

PLATO ON THE UNITY OF THE POLITICAL ARTS

(STATESMAN 258d-259d)

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In Plato's *Statesman*, the Eleatic Visitor argues that the four apparently distinct arts of politics (πολιτική), kingship (βασιλική), slaveholding (δεδουλοτική), and household-management (οικονομική) are in fact one and the same art.¹ Aristotle rejects this thesis in the second sentence of his *Politics* (1252a7-18), and spends the rest of Book One trying to substantiate the rejection.² Siding with Aristotle, recent commentators have judged Plato's argument 'more persuasive than strict', 'extremely weak', or even 'flagrantly invalid'.³ I aim to offer a more charitable interpretation of Plato's argument. After I review the apparent problem in it and consider three inadequate responses, I reconsider Plato's purposes and reconstruct how the argument validly achieves them. My effort will not show that Plato was right and Aristotle wrong, but it will save Plato from failure and clarify what is at issue in their disagreement.

The argument in question comes early in the *Statesman*. The Visitor and young Socrates seek to define the expert citizen or statesman (hereafter, artificially, the 'politician'). They first place their target among the knowers (258b2-6), and then, to begin narrowing their search, they distinguish between practical (πρακτική) and theoretical (γνωστική) knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) (258b7-e7). They agree that theoretical knowledge, such as arithmetic, is disengaged from action, and dedicated to knowing, whereas practical knowledge, such as building, is naturally embedded in action, and brings a body into existence. This prompts an obvious question for their inquiry: is the politician a theoretical knower or a practical knower?⁴

But the Visitor does not ask the obvious question. Instead, he asks,

T1. 258e8-11

Πότερον οὖν τὸν πολιτικὸν καὶ βασιλέα καὶ δεσπότην καὶ ἕτ' οἰκονόμον θήσομεν ὡς ἔν πάντα ταῦτα
προσαγορεύοντες, ἢ τοσαύτας τέχνας αὐτὰς εἶναι φώμεν ὅσαπερ ὀνόματα ἐρρήθη;

Shall we set the politician and king and slaveholder and also the household-manager down as
one thing though we call them all these things [*viz.*, names], or should we say that the arts
themselves are as many as the names they are called by?

So now the Visitor and young Socrates have two tasks. First, they need to determine whether 'politics',
'kingship', 'slaveholding', and 'household-management' name four arts or just one. Second, they need
to determine whether politics is among the theoretical or practical arts.

They apparently try to discharge the first task with just three premises. The Visitor states the
conclusion clearly:

T2. 259c1-4

Οὐκοῦν, ὃ νυνδὴ διεσκοπούμεθα, φανερόν ὡς ἐπιστήμη μία περὶ πάντ' ἐστὶ ταῦτα: ταύτην δὲ εἴτε
βασιλικὴν εἴτε πολιτικὴν εἴτε οἰκονομικὴν τις ὀνομάζει, μηδὲν αὐτῷ διαφερώμεθα.

Thus, with respect to what we were inquiring into just now, it is plain that there is one science
concerning all these things; whether someone names it kingship or politics or household-
management, let us not disagree with him at all.

Similarly clear are the second and third premises:

T3. 259b7-8

Καὶ μὴν οἰκονόμος γε καὶ δεσπότης ταυτόν.

But a household-manager and a slaveholder are the same thing.

T4. 259b9-11

Τί δέ; μεγάλης σχῆμα οἰκίσεως ἢ σμικρᾶς αὖ πόλεως ὄγκος μῶν τι πρὸς ἀρχὴν διοίσειτον;

Οὐδέν.

Well then, will the apparent character of a large household differ at all from the bulk of small city as far as rule is concerned?

Not at all.

There is room for quibbling about what exactly the Visitor and young Socrates agree to here, let alone whether they *should* so agree. But in light of the intended conclusion, it seems best to take these premises to be that the arts of household-management and slaveholding are the same and the arts of household-management and politics are the same. Then, if the first premise identifies the art of kingship with one of the others, the Visitor and young Socrates could draw their conclusion that all four arts are one and the same.

Unfortunately, the passage where the first premise should be does not identify kingship with one of the others. Instead, the Visitor and young Socrates say this:

T5. 259a1-b6

εἴ τῷ τις τῶν δημοσιευόντων ἰατρῶν ἱκανὸς συμβουλεύειν ἰδιωτεύων αὐτός, ἄρ' οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον αὐτῷ προσαγορεύεσθαι τοῦνομα τῆς τέχνης ταῦτόν ὅπερ ᾧ συμβουλεύει;

Ναί.

Τί δ'; ὅστις βασιλεύοντι χώρας ἀνδρὶ παραινεῖν δεινὸς ἰδιώτης ὢν αὐτός, ἄρ' οὐ φήσομεν ἔχειν αὐτὸν τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἣν ἔδει τὸν ἄρχοντα αὐτὸν κεκτηθῆσθαι;

Φήσομεν.

Ἄλλὰ μὴν ἢ γε ἀληθινοῦ βασιλέως βασιλική;

Ναί.

Ταύτην δὲ ὁ κεκτημένος οὐκ, ἄντε ἄρχων ἄντε ἰδιώτης ὢν τυγχάνη, πάντως κατὰ γε τὴν τέχνην αὐτὴν βασιλικὸς ὀρθῶς προσρηθήσεται;

Δίκαιον γοῦν.

If someone who is himself private is able to advise one of the public doctors, mustn't the same name of the art be applied to him as to the one he advises?⁵

Yes.

Well, shall we not say that the one who is clever at helping the king of a country, though he is himself a private individual, has the knowledge which the ruler needed to have?

We shall say that.

But the knowledge that belongs to the true king is kingship?

Yes.

And the person who possesses this, whether he happens to rule or to be a private citizen, will be addressed with perfect correctness as an expert in kingship, on account of the art itself?

That is just.

In other words, just as whether one holds the office of public doctor is irrelevant to whether one has the public doctor's art, so too, whether one is actually a king is irrelevant to whether one has the art of kingship.

This is plainly not enough to deliver the conclusion of the argument. If we read very charitably, we have the following premises and conclusion:

(P1) One can possess the art of kingship without being a king.

(P2) The art of household-management = the art of slaveholding.

(P3) The art of household-management = the art of politics.

(C) The art of household-management = the art of slaveholding = the art of politics = the art of kingship.

As Cooper says, 'It flies in your face that the conclusion does not follow (and never mind whether all or any of the premises are true)',⁶

Recent scholarship offers two ways of covering up this embarrassment. Cooper himself argues that Plato *intentionally* gives us a ‘flagrantly invalid’ argument ‘to place and hold a question mark over’ the claim that politics and kingship are the same art.⁷ On his view, the identity of expert politics and expert kingship is the central thesis, and ‘the other two alleged equivalents are brought in solely... as camouflage.’⁸ Cooper explains, ‘To any Greek reader the supposition that what a king needs to know is precisely the same thing that a statesman does—a *politikos*, one who knows how to rule in a polis, a free, self-ruling community—must have been, to put it mildly, a great provocation.’⁹ The flagrantly invalid argument helps us to place a question-mark over this identification, and thus prepares us for the rest of the dialogue, in which, or so Cooper argues, Plato first over-inflates the expert statesman into a king and then deflates a king into an expert statesman. So, as Cooper explains, ‘the initial identification of the expert statesman and king really paves the way for a reduction of kingship to statesmanship—not the other way around, as first appears.’¹⁰

I doubt that our argument is supposed to be ‘flagrantly invalid’. First, Cooper’s Plato seems a bit confused. This author advances a ‘great provocation’ and yet also designs an invalid argument so that readers will question the great provocation. But is the invalidity really necessary? I would have thought that great provocations bring their own question-marks. Also, Cooper’s Plato offers a flagrantly invalid argument so that his readers question its central conclusion, and yet he also takes care to camouflage the central conclusion. But if one were designing a *flagrantly* invalid argument to make a point, why would one want to add *camouflage*? I would have thought that the flagrant do not hide.¹¹ What is more, Cooper’s Plato wants to provoke great skepticism about the identification of the political and the kingly arts though he ultimately means to defend the identity. I understand why he would want to raise questions about one way of understanding the identification, but what does he gain by making the very idea seem like a non-starter? I would have thought that Plato would not want to stack the deck against himself.

But these concerns do not unearth the roots of my disagreement with Cooper. My second general reason for rejecting Cooper's interpretation is that he has misdiagnosed the real challenge of the argument. Cooper thinks the provocation is to identify expert kingship and expert politics. That strikes me as the easy part. The hard part is to identify the public arts of kingship and politics, on the one hand, with the private arts of household-management and slaveholding, on the other.

Cooper is of course right that the Greeks saw an enormous gulf between Athenian politics and the Persian king, but the Visitor does not encourage us to think of Athenians and the Great King. When members of the Athenian elite talk about kingship, they need not have the Persian king in mind. They might instead have the Spartan kings in mind (e.g., *Alc. I* 120e-124a), or merely some possible, ideal kings (e.g., the *Republic*). Moreover, when they want to refer to the Persian king, they can pick him out explicitly as 'the great king' (ὁ μέγας βασιλεύς) (e.g., Plato, *Lys.* 209d6). So we should not think that bare talk of a king in the *Statesman* necessarily calls the Persian king to mind. In fact, the Visitor has called our attention away from ordinary Athenians and Persian kings, because he asks us to focus on 'knowers' or experts. In the *Euthydemus*, which similarly focuses on knowledge, Socrates reports to Crito that he and young Cleinias 'thought that the politician's art and the kingly art were the same' (291c4-5), and there is no hint that either Cleinias or Crito found this controversial. Nor should it be controversial, at least if we are accepting some Socratic assumptions. Whether there is one political ruler or many, the art political rulers should have is wisdom, and it should benefit the ruled. Of course, in the *Statesman*, the conversation is being led not by Socrates but by the Eleatic Visitor, and while we might be prepared for an intellectual from Elea to over-unify things, we cannot assume that he has Socratic thoughts in mind. Still, Socrates is hovering nearby, and the Visitor and young Socrates have quickly agreed to focus not on what actual statesmen or politicians do but on the expert.¹²

What Cooper dismisses as mere 'camouflage' is the harder part, of identifying the private with the public arts. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates proposes that rhetoric is the same art whether it works in

public, in the Assembly and lawcourts, or in private (261a7-b5), and Phaedrus expresses surprise. In the *Statesman*, the Visitor might hint that this identification of public and private is more difficult when he first raises the question (at T2), since he uses ‘also’ (ἔτι) to emphasize whether *household-management* should be joined to the others. In any case, the only premises that the Visitor develops concern the possible distinction between private and public arts. Plainly, then, this is the objection that he is most concerned to fend off. A wider view begins to explain why, since there is in Greek political ideology a strong contrast between those who engage in politics and those who live a private or quiet life. The latter are ridiculed as ‘useless’, ‘unmanly’, ‘fools’, and ‘nobodies to their friends’.¹³ Plato’s *Meno* gives voice to this ideology when he identifies the virtue of a man as ‘being able to do the business of the city, and by doing this to benefit his friends and harm his enemies’ (*M.* 71e2-4) and then assigns ‘managing the household well’ to the virtue of a woman (*M.* 71e6-7). Later in the *Statesman*, the Visitor explains how hostility arises in a city between those committed to living the ‘quiet life’ and those who favor the vigorously engaged life (307d-308b). But the ideological conflict is not inevitable. Socrates challenges the ideology when he insists that he, a private citizen who has minimized his engagement in politics (*Ap.* 23b, 31d-32a), is one of few Athenians, if not the only one, to try to practice the true political art (*Gorg.* 521d6-8).¹⁴ It is similarly provocative to say that those who are expert household-managers and slaveholders have the same knowledge as those who are expert kings and statesmen.¹⁵

So let us consider a second response to the Visitor’s argument. The argument lacks a premise identifying the arts of politics and kingship. Two scholars have independently proposed rectifying this by moving three lines of text.¹⁶ In the manuscripts, the lines come at the very end of our passage, just before the Visitor suggests that they make a second division, between two kinds of theoretical knowledge. But the movers, and they include the editors of the most recent Oxford Classical Texts

edition, propose to place these lines between the first two premises of the argument, (T₅) and (T₃).

Here they are:

T6. 259d4-6

Τὴν ἄρα πολιτικὴν καὶ πολιτικὸν καὶ βασιλικὴν καὶ βασιλικὸν εἰς ταῦτόν ὡς ἔν πάντα ταῦτα

συνθήσομεν;⁷

Δῆλον.

So shall we place all these things—the political art, the expert politician, the kingly art, and the expert king—into the same thing [*viz.*, category] as one thing?

Clearly.

Cooper calls the decision to move these lines ‘a stunning example of editorial hubris and ignorance’.¹⁸

Those are not my words, but I tend to agree. There needs to be outstanding reason to move text around: problems had better get solved. Unfortunately, this particular move solves no problem and creates a new one.

It creates a problem by depriving our passage of its effective conclusion. Recall that the Visitor and young Socrates have two tasks. They reach their conclusion for the first task in (T₂), agreeing that the arts of politics, kingship, household-management, and slaveholding are the same, and then they take up the second task by considering whether this single political art is theoretical or practical (259c6-d3). To do this, they agree that ‘any king’—that is, anyone with the single political art that can be called the kingly art—has power that resides not in his (own) hands but in his mind (259c6-9), and so the art of kingship must be theoretical (259c10-d3). This reasoning, even more than the reasoning for the first task, treats the agent who possesses the art as nothing but the art itself, embodied. That is why inferences can be made from what the artful king does to the nature of kingship (and *vice versa*).¹⁹ The completion of the second task also sets up the double conclusion that the apparently various political arts are all one and the same art *and* that this one art belongs to the category of theoretical

arts. The passage that some scholars want to move—(T6)—states this double conclusion, concentrating on just politics and kingship: these arts belong to the same category (they are theoretical knowledge) as one art.²⁰ If (T6) is moved, there is no clear conclusion to the two tasks the Visitor and young Socrates took up before the Visitor introduces a further division within theoretical knowledge.

But perhaps the more serious problem with moving (T6) is that it does not help the Visitor's argument. Notice that (T6) offers an inference ($\alpha\rho\alpha$). In its original location, it is clear how: (T6) completes the Visitor's two tasks by drawing together the two conclusions into one, validly inferring the claim $p \ \& \ q$ from the claims p and q . In its new home, however, what are the grounds in (T5), about a private individual having the same knowledge that a public doctor or king needs, for (T6)? Let us consider this dilemmatically. Either (T5) gives good grounds for (T6) or it does not. If it does not, then moving (T6) hardly helps the Visitor's cause. Yes, the Visitor now has a premise he needs to infer that the arts of politics, kingship, household-management, and slaveholding are the same, but unfortunately, he infers that premise invalidly. One invalidity has replaced another. What if, on the other hand, (T5) gives good grounds for (T6)? In this case, we do not need to move (T6) at all. If (T5) warrants the conclusion that the kingly and political arts are the same, then we can give the Visitor this as an *implicit* premise to get to his desired conclusion.

The possibility of an implicit premise offers a third approach to the argument. If we prefer not to call the argument flagrantly invalid for dubious gain and prefer not to shuffle the text for no gain, then perhaps we should try to extract from (T5) the grounds for an implicit claim that the kingly and political arts are the same. This would give the Visitor a valid argument:

(P1) Politics = kingship (assumed to be implicit in T5)

(P2) Household-management = slaveholding (T3)

(P3) Household-management = politics (T4)

Thus, (C) Politics = kingship = household-management = slaveholding. (T2)

The initial difficulty with this approach is that there is no explicit mention in (T5) of the expert politician or the art of politics at all.²¹ But one might think that the implicit identity does not require any explicit mention of the expert politician. The Visitor does ask, ‘Well, shall we not say that the one who is clever at helping the king of a country, though he is himself a private individual, has the knowledge which the ruler (ἄρχοντα) needed to have?’ (259a6-8) Here, the word ‘ruler’ plainly refers to the same person the word ‘king’ refers to, but in other contexts, the same word easily refers to people who are not kings but regular politicians, holding office in the city. One might think that the Visitor’s word choice reflects the casual identification of the political art with the art of kingship. And if (T5) casually assumes that the political art and the art of kingship are the same, (T4) would, too, with the use of ‘rule’ (ἄρχῆν, 259b10).

There are two problems with this interpretation. First, it renders the argument valid but very weak. The first premise is not articulated, and the second is *merely* articulated. Only the third premise gets supported by reasoning (in T4). But if you were inclined to doubt that the arts of politics, kingship, house-hold management, and slaveholding were one and the same, you should easily be able to continue doubting after learning in (T4) that the largest households and smallest cities were similarly sized. Second, there is a lot going on in (T5) beyond any implicit identification of the arts of kingship and politics. The central point of (T5) is that someone can possess the art of kingship without being a king. A better interpretation of the Visitor’s argument would explain this; it would explain what the Visitor says in making the argument and not merely what the Visitor assumes.

So I turn now to a fourth approach to the argument. I propose that we start by attending to the two points that the Visitor actually develops, in (T5) and (T4). In these passages, the Visitor addresses reasons a person might have for distinguishing between the public arts of politics and kingship and the private arts of household-management and slavery. You might think, with Meno, that

there is a significant gulf between the manly sphere of the polis and the womanly sphere of the household. Or you might think that what politicians and kings do diverges sharply from what household managers and slaveholders do. In (T₅), the Visitor focuses our attention not on what these various agents do but on what they know, and he insists that a person who is a private citizen can know what a public doctor or king needs to know. A private citizen cannot do what a public doctor or king can do. Nor, one might worry, can they have all the know-how that is embedded in what a public doctor or king does. But they can nonetheless know things the public doctor or king needs to know, things that could be communicated by an advisor to an advisee before any action. For the public doctor or king needs to know what their goals are, and they must know about how, broadly, to achieve those goals, quite apart from any particular actions. Moreover, nothing prevents a private citizen from acquiring knowledge about how to promote health or how to rule so as to promote the well-being of citizens. With this reasoning, the Visitor has not established that an expert household-manager and an expert politician share the same expertise. But he has removed two reasons one might have for doubting this, both Meno's about the difference between the manly polis and the womanly household and the appeal to divergent actions. Then, with (T₄), the Visitor removes a third reason for doubt. You might think that the civic arts differ from the household ones because cities are larger than households, but this, as the Visitor points out in (T₄), is false.

On this fourth approach to the argument, the Visitor is primarily exercised to show that the public and private arts are the same. He and his interlocutors nowhere doubt that the arts of politics and kingship are the same, and they can take this identity for granted in (T₅) and especially (T₄). In (T₃), he baldly claims that the arts of household-management and slaveholding are the same. But in (T₅) and (T₄), he does not merely assume or assert. He works to bridge the gap between the pair of arts concerned with the business of the polis and the pair concerned with the business of the household. Moreover, on this interpretation, the Visitor is primarily intent on bridging this gap by

turning away from particular actions of ruling, on which the four arts differ, and toward some general knowledge of how to rule, on which the four arts might agree. This explains why he turns immediately from the implicit question of whether the expert statesman is a theoretical or practical knower to the explicit question of whether the arts of politics, kingship, slaveholding, and household-management are the same (T1).²² To answer the question about theoretical and practical knowledge, the Visitor needs to give greater content to his rough distinction between these kinds of knowledge, and to do that, the Visitor uses his argument for identity. This argument draws attention to the ‘theoretical’ knowledge shared by the political arts, knowledge not about particular actions but about what the goals of ruling human beings are and how, generally, to realize those goals. So understood, the Visitor is simultaneously preparing for the conclusion that the four arts are one and the conclusion that this one art is ‘theoretical’.

But this interpretation faces an objection. One might put the four premises I have attributed to the Visitor like this:

- (P1) Whether a person is a public official or not is not significant to whether they know what an expert public official knows. (T5)
- (P2) Household-management = slaveholding. (T3)
- (P3) Whether the number of people managed is large or small is not significant to whether one has the art of managing people. (T4)
- (P4) Politics = kingship (assumed)

The problem is that these four premises are still quite far from the conclusion, in (T2), that the two private arts of household-management and slaveholding are the same as the two public arts of politics and kingship. The argument needs first to leap from (P1) and (P3) to

- (C*) There is no significant difference between a private political art such as household-management and slaveholding and a public political art such as politics and kingship.

Then, the argument needs to leap again, from (C*), (P₂), and (P₄) to

(C) Politics = kingship = household-management = slaveholding. (T₂)

But both of these inferences seem to be problematic.²³

The second inference is not problematic.²⁴ The reasoning from (C*) to (C) moves from ‘there is no significant difference between X and Y’ to ‘X=Y’. This inference needs some premise or inference-rule according to which if X and Y differ only in insignificant ways, they are identical. This would be nonsense on some conceptions of identity. But the Visitor is plainly not saying that the four political arts are identical in every particular but only that they are essentially the same. For that, it will do to show that there are no essential differences among them. So there should be no difficulty in attributing to the Visitor the general premise or inference-rule he needs.

The first inference, from (P₁) and (P₃) to (C*), by contrast, looks like a hasty generalization. The Visitor has addressed three possible differences between private and public political arts.²⁵ It would be mad to attribute to him the premise that these are the *only* differences. So if we want the Visitor’s argument to manifest textbook deductive validity, we must think him crazy. But this just shows the limited utility of deduction and the importance of other models of inferential validity. It is true that the Visitor is committed to all the differences between public and political arts being insignificant. But he cannot make good on this commitment exhaustively; he can, in his limited time, make good on it only for some obvious differences. Whether this suffices to show that (C*) is plausible *to us* depends upon whether *we* can think of other differences that are significant. Whether, that is, the argument succeeds as an argument depends upon what reasons we can adduce for doubting its conclusion.²⁶

Exactly here Aristotle shoulders the burden to register his disagreement with Plato. He argues that it is not the *number* of persons managed but the *kinds* of persons managed that matter to the distinction between household-management and city-management (*Politics I passim*). Plato has

conceded that *the actions* in relation to a slave or child differ from those in relation to fellow-citizens, but he insists that the expert rulers of human beings—whether slaves or free, whether in the household or in the city—must know what the goal of ruling is and generally how to achieve those goals, which includes knowing what is good for human beings. So Plato is insisting that expert rulers of human beings, whether in the household or the city, must have the same knowledge of what is good for human beings. Aristotle, by contrast, thinks that what is good for a slave, a child, or a woman is not exhausted by considerations of what is good for a human being. He thinks that what is good for man, what is good for a woman, what is good for a slave, and what is good for a child differ. The Visitor does not make any case for his Socratic assumption, and this makes his argument vulnerable to Aristotle's rejoinder.

But the Visitor is not exactly undone by this rejoinder. Aristotle's distinctions are uncomfortably close to Meno's, including his sharp contrast between the manly world of politics and the womanly world of the household, and his appeals to the different natures of slaves and women are disappointing. The Visitor can agree with Aristotle that *children* are something different, but this difference does not underwrite a distinction between the public arts of ruling and the private ones, since nothing is more important to politics than the education of children (308b-309d; cf. *Rep.* IV 423d-e).

We might find a better way to resist the Visitor's argument by insisting that the knowledge of what ruling's goals are and how, generally, ruling can achieve those goals is not enough to characterize what politics is, because the essence of politics is trapped in its practical particularities.²⁷ Later in the *Statesman*, the Visitor might even seem to support this case against himself. He favors the expert ruler who is not constrained by laws (293c5-e6) and who always knows the right time to begin the most important things in cities (305c10-d5). Such a person rules to the needs of particulars, and is not limited to general, systematic knowledge.

But this misses what really distinguishes expert politicians or kings from the pretenders to this title. What matters here is not knowledge embedded in action, learned by experience. Rather, it is wisdom about the goals of ruling.²⁸ This is a familiar Platonic lesson, very clear in Socrates' distinction between the art of politics and Gorgianic rhetoric (*Gorg.* 464b-466a). At least Socrates tries to do what expert politicians would do, to foster well-being in other citizens. Gorgias and his followers ignore what is good for human beings, but instead develop a knack to craft pleasing speeches so that they can manipulate audiences and satisfy their own desires for power and wealth.

Wisdom about the goals of ruling matters even when the Visitor is sharply distinguishing the fully expert ruler who rules without constraint from all the pretenders who live in cities without perfectly expert rulers (291a-303d). In the midst of this discussion, the Visitor makes a case for the rule of law as an achievable second-best between the zenith of expert rule unconstrained by law and the nadir of inept rule unconstrained by law (297d-300c). He insists that it is disastrous to flout even the laws made on the advice of those who please and persuade the masses (300b1-6). But he does not deny that there are better and worse cities that lack fully expert rule, or even that there are laws that more and less closely imitate expertise (300e-301e). For better laws, we need better advisors, who do not merely gratify those they seek to persuade. But these better advisors are better not by their practical knowledge of exactly what to do in particular circumstances but by their general knowledge about what is good for human beings, and they are better whether they hold political office or are private citizens. To find progress in a world without perfectly expert rulers, we need to look for politics defined principally by the general knowledge of what benefits human beings, the politics which unifies the political arts at the start of the *Statesman*.²⁹

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¹ I cite Robinson's text in E.A. Duke et al. (eds.), *Platonis Opera*, vol. 1 ['OCT'] (Oxford, 1995), and translations are mine, with borrowings from C.J. Rowe (ed.), *Plato: Statesman* [*Statesman*] (Warminster, 1995) and J. Annas and R. Waterfield (eds.), *Plato: Statesman* [*Statesman*] (Cambridge, 1995). 'Kingship' might seem an inappropriately gendered rendering, but the interlocutors of the *Statesman* seem to have the patriarchal world around them firmly in view throughout. Note that the Visitor introduces their topic as a search for the 'political man' (πολιτικὸν ἄνδρα, 258b3) and saves 'monarchy' for limited use (291d1-5). Cf. P. Kleingeld, 'The Problematic Status of Gender-Neutral Language in the History of Philosophy: The Case of Kant', *Philosophical Forum* 25 (1993), 134-150.

² See also *Pol.* III 6 1278b30-1279a21, *EN* VIII 10 1160b22-1161a9, and *EE* 1241b27-40. There should be no doubt that Aristotle has our passage in his sights at 1252a7-9. Contrast P.L.P. Simpson, *A Philosophical Commentary on the Politics of Aristotle* (Chapel Hill, 1998), 16n4. Simpson suggests that Aristotle might have had Xenophon's *Memorabilia* III 4 in mind, though Xenophon's Socrates compares the household-manager, chorus-leader, and general. (That the household-manager's knowledge is the same as the politician's is only implied at III 4.6 and III 4.12). Simpson also points to passages in the *Politics* in which Aristotle opposes anonymous thinkers who identify politics and slaveholding or politics and money-making or kingship and slaveholding or household-management and slaveholding, though, of course, nothing suggests that any of these anonymous persons identified the four arts of politics, kingship, slaveholding, and household-management, which is what Aristotle targets at 1252a7-9. Simpson does not mention it, but Aristotle might have had the Platonic *Lovers* 137b-139a in mind. I am uncertain about the authorship of the *Lovers*, which is generally judged to be spurious but without any knockdown arguments in favor of that judgment. Cf. S. Peterson, 'Notes on *Lovers*', in A. Stavru and C. Moore (eds.), *Socrates and the Socratic Dialogue* (Leiden, 2017), 412-431. I am, however, confident that even if Aristotle had *Lovers* 137b-139a in mind, he was definitely responding to *Statesman* 258d-259d, as well.

- 3 In order, Rowe, *Statesman*, ad 258e11; M. Schofield, *Plato: Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 2006), 167; and J.M. Cooper, 'Plato's Statesman and Politics' ['Politics'], in *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton, 1999), 165-191 at 169. There is not much discussion of this argument in M.H. Miller, Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman* (The Hague, 1980), S. Rosen, *Plato's Statesman: The Web of Politics [Web]* (New Haven, 1995), M.S. Lane, *Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman [Method]* (Cambridge, 1998), or the many contributions in C.J. Rowe (ed.), *Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III Symposium Platonicum* (Sankt Augustin, 1995), although several contributors note the argument's anticipation of 292e-293a. See C.J. Rowe, 'Introduction', 11-28 at 14-15 with 25; M. Dixsaut, 'Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature', 253-273 at 257, U. Hirsch, 'Μιμίεσθαι und verwandte Ausdrücke in Platons *Politikos*', 184-189 at 188, and P. Accattino, 'L'ἀρχή del *Politico*', 201-212 at 203.
- 4 It also prompts less obvious questions about the distinction itself. First, one might think that some arts are naturally embedded in actions but do not bring a body into existence. Medicine, for instance, brings health to a body, but does not bring a new body into existence. Is an art like this theoretical or practical? Second, one might wonder about expertise that combines an art of management with an art of manual activity, an expertise that a construction foreman might possess. I bracket these questions insofar as possible in this essay, and proceed with the rough distinction that the Visitor draws.
- 5 Two readings of this have been proposed. According to one, the advisor is a doctor in private practice and the advisee is a special public doctor appointed by the Athenian assembly (see Plato, *Gorg.* 455b and Xenophon, *Mem.* IV 2.5, with E.R. Dodds (ed.), *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford, 1959), ad 455b2 and J.B. Skemp, *Plato's Statesman* (New Haven, 1952), 124n1). Alternatively, the advisor is an amateur who knows medicine and the advisee a publicly recognized doctor (cf. *Gorg.* 514d-e, with L. Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato [Politicus]* (Oxford, 1867), ad 259b). I have tried to translate neutrally; for my purposes, either will do.

- ⁶ Cooper, 'Politics', 170n7.
- ⁷ Cooper, 'Politics', 169-170.
- ⁸ Cooper, 'Politics', 168.
- ⁹ Cooper, 'Politics', 168-169.
- ¹⁰ Cooper, 'Politics', 172.
- ¹¹ Cooper might mean that *Plato* wants the invalidity to be flagrant but lets the *Visitor* hide or even miss the invalidity behind what is to young Socrates or even to himself camouflage (cf. Cooper 'Politics', 169). There still seems a problem for Plato's aims in this more baroque interpretation.
- ¹² See also R. Weiss, 'Statesman as ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΩΝ: Caretaker, Physician, and Weaver', in C.J. Rowe (ed.), *Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III Symposium Platonicum* (Sankt Augustin, 1995), 213-222.
- ¹³ By, respectively, Pericles, in Thucydides' version of his funeral oration (Thuc. II 40.2), the philosophically withdrawn father's nagging wife in Plato's *Republic* (549d6), those around that same man's son (550a3), and Zethus, in the fragments of Euripides' *Antiope* (fr. 187 TGF).
- ¹⁴ See J.C. Shaw, 'Socrates and the True Political Craft', *Classical Philology* 106 (2011), 187-207.
- ¹⁵ See E. Brown, 'False Idles: The Politics of the "Quiet Life" in Greek and Roman Antiquity', in R. Balot (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Political Thought* (Oxford, 2009), 485-500.

- ¹⁶ See F.H. Sandbach, 'Five Textual Notes' ['Notes'], *Illinois Classical Studies* 2 (1977), 49-53, and D. Robinson, 'The New *Oxford Text* of Plato's *Statesman*: Editor's Comments' ['Comments'], in C.J. Rowe (ed.), *Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III Symposium Platonicum* (Sankt Augustin, 1995), 37-46 at 41 with 37n1. (Robinson's proposal is enshrined in Duke et al., *OCT*, and in Annas and Waterfield, *Statesman*.) Although Sandbach and Robinson propose moving three different lines, the difference is trivial. They both want to move the Stranger's sentence at 259d4-5 (using the lines numbers in Duke et al., *OCT*). Sandbach would also move the preceding response from young Socrates and locate 259d3-5 immediately after 259b5. Robinson also moves the following response from young Socrates and locates 259d4-6 immediately after 259b6. Sandbach ('Notes', 51) reasons that *Δίκαιον γοῦν* (at 259b6) is an unparalleled and infelicitous response to a question concerning whether something is said *ὀρθῶς*, since 'to say anything *ὀρθῶς* *must* be *δίκαιον*'. This seems to me to fear redundancy more than Plato in fact did, and above I consider Robinson's proposal. But nothing philosophically important hinges on this particular difference. Nor does much hinge on the emendations that Sandbach ('Notes', 51-2) proposes for the would-be-moved text (for which see the next note).
- ¹⁷ Sandbach ('Notes', 51-52) suggests two emendations. First, he notes that manuscript T lacks *καὶ* before *πολιτικόν* and *βασιλικόν* and suggests bracketing *καὶ πολιτικόν* and *καὶ βασιλικόν*, since if the archetype lacked *καὶ πολιτικόν* and *καὶ βασιλικόν*, *πολιτικόν* and *βασιλικόν* could have crept in from explanatory marginalia (explaining T) and then conjunctions would have been added to 'correct' the error in T (explaining B and W). Second, citing conversation with Richard Hackforth, he troubles about *ὡς ἔν πάντα ταῦτα* since 'even if four terms precede it there are in reality only two entities to be identified', and so he suggests that 'the phrase had been wrongly repeated' from (T₁), 'as an explanation of *εἰς ταῦτόν συνθήσομεν*'. This is more worrying than there needs to be, as I argue in what follows.
- ¹⁸ Cooper, 'Politics', 168n4.

- ¹⁹ Sandbach's worries about (T6) (see note 17) miss the way in which the argument before 259d₅ licenses the identification of an artist with his art, in part because Sandbach has committed himself to moving the crucial question in (T6).
- ²⁰ Cooper ('Politics', 168n4) sees the double conclusion clearly, and Waterfield (in Annas and Waterfield, *Statesman*) translates (T6) for the double conclusion but unfortunately misplaces it. Rowe, *Statesman*, under-translates εἰς ταῦτόν... συνθήσομεν in (T6): 'In that case shall we put all these things together—the statesman's knowledge and the statesman, the king's knowledge and the king—as one, and regard them as the same?' For εἰς ταῦτόν... συνθήσομεν, Cooper ('Politics', 168n4) aptly cites 276e2 and the related parallels of 260e6, 263d7-8, 266e9, 281c9-d1. Julia Annas has insisted to me that these parallels are not relevant, since there is a difference between εἰς ταῦτόν... συνθήσομεν and εἰς ταῦτόν ὡς ἓν... συνθήσομεν. On this view, which supports Rowe's rendering, εἰς ταῦτόν ὡς ἓν... συνθήσομεν is just an especially elaborate way of saying that we will consider these arts to be the same. I think that this way of parsing the Greek is possible, but I do not see that it is mandatory. And Rowe's rendering makes (T6) repeat the conclusion in (T2) needlessly, as Cooper ('Politics', 168n4) notes. Rowe (*Statesman*, ad 259d₃₋₄) pretends otherwise, saying that (T2) established 'the identity of kingship and statesmanship' whereas (T6) 'confirms the identity of kingship and statesmanship with the knowledge which the true king/statesman will possess' since now it is clear that 'kingship/statesmanship is a matter of knowledge only'. But this defense misrepresents (T2) and confuses the issue of identifying the arts of kingship and statesmanship (done in [T2]) and identifying the single art of kingship or statesmanship as a theoretical art (only done in [T6], and only if we parse εἰς ταῦτόν... συνθήσομεν and ὡς ἓν as making distinct points).

- ²¹ I am thus confused by Sandbach's ('Notes', 51) assertion that 'the preceding argument [that is, before 259b5 and so in (T5)] has shown that πολιτικός is equivalent to βασιλικός.' But I am grateful to an anonymous referee, Anne Baril, and Billy Dunaway for encouraging me to take this reading more seriously.
- ²² So, too, Campbell, *Politicus*, ad 258e.
- ²³ Cooper would lodge a third complaint, as he thinks the Visitor cannot assume the identity of expert kingship and politics without begging the question ('Politics', 168n4). But whether an argument begs the question depends upon what question it is addressing. I have argued that the Visitor is not concerned to show that kingship and politics are identical. He is instead concerned to show that the public and private political arts are the same. He does not beg *that* question by assuming the identity of kingship and politics. Cooper would surely insist that the rest of the *Statesman* raises questions about whether kingship and politics really are identical. I doubt this. The Visitor takes care to characterize kingship correctly, swapping out the herdsman king in favor of the weaver king, and thus distinguishing kingship from tyranny. (See especially R. Blondell, 'From Fleece to Fabric: Weaving Culture in Plato's *Statesman*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 28 (2005), 23-75.) But the Visitor does not stop talking about kings and kingship, and he uses this talk interchangeably with talk of the politician and political art he is trying to define (e.g., 289c4-d2, 291c3-7, 303e7-304a4, 305c10-d5). It is clear enough why he does this: he continues to insist that knowledge alone makes someone an expert ruler (e.g., 292e9-293a1, 293c5-d2) and that this knowledge is rare, limited to a few politicians or a single king (297b7-c4).
- ²⁴ For help focusing on these two inferences, I'm indebted to Keith McPartland.
- ²⁵ The first premise, recall, addresses two differences, one rooted in the shift from private to public and the other rooted in practical differences.

- ²⁶ I am suggesting, then, that we treat the Visitor's argument as a case of non-monotonic reasoning. He is adducing reasons for (C*) and thus for inferring (C), but the addition of further considerations could defeat (C*) and thus (C).
- ²⁷ Cf. Rosen, *Web*, 21, and Lane, *Method*, 140.
- ²⁸ With my concluding reflections, cf. D. El Murr, 'Politics and Dialectic in Plato's *Statesman*', *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 25 (2009), 109-135, and *Savoir et Gouverner: Essai sur la science politique platonicienne* (Paris, 2014).
- ²⁹ I thank the students in my Spring 2005 Plato course, and especially Amy and Don Goodman-Wilson, for their reactions to the first version of this material; I thank the conferees at the February 2009 Fourteenth Annual Arizona Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy, and especially my commentator Joel Martinez, for their comments on a second draft; I thank Dimitri El Murr for encouragement; I thank the members of Washington University's Workshop in Politics, Ethics, and Society, and especially my commentator Jason Gardner, for their feedback in September 2010; and I thank Anne Baril, Anne Margaret Baxley, Billy Dunaway, Eric Wiland, two anonymous referees, and Victor Caston for helpful criticisms of the penultimate draft.