standpoint in relation to the statesman. To overlook this object of study, however, means to miss the properly *practical* nature of leadership, which is by necessity addressed to living subjects and shaped by their autonomous conditions. Methodology and formal knowledge are *not one* with concrete leadership, unless one artificially abstracts from the concrete application of the latter and reduces it to pure formal categories.

The same lack of attention to *praxes* affects, to various degrees, the few available studies of the dialogical scene of the *Statesman*. These studies generally focus on the Stranger's doctrines and the formal means of their communication to Young Socrates. For instance, Rowe (2000) holds that the *Statesman* was composed by Plato 'to propound already fixed positions' (p.175), whereby it 'doesn't quite come off as a dialogue' (p.176) and constitutes a thinly 'disguised pedagogy' that hardly requires a dialogical form (p.178). Rowe's judgment is particularly puzzling insofar as the *Statesman* is, in fact, *explicitly* set out as a pedagogical or educational dialogue (e.g. 257c7-258a6; 285c8-d7). It is difficult to imagine why Rowe claims that this process be in any way disguised. Rowe rightly observes that this dialogue does not portray an

²²⁰ Lane (1998) acknowledges the independent role of the citizens in relation to the statesman (pp.178-180). However, she construes the former's role merely as 'the murkier stuff of beliefs and backgrounds' to which a rigidly objective norm must be dictated (p.186), and the latter's as the communication of a methodologically, if less theoretically sound, understanding of the *kairos* ('facilitating the perception of the timely good', p.202).

interaction among different arguments, defended by different characters, thus losing the 'sheer excitement' of debate that is more typical of Plato's writing (p.171). The lack of debate or excitement, however, does not mean that the presence of different characters can be disregarded and the dialogue reduced to a camouflaged treatise. Two recent studies of this dialogue scene, in fact, defend its relative significance. Santa Cruz acknowledges that the Stranger, in his educational role, must rely 'on his interlocutor's agreement, without which it is impossible to proceed' (p.193, *tr. mine*). Like Rowe, nonetheless, she holds that the form of the *Statesman* 'is not the one of a living dialogue' and that 'the absence of conflict in it is remarkable' (p.190, *tr. mine*), because its purpose is to present mere 'considerations on explicatory methods' (p.199, *tr. mine*) rather than an exchange of opinions. Gill offers a more nuanced interpretation (1995), supporting a reading of this dialogue as a genuine, albeit not very dramatic, 'dialectical interchange' (p.292). He observes, correctly, that the dialogue includes a moment of mediation between the Stranger's support for unregulated authority and Young Socrates's resistance to it (*Pol.* 291-303). Since the Stranger, in response to his interlocutor's doubts, needs to moderate his position and allow for the value of constitutional legislation, Gill reads this dialogue as a dynamic process of '*defamiliarization* and *theorised reconstitution*' (p.304) whereby given opinions are progressively reframed and corrected in view of a mediation of different standpoints.²²¹ Nonetheless, Gill (2000) also admits that this process of 'mediation' of intellectual positions is not necessarily 'expressed through the dramatized interchange between personae' in Plato's dialogues (p.292). There is in fact no inherent reason to rely on a dramatic discussion in order to present a mediation of ideas. The genuinely dramatic aspect, which none of the interpreters here listed has sufficiently considered, is Young Socrates's own disposition or philosophical progress as Plato represents it. These interpreters, instead, consider formal methodology and theoretical clarification as the fundamental payoffs of the *Statesman*.

What similar approaches fail to acknowledge, or acknowledge only as secondary, is the independent position of the subjects of philosophical or political guidance. They focus, instead, either on figures that Plato presents as possessors of knowledge, or on the formal, methodological features of their expertise. To my knowledge, only Stefanini (1949) has argued against the central role of methodology or didactic formalism in this dialogue, arguing that Plato has represented a difficult

²²¹ Cf. Gill (2000) for a development of this interpretation as valid for the other non-Socratic dialogues as well.

progress of reflective ‘awareness’²²² acquired through speculation (p.217), as opposed to a mere refinement of methods and doctrines. He holds that Plato has portrayed ‘the anxiousness and almost the suffering of thinking’ dictated by constant inquiry and doubts, and analogous to the difficult problem of finding, concretely, an ideal statesman (p.441). Albeit limiting his observations to general remarks and not exhibiting complete textual evidence for his reading, Stefanini correctly emphasises the *concrete* experiential aspects that, to Plato, determine the cognitive and political value of the art of dialectic. His attention to the presence of cognitive experiences (‘awareness’) and emotional states (‘suffering’) in Plato’s writing is not a naïve appreciation of superficial elements, with no bearing on theoretical issues. Rather, it has a solid theoretical foundation, namely the conviction that, in every dialogue, Plato represents philosophy as a process of ‘skepsis’ (p.441), a troubling but constructive examination and re-examination of opinions, grounded at once on the possibility to attain some truth and on the necessity to question established positions, constantly, from multiple standpoints. To Stefanini, *skepsis* is thus a dynamic process that stands in between rigid dogmatism and absolute scepticism and requires both moments.²²³ In agreement with this theoretical standpoint, I will demonstrate that, in the *Statesman*, Plato *explicitly* portrays a process of dialogue that involves toilsome effort, and that he assimilates the intellectual and political experiences of the search for a correct combination of perspectives.

5.2. *The Statesman as a Model of Dialectics*

In composing the political inquiry of the *Statesman* as a dialogue, Plato has eschewed linearity of argument and chosen to represent, instead, an educational scene characterised by errors, philosophical digressions, and complex shifts of angles. In this

²²² All citations from Stefanini are given in my translation. The Italian ‘coscienza’ could also be translated as ‘consciousness’. The notion of consciousness or self-awareness in ancient Greece is extremely complex and it cannot be easily reduced to contemporary notions of psychology or philosophy of mind. Foucault (2003) has suggested that the principle ‘know thyself’, reportedly expressed by the Delphic oracle, grounds Classical culture not so much in terms of theoretical understanding as in terms of *pragmatical* care (*epimeleia*) of oneself: self-awareness emerges, to him, in the context of the ethical management of one’s life, material goods, and inner dispositions (p.47). The full scope of this concept cannot be tackled adequately here, but it can be observed that the processes of ethical psychology represented in the *Statesman* fit perfectly within this frame. Cf. Napolitano Valditara, 2010, pp.19-21.

²²³ See Stefanini (1991), pp.XXVIII-XXXIII. Cf. Capizzi (1995) and Lodge (1947). Capizzi sees Plato’s philosophy as a mediation between dogmatism and scepticism (pp.404-6). Lodge argues for a reading of Plato’s dialogues as sceptically detached from the theoretical positions they propose, even as they defend idealistic positions, because their educational purpose is to promote critical judgment (pp.6-8). Stefanini’s position is preferable, however, insofar as it does not detach dogmatism or idealism from scepticism, but rather shows that both moments (the positing of abstract truths and their constant questioning) are inseparable parts of the same theoretical process.

dialogue, indeed, the Eleatic Stranger guides Young Socrates through a multifaceted ‘experience about knowledge’ (περὶ τῆς ἐπιστήμης πάθος, 277d7) on political matters, starting with an error of perspective (the statesman as herdsman, 258a7-277a2) and slowly correcting it through a set of organised disruptions and combinations of images. I argue that Plato’s compositional choice prevents the readers from interpreting this dialogue merely as an exposition of methodological, metaphysical, or political doctrines. Rather, it is productive to read it as a particular image of dialectics, namely of the activity of inquiring minds in general. The Stranger himself invites such a reading by assimilating his and Young Socrates’s inquiry to a model:

E.S.: If someone were to ask us about the session of pupils learning about letters – when one of them is asked what letters make up some word or other, are we to say that for him on that occasion the inquiry takes place more for the sake of the question that has been set before him, and that alone, or for the sake of his becoming more able to answer all questions relating to letters? / Y.S. Clearly for the sake of his being able to answer everything. / E.S. What then about our inquiry now about the statesman? Has it been **set before us** more for the sake of that very thing, or **for the sake of our becoming more able dialecticians in relation to all subjects?** / Y.S. That’s clear too – for the sake of our being more able in relation to all.

ΞΕ. Εἴ τις ἀνέροιτο ἡμᾶς τὴν περὶ γράμματα συνουσίαν τῶν μανθανόντων, ὅποταν τις ὀτιοῦν ὄνομα ἐρωτηθῆ τίνων ἐστὶ γραμμάτων, πότερον αὐτῷ τότε φῶμεν γίνεσθαι τὴν ζήτησιν ἐνὸς ἕνεκα μᾶλλον τοῦ προβληθέντος ἢ τοῦ περὶ πάντα τὰ προβαλλόμενα γραμματικωτέρῳ γίνεσθαι; / ΝΕ. Δῆλον ὅτι τοῦ περὶ ἅπαντα. / ΞΕ. Τί δ’ αὖ νῦν ἡμῖν ἢ περὶ τοῦ πολιτικοῦ ζήτησις; ἕνεκα αὐτοῦ τούτου **προβέβληται μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ περὶ πάντα διαλεκτικωτέροις γίνεσθαι;** / ΝΕ. Καὶ τοῦτο δῆλον ὅτι τοῦ περὶ πάντα (285c8-d7, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The significance of this passage extends the Stranger’s account of models (see Chapter 2) to the dialogue as a whole: the political inquiry at hand is not an end in itself, but it can provide a paradigmatic model, *set before* the minds of the interlocutors as much as of the readers, of dialectic itself *in all circumstances* (περὶ πάντα). As images and models allow the mind to explore a complex topic from (ideally) all its different angles, so in relation to the *Statesman* it is possible to shift the interpretive angle from political concerns to a reflection on the activity of dialectic as such.

In this passage, Plato explicitly draws the readers' attention to the dialogue as a whole, highlighting its paradigmatic value. Notice however that the character of the Stranger does not *argue* for the absolute validity of this interpretation, but rather *asks* for Young Socrates's judgment. Young Socrates is the one who accepts to consider this political inquiry from a reflective angle about dialectic alone. It is not necessary, thus, to take this passage as an invitation for the readers to focus *exclusively* on exercises of dialectic, compared to which political concerns are of minor importance or even indifferent. In fact, the Stranger, in an interrogative fashion, simply points out that two possible interpretations of this political inquiry are possible: one focused on the problem of statecraft, the other on the dialectical activity it entails. We need not sever the two aspects if we observe that it is the very topic of statecraft, *qua* multifaceted and susceptible of inquiry from different angles, that demands an equally complex movement of inquiry. By inviting Young Socrates to consider the inquiry as an image of dialectic, the Stranger certainly stresses the importance of dialectic, but he does not imply that political inquiry is an indifferent pretext for practicing the art of dialogue. Rather, he invites the youth (and the readers) to pay attention to what happens at the level of the dialogue itself, in order to reflect critically on the very process of dialectic triggered by the problem of statecraft.

5.2.1. A Shared Exercise of Cognitive Stability

In the *Statesman*, Plato represented a dialectical exercise undergone by Young Socrates, which demands strong stability of mind. The other characters of this dialogue are the same that appear in the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, which narratively precede it: the older Socrates, who introduces the characters' discussion but then remains silent, the old mathematician Theodorus of Cyrene, and his younger 'colleague' and Young Socrates's companion Theaetetus.²²⁴ Plato's narrative scene connects the three dialogues: Theaetetus had dialogued with Socrates about knowledge the former day, during the discussion in the *Theaetetus*, and about sophistry with the Stranger this very day, during the discussion in the *Sophist*. Now the characters of the older Socrates and Theodorus are discussing with the Stranger about choosing another interlocutor to replace Theaetetus:

²²⁴ Historical studies of character: Skemp, 1952, pp.22-26; Migliori 1996, pp.33-36; Reale, 2000, p.193 and p.263. Plato's choice to represent young *mathematicians* as in need of *philosophical* training is theoretically significant, because it reflects the subordination of mathematical (hypothetical) knowledge to philosophical thought, which aims to give account (*logon didonai*) of its very hypothetical premises (*Resp.* VI.510c-511e). Cf. Napolitano Valditara (2011).

E.S.: Should we give him a rest and substitute for him [the younger] Socrates here, who **trains with him**? Or what's your advice? / Theodorus: As you say, make a substitution; since they are young, they'll put up with any sort of **toilsome effort** more easily if they take a rest.

ΞΕ. διαναπαύσωμεν αὐτὸν μεταλαμβάντες αὐτοῦ τὸν **συγγυμναστήν** τόνδε Σωκράτη; ἢ πῶς συμβουλεύεις; / Θεόδωρος. καθάπερ εἶπες, μεταλάμβανε· νέω γὰρ ὄντε ῥᾶον οἴσειτον πάντα **πόνον** ἀναπαυομένω (*Pol.* 257c7-10, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

Immediately, the characters describe philosophical discussions as a hard training, characterised by a level of toilsome effort (πόνον).²²⁵ This aspect follows consistently the scene of the *Sophist*. At *Soph.* 218a6-b4, the Stranger had warned Theaetetus that the length (μήκει) of discourses was likely to cause him pains (πονῶν), and the youth had accepted by suggesting that, should he be unable to carry on, the burden of the discussion could pass to Young Socrates, a 'companion in training' (συγγυμναστήν) whose custom is 'to share toilsome efforts' (συνδιαπονεῖν) with him. The *Statesman* thus represents a kind of effortful dialectical exercise meant to develop Young Socrates's philosophical skills. The older Socrates supports and expands this frame, by suggesting that the discussion will constitute a test of the youth's abilities:

Yesterday I myself commingled in discourses with Theaetetus, and I have just now heard him answering questions, but in Socrates's case I did neither; we need to **examine** him too. He'll answer to me on another occasion; for now let him answer you.

Θεαιτήτῳ μὲν οὖν αὐτός τε συνέμειξα χθὲς διὰ λόγων καὶ νῦν ἀκήκοα ἀποκρινομένου, Σωκράτους δὲ οὐδέτερα· δεῖ δὲ **σκέψασθαι** καὶ τοῦτον. ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν εἰς αὐθις, σοὶ δὲ νῦν ἀποκρινέσθω (258a3-6, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

This exercise, the older Socrates jokes, will serve to reveal whether his younger namesake shares a genuine 'kinship' (συγγένειαν, 257d2) with him, as their homonymy

²²⁵ I am grateful to Francesco Benoni for his constructive indications about πόνος in the *Sophist* and, more generally, about Plato's understanding of suffering as integral to the philosophical quest for knowledge. For a study of the various meanings of *ponos*, ranging from the toil of daily human labours to military and heroic ordeals, see Loraux (1982). This term is associated to philosophical characters and their theoretical efforts in Xenophon, *Apol.* 17; Plato, *Symp.* 219e8; and Aristotle, *Et. Nic.* I, 12, 1102a5 and X, 6, 1177a33.

seems to suggest.²²⁶ The entire discussion on politics is set from the start not merely as an exercise of correct definition, but as a very personal examination of a young mind. The Stranger's central focus, indeed, rests on the psychological conditions of those who undergo effortful philosophical inquiries.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, his account of intellectual confusion as akin to a pupil's misunderstanding of complex syllables serves to highlight what would happen 'if our souls by their nature experienced this same thing in relation to the letters [*scil.*: elements] of everything' (εἰ ταῦτόν τοῦτο ἡμῶν ἢ ψυχῇ φύσει περὶ τὰ τῶν πάντων στοιχεῖα πεπονθυῖα). The same psychological concern refers as much to *diairesis* as to other expressive forms: at 258c the Stranger argues that 'our soul' (τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν, 258c7) must strive to think in terms of two opposite Forms in order to find the path towards statecraft, and at 286a he claims that visual images lack the power to 'satisfy' (ἀποπληρῶσαι, literally 'fill up') 'the soul of the inquirer' (τὴν τοῦ πυνθανομένου ψυχὴν, 286a2).²²⁷ The Stranger's concern with methods of dialogue and, more generally, expressive forms is always justified by their psychological (either cognitive or emotional) impact. They are educationally opportune only if they produce a correct inner order of the soul, counteracting or preventing negative conditions such as confusion, disorientation or insufficient clarity. All the aspects of philosophical communication examined in the former chapters fit within this psychological frame: disruptions interrupt the linearity of inquiry (Ch.1), images provide different angles through which an inquiring mind needs to move (Ch.2), and playful imagery provokes the inquiring intellect with clashing ideas (Ch.3 and 4).

The Stranger, accordingly, pays attention not only to intellectual procedures, but also to the emotional efforts faced by Young Socrates. He praises his tentative distinction of human beings from other animals as 'very eager and courageous' (προθυμότητα καὶ ἀνδρειότητα, 262a5), even if he considers it too superficial to distinguish a statesman from a herdsman. He observes that 'revulsion' (δυσχερείας, 286b7) can ensue from apparently excessively convoluted discourses, and he worries that the youth feels revulsion (δυσχεραίνεις, 294a2) against the apparently excessive idea of unregulated political expertise. Finally, he insists repeatedly on the puzzling nature of his myth (θαυμαστόν, 277b4; cf. 269b6; 270b4; 270d2), as well as of other

²²⁶ On word-play on the characters' names as a trigger of philosophical discussion, cf. *Crat.* 383b2-384c5; *Symp.* 185c4-d3. Socrates's joke here seems to foreshadow the Stranger's later concern with the recognition *and evaluation* of similarities, thus adding further significance to the dialogical frame.

²²⁷ Cf. 306d1: pictures of human bodies can nonetheless express bodily *and psychological* qualities such as quickness 'in body, soul and voice' (εἶτε κατὰ σώματα εἶτ' ἐν ψυχαῖς εἶτε κατὰ φωνῆς).

discourses such as the one about the contrast of courage and moderation (θαυμαστόν [...] λόγον, 306b6). The Stranger, therefore, is fully aware that his method of lengthy argumentation is connected to his interlocutor's inclinations, doubts and perplexities, since it either triggers various emotional reactions or responds to them. The presence of such reactions is not a mere side-effect of an intellectual endeavour, but it is integral to the inquiry to the point of determining the argumentative directions taken by the Stranger. The educational scene of the dialogue thus serves to emphasise the psychological effects entailed by an intellectual and emotional 'gymnastic' such as the inquiry on statecraft requires, and justifies its puzzling lack of linearity.

The Stranger explicitly invites Young Socrates to reflect on these dialectical efforts and accept them as an integral part of complex inquiries. At 286a4-5 he claims that philosophy consists in 'exercising at being able to give *and receive* an account of each thing' (μελετᾶν λόγον ἐκάστου δυνατὸν εἶναι δοῦναι καὶ δέξασθαι), namely in a practical effort of communication both for the speaker *and for the listener*, who must be able to follow attentively the various nuances of the dialogue. Shortly afterwards, the Stranger insists that lengthy discussions and digressions should be 'accepted' (ἀποδεχόμενον, 286e5) for their educational value, as they can make the hearer better at discovering new notions and ways of communicating them. Thus, the Stranger displays an educational concern with the development of autonomous philosophical skills in his interlocutor, to be acquired by following attentively the disruptive path of inquiry on political complexities. Notice that 'knowing how to give and receive account' (ἐπίστασθαι λόγον τε δοῦναι καὶ δέξασθαι) about every subject is also described by Alcibiades as Socrates's unchallenged expertise in the *Protagoras* (336c1).²²⁸ Plato has thus represented the younger Socrates as training in his older namesake's expertise: the art of dialectic itself. Yet his concern is not just with dialectic as a technical tool, but also with the psychological conditions it entails. Indeed, the Stranger had previously exhibited this concern in his theory of models, when he claimed that images can help the mind to 'compose itself' (συνίσταται, 278d2) among various shifts of perspective rather than being 'carried around everything' (περὶ ἅπαντα [...] φέρεται, 278d2) in outright disorientation. Therefore, Young Socrates' efforts are aimed at developing

²²⁸ Plato's insistence on the universality of such expertise does not coincide with a hubristic claim that dialectic *consists in* universal knowledge (a deceitful sophistic claim according to *Resp.* X.596c-598d and *Soph.* 231d-236d). Rather, insofar as dialectic is open both to *giving* and *receiving* accounts of everything, it constitutes an art of inter-subjective communication, critically open as much to the reception of others' ideas as to the expression and examination of one's own.

dialectical skills as much as cognitive stability in facing digressive, multifaceted discussions.

Finally, the Stranger construes his and Young Socrates's inquiry as a shared process aimed at reciprocal agreement. He first remarks that 'the two of us together must search for the statesman' (δεῖ πολιτικὸν τὸν ἄνδρα διαζητεῖν νῶν, 258b3), thus immediately setting out the research as a common effort. Subsequently, he claims that 'if people are doing something in common, concord is desirable' (ἀλλὰ μὴν τοῖς γε κοινῇ τι πράττουσιν ἀγαπητὸν ὁμονοεῖν; 260b7-8), thus establishing mutual agreement (literally, developing alike [ὁμοῖοι] minds [vooi]) as the foundation of any shared (κοινῇ) activity. He further insists on the common nature of the task that 'we are sharing' (αὐτοὶ κοινωνῶμεν, 260b10), and later prevents Young Socrates from concluding the inquiry by claiming that 'I need to share my opinion in common with you, as well' (δεῖ [...] κάμοι μετὰ σοῦ κοινῇ συνδοκεῖν, 277a3-4).²²⁹ The guiding principle of his discussion with Young Socrates is *mutual understanding*. Such a principle is necessarily two-sided. At 277a3-4, the Stranger refuses to agree with the youth that a definition of statecraft *qua* responsible care of a community is sufficient to capture its nature. At 293e8-294a4, instead, he welcomes his interlocutor's doubts about the opportunity of unregulated authority, a position that Young Socrates considers unmeasured,²³⁰ and tackles them directly. The multifaceted structure of the *Statesman*, thus, owes as much to the Stranger's insistence on dialectical precision as to Young Socrates's hesitations and doubts. Concord is not represented here as a mere uniformity of minds, but as the result of a difficult process in which two individuals acknowledge each other's positions and strive to mediate them. In agreement with Gill (1995 and 2000), we can notice that the *Statesman* portrays a dynamic of genuine interaction between two subjective standpoints, as opposed to rigid dogmatism or didactic formalism. Even if the Stranger undoubtedly preserves a leading role, and Young Socrates never proposes *positive* arguments, the educational dynamic represented by Plato is significant. It serves to portray philosophical education not just as the communication of established notions, but as an attentive relationship of teacher and pupil, necessarily influenced by the latter's own dispositions, both cognitive and emotional.

²²⁹ Santa Cruz (1995) also lists: 257c8-d2; 261a8; 264d5; 277e2; 280b6-8; 287a6-b1; 293e2-294a2; 294b6-7 (p.192).

²³⁰ Cf. Chapter 1, Section 1.3.

Plato represents Young Socrates as benefitting from this attention and slowly becoming more sensitive to the nuances of the Stranger's exposition. At first, the Stranger in fact leads the discussion with a strong hand. When he begins his second *diairesis* of animal species, he anticipates the youth's possible questions with the words: 'so that you don't precede me' (ἵνα μή με φθῆς, 266d11); and as we have seen he prevents him from concluding the political discussion too early (277a3-4). However, Young Socrates soon starts to anticipate the Stranger's implicit aims. At 277c7-8, the youth asks: 'Show me how you say we have not yet given an adequate account [of statecraft]' (ὅπη δὲ ἡμῖν οὐπω φῆς ἰκανῶς εἰρησθαι δῆλωσον), thus exhibiting reflective awareness about the current status of inquiry. More strongly, at 293e6-7 he phrases his doubts against unregulated authority in terms of right measure, claiming that the Stranger's position has not been said 'in due measure' (μετρίως). In both cases, Socrates correctly perceives implicit problems or imprecisions, which require the Stranger to address overlooked arguments and integrate them in his account of statecraft. At 275e, the generic definition of statecraft as 'art of taking charge' (ἐπιμελητικὴν, 275e5) of a community had to be integrated with a long and laborious examination of all the social aspects to which it relates, namely professional arts and the citizens' dispositions (287b4-311c8). At 293e, the superficial notion of effective and benevolent authority 'without laws' (ἄνευ νόμων, 293e7) had to be integrated with an examination of the independent value of legislation (293e6-300c4). Young Socrates thus gradually learns to exhibit his own educational needs and even to challenge his interlocutor's opinions, always with attention to implicit problems that would make a particular political position too partial to be judged adequate and measured. The Stranger indeed welcomes the youth's final objection with the words: 'You preceded me just a little with your question, Socrates' (μικρόν γε ἔφθης με ἐρόμενος, ὃ Σώκρατες; 293e8)', thereby approving his perception of the implicit limits of what has been said and accepting his novel position ahead of his teacher.²³¹ In the end, it is Young Socrates who puts the final seal on the political discussion, approving the Stranger's discourse as beautiful and well-composed.²³²

²³¹ In the *Sophist* he displays a comparable educational concern, blaming pre-Socratic philosophers, despite their venerable wisdom, for writing in such a style as to disregard whether 'we follow them up close' (ἐπακολουθοῦμεν, *Soph.* 243a7) or 'they leave us behind' (ἀπολειπόμεθα, 243b1).

²³² *Contra* Rowe, 1995, p.245. Rowe argues that these last words are pronounced by the older Socrates. I hold that the simple disappearance of the main interlocutor at the very end of the inquiry does not match the educational scene represented by Plato, and the abrupt reappearance of Socrates seems somewhat unjustified. Notice that the educational scene of the *Sophist* also ends with the young interlocutor's

In the most beautiful way, Stranger, you have completed for us the kingly man and the statesman.

κάλλιστα αὖ τὸν βασιλικὸν ἀπετέλεσας ἄνδρα ἡμῖν, ὃ ξένε, καὶ τὸν πολιτικόν
(311c7, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

Thus, the role of Young Socrates as trainee in philosophical dialogue is much more than a silent receiver of established doctrines. In fact, he serves to represent a subject that, while strictly guided, faces countless philosophical difficulties and patiently learns to evaluate them autonomously. Skemp (1952) has observed that Young Socrates is not a colourless listener but has a specific character: he is ‘over-eager to complete the definition of the Statesman [...] He finds it hard saying that the truly wise statesman is able to rule without laws, but he is quick to admit to rarity of good draught players [...] He is commended for restating the important contention that a skilled adviser of a ruler is as much a statesman as if he ruled himself, and has no doubts of the effect of tying up everything by legal regulations. He sees nothing wrong in the practice of marrying for money’ (p.26). Skemp considers these as little dramatic touches, but I have shown that at least some of them have a specific philosophical significance: his intellectual eagerness and courage, as well as his revulsion against rule without laws, constitute moments in which the right measure of statecraft is called into doubt and must be found through different paths of discussion. Young Socrates’s last words fit within this dramatic scene and indicate that his efforts have been successful. He can now see clearly the well-composed figure he’s been striving to find.

This dialogue scene is thus significant for a correct interpretation of the *Statesman* as an image of dialectical inquiry. It establishes inquiry as a *toilsome effort* from which, nonetheless, an interlocutor can benefit both in proficiency in communication and lucid stability of mind. It represents the frequent irruption of emotional aspects and intellectual difficulties that complicate the examination of a multifaceted issue. It also establishes dialectic, even when strictly educational, as a process of *mutual acknowledgement* and progressive convergence of opinions. Finally, it portrays education itself as an art of communication, which takes into account the

agreement (*Soph.* 268d5). It seems indeed more coherent with the Stranger’s educational praxis that the conclusion of both dialogues demand the youths’ agreement.

dispositions and doubts of the interlocutors, in order to communicate *autonomous insights* on philosophical problems.

5.2.2. *The Inquiring Mind and its Circular Motion*

Having established how Plato represents the dialogical scene of the *Statesman*, it is now possible to examine how the Stranger describes the intellectual movement he and Young Socrates undergo together. I will show here how he repeatedly displays his awareness that the political inquiry at hand is a dynamic and non-linear process, because it involves various dialectical *movements* among different problems and a subjective ability to follow them in an organised, stable fashion akin to the *circular motion* of the cosmos.

In Chapter 1, we have seen that the discussion of the *Statesman* is apparently disorganised, frequently interrupted by digressions and changes of discursive paths. Similarly, in Chapter 2 we have seen that this dialogue requires the readers to follow a set of different images of politics, shifting their attention from one conceptual angle to another. Not only do collateral problems disrupt the linearity of this political inquiry, but the multifaceted nature of politics itself demands that it be considered, wittingly, from distinct perspectives. The non-linear and many-sided structure of the *Statesman* responds to a philosophical demand for a flexible but stable intellectual movement, which eschews both naïve reductions to univocal notions and confused dispersion of ideas. The Stranger highlights this dialectical dynamism not only through the language of divergent ‘paths’ or ‘routes’,²³³ but also by metaphorically describing it as a form of motion. He introduces his theoretical digression on the experience about knowledge as a process that Young Socrates’s doubts have ‘very strangely set in motion’ (μάλ’ ἀτόπως [...] κινήσας, 277d6). Similarly, later he claims that the youth’s questioning attitude has, again, ‘set in motion’ (κινήσας, 297c7) an ‘account’ (λόγον, 297c8) of the status of legislation. In both cases, he insists that these collateral movements should not be set aside, once a problem has triggered them, until the issue has been satisfactorily clarified. As always, his metaphorical language is not casual. In the literal sense, the language of motion (κίνησις) can describe, for instance, the precise movement of the revolving cosmos²³⁴ as well as the rhythmic movements of dance.²³⁵ Describing moments of

²³³ E.g. 266e1; 268d5; 273e7.

²³⁴ 269e3: ‘κινεῖται’; 269e4: ‘κινήσεως’; 269e6: ‘κινουμένων’.

²³⁵ 307a10: ‘ῥυθμικὴν κίνησιν’.

inquiry as motions means assimilating them to physical changes of position that can be harmoniously controlled, and it allows the interlocutors to think about the overall structure of their dialectical discussion. The image of motion, thus, serves to describe dialectic as dynamic process whereby the inquiring mind is ‘carried’ (φέρεται, 278d3) along various lines of inquiry but needs to ‘compose itself’ (συνίσταται, 278d2) throughout this movement.

At 286e3-287a3, after the digression on knowledge but before the one on legislation, the Stranger further specifies this image of generic intellectual motion as specifically *circular*. A preliminary remark on the context of his image is necessary. At this point, the Stranger is addressing the problem of right measure (*metrion*) in discourses. As we have seen in Chapter 1, he claims that philosophical discourses should not be judged as excessive or inadequate just because of their length or brevity, namely out of *quantitative* criteria. Rather, to him the quantitative notion of measure should be bent, as it were by ‘forcing’ it (προσαναγκαστέον, 284b10), to *qualitative*²³⁶ determinations of appropriateness or adequacy. As long as it is appropriate to tackle, with lengthy discourses or even myths, unexpectedly complex problems, discourses can be said to possess the opportune measure. As long as a path of inquiry or an expressive form of language is adequate to elucidate a collateral problem or an implicit difficulty, it can be named measured. This claim holds, to him, as much for the lengthy divisions on the art of weaving as for the laborious myth of cosmic reversals (and also for the digression in the *Sophist*²³⁷ about the notion of non-being). Thus the notion of right measure is very general and applies to any form of discourse that might *appear* excessive or inappropriate to a topic, like punctilious distinctions about carding and fulling or grand narratives about the cosmic order might seem irrelevant to the definition of statecraft. It is in relation to measured discourses that the Stranger introduces the image of circular motion:

²³⁶ I agree with Sayre (2006) that right measure is a *qualitative* property (e.g. the distinction found ‘in the middle’ between opposites, such as even and odds numbers, as identification of both sets based on an inherent quality or lack thereof, such as divisibility by two; cf. pp.230-232). Notice however that speaking of quality might be misleading, if we take this term in a purely objective sense. Insofar as we speak of an object as measured in the sense of ‘fitting’, ‘adequate’, ‘suitable’, ‘sufficient’ or ‘appropriate’, like a dress that fits a person or enough water to fill up a jar (cf. *Gorg.* 493a-d), right measure can be defined as *relational*. The property at issue may depend on a measurable quantity (the dress is *long* enough; the water in the jar is in the right *amount*), but the quality of adequacy depends on the relation between two objects and is therefore two-sided and contextual (one may also say that a person is too tall for the dress she wishes to wear, or that a jar is too small for the water it is meant to contain). This intrinsic relational aspect *necessarily* demands the subject’s judgment and is, in this sense, always ethical (is the person inadequate to an objectively *good* dress, and therefore misguided in her efforts to fit in it, or is the dress inadequate to the person, and therefore *badly* produced?).

²³⁷ *Soph.* 236d-242b.

If in relation to such discussions someone finds fault with the length of what is said and will not put up with **going round in circles**, we must not let such a person go straight away [...] but we should think it right that he should also show, in addition, that if it had been shorter it would make the partners in the discussion better dialecticians and better at finding how to display realities in their words.

ἔτι δ' αὖ πρὸς τούτοις τὸν περὶ τὰς τοιάσδε συνουσίας ψέγοντα λόγων μήκη καὶ τὰς ἐν κύκλῳ περιόδους οὐκ ἀποδεχόμενον, ὅτι χρή τὸν τοιοῦτον μὴ πάνυ ταχὺ μηδ' εὐθὺς οὕτω μεθιέναι [...] ἀλλὰ καὶ προσαποφαίνειν οἷεσθαι δεῖν ὡς βραχύτερα ἂν γενόμενα τοὺς συνόντας ἀπηργάζετο διαλεκτικωτέρους καὶ τῆς τῶν ὄντων λόγῳ δηλώσεως εὐρετικωτέρους (286e3-287a3).

This image defines the Stranger's educational purpose: to him, the troubling movement of digressive discourses is something to be endured for the sake of acquiring abilities of dialogue and communication. We need to remember that the inquiry on statecraft, as a whole, was introduced as a sort of toilsome dialectical gymnastics; similarly, now the Stranger insists that *all* similar discussions, however troubling, are valuable insofar as they benefit those who undergo them. The measuring standard of the value of philosophical discourses, thus, is not their objective length, quantitatively determinable, but the effect they have on the interlocutors' dialectical abilities and cognitive condition.

Why, then, does undergoing such disorienting discussions correspond to a round-about motion? Certainly, this image cannot be explained away as implying the vanity of such efforts, as a process that merely ends up where it started or as circular reasoning, because the Stranger rather considers them valuable and productive. As Pender (1999) has shown, Plato's images of circular motion, when attributed to the progress of argument and thought, can assume two opposite meanings. On the one hand, they can denote 'some sort of confusion or ignorance' whereby the speakers are stuck in an aimless reasoning (p.105).²³⁸ On the other, they can represent 'the kind of stability held up as an ideal' in Plato's cosmological accounts, the stability of cosmic bodies that

²³⁸ *Charm.* 174b: 'all this time you've been dragging me around in a circle' (πάλαί με περιέλκεις κύκλῳ); *Gorg.* 517b: 'All the time we discuss we never stop coming round always to the same place, with each not knowing what the other is saying (ἐν παντὶ γὰρ τῷ χρόνῳ ὃν διαλεγόμεθα οὐδὲν παύομεθα εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ αἰεὶ περιφερόμενοι καὶ ἀγνοοῦντες ἀλλήλων ὅτι λέγομεν)'.

keep moving while maintaining a constant position (p.107)—namely their balance.²³⁹ Plato can thus describe a reasoning as circular either because it is aimless and inconclusive or because it stands in balance on its own position albeit moving through various moments of discussion. Given that the Stranger recommends to sustain circular arguments as a valuable educational practice, I argue that his image of circularity belongs to the second kind identified by Pender. Indeed, in the myth of the *Statesman* the image of circular revolutions (περιόδων, 270a7)²⁴⁰ represents the rational and wise cosmic motion, at times strictly led by a sovereign deity, and at times enacted autonomously by the cosmos itself, in delicate balance. In the myth the figure of circularity expressed both the idea of strict control, imposed by a helmsman-like leader, and the notion of self-controlled inner balance. Equally, this image serves here to represent a troubling succession of discourses that needs to be patiently sustained, for the sake of internalising dialectical abilities (technical as well as psychological).

The organisation of the *Statesman*, accordingly, can create the impression that the Stranger is leading Young Socrates in an exercise of confusing, and even pedantic, circularity of argument. The interlocutors start with a definition of statecraft as (a₁) all-encompassing expertise in governing a community (258a7-267c4), only to question it because of (b₁) the myriads of arts that could overlap with it (267c5-268d1) and correct it through the myth of an age devoid of arts and politics (268d2-277a3). After a central reflection on the former error (277a3-287b3), the characters start again by distinguishing (b₂) all the arts that contribute to political organisation (287b4-305e7), and only at the end they reach a definition of (a₂) political expertise as guidance of opinions and emotional disposition in the community, for the sake of the citizens' harmonious coexistence (305e8-311c8). The discussion of the *Statesman* is indeed a circular process, whereby given opinions are turned around back-to-front as the inquiry moves from problem (a) to problem (b), only to start back from (b) moving towards (a). Yet this process is not aimless. Through it, rather, the interlocutors' initial, univocal notion of political expertise as the all-encompassing control of a community is refined and reconfigured as, above all, an art of leadership of opinions and inter-subjective dispositions. The interlocutors conclude where they started, but with a novel perspective on politics: the initial great image of the statesman as 'shepherd of the people' has given

²³⁹ Cf. *Leg.* 893c (see Section 4.2). Skemp (1942) shows that Plato presents circular motion as divine and superior to linear motions in *Pol.*, *Tim.* and *Leg.* Sedley (1997) shows that to Plato circular motion is 'appropriate to rational thought' (p.329) insofar as it is eternal, just like reason has eternal truths as its ideal objects.

²⁴⁰ Also 273e2: 'περιόδω'.

way to the very small image of a weaver of bonds among the citizens, *turning* greatness into smallness, excessive perspectives into measured ones. Circularity of discourses might thus *appear* as a confusing ‘overturning’ (μεταβολή)²⁴¹ of speeches, a vain or confusing back-and-forth among opinions. Nonetheless, it constitutes a valuable educational exercise insofar as it provides an experience of how excessive perspectives can be corrected and given opinions revolutionised. Starting from an error of perspective, and correcting it through its back-to-front re-examination, the *Statesman* does more than represent methodological exercises or providing political doctrines; it represents the movement of a mind capable of reversing existing opinions and examining them from novel angles without becoming disoriented and unstable.

The image of the circular movement of the intellect is indeed typical of Plato’s educational concerns with the inner order of the soul. As we have seen above (4.1), the *Statesman* shares with the *Laws* and the *Timaeus* the image²⁴² of a cosmic mind that moves the universe according to circular patterns. In the *Statesman*, the living (ζῶον, 296d1) cosmos is endowed with wisdom (φρόνησιν, *ibid.*) insofar as it can move through myriads of revolutions on its own accord. Similarly, the eponymous character of the *Timaeus* posits the circular movement²⁴³ of the cosmos as typical of ‘intellect and wisdom’ (νοῦν καὶ φρόνησιν, 34a2), and the protagonist of the *Laws* speaks of ‘the motion and revolution and calculations of intellect’ (νοῦ κινήσει καὶ περιφορᾷ καὶ λογισμοῖς, X.897c5-6) and of ‘the revolution of intellect’ (τῆ τοῦ νοῦ περιόδῳ, X.898a5) that govern the life of the universe. In addition, the *Statesman* shares with the *Phaedo* the image of a spherical cosmos, whose perfect shape and motion grants is ‘balance’ (ἰσορροπίαν, 109a4) on its centre and furnishes a model of ethical, rational order embedded in the material cosmos. The ostensible reason for this image, thus, is that it represents a stable homogeneity of shape and movement: a circumference is equally distant from the centre in all its parts, and a circular motion always starts back from where it started, endlessly replicating exactly the same path as long as it remains balanced on its axis. Circular motion is the image of a reality that never changes, never ceases to move itself by itself, and preserves itself identical to itself, with geometrical

²⁴¹ Cf. *Gorg.* 481d7-e1; *Parm.* 162c5-6; *Soph.* 234d6.

²⁴² *Pol.* ‘figure’ (σχῆμα, 269a5); *Laws* ‘image’ (εἰκόνα, X.897e1); *Tim.* ‘figure’ (σχῆμα, 33b1).

²⁴³ *Tim.* 34a1: ‘κίνησιν’; 34a4 ‘κύκλω κινεῖσθαι’.

precision.²⁴⁴ It is an image of a never-ending life that depends on a perfectly rational structure.²⁴⁵

This figure of perfect, geometrical homogeneity also provides an image for human rationality, but with nuances due to the influence of non rational factors on the human mind. For instance, Timaeus describes the human soul as divinely designed to replicate the cosmic revolutions (περίοδους, *Tim.* 44d3), and like the cosmic soul placed within a spherical body (the head) to direct the rest of the body. However, he also grants that it is subject to irrational influxes from bodily affections,²⁴⁶ which drag it ‘forwards and backwards, and again to the right and to the left, and downwards and upwards’ (εἰς τε γὰρ τὸ πρόσθε καὶ ὀπίσθεν καὶ πάλιν εἰς δεξιὰ καὶ ἀριστερὰ κάτω τε καὶ ἄνω, 43b3) and leave it disoriented. Unlike cosmic wisdom, human rationality needs to respond *adequately* to all sorts of impulses that threaten its inner order. Similarly, in the *Phaedrus* Socrates describes the heavenly revolution as carrying around (περιάγει, 247c1) disembodied and perfectly rational souls together with the gods. Such souls, Socrates narrates, are therefore able to contemplate, from the very top of the cosmos, the ideal Forms outside of it (247d ff.). But this process is not devoid of difficulties:²⁴⁷ while divine souls are structured ‘in a balanced fashion’ (ἰσορρόπως, 247b2) and easy to govern because devoid of non rational appetites, human souls are constantly drawn downwards towards earthly goods and are more difficult to keep in the same divine position.²⁴⁸ To Plato, emotional aspects variously influence the stable and lucid activity of human intellect, and one of the many images he chooses to represent this dynamic is a circular motion that must be maintained, *with effort*, in equilibrium. This image represents a stable and regular position of the intellect that, in its optimal condition, is not disrupted and unbalanced by irrational impulses, but preserves a rational structure.

²⁴⁴ Timaeus famously calls it ‘a certain moving image of eternity’ (εἰκὼν [...] κινητὸν τινα αἰῶνος), namely the dynamic imitation of a reality that never changes.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Skemp, 1952, pp.85-91. In particular, Skemp notices that the essential reason for the image of circularity (and the anthropomorphic account of the universe as endowed with consciousness) is the establishment of the ‘analogy of microcosm and macrocosm’ (p.90). See also: Guthrie (1962) on circularity as cosmic perfection (pp.351-7); Sedley (1997) on circularity as rationality.

²⁴⁶ Such as the need for nutrition or confused empirical perceptions (43b5-c5). In addition, Timaeus later lists the emotional impulses of pleasure and pain, audacity and fear, spiritedness and hope, irrational sensations and erotic drives (69c3-d5), but without mention of either circular or linear motions of the soul.

²⁴⁷ ‘For there extreme toil and challenges are set before the soul’. (ἐνθα δὴ πόνος τε καὶ ἀγὼν ἔσχατος ψυχῆ πρόκειται). Cf. *Pol.* 257c7-10 and 285c8-d7 (Sections 5.2 and 5.2.1).

²⁴⁸ The fundamental difference between Timaeus’s and Socrates’s accounts is that, in the former case, irrational impulses derive from the body, while in the latter they pertain to the soul as such. It is impossible to address here the controversial problem of Plato’s consistency in his psychological accounts; suffice it to identify his constant focus on psychological activity as a dynamic process, either regular and balanced or carried around in confusing directions.

However, Plato uses the image of circularity also to promote intellectual dynamism over excessive immobility. In the image of the cave in the *Republic*, in particular, Socrates describes the conditions of prisoners forced by chains to stare at delusionary shadows, as the impossibility of ‘turning their heads around in circle’ (κύκλω δὲ τὰς κεφαλὰς [...] περιάγειν, 514b1) towards the source of light that casts those shadows.²⁴⁹ The freed prisoner imagined by Socrates, by contrast, will be able to engage in an ascendant path towards the hidden sources of light (a fire in the cave, and the heavenly bodies outside), thus perceiving the real objects past the former delusions, and then come back to the other prisoners with accounts of what he has seen. In this context, the circular motion available to the human head (identical to the one in the *Timaeus*), does not represent a stable movement, but a *free* one: the ability to observe reality from perspectives otherwise unavailable and to gain a sounder knowledge of reality. The human ability to revolve their heads, the seat of intellect and sight in the *Timaeus*, constitutes here an image for the possibility to gain a synoptic view of reality, provided that the mind is not constrained by cognitive limits and delusions. The stable revolution of the intellect, directly coincident with the movement of the head (when helped by an unchained body),²⁵⁰ is thus here an act of con-version, of re-orientation from limited images towards truer realities. Therefore, to Plato circularity of intellectual movement does not represent only the fixedness upon a stable point, but also the motion of a synoptic, ‘all-round’ understanding of reality.²⁵¹

In accordance with my study of cosmic imagery in Chapter 4, we can thus observe that the figure of circularity constitutes at once an image of stable and

²⁴⁹ It may be argued that a fully circular motion of the human head goes against human physiology, and that once again Plato is creating a metaphor that exceeds the limits of realism. However, at 514a Plato clearly describes the prisoners’ necks *and legs* as chained, so that the prisoners’ liberation entails a possibility to revolve *their whole body* and, by extension, physically revolve their heads in a circle. This fact obviously hinders us from taking the head as a fully independent seat of rationality (cf. *Tim.* 44d-45a), but it does not diminish the metaphorical force of envisaging the head, spherical seat of intellect and vision, as a microcosmic image of the whole universe and capable, under the right circumstances, of the same activity.

²⁵⁰ See fn.249 above.

²⁵¹ Napolitano Valditara (2007) observes that the idea of a synoptic vision, obtained by rotating a mirror in a full circle, appears at *Resp.* X.596d-e (‘if you are willing to take a mirror and turn it around in every direction [εἰ θέλεις λαβὼν κάτοπτρον περιφέρειν πανταχῆ] ... you will quickly produce the sun and everything in the sky, and the earth and yourself and the other animals and equipments and plants and all the objects about which we just now discussed’). In this context the synoptic vision is in fact a sophistic illusion, an image of the universe that pretends to be real. It is the most complete and thus worst kind of deceit or self-delusion. Napolitano Valditara insists on the ‘delusionary and deceitful role’ of the mirror for its power to replicate ‘the whole world’ (p.235, tr. mine). Nonetheless, this power depends not on the mirror as such, but on the utmost completeness and perfection of the illusion, which is only achieved through a rotation akin to the cosmic motions (*peripheriein*). The image of circular motion thus remains fundamental for Plato to express the idea of complete vision and perfect knowledge (even when delusionary).

homogeneous rationality, and of a freely moving intellect capable of synoptic views. The obstacles to this intellectual movement, to Plato, can be either irrational impulses pushing it in confusing and unbalancing directions, or an excessive fixity that constrains a comprehensive intellectual exploration. Just like in the *Statesman*, both the excessive focus on limited perspectives and the disoriented dispersion of mind along different lines can be detrimental for human cognition and psychological stability. Following another Socratic image of circularity, we may say that to Plato the human mind is like a precariously placed spinning-top,²⁵² which must eschew at once destabilizing thrusts and paralysing constraints in order to maintain its regular activity.

The kind of intellectual movement through which the Stranger leads Young Socrates combines both the aspects of stability and movement. While I accept Pender's (1999) interpretation of circular motion as stable intellectual dynamism, I stress the fact that this ambivalent condition is ultimately dependent on a form of balance. Moving through a variety of perspectives on the same issue, facing emotional impulses and cognitive disruptions, while aiming with unwavering determination at a synoptic and satisfactory representation of the topic at hand, the inquiry of the *Statesman* constitutes a demanding exercise in cognitive balance. Just like, in the Stranger's myth, a divine helmsman firmly imposes a circular motion to the universe, so that it might in due time replicate it autonomously, so the Stranger leads his pupil through a circular recurrence of arguments on statecraft, constantly re-examining them from different angles until the circle is closed in mutual concord, for the sake of the youth's own development.

The dialogue scene of the *Statesman* is therefore justified by this educational process, more than by mere methodological or doctrinal concerns. The focus of scholars such as Rowe (2000), Santa Cruz (1995) and to some extent Gill (1995) on methodological or theoretical stances, in fact, risks to obscure the full educational purpose of the Stranger. While he leads the youth with uncontested authority and *does* care about methodology and theories, his role does not consist in communicating mere doctrines. Rather, he constructs his own lengthy discourses, only to demolish them and build them up again from a novel angle.²⁵³ While he does ask for Young Socrates's *judgment* and *consent*, often allowing him to determine shifts in his own exposition, he never asks for the youth's *argued opinions*. Certainly he is not a Socratic questioner, who invites his interlocutors to present their own opinions and submits them to scrutiny

²⁵² *Resp.* IV.436d4-e6. Cf. Section 4.2.

²⁵³ Cf. Stefanini, 1949, pp.441-442.

though short questions and answers.²⁵⁴ Yet his educational aim is not to communicate formal notions or methodologies to a passive learner, but rather to communicate to him *a specific form of intellectual movement*. For him and Young Socrates ‘to reach concord’ (ὁμονοεῖν, 260b8) means precisely to develop a similar (ὁμοῖος) condition of the intellect (νοῦς), which needs to revolve stably amidst the different facets of a complex inquiry. Even the readers find themselves involved in the same process, as they face the apparently disjointed structure and bedazzling variation of perspectives in the *Statesman*. Through the Stranger’s disruptive, multifaceted, and puzzling argumentative style, Plato thus forces those who follow his arguments to develop a philosophical disposition: the inquisitive form of mind of the philosopher who never rests within partial perspectives but constantly strives to examine them, as lucidly as possible, from every side.

5.3. Educational Leadership and Political Balance

In this section my focus shifts from philosophical education to political leadership, in order to show in what sense this latter expertise is educational. I will thus examine the educational relationship that the ideal statesman establishes with his community. First (5.3.1.), I will show that statecraft consists in a form of educational guidance of psychological dispositions, akin but irreducible to other more traditional forms of leadership such as generalship and rhetoric. To define its irreducible status, I will introduce the notion of meta-leadership. Second (5.3.2.), I will examine Plato’s radical distinction between leadership of minds and traditional political control, suggesting that it is possible to speak of a revolutionary political account. Third (5.3.3.), I will argue that the *Statesman* represents the educational leadership of minds as a balancing act. Finally (5.3.4.), I will raise the problem of the concrete methods of this leadership, showing that the *Statesman* leaves it necessarily open as a matter of practical action rather than pure definition.

²⁵⁴ Cf. *Soph.* 217c1-d2. Here the Stranger explicitly contraposes the Socratic method of dialogue through brief questions and answers to his own method of lengthy expositions, more akin to a dialogue with himself and a display of eloquence than to a discussion with an interlocutor. He justifies his choice as fitting to the complexity of the topics at hand (sophistry, politics and philosophy).

5.3.1. Leadership of Minds as Meta-leadership

The process of inquiry in the *Statesman* leads the interlocutors to a conclusive account on the function of statecraft: the leadership of the citizens' psychological 'dispositions towards courage or moderation' (τὸ τῶν ἀνδρείων καὶ σωφρόνων [...] ἦθος, 311b8-9), enacted by someone who knows what is best for the city and its members, namely an ideal of inner harmony and autonomous stability, and what is opportune for the sake of its attainment, namely the creation of intersubjective bonds of mutual concord (310e7-311a2). As several scholars have remarked,²⁵⁵ the major political concern of this dialogue is psychological, because the prime objects of political action are 'those who possess them [i.e. inclinations for courage and moderation] in their souls' (τοὺς ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς αὐτὰς ἴσχοντας, 307c6). The model of weaving finally serves to present statecraft as a production of intersubjective harmony. It must be emphasised, once again, that Plato never presents this notion as a linear definition, because statecraft encompasses a variety of angles (e.g. the limitations of absolute authority, its relation to written prescriptions, or the ethical responsibilities it entails) that cannot be reduced, without distortions, to a one-sided account. Even at the very end of the dialogue, the Stranger does not renounce to imagery and insists on the metaphor of a well-composed social fabric, a magnificent and noble robe that covers and protects the body politic as a whole (311b7-c6). Therefore, it is useful to bear in mind that every aspect of statecraft explored in this dialogue constitutes a particular perspective and cannot exhaust its multifaceted nature. Nonetheless, it is true that the Stranger identifies an *eminent* role of statecraft, which does not exclude its other aspects, but constitutes its most proper function. This role is the communication of a 'true opinion' (ἀληθῆ δόξαν, 309c6), a foundational and correct belief whereby the courageous and moderate citizens' can eschew mutual 'hostility' (ἔχθραν, 307d4) and strive to preserve 'concord and friendship' (ὁμονοία καὶ φιλία, 311b9), in order to communicate some level of autonomous authority to them ('to entrust offices in cities to them forever in common [τὰς ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἀρχὰς ἀεὶ κοινῇ τούτοις ἐπιτρέπειν]' 310e-311a). Statecraft is thus a process of mediation between opposite groups of citizens and of creation of shared values which enable a stable and autonomous government—a form of constructive and empowering leadership of minds. Its role is therefore not purely psychological but properly educational, *qua* concerned with the correct development of autonomous social dynamics.

²⁵⁵ Bontempi, 2009, pp.143-147; Lane, 1995; Bobonich, 1995.

This particular role distinguishes statecraft from all other modes of individual or social guidance, training and instruction. Moreover, it makes statecraft eminent among them, because the management of social dynamics *as a whole* is foundational to any other *particular and partial* instance of social interaction. As we have seen in Chapter 1, the positive definition of statecraft is preceded by a negative moment, where all productive and servile arts are distinguished from statecraft (287b4-290e9) together with traditional constitutions (government of one individual, of elites, and of multitudes: 291a1-293e5; 300c5-303d3) and different arts of leadership (303d4-305e7). Finally, the Stranger introduces statecraft itself as eminent among all forms of leadership, by comparing it to the purity of gold once purified from less precious materials:

Well, it seems that in the same way [as goldsmiths] we have now separated off those things that are different from political knowledge, and everything that is alien and not akin to it, and that there remain those that are precious and related to it. Among these, I think, are generalship, jurisdiction, and that part of rhetoric which in common with statecraft persuades people of what is just and so steers, together with it, the affairs of cities.

κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τοίνυν λόγον ἔοικε καὶ νῦν ἡμῖν τὰ μὲν ἕτερα καὶ ὅποσα ἀλλότρια καὶ τὰ μὴ φίλα πολιτικῆς ἐπιστήμης ἀποκεχωρίσθαι, λείπεσθαι δὲ τὰ τίμια καὶ συγγενῆ. τούτων δ' ἐστὶ που στρατηγία καὶ δικαστικὴ καὶ ὅση βασιλικῆ κοινωνοῦσα ῥητορεία πείθουσα τὸ δίκαιον συνδιακυβερνᾶ τὰς ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι πράξεις (303e7-304a2, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

Here, the Stranger uses the image of gold to remark the value and rarity of genuine political leadership, while at the same time assimilating it to other distinct but similarly valuable directive arts. He thus introduces one last negative account in which he defines as quasi-political all the arts that provide some form of direction of the citizens. His whole account includes not only military leadership, jurisdiction, and persuasive rhetoric, but also individual education, the art ‘that is the object of learning and teaches’ (μανθανομένης καὶ διδασκούσης, 304c4-5). All these arts, he claims, need to be subordinated to the one that coordinates them all, determining whether their action (or inaction) is useful for the good of different citizens and for the city as a whole. Therefore, statecraft is a very demanding art of meta-leadership. It can be named ‘meta-leadership’ because it requires various competences that encompass all other forms of socio-political leadership but cannot be reduced to them: assessing the opportunity for military action or peacefulness; devising a correct legislation; determining the necessity

for popular persuasion; and assessing the citizens' intellectual capacities and educational needs. Thus it overlaps, to some extent, with all other directive arts, but it is also distinct from them. It does not need to include the specific competences of generals, judges, rhetoricians, and teachers, or to exert direct influence on their activities.²⁵⁶ Rather, it needs to assess the value of their arts and guide their actions in view of what benefits the organisation of the whole city and, by consequence, the happiness (*eudaimonia*) of the citizens within it.²⁵⁷ Even though it is a form of leadership comparable to any other, its directive position and political value transcend them all.

'Meta-leadership' is a *negative* and abstract notion: it tells us what statecraft is *not* and only abstractly defines its purpose as the happiness of the whole city. With this negative account, however, the Stranger paves the way to the final, *positive* and concrete determination of statecraft as psychological leadership directed at producing social concord.

5.3.2. A Revolutionary Political Account

Insofar as the political model of the Stranger is defined in opposition to every other form of expertise, constitution, and leadership, it might be said that his account is revolutionary. Ultimately, the Stranger does not suggest any possible reformation and improvement of existing political orders, but he radically separates genuine political leadership from all of them. Moreover, he strongly asserts the fundamental role of the dispositions of the multitudes in the emergence of a good political order. To him, statecraft is not a mere technique of control or a familiar form of leadership, but an educational art that must empower the citizens themselves (or at least some of them, those who can display courage and moderation) by granting them autonomous self-control and the ability to rule in mutual cooperation. Rather than consisting in complete control from a superior position like the traditional 'shepherd of the people' (ποιμένα λαῶν),²⁵⁸ genuine statecraft aims to create a disposition for concord and friendship

²⁵⁶ Cf. Lane (1998), pp.142-145.

²⁵⁷ The object of statecraft is for the community to be 'happy' (εὐδαίμονι, 311c8; cf. 272c5, 301d5), in the typical Platonic sense of a psychological and social condition in which different drives, opinions, and functions, directed by knowledge, avoid conflicting with each other and find harmonious coexistence (cf. Hobbs, 2000, pp.50-59; Russell, 2005, p.238; Kamtekar, 2001, p.190).

²⁵⁸ Brock (2013) remarks that this epic formula constitutes a clichéd image, mostly applied to military leadership but also to ideas of benevolent care and divine protection. The formula occurs 65 times at the end of a line in early hexameter poetry and the image is frequent in Near Eastern texts, including obviously the Bible. Brock also stresses the fact that, in the *Statesman*, 'the use which Plato makes of this

among the citizens themselves. Its efficacy and value therefore inherently depend, in the *Statesman*, on the conditions of its subjects. The *Statesman* ultimately charges statecraft with a responsibility in leading the citizens' minds towards an intersubjective harmony of opinions and emotional drives. Since this role is irreducible to any other professional or political function in the city, the very act of positing it as the sole genuine political art challenges all established political orders.

This challenge depends on the notion that psychological dispositions have fundamental political repercussions and should thus be the first and foremost object of political action. This notion is not idiosyncratic of the character of the Stranger, but it is typical of Plato's political doctrines. It recurs at *Resp.* VIII.544c1-e2 and *Leg.* I.644b9-645b7. In the *Republic*, Socrates argues that the origins of constitutions must be traced back to the emotional dispositions and desires of their members, and he proceeds to derive timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny respectively from desires for military honours, wealth, freedom, and unrestrained power. Socrates describes the citizen's 'dispositions' (ἡθῶν, VIII.544e1) as they metaphorically 'drag' (ἐφελκύσονται, VIII.544e2) the political order towards different possible organisations. Similarly, in the *Laws* the Athenian Stranger argues that political norms derive from the control or lack of control over pleasure/joy and pain/affliction (ἡδονὴν καὶ λύπην, I.644c7) in the citizens, when their behaviours and habits become norms for the entire city. In both cases, the characters analyse the origins of constitutions from the bottom up, as they supposedly derive from complex networks of psycho-physical dispositions, habits and beliefs that can influence societal dynamics and solidify into political institutions (which in turn will influence the citizens' dispositions, and so on).²⁵⁹ Thus, the *Statesman* addresses a typical Platonic concern with the foundational role of emotions and moral psychology in the political field. Differently from the other political dialogues, however, it focuses exclusively on aggressiveness and mildness of temperaments, insofar as they determine opposite modes of life marked by courage and moderation. The highest and most proper political concern, to the Eleatic Stranger, should be the education of the courageous and moderate citizens' intersubjective attitudes. A genuine statesman should enable the citizens to evaluate their own

figure is idiosyncratic and ultimately abortive' because, while he does not dismiss it completely, he subordinates it to the image of weaving (p.46).

²⁵⁹ Lodge (1947) argues that Plato's theory of mind 'is identical with the life of the self: or rather, of selves interacting and developing themselves in a social tissue of civic life'; to Lodge, thus, the life of the self influences and is influenced by language, arts, science, philosophy, and culture in general (p.232).

standpoints in relation to the opposite ones and consider both equally valuable for the happiness of the city.

To Plato the educational objective of genuine politics, I propose, is the main reason for him to distinguish it from existing political orders and forms of expertise. In all his major political dialogues, Plato separates, to some extent, the ideal constitutions he presents from existing ones: *Resp.* presents the political order of its ideal city as a model laid up in heaven, irreducible to existing constitutions and perhaps even impossible to realise;²⁶⁰ *Leg.* presents its legislation as a project for an imaginary colony inspired by Athenian, Spartan and Cretan constitutions,²⁶¹ and *Pol.*, as we have seen, explicitly theorises a separation of true political expertise from all other forms of constitution and leadership. This separation, I hold, is largely independent from the *vexata quaestio* of Plato's intellectual utopianism or pragmatic realism.²⁶² The presence of idealistic descriptions of the best possible political order does not prevent Plato from exploring a variety of concrete political problems in detail and accepting the validity of second-best solutions.²⁶³ Thus the distinction between a utopian project and political reality is inadequate to capture the complexity of Plato's political accounts. In fact, Plato posits a distinction between a form of politics focused on the education of the mind (i.e. cognition and emotion) and instrumental political fields such as control, professionalization, legislation, and forms of power over the citizens' minds. Lodge (1947) has shown that this is the case in *Resp.* and *Leg.*, arguing that here Plato 'does not philosophize for the sake of philosophizing', but that he 'endeavours to give to the city-state an ideal formulation, to construct a pattern' for political rule because 'his educational theories have always the practical aim of training for citizenship, or it may be for leadership' (p.14). His construction of ideal patterns, Lodge argues, is chiefly directed at practical educational concerns (p.15). I hold that the *Statesman* not only supports Lodge's interpretation, but explicitly theorises it. This dialogue theorises, at once, the abstract separation of genuine politics from inadequate political practices, and its inherent bond, *qua* educational activity, to the dispositions of its subjects. It thus

²⁶⁰ *Resp.* IX.592b: 'But maybe there is a model of it laid up in heaven for those who want to look it and by looking to settle there. But it makes no difference whether it exists now or will ever exist (ἀλλ' ... ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσως παράδειγμα ἀνάκειται τῷ βουλομένῳ ὄραν καὶ ὄρῶντι ἑαυτὸν κατοικίσειν. διαφέρει δὲ οὐδὲν εἴτε που ἔστιν εἴτε ἔσται)'.

²⁶¹ *Leg.* III.702c-d: 'let us choose from what we have said, and organise a city with our words, as it were by erecting it from the foundation (ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων ἐκλέξαντες, τῷ λόγῳ συστησώμεθα πόλιν, οἷον ἐξ ἀρχῆς κατοικίζοντες)'.

²⁶² This problem has been recently revived by Kahn (2009), who sees in *Pol.* and *Leg.* more pragmatic takes on the utopian ideal of philosophical rule in *Resp.* (pp.163-164).

²⁶³ E.g. the 'second navigation' of constitutional legislation addressed at *Pol.* 293e ff. On the value of second-best constitutions in the *Statesman*, see Lane 1998, pp.155-163.

teases out the revolutionary potential of conceiving the education of the citizens' minds as the truest political concern and the eminent political practice.

The Stranger's account, therefore, is not revolutionary in the sense of overturning authorities in favour of democratic politics, the pure self-determination of the multitudes in the city. In fact, his stance remains based on a conception of public life determined by ethical limits and measuring standards, which endow the statesman with the authority to discern and select who has the right to partake to this life and, in fact, to life *tout court*.²⁶⁴ The Stranger and Young Socrates espouse various political positions that ancients and moderns alike would identify as anti-democratic or difficult to integrate within democratic institutions. They accept that no multitude (*πληθός*) can attain any form of knowledge (*ἐπιστήμην*), including statecraft, thus arguing in favour of the government of enlightened oligarchies, diarchies or monarchies (292e1-293a4). On the same note, they also accept that genuinely beneficial and expert legislative decisions may be taken regardless of popular consent, as long as they benefit and improve the citizens (296a7-297b4); and they grant that the statesman might resort to violent measures, exile, reduction to servitude or deprivation of privileges to exclude from the city individuals of inherently intemperate dispositions (308e8-309a7). In addition, they identify democracy as a fragmented and weak constitution, incapable of achieving either great goods or great evils; thus, they limit its political value to situations in which there is no stable legislation, and social diversity of opinions is less detrimental than the arbitrary decisions of oligarchs or tyrants (303a4-b4). Moreover, by contrast with typically modern liberal ideals, they accept the institution of slavery or servitude, as a constitutive part of the city's professional organisation (289c4-d1). The Stranger's argument for social cohesion and collective rule, in fact, is limited to specific groups of citizens whose dispositions tend towards courage and moderation, while all

²⁶⁴ Cf. Brock (2013): 'One rarely encounters the "shepherd of the people" these days, at least in the western world: the image is hardly at home in an era in which almost all regimes profess to be democracies' (p.43). Plato's idiosyncratic dismissal or radical reconfiguration of this image in favour of models of social balance (p.46) might legitimately be read as in tune with contemporary democratic preferences, and it certainly constitutes an attempt to moderate excessive and potentially tyrannical claims to authority. However, Plato never fully abandoned the idea of a superior expertise endowed with complete power over human life, including the right to purge unsuitable individuals (p.48; cf. *Leg.* 735b-736c). Bontempi (2009, p.323) and Foucault (1983, pp.261-262), accordingly, remark that Plato's position remains mingled with concerns typical of ancient ethics, whereby strict limits and conditions can preclude political participation to those who are seen as 'others' in relation to the accepted ethical framework, in a way that to us moderns is unacceptable. The overlap of ethics and politics, of judgment about the quality of individual lives and about their right to partake to politics, is irreducibly incompatible with any democratic framework. Nonetheless, precisely Plato's emphasis on education as foundational of correct politics grounds both his rejection of more authoritarian political models and the possibility of a cautious modern appreciation of his ethical stance.

the others citizens (free or enslaved) are merely envisaged as held fast within this political organisation (311c3), without further ideals of democratic participation or universal freedom. The Stranger is unclear whether courage and moderation can in fact be universal or they are possessed by a more limited class of human beings. Most importantly, he never suggests that the best political organisation can emerge spontaneously, finding its own equilibrium due to the internal dynamics of the community alone, but he constantly posits the reference to an *external* principle of harmony as necessary for the social good.²⁶⁵ Therefore, the political account of the *Statesman* cannot be taken as a fully-fledged endorsement of democratic ideals, either in an ancient or in a close-to-modern sense.²⁶⁶

Nevertheless, we may speak of the *Statesman* as presenting a revolutionary political model insofar as it radically privileges educational concerns over any other political interest, function, and constitution. This dialogue does not condemn democracy as such; it rather separates genuine statecraft from *all* forms of political order. Thus it contains the roots of a conception of politics as responsible *above all* for the citizens' education and even autonomy. The very authority of educational leadership is dependent on the effective improvement of the citizens' coexistence. Thus, this account is more radically revolutionary than the assertion of the rights to self-determination of political multitudes over limited authorities. It theorises the substitution not of one model of authority over another, but rather of a model of intersubjective harmony based on psychological dispositions to models of pure control, technical expertise, normativity or power over the minds of political subjects. It is the radical affirmation of the principle of right measure over limited and partisan political concerns.

5.3.3. *Leading to Balance: A Tension of Control and Autonomy*

The political figure presented in the *Statesman* combines aspects of heteronomous command, based on the knowledge of right measure, and autonomous (albeit not spontaneous) organisation of the citizens, who enact a measured and harmonious coexistence. This figure entails an inescapable tension of control and autonomy: statecraft consists here, puzzlingly, in the art of controlling a community for the sake of

²⁶⁵ Just as, in the myth, the cosmos does neither find nor maintain its own balance without the external intervention of a god (cf. Chapter 4).

²⁶⁶ Skemp (1952) nonetheless outlines the Stranger's discussion of the 'relative merits' of democracy, which make it relatively close to modern democratic ideals: its capacity to resist 'tyrannical self-assertion' through the diversity of opinions and 'the admission that laws represent the fruit of experience' (pp.65-66).

their own autonomy. Accordingly, the interlocutors' exploration of statecraft, once it has abandoned the model of the herdsman, follows two paths, outlining both a political function of rigid control and one of educational leadership.

In the first place, the Stranger portrays statecraft as a controlling authority that regulates all the professional activities in the city and can disregard, in its legislative role, both written norms and popular consensus, insofar as it can effectively benefit the city. Modelling the statesman upon a weaver, he envisages the statesman as the legitimate director of co-operative (συνεργῶν, 280b2) arts, due to his technical knowledge of the final product. Modelling him upon a physician, the Stranger grants him the authority to impose even through force or constriction a healthy regimen (i.e. a good legislation) to the political community, 'without persuading' (μὴ πείθων, 296b1; 296b5) his subjects of the validity of his treatments. Within this frame, neither the Stranger nor Young Socrates display any concern with the citizens' own opinions about political principles, but they are content with asserting the authority of expert knowledge, *provided that* (like medicine) it also entails full responsibility for the conditions its enforceable regimen will produce in its subjects. Therefore, statecraft needs to exert indirect authority over every other activity in the *polis*: it determines, with expert skill, the opportunity of every form of expertise, from the production of tools to creative arts and nurture (287b4-290e9); it constitutes the ideal to which constitutions must conform themselves if they aim to avoid social strife and tyranny, should a good statesman be absent (300e11-301c4); and it directs professional forms of leadership such as teaching, rhetoric, military guidance, and jurisdiction by determining the contextual opportunity of their activities (303d4-305e7). Statecraft appears first, in every respect, as a 'ruling' or 'controlling' (ἄρχουσαν, 305e2) enlightened authority. Therefore, when it comes to professional activities, including legislative decisions, the *Statesman* displays a strong preference for centralised, enlightened control over unregulated social dynamics.²⁶⁷

By contrast with the Stranger's account of professional activities, his introduction of moral psychology as politically foundational entails a direct concern with the freedom and autonomy of the citizens, as the very endpoint of educational leadership. This account positively describes the 'undefiled gold' that had been

²⁶⁷ It must be noticed, however, that the Stranger's preference for centralised, enlightened control is moderated by the concession that, should this be factually impossible, the autonomous legislative activity of an assembly provides a viable, albeit more difficult, second-best solution (300d9-e3). The specific dynamics of this activity, impossible to explore here, have been studied by Skemp (1952, pp.48-49), Gill (1995) and Lane (1998, pp.146-163).

previously distinguished from other valuable forms of leadership. The Stranger will indeed describe, radically, the role of statecraft in relation to moral psychology as the *sole* aspect that is proper to it:

For this is the **single and whole task** of kingly weaving-together: never to allow moderate dispositions to stand away from the courageous, but by working them closely into each other as if with a shuttle, through unanimity, honours, dishonours, opinions, and the giving of pledges to one another, drawing together a smooth and fine-woven fabric out of them, as the saying goes, to entrust offices in cities to them forever in common.

τοῦτο γὰρ ἔν καὶ ὅλον ἐστὶ βασιλικῆς συνυφάνσεως ἔργον, μηδέποτε ἔαν ἀφίστασθαι σόφρονα ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνδρείων ἦθη, συγκερκίζοντα δὲ ὁμοδοξίαις καὶ τιμαῖς καὶ ἀτιμίαις καὶ δόξαις καὶ ὁμηρειῶν ἐκδόσεσιν εἰς ἀλλήλους, λεῖον καὶ τὸ λεγόμενον εὐήτριον ὕφασμα συνάγοντα ἐξ αὐτῶν, τὰς ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἀρχὰς ἀεὶ κοινῇ τούτοις ἐπιτρέπειν (310e7-311a2, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The core elements of statecraft established in this dense passage are three: (1) the reference to the model of weaving, here envisaged as a ‘drawing together’ (συνάγοντα) of citizens of opposite dispositions; (2) the reliance on a complex network of (loosely defined) discursive practices that need to be communicated to the social groups in the city; and (3) the political end-point as a communication of authority to the citizens, so that they may enact it *permanently* (ἀεὶ). It is under this respect that statecraft consists in a *communicative* process, whereby discursive practices are managed in order to increase the citizens’ closeness and in view of their permanent autonomy. This communicative process appears nonetheless ambiguous. Various scholars have argued that the Stranger envisages a certain kind of social uniformity or orthodoxy as political objective,²⁶⁸ but his account is more nuanced. In order to clarify it, we need to look at how he describes the problems and potentials of communication in the city.

At first, the Stranger argues that, in order to remain ‘free’ (ἐλευθέρων, 308a1) from foreign powers, it is necessary for the citizens correctly to evaluate the opportunity of both aggressive and mild policies. Unilateral and untempered preferences for militarism or pacifism, he claims, would *equally* drive a city into servitude or

²⁶⁸ E.g. Skemp (1942) interprets statecraft as the imposition of a quasi-religious ‘orthodoxy’ (p.42), and Bobonich (1995) as ‘the implanting of true opinion’ in the citizens’ minds (p.324). Lane (1998), despite granting a level of autonomy to the citizens, nonetheless concludes that statecraft ‘dictates what is properly to be done’ as an objective norm that only ‘obliquely’ interacts with the citizens’ dispositions (p.186).

destruction sooner or later, either by provoking fierce reactions against the city-state or by facilitating its conquest (307e1-308a8). He thus envisages a situation in which one-sided dispositions for aggression or mildness are *always* (ἀεὶ, 307e9 and 308a5) followed without change, and thus become *equally* detrimental. However, his fundamental concern is not restricted to foreign policies, which serve only as particular example of the dangerous excesses entailed by unilaterality of opinions.²⁶⁹ Rather, his objective is the citizens' ability to guide themselves *permanently* (i.e. in all kinds of political decisions), relying on the right mingling of aggressive and mild dispositions. An ideal statesman must not only ensure that submission to foreign powers be avoided, an end which could be also achieved, at least theoretically, by an expert authority; but he must also find a way to allow the citizens to evaluate each other's opinions, diverse and emotionally-influenced, in the most constructive way possible.

To the Stranger, the city is a disrupted social field that needs improvement, and thus some level of control, so that its inherent potential for conflict may be bent towards constructive relationships. The 'puzzling' (θαυμαστόν, 306b6) problem of potentially conflicting, albeit equally valuable, sets of behaviours constitutes to him a notion that is easy for 'disputers' (ἀμφισβητητικοῖς, 306a9) to exploit antagonistically. On the same note, he argues that the impact of temperamental 'affinity' or 'kinship' (συγγένειαν, 307d2) frequently leads the citizens to praising familiar behaviours and decisions and blaming alien ones, thus constituting the root of social hostility (ἔχθραν, 306b10).²⁷⁰ His concern is therefore more fundamental than the mere opportunity of divergent foreign policies, but rests on the possibility of emotionally-driven conflict. This view is similar to his previous evaluation of professional experts as potential 'competitors' (ἀμφισβητούντων, 268c3) for political authority, *qua* providers of necessary material goods for the community and thus partakers in its maintenance. But the educational role of statecraft is more nuanced than strict regulation, because it addresses social interactions dictated not by mere professional roles, but by deeply ingrained psychological factors.

²⁶⁹ *Contra* Lane (1998), who argues that the statesman must communicate an ability to assess the *timeliness* of political choices (pp.170-180). Her interpretation is unsatisfactory, insofar as the Stranger does not press the problem of timeliness, but rather moves on immediately to social cohesion, where the problematic element is not just a difference in *timely opportunity* of choices but the very *divergence* between groups of citizens. Evidently this problem is more fundamental, because it would be impossible for the citizens correctly to assess the opportunity of each other's dispositions and to achieve agreements without, first and foremost, a correct (non-hostile) practice of dialogue.

²⁷⁰ Restated at 307d3, 308a7, 308b4.

Therefore, the Stranger's view does not entail a judgment in favour of the citizens' absolute subordination to the ruler's expertise, let alone *against* any diversity of dispositions and correlative opinions. In fact the Stranger, while claiming that the hostility fuelled by temperamental differences is a social 'malady' (νόσος, 307d7) that can dissolve and weaken a city and needs a 'remedy' (φάρμακον, 310a3), *also* considers those very differences as necessary for its healthy organisation. If aggressive or mild decisions are influenced by the corresponding emotional dispositions, and since both of them can be beneficial to a city, precisely their being 'carried in opposite directions' (ἐπὶ τὰ ἐναντία φερομένων, 310a5) constitutes the condition of political freedom and social cohesion. Like in the case of a city which can expertly attack and retreat or seek peace at the right moment, independence from foreign powers depends on the cooperative assessment of the opportunity of one or the other disposition. And like in the image (εἰκόνα, 309b5) of rigid warp and soft woof, the very *integrity* of the social fabric depends on the tension that emerges when divergent preferences for aggressiveness and mildness are made to interact. The different citizens must *at the same time* be drawn together (συνάγοντα) by the statesman and maintain their inherent tendency to be carried (φερομένων) in opposite directions. The condition to which the statesman must provide a remedy is, rather than the simple divergence of opinions, their emotionally-influenced *unilaterality*. His relation with his subjects, albeit tense because in contrast with their inner drives, nonetheless relies on them to achieve the *right level* of social cohesion.

To represent this process, Plato resorts not only to the image of threads drawn together and carried apart, as it were by external pulls, but also to the image of divergent inclinations, internally driving the very psychological movement of the citizens. This psychological metaphor recurs only once in the *Statesman*, in noticeable contrast with the predominant image of the social fabric. The Stranger criticises both the one-sided 'love' (ἔρωτα, 307e6) for moderation as 'less opportune than it should be' (ἀκαιρότερον [...] ἢ χρή, 307e7) and the one-sided inclination for courage as a 'desire stronger than it ought to be' (σφοδροτέραν τοῦ δέοντος ἐπιθυμίαν, 308a6-7). In the latter case, he speaks of 'those who *incline* more towards courage' (οἱ πρὸς τὴν ἀνδρείαν μᾶλλον ῥέποντες, 308a4), thereby framing the political problem as a matter of dynamic psychological processes that impact on the political order. The presence of this metaphor, however limited, is crucial. The image of interwoven warp and woof is suitable to represent the bond of courage and moderation, but it does not capture the

autonomous and potentially unbalanced psychological movement of the citizens. The concept of psychological *inclination*, instead, is at least implicitly associated with the criterion of *balance*.

This concept is central to the political accounts of the *Republic* and the *Laws*, and in the former the association to the criterion of balance is explicit. At *Resp.* VIII.544d7-e2, Socrates rhetorically contraposes the idea that constitutions, like men in traditional myths, are ‘born out of an oak or a rock’ (ἐκ δρυός ποθεν ἢ ἐκ πέτρας [...] γίγνεσθαι)²⁷¹ to his conviction that they originate ‘out of the citizens’ dispositions, which, so to speak, tip the scales and drag the rest after them’ (ἐκ τῶν ἡθῶν τῶν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν, ἃ ἂν ὥσπερ ῥέψαντα τᾶλλα ἐφελκύσῃται). Socrates’s account is the story of a decline from the ideal constitution ruled by philosophers, the lovers of wisdom, toward tyranny due to the destabilising progressive accumulation of different *inclinations* in the citizens. The various desires for honours, wealth, freedom and power that proliferate in real constitutions then drag them slowly towards tyranny, the polar opposite of the best government. This process is as much psychological as it is political: at VI.485d Socrates had posited that ‘when in someone the desires incline strongly to any one thing, they are weakened for other things’ (εἰς ἓν τι αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι σφόδρα ῥέπουσιν [...] εἰς τᾶλλα τούτω ἀσθενέστεραι), so that only one desire can *preponderate* in a single person from time to time. The same dynamic influences, according to Socrates, the political field. At VIII.550e8 he claims that the desire for wealth, typical of oligarchies, causes people to hold wealth in more honour than virtue. He thus suggests that ‘the divergence of wealth and virtue be conceived as if each lay in the scale of a balance inclining opposite ways’ (οὕτω πλούτου ἀρετὴ διέστηκεν, ὥσπερ ἐν πλάστιγγι ζυγοῦ κειμένου ἑκατέρου, ἀεὶ τοῦναντίον ῥέποντε). In Socrates’s account, the desire for wisdom and virtue thus constitutes a counterbalance to other inclinations that, if preponderant, can alter both the psychological constitution of individuals and the political constitution of cities. The *Laws* (VII.802e) also include an account of ethical psychology in terms of inclinations, but complicate it with a further exploration of gender dynamics, whereby masculinity inclines (ῥέπον) to courage and femininity inclines as it were downwards (ἀποκλῖνον) to temperance—and both are equally necessary in a well-composed city. At IX.862c9, moreover, education, constriction and punishment are said to incline (ῥέπειν) disharmonious souls and anti-social forms of life towards correction, albeit with

²⁷¹ The reference is to Homer, *Odyssey* XIX, v.163. Cf. *Iliad* XXII, v.126.

different efficacies (whereby education remains the preferential corrective tool).²⁷² In both *Resp.* and *Leg.*, inclinations are drives that require an adequate counterbalancing movement, which can be provided either by superior wisdom (love of virtue, education, correction) or by the correct interrelation to their opposite.²⁷³ The same conceptual framework, I propose, is at work in the *Statesman*: the ideal leader of minds is the one who is able to communicate to the citizens a correct form of mutual counter-balancing. The fact that this dialogue strips down the infinite possible political complexities to the sole case of courage-moderation facilitates, didactically, our grasp of the very criterion of harmony as balance of opposites.

If my reading is correct, then the mutual bond of the citizens is not a tie, a constraint, but rather a delicate tension whereby opposite drives are neither so close as to coincide nor so (disproportionally) distant from their middle-ground as to unbalance the whole political structure. The predominance of the image of social bonds can be explained by the Stranger's emphasis on the need for closeness, rather than a generic mathematical equidistance from a steady centre. The right measure of the disrupted political community, to him, cannot be found but by counteracting unilateral pulls to separation and hostility. In any case, the political action here configured is not just productive of closeness and affinity for their own sake, but of right measure; it is a response against disharmony, not a rigid dogma. The image of inclinations is thus fundamental to grasp the non-dogmatic principle that guides the statesman. He must not impose a doctrinal orthodoxy that overrules the citizens' own opinions, but he aims to establish the conditions that can counter the citizens' unreflective and potentially conflictive unilaterality.

²⁷² The only other occurrences of this verb are found at *Tim.* 79e5 (physiological movement of air that tends to exit the body), *Phaedr.* 247b4 (downwards inclination of disembodied souls from the heavens towards the earth, due to an inherent psychological asymmetry between kinds of emotional drives), and *Phil.* 46e4 (preponderance of pain or pleasure, which physiologically coexist and succeed one another). The noun ῥοπῆ (inclining impulse) appears at *Resp.* VIII.556e4 (external impulse to sickness in the body, as opposed to its inner health) and *Leg.* XI.920b2 (inclination that can 'urge forward' [προτρέπειν] to vice, as opposed to stability in virtue). The terminology of inclination is thus always associated with pairs of opposites (in and out, up and down, pleasure and pain, sickness and health, vice and virtue) in dynamic alternation. Notice that some of these alternations are physiological and inevitable (breathing, enjoying-suffering; cf. movement-stasis or courage-moderation) while others are disruptive and susceptible to correction (health-sickness, virtue-vice; cf. balance-imbalance). All are open to education or self-regulation.

²⁷³ To *Resp.* and *Leg.* we may add *Prot.* 356b, where Socrates represents pleasures and pains as measured on a pair of scales, and their temporal proximity and distance as the beams. This account of right measure (355b-358c) is nonetheless more focused on subjective virtue (courage as ability to evaluate and face pains, 359d ff.) than on political harmony.

Thus, the widespread scholarly interpretation of this political figure as requiring some sort of orthodoxy or uniformity of minds is too partial. A one-sided focus on the role of expert authority, indeed, has frequently led interpreters to disregard of the internal dynamics of the community. Even Lane (1998), who construes statecraft as necessarily implicated with the citizens' own activity, ultimately identifies these latter's status as 'the murkier stuff of beliefs and backgrounds' to which a rigidly objective norm must be dictated and suitably adapted (p.186). By contrast, it must be emphasised that the Stranger envisages correct social dynamics as a *process* through which the citizens themselves, once they have rejected hostile unilaterality, improve *each other's* judgments in mutual dialogue. The Stranger argues that those citizens of courageous disposition, if they possess the correct opinion and can appreciate the multilateral nature of political virtue, will incline to 'enter in partnership with those who are just' (τῶν δικάϊων [...] κοινωνεῖν, 309e1-2) and thus moderate their 'feral' (θηριώδη, 309e3) tendency to aggression in the wrong circumstances. In the same way, to him the moderate who hold the same opinion will become authentically 'prudent and wise' (σῶφρον καὶ φρόνιμον, 309e6) by eschewing the tendency to 'simple-mindedness' (εὐηθείας, 309e8) dictated by their unreflective mildness. This tendency is also, to the Stranger, the foundation of the citizens' possibility to eschew their 'revulsion' (δυσχερεία, 310c7) at the idea of mingling courageous and moderate families through marriages, thereby avoiding the generation and upbringing of individuals increasingly unrestrained in their unilateral dispositions and bringing about more measured individuals (310a7-e2).²⁷⁴ The process that the statesman must trigger, thus, consists in a development from mere aggressiveness and mildness, not necessarily valuable in themselves, towards genuinely courageous and moderate behaviours and even, to some extent, justice and wisdom, insofar as it prevents aggressive prevarications and unreflective passivity. Its ultimate end is for the citizens themselves to be able to be drawn towards one another, when it is opportune to temper their otherwise valuable divergent inclinations.

Therefore, I argue, the statesman's loosely defined network of 'unanimity, honours, dishonours, opinions, and the exchange of pledges with one another'

²⁷⁴ At 310a7-9, the Stranger insists that the fundamental factor of political order is the 'divine' (θείου) bond of social concord, and that the 'human bonds' (ἀνθρωπίνους δεσμούς) of marriage and parenthood depend on it as secondary instances. The cultural and educational element is thus predominant in his account. While he does grant that *natural* predispositions are a relevant factor, his focus always rests on the citizens' opinions and beliefs. It seems incorrect to speak, with Lane (1998), of a 'eugenically based' marriage policy (p.182), but the issue of the relation between natural order and cultural devices in the *Statesman* is too complex to be exhausted here.

(ὁμοδοξίας καὶ τιμαῖς καὶ ἀτιμίας καὶ δόξαις καὶ ὀμηρειῶν ἐκδόσεσιν εἰς ἀλλήλους; 310e10-11) depends *in the last instance* on the citizens' own activities and discourses. The Stranger *does* favour a certain unanimity (ὁμοδοξίας), in the sense of likeness (ὁμοιότης) of opinions (δόξαι), but it would be a stretch to construe it as a mere doctrinal orthodoxy imposed from above. In fact, he explicitly requires the citizens themselves to engage in common partnership and compare their own opinions for the sake of improving them. The loosely defined social practices he envisages, finding concord, granting or denying honour, exchanging opinions and pledges, cannot possibly depend on the statesman's activity alone. They rather require – in order to enable a 'healthy' process – that the citizens themselves willingly enact them. The political figure presented by the Stranger requires not only the statesman's expert direction, but also the *active* self-regulation of his community. It requires not just the formation of a bond but the citizens' constant activity of mutual self-balancing.

The political figure of the *Statesman* is thus at odds with a notion of statecraft as mere authority. Here political rule, in its highest and most proper function, does not consist in arranging the citizens' activities, or even in rigidly controlling their dispositions from above, but rather in guiding the citizens towards a *convergent* appreciation of *divergent* standpoints. It is a properly educational endeavour: like the teacher of his former example, who must make the pupils *always* (ἀεὶ, 278c1) able to avoid errors and to recognise the different letters in all syllables,²⁷⁵ so the statesman must make the citizens *permanently* (ἀεὶ, 311a2) capable of eschewing unilaterality and evaluating each other's opinions in different situations. As educational activity, therefore, statecraft cannot simply disregard the citizens' different opinions and dispositions by imposing authoritarian commands, because it needs to preserve, in its autonomy, the healthy tension between the citizens' opposite modes of life.

Notice that the Stranger grants that this balance of opposite dispositions may emerge even within a single mind, in which case statecraft may also confer authority to a single virtuous individual. However, he considers both individual and collective authority as equally viable and open to contextual evaluation:

Whenever there happens to be a need for a single ruler, [the statesman will act] by choosing the person who has both qualities; and where there is a need for more than one, by mixing together a part of each of these groups.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Chapter 2.

οὐ μὲν ἂν ἐνὸς ἄρχοντος χρεία συμβαίη, τὸν ταῦτα ἀμφοτέρω ἔχοντα αἰρούμενον ἐπιστάτην· οὐ δ' ἂν πλειόνων, τούτων μέρος ἑκατέρων συμμειγνύντα (311a4-6, tr. Rowe, *adapted*).

The Stranger's ultimate position is neither monarchic, nor elitist, nor democratic, but rather allows for different modes of rule in different circumstances, albeit always depending on the preliminary selection and approval of the statesman. His concern with the moral psychology of the rulers simply transcends constitutional distinctions and is thus equally applicable to monarchy as to aristocracy and democracy. While he does not specify *which situations* might entail a need for either monarchic or more inclusive forms of power, he explicitly grants that multitudes can govern as legitimately as monarchs, *provided that* either form of sovereignty can order their emotional dispositions and thus regulate their impact on political opinions. The highest function of statecraft thus consists in communicating a truly beneficial order of dispositions to the city, in line with the image of a noble robe that the statesman confers to it (311b7-c6).

Therefore, we can notice an inherent tension in this model of political praxis, because the self-moving subjects who are conferred legitimate authority are at the same time the material on which the statesman must work. Their autonomous movement is as relevant as the direction communicated from above. Their freedom is certainly not described, in terms comparable to modern representative democracies or ancient Athenian direct participation, as a given condition always already present in the citizens' lives. Rather, it is presented a mode of self-regulation, to be produced by a superior expertise concerning what favours or hinders social harmony. In the *Statesman*, we find no optimistic appreciation of the multitudes that need to coexist in a city. Rather, the 'never simple' (μηδέποτε ἀπλᾶ, 279c8) and potentially conflictive coexistence of different skills, constitutional preferences, and personal attitudes constitutes a problematic, albeit unavoidable, aspect of social life. Yet we do not find a pessimistic rejection of the value of communal life, either, as necessarily condemned to detrimental conflicts and distorted judgments to be dogmatically controlled. What we find, instead, is a demanding political ideal of possible regulation of social life, based on the *communication* of correct intersubjective attitudes, a disposition for friendly and constructive dialogue that must be followed 'as far as possible' (καθ' ὅσον, 311c5) by the citizens themselves. This political figure thus involves *at once* an appreciation of internal social dynamics that can determine, from the bottom up, an autonomously well-regulated community, and a rigid assertion of the necessity for an enlightened authority,

capable to direct such potentially disintegrating dynamics towards their best possible outcome.

The political contents of the *Statesman* reflect its thematic focus on figures of guidance and of autonomy in dynamic, tense interaction. In the Stranger's myth the divine pilot of the cosmos periodically guides it with absolute control over its body and movements and periodically lets it go, in order for it to maintain itself balanced as long as it can (Ch.4). This cosmic image can indeed be considered, literally, *paradigmatic* of the kind of political activity promoted by the Stranger: guidance as education, leadership as transmission of self-directed power, control as aimed at autonomous balance. But the cosmic model is not the only way in which Plato has represented this process. Through the interlocutors' discussion, similarly, the image of the herdsman, an absolute controller of his tame flock, is set aside because it can trigger disputations about his role; but images of expert control return in the shape of helmsmen and physicians who take full responsibility for their subject's wellbeing, as well as of weavers who direct their co-workers (Ch.1 and 2). Finally, the very educational scene of the dialogue represents a strong leading figure, the Stranger, directing with unquestioned authority the inquiry on statecraft, while the subject of his guidance, Young Socrates, slowly learns to anticipate the problems that will arise and determines, with his hesitations and doubts, the different paths of inquiry taken by his educator. Therefore, by looking at the images and scene that Plato has chosen for his composition of the *Statesman*, we can notice that the problem of authoritative but beneficial control over various kinds of subjects is the recurrent theme of this dialogue. Plato's central focus consists in the identification of genuinely educational and empowering forms of guidance, so that authority might be configured not as mere control but as authentic leadership.

5.3.4. Which Methods for Leading Minds?

The *Statesman* presents statecraft as a problematic, even puzzling form of empowering leadership, but it leaves open the problem of the concrete communicative methods that the statesman addresses to his community. Not only does the Stranger envisage the communication of a true opinion to the citizens, but he also speaks of it as helped by 'the Muse of the kingly art' (τῆ τῆς βασιλικῆς μουσῆ, 309d2). He pictures statecraft as akin to other expressive arts, which were similarly said to be guided by their respective Muses. His ultimate political figure thus requires the statesman to act as a good

communicator for his community, capable of expressing effectively the need for constructive dialogue. The Stranger, nonetheless, does not attempt to define *how* this communicative aspect may work in practice. Rather, this figure of educational leadership constitutes a pure *ideal* of statecraft. It opens the issue of *concrete* educational practices, but without the purpose of defining them once and for all. I hold that this openness is inherent to the notion of educational leadership as a practical balancing act that must be enacted differently (but coherently) in different circumstances.

The limitations of the Stranger's political figure are due to his explicit distinction of statecraft from any other professional form of leadership, namely teaching, rhetoric, military strategy, and jurisdiction. The concrete activity of the statesman remains puzzlingly difficult to determine, insofar as statecraft lacks any positive correspondence with more familiar techniques of leadership.²⁷⁶ In fact, it has been suggested that the statesman envisaged by the Stranger might act like a benevolent rhetorician who attempts to re-direct emotional drives,²⁷⁷ or an educator who attempts didactically to transfer philosophical doctrines.²⁷⁸ There is some measure of truth in such readings. Insofar as statecraft consists in an act of instructive communication and leadership of minds, it seems reasonable to assimilate it *tout court*, for instance, to rhetoric, which in the *Phaedrus* (261a8) Socrates calls 'a certain guidance of souls through discourses' (ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων) and which he himself uses to praise the love of wisdom. Similarly, it could be assimilated to a kind of maieutic education addressed to the citizens to correct their misguided opinions and stimulate constructive dialogue, 'stirring, persuading, and reproaching' (ἐγείρων καὶ πείθων καὶ ὀνειδίζων), such as Socrates describes himself as doing for the benefit of Athens, like a nagging gadfly provoking a noble but lazy steed, in the *Apology* (30c2-31c3). Notice also that, in

²⁷⁶ Lane (1998) suggests that statecraft consists in dictating the correct modes and timings for these arts to be enacted. Her reading is correct but does not address the educational problem at its core: how does the statesman factually communicate his directions? How does he persuade the citizens of their opportunity? And how does he incline them towards healthy concord? These problems require us to pay attention not only to the political expertise in recognising opportune conditions and times of political action, but to the very acts of communication needed in order to communicate or maintain them.

²⁷⁷ Tordesillas (1995) assimilates statecraft, *qua* production of collective right measure (*metrion*) and expert management of shifting political circumstances, with rhetoric, *qua* persuasion of the masses and expertise in the opportunity (*kairos*) of speeches. While these parallelisms are certainly valid, his one-sided account does not capture the whole complexity of statecraft as the Stranger describes it.

²⁷⁸ Bobonich (1995) argues that 'the only method of improvement Plato suggests here [*Pol.* 296b5-c2] is education' (p.321), but construes it as the implanting of ideas and inculcation of behaviours, to which the citizens' own drives merely resist due to their inherent distortion (p.328). However, the Stranger does not construe the citizens' role as either passive reception or rebellious resistance, but as a tension that is required for the city's good order and happiness.

the *Gorgias* (521d6-8), Socrates claims that he is ‘one of the few Athenians, not to say the only one, who attempt to practise the true political art, and the only among those who live now to practise political matters’ (μετ’ ὀλίγων Ἀθηναίων, ἵνα μὴ εἶπω μόνος, ἐπιχειρεῖν τῇ ὡς ἀληθῶς πολιτικῇ τέχνῃ καὶ πράττειν τὰ πολιτικὰ μόνος τῶν νῦν). Thus it is tempting to see the statesman as a Socratic figure, whose role as guide of the citizens is the same as Socrates’s guidance of the Athenians, and whose expertise is equally encompassing. Similar assimilations, however, are ultimately unsatisfactory, because the Stranger explicitly ascribes the arts of education and persuasion to *other* professionals, and Socrates himself does not claim to actually possess true political expertise.²⁷⁹ No similar suggestion has been proposed for the identification of the statesman with a judge or a general, although we may legitimately observe that his role also requires him to formulate judgments concerning the conflicts among his subjects and to influence their aggressiveness or lack of spirit. In fact, the Stranger grants that such similarities are inherent to political leadership, but he is careful in distinguishing its unique field of action: neither the individual intellect of a student and the subjective position of the judged in a court, nor the emotions and opinions of armies and popular assemblies, but the *whole* field of social dynamics in the city. In the Stranger’s account, statecraft operates only ‘with regard to the constitution of the city’ (ὡς γε ἐν πολιτείᾳ, 309e6-7) as a whole, and not through direct involvement with every single part of it. Thus, the specificity of the statesman’s role entails its utmost complexity. He needs to convince the citizens that an intricate social reality, composed of potentially conflictive professional claims, constitutional preferences and, above all, divergent modes of life, may actually attain the harmonious order it lacks and needs. His educational role therefore cannot be limited to a specific instructive, persuasive, or directive activity, but encompasses a very broad range of communicative competences.

However, the Stranger makes no attempt to explore concrete methods to respond to social complexities, nor does Young Socrates demand it. In the *Statesman*, thus, we face a certain lack of concreteness, even when concreteness would be required to define *how* to realise its political figure. This problematic lack can be contrasted with the extensive attention dedicated, in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, to the manifold issues of political education, which the Stranger leaves mostly unexplored. In particular, he does not describe ways to tackle the variety of emotional factors elsewhere credited with

²⁷⁹ Notice how Socrates, in the *Gorgias*, distinguishes between the *true* art of statecraft, which he only *attempts* to practise (ἐπιχειρεῖν), and the *political matters* which he in fact practises (πράττειν). This distinction is compatible with the Stranger’s separation between, on the one hand, political arts that are akin to statecraft and, on the other, true statecraft itself.

political relevance, such as desire for wealth,²⁸⁰ drive for pleasure and aversion to pain,²⁸¹ fear of death,²⁸² or the moving power of poetry.²⁸³ In fact, unlike Socrates in the *Republic*, he explicitly considers the ‘pursuit of wealth and power’ (πλούτου καὶ δυνάμεων [...] διώγματα, 310b7) as not ‘worthy of discourse’ (ἄξια λόγου, 310b8) or ‘serious effort’ (σπουδάζοι, *ibid.*). Moreover, he does not address the possibility of persuasive introductions to legislative norms, apt to inform the citizens of their value,²⁸⁴ or the role of mythology and poetry in educating the population about ethical principles.²⁸⁵ Even with regard to his specific focus, the dynamics of courage and moderation, he does not suggest any concrete form of verbal communication, like rhetorical speeches, myths, irony, or refutation, which may illuminate *how* his political model might be realised from case to case.²⁸⁶ By comparison with the complexity of emotional factors and educational techniques described in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, the *Statesman* might seem somewhat superficial in its political figure, focused as it is on the determination of a *formal* objective of political guidance in relation to courage and moderation alone. However, we must bear in mind that the interlocutors acknowledge as their *sole* purpose the attainment of a satisfactory figure of statecraft, addressing all the issues that might appear relevant to them and leaving behind problems that escape their own understanding²⁸⁷ or appear irrelevant.

This lack is not the mark of theoretical incompleteness, but rather of practical openness. It indicates that Plato, in composing this dialogue, merely intended to furnish an ideal figure of statecraft as educational leadership, while leaving the problem of its practical realisation open to further exploration. The practical aspect is nonetheless inherent to the very political figure he presented, insofar as it cannot be conceived as normative or dogmatic control but rather as a model of a balancing act. This *praxis* is to be performed in different ways in different contexts, while maintaining the same fundamental objective of harmonious balance.

²⁸⁰ E.g. *Resp.* VIII.550d6-e8.

²⁸¹ E.g. *Leg.* I.644b9-645b7.

²⁸² E.g. *Resp.* III.387b8-c6.

²⁸³ E.g. *Resp.* X.606a3-b8; *Leg.* II.656c1-657a1.

²⁸⁴ E.g. *Leg.* IV.722a7-723d3.

²⁸⁵ E.g. *Resp.* II.376c7-377a9. Mythology is nonetheless credited with educational efficacy at *Pol.* 304c-d, albeit attributed to rhetoric and not to statecraft itself.

²⁸⁶ Notice that the Stranger, however, allows for non-verbal forms of expression. At 277c3-6 he grants that ‘handicrafts’ (χειροργιῶν) like painting and sculpture can provide some education for those who cannot follow complex arguments, and at 306c10-d4 he claims that music and painting can represent beautiful and noble behaviours ‘in images’ (ἐν εἰδώλοις). Handicraft and music are nonetheless distinct from statecraft, and cannot solve, alone, the problem of its educational leadership. Cf. Section 3.3.1.

²⁸⁷ Such as the problem of happiness in an apolitical golden age (272d2-4).

5.4. *The Common Trait of Education and Leadership*

In this section I will compare the dialogue scene and the political contents of the *Statesman* in order to show their theoretical cohesiveness. In Sections 5.2. and 5.3. I have analysed the non-doctrinal and practical aspects of philosophical education and political leadership as Plato presented them in the *Statesman*. In both cases, I have observed that a criterion of autonomous balance grounds his writing and justifies his extensive reliance on the dialogue form and on images. I have argued that to Plato philosophical education is not just a communication of doctrines or formal methods, but rather of a well-balanced condition of mind. Similarly, I have argued that to him political leadership is not just a form of dogmatic control but rather the communication of autonomous intersubjective balance to the citizens. Here, I will argue that these two conceptions are comparable because they are both grounded on the same educational dynamic: the challenge of unilateral and potentially contrasting perspectives and the creation of their best possible integration within a cohesive whole. The dialogue scene and political contents are therefore cohesively grounded on Plato's notion of education as production of well-combined balance.

This educational framework conjoins the political argument to the very dialogue scene that frames it. Such a conjunction has not been hitherto studied, because the differences between argument and scene are more immediately evident. The argument is focused on concrete political complexities and forms of technical expertise, while the scene represents an effort of correct dialectical argumentation. The subject-matter of this dialogue is thus to some extent independent from the dialectical training it represents. There is no reason to think that the education of philosophical abilities and dispositions *must* be bound, by logical necessity, to a political argument. Accordingly, other Platonic dialogues also represent dialectical training while advancing diverse philosophical arguments. For instance, we find similar explorations of dialectic through the drama both in the *Theaetetus* and in the *Sophist*. In the *Theaetetus*, the older Socrates leads the eponymous young man through the various problems of defining knowledge, with its various potentials and limitations. Similarly, in the *Sophist* the Stranger is concerned with leading Theaetetus through many possible definitions of sophistry and offering reflections on the activity of the inquiring mind, with particular attention to the dangers of deceit and delusion.²⁸⁸ The *Philebus* and the *Parmenides* also portray characters that strive dialectically to define complex philosophical ideas (the

²⁸⁸ Cf. Section 3.2.

good individual life and Being itself). Gill (2000) observes that Plato's 'readiness [...] to engage with other philosophical, or conventional, positions' for the sake of attaining a 'mediation' of opinions in the *Statesman* is common to other dialogues frequently attributed to Plato's old age, like the *Philebus* and the *Parmenides* (p.292). Therefore, we might conclude that the experience of philosophical inquiry portrayed in the *Statesman* is not inherently bound to its occasional subject-matter. Dialectical procedures are therefore not the common element between scene and argument. Instead, I propose, the conjunction consists in Plato's concern with the education of the mind to balance. In the *Statesman*, Plato is determined to show that philosophical education and politics, as modes of communicating balance, are inherently entwined.

In the scene of the *Statesman*, the Stranger focuses on the praxis of correct communication of political, as well as philosophical, opinions, for the sake of assessing the extent of their validity and reaching a satisfactory level of agreement with his interlocutor. As we have seen, he educates Young Socrates by: letting him follow inadequate political perspectives to the point where they become untenable (268b6-c4); disrupting the linearity of thought with pivotal moments of political and philosophical reflection (262a5-263e5; 272b3-d6; 277a3-287b3; 293e6-300c4; 308b10-308e3); provoking his interlocutor with puzzling images of interdependent control and autonomy (277b4); and requiring him to maintain his mind as well-composed as possible throughout a variety of political perspectives (278c8-d5). Mirroring the complexity of a political community, the intricate tangle of divergent opinions and potential disputations in need of harmonious combination, the Stranger complicates his dialogue with Young Socrates by demanding that political opinions be reflectively explored from all kinds of angles, and made to fit in a well-integrated, harmonious figure.

The underlying *common trait* of this political inquiry and the political community it describes is the potential for disrupting, destabilizing differences of perspectives, which need to be evaluated in order to avoid complete confusion and to be integrated for the sake of social harmony. Thus, the scene of the *Statesman* itself further illuminates how Plato conceived the practical aspects of political education and correct dialogue, as methods of producing intersubjective concord. Again, the statesman remains certainly different from an educator, insofar as he does not address individuals or particular social groups but the whole political community, and thus needs to cooperate with other professional leaders and communicators. Nonetheless, the

fundamental problem of divergent perspectives is the same in both cases, and it is reasonable to assume that the instruments to tackle it be comparable as well. I argue, therefore, that Plato has represented the various methods of dialogue employed by the Stranger as a way to present valid models for the statesman's own leadership of minds, or at least in view of analogous educational concerns. I have examined the Stranger's different communicative methods throughout this dissertation. He allows (1) *disruptions* to interrupt the linearity of political discourses, either insisting on his disagreement with his interlocutor or welcoming his doubts. He insists on (2) the *partiality* of political models and images, which demand constant shifts of perspective, while never renouncing the possibility of their coherent integration or allowing absolute political relativism. Finally, he welcomes (3) *playfulness* and self-aware usage of mythology as cognitively productive forms of communication concerning political concepts such as control and autonomy. It is thus possible to identify a network of correlations between these techniques of dialogue and the educational concerns raised by the Stranger about political matters.

We can find such correlations in the Stranger's language about emotional states and cognitive experiences. We have seen that, to him, disruptive digressions can cause an individual mind to be carried around different angles of inquiry and feel a 'revulsion' (*δυσχερείας*, 286b7) caused by confusion, as when Young Socrates feels unease at the idea of unregulated authority. Similarly, the Stranger describes as 'revulsed' (*δυσχερανάντων*, 301c7) the people who do not trust in the possibility of enlightened monarchy, out of fear that it might degenerate into tyranny, and as 'revulsion' (*δυσχερεία*, 310c7) the citizens' aversion to creating familiar bonds between courageous and moderate social groups.²⁸⁹ This confusion of the mind, to him, is as much a 'malady' (*νόσημα*, 283b7) as social conflict is (*νόσος*, 307d7). He thus presents both Young Socrates's hesitations and the citizens' possible resistances as detrimental lacks of inner order that must be laboriously sustained and responded to, for the sake of attaining political opinions (and attitudes) as constructive as possible. On the same line, as the Stranger considers the integration of political perspectives a precise 'mixture' (*συγκράσεων*, 278d3) of different elements on which 'to concord' (*ὁμονοεῖν*, 260b8) with Young Socrates, so he names 'mixture' (*σύγκρασιν*, 308e7) the courageous and moderate citizens' constructive 'concord' (*ὁμονοία*, 311b9). To him, thus, the process whereby different opinions can be integrated through educational dialogue is akin to the

²⁸⁹ Cf. Lane, 1998, pp.161-163.

process of social agreement. Finally, as he presents the ‘puzzling’ (θαυμαστόν, 277b4) mythical image of clashing control and autonomy as a ‘game’ (παιδίαν, 268d8), so he considers the contrast of courage and moderation as ‘puzzling’ (θαυμαστόν, 306b6) but also, when it does not entail hostility, as a playful activity (παιδιά, 307d6). Both in his usage of imagery and in his political language the Stranger allows for playful and valuable clashes of ideas, to be sustained *together* in a cohesive whole. Through the Stranger’s terminological consistency, therefore, Plato has construed the educational dynamics required by an individual and by a community as comparable, insofar as they entail analogous difficulties and potentials. Overall, the benevolent but tenacious insistence on the partiality of any political perspective, in need of balanced combination through dialogue, seems to constitute the foundation of both the Stranger’s educational praxis and the ideal statesman’s leadership.

Ultimately, in the *Statesman* Plato has represented a paradigmatic educational praxis, not limited to a dogmatic communication of doctrines, but responsive to diverse cognitive and emotional factors that influence both subjective and intersubjective opinions. Both the Stranger’s and the ideal statesman’s efforts are directed at benefitting their subjects by making them *autonomously* capable to sustain the multifaceted complexity of political opinions, without being led astray by their partiality but seeking their best possible integration. Thus, it can be observed that the praxis of dialogue, to Plato, is central to both the philosophical and the political leadership of minds, not necessarily in relation to theoretical complexities, but in view of a correct management of disagreements and evaluation of partial perspectives. As Lodge (1947) argued, Plato’s educational conception of dialogue entails ‘the comparison of all sides and the one-sided victory of none’, because only through this process one can achieve ‘the reflective, balanced judgment which depends upon itself in matters of practice’, namely genuine autonomy of judgment (p.8).²⁹⁰ Lodge’s point is only partially correct, though, because it is limited to the *Republic* and the *Laws*. It must, in fact, be complemented by the insights on right measure provided by the *Statesman*. The educational process that Plato presents here does not rely merely on detached comparative procedures or acceptance of diverse perspectives, but it aims as far as possible at their cohesive integration, for the sake of a balanced inner constitution of mind and society. It is not an abstract stance in favour of detached critical thinking, a form of theoretical skepticism

²⁹⁰ The echoes of the *Statesman*’s figures of multifaceted judgment, self-sustained balance, and practical efforts directed at generating it are evident, but Lodge does not seem to be aware of them (he refers, rather, to: *Lach.* 188a ff., 200a ff.; *Meno* 84a ff.; *Euthyd.* 288c-291a; *Resp.* 590e ff., 540a-b; *Phaedr.* 276 ff., 278a-b; *Epist. VII* 341-344c).

or political neutrality. Rather, it is a practical instrument aimed at achieving a harmonious interrelation of psychological (cognitive and emotional) conditions. It is the path to make right measure come into being both in the individual mind and in the city.

With regard to the complexity of both philosophical inquiries and social life, Plato's fundamental concern is the impact of emotional dispositions and unreflective partiality of opinions on the inner *constitution* of both individuals and communities. Both are equally improved by firmly sustaining destabilising and repulsive doubts, by embracing those opinions that display their own partiality and lack of definitive truthfulness, and by allowing different opinions to be integrated through the acknowledgment of their particular angles. Certainly, Plato insists on the necessity of finding an expert and well-disposed *leader* of minds, because to him unchecked differences of opinions are potentially detrimental. At the same time, nonetheless, he emphasises the value of a well-regulated autonomy in evaluating those differences and appreciating them for their *partial* validity, dependent on specific points of view. The *Statesman* thus constitutes a many-faced figure of educational guidance through correct, adaptive communication in political discussions of the sort that, ideally, statecraft itself should direct to and enable in the citizens. Plato's fundamental concern, in this dialogue, is the dynamic movement of educational leadership as communication of balance.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the dialogue scene of the *Statesman* and its political contents. By contrast with mainstream interpretations of this dialogue as focused on theoretical and methodological issues, I have directed my attention to the practical aspect of the guidance of mind (5.1). I have shown that the dialogue scene represents an educational effort aimed to engender a well-balanced condition of mind (5.2). Subsequently, I have shown that the political contents configure a form of educational leadership aimed to realise a well-balanced political community (5.3). Finally, I have argued that the two educational processes are comparable because they rely on the same, fundamental common trait: the avoidance of detrimental excesses and the achievement of a balanced and cohesive integration of different perspectives (5.4). I conclude that, in the *Statesman*, Plato has addressed the education of the mind, both through the representation of a dialogical scene and through figures of political action.

By paying comparative attention to both aspects we can observe that, as the Stranger leads Young Socrates's mind towards an integration of different political perspectives, so the ideal statesman leads the citizens towards the integration of divergent standpoints. The condition of the subjects of guidance is therefore inherent to the nature of correct education and leadership. In both cases, to Plato emotional influences play a central role, insofar as they determine, to some extent, opinions, judgments and doubts concerning the features of a good political organisation. Equally, both for individual minds and social interactions Plato promotes an ideal of dynamic and autonomous stability, which depends in the last instance on a capacity for non-hostile dialogue, open to the constructive interaction of partial points of view. In both cases the guide needs to rely on the dispositions and judgments of the guided subjects, because his objective is their own self-regulation.

The *Statesman*, albeit not *radically* open to every possible opinion and thus dependent on the presence of some enlightened authority, nonetheless grounds the value of a leader *exclusively* on the capacity to enlighten others to the widest possible extent, making them able to evaluate diversity of perspectives as an intellectual and political asset. In this dialogue, Plato has configured educational leadership as inherently dynamic, insofar as it depends on the unstable and varied conditions of its subjects, and as it is impossible to reduce it to a fixed set of norms. It is an act of right measure, both because it aims to enable a correct harmony or balance in its subjects and because it is in itself measured, attentively fitting to the conditions and responses of those subjects. Ultimately, I hold that Plato's choice to avail, even for a technical work like the *Statesman*, of the dialogue form, is fully justified by its aptness to present not only methodological or doctrinal contents, but the open praxes of his educational ideal.

Two crucial results emerge from this reading of the *Statesman*. First, images are always central in Plato's writing due both to their cognitive efficacy and to their political value. In order to communicate his notion of educational dynamism, Plato configures this political discussion as a *model* of philosophical dialectic and represents the psychological experience it entails through the *image* of circular movement among various angles of inquiry. Moreover, he never presents his political account as a linear definition. He rather insists up to the very conclusion on the *image* of the social fabric composed by elements inclining in opposite directions but also drawn together, thus never allowing for a definitive reduction of his ideal of leadership to fixed dogmatic positions. Even if it *is* possible to extract a non-metaphorical account of his position,

without which any interpretation would be impossible and his writing ineffective, images are still inherent to the cognitive and discursive *process* of understanding and communicating ideas. To Plato, exploring different perspectives in a dynamic, non-dogmatic fashion constitutes at once a fundamental cognitive experience and a beneficial political praxis.

Accordingly, the second result of my reading consists in the identification of the *common trait* that, to Plato, underlies philosophical and political dialogue alike. In both cases, the inevitable presence of partial perspectives and emotional influences constitutes the ambivalent element that requires a correct guidance. Plato presents unreflective or emotionally-driven partiality of opinions as (1) potentially *disruptive*, a source of both intellectual confusion and social unrest—a troublesome condition and a malady that needs healing. However, he also presents it as potentially valuable, provided that partial standpoints are reflectively understood in their limitations and always bent towards (2) amicable *tension* or (3) concordant *integration*—not a disharmony to be corrected but an asset to be exercised, with tense effort, in the best possible way. In both the intellectual and the political field, thus, the ‘healthy’ praxis envisaged by Plato consists in a dialectical mediation of divergent opinions. I have shown that the *Statesman* does not fully exhaust the range of such praxes, but it demonstrates that Plato’s evaluation of them is central to his philosophical and political views and thus deserves more extensive exploration.

My analysis of the *Statesman*, ultimately, demonstrates that Plato’s ideal of education through dialogue does not consist in the dogmatic communication of fixed notions but in ‘tipping the scales’ of interconnected opinions towards their constructive, dialectical equilibrium.

Conclusions – Multifaceted Balance: Combining Images and Leading Minds

6.1. Scope of the Project: Right Measure as Principle of Balance

In this dissertation, I have sought to illuminate two underexplored facets of Plato's notion of right measure in the *Statesman*: the cognitive role of imagery and the correct leadership of minds both in individuals and in political communities. In my central chapters, I have shown that the cognitive function of images is grounded on their well-articulated combination. In the first and last chapters, I have framed this study of imagery within the main subject of the dialogue, namely the correct guidance of human minds. Throughout this study, I have shown that, for the sake of fleshing out a notion as complex as right measure, it is necessary to examine its different *practical* instances in various contexts.

It has thus become evident that right measure constitutes a dynamic point of balance between opposites (alternative paths of inquiry, ignorance and knowledge, seriousness and playfulness, control and autonomy, courage and moderation). However, this conclusion must not be radicalised in the direction of an excessive formalism, because right measure is also a (not always successful) criterion of judgment of conceptual and ethical ambivalences and a principle of harmonious combination of heterogeneous (not merely opposite) elements. Ultimately, this project illuminates an overlooked aspect of Plato's philosophy: its multifaceted and dynamic attention to the guidance of human minds for the sake of psychological and political equilibrium.

The conclusion of my research, accordingly, does not entail a reduction of the many facets of right measure to a single rigid pattern (opposite-balance-opposite or deficiency-measure-excess). This pattern will be theorised by Aristotle in defining the related ethical concept of the mean (*mesotēs*),²⁹¹ but Plato's representations of right measure in the *Statesman* escape any reductionism to abstract concepts. The figure of balance constitutes a useful heuristic outline to understand what right measure is without overshadowing its practical instances. If we imagine a pair of scales carried around on a ship amidst different climatic conditions, some calm and some turbulent,

²⁹¹ *Nicomachean Ethics* 1104a-b. Notice however how Aristotle, exactly like Plato, forewarns his readers that 'the whole account of moral actions is bound to be said as an outline, not with exact precision' (πᾶς ὁ περὶ τῶν πρακτῶν λόγος τύπων καὶ οὐκ ἀκριβῶς ὀφείλει λέγεσθαι, 1104a). In a Platonic spirit, Aristotle remarks that the ethical *mean* (μεσότης) is imprecise in itself, and that morally wise actions are even more so because they, *like medicine and navigation*, always require contextual deliberation (Price, 2011, pp.200-201; 209; cf. Broadie, 1991, pp.17-19).

we will have a clearer picture of Plato's right measure. The weights to be put on the scales, the length of its beams, and the position of the point of balance between them may be determined with mathematical exactness, but the correct adjusting of the scales to shifting and unstable circumstances will remain a contextual effort, not always precise. Analogously, the abstract criteria of right measure in its most stable state might be exactly determined through reason, but their practical instantiations under different conditions will vary, always requiring skillful and timely responses and never absolutely reducible to definitive norms. The outcome of my study thus consists in showing how, even within a clear pattern of right measure as balance, its each and every instance is *irreducibly* contextual and dependent on diverse specific *practices*. My study shows not just that to Plato this ethical model is good, but what *makes it* good in the circumstances examined. To Plato, the model of balance serves to orientate practices that are educationally productive, cognitively effective and ethically valuable, insofar as they counteract disharmony, confusion, and conflict and actively communicate autonomous harmony, lucidity and concord.

This conclusion does not purport to be in any way exhaustive in scope, yet it illuminates Plato's attention to practical efforts. The limitation of my research field to a single dialogue, however integrated by inter-textual comparisons, means that my results cannot be universalised without mediation. They do not express Plato's definitive positions or identify hermeneutic principles valid, without change, in other contexts. Nonetheless, the advantage of my focalised study is twofold. First, it articulates the notion of right measure by relying on the only dialogue in which Plato has approximated its definition and insisted on representing its various facets. Second, it shows the inter-relation and central significance of two fields of Platonic research, imagery and ethical leadership, which are still too frequently considered as secondary to Plato's theoretical concerns. Both fields are practical, not theoretical, because they are concerned with practices of correct and effective generation of right measure as balanced composition of diversities and contrasts. Even the theoretical effort of achieving knowledge ultimately depends on the exercise of right measure. My contribution is especially significant insofar as the *Statesman* itself has been read, almost universally, as hinging on theoretical concerns and formal methodology. My novel reading of this dialogue, by contrast, shows that the *practical* aspects of right measure are in fact preponderant. I have shown that Plato here conjoins some of his

highest theoretical efforts with a flexible and nuanced openness to the practical concerns of individual and collective guidance and self-guidance.

Precise limits define the scope of this project and foreground further possible research. As I have observed, a broader reconstruction of right measure in Plato's corpus, especially in relation to imagery, will require further study. Nonetheless, I have shown that the *Statesman* must be considered as paradigmatic of Plato's cognitive usage of imagery as well as of his nuanced political stance. Verifying this claim will require to test its hold in different contexts. For instance, does the measured combination of images perform similar roles and produce a comparable psychological effect in other dialogues, especially when used by the exemplar philosopher Socrates, or is its usage idiosyncratic of the Stranger? Moreover, does the political model of educational leadership of minds apply to other dialogues? In particular, does it have any bearing on the notion of *psychagogia* (soul-guidance) credited to rhetoric (and thus to different kinds of rhetorical tools, not just imagery) in the *Phaedrus*? How does the foundational role of ethical psychology relate to Plato's evaluation of constitutional forms and laws in other political dialogues? And what is the full scope of the relation between ethics and politics in Plato's thought? Is the individual form of psychological guidance (and self-guidance) primary in his political evaluation, or is ethics itself contaminated by social and political dynamics? These implicit questions have haunted my research but I could not give them the space they deserve.

Nonetheless, my evaluation of the *Statesman* as a paradigmatic model of educational leadership furnishes three fundamental methodological guidelines for further research. A) The cognitive and heuristic role of imagery emerges only in relation to its dialogical context, and in particular to the purposes for which images are used and to the psychological reactions they trigger. B) What Plato considers a positive effect of rhetorical techniques can be identified as dependent on its psychologically expert usage, namely on a counterbalancing management of detrimental lacks or excesses in cognition and emotion. C) The relation between ethical and political concerns can be clarified by paying attention to the mutual influence between individual practices or conditions and societal dynamics, always with regard to the balance of psychological and political constitutions. These guidelines allow us to test the hold of right measure as central principle of Plato's compositional techniques, communication of ideas, ethical psychology and politics. The pattern of well-composed balance outlined in this thesis is,

I propose, fundamental for understanding Plato's philosophy not just as theoretical exploration but also as a practical effort.

Having so defined the scope, limitations, and contributions of my project, in the next sections I will outline in detail my contributions about cognitive images and leadership of minds.

6.2. *Cognitive Images: Combination and Clash of Perspectives*

In the central chapters of this dissertation, I have addressed the question whether Plato's images perform a merely illustrative function or actively contribute to the acquisition of knowledge. This problem is crucial for a correct interpretation of the *Statesman* as configuring a dialogical experience about knowledge-acquisition, in agreement with the Stranger's own remarks. Nonetheless, scholars so far have focused in particular on the illustrative function of *paradeigmata*. They have focused, without distinction, on the Stranger's partial example of children that compare letters in simple and complex syllables, guided by the expertise of a teacher; they have considered this example as the central, if not unique, description of how the mind acquires knowledge through images; and have concluded that *paradeigmata* serve as easy-to-grasp terms of comparison that do not provide, on their own, access to new propositions or perspectives. Current scholars, therefore, unanimously hold that imagery, in the *Statesman*, contributes to inquiry only by providing stable and evident examples which, at best, establish a new structure for understanding complex ideas, but they offer no justifications for its validity nor grant novel insights.

My study has demonstrated that this agreement needs to be challenged, for reasons of textual accuracy and conceptual completeness. First, the usage of *paradeigmata* needs to be located in the correct dialogical context, because the Stranger's examples of knowledge acquisition describe the very process of inquiry that the *Statesman* represents. It cannot be understood, then, as a general epistemological or linguistic theory, without mediation. Second, the example of letters is too reductive in comparison to the process it illustrates, and needs to be combined with the other examples provided by the Stranger (visual arts and awakening). Third, the Stranger's usage of imagery is not limited to instruments explicitly named *paradeigmata* (models), but it includes other images variously named as *eikon*, *schema* and *paidia*—or not named at all. This fact suggests that his primary concern is not the definition of a

specific rhetorical figure, but rather the similar impact of all images (analogies, comparisons, metaphors, etc...) on the inquiring mind. I have therefore organised my study of imagery according to three moments of inquiry. First, I have analysed the Stranger's *different* examples of (1) visual arts, (2) awakening from dreams, and (3) juxtaposition of syllables as defining a theory of knowledge-acquisition as a process of (1) combination, (2) variation, and (3) recognition of different images, arguing that it is operative throughout the whole dialogue and never superseded by a definitive acquisition of truth (Chapter 2). Second, I have examined the Stranger's notion of *paidia*, which he uses to denote illusory discourses in the *Sophist* and mythical imagery in the *Statesman*, as a process of either conflation or clash of opposite ideas (Chapter 3). Third, I have sought to unravel the complex workings of mythical imagery in this dialogue, focusing on the image of cosmic balance and analysing its inner articulation (Chapter 4). In this way, I have shown that images, in the *Statesman*, function as heuristic and cognitive instruments.

I have argued that images serve as heuristic instruments thanks to their interaction within a threefold process: (1) combination of different images in a cohesive whole (completion of a work of art); (2) disruptive variation of images and perspectives (awakening); and (3) comparative recognition of similarities (juxtaposition of syllables). The usage of imagery is thus part of an intellectual and dialectical dynamic whereby not only objective similarities are illustrated and transferred from a known object to one less known (3), but incompatible differences evaluated from the appropriate standpoint (2) and finally various perspectives integrated in an all-encompassing account (1). This process does not serve to attain a *definition* of its object: in the *Statesman*, the characters define statecraft, in reciprocal agreement and through *diairesis* of mutually exclusive alternatives, as a directive art for human communities. Images, thus, do not furnish answers to the Socratic question 'what is this?' (τί ἐστί); they are not *heuristic* in relation to the essential nature of an object. Rather, we may say, they reply to the question 'of what kind?' (ὁ ποῖος); they are heuristic in relation to the quality of their object in different contexts and under different respects. This is the theoretical reason why, in this dialogue, statecraft is always examined from distinct perspectives: *as* autonomous production of a good, in accordance with the image of a producer; *as* collective care of a living community, following the model of the herdsman; *as* cooperative construction of a cohesive social fabric, as per the model of the weaver; *as* necessarily imprecise in its legislative function, based on the analogy with a trainer of

gymnastics; and *as* provision of health and safety against detrimental inner conflicts and instabilities, following the images of the doctor and the helmsman. All these images do not serve to provide a conclusive demonstration or linear definition, but rather to achieve a more complex and encompassing conceptual figure of statecraft, without conflating it with any of its partial aspects but allowing for constant intellectual movement through different angles of inquiry.

Images and models, overall, are crucial to knowledge-acquisition as depicted in the *Statesman*, for three reasons. First, it is necessary to recognise that each contextual description of statecraft *works as* an image, a term of comparison through which an object is *seen as* something fundamentally distinct, and which thus orientates the inquiring mind *from a specific perspective*. Second, it is necessary to eschew a twofold lack of measure, either identifying statecraft completely with one of its possible images, or radically falling into disrupting lacks of recognition, complete confusion and radical ‘ignorance’ (ἀγνοεῖν, 277d4) whenever the perspective necessarily changes. Third, it is necessary to combine the various images into a unified figure, recognising their points of conjunction and variation, and judging them within the broader conceptual field they generate. It is necessary to preserve a balanced intellectual dynamism that eschews both reduction to one-sided accounts and dispersion among confusing differences. The *Statesman* thus shows that conceiving different opinions *as images* and *through images* allows the inquiring mind to orientate itself among the complexities of a multifaceted issue and reach a broader, more flexible point of view. Even if it is certainly possible to furnish a different, more literal account of what images represent, the very dynamic movement of intellect and dialectic *through different angles*, the capacity to ‘*see as*’, to conceive an object under different regards without losing track of their fundamental unity, constitutes the irreducible heuristic role of Plato’s imagery.

The mythical *paidia* similarly contributes to knowledge-acquisition, but in a more problematic way. It does not unfold similarities and differences in a discursive process, but rather condenses them within a narrative frame, whereby conceptual distinctions become less evident. Its immediate effect is therefore not one of increased lucidity, but one of puzzled wonder. As a consequence, the interaction of different images within a mythical narration produces a *clash* of contradictory ideas. Nonetheless, this *clash* (συμβάλλειν, 273a1 and 285a5), if recognised correctly, performs in the myth the same function that the *combination* (σύνκρασις, 278d3) of perspectives performs throughout a discursive inquiry, or at least a comparable one. It

must in fact be emphasised that the clash, a trigger of puzzled wonder rather than knowledge, remains more problematic because it is the mark of something that has *not* been sufficiently clarified, or better of the cognitive impossibility of measuring and judging correctly with definitive certainty. Its cognitive contribution remains a positive one, nonetheless, precisely insofar as it brings to light an irreducible ambivalence and it stimulates the cognitive ability to evaluate the same object from opposite angles.

In Chapter 4, I have analysed the clash of the two images of cosmic movement envisaged in the *Statesman*: inner balance of the universe and external guidance of a divine helmsman. Both images represent one and the same figure (σχῆμα, 269a5) of movement, the circular motion of the heavens; and both are culturally associated to the notion of right measure, either as spatial equipoise or timely action; but they also vehicle radically opposed and incompatible ideas about expert guidance. The first image is spatial, focused on the centre of an all-encompassing spherical body, and expresses the notion of *autonomous self-control*. Differently, the second image is temporal, it shifts the attention on the periphery of the universe, including the image of an external space in which the cosmos can founder, and vehicles the idea of a *guiding power* that sustains the universe. The two images, albeit displaying one and the same figure of circularity, are explicitly represented as opposite, because they develop in two opposite directions (ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου, 269a4; cf. ‘ἐναντίαν ὀρμὴν’ 273a2). Plato even represents this opposition as a physical event, a collision that brings about a series of catastrophes on earth. Thus, he draws explicit attention to his carefully constructed clash of incompatible images. He represents the very image of cosmic autonomy not as a given state, but as the delicate and *independent* replication of a former guidance.

The clash of incompatible ideas, ultimately, serves to produce the novel and puzzling notion that autonomy needs to be acquired, that independence is dependent on conditions of measured control, and that wisdom (φρόνησιν, 269d1) and care (ἐπιμέλειαν, 274d5) over oneself consist in the preservation of a delicate tension between opposite drives. This is the philosophical reason of the inherent ambivalence of cosmic imagery in the *Statesman*. On the one hand, the measured movement of wisdom is one and the same, regardless of whether it is imposed from outside or autonomously enacted; on the other, autonomous wisdom can be learned and right measure can be acquired, in a problematic shift that *both* preserves *and* opposes external guidance, because it maintains the external norm but does so in its own way. There is *more* in the image of cosmic revolutions than in the figure of divine guidance, precisely because the

cosmos, material and susceptible of instability, requires to exert a tense internal balance that, alone, allows it to replicate the perfect divine motion in complete autonomy. Once again, Plato is inviting his readers to look at the notion of directive control from two different perspectives, both of which are necessary for the completeness of its conceptual figure.

Images thus perform a heuristic or cognitive function in their dynamic interaction, either as harmonious combination or puzzling clash. Working together, images construct novel conceptual spaces, where the notion of a measured and balancing leadership can be understood in further detail. By presenting images as susceptible of combination and clash, Plato displays his awareness that imagery has a strong cognitive power, which transcends the limit of didactic illustration. This does not mean, however, that images as such have a *privileged* cognitive power. They do not provide, as Pender remarks, any unique or direct access to philosophical knowledge (2000, pp.50-59). In fact, their outcomes, as defined here, could be achieved by a plethora of different linguistic tools: for instance, Plato uses the dialogue form as a way to represent the diversity of points of view and their successful or failed integration; he uses Socratic irony to point out when accepted opinions implicitly clash with each other; and he resorts to Socratic refutation in order to correct the conflict of opinions within the soul, in the same way as he does with images in the *Statesman*. Moreover, the *Statesman* shows that no *single* instrument of inquiry is sufficient, in itself, to attain philosophical knowledge; it rather represents a complex interplay of different methods, including *diairesis*, mythical narration, and imagery. Insofar as *all* linguistic expressions are irreducibly different from the realities they serve to represent, Plato often insists, they are akin to images.²⁹² This general observation holds as much for *diairesis*, debate, irony, and refutation as it does for *paradeigmata*, *eikones*, and *paidia*. Such a generic claim does not coincide with a disqualification of any of those instruments; rather, it means that each of them needs to be understood in its specific potentials and limitations. It could be proven, arguably, that all of them contribute differently to the process of knowledge-acquisition, and function in specific contexts as heuristic tools. Nonetheless, in this occasion, Plato has chosen to achieve this outcome through imagery, as integral part of an educational effort that does not merely aim to instruct but to incite the inquiring mind to consider the same issue from different perspectives, striving to evaluate and combine them as correctly as possible.

²⁹² *Pol.* 277a3-c6. Cf. *Crat.* 439a-b, *Tim.* 19b3-20a1, *Criti.* 106c-108a; *Resp.* X.595a1-608b9; *Phaedr.* 275d4-e6; *Epist.* VII 342a1-344d2.

6.3. *Leadership of Minds: Educating to Inner Balance*

In the first and last chapters of this thesis I have framed my study of imagery within the main subject of the dialogue, namely the correct guidance of human minds based on the principle of right measure. The topic of ethical psychology and of the criteria for its guidance in the *Statesman* has received scant scholarly attention, and its political account has never been connected to the process of education it represents. The presence of psychological elements in the dialogical scene itself, namely in Plato's portrayal of an instance of philosophical guidance, has not hitherto been studied. This limitation, I have argued, is due to the persistent reading of the *Statesman* as a technical methodological dialogue, frequently combined with the opinion that Plato had lost his artistic touch by the time he composed this work. By contrast, I have shown that both Plato's compositional skills and his attention to psychological nuances are crucial to a cohesive interpretation of this dialogue. By studying the structure of the dialogue (Chapter 1) and the consistency between the dialogical scene and its political doctrine (Chapter 5), I have shown that right measure is the underlying philosophical principle of the *Statesman* not only theoretically but also composition-wise. I have thus shown that this dialogue serves to represent, through its composition and dramatic scene, how right measure works as a criterion of cognitive and emotional orientation.

In Chapter 1, I have studied the structure of the *Statesman* in relation to the principle of right measure. First of all, my purpose in this chapter has been to present a clear-cut point of reference for the following analyses, showing how the various images in the *Statesman* are clearly organised according to two opposite paths of inquiry, in agreement with the widely accepted overview established by Diés (1935). I have argued that an accurate understanding of this structure cannot be limited to a formal identification of sections, but needs to be expanded to its philosophical significance. Accordingly, I have demonstrated that the *Statesman* is not only divided, on the macroscopic level, between the inquiry into statecraft as akin to herding (258a7-277a2) and as modelled upon weaving (287b4-311c8) by a central reflection on 'right measure' in philosophical discourses (277a3-287b3), but also by a series of identically structured divisions at more detailed levels. As I have shown, *diairesis* (258a7-268d4) is methodologically distinct from myth (268d5-277a2), and separation of political arts (287b4-305e7) is distinct from the account of statecraft as unification of virtues in the citizens (305e8-311c8). Moreover, each of these moments is split in two by different critical reflections: on the criteria of correct *diairesis* (262a5-263e5); on the ethical

evaluation of apolitical and political lives (272b3-d6); on the relation between expert authority and laws (293e6-300c4); and finally on the criterion that should guide political leadership (308b10-308e3). In every case, we find the same structure of ‘organised disruptions’ (alternative A – critical reflection – alternative B) embedded in different ‘units of meaning’, rather than a linear succession of arguments from premises to conclusions. In addition, Plato has represented this disrupting process as occasionally troublesome, the cause of possible revulsion (286b7; 294a2) against apparent digressions and perceived excesses, precisely because it forces the inquirers to constantly re-evaluate their opinions through various shifts of focus. Right measure *acts* as a practical criterion of evaluation and orientation of mind between contraposed alternatives.

I have thus argued that this structure is philosophically significant because it embeds in the very dialogue the philosophical notion of ‘right measure’, the art of finding ‘the middle’ (τὸ μέσον, 284e7) between contrasting standpoints and formulating correct judgments, which Plato construes as fundamental both to philosophy and to politics. Plato’s choice to represent a dramatic dialogue as opposed to writing a methodological treatise is crucial, because it construes philosophical inquiry as a process that demands frequent disruptions, re-evaluations and corrections of established opinions. The *Statesman* artfully represents the education of Young Socrates’s inquiring mind in resisting the appeal of one-sided, straightforward opinions, and in striving (not always successfully: 272d2-4) to formulate a correct judgment (*krisis*) every time a *critical* difficulty challenges former agreements. By structuring the *Statesman* in this way, Plato has combined his masterful compositional skills and his persistent interest in philosophical education as a dynamic effort of challenging, in a Socratic spirit, preconceived ideas while never renouncing to strive dialectically for the truth.

I have tackled this educational dynamic in deeper detail in Chapter 5, by comparing the educational praxes that Plato has presented in relation to philosophy and politics. I have shown that Plato has represented the educational dialogue between the Stranger and Young Socrates as a toilsome effort (πόνον, 257c10) of mutual acknowledgment of standpoints, whereby the latter character acquires autonomous philosophical insights in the implicit difficulties of the former’s arguments. I have shown, in addition, that the Stranger represents the movement of intellect and discourse, through which he is leading Young Socrates, as *circular* and in need of stability: he envisages digressive discourses as dynamically ‘going round in circles’ (τὰς ἐν κύκλῳ

περιόδους, 286e5), and the inquiring mind (ψυχή, 278c8) either as capable of ‘standing composed’ (συνίσταται, 278d2) or as ‘carried around everything’ (περὶ ἅπαντα [...] φέρεται, *ibid.*) that is said. Plato thus shows awareness that the *Statesman* represents a variety of disruptions and divergent perspectives, inherent to philosophical inquiries and psychologically problematic. In accordance with Plato’s recurring images of the revolving universe, and in particular with the image of a ‘perfectly balanced’ (ἰσορροπώτατον, 270a8) cosmos in the *Statesman*, the educational objective he promotes here is one of inner order of opinions and emotional dispositions, resisting both the dispersive cognitive and emotional thrusts that complicate the attainment of a clear, all-encompassing vision (doubts and perplexities as much as hastiness or revulsion), and the static fixity of one-sided opinions.

Finally, I have argued that Plato envisages the same educational framework as operative in the statesman’s guidance of the citizens’ dispositions. I have observed that, like in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, he construes political constitutions as emerging from a complex network of psycho-physical dispositions, habits and beliefs that influence social dynamics and political institutions (and are influenced by them). In the *Statesman*, however, Plato’s focus rests exclusively on the two opposite forms of life determined by either aggressiveness and courage or mildness and moderation, as he brackets other factors such as desire for money or poetical fascination. Despite these differences in scope, Plato’s framework remains the same: dynamic social interactions are in need of balance (and thus of philosophical guidance) to eschew detrimental hostility (ἔχθραν, 307d4) and find a viable form of ‘concord and friendship’ (ὁμονοία καὶ φιλία, 311b9). I have observed that the image of unbalanced inclinations recurs in Plato’s major political dialogues, the *Republic* and the *Laws*, and argued that in the *Statesman* this model is limited to the mutual counterbalancing of courage and moderation. The Stranger only uses this image once, addressing the souls ‘inclining’ (ρέποντες) towards courage, because his main concern consists in the corrective creation of social bonds among citizens. Nonetheless, the same psychological framework is at work in this dialogue. The Stranger radically separates ideal statecraft from more traditional conceptions of politics in terms of its role of educating the citizens’ minds.

Overall, in the *Statesman* statecraft is a way of communicating autonomous balance to the citizens. This communication is based both on the statesman’s action of ‘drawing together’ (συνάγοντα, 311a1) the subjects, and on the citizens’ inherent

tendency to be ‘carried in opposite directions’ (ἐπὶ τὰ ἐναντία φερομένων, 310a5) by their equally valuable drives. To the Stranger, the ideal political situation is for courageous and moderate citizens to acknowledge that both impulses are equally needed for the city’s autonomy and integrity. The Stranger envisages an ideal situation in which the statesman communicates a permanent (ἀεὶ, 311a2) mutual tension to the citizens, whereby they can learn to enter in constructive partnership (κοινῆ, *ibid.*; κοινωνεῖν, 309e2) and autonomously act, as it were, as mutual counterweights to their potential excesses through a non-antagonistic ‘exchange of opinions’ (δόξαις [...] ἐκδόσεσιν εἰς ἀλλήλους, 310e10-11). His political ideal, radical as it is, is not a naïve appreciation of strict orthodoxy or generic friendliness, but a reflective and well-structured evaluation of the advantages of convergent opinions combined with divergent but not hostile emotional dispositions that can benefit a city. It is an ideal figure of statecraft as practical communication of a well-balanced social cohesion.

I have concluded that Plato has presented in the *Statesman* an ideal figure of statecraft as a constructive leadership of minds that is structurally akin to philosophical guidance. Both are forms of educational guidance that aim to: (1) cure or prevent the ‘malady’ (νόσημα, 283b7; νόσος, 307d7) of detrimental confusion and contrast among opinions and emotional drives; (2) give value to the coexistence of contrasts not as hostile contradiction, but as a kind of ‘game’ (παιδιὰν, 268d8; παιδιὰ, 307d6) that encompasses their opposition; and (3) achieve their cohesive ‘mixture’ (συγκράσεων, 278d3; σύγκρασιν, 308e7). To Plato, in the *Statesman* as much as in the other political dialogues, the inner order of both psychological (cognitive *and* emotional) and social conditions depends on an educational, but not dogmatic, guidance towards a constructive dialectical equilibrium. The right measure of the city ultimately consists in a form of balance to be exercised by the citizens themselves in mutual support.

By contrast with widespread readings of this dialogue and of its political theory as strictly methodological and doctrinal, I submit a novel and more nuanced interpretation of the *Statesman*. Plato has represented here a process of educational communication of right measure. By employing sophisticated compositional techniques and imagery, he has effectively portrayed the dynamics of measured guidance and balanced self-regulation. Thus, he has sought to promote an ideal of genuinely educational praxes that can respond to cognitive and emotional factors, which may threaten as much as enable, *if correctly exercised*, the individual and social attainment of inner balance.

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