

Cultivating Virtue:

A study into education and the political theories in classical Athens

Submitted by Nicholas Edward Baker to the University of Exeter

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with understanding the relevance of education to good leadership within the political writings of fifth and fourth century Athenian thinkers. I ask why education became such a universal component to the works of post-Socratic thinkers. What specifically were the lessons or skills that were seen to be so important to competent ruling and how might a society be designed in order to cultivate those lessons within its leadership? To address these questions, the thesis will assess the works of Xenophon, with particular attention given to the *Cyropaedia*, Isocrates and Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*.

I propose that as a result of Athenian theatre and the rise of sophist teachings, especially in the fifth century, education came to be acknowledged as important to democracy and leadership. As a result, by the close of the fifth century, Athenian thinkers considered how education could be used to create good and even idealised leadership. I argue that for all our sources, leaders needed actively to learn the needs of their society and how to control their own desires and ambitions in order to rule in the best interests of all. I show that while different thinkers approach this idea from slightly different positions or by using different terminology, they maintain this common notion that education was relevant to leadership. It is within the question of how best to cultivate these lessons in society, that our sources begin to demonstrate more difference. Yet I will demonstrate how all our thinkers design meritocracies based around one's mastery of moderation and social awareness. They all establish hierarchies, while also attempting to avoid forceful ruling. Ultimately, I will show how they all create societies obsessed with the cultivation of education, so as to ensure future leaders can judge what is for the benefit of all members of society.

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Introduction

When we think of education, the modern reader might define it as the upbringing of a child, the shaping of their behaviour and understandings so as to function in a society.¹ For thinkers of the fourth century however, education was far less about preparing for adulthood and far more of a lifelong vocation, accumulating the knowledge that could allow for informed thought. As a result, we could define education as being based upon two factors: firstly, that education was an accumulation of knowledge, such as lessons in rhetoric or moderation; secondly, that it was the ability to apply that knowledge in a way that might benefit one's society. For fourth-century thinkers, education was seen to be intrinsically linked to good citizenship and good leadership. It is not enough for a leader to simply learn how to conform to their societal norms, they must become an expert of their communities, capable of understanding how to act in their best interests. Furthermore, they need to understand how to be a good citizen so completely that they can act as a guide for others.

Understanding education, and its perceived relevance to good leadership within late fifth and fourth century political thought, forms the primary focus for this thesis. In the following chapters, I will ask: How did education become seen as so fundamental for good leadership in Athens by the end of the fifth century? What specifically were the lessons and proficiencies that could be expected to be crucial for a future leader to learn? Exactly what did our ancient thinkers mean when they referred to education and good leadership? How did these thinkers propose lessons could be built into a society, so that these skills and virtues could be consistently learnt by future generations?

In order to address these questions, the thesis will begin by grounding the connection between education and good leadership in Athenian history. In section one I will show how, over the course of the fifth century, lessons in

¹ Definition taken from the Oxford English Dictionary.

rhetoric and *λογος*² were realised to be relevant to political success. The sophists will be shown to offer a form of education that could empower those who could afford it, giving those individuals a political advantage.

But while the sophistic education was limited to those who could afford the tuition, I will demonstrate how every individual in Athens would have been exposed to education. The theatre will be shown to circulate complex ideas, not because playwrights taught their audience but because questions about rhetoric, war and leadership were popular topics for contemplation or discussion. As a result, section one of this thesis will show how Athenian politics was influenced by sophist lessons in rhetoric and *λογος* but also how this education was not limited to the social elite.

Section one will thereby show that the fifth century introduced the idea that education could provide a political advantage to those who studied rhetoric and *λογος*. However, political advantage is not synonymous with good leadership. The question that occupies the minds of our fourth-century thinkers, along with the second section of this thesis is: How might education be used to create good leadership? Yet in order to understand how fourth-century thinkers saw education as a tool for leadership more questions are raised: What specifically were the lessons that were so important to create a good leader? Why was this education so crucial for good leadership? How could these lessons be cultivated within society and learnt by future generations? As a result, section two of this thesis will address these questions through the works of Xenophon, Isocrates and Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*.

² See below for a full definition of *λογος*.

For each, Xenophon, Isocrates and Plato, I will demonstrate that the key virtue good leaders needed to grasp was the ability to make decisions in the best interests of the whole community, rather than one's own ambitions or interests. This virtue is referred to by Xenophon and Plato as σωφροσύνη while Isocrates uses the term δοξά. I will show how both of these terms are used in a similar manner, to refer to moderation, self-control and the ability to judge wisely in the best interests of the society. This idea that a good leader must actively learn the needs for their society is one of the fundamental components of this thesis and the way we understand the works of these fourth-century thinkers.

The key question then becomes, why was this lesson in moderation so important for these fourth-century thinkers? For every thinker I assessed, there was a shared belief that humanity was born wild and needed to be taught the customs and behaviour of society. Yet δοξά and σωφροσύνη were more than just childhood lessons. For Xenophon, Isocrates and Plato, the greatest threat that faced any society came from citizens striving for their own ends in spite of the needs of their community. I will show how Xenophon and Isocrates elevate the actions of Cyrus and Timotheus specifically because they act in the best interests of their societies. Additionally, although perhaps more dramatically, I will demonstrate how Plato sees human ignorance to be the primary cause for societies to fall, creating the strict focus on education that can be seen in the *Republic* and *Laws*.

Finally, I will show how these lessons might be interwoven into society, so that future generations could learn how to act as good citizens and good leaders. I will demonstrate how all three thinkers designed meritocracies that created a hierarchy based upon an individual's understanding of σωφροσύνη or δοξά respectively. Those individuals who could learn the needs of their society

and cultivate moderation and self-control within themselves could then act in the best interests of their society, and even become a guide for others.

In this way, the thesis will demonstrate how education was initially realised as a component in political success in fifth-century Athens. I will then show how fourth-century thinkers looked at education as a means to create good leadership rather than simply give an advantage to a wealthy individual. The thesis will show the specific lessons these thinkers want prospective leaders to learn. I will show why these lessons are so crucial for good leadership. Finally, I will demonstrate how each thinker designed a society imbued with this education so that future generations had the capacity to learn these lessons of good leadership.

II. Defining education in Athens

Before addressing the research questions I have just highlighted above, it would initially be valuable to outline what education existed in Athens by the end of the fifth century. What forms of education might the Athenians, and our fourth-century thinkers, have had access to? How might a fifth-century Athenian have learnt the customs, political processes and the means to participate? Through addressing these questions, I will establish an initial understanding of education in Athens, an education that influenced our fourth-century thinkers so heavily.

While this thesis has defined education as described above, it is worth considering that other forms of learning were taking place within Athens. The first, and perhaps where the modern mind is first drawn when thinking of education, is schooling. Yet I argue that, while certainly educational, schooling was incapable of teaching the lessons citizens would need to become socio-

political actors. By the fifth and fourth centuries schooling was clearly an established practice,³ yet institutions appear sparse and were certainly not uniform in terms of curriculum.⁴ On the whole, we can expect students to have studied athletics and gymnastics via the *Paidotribes*, literacy via *Grammatistes* and music via the *Kitharistes*.⁵ Furthermore, these schools were paid institutions and the majority of the citizenry were unlikely to have been able to afford them.⁶

The limitations of this form of schooling were not lost on the thinkers of the fifth and fourth century. Thucydides highlights that the younger members of the assembly tended to be more prone to warmongering.⁷ Aristophanes too contrasts the aggression of the young with the caution of the elders⁸ and Plato states quite overtly that: *when they are released from their schooling the city next compels them to learn the laws and to live according to them as after a pattern*.⁹ Plato is dividing the traditional aristocratic education that a student would learn from parents, tutors and schooling, from the communal, civic education that will be the focus of this thesis. Plato's *Protagoras* also makes clear that the real civic education begins when a child has left school.¹⁰ So, if schooling was insufficient, or at least too narrow in focus to provide Athenians with the means to understand and participate what did provide this education?

³ Herodotus makes references to schools at Hdt. 6.27. (trans. by) A. D. Godley. 1920. Pausanias also makes similar reference at Paus. 6.9.6. (trans. by) W.H.S. Jones and H.A. Ormerod. 1918. Additionally there are references about schooling from Plutarch at Plut. *Them.* 10. (trans. by) B. Perrin. 1914. Finally, Thucydides refers to schools at Thuc. 7.29. (trans. by) Hammond. 2009.

⁴ See Morgan, 1999, 50-1.

⁵ Beck, 1964, 80; Griffith, 2001, 44. Griffith also highlights the study of music as a means to align emotional and intellectual impulses and is fairly typical of archaic and classical Greek education.

⁶ Bowen, 1972, 74; Morgan, 1999, 56. Morgan specifically argues that literary education would have been tied to socio-economic groups.

⁷ Thuc. 6.13.1.

⁸ Arist. *Lys.* 420, *Ach.* 205-36. (trans by) B. Rogers. 1924.

⁹ Pl. *Prot.* 326c.

¹⁰ Pl. *Prot.* 318-319; Jaeger, 1939, 284.

III. Military training

Military power, it seems, so commonly runs parallel to political power.¹¹ The ancients too were not blind to this correlation, often associating military service with right to rule.¹² Citizenship then was closely linked to military participation. In this section, I will argue that military training was a key form of education that taught the young *epheboi*, not only the skills needed to be an effective soldier, but also the social and political understandings that allowed them to be a proactive citizen and statesmen. Unlike schooling that was reserved for those who could afford it, there was a concerted effort to educate the at least those eligible to be *epheboi*.¹³ These young citizens would participate in two years military service, meaning that the lessons learnt in the military were part of a state-wide attempt to educate. While by no means does this represent the whole of Athenian society, it is at least far more accessible than schooling. The education experienced through the Athenian military must therefore be relevant to citizenship and political power.

Initially, we must acknowledge the problem of evidence here. The primary issue here is how far we can rely upon the *Athenaion Politeia* for the fifth century.¹⁴ While attributed to Aristotle, it was likely written instead by a student of his and more pressingly, the work can only be reliably used to describe the situation in the 320's so that we must be careful about applying it to the fifth century.¹⁵ Other references to the two years military service can also

¹¹ There are examples of military victories being followed by hoplite-focused constitutions. Such as Athens in 411 (Thuc. 8.97), Thebes and Boeotia (Xen, *Hell.* 5.4.9; Hellenia Oxyrhynchia 19.2).

¹² Arist. *Politics*. 1304a; Plut. *Them.* 19.4; Arist. 22.1.

¹³ Arist, *Ath Pol.* 42. While this source is clearly of a different period, Rhodes does suggest that the intention to provide training to young citizens was relevant much earlier. Rhodes also explains in depth the restrictions on the term *epheboi* describing those who were exempt or excluded. Rhodes. 2017, 337-345.

¹⁴ The debate concerning the authorship of *Athenian constitution* will not be expanded upon here. It seems sufficient to follow Rhodes' summary that despite sharing themes with *Politics* the work is likely to be that of a pupil. Rhodes goes on to point out that the work is highly valuable regardless of its authorship. See Rhodes, 1993.

¹⁵ Hansen, 1991, 89. Hansen suggests that the system of military training Aristotle describes was likely introduced in the end of the 5th century, after Spartan victory at Battle of Aegospotami.

be found in Aeschines' *On the Embassy* in 343.¹⁶ This implies that the education structure we see in the *Athenaion Politeia* may also be relevant in the early fourth century and even perhaps into the late fifth.¹⁷ The Ephebic Oath however, is perhaps the earliest reference to military education in Athens.¹⁸ The oath can be placed fairly securely within the 5th century, according to references and recitation from fourth century thinkers such as Demosthenes and Lycurgus making the oath far more relevant to the fifth-century than the *Athenaion Politeia*.¹⁹ Most notably, the oath outlines that a cadet must defend the rights of gods and man, must oppose any who would endanger Athens and must honour the cult of their fathers.²⁰ This oath implies that military training exposed the *epheboi* to social and political lessons and that they were expected to display this commitment to more senior members of the polis. Through participating in military training, Athenian citizens would learn how their polis operated, what issues its people had to deal with and how to make a positive impact upon that society.

If we accept a fifth-century date for the introduction of the *epheboi*, we can go a step further to demonstrate a link between military and political power. Before demonstrating the way in which military training taught individuals how to be effective and participatory citizens, it would first be valuable to briefly demonstrate a link between military power and political power. This is an argument made by van Wees who demonstrates a correlation between the development of democracy during fifth century and military victories that can be credited to the efforts of the poorer citizens of Athens.²¹ The victories of both Marathon and Salamis relied upon citizens without wealth, nobility, or leisure time.²² Salamis, being a naval conflict, is often held up as a prime example of democratic power. This is because, given the nature of naval conflict, no

¹⁶ Osborne, 1999, 269.

¹⁷ Aeschin. 2 167.

¹⁸ Thomas, 1989, 84-5.

¹⁹ Lycurg. *Leoc.* 1.76; Dem. 19 303. (trans by) C. A. Vince. 1926.

²⁰ RO 88.

²¹ Van Wees, 2008, 291.

²² Thuc. 2.13.6-7.

individual or small cohort of soldiers could be credited with particular distinction. Instead, the whole ship, if not the whole navy, must be credited equally for any military success. This point is made quite plainly by Plato who sees the inability to single out individuals, or small groups, for praise as a negative consequence of creating a naval-focused polis. His Athenian states:

*States dependent upon navies for their power give honours, as rewards for their safety, to a section of their forces that is not the finest; for they owe their safety to the arts of the pilot, the captain and the rower— men of all kinds and not too respectable, —so that it would be impossible to assign the honours to each of them rightly. Yet, without rectitude in this, how can it still be right with a State?*²³

In this passage, Plato ties social rank to an individual's importance in protecting the state. However, during naval conflicts, hierarchies are difficult to pick out because credit for any victories must be shared among every crewmember. It is for this reason that Salamis so important for democratic Athens, as it provided a justification for all citizens to have a say in the running of the state. It is also unlikely that the force at Marathon came solely from the leisure class, as it was far too large not also to have included poorer citizens.²⁴ Van Wees' argument for the connection between military successes and political power seems appropriate to follow here. Van Wees goes on to argue that compulsory military service created a shared identity through the experience of war.²⁵

While I support van Wees' argument, I would add that this military service was as much about teaching and embracing a new generation of citizens into social and political responsibilities, as it was about creating good soldiers. To show this, I would emphasise that as part of his training a cadet would have trained in hoplite drills, demonstrated before the assembly²⁶ and that the military service is specifically described as guarding and patrolling the

²³ Pl. *Laws*. 707a-b.

²⁴ Van Wees, 2008, 280; Arist. *Pol.* 2.1274a.

²⁵ Van Wees, 2008, 291.

²⁶ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 42.

Athenian borders.²⁷ I suggest the key here is that new cadets were the most visible defenders of the polis. They gained experience by, quite literally, protecting the city, and just as importantly, they were seen to be doing so by the rest of society. I argue that this time as a cadet was more focused on symbolism than actual military proficiency. They would be displaying to the polis, and to themselves, their civic responsibility and licence for citizenship. Moreover, the cadets were learning through experience about their society, its needs, its threats and about the political, religious, and civic institutions they were guarding. This is only a minor revision to van Wees' argument, but I do think it is a necessary one. Military service should be seen primarily as an education, or socialisation, into the Athenian political environment and not necessarily to provide a shared experience of 'real' warfare.

IV. Participation

Participation was key to citizenship²⁸ and this participation gave the citizens of Athens a broad experience of many aspects of civic institutions. Through participation, every citizen was, in theory, able to learn about political processes, relevant discussions or controversies, the needs and fears of the Athenians and be in a position of power and influence. It is through both observing and taking part in Athenian civic institutions that members of society could become educated in the customs and discussions of Athens.²⁹

Athens had more than enough capacity for widespread participation and actively encouraged citizens to get involved.³⁰ We see this capacity for participation particularly arise after Pericles' reforms in 450s which introduced

²⁷ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 42.

²⁸ Pelling, 2005, 83.

²⁹ Ober, 2001, 175; Griffith, 2001, 26.

³⁰ Christ, 2006, 17. Christ draws attention to the incorporation of the individual in order to provide incentive to participate.

pay for jurors among other *demos*-focused policies.³¹ We can therefore expect that a sizable proportion of the citizen population could have had the means to participate. Between the 450s and the introduction of pay for assembly members in the 390s³² we can anticipate an increasing degree of diversity within Athenian social and political practices.³³ There may have been up to 1200 *archai* from the *demos*³⁴ organising roughly 6000 jurors that may have met 200 times a year. As a result, in theory at least, there was certainly scope for citizens to participate in Athenian democracy. Indeed, listening to debates within the deme is likely to be the first political topics a child/youth would have encountered.³⁵ Contributing to the state became a way of life, either through the holding of public office or engaging in the discussions raised by its institutions.³⁶

As for the assembly, it appears to be capable of seating between 6000 and 8000 members, representing up to two fifths of the citizen population.³⁷ Considering many more could potentially gather around the *pnyx*, we can anticipate that Athens had capacity for a large number of individuals to observe the decision-making process, particularly when considering assemblies could be as frequent as 40 times per year.³⁸ In addition, 50 citizens from each tribe would be elected by lot to be representatives in the *boulē* who would need to be replaced annually and could not be appointed twice in a decade.³⁹ Consequently, a considerable number of citizens can be expected to have gained experience through appointment to the *boulē*. In addition, we can expect a further 700 offices to have been available annually⁴⁰ and while some were not

³¹ Hansen, 1991, 39. Hansen highlights Pericles as a “democratic driver” drawing attention to the position of archon that began to be filled by commoners after Pericles.

³² It is worth noting the restriction of citizenship here, forcing individuals to prove citizen status from both mother and father. This reform has caused notable debate, but it seems likely that the reforms were aimed at dismantling established aristocratic powerbases created by marriage to influential persons in other polities. See Osborne, 2010, 245-247.

³³ Markle, 2004, 106-114; Ober, 1989, 321.

³⁴ Lys. 6. 4.

³⁵ Osborne, 2010, 31.

³⁶ Dem 10.28, 42.25; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 29.5.

³⁷ Ober, 1989, 132.

³⁸ Ober, 1989, 132.

³⁹ Rhodes, 1972, 3.

⁴⁰ Ober, 1989, 160; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 24.3.

paid positions, holders may have received other benefits.⁴¹ The number of offices available for participation implies that a substantial percentage of the citizen population would have had the opportunity to be actively engaged in affairs of the state for at least some point in their adult life.⁴² In fact, later elite thinkers even complain that citizens relied on these public officers for income rather than focusing on independent means of moneymaking.⁴³

The amateur nature of the Athenian institutions resulted in citizens being actively drawn into politics. The sheer number of positions available, demonstrates how important participation was to the running of Athenian society and those who did participate could not avoid learning about their polis. Pericles' reforms are key, not because they defined a political culture based upon participation, but because they catered for it, supporting participation and, by extension, the political education of all members of Athenian society. Furthermore, for many, it would have been through observing others that lessons in Athenian politics could be learnt. Assemblies, law courts and theatre were all institutions that raised controversies for the audience to discuss and try to solve. All these institutions would have drawn crowds of onlookers⁴⁴ all eager to have their say and observe the arguments and discussions of others. These discussions and political experiences would have helped to promulgate an education in Athenian citizenship and identity that taught both the knowledge of good leadership and how to apply it to the benefit of Athens.

⁴¹ Isoc 7. 24–7. (trans by) G. Norlin. 1928.

⁴² Manville, 1990, 20.

⁴³ Isoc. *De pace*, 132.

⁴⁴ Ant.6.24; Aeschin. 2.5.

V. Public inscriptions

As the fifth century progressed, Athens can be considered to have become increasingly willing to cater to widespread public discussion. Yet for effective discussion, transparency and information are essential for an informed debate. One of the most remarkable indicators of increased discussion, running parallel to the rise of an increasingly populist democracy, was the more frequent use of public inscriptions. However, the importance of inscriptions is also dependant on the level of literacy within Athens, a topic I will assess below. Inscriptions demonstrate a desire to distribute information, to allow for education in political, social or cultural systems.⁴⁵

While inscriptions are not only seen within democracies, inscribing written laws and public records into a public domain helps to facilitate transparency and public knowledge, key values for democratic societies. The vast records we see toward the end of the fifth century present a very public display of Athenian virtues and political participation. They also allowed individuals to see themselves publicly acknowledged by the state, their names physically set into the stone of the city, recognising them as a member and contributor to the state. That reflection would also act as a very public reminder that they were responsible and accountable to the citizen body as a whole.

By the second half of the fifth century, lists dominated the Athenian acropolis: assembly laws, accounts of treasuries⁴⁶ and officials, temple inventories and building accounts, all were publicly listed.⁴⁷ There are a significant number of inscriptions in the standard corpus, including further lists

⁴⁵ The impact of public inscriptions would depend on how many members of the population were literate, as I will cover below.

⁴⁶ *IG* I³ 4.

⁴⁷ Thomas, 1992, 137.

of traitors, debtors and heroes.⁴⁸ Similar to the inscription of laws, these lists paint a very complex picture of the virtues and responsibilities expected of the citizen members. Unlike the written laws of Solon, the inscribed accounts were widely referenced. Aristotle refers directly to instances where inscriptions were used to support legal investigations.⁴⁹ Even the inscriptions themselves refer to other records and imply that they will have to be consulted again at a later date.⁵⁰ Furthermore, these extensive records hold a very public mirror up to the citizens, calling them out by name, logging their participations or their transgressions. The individual citizen is publicly acknowledged by the state but with that comes an expectation that a citizen will respect and even actively support the shared values of the state. This ability to see oneself and one's duty to society physically inscribed and publicly acknowledged by the state is rather profound to a modern reader. These inscriptions were not just a bureaucratic process, but a deeply personal and vivid display of an individual's civic duty. As Low has demonstrated inscriptions were frequently erased, edited or reconstructed so as to reflect an ever-changing memory.⁵¹ This shows that these inscriptions have an active role in the Athenian democracy, recording and documenting but also remaining up-to-date and relevant to current affairs.

One notable issue when considering the impact of public inscription is the extent of literacy in fifth-century Athens. As we have seen, amateur participation formed the backbone of Athenian politics, and public discussion should be expected to reach all areas of society.⁵² Yet if only a fraction of the population could read, their ability to participate would, at first glance, appear restricted. Either literacy was sufficiently widespread as to permit the majority to participate, or literacy was not a necessary requirement.

⁴⁸ Thomas, 1992, 137.

⁴⁹ Arist. *Rhet.* 1400a 30-35.

⁵⁰ Evidence of public reference to inscriptions: IG_13. 61.

⁵¹ Low, 2020, 236.

⁵² Raaflaub, 1997, 34.

I argue the answer is a bit of both: there is evidence to suggest that the majority of the citizen body had a basic understanding of letters. Aristophanes' *Knights* quite directly states that a common tradesman might be expected to read, albeit badly.⁵³ Similarly, Morgan has demonstrated that at least the fundamentals of literacy were widespread; including educational discoveries, such as school texts, found within small towns.⁵⁴ Some scholars have also raised the practice of ostracism, that required participators to write the name an individual they wished to remove.⁵⁵ While this evidence certainly implies some form of common literacy, it is far too insecure to draw any substantial conclusions. More securely, we can assume that the elite or any who could afford at least some time in formal schooling⁵⁶ could be expected to have a grasp of literacy. On the other hand, we need not assume that an illiterate was unable to participate in democracy.⁵⁷ While they may be illiterate in language, they certainly would have the means to become politically, socially and intellectually literate. As I have suggested above and will explore in more depth later in this thesis, judgments were established through predominantly oral discussion and argument. Opinions were made or changed through listening to debates⁵⁸ not through studying texts. Public inscriptions were powerful educators because they allowed for transparency. They did not need to be read by every individual. Their value was to keep public discussion informed of legal or bureaucratic details. It is not hard for the modern reader to appreciate how quickly information (or misinformation) can spread through a public discussion, without individuals having ever read the original source. In short, it is hard to make any meaningful conclusions about the role of literacy and democracy, but we can conclude that whatever the reality, it is unlikely to have posed a serious obstacle for public discussion and widespread political education.

⁵³Arist. *Eq.* 180 -90.

⁵⁴ Morgan, 1999, 56.

⁵⁵ Bowen, 1972, 76.

⁵⁶ For the expense of formal schooling see Xen. *Mem.* 2.2.6.

⁵⁷ Finley, 1983, 29.

⁵⁸ Hansen, 1991, 305; Rhodes, 2004, 200.

VII. Summary

As covered at the start of this introduction, one of the primary questions this thesis will ask is why education was so relevant to the works of fourth century political thinkers? What were the lessons that needed to be learnt and how could those lessons be built into society? Yet before addressing those question directly, it was initially important to understand what forms of education already existed in Athens by the end of the fifth century. It was these forms of education that would have influenced our fourth-century thinkers. Establishing an understanding of how an Athenian might have learnt the customs, culture, needs and political pressures of their city is a key a foundation from which to address the core questions of this thesis.

I demonstrated that the Athenian citizen had several means by which they could learn the customs, political processes, culture and needs of their society. The first form of education was shown to be through military training. I argued that through guarding the society they would have learned what could threaten it. They would have learnt to see themselves as substantive members of that society as well as protectors of it. Second, I argued that participation was perhaps the most widespread form of education. Through the amateur nature of Athenian institutions, a high turnover of public servants could be expected, each gaining valuable experience of power, influence and understanding of the needs of their polis. Lastly for this introductory section, public inscription was shown to both cater to this public discourse and be a physical part of an educational environment. By introducing public records, individuals could see their own civic responsibility physically carved into their polis, acknowledging them, and holding them accountable. These forms of education are relevant because they make up the environment that our later thinkers would challenge, defend, but also grew up in.

The education I have outlined so far has been focused on how an individual living in fifth century Athens might have been exposed to the customs and culture of their society. In the following section I will concentrate on two further forms of education where an individual might be confronted with new cultural and political ideas. Namely the sophist teachings and the intellectually and politically relevant performances of the theatre.

Section 1: Λογος, Learning and Leadership

As I have demonstrated, even without direct tuition, an individual can still be exposed to lessons on culture, politics and society. Additionally, the ability to persuade, perform or communicate ideas to an audience, is a fundamental practice for dramatists, rhetoricians and politicians to master. Over the fifth century, the sophists offered lessons in the performance of ideas which proved highly sort after by the ambitious statesman of the time. Through the practice of performance, the public discourse in Athens was changed, creating an environment where individuals could learn actively skills that would increase their chances of becoming successful leaders. Through understanding this environment, and the impact these practices had upon Athens and its democracy, we can begin to unpick the controversies that occupied the minds of our fourth-century thinkers and their countrymen.

Specifically, the skill that the sophists offered to teach, and what any would-be leader needed to master, was *λογος*. The Liddell-Scott-Jones Lexicon includes thirty-one separate translations for *λογος* highlighting just how broadly the term could be defined. Definitions include accounting, proportion or ratio, explanations, speeches, sayings, arguments or storytelling, among others.⁵⁹ For the purposes of this thesis, I will refer to *λογος* as a skill that permits persuasion through well performed speechcraft and argument. This translation of *λογος* as a performative and persuasive art is most relevant to understanding sophist teachings and its impact upon Athenian social, political, and intellectual life.

In this section, I will show how sophistic education, taught *λογος* as an art form, equipping statesmen with the ability to perform and thereby to persuade their audience. I will demonstrate how intertwined sophistic thought was with Athenian politics by highlighting how many of the key leaders of the fifth century had sophist influencers. I will show how Athenian politics, its social

⁵⁹ Diggle, 2021, 878.

values, and its intellectual discussions, were all moulded by the development of performance.

Yet the ideas and lessons of the sophists were not limited to those who could afford to study with them. In the second chapter of this section, I will show how the theatre introduced complex and nuanced topics to its audience. Themes of war, rhetoric and leadership were toyed with in the theatre, requiring the audience to have a sufficient understanding of these themes in order to enjoy and understand the plays. These ideas about leadership and education will be shown to have been a common topic in fifth century Athens and undoubtedly would have greatly impacted the works of our fourth-century thinkers.

Chapter 1: Sophists and Statesmen

It is within fifth century Athens that we start to see education becoming particularly relevant to political power. The sophistic impact can be seen, partly, in their proximity to key characters of the fifth century, but more clearly in how their teachings are reflected in the works of our fourth century thinkers.⁶⁰ In this chapter, I will demonstrate how later thinkers wrote in contrast to sophistic ideas, or in response to them, building new arguments on the value of education and leadership from the foundations of sophistic thought. I will show how the sophists held ideas that were far more complex than the simplified parodies portrayed by Plato. I will demonstrate that despite limited evidence we can still see a philosophy that revolves around the teaching, practice, and cultivation of *λογος*. As mentioned above, *λογος* can have a remarkably broad usage.⁶¹ For this chapter, I will focus on the definition of *λογος* that was outlined above. *Λογος* will be defined as a skill or art form that could be learnt, or at least practiced. It would include public speaking, rhetoric, oratory, persuasion as well as intellectual discussion. I will demonstrate in this chapter, and more extensively within Isocrates' works below, that *λογος* can be seen as means to explore and investigate one's social, political, or intellectual context. This is done through arguing and discussing with others, a practice that forms a key component of sophist philosophy.⁶²

1. The Sophist Reception

The key sources for this thesis are united in a desire to challenge, correct, or build upon sophistic understandings and it is valuable to start this chapter by understanding that relationship between sophist and Socratic.⁶³ I will argue that regardless of the reality of sophistic teaching, it was ultimately seen as a corruptive education that could be blamed for the political turmoil of the late fifth century. Yet the works of later writers are focused, not on condemning the

⁶⁰ I am referring here specifically to the works of Xenophon, Isocrates and Plato, who are the focus of this thesis.

⁶¹ Diggle, 2021, 878.

⁶² Ford, 2001, 87. Ford has highlighted the need to see the Sophistic education as a form of higher education and not just the art of manipulating words.

⁶³ In this instance I am extending the term Socratic to include Isocrates. Whether Isocrates should be classed as a Sophist or Socratic is a far more complex issue that I will explore below.

sophist teachings, but on separating themselves from the stereotypical brand of being 'a sophist'. Instead, I will argue that later writers actually built upon sophistic beliefs, incorporating them into their own works where themes of education and *λογος* played central, if not fundamental roles. The negative portrayal of the sophists by later thinkers is more a reflection of the popular opinion of Athens than it was of any real disparity in intellectual thought. This section will demonstrate that the Socratics leaned on the stereotypical caricature of the sophist in order to distance themselves from it.

1.1. Sophistic corruption

The sophists and their education in *λογος* added a new power dynamic into Athenian politics. Rhetoric and practised *λογος* began to dominate Athenian decision-making and contemporary writers appear eager to blame the sophistic movement for the political turmoil that Athens experiences toward the end of the fifth century. For Plato, the sophists are not to blame for introducing *λογος* but for its misuse.⁶⁴ The sophist education is corruptive in Plato's eyes. Corruptors of Athenian politics, of its culture, its values and, perhaps most importantly they are responsible for the corruption of *λογος* itself. Within his *Laws* Plato outlines Athenian decline from the virtuous and just time of their ancestors at the start of the fifth century into the chaos of misinformation. He states:

*Just reflect: seeing that we Athenians suffered practically the same fate as the Persians—they through reducing their people to the extreme of slavery, we, on the contrary, by urging on our populace to the extreme of liberty.*⁶⁵

Athens is seen to have fallen into vice through a failure to regulate its traditional virtues and customs. In both Athens and Persia Plato argues that both societies have failed to educate appropriately permitting their children to be led astray. Furthermore, it is the sophists that Plato blames for teaching this

⁶⁴ Caizzi, 1999, 322. Caizzi argues that Plato respected many of Protagoras' teachings but that they could not prevent the ruin of society.

⁶⁵ Pl. *Laws*. 699e.

misinformation.⁶⁶ In his account of the sophists Plato outlines the dangers of rhetoric clearly arguing that:

*... the ability to persuade with speeches either judges in the law courts or statesmen in the council-chamber or the commons in the Assembly or an audience at any other meeting that may be held on public affairs. And I tell you that by virtue of this power you will have the doctor as your slave, and the trainer as your slave; your money-getter will turn out to be making money not for himself, but for another, in fact for you, who are able to speak and persuade the multitude.*⁶⁷

Here again we see Plato challenging the sophist teachings, accusing them of corrupting not only the virtues of Athens but knowledge itself. Gorgias here is shown to be suggesting *λογος* is so powerful even doctors will become servile to rhetoric. This analogy is a popular one for Plato and is used to demonstrate a ludicrous extreme of persuasion. The value of a doctor is based on their ability to prescribe accurately occasionally in disregard for the feelings or ignorant beliefs of their patient. In this passage Plato attempts to demonstrate the danger of education in rhetoric - making expert advice irrelevant and thereby corrupting wisdom along with the virtues of the society. In addition, a similar example of Plato's concern of rhetorical corruption can be seen within his *Republic* he argues:

...in the present condition of society and government, in saying that the providence of God preserves it you will not be speaking ill."
"Neither do I think otherwise," he said. "Then," said I, "think this also in addition." *"What?" "Each of these private teachers who work for pay, whom the politicians call sophists and regard as their rivals, inculcates nothing else than these opinions of the multitude which they opine when they are assembled and calls this knowledge wisdom.*⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Wolin, 2004, 31-33.

⁶⁷ Pl. *Gorg.* 452e.

⁶⁸ Pl. *Rep.* 6.493a.

Again, we see Plato challenge the corruptive influence sophistic teaching had upon 'present society' suggesting that it confuses the agreement of the multitude with wisdom. For Plato, the sophists were responsible for corrupting both the politics of Athens as well as wisdom itself, so that they spread misinformation under the guise of understanding.

In a similar manner, Xenophon and Isocrates also interpret the sophistic teaching as corruptive to Athenian politics. Isocrates is the most vocal about his criticism of the sophists. In his *Against the Sophists* Isocrates states:

*...if all who are engaged in the profession of education were willing to state the facts instead of making greater promises than they can possibly fulfil, they would not be in such bad repute with the lay-public. As it is, however, the teachers who do not scruple to vaunt their powers with utter disregard of the truth have created the impression that those who choose a life of careless indolence are better advised than those who devote themselves to serious study.*⁶⁹

This passage is interesting partly because he agrees with Plato's criticism that sophistic teaching corrupts both the students, the society and includes a "disregard [for] truth" but also because Isocrates states that this criticism is popular among the "lay-public". This suggests that not only were later thinkers concerned about the corruptive lessons of the sophists but that this was a common and frequently raised concern. Isocrates expands upon these popular criticisms in his *Antidosis* stating:

These charges are of two kinds. Some of them say that the profession of the sophist is nothing but sham and chicanery, maintaining that no kind of education has ever been discovered which can improve a man's ability to speak or his capacity for handling affairs, and that those who excel in these respects owe their superiority to natural gifts; while others acknowledge that men

⁶⁹ Isoc, *Against the Sophists*, 13.1.

*who take this training are more able, but complain that they are corrupted and demoralized by it, alleging that when they gain the power to do so, they scheme to get other people's property.*⁷⁰

Here Isocrates highlights two of the most pressing and most popular criticisms of sophist teachers. Firstly, that they are unable to actually teach what they claim, an argument Isocrates entirely disagrees with⁷¹ and secondly that they spread corruption. This second claim is one Isocrates takes time to articulate. He agrees that traditionally sophists have corrupted their students through encouraging rhetoric and selfish ambitions, but he argues not all teachers are responsible for this. Understanding Isocrates' perception of the sophists is particularly interesting because he is the only source assessed in this thesis that studied via the sophists, rather than Socrates. As I will cover in more detail below, Isocrates also taught rhetoric for a fee and sophist influences are quite clear within his own works, even prompting the question whether Isocrates should really be labelled a sophist himself?

This connects closely with Xenophon's perception of good teaching, there must always be a focus on learning the skills and virtues that can create an effective leader if the student is only taught the means to power their selfish ambitions may overtake the needs of the state. Xenophon is even prepared to extend this criticism to Socrates himself arguing that

*Socrates should have taught his companions prudence before politics. I do not deny it; but I find that all teachers show their disciples how they themselves practise what they teach and lead them on by argument (λογος).*⁷²

What is key about this passage is that it not only criticises his teacher but also demonstrates specifically that λογος, as a practice, was not at fault for the corruption. On the contrary, λογος is described as the means by which a student may learn discipline. Xenophon's usage of the term λογος is remarkably

⁷⁰ Isoc, *Antidosis*. 198.

⁷¹ See chapter four.

⁷² Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.17.

similar to Gorgias' who also uses it to mean argument or discussion. Xenophon's concern for the rise of misleading rhetoric can also be seen within his *Apology* where he states:

*Do you not observe that the Athenian courts have often been carried away by an eloquent speech and have condemned innocent men to death, and often on the other hand the guilty have been acquitted either because their plea aroused compassion or because their speech was witty?" "Yes, indeed!" he had answered...*⁷³

Xenophon has a clear concern that discussions in Athens were becoming tangled with 'eloquent speech'. This quote is very similar to Plato's *Protagoras* that has Socrates refuse to debate with Protagoras if he continued to use such long eloquent speeches.⁷⁴

This section has demonstrated that there is a common overriding criticism of sophistic teaching, namely, that it corrupts both the traditional values of Athens as well as the practice of *λογος* itself. Yet these writers are not actually rejecting sophistic teaching but specifically the popular stereotype of the sophists. In reality, there are several major components of sophistic teachings that are not only accepted but built upon by our later writers.

⁷³ Xen. *Apology*. 4.

⁷⁴ Pl. *Prot.* 336.

1.2. Building on Sophistic education

While later thinkers are overtly hostile to the sophistic movement, that does not mean they reject all of their teachings. On the contrary, the sophists are not only central to the education of fifth-century Athens but are critical because so much of Athenian political thought was built upon their teachings. The Socratics felt challenged, not to prove the sophists wrong, but to show how their teachings might be built upon and tailored toward the benefit of a society without risking the political instability seen in Athens at the end of the fifth century. Importantly, the two most prominent correlations between sophistic and Socratic thinking focused upon education. Firstly, it is the belief that *λογος* may be used as empirical means to build upon rational beliefs and thereby offer a legitimate form of education leading the individual toward wisdom. Secondly, it is the shared acknowledgment that *λογος* is a new and essential political power that has the potential to strengthen a society. Both sophists and Socratic thinkers agree that regardless of an individual's position they must be educated in *λογος* in order to rule and to be ruled.

Isocrates is perhaps the most overt writer to demonstrate this desire to build upon sophistic teachings.⁷⁵ For the purposes of this discussion, it is irrelevant whether Isocrates should be considered a sophist or not however, this question will be explored in depth later in this thesis. In his *Against the Sophists* Isocrates challenges sophistic teachings directly, as the name implies, yet most critically he also chooses to build upon their beliefs. He writes:

...whereas the former (the sophists), although exhorting others to study political discourse, neglected all the good things which this study affords, and became nothing more than professors of meddlesomeness and greed... And let no one suppose that I claim that just living can be taught; for, in a word, I hold that there does not exist an art of the kind which can implant sobriety and justice in depraved natures. Nevertheless, I do think that the study of political

⁷⁵ See Lombard, 1990, 8-10.

*discourse can help more than any other thing to stimulate and form such qualities of character...*⁷⁶

The final line of this quote is key. Isocrates highlights the fundamental core of his philosophy, that *λογος* is the best way actively to teach leadership and virtue. This belief is at the centre of Isocrates' works and it is a technique borrowed almost verbatim from sophist teachings, particularly those of Gorgias. Indeed, many scholars have drawn attention to the close relationship between Isocrates and Gorgias, to such a degree, it alters the way in which we understand his criticisms of the sophists. I would add in addition to this that Protagoras' focus on good judgment is identical to Isocrates' dependence upon *δοξα* as a key virtue for good leadership.⁷⁷ More than any other thinker Isocrates aims to separate his philosophy not from the sophists specifically but from the popular stereotype of the sophist, the by-word for misinformation and corruption that was so popular in the theatre and the *demos*.

Plato's concerns about the dangers of a corruptive sophistic education form a central part of his agendas within his *Republic*, *Statesman* and *Laws*. Yet these works are dominated by education, portrayed as a primary means to create and maintain a successful society.⁷⁸ Relying upon education as a means to strengthen the *vopos* of a society is a theory taken directly from sophist teachings. In addition, Plato builds upon the sophists use of education again as a means to protect his theoretical societies from corruptive rhetoric and misinformation, a threat that is again inspired by his perception of the sophist impression upon Athens. This can be seen most clearly within his *Republic*; Plato defines the role of a leader as one who can safeguard education arguing that:

...those in charge must cling to education and see that it is not corrupted without their noticing it, guarding it against everything.

⁷⁶ Isoc. *Against the Sophists*. 20-21.

⁷⁷ Pl. *Prot.* 318d-319a; Wolin, 2004, 9. Wolin also draws attention to the sophist teaching of decision-making but does not extend that link to Isocrates.

⁷⁸ See chapters six and seven.

*Above all, they must guard it against any innovation in music and poetry or in physical training that is counter to the established order.*⁷⁹

It is this resistance to innovation or change and indulgence in traditional virtues that becomes a defining features of Plato's Callipolis and subsequent Magnesia. They are built to succeed where Athens failed, resisting the misuse of *λογος* and thereby avoiding the corruption that could damage every aspect of society. This point is continued later in the *Republic* where Plato adds legal weight to this conservative policy arguing:

*...that this is the purpose of the law, which is the ally of all classes in the state, and this is the aim of our control of children, our not leaving them free before we have established, so to speak, a constitutional government within them and, by fostering the best element in them with the aid of the like in ourselves, have set up in its place a similar guardian and ruler in the child, and then, and then only, we leave it free.*⁸⁰

Again, Plato works this defence from corruption into the legislation of the society. It is portrayed as society's primary aim and by extension what Plato perceives to be society's primary threat. We must remember that Plato is writing at the end of the fifth century and the start of the fourth. The Athens he would have witnessed was one of insecurity, revolution and military failure. It is not surprising that he saw Athens to be in decline, falling into chaotic colloquial debates, confusion and the flaws of radical democracy. His charge against the sophists then was not their introduction of a new form of political power but that they misunderstood it and by teaching the means to leadership without the moderation, justice and wisdom that is equally essential, caused the corruption of traditional Athenian values in favour of the individual resulting in the turmoil he witnessed at the end of the fifth century.

⁷⁹ Pl. *Rep.* 424b.

⁸⁰ Pl. *Rep.* 590-591a.

The Socratics acknowledged and accepted *λογος* as a new powerful political force within Athenian politics. Their task was to build on the education of the sophists to incorporate and maximise education in *λογος* without causing the instability that Athens suffered. The most critical parameter is that *λογος* is an art that had to be actively learnt. Thus, education in *λογος* and virtue became the lynch-pin of political thought. For Plato, we see its incorporation most clearly within his political theory, discussing idealised societies. He states that:

...let all have their share: for cities cannot be formed if only a few have a share of these as of other arts. And make thereto a law of my ordaining, that he who cannot partake of respect and right shall die the death as a public pest.” Hence it comes about, Socrates, that people in cities, and especially in Athens, consider it the concern of a few to advise on cases of artistic excellence or good craftsmanship, and if anyone outside the few gives advice they disallow it, as you say, and not without reason, as I think: but when they meet for a consultation on civic art, where they should be guided throughout by justice and good sense, they naturally allow advice from everybody, since it is held that everyone should partake of this excellence, or else that states cannot be. This, Socrates, is the explanation of it.⁸¹

Here education is highlighted as being the primary building block of any society to cultivate self-awareness of one's own *νομος*. Plato here is both incorporating *λογος* while also ordering a society that can regulate it. Education is seen as the controlling power to keep *λογος* in check. Plato focuses on consolidating and enshrining the society's virtues and identity into law, thereby preserving them from the inevitable erosion by *λογος*. This is one of the key fears for Plato and, as we will see later, Plato's belief that the strength of a society's constitution is measured in its ability to educate and cultivate traditional values and thereby preserve its constitution for as long as possible. Plato then does not reject the sophists' teachings and the introduction of *λογος* because he believed it was inherently damaging but because it *could* be. The sophists are criticised for

⁸¹ Pl. Prot. 322d-e.

attempting to wield a power they do not have the wisdom to control and so Plato sees the sophists as unleashing and actively spreading a new power that ought to be controlled and moderated through effective education.

2. Procuring political power

The sophists have been shown to have had a major impact upon our fourth-century thinkers, but their teachings can also be seen to impact Athenian politics directly by the middle of the fifth century.⁸² Protagoras is said to have been invited to Athens to help Pericles write the constitution for the Athenian colony of Thurii. Pericles studied under the sophists Anaxagoras of Clazomenae and Damon⁸³ and took advice from Protagoras.⁸⁴ Contemporary portrayals of Pericles highlight his ability to persuade the assembly,⁸⁵ even leading Thucydides to term his time in power as the “rule by the first citizen”.⁸⁶ Additionally, Cleon is perhaps one of the clearest examples of how an individual could influence an audience thanks to the skill of his rhetorical performance.⁸⁷ As I will cover in more depth below, Cleon is often criticized as an example of rhetorical speech having power in Athenian power by contemporary thinkers and playwrights. Morgan describes Cleon as the first of these new men with a new education.⁸⁸ The sophist teachings then can easily be seen to have had an impact on Athenian politics, influencing some of the biggest characters in fifth century Athens.

The impact that sophistic education had upon Athenian politics is undeniable, yet the controversy highlighted above was only the aftershock from

⁸² Christ, 2006, 18.

⁸³ Isoc. *Ant.* 15.235.

⁸⁴ Jarratt, 1991, 98.

⁸⁵ Thuc. 2.65.

⁸⁶ Thuc. 2.65.

⁸⁷ While it is unclear whether Cleon studied under the sophists, his wealth and rhetorical skill certainly makes it highly likely that he studied *λογος*. See Morgan, 2007, 305; and Worthington, 2007, 262.

⁸⁸ Morgan, 2007, 305.

the real change in political understanding. Most importantly, the sophists demonstrated that through teaching *λογος*, individuals could learn how to secure a political advantage. This notion hung over the sophists' works, their Socratic peers, and consequently, this thesis. While, as we will discuss in the following section, the sophists and Socratics were committed to teaching more than just the means for political achievement to their students, their education was nevertheless a primary means to political power. In this section I will demonstrate that the politics of late fifth century Athens was dominated by ambitious individuals desperate to learn their way to political success.

This attitude is seen quite clearly within Plato's *Protagoras* where Hippocrates repeatedly acknowledges that he intends to become "a *clever speaker*".⁸⁹ Similarly upon entering Protagoras' residence his students are portrayed as being in awe of:

*...the great Protagoras from the several cities which he traverses, enchanting them with his voice like Orpheus, while they follow where the voice sounds, enchanted; and some of our own inhabitants were also dancing attendance. ... whenever the master turned about and those with him, it was fine to see the orderly manner in which his train of listeners split up into two parties on this side and on that, and wheeling round formed up again each time in his rear most admirably.*⁹⁰

Plato here is clearly presenting a parody of Protagoras. The comparison of his teachings to Orpheus' music was not designed as a compliment, but as a deliberate metaphor to display the coercion his rhetoric could have upon the young men of Athens.⁹¹ Importantly however, these young men, which included Pericles' own sons and Alcibiades,⁹² are portrayed as enthralled by Protagoras' teachings. Plato is describing an aristocratic circle of influence that portrayed all

⁸⁹ Pl. *Prot.* 312a-e.

⁹⁰ Pl. *Prot.* 315.

⁹¹ Bartlett, 2016, 15.

⁹² Pl. *Prot.* 316a.

the would-be leaders engaging in an education that is purely designed to persuade and enchant its audience.⁹³ This is of course a crude summary of Sophistic education from Plato and, as we will assess in more depth below, even a misleading one. Later in the same work Plato permits Protagoras to explain more precisely what he teaches stating:

The generality of them maltreat the young; for when they have escaped from the arts they bring them back against their will and force them into arts, teaching them arithmetic and astronomy and geometry and music (and here he glanced at Hippias); whereas, if he applies to me, he will learn precisely and solely that for which he has come. That learning consists of good judgement in his own affairs, showing how best to order his own home; and in the affairs of his city, showing how he may have most influence on public affairs both in speech and in action.

I wonder, I said, whether I follow what you are saying; for you appear to be speaking of the civic science, and undertaking to make men good citizens.⁹⁴

The words that Plato places into the mouth of Protagoras still create a parody of sophistic thinking but perhaps a more wholesome one. Plato acknowledges that the intention was to develop a student's competency in εὐβουλία⁹⁵ creating a competent citizen and/or leader. The aim to educate individuals in the skills for citizenship is honourable and one that Plato agrees with. The issue for Plato is firstly an intellectual disagreement, questioning Protagoras' actual ability to teach what he claims to understand and secondly, the political effect his teachings has upon Athens' political reality. Plato's major concern is that students did not receive sufficient education in moderation and justice to make them effective leaders. Instead, they enter the political world prematurely, with a knowledge of rhetoric but an ignorance to the needs of an Athenian society.

⁹³ Weiss, 2018, 290. Weiss argues that Plato acknowledged the sophist's ability to teach success both in public and private life.

⁹⁴ Pl. *Prot.* 318e-319b.

⁹⁵ Often translated as 'decision-making', I will later compare this to Isocrates' use of δόξα.

This is the conclusion of many sources writing in the late fifth and fourth centuries, that yes the route to political power could be taught, but that this power also encourages individuals to exploit their position for personal benefit, often at the cost of the city.⁹⁶ Both Demosthenes and Isocrates draw attention to this self-centred focus of Athenian politics stating that *“no man is naturally either oligarch or democrat but rather each is eager to see established whatever constitution he finds advantageous to himself.”*⁹⁷ In addition, Thucydides offers one of the clearest images of the wealthy aristocrats exploiting their position in his portrayal of Alcibiades. Initially, Thucydides outlines Alcibiades’ tyrannical behaviour stating that he would: *“indulge his tastes beyond what his real means would bear, both in keeping horses and in the rest of his expenditure; and this later on had not a little to do with the ruin of the Athenian state.”*⁹⁸ Because of his actions Thucydides states that Alcibiades was condemned and labelled a tyrant by the *“mass of the people”*. Yet from here Thucydides portrays Alcibiades making a lengthy rhetorical speech, successfully persuading the *demos* to not only agree to drop their allegations of tyranny but also concurring that he should lead the expedition to Sicily.⁹⁹ This rhetorical passage is deliberately added to draw the reader’s attention to Alcibiades’ education, demonstrating his ability manipulate the *demos* (and even author) into believing that his personal advancement was in the best interests of Athens. Thucydides is quite clear that Alcibiades possessed the ability to mislead the *demos* into supporting what would in fact benefit him personally. Ironically, as part of his defence Thucydides has Alcibiades accuse the Sicilians of precisely the same abuse of aristocratic power that he himself is guilty of. Here Alcibiades is defending the policy to launch an expedition to Sicily arguing that:

The cities in Sicily are peopled by motley rabbles, and easily change their institutions and adopt new ones in their stead; and consequently the inhabitants, being without any feeling of patriotism, are not provided with arms for their persons, and have not regularly established themselves on the land; every man thinks

⁹⁶ Christ, 2006, 18. Christ argues for this rise in individualism as a consequence of sophist teachings.

⁹⁷ Dem 25.8. Isocrates makes a similar argument: Isoc. 8.133.

⁹⁸ Thuc. 6.15.

⁹⁹ Thuc. 6.19.

*that either by fair words or by party strife he can obtain something at the public expense...*¹⁰⁰

Thucydides is portraying Alcibiades as strikingly hypocritical. His condemnation of the Sicilians for their lack of a united set of civic virtues and their willingness to allow wealthy individuals to exploit the state for their own benefit, is precisely the charge that had just been levelled at Alcibiades in the subsequent passage. This maybe an attempt to demonstrate the naivety of the audience or perhaps outline the tyrannical character of Alcibiades. What we know for certain is that Thucydides is painfully aware of the power of rhetoric as a tool for the advancement of aristocratic young men, often at the cost of the state.

Alcibiades and his role in the Sicilian expedition is, for Thucydides, one of the clearest examples of rhetoric as a means for aristocrats to learn political power that is ultimately paid for by Athens as a whole. We see this attitude by returning to a passage quoted above. Thucydides defines Athenian politics after the rule of Pericles stating that:

*With his successors it was different. More on a level with one another, and each grasping at supremacy, they ended by committing even the conduct of state affairs to the whims of the multitude. This, as might have been expected in a great and sovereign state, produced a host of blunders, and amongst them the Sicilian expedition.*¹⁰¹

Previously, I concluded that this passage demonstrated a clear but progressive development in the teaching of rhetoric and its impact upon Athenian politics. Now I draw attention to the result of that change. Thucydides argues there is a shift from using rhetoric as a means to lead justly for the good of the polis into the use of rhetoric to enhance the individual at the cost of the polis. Thucydides is portraying the chaos of Athenian politics as Pericles' successors scramble for

¹⁰⁰ Thuc. 6.17.3.

¹⁰¹ Thuc. 2.65.

personal power, pandering to the *demos* rather than the best interests of the society.

Xenophon too makes a point of condemning Alcibiades, along with Critias, for learning only what they needed for personal success without also learning virtues of moderation that would ensure they could rule well, he states:

*Among the associates of Socrates were Critias and Alcibiades; and none wrought so many evils to the state. For Critias in the days of the oligarchy bore the palm for greed and violence: Alcibiades, for his part, exceeded all in licentiousness and insolence under the democracy. Now I have no intention of excusing the wrong these two men wrought the state; but I will explain how they came to be with Socrates... Their conduct betrayed their purpose; for as soon as they thought themselves superior to their fellow-disciples they sprang away from Socrates and took to politics; it was for political ends that they had wanted Socrates.*¹⁰²

Here again we see a clear condemnation of the teaching of rhetoric alone. Xenophon lays the blame squarely at the feet of Alcibiades and Critias for failing to complete their education taking only the rhetoric that would allow them to succeed in politics. The result, Xenophon makes clear, is that Athens suffered under the leadership of both statesmen who ruled through personal benefit rather than what could be considered best for the state. For Xenophon, it was their ignorance, and poor morality, that caused the poor leadership of Alcibiades and Critias. Their inability to moderate their own desires yet possessing the rhetorical knowledge to manipulate the assembly was what Xenophon saw to be so damaging to Athens.

¹⁰² Xen. *Mem.* 17.

To summarise this section, it has been valuable to demonstrate that the sophists brought with them a political realisation: that political power could be acquired through an education in rhetoric. This education in *λόγος* capitalised on the radical Athenian democracy, enabling the wealthy to achieve political power through studying with the sophists.¹⁰³ Yet this education brought with it a desire to strive for personal success in disregard for the needs of Athens. I demonstrated that this criticism of sophistic teaching was popular among late fifth-and fourth-century thinkers who point to the self-serving careers of leading statesmen whose ignorance heavily damaged Athenian power and prestige. For these thinkers, sophistic education was a means to empower and not necessarily a means to produce effectively good leaders.

3. The Sophist contribution

The impact of the sophists was felt across the whole of Athenian life from intellectual to political to social. For the first time individuals could actively learn how to succeed in public and private affairs, they could learn how to gain the support of fellow citizens and learn how to lead or manipulate them. The key question for us to understand now is what these lessons were. What were these sophistic ideas that had such an impact on fifth-century Athens and fourth-century thinkers? I will show how the sophists saw *λόγος* as a means to study and explore the social, political and intellectual world and not just as a means to achieve political power.

¹⁰³ Christ, 2006, 19-20.

3.1. Gorgias

Λογος, especially in terms of argument and discussion, is the key to understanding for Gorgias. Arriving in Athens in 427 as part of an embassy, Gorgias quickly dazzled the Athenians with his rhetorical skill.¹⁰⁴ Gorgias thought that attempting to understand a universal or divine truth is fruitless, irrelevant and likely non-existent. However, good discussion, seated within known 'truths' and without misleading rhetoric may cultivate wisdom, a mortal wisdom, that may only be true for the context of the speakers, but it nevertheless remains achievable. This message comes most clearly from his *Encomium of Helen*. The aim of this work is, as the title implies, a defence of Helen,¹⁰⁵ yet it is also a defence of λογος. This offers an ideal demonstration of how rhetoric could show the indefensible as innocent and the innocent as indefensible. Gorgias prefaces his work with an acknowledgment of this argument he writes:

*Man and Women and speech and the deed and city and object should be honoured with praise if praiseworthy and incur blame if unworthy ... Thus it is right to refute those who rebuke Helen, a woman about whom the testimony of inspired poets has become univocal and unanimous ... For my part, by introducing some reasoning into my speech, I wish to free the accused of blame and, having reproved her detractors as prevaricators and proved the truth, to free her from their ignorance.*¹⁰⁶

Gorgias is quite explicit about his motives, and the need for this defence of Helen. Yet he immediately draws attention to the importance of λογος. He argues that it is the responsibility of a city's peoples (both men and women) to discuss and speak honestly, to honour or to condemn, in order to achieve an understanding and arrive at conclusions that would cultivate a society's νομος. To that end, Gorgias defines it as his duty to speak up for Helen against the ignorance of poets, not in order to protect her legacy but as his duty to establish

¹⁰⁴ Wilburn, 2016, 1.

¹⁰⁵ A character that was arguably seen as indefensible.

¹⁰⁶ Gorg. *Hel.* 1-3.

a truth. This work is perhaps the ultimate sophistic text, it is a defence of the indefensible.

For Gorgias, *logos* is as powerful as defending Helen physically. To demonstrate this, Gorgias outlines several causes for Helen to leave Greece: 1) by fate or the will of the Gods, 2) through force and finally 3) by speech, Helen was persuaded by Paris to leave. Gorgias' argument is that persuasion or *logos* is no less of a powerful means to get Helen onto Paris' ship, as if she had been carried by force. Gorgias quickly dismisses the first two causes, arguing that if they were true nobody should have cause to condemn Helen. The remainder of Gorgias' defence is then focused on arguing that speech is as powerful as fate or force thereby again relieving Helen of blame. He writes:

*Speech is a powerful lord, which by means of the finest and most invisible body effects the divinest works: it can stop fear and banish grief and create joy and nurture pity. I shall show how this is the case, since it is necessary to offer proof to the opinion of my hearers: I both deem and define all poetry as speech with meter.*¹⁰⁷

The intention of Gorgias' *Helen* becomes an argument for the power of *logos*. He asks his readers to consider Helen to be equally as helpless to good persuasion as she might be to physical force or divine will. Later Gorgias adds to this notion that Helen was powerless to resist persuasion suggesting that: "The effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies."¹⁰⁸ Gorgias' defence hinges on the acknowledgment of *logos* as a persuader powerful enough to absolve Helen from any personal moral responsibility. *Logos* then is portrayed as a separate battleground where it is an individual's moral duty to argue for what they perceive to be right. Any truth then is a constructed truth, built upon *logos*. While there are occasions where the truthful argument is defeated, either due to the skill of the opposition or the ignorance of the truthful speaker, this highlights for Gorgias the need for his defence of Helen. It is his duty and the duty of every

¹⁰⁷ Gorg. *Hel.* 8-9.

¹⁰⁸ Gorg. *Hel.* 14.

citizen to actively participate in similar discourse as a means to cultivate the *voμos* of their society.

For Gorgias, education in *λογος* is essential for intellectual discovery. Argument and discussion is the only way to achieve and establish truth and without education society risks ignorance of its own customs, identities and needs. This is perhaps where Plato's parodies of sophistic teaching are particularly inaccurate. Gorgias is highly aware that rhetoric could spread misinformation or take advantage of an audience's ignorance. Yet Gorgias sees his education as a means of reducing misinformation and strives to improve discussion. This can be seen mostly clearly within Gorgias' defence of speech arguing that:

*The persuader ... does the wrong and the persuaded, ... is wrongly charged. To understand that persuasion, when added to speech, is wont also to impress the soul as it wishes, one must study ... logically necessary debates in which a single speech, written with art but not spoken with truth, bends a great crowd and persuades...*¹⁰⁹

Here Gorgias separates the need for debate with the designs and opinions of the speaker. There is a clear acknowledgment in the need for "*logically necessary debates*" while simultaneously accepting that these debates may be hijacked by misinformation and falsehoods. Gorgias expands on the impact of misinformation, he argues:

All who have and do persuade people of things do so by moulding false argument. For if all men on all subjects had both memory of things past and of things present and foreknowledge of the future, speech would not be similar, since as things are now it is not easy for them to recall the past nor to consider the present nor to predict the future. So that on most subjects most men take opinion as

¹⁰⁹ Gorg. Hel. 12-13.

*counsellor to their soul, but since opinion is slippery and insecure it casts those employing it into slippery and insecure successes.*¹¹⁰

Gorgias clearly does not dismiss the notion that *λογος* has the power to be misleading, but he also argues that the blame for this is not within the practice of *λογος* but within the ignorance of the speaker. Gorgias argues that *λογος* is a real, tangible power, one that he is happy to compare to physical¹¹¹ or militaristic power.¹¹² Like physical power, it can, and should be actively taught and trained but ultimately it still resides with the practitioner to act with justice. In addition, to return briefly to a passage quoted above, Gorgias defines poetry as “*speech with meter*”.¹¹³ Considering the popular condemnation of sophistry by the playwrights, it would be understandable if this comment was a response to that criticism. Gorgias may well be suggesting that drama was as much to blame for educating, influencing and participating in Athenian political discussion as the sophists were, and from the modern perspective - he may have a point. This demonstrates that for Gorgias, *λογος* is a real and unavoidable power that has the potential to mislead and corrupt its audience yet equally has the power to push individuals toward truth and wisdom, all be it mortal wisdom.

For Gorgias, *λογος* is a new socio-political battleground, as important and impactful as a physical conflict. Predominantly those who are educated, just and wise can be expected to be victorious and their success can help guide others toward a tangible, all be it mortal, truth. For Gorgias it is a citizen's duty to learn *λογος* and participate in discussion thereby actively defending the society from ignorance and misinformation. Contrary to Plato's portrayal of sophistic teaching, education in rhetoric was not an inherently corrupting process. On the contrary, it extended the same lessons of the theatre, encouraging *λογος* as a means to cultivate a society's identity and thereby strengthening it. What determines corruption was the extent an individual had

¹¹⁰ Gorg. Hel. 11.

¹¹¹ Gorg. Hel. 8.

¹¹² Gorg. Hel. 16.

¹¹³ Gorg. Hel. 8-9.

cultivated truth through that discussion. Through understanding Gorgias' beliefs this chapter can demonstrate that the sophists added an influential new dynamic to the ancient discussion on education and politics.

3.2. Protagoras

*Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are,
and of things that are not that they are not.*¹¹⁴

This passage is one of the few brief passages that can somewhat reliably be attributed to Protagoras. Yet in this section, I will argue that it articulates one of the major contributions Protagoras made to classical Athenian thought. For Protagoras, wisdom may be discovered through human means namely, through education in *λογος*.¹¹⁵ In other words, by educating individuals in *λογος*, tangible truths may be actively discovered. Protagoras defines what is lawful by what is just and through this we get the grounds for his educational goal termed 'the art of good deliberation' (*euboulia*).¹¹⁶ Contrary to the parody created by Plato¹¹⁷ that so heavily dominates our understanding of sophistic teachings,¹¹⁸ the passage need not imply that divine wisdom or universal truth does not exist and thereby permit individuals to live lawlessly. On the contrary, it is suggesting that through *λογος* a society might discover mortal truths that are not perfect or universal but are tangible, achievable, and valuable to a successful society. This I will argue is Protagoras' contribution to the ancient discussion on education and politics, a contribution that can be seen to provoke the great change in Athenian politics.

As so much of our material for sophistic thought comes from predominantly hostile sophistic writers it is impossible to see through their

¹¹⁴ Diog. Laert. 9.8.51.

¹¹⁵ Jarratt, 1991, 53. Jarratt argues *voμος* was a combination of public and private knowledge.

¹¹⁶ Caizzi, 1999, 320.

¹¹⁷ Pl. *Prot.* 361.

¹¹⁸ Collins, 2015, 214, 155.

portrayals. Plato provides by far the most extensive account of sophistic arguments. From his *Protagoras*, Plato criticises Protagoras for claiming to avoid tangible subjects such as arithmetic, geometry and astrology and instead teach them the art of citizenship.¹¹⁹ This passage is interesting because Socrates is shown to immediately jump on Protagoras, claiming that he does not know what good citizenship is and therefore to claim to teach it is a fraud. Yet as we have seen above, Protagoras is not claiming he can teach an ideal but a means to cultivate a mortal and contextually based wisdom. It is through good discussion that information and understandings can be shared that might help to understand the needs and customs of a society. Protagoras' teachings were not designed to reveal absolute truths, it was simply a means to better understand.

What Plato ignores or parodies is that *logos* is a means to achieve wisdom. Protagoras engaged with the chaos of Athenian democracy incorporating *logos* as a new socio-political force that must be acknowledged and taught to all levels of society as a means to grapple with their own identities, customs and laws.¹²⁰ For Protagoras, *logos* ought to be central to a communities' education. This is reflected when Plato has Socrates threaten to leave the discussion if Protagoras did not stop speaking rhetorically.¹²¹ Plato is actively attempting to divide manipulative rhetoric from intellectual discussion, something that Protagoras would consider to be impossible.¹²² Certainly, the sophists acknowledged that misinformation and false opinions could hijack a debate, but that is not what Plato is referring to here.¹²³ Plato is attempting to draw a line between Socrates and Protagoras that is not really there. They are both using what we would determine as a 'Socratic method' to reach a truth, yet Plato accuses Protagoras of corrupting this process.

¹¹⁹ Pl. *Prot.* 319e.

¹²⁰ Wolin, 2004, 11.

¹²¹ Pl. *Prot.* 336.

¹²² Wolin, 2004, 9. Wolin argues that Plato is specifically dividing the sophist politician from his own statesman.

¹²³ Woodruff & Gagarin, 2008, 367. Woodruff has also pointed out that sophists may well have included discourse that made the weaker argument the stronger as a technical exercise.

Plato's perception is that Protagoras is a misleading, fraudulent, and damaging influence upon intellectual debate, and I would acknowledge Plato was half-right. Sophistic teaching certainly contributed to the rise of prominent statesman that exacerbated and even initiated the political turmoil seen in Athens at the end of the fifth century. Yet to claim that the sophists only taught misinformation should be seen as buying into the theatrical stereotype of a 'sophist', a stereotype Plato is perhaps most intent on distancing himself from.¹²⁴ Instead, Protagoras argues for the importance of understanding *λογος* as part of the duty of the citizen. *Λογος* is a means to develop an effective understanding of one's social, political and intellectual context *νομος*. An understanding that helps to build upon human wisdom, without claiming to be a divine or a universal truth. For Protagoras, *λογος* was seen as a means by which an individual could actively attempt to learn and cultivate wisdom both within themselves and within their society at large.

It is not that truth does not exist for Protagoras but that it is difficult and sometimes, even impossible, to achieve. For Protagoras, *λογος* acts as a 'scientific' endeavour, a means slowly to grapple and build a rational argument upon rational argument until eventually a more accurate *νομος* could be established. This attitude is seen most clearly within the second fragment that is attributed to Protagoras. He states:

*As to the gods, I have no means of knowing either that they exist or that they do not exist. For many are the obstacles that impede knowledge, both the obscurity of the question and the shortness of human life.*¹²⁵

From this quote we see the agnosticism in Protagoras' understandings that many modern scholars have seized.¹²⁶ Most importantly, knowledge is seen to be difficult to achieve, taking a lifetime of dedication and even then, many are

¹²⁴ Osborne, 1999, 211.

¹²⁵ Diog. Laert. 9.8. 51.

¹²⁶ Woodruff & Gagarin, 2008, 375; Reuter, 2001,78; Farrar, 1988, 51.

often unsuccessful. Yet Protagoras does not suggest that knowledge is an illusion, or even that divine wisdom and ultimate truths are not achievable. Protagoras appears open to the idea that wisdom can be achieved but he neither claims to understand it himself, nor dismisses the notion that wisdom could be achieved.

To summarise, because the sophistic education reshaped so much of Athenian politics it is critical that we understand the lessons taught and the extent of the impact. I have demonstrated that the sophists saw *λογος* as a means by which an individual could actively be educated toward wisdom. Through practising the performance of ideas and arguments, *λογος* became a legitimate means to achieve power, providing the ability to persuade ones audience. As a result, *λογος* became a new political force and, for Gorgias, it was every citizen's duty to learn *λογος* so that they might stand up for their beliefs and endeavour toward wisdom. The sophist contribution to the contemporary debate on education stems from the fact that *λογος* is a form of education. It was a new political force to be mastered and Athens in the late fifth century should be seen as being in a vicious struggle to best master this new power. The sophists understood and capitalised on this realisation that education was the key both to leadership and citizenship.

4. Conclusion

To summarise this chapter, I have argued that sophistic education created a seismic change in fifth-century Athenian politics through teaching *λογος*. *Λογος*, was defined, in this context, as an argument, speech, or rhetorical persuasion. This sophistic education gave those who could afford it, a political advantage through learning how to persuade an audience. I showed how many major characters of the fifth century owe part of their education to the sophists and that those characters impacted fifth century Athenian politics is unquestionable. It is perhaps due to this influence that the sophists received

such a negative portrayal from the theatre and fourth century writers, who had cause to blame the sophistic teachings for Athens' political turmoil toward the end of the fifth century.

However, I argued that sophistic philosophy was more complex than simply teaching wealthy individuals how to gain political advantage. I demonstrated that for Gorgias and Protagoras practising *λόγος* was a means to understand others, to learn the customs and needs of their society and to search for common truths. For the sophists, *λόγος* was a means to learn how to become a good citizen or good leader. Moreover, I showed how relevant these ideas were to the thinkers of the fourth century, despite the efforts taken by the Socratics¹²⁷ to distance themselves from the sophists. The sophists brought with them a recognition that education was relevant for an individual's political achievement, but it is also relevant for good leadership.

¹²⁷ I am hesitantly including Isocrates within the label of Socratic here. As I will argue below, the reality is more complex.

Chapter 2: Theatre and the assembly

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how the sophists introduced new ideas on rhetoric, education, and leadership. Through discussing these ideas and instructing those who could afford tuition the sophists had a direct impact upon Athenian politics through their teaching of *λόγος*. However, these sophistic ideas were not just discussed behind closed doors or whispered into the ears of key fifth-century characters, they were part of a public discussion. In this chapter, I will show how the theatre acted as a vehicle for the complex ideas of the sophists to be understood and discussed by a wide section of Athenian society. The performances of the theatre brought audiences face to face with complicated, nuanced topics that were politically or intellectually pertinent to the current events of fifth-century Athens.

While this chapter will draw attention to the power of the theatre to distribute ideas, we must remember that Athenian theatre was not designed principally to be an educator, or as a debating chamber, but as part of religious tradition.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, in this chapter, I will argue that through incorporating themes of rhetoric, leadership or war, the audience was encouraged to consider and discuss these ideas without attending a sophistic discussion. It is additionally important to highlight that this chapter is assessing theatre from an Athenian standpoint, understanding the impact a play might have upon a democratic audience within a particular historical context.

To demonstrate this ability to transmit ideas, the chapter will initially establish the theatre's position within Athenian democratic society. I will show how the theatre acted as an independent civic institution, at the heart of Athenian cultural and religious tradition.¹²⁹ This will highlight, not only the impact that theatrical performances could have upon Athens but also that the role of

¹²⁸ Carey, 2019, 245.

¹²⁹ Carey, 2019, 245.

the theatre in Athenian society was far too complex to just be labelled an educator. Instead, the key to this chapter is demonstrating that the ideas and discussions highlighted in the previous chapter were not limited to the privileged. I will show that the theatre's audience a diverse section of Athenian society, and was not just the stomping ground of the elite.

Finally, I will show how evidence for theatre acting as a vehicle for sophistic ideas can be seen in our fourth century-thinkers. I will demonstrate how later thinkers, especially Plato, are very wary of the power and influence that could be generated by the theatre. For Plato, I will show that he is so concerned with the theatre's capacity for influence that he proposes heavy regulations should be set up to limit the freedom of the performances and thereby attempt to control the ideas the theatre could circulate. The impact that theatre had upon our fourth century-thinkers, helps to highlight just how influential the theatre of fifth-century Athens could have been in spreading sophistic ideas to the *demos*.

1. Theatre and democracy

As we have seen, Athenian citizenship was defined by acts of participation.¹³⁰ Participation in festivals, theatre, law courts and the assembly were all key elements of the Athenian democratic culture. As I demonstrated above, all these institutions provided lessons in citizenship, but it was the theatre that was particularly capable of popularising the discussion of complex topics and thereby influencing the general intellectual environment.¹³¹ However, Athenian theatre was not institutionalised, nor should we forget its religious importance. The theatre was a civic institution, whose performances were often complementary to Athenian culture and politics.¹³² Through this uncontrolled

¹³⁰ Pelling, 2005, 83.

¹³¹ Cartledge, 2006, 19.

¹³² Carey, 2019, 245.

public discussion, the audience could participate in a communal promotion of shared values, ideas and could even address controversies relevant to their own civic life.¹³³ The theatre would have evoked an emotional and intellectual challenge that would not only introduce highly complex topics into civic discussion, but also could challenge the audience to resolve or at least engage with a controversy.¹³⁴ I argue that the theatre primarily played a cultural and religious role, employing independent playwrights who raised topics and discussions designed to be entertaining as well as educational.

That theatre performances were part of religious festivals is one of the most telling indications of its importance within Athenian society. The festival of Dionysus was a means, quite literally, to bring the society together.¹³⁵ The theatre would act as a way to consolidate and share common values and ideas. The fact that this practice was endorsed by the state, due to its role as part of a religious festival, makes the theatre doubly relevant to Athenian tradition.¹³⁶ We see the cultural and social significance of the theatre in many of the civic customs that flanked theatrical performance. This can be seen within the procession of war orphans,¹³⁷ a visual demonstration of sacrifice, and a communal willingness to emulate those who had given the most to Athens.¹³⁸ The audience would see these orphans being protected and cared for by the state and acknowledge the public display of honouring their sacrifice. On the same note, military cadets would demonstrate their martial skills before the citizenry within the theatre.¹³⁹ This was not just a demonstration of their military capability, but of their worthiness to join the current citizens as participatory members of Athenian society as well as in war.¹⁴⁰ The theatre would also host

¹³³ See Poulakos, 2004, 45.

¹³⁴ Davidson, 2005, 208. Davidson argues for the intellectual and emotional challenge theatre would be for the audience.

¹³⁵ Winkler, 1990, 13. Winkler argues specifically for what he terms a 'communitarian' system where the public would take part in a religious and political activity.

¹³⁶ Davidson, 2005, 196; Winkler, 1990, 15; Henderson, 1990, 299.

¹³⁷ Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon*, 3.154; Isoc, *de pace*, 82. See Goldhill, 1987.

¹³⁸ Winkler, 1990, 15.

¹³⁹ Osborne, 1999, 268.

¹⁴⁰ Arist. *Const. Ath.* 42.

announcements, listing those citizens that had benefited the city.¹⁴¹ Tributes from states under the Athenian empire would be offered along with a ceremony that glorified Athens.¹⁴² Finally, the theatre was used as a platform to decorate distinguished members of society, rewarding them for their dedication or selfless support of the state. These examples show how Athenian theatre was so entwined with the cultural traditions and shared values at the centre of Athenian society.¹⁴³

At this point it is worth noting that this thesis would distance itself from Winkler who leans too heavily on the theatre as a means to lead the audience toward specific lessons.¹⁴⁴ Several scholars have spent time demonstrating how Greek theatre acted as a melting pot of Greek ideas,¹⁴⁵ rather than specifically Athenian ones.¹⁴⁶ While I agree that theatre is bigger than Athens, this thesis is interested specifically in theatre's impact upon an Athenian audience. I argue playwrights primarily aimed to be entertaining, and the fact they raised nuanced, topical or controversial themes was a means to that end. As a result, playwrights should not be seen to be pushing a specific argument, and certainly not an Athenian argument. Instead they are challenging the audience to engage with the play. This is not to say the theatre was blind to its political or social context, and indeed some scholars have drawn plausible ties between certain plays and current events, which I will discuss below.¹⁴⁷ In this chapter, I argue that the theatre was simply capable of spreading complex ideas and in that capacity alone, the theatre becomes relevant to this thesis.

¹⁴¹ Winkler, 1990, 15.

¹⁴² Goldhill, 2006, 56.

¹⁴³ Cartledge, 2006, 3.

¹⁴⁴ Winkler, 1990, 16.

¹⁴⁵ Hall, 2006, 20; Rhodes, 2003, 105.

¹⁴⁶ See Rhodes, 2003; Hall, 1996, 295-309; Carter, 2011.

¹⁴⁷ Wohl, 2015, 112.

2. Audience

One reason why the theatre is relevant to this thesis is because it demonstrates how complex topics were not just confined to intellectual discussions but were accessible to a far wider audience. The exact composition of the audience is difficult to determine with any certainty, but I argue that the ideas and values that the theatre raised were aimed at a diverse audience. Ultimately, I will conclude that while there is a considerable lack of clarity in this area, the theatre's audience was diverse enough to create discussion throughout the whole of Athenian society.

The most overt example of public accessibility to the Athenian theatre, comes from several passages that imply a diverse participation, especially seen in Aristophanes and Plato.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, with a standard admission cost of two obols we can presume that the theatre would have been accessible, at least in theory, to a majority of the population. Plato in his *Gorgias*, even refers to public funds introduced by Pericles that we can presume would have permitted a considerable section of society to afford the entrance fee and attend the theatre.¹⁴⁹ Specifically he states: “*What I, for my part, hear is that Pericles has made the Athenians idle, cowardly, talkative, and avaricious, by starting the system of public fees.*”¹⁵⁰ Some scholars have used this reference, among others,¹⁵¹ to support the argument that money was no barrier for theatre attendance, despite the negative portrayal these public funds receive in our elitist sources. Yet scholars make these claims cautiously, hesitant to move past the considerable difference in power and class between male citizens, women, metics and slaves.¹⁵² Indeed, it seems difficult to see how such a patriarchal and conservative society could put all those social divisions aside for

¹⁴⁸ Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 501-8; *Peace* 962-7; Plato *Gorgias* 658c-d.

¹⁴⁹ Cartledge, 2006, 10.

¹⁵⁰ Pl. *Gorgias*. 515e.

¹⁵¹ Arist. *Wasps*. 1189; *Frogs*. 141.

¹⁵² Roselli, 2011, 86; Goldhill, 2006, 59. Goldhill has drawn attention to a comedic fragment (Alexis fr. 41.) that implies that both women and foreigners would have seating in the theatre, and that seats were allocated based on social position.

the theatre. Yet, while social status was likely to be relevant for the theatre, we can presume that neither social position, nor admission cost, would have been sufficient to prevent a diverse audience.

The question of social diversity within the theatre then becomes a question of space. Scholars have frequently debated the potential seating capacity for the theatre of Dionysos with many estimating between 3700 – 8,000 based upon archaeological remains.¹⁵³ It is likely then, that physical space was the primary prohibitor on audience diversity. Yet Roselli's greater estimate of 8,000 is worth exploring. Roselli comes to this figure by including spectators seated beyond the archaeological remains, on the surrounding hilly banks.¹⁵⁴ This I think is part of the key to understanding the actual impact of the theatre, that the full audience would include not only those seated, but any who were able to be drawn into the themes, discussions and stories of the play.

Plato's comments suggests that the public fees made the people "talkative" and "idle", pursuits normally reserved for the wealthy. Slightly earlier, Plato makes the same point more clearly having his Socrates state:

*Then it must be a rhetorical public speaking, or do you not think that the poets use rhetoric in the theatres? ... So now we have found a kind of rhetoric addressed to such a public as is compounded of children and women and men, and slaves as well as free; an art that we do not quite approve of, since we call it a flattering one.*¹⁵⁵

It is not certain from this passage that the theatre was attended by women, children and slaves but what *is* certain is that Plato believed the theatre could

¹⁵³ See Dawson, (1997, 7) for a seating capacity of 3,700, Goldhill, (2006, 58) for 6000 and Roselli, (2011, 74) for 8000. It is worth noting however, that Roselli reaches that figure through the inclusion of spectators seated beyond the bounds of the archaeological remains.

¹⁵⁴ Roselli, 2011, 86.

¹⁵⁵ Pl. *Gorgias*. 502d.

impact the whole of society. In a similar passage from *Laws* Plato's Athenian states that:

*If the tiniest children are to be the judges, they will award the prize to the showman of puppets, will they not? ... And older lads to the exhibitor of comedies; while the educated women and the young men, and the mass of the people in general, will award it to the shower of tragedies... And we old men would very likely take most delight in listening to a rhapsode giving a fine recitation of the Iliad or the Odyssey or of a piece from Hesiod, and declare that he is easily the winner. Who then would rightly be the winner of the prize? That is the next question, is it not?*¹⁵⁶

This passage outlines quite precisely all members of society participating with theatre in one form or another. Plato is making a direct reference to Athenian theatrical competitions, a reference that his readers would not understand had it not at least some bearing as to the state of a theatre audience in the fourth century. This suggests that the theatre had an impact well beyond those who physically attended, and that the topics and discussions infiltrated every aspect of society.

The notion of a widespread public discussion that is stirred up by the theatre can be seen most vividly within Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. While the play is certainly set up around the comic theme of a sex strike, the women are portrayed as participators in public discussions, placing them, not only at centre stage, but as the deliverers of wisdom. I would argue this is not just a literary, or comic tool for Aristophanes, but that it was designed to connect with the audience. In fact, I argue that the play would only work if women were either present in the theatre, or at least involved in the public discussion. As Aristophanes states:

*we, unassuming, forgotten in quiet, endured without question,
endured in our loneliness all your incessant child's antics and riot.*

¹⁵⁶ Pl. *Laws*. 658.

Our lips we kept tied, though aching with silence, though well all the while in our silence we knew. How wretchedly everything still was progressing by listening dumbly the day long to you. For always at home you continued discussing the war and its politics loudly, and we sometimes would ask you, our hearts deep with sorrowing though we spoke lightly, though happy to see, what's to be inscribed on the side of the Treaty-stone "What, dear, was said in the Assembly today?" "Mind your own business," he'd answer me growlingly.

"hold your tongue, woman, or else go away." And so I would hold it.¹⁵⁷

Several elements of this passage require unpacking. The first is diversity and commonality of public discussion. Aristophanes vividly portrays political discussion reaching every part of society, occupying the minds of assembly voters and non-voters alike. The audience is expected to relate to these matters of public interest and how they infiltrated discussions within households. The second aspect to this passage is that this is not a reserved or passive speech but an angry exchange in the heat of argument. The character of Lysistrata is prominent within the play, partly due to her bravery and decisiveness but also because she delivers the most articulate and intelligent speeches.¹⁵⁸

Aristophanes is such a skilful playwright owing, in part, to his ability to connect and encourage his audience to engage with his plays. Yet one of the primary premises of *Lysistrata* would be lost if the scenario were entirely hypothetical with no bearing on the reality of Athenian discussion. *Lysistrata* is a comedy, and while we should acknowledge that its primary goal is to be funny, it is also worth highlighting that it is the traditional statesmen that are humiliated and the rebellious Lysistrata who is idealised. *Lysistrata* demonstrates two important factors. Firstly, that public discussion was not confined to the

¹⁵⁷ Arist. *Lysistrata*. 486-531.

¹⁵⁸ Arist. *Lysistrata*. 551.

theatre¹⁵⁹ but the topics raised permeated into every element of society and engaged individuals who may never have even entered the theatre. Secondly, the play suggests that women were part of public discussions and that their contributions were legitimate and intelligent, or, at the very least, Aristophanes believed they could be. I would argue that *Lysistrata* would struggle to work as a play or as a comedy if women were neither in the theatre nor part of political discussion beyond the theatre. It would seem far more likely that the theatre audience would broadly reflect the socio-political positions of individuals in society.¹⁶⁰ As a result, to answer the question of whether women were present¹⁶¹ would require an investigation as to the role of women within Athens more broadly as indeed would be relevant for metics and slaves.¹⁶² This is not to say that we should expect a completely egalitarian theatre, but that the audience was diverse enough for the theatre to influence public discussion. What is important for this chapter is that the theatre is acknowledged to be a propagator of ideas that would infiltrate every avenue of society and thereby create an environment of discussion.

3. Learning Through Comedy

One of the clearest examples of the theatre acting as a vehicle for ideas is within the works of Aristophanes. While, as a comic playwright, we must always be cautious not to take Aristophanes too seriously, it is difficult to ignore how deliberately he glorifies the theatre's role as an influencer, a teacher and an adviser.¹⁶³ I argue that we need not take the following passages at face value to still see how widely the theatre was recognised as a place of learning as well as entertainment. One of the clearest examples of Aristophanes overtly acknowledging, and frankly bragging, about his ability to introduce new ideas to his audience, can be seen in a passage from *Clouds* where he states:

¹⁵⁹ Or assembly/law courts etc.

¹⁶⁰ Hall, 2006, 93. Argues that while women and slaves were excluded from law courts and the assembly they can be found in the theatre.

¹⁶¹ Goldhill, 2006, 61. Argues that metics were present within the theatre but acknowledges the evidence for women is difficult to state with certainty.

¹⁶² Roselli, 2011. 168.

¹⁶³ Osborne, 2020, 24.

*And I, although so excellent a poet, do not give myself airs, nor do I seek to deceive you by twice and thrice bringing forward the same pieces; but I am always clever at introducing new fashions, not at all resembling each other, and all of them clever...*¹⁶⁴

The notion that Aristophanes deliberately placed new and engaging ideas at the feet of his audience, is difficult to avoid in this passage. The passage directly speaks of “*new fashions*” although perhaps ‘new ideas’ would be a more relevant translation of ἰδέα, given the context.¹⁶⁵ Here Aristophanes places his comedy in contrast to tragedy, and in that comparison, we must acknowledge there is the potential for comic irony.¹⁶⁶ Yet even if Aristophanes is not serious in suggesting that comedy is more nuanced, or more original than tragedy,¹⁶⁷ he is still depending on the audience being aware of the relation between comedy and tragedy and their respective capacity to introduce new ideas.

In a similar manner to the passage above, Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* also directs a speech from the chorus directly to the audience; asserting his capacity as a comic to engage with complex and serious topics along with tragedy. He states:

*Spectators, be not angered if, although I am a beggar, I dare in a Comedy to speak before the people of Athens of the public opinion; Comedy too can sometimes discern what is right. I shall not please, but I shall say what is true.*¹⁶⁸

This passage is widely regarded among scholars as evidence that comedy acted as a vehicle for moral or political ideas.¹⁶⁹ It is particularly interesting because it implies how the audience is expected to react. Aristophanes appears

¹⁶⁴ Aristophanes. *Clouds*. 545-8.

¹⁶⁵ The context here is that in *Clouds* Aristophanes includes sophistic ideas as a fundamental theme of the play. This is interesting because this critical attitude toward sophistic through is also taken up by Plato who also criticises the sophistic ideas along similar lines.

¹⁶⁶ Zuckerberg, 2016, 166.

¹⁶⁷ Specifically, as we will explore below, tragedy appears to repeat themes and stories.

¹⁶⁸ Aristophanes. *Acharnians*. 496-7

¹⁶⁹ Wright, 2012, 11; Henderson, 1990, 272. Henderson argues that Aristophanes was present within intellectual circles and was capable of teaching politics.

to be attempting to push against a pre-conceived notion that comedy was not deep-thinking when compared to tragedy. What is more, Aristophanes puts his finger on exactly what this chapter is attempting to prove: That theatre in general “*spoke before the people of Athens of the public opinion*”.¹⁷⁰ Again, we must err on the side of caution when using comedy to prove serious arguments, and it will ultimately come down to the reader’s opinion whether to see these passages as trustworthy or not. Yet for this passage to make sense, whether it was meant ironically or not, would rely upon the audience understanding a generally held notion that theatre could “*discern what is right...[and] say what is true.*”.

These passages help to prove that Aristophanes actively challenged the audience to question key public ideas and figures, he names names, and calls out popular controversy.¹⁷¹ Aristophanes goes as far as to suggest that the strength of a playwright is based upon their ability to teach the audience. In his *Frogs* he states: “*It is right and just for our sacred chorus to advise and teach what’s good for the city.*”¹⁷² And later: “*...why should one admire a poet?*” and Euripides replies “*For cleverness, and giving good advice, since we improve the people in the cities.*”¹⁷³ Once again Aristophanes appears to put his finger directly upon the point this section is trying to prove; that the theatre could engage, and even influence, its audience on complex topics.¹⁷⁴ Yet as always we must be careful here.¹⁷⁵ As Taplin points out, Aristophanes is not proposing that theatre taught specific lessons but he is acknowledging the impact the theatre could have upon its audience.¹⁷⁶ I argue theatres role is not so specific as can be summarised as a ‘teacher’, “*for little boys have a teacher, who advises them, and grown-ups have poets.*”¹⁷⁷ We do not need to go as far as

¹⁷⁰ I feel it is acceptable to use the term ‘opinion’ over ‘weal’ in this case.

¹⁷¹ Henderson, 1990, 291. Argues that by challenging public figures and ideas helped to confirm the sectators’ sovereignty.

¹⁷² Aristophanes *Frogs*. 486.

¹⁷³ Aristophanes. *Frogs*. 1006.

¹⁷⁴ Bowen, 1972, 77. Argues that *Frogs* even required the audience to read text written onto theatrical props.

¹⁷⁵ Wright, 2012, 6.

¹⁷⁶ Taplin, 2003, 122.

¹⁷⁷ Aristophanes. *Frogs*. 1054.

these passages imply,¹⁷⁸ the theatre should not be seen as a lecture hall, but a forum of ideas where opinions run a gauntlet of argument and objection. In the above passage, Aristophanes acknowledges the role of the playwright in that method of education, to set the agenda, raise a topic, or take a common concept to a comic extreme, and thereby provoke engagement from the audience.¹⁷⁹ By extension, Aristophanes creates an environment for education to develop and is acutely aware of his role in that process.

In summary, despite the clarity of the passages I have covered, we simply cannot trust Aristophanes not to be making some inside joke that would go over the head of the modern reader, and as such, that Aristophanes should not be taken too seriously. This, however, is exactly the point, for the audience to understand Aristophanes' comedy they must be aware of the complex ideas and controversies employed by Aristophanes. That then is the focus of my argument, that Aristophanes' audience must have been sufficiently knowledgeable about these complex ideas, key political individuals and public opinions to understand this comedy. Moreover, the more obscure these passages appear to the modern reader, the more culturally and politically aware we might expect spectators to be. In short, if these passages are all an inside joke, the audience must, at the very least, have been on the inside. It is also worth noting that this is not a comprehensive list of passages that press this argument.¹⁸⁰ From here the section is in a position to highlight some of the complex topics that Aristophanes focuses on.

¹⁷⁸ Henderson, 1990, 312. Henderson argues that poets wanted the audience to think about their civic lives and be good judges of rhetoric. While I broadly agree, Henderson goes a little too far. I argue that poets wanted to be successful and in order to do that they needed to engage with a popular topics, many of which were highly complex.

¹⁷⁹ Christ, 2006, 23

¹⁸⁰ Metagenes, *Sacrifice-Lover* fr. 15; *Eupolis* fr. 392.

4. The Theatre's "spell"¹⁸¹

I argue that by the end of the fifth century there was a widely held belief that theatre acted as a vehicle for ideas and values to spread across Athenian society.¹⁸² This is primarily based on how much detail, provisions and restrictions are used by Plato and Aristotle when speaking on theatres role within society. However, there is evidence that implies this appreciation for the power and influence of the theatre was present well within the fifth century too.¹⁸³ Plato is a good starting point and considering he will be particularly relevant to this thesis, it is sensible that we focus on his understanding. One of the clearest passages that demonstrate Plato's concern over theatre's ability to influence its audience comes toward the end of the *Republic*. He states:

*...Homer is the most poetic of poets and the first of tragedians, but we must know the truth, that we can admit no poetry into our city save only hymns to the gods and the praises of good men. For if you grant admission to the honeyed muse in lyric or epic, pleasure and pain will be lords of your city instead of law and that which shall from time to time have approved itself to the general reason as the best.*¹⁸⁴

This passage is one of many that highlight Plato's fear that theatre had the capacity to spread misinformation, impiety, and iniquity.¹⁸⁵ Plato is repeatedly critical of theatre as an educator, highlighting the absurdity of learning from the theatre rather than a technical expert.¹⁸⁶ By extending his censorship to Homer Plato is likely to have been met with some resistance among his peers, as he appears to anticipate.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹ Pl. *Rep.* 607e.

¹⁸² Wright, 2012, 17; Ford, 2002, 197-208; Russell, 1981, 84-98.

¹⁸³ See O'Regan, 1992, 9-21.

¹⁸⁴ Pl. *Rep.* 607a.

¹⁸⁵ , Pl. *Rep.* 312b, 318e, 325d-e, 376-3.398,10.606d-607a; Cartledge, 2006.

¹⁸⁶ Taplin, 2003, 122; Pl. *Rep.* 357-383.

¹⁸⁷ Pl. *Rep.* 606e.

As a result, Plato acknowledges an “*old quarrel between philosophy and poetry*” and promises to allow citizens to discuss certain work and decide if they are appropriate. Plato’s Socrates states: “*But nevertheless, let it be declared that, if the mimetic and dulcet poetry can show any reason for her existence in a well-governed state, we would gladly admit her, since we ourselves are very conscious of her spell.*”¹⁸⁸ These passages toward the end of the *Republic*, help to outline Plato’s concerns with the theatre. Yet here we see that Plato is not just against theatre, he is simply cautious of how effectively theatre can spread ideas to a citizenry. In addition, it is interesting that Plato chooses to reference an ancient controversy between poet and philosopher, as Plato is not alone in challenging such established epic poets as Homer. Similar examples can also be found among a wider range of thinkers, as early as the pre-Socratics in the sixth and fifth centuries. Xenophanes states that there is little benefit to discussing fictional stories from former ages and criticises Homer and Hesiod for portraying the gods in frequently immoral light.¹⁸⁹ Moreover, Wright has outlined a plausible set of references that suggest Aristophanes is deliberately playing with a controversy that questions the value of theatre for intellectual discussion.¹⁹⁰

While Plato may well have been cautious of theatre’s capacity to mislead and corrupt, he also acknowledged its ability to guide and educate. This can be seen in the first instance by Plato’s willingness to draw from poetry to aid his intellectual discussions. His character of Socrates states that “*...everything Sophocles says comes to pass...*”.¹⁹¹ Similarly, phrases from Aeschylus are borrowed from his *Seven Against Thebes*¹⁹² “*... as Aeschylus says, [a good man] doesn’t want to be believed to be good but to be so*”.¹⁹³ Plato also includes several quotes from the *Iliad*¹⁹⁴ and the *Odyssey*.¹⁹⁵ While Homeric

¹⁸⁸ Pl. *Rep.* 607e.

¹⁸⁹ DK21 B10 – 22, B56-7.

¹⁹⁰ Wright, 2012, 18.

¹⁹¹ Pl. *Rep.* 329d

¹⁹² Aeschylus. *Seven Against Thebes*. 592-94.

¹⁹³ Pl. *Rep.* 361b.

¹⁹⁴ Pl. *Rep.* 366, 380.

¹⁹⁵ Pl. *Rep.* 381.

performances were not strictly speaking part of the theatre, they were clearly not above criticism or incorporation by Plato. This willingness to include poetic references and quotes demonstrates that Plato did not reject the complex topics raised by the theatre outright. As a result, I argue that Plato is using these quotes as a means to draw on common knowledge and familiar concepts as a means to anchor his own argument.

Moreover, as I have already touched upon, it is difficult to ignore the role that music and poetry played on Plato's idealised society described within the *Republic* and *Laws*. Plato sees poetry as immensely powerful, with the ability to educate the society but with an equally powerful ability to corrupt them. As a result, while Plato explains at length, several means to censor and control theatre, music or poetry¹⁹⁶ he also explains that it is one of the first and most powerful ways to educate.¹⁹⁷ Through understanding how Plato incorporated theatre into his idealised society and the caution he employed we can see evidence for the idea that theatre had the capacity to influence spectators.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that Athenian theatre facilitated public awareness of complex topics and shared ideals, topics that, as we will see, would heavily influence our later thinkers and occupy significant portions of their works. Today our only major window into understanding these ancient talking-points is through the intellectual works of elite thinkers, but this section has demonstrated the discussion to be much wider than that. These themes of rhetoric, education, leadership and war were part of a public debate, accessible to a diverse section of Athenian society.

¹⁹⁶ Pl. *Rep.* 380b, 386; Annas, 2017, 125.

¹⁹⁷ Pl. *Rep.* 376-8; 599-608; Bartels, 2017, 108.

To demonstrate this, I showed central role the theatre took as an Athenian institution. Attention was drawn to its place within religious festivals, within civic honours and military displays. The theatre was shown to be an independent civic institution yet positioned at the very centre of Athenian religious and cultural tradition.

One of the key points of this chapter was that the sophistic ideas highlighted in chapter one were not limited to wealthy or elites but, thanks to the theatre, were made available to a large proportion of the Athenian *demos*. I demonstrated that the theatre audience can be expected to represent substantial diversity. Through participating in Athenian customs and attending the theatre, I argued that an audience would struggle to avoid themes of leadership, education and leadership that were raised by playwrights.

The chapter then discussed the impact that theatre made upon the Athenian thinkers that make up so much of this thesis. I demonstrated that Plato especially, acknowledges theatre as an influencer in society and even incorporates it into his own idealised societies. Yet, Plato is also respectful and even apprehensive of the theatre's power to share ideas. I showed how Plato's references to the theatre are flanked with restrictions and legislation designed to force the theatre to only propagate ideas that benefit society. The way fourth century writers incorporate theatre into their idealised society, is an indication of how we should see the theatre, a powerful means to distribute complex ideas to the *demos*.

Section 2: Theorising Education

So far, this thesis has demonstrated that by the end of the fifth century, Athens was home to the idea that through actively learning individuals could gain powerful tools for any orator or leader to persuade their audience. The contemporary concern was that while persuasive, prospective leaders did not necessarily know how to be good leaders, with the best interests of Athens in mind.¹⁹⁸ With the political turmoil seen in Athens at the close of the fifth century, many began to question these new, persuasive and knowledgeable leaders. The new century brought with it a wave of thinkers who aimed to theorise a way that leaders could learn, not only how to be persuasive but how to understand the needs of their society and act in a positive and virtuous manner. But these new thinkers were not the instigators nor discoverers of education as a political tool, they were simply the children of it, attempting to remodel and hone a political force that Athens had apparently not mastered. Questions on leadership, law and education were always acknowledged as important for society but now thinkers aimed to intertwine them with virtue.

¹⁹⁸ Thuc. 6.39. (trans by) Crawley. 1910. Pl. *Protagoras*, 322d-323a. (trans by) W.R.M. Lamb. 1967.

Chapter 3: Xenophon

Education is essential to Xenophon's ideal of leadership. To rule effectively, every leader, no matter how idealised or naturally gifted, must actively learn the needs of their society and show moderation in tailoring their personal ambitions to those needs. Xenophon's works are typical of a fourth-century desire not just to teach rhetoric, but to demonstrate that a leader must also be taught how to be both virtuous and just. This chapter will primarily focus on demonstrating this within Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* where an education, principally in justice, provides the basis of Cyrus' success.

To demonstrate this, the chapter will initially outline how it will approach the works of Xenophon. It will show that Xenophon's works must be read together in order to best understand his thinking and agendas. Secondly, as 'σωφροσύνη' is seen by Xenophon to be such an important lesson for any would-be leader, it is necessary to explore Xenophon's use of the term and exactly what he means when he uses it. Following this, law and justice are two key themes to Xenophon's works, and to assess them properly the chapter must outline the historical and intellectual contexts that Xenophon was a part of. By the end of the fifth century, Athens will be shown to be redesigning its laws and thereby encouraging a popular discussion on νόμος in relation to φύσις. I will argue that Xenophon saw σωφροσύνη as a means to address this controversy, stating that leaders must learn the customs and laws of a society rather than rely upon a universal natural law. In addition, this section will be important for demonstrating that Xenophon's works should not be seen principally as a direct response to other thinkers. Instead, that Xenophon was simply engaging with topics that were popular throughout Athens.

This argument will then be developed within the *Cyropaedia* specifically. Through Xenophon's portrayal of Cyrus' flaws in book one, we can see Xenophon's understanding of the lessons his idealised leader must learn. The section will argue that Xenophon deliberately depicts the young Cyrus as brave

and ambitious but lacking in σωφροσύνη, thereby demonstrating need to ‘tame’ Cyrus’ immaturities. The chapter will then turn to the lessons given to Cyrus by his father Cambyses, which taught willing obedience and the outline of an idealised meritocracy. It will argue that Xenophon’s meritocratic society is one based around the cultivation of ἀρετή within all members of the society, and not just the leader. Finally, the chapter will address divinity in relation to the character of Cyrus. The section will argue that Cyrus’ proximity to the divine is predominantly irrelevant, as Xenophon understands σωφροσύνη to be a lesson even a divine leader would need actively to learn in order to best benefit the state. Through this method, the chapter aims to trace the importance of education through Xenophon’s understanding of law, meritocracy, leadership and divinity.

1. Reading Xenophon

Before exploring education within Xenophon, we must first outline the approach this thesis will take when reading his works. First and foremost, Xenophon’s works must be read together, as a whole, because his agendas are broader than any one work.¹⁹⁹ His arguments and topics are often cut short or not fully explained in some works, only to be taken up by others where a new perspective is offered. An example that will come up frequently within this chapter is Xenophon’s ideas surrounding law. The belief that ‘what is lawful is, by definition, also just’ is a topic that can be traced through several episodes within the *Cyropaedia*,²⁰⁰ yet the reader can still be left uncertain of the full complexity of what Xenophon means until it is contrasted with the character of Socrates in the *Memorabilia*.²⁰¹ Without comparison between texts in the Xenophontic corpus, Xenophon’s agenda is vague and difficult to follow. Particularly within the *Cyropaedia*, inconsistencies and contradictions within his narrative can leave the reader confused as to his understandings.

¹⁹⁹ Ferrario, 2017, 60; Grey, 2010, 248.

²⁰⁰ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.3.14-1.3.18. (trans by) Miller. 1914.

²⁰¹ Xen, *Mem*. 1.2.9. (trans by) Marchant. 1923.

It is as a result of this ambiguity that some have attempted to read a deeper logic into Xenophon's works. The publications of Leo Strauss and his followers,²⁰² in particular, read ambiguity into Xenophon's works.²⁰³ The primary issue with the Straussian method, which is controversial among readers of Xenophon,²⁰⁴ comes when modern scholars begin to project their own political theories onto Xenophon's ambiguity in an attempt to propose a general logic. As we will see, Xenophon is not above engaging with grandiose concepts. However, seeing such complexity within Xenophon's ambiguity is often difficult to justify. Instead, I propose Xenophon's philosophy is simply not as polished as some of his contemporaries and as modern readers we must allow for some messiness. Yet through comparison with Xenophon's other works, I propose that he demonstrates profound theories that build upon popular Socratic understandings.

2. Xenophon on νόμος and φύσις

Xenophon's occasional obscurity is not necessarily deliberate, or an attempt to hide a deeper truth. In fact, his thoughts are often made crystal clear. Throughout his works Xenophon repeatedly presses several key ideas, one of the clearest focusing on the need for education. For Xenophon, education enhances nature, but it also controls and tames it. Education acts as a means to harness the natural gifts of an individual to the needs of their society. Nature then is essential to good leadership but left untrained also has the potential of causing damage and harm. There are a multitude of references to this understanding and frequently Xenophon is uncharacteristically clear and specific when describing what he means.²⁰⁵ Select examples of this can be seen in his *Memorabilia* where he states:

²⁰² Strauss, 1972; Johnson, 2003; Johnson, 2012.

²⁰³ Gray, 2010, 247.

²⁰⁴ See Gray, 2010.

²⁰⁵ Xen. *Mem.* 3.1.6.9, 3.9.1.4, 4.1.3.2, 4.2.2.3; Xen. *Oec.* 11.5.4, 20.26.1, 20.27.2, Xen. *Symp.* 1.8.3, 8.41.3; Xen *Cyr.* 2.3.9.2, 2.3.10.12, 5.1.24.4; Xen. *Cyn.* 12.16.1.

*Was it by constant intercourse with some wise man or by natural ability that Themistocles stood out among his fellow-citizens as the man to whom the people naturally looked when they felt the want of a great leader?...“If in the minor arts great achievement is impossible without competent masters, surely it is absurd to imagine that the art of statesmanship, the greatest of all accomplishments, comes to a man of its own accord.”*²⁰⁶

Here Xenophon carefully states the need for education to enhance and develop the natural talents of a leader. Notably he is not suggesting that natural ability is unimportant but simply not enough. Xenophon is demonstrating the need to learn statesmanship actively and resisting the notion that idealised leaders arise naturally.

This idea that natural talent is only a part of good leadership is, again, carefully explained earlier in his *Memorabilia* where he states:

*To those who thought themselves possessed of natural endowments and despised learning, he explained that the greater the natural gifts, the greater is the need of education; pointing out that thoroughbreds by their spirit and mettle develop into serviceable and splendid creatures... if well trained, but, if untrained, turn out stupid, crazy, disobedient brutes. It is the same with human beings.*²⁰⁷

This passage again highlights the importance of education to enhance natural ability, but additionally Xenophon suggests that the greater one's natural talents, the greater the need for education. Xenophon is suggesting that left to its own devices, nature is capable of creating potentially dangerous individuals that are a threat to their surroundings if not properly educated. This point is particularly relevant when considering the meritocratic hierarchy laid out in the *Cyropaedia*. A leader must hold remarkable natural ability, but it is essential that

²⁰⁶ Xen. *Mem.* 4.2.2.

²⁰⁷ Xen. *Mem.* 4.1.3.

they are trained to attune their talents to the needs of the state. This is a belief this chapter will focus on as it is particularly relevant to understanding Cyrus' education.

One example that Xenophon clearly has in mind when demonstrating the need for education is the virtue of courage. Seen perhaps most clearly in his portrayal of Cyrus that we will return to later in this chapter, Xenophon sees courage as natural but in need of controlling through education. Xenophon states:

Then asked again whether Courage could be taught or came by nature, he replied: "I think that just as one man's body is naturally stronger than another's for labour, so one man's soul is naturally braver than another's in danger. For I notice that men brought up under the same laws and customs differ widely in daring. Nevertheless, I think that every man's nature acquires more courage by learning and practice."²⁰⁸

Courage is a useful example to pin down Xenophon's understandings as to the relationship between nature and education. As he states, individuals can build on their natural gifts through learning and practice. Most notably, courage is a virtue that, without training, can become a hindrance if an individual cannot correctly judge danger and becomes foolhardy. Along with the *Memorabilia*, the dangers of untrained courage are highlighted again in his *Cynegeticus*²⁰⁹ which vividly points to the risks of a spirited yet disloyal hunting dog and the *Cyropaedia* through the portrayal of Cyrus,²¹⁰ both passages we will return to.

Finally, there are two further passages that again, are highly deliberate in demonstrating this notion that nature is not enough if not accompanied with

²⁰⁸ Xen. *Mem.* 3.9.1-2.

²⁰⁹ Xen, *Cyn.* 1.3.11.

²¹⁰ Xen, *Cyr.* 1.4.20.

education. He states in his *Memorabilia* that “...there are many other qualifications, some natural, some acquired, that are necessary to one who would succeed as a general.”²¹¹ And similarly in his *Symposium*:

*If what I say appears to you gentlemen to be too grave and earnest for a drinking party, I beg you again not to be surprised. For during practically all my life I have been at one with the commonwealth in loving men who to a nature already good add a zealous desire for virtue.*²¹²

These passages help to stress how clear Xenophon was capable of being when stressing an idea he believed to be integral to leadership. This relationship between nature and the education that enhanced and harnessed it is essential to understanding Xenophon’s attitudes toward φύσις and νόμος. This has demonstrated that while Xenophon’s works are characteristically vague when compared to some of his contemporaries, he was still more than willing to firmly pin down his conclusions particularly when speaking on the importance of education.

2.1. Xenophon, Law and Context

For Xenophon, nature has its place in creating a good leader. Far more important though, is the need to actively learn the νόμος of their society so that an individual might best moderate their talents for the best interest of their society rather than themselves. To understand Xenophon’s use of νόμος and its role as a moderator or enhancer to φύσις we must first acknowledge how Xenophon engages with the discussions on law that I highlighted in chapters one and two. As we have seen, Athens in the second half of the fifth century can be confidently understood to be the host of informed political and popular discussions. Xenophon is a child of these discussions, growing up as a participatory member of Athenian democracy. Xenophon’s philosophy is a product of this theatrical debate along with sophistic and Socratic discourse.

²¹¹ Xen. *Mem.* 3.1.6.

²¹² Xen. *Sym.* 8.41.

Most notably the topic of justice and the discussion of the relationship between νόμος and φύσις is one of the most overt discussions and one that Xenophon appears heavily engaged with.

As we have seen, the relationship between νόμος and φύσις was entwined with the development of Athenian political culture along with its political history. When Solon first designed the Athenian laws and had them inscribed, he positioned the polis in an interesting legal scenario.²¹³ By departing Athens soon after establishing his written laws Solon had made Athenian νόμος the highest legal authority in Athens since the laws he ordained could not be changed for ten years.²¹⁴ Furthermore, he specifically states that he “...wrote laws the same for the bad and the good, fitting straight justice to each.”²¹⁵ While by no means democratic,²¹⁶ Solon had created laws that applied to all members of Athenian society. This is relevant because it was a clear acknowledgement of Athenian νόμος and its role within the polis. By the end of the fifth century, however, the authority of democratic Athens, and by extension Athenian νόμος, was under scrutiny. The polis endured failure in the Sicilian expedition, an oligarchic revolution and defeat in the Peloponnesian war provoking many to question the validity of Athenian νόμος.²¹⁷

What is particularly relevant to understanding Xenophon is to see him as part of these late fifth and fourth-century thinkers who aimed to find a new anchor for νόμος, or alternatively, to better categorise its relationship with φύσις. The presence of this debate can be seen within Plato’s *Gorgias* that demonstrates the conflict that can arise between νόμος and φύσις stating that:

²¹³ Regardless of the historic uncertainty of Draco’s laws Solon still created a new legal position for Athens.

²¹⁴ Hdt. 1.29.2. (trans by) Godley. 1920. Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 7.2. (trans by) Rackham. 1952. Plut. *Sol.* 25.1. (trans by) Perrin. 1914.

²¹⁵ Solon, fr. 36.

²¹⁶ Robb, 1994, 132; Raaflaub, 1997, 38.

²¹⁷ Mitchell, 2019, 2.

For you, Socrates, really turn the talk into such low, popular clap-trap, while you give out that you are pursuing the truth—into stuff that is “fair,” not by nature, but by convention. Yet for the most part these two—nature and convention—are opposed to each other²¹⁸

Plato is acknowledging this conflict between νόμος and φύσις and in the following passage Plato also addresses Pindar's historic claim that νόμος was king.²¹⁹ Again, in the fragments of Antiphon,²²⁰ who is likely to be writing before Plato, while justice is stated to be the obedience to civic law, it is noted that some may evade punishment while others are wrongly convicted, causing true justice to stem from nature. This underlines the conflict between νόμος and φύσις. This demonstrates that there was a contemporary debate on law and legal authority that was likely to have influenced Xenophon's works. It is within this context that Xenophon writes his understanding of law and justice. Xenophon is writing against a background of discussion about what law is. This debate is crucial in understanding the formation of Xenophon's legal understandings and the construction of his philosophy. It is within that context that σωφροσύνη becomes most relevant.

2.2. Νόμος over φύσις

For Xenophon a good leader must actively learn the νόμοι of their society. While φύσις is highly relevant to good leadership it must always come second to the needs of the society. Education then, is not just a means to good leadership but is also a means to justice. Through cultivating σωφροσύνη, a leader may understand their legal context and thereby learn the capacity to act justly. In the *Memorabilia* we see this attitude develop in between Socrates' dialogue with Hippias:

²¹⁸ Pl. *Gorgias*, 483.

²¹⁹ Pindar. Fr. 169.

²²⁰ Antiphon. *On Truth*. Fr. 44.

*Consequently, Hippias, the gods too accept the identification of just and lawful. By such words and actions, he encouraged Justice in those who resorted to his company.*²²¹

Xenophon proposes that even a god, possessing a divine understanding of justice, would need to learn the unique needs of a community. Every member of a society must be educated in σωφροσύνη in order to bind their virtues to the needs of the polis. When designing civic laws, the goal was not to describe a universal morality but a local one.²²² Herodotus in the fifth century had already said a polis' laws must be as unique as the society they govern, since a good law in one community might appear ridiculous in another.²²³ For Xenophon, a society's unique νόμος must be learned by all members of the society, in order to be successful.

For Xenophon, obedience to the νόμος of a polis is central to the success of that society. It is a common argument within Xenophon's works and is demonstrated most overtly within the *Memorabilia* where Socrates concludes that the "*lawful and just are the same thing*".²²⁴ Indeed, obedience to civic law, regardless of its flaws is central to Socrates' portrayed martyrdom. According to Xenophon, Socrates has both the moral means to oppose Athenian law and is offered the physical means to escape it. Yet Socrates chooses to follow Athenian law and go through with his execution.²²⁵ Again the *Memorabilia* argues that obedience to the law is used as a direct definition of justice for both the ruler and the citizens:

*For government of men with their consent and in accordance with the laws of the state was kingship; while government of unwilling subjects and not controlled by laws, but imposed by the will of the ruler, was despotism.*²²⁶

²²¹ Xen. *Mem*, 4.4.25.

²²² Ferrario, 2017, 61.

²²³ Hdt. 3.38.

²²⁴ Xen. *Mem*, 4.4.18.

²²⁵ Xen. *Mem*, 1.2.9.

²²⁶ Xen. *Mem*, 4.6.12.

Similarly, in the *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*, while Sparta did not have extensive written laws, Spartan kings are portrayed as taking an oath of subservience to the laws of the polis.²²⁷ In the *Agésilas*, Agamemnon is portrayed as choosing “to rule and to be ruled at home according to the constitution” instead of gaining supreme power in Asia.²²⁸ Finally and as we will expand on below, in his *Cyropaedia* Xenophon has the young Cyrus learn that the judge must always cast his vote in accordance with the law.²²⁹ Law is seen as a protector for a society and as the means for success, therefore anything that undermines it also limits the society’s functionality.²³⁰

For a society to be successful, there must be shared investment in the law regardless of its quality. Written laws are imperfect, yet to disobey them on account of their flaws encourages disorder. The importance of civic law is central to Xenophon’s understanding of a successful society. Xenophon is demonstrating that civic laws are not designed to reflect φύσις, or any utopian or natural justice. Civic laws are designed to cultivate ἀρετή within their society. If a polis’ laws are well designed, they will educate the populace and bind each individual to the needs of the state through teaching ἀρετή. Xenophon proposes that the ultimate test of civic law is through war, where societies can test their laws and individuals can test their ἀρετή.²³¹ Xenophon often highlights the enemy’s inferiority in various respects but most crucially due to their lack of education.²³² It is also how Xenophon establishes rank within Cyrus’ army and ultimately his meritocracy.²³³ For Xenophon, civic law is an essential educational tool to build the ideal society and justice maybe found within one’s obedience to it.

²²⁷ Xen, *Lac*, 15.7. Although it is worth noting that these would not be written laws.

²²⁸ Xen, *Agés*, 2.16.

²²⁹ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.3.17.

²³⁰ Ferrario, 2017, 64; Buzzetti, 2001, 11.

²³¹ Xen, *Cyr*, 5.2.19, 2.2.20, 2.3.15, 7.2.6.

²³² Xen, *Cyr*, 1.5.11 .

²³³ Xen, *Cyr*, 7.5.35 – 38.

In contrast, Xenophon's perception of φύσις revolves around two explicit points according to his Socrates. Firstly, φύσις is universal, with widespread acknowledgment across all peoples.²³⁴ Secondly, it is self-fulfilling, using, at times, ironically cruel consequences that cannot be avoided, such as incest leading to deformity in the children, or selfish intentions resulting in the loss of friends.²³⁵ Morrison suggests that Xenophon saw φύσις to be superior, authenticating and legitimising the νόμος of a polis.²³⁶ Certainly, φύσις plays an important role in Xenophon's understanding of justice and knowledge, as Cambyses makes clear in the *Cyropaedia*.²³⁷ Yet Xenophon's attitude toward φύσις is presented as very much within the shadow of νόμος. The aims of νόμος are clear for Xenophon, to support the polis. Natural law, however, is more specific to the actions of an individual and will automatically discharge punishment. Xenophon's attitude on this is made clear in the *Anabasis* where he argues for the importance of oaths because if broken, no one could hide or out run punishment from the gods.²³⁸ It is not that φύσις is inferior or superior to νόμος, but for a society to be ruled effectively priority must be given to the specific needs of the community over any generalised or individual-focused law. A good leader must attempt to unify what is best for the individual with what is best for society.²³⁹

In summary, Xenophon's understanding of νόμος is centred around education. νόμος binds the members of a society to the needs of the state, cultivating ἀρετή and more specifically σωφροσύνη. The definition of justice then becomes the obedience to νόμος. For an individual to be just they must learn to temper their personal ambition or natural talents to support the success of the society. This lesson in σωφροσύνη is perhaps most relevant within

²³⁴ Xen. *Mem*, 4.4.19.

²³⁵ Xen. *Mem*, 4.4.22-25.

²³⁶ Morrison, 1995, 336.

²³⁷ Xen. *Cyr.* 1.6.1-5.

²³⁸ Xen. *Anabasis*, 2.5.11.

²³⁹ The connections between self-control and the benefit of the state have been discussed above.

Xenophon's portrayal of Cyrus. As I will go on to demonstrate below, no matter Cyrus' remarkable natural virtues he must still learn the νόμος of Persia.

2.3. Xenophon on education, leadership and justice

Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* is an observable attempt to demonstrate that the success of a society is bound to the education of its members and most importantly, to the education of its leaders. This can be seen most clearly within Xenophon's meritocracy where education forms the basis of Cyrus' hierarchy.²⁴⁰ That any leader must earn their position and surpass their subjects in ἀρετή is the basis of Xenophon's 'willing subjects'.²⁴¹ That education is central to leadership, and to the success of a society in general, is not a hidden agenda in the *Cyropaedia*. The title alone is a demonstration of this. The lessons that Cyrus must learn are developed extensively by Xenophon. Despite Cyrus' impressive innate virtues, we learn at Cyrus' first mention that he was "*most devoted to learning*".²⁴² It is Cyrus' education in all matters that makes him an idealised leader. This is articulated, perhaps most clearly, by Cyrus' father who suggests that it is not an education in the strategy of battle that brings victory, but an education in the proper governing of his troops.²⁴³ This scene is mirrored almost identically in the *Memorabilia* where Socrates gives the same instruction to a cavalry commander.²⁴⁴ I would propose that these mirrored passages are designed to reflect each other, demonstrating that occupational knowledge is not enough for success. Instead, a leader must have a complete education in all matters. For Xenophon, the idealised society was one that pursued education to an all-consuming degree. It was meritocracy that placed those capable, in ever increasing positions of influence, that they might instruct and set an example to others. This is a point that Xenophon has Pheraulas specifically argue to the Sacian stating that the more he possesses the more responsibility he has to

²⁴⁰ As we will discuss in more depth below.

²⁴¹ Xen. *Cyr*, 1.6.1-46. See below for more detail on 'willing obedience'.

²⁴² Xen. *Cyr*, 1.2.1.

²⁴³ Xen. *Cyr*, 1.6.14.

²⁴⁴ Xen. *Mem*, 3.3.1-15.

“...take care of more, distribute more to others, and have the trouble of looking after more...”²⁴⁵

To modern readers, Xenophon's portrayal of such a strict hierarchy based on competency may appear militaristic, and with campaigns occupying a majority of the *Cyropaedia* it is not surprising that scholars have drawn connections between Cyrus' Persia and heavily militaristic societies such as Sparta.²⁴⁶ Critically however, the focus of Xenophon's writings is on the cultivation of ἀρετή²⁴⁷ within the society.²⁴⁸ For Xenophon, the society that cultivates the best virtues and knowledge amongst its people will be the most successful.²⁴⁹ I would argue that while Xenophon is primarily writing within a militaristic template but in reality, his philosophy is hyper-aware of education, persuasion and understanding as a means to encourage a society towards success and he actually condemns forceful methods of subjugation. Xenophon appears to treat society as a single, unified, animated being with emotions felt on mass.²⁵⁰ The *Anabasis* underlines this point as the ten thousand are often seen as a city on the march.²⁵¹ In this sense law is seen to bind the citizens together, and discipline becomes paramount to the society's autonomy.²⁵² Leadership then becomes an ability to inspire and improve the morale of an army or household, placing the role of a leader as equivalent to that of a general.²⁵³

As an additional note on Xenophon and the prominence of militarism within his philosophy, Xenophon states many times and in various works that

²⁴⁵ Xen. *Cyr*, 8.3.40.

²⁴⁶ Buzzetti, 2001, 12; Ferrario, 2017, 61. Similarities can also be drawn between the portrayal of society in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and his *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*.

²⁴⁷ Reuter, 2001, 82. See Reuter for ἀρετή as teachable.

²⁴⁸ Xen. *Mem*, 3.6.3.

²⁴⁹ Seager, 2001, 385.

²⁵⁰ Lendon, 2006, 89.

²⁵¹ Buzzetti, 2014, 181.

²⁵² Xen. *An*, 5.7.27. It seems highly plausible that this reference is equivalent to a polis.

²⁵³ Xen. *Oec*, 11.8.

learning to manage a state is like learning to manage a household or an army. What particularly characterises Xenophon, is the use of war to prove the prowess of a society's virtues.²⁵⁴ Lendon has even suggested that Xenophon deliberately has Cyrus design battles on equal terms to prove the strength of his laws in a fair fight.²⁵⁵ While I would agree with Lendon's conclusion, we should add a condition. It is important to remember that Cyrus was not above using stealth and underhanded tactics to win control over an opponent.²⁵⁶ Xenophon specifically has Cambyses explain to Cyrus that when dealing with enemies, it is sometimes appropriate to act contrary to the laws of Persia.²⁵⁷ Nevertheless, we can summarise that Xenophon's idealised society was one that cultivated ἀρετή amongst all its members via a meritocracy that ensured the most educated were those with the most responsibility. Before we turn to a detailed discussion of justice and education in the *Cyropaedia*, we first need to consider some of the background issues which will become relevant to this discussion, namely, Xenophon's understanding of σωφροσύνη.

2.4. Xenophon's use of σωφροσύνη

Xenophon's use of σωφροσύνη is interesting because unlike some other virtues it must be taught. No matter how gifted an individual might be, they are incapable of possessing σωφροσύνη naturally because to master it, an individual must fully understand their unique social and legal context. Xenophon uses the term σωφροσύνη often and diversely, but it can be translated adequately as moderation in a general sense, self-control or self-restraint.²⁵⁸ The importance of σωφροσύνη is essential to our understanding of Xenophon's political theory because it adds a condition to the meritocratic attitude that a leader must always be the best of those they lead.²⁵⁹ The early teachings of the

²⁵⁴ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.5.11. We also see social status and spoils being defined by success in war: Xen, *Cyr*, 5.2.19, 2.2.20, 2.3.15, 7.2.6.

²⁵⁵ Lendon, 2006, 88.

²⁵⁶ Xen, *Cyr*, 2.4.15 – 2.4.17. Also see on the *krypteia* Xen, *Lac.Pol.* 3.

²⁵⁷ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.6.27 – 1.6.46.

²⁵⁸ North, 1966, 123. North shows the diversity in the use of 'σωφροσύνη' yet it can be adequately translated as moderation for the purposes of this thesis. North does however, place too much of an 'oligarchic' emphasis on the term that this chapter would distance itself from.

²⁵⁹ Xenophon on meritocracy will be discussed below.

seven sages, particularly Heraclitus, use σωφροσύνη to add the same condition to wisdom,²⁶⁰ proposing that a leader must learn common teachings amongst the pre-Socratics such as ‘nothing in excess’ and ‘know thyself’.²⁶¹ Justice for instance, is not a virtue that Xenophon believes is enough on its own but must be tempered with σωφροσύνη.²⁶² The clearest demonstration of this can be seen within Xenophon’s portrayal of Alcibiades and Critias within his *Memorabilia*. Both Alcibiades and Critias become the archetypes of poor leadership despite being students of Socrates. The reason for this weakness is made very clear. They sought in Socrates, only dialectic knowledge, not the moderation that tempers it.²⁶³ This is explicit in Xenophon’s criticism of Alcibiades and Critias describing them as greedy, violent, licentious and without respect for Athenian νόμος, directly drawing attention to their lack of σωφροσύνη.²⁶⁴ Due to their lack of σωφροσύνη, Critias and Alcibiades become uncontrollable, acting out of spite²⁶⁵ or greed²⁶⁶ in disregard for Athenian law, rather than ruling for the benefit of the society.

The relevance of Critias and Alcibiades cannot be understated. Xenophon is making an unreserved argument for the importance of a complete education, one that includes σωφροσύνη. More specifically, he directly suggests that much of the political turbulence seen in Athens by the end of the fifth century is due to the self-serving ambition of key Athenian statesmen who fail to moderate their beliefs with the needs of the state. This argument is again put forward by Tigranes in the *Cyropaedia*. Tigranes champions his father’s defence after he led a failed rebellion against Cyrus arguing: “*For it seems to me to be true that without σωφροσύνη there is no advantage at all in any other virtue;*”²⁶⁷ Here Tigranes argues that his father has learnt, through his defeat,

²⁶⁰ Kahn, 1979, 12-3.

²⁶¹ On the importance of understanding one’s prowess’s and limitations see: DK B101; DK B116.

²⁶² Xen, *Oec*, 11.11; Xenophon highlights the importance of matching natural ability with education.

²⁶³ Xen, *Mem*, 1.2.12; Xenophon explicitly uses ‘σωφροσύνη’ rather than ‘αὐτάρκεια’ or ‘ἐγκράτεια’ suggesting that Xenophon deliberately intended to refer to a wider sense of moderation.

²⁶⁴ Xen, *Mem*, 1.2.12.

²⁶⁵ Xen, *Mem*, 1.2.32.

²⁶⁶ Xen, *Mem*, 1.2.12.

²⁶⁷ Xen, *Cyr*, 3.1.16.

σωφροσύνη and Tigranes argues he is now in a better position than any to continue his rule. Cyrus is therefore portrayed as accepting the 'Socratic' ideology through pardoning the Armenian King.²⁶⁸ Indeed, Xenophon appears to go out of his way to suggest that this ideology is Socratic since Tigranes' respected teacher was executed for corrupting the young.²⁶⁹ This comment by Tigranes appears to be a not-so-veiled allusion to the charges against Socrates at his execution.

For Xenophon, and many of his contemporaries,²⁷⁰ self-control and moderation were fundamental to the ideal ruler and are the base to which all other virtues are established.²⁷¹ Xenophon is demonstrating that despite skill in rhetoric (and innate talent for justice in Alcibiades²⁷² and Cyrus²⁷³) it is the failure to understand how to act moderately in implementing that knowledge within a society which causes inefficiency and injustice. It is important to note that for Xenophon, an individual's goal should be to benefit the society not themselves as individuals.²⁷⁴ As Alcibiades and Critias fail to understand this notion, Cyrus must learn that σωφροσύνη hones his innate knowledge of justice to benefit the society, a skill that should be mastered by all members of society but particularly the leader. In comparison, as we will see, the young Cyrus can be seen to be acting with the same lack of moderation when acting as judge, but also when hunting and during battle, topics that we will explore in more detail below. Xenophon is presenting Cyrus as a student learning to use moderation to attune his self-interests with that of society's.²⁷⁵ Σωφροσύνη provides a prerequisite to Xenophon's portrayal of education, law, meritocracy and leadership.

²⁶⁸ Xen, *Cyr*, 3.1. 17.

²⁶⁹ Xen, *Cyr*, 3.1.38.

²⁷⁰ North, 1966, 139. North has presented the use of 'σωφροσύνη' as important in law-making within Aeschines, 1.20-22, 1.7.20, 1.36,192; Aristophanes' *Plutus*; 24.75.

²⁷¹ Xen, *Mem*, 1.5.4; It should be noted that Xenophon uses 'ἐγκράτειαν'.

²⁷² Xen, *Mem*, 1.2.46.

²⁷³ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.3.14-1.3.18.

²⁷⁴ Xen, *Mem*, 3.6.3.

²⁷⁵ Christ, 2006, 26; Tamiolaki, 2013, 38.

3. The education of young Cyrus

Having discussed some of the background to Xenophon's political thought, we can now turn to a discussion of the *Cyropaedia* in more detail. The education of Persian citizenry in the *Cyropaedia* is important to this discussion because it demonstrates that every member of the society needed to actively learn justice and moderation.²⁷⁶ The aim of this education was to temper the varying natural abilities of the youth toward the needs of Persian society. For Xenophon, this education was at the core of Persian citizenship. For example, he argues in his elaboration of the Persian educational system:

*... those who finish their course among the mature men without blame become members of the class of elders. So, we see, the elders are made up to those who have enjoyed all honour and distinction. This is the policy by the observance of which they think that their citizens may become the best*²⁷⁷

Crucially, Persian citizenship is limited to those who could demonstrate their education. Any who fail to complete the course are held back and unable to progress to the more distinguished positions in society.²⁷⁸ The specifics of Xenophon's meritocracy will be discussed below but is important to note that despite the clear military focus, it is education that takes centre stage in Xenophon's account of the development of the citizenry.²⁷⁹ Warfare, or practices that imitate it (such as hunting), should only be seen as demonstrations of education and not ends in their own right. Xenophon is demonstrating that citizenship revolves around education in justice and moderation. We are expected to see Persian society as centred on education, rather than wealth, or natural ability.

²⁷⁶ Xen. *Cry.* 1.2.6-8.

²⁷⁷ Xen. *Cry.* 1.2.15.

²⁷⁸ Xen. *Cry.* 1.2.15.

²⁷⁹ Gray, 2007, 153.

For Cyrus, it is his natural abilities that he must learn to control. Cyrus must learn the importance of obedience to Persian law and to judge using σωφροσύνη and not force. Xenophon says:

*Cyrus was most handsome in person, most generous of heart, most devoted to learning, and most ambitious, so that he endured all sorts of labour and faced all sorts of danger for the sake of praise. Such then were the natural endowments, physical and spiritual, that he is reputed to have had; but he was educated in conformity with the laws of the Persians; and these laws appear in their care for the common weal not to start from the same point as they do in most states.*²⁸⁰

Xenophon makes it clear in the first lines of the Cyropaedia the intention of Cyrus' education, that despite his natural gifts he was not born an expert in law but had to learn how to rule successfully and justly.²⁸¹ The character of Cyrus is portrayed as an idealised student, capable and dedicated but not all-knowing. Moreover, it is precisely because of his prowess that learning σωφροσύνη is so important. Cyrus must learn to temper his powerful innate ability in order to become beneficial to the state, learning how to be ruled by law as well as how to rule with it.²⁸²

3.1. Cyrus and education in law

The clearest example of this education can be seen within a dialogue between Cyrus and his mother, where he attempts to prove to her that he understands justice. To demonstrate this, Cyrus argues that he has already been punished for failing to judge in accordance with Persian law and recounts to her his lesson:

The case was like this: a big boy with a little tunic, finding a little boy with a big tunic on, took it off him and put his own tunic on him,

²⁸⁰ Xen. Cry. 1.2.1-2.

²⁸¹ Ferrario, 2017, 63.

²⁸² Mitchell, 2012, 92.

while he himself put on the other's. So, when I tried their case, I decided that it was better for them both that each should keep the tunic that fitted him. And thereupon the master flogged me, saying that when I was a judge of a good fit, I should do as I had done; but when it was my duty to decide whose tunic it was, I had this question, he said, to consider—whose title was the rightful one; whether it was right that he who took it away by force should keep it, or that he who had had it made for himself or had bought it should own it. And since, he said, what is lawful is right and what is unlawful is wrong, he bade the judge always render his verdict on the side of the law. It is in this way, mother, you see, that I already have a thorough understanding of justice in all its bearings²⁸³

The question we must ask from this episode is why was Cyrus wrong to decide as he did? Xenophon offers two answers to this. Firstly, that the judge must always decide in accordance with the law.²⁸⁴ Xenophon's belief that the "*lawful and just are the same thing*"²⁸⁵ has been set out above, arguing that everyone must learn to obey the civic laws of a polis before they are capable of acting justly. Despite Cyrus' remarkable natural ability, he must still learn how to rule and how to judge in accordance with Persian law. It is this lesson in σωφροσύνη that Cyrus is seen to learn above all else in book one of the *Cyropaedia* as a means to control his own natural ability.

Secondly, Cyrus misjudged the case because his decision allowed for the use of force to go unpunished. The use of force by a ruler is considered by Xenophon to be a tyrannical display of power. This can be seen most clearly when compared to Socrates' defence in the *Memorabilia*:

... I hold that they who cultivate wisdom and think they will be able to guide the people in prudent policy never lapse into violence: they know that enmities and dangers are inseparable from violence, but

²⁸³ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.3.14-1.3.18.

²⁸⁴ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.3.15.

²⁸⁵ Xen, *Mem*, 4.4.18.

*persuasion produces the same results safely and amicably. For violence, by making its victims sensible of loss, rouses their hatred: but persuasion, by seeming to confer a favour, wins goodwill. It is not, then, cultivation of wisdom that leads to violent methods, but the possession of power without prudence.*²⁸⁶

This passage makes clear that the use of force is an indication of a failure to learn moderation, an argument that is made frequently by Xenophon. Another example can be seen within a dialogue between the young Alcibiades and Pericles on the origins of law. Alcibiades demonstrates that while force is present within a tyranny it may also exist within a democracy.²⁸⁷ More examples can be seen within Xenophon's portrayal of Critias and Alcibiades. Their failure to learn moderation from Socrates²⁸⁸ looms over the reader during Xenophon's portrayal of the rule of the Thirty.²⁸⁹ For Xenophon, any constitution is capable of incorporating a tyrannical use of force. To rule justly, Cyrus must learn to judge with σωφροσύνη in order to avoid becoming tyrannical.²⁹⁰ Instead, Cyrus must learn how to encourage the willing obedience²⁹¹ of his subjects. This episode is vital in demonstrating the lessons that Cyrus must learn. Firstly, that he must learn the νόμος of Persia. Second, that he must always temper his beliefs with σωφροσύνη to avoid tyrannical use of force. Education then is vital to entwine the ambitions and desires of the individual to the needs of the state. This is most important within a society's leaders, and the key lesson that Cyrus is shown to learn in book 1 of the *Cyropaedia*.

²⁸⁶ Xen, *Mem.* 1.2.10.

²⁸⁷ Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.44.

²⁸⁸ Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.12.

²⁸⁹ Xen. *Mem.* 1.3.32.

²⁹⁰ Xen, *Cyr.* 1.3.17.

²⁹¹ On willing obedience: see below.

3.2. Cyrus and σωφροσύνη

Learning σωφροσύνη is critical to Xenophon's understanding of Justice. No matter how naturally gifted an individual maybe they can never be just unless they are educated in moderation to temper their untamed talents into something beneficial for their society. Xenophon makes the importance of this virtue clear stating:

*They teach the boys self-control also; and it greatly conduces to their learning self-control that they see their elders also living temperately day by day. And they teach them likewise to obey the officers*²⁹²

σωφροσύνη, translated here as 'self-control' or 'temperance', is a central feature in Xenophon's portrayal of Persian education, as we have seen. In fact, this is another lesson that Cyrus learns at 1.3.14-1.3.18, when he is reprimanded for his judgement on the two boys and their shirts. Cyrus learns that while his argument to redistribute the shirts was logical, by acting contrary to the law it was immoderate and would undermine the Persian legal system.²⁹³

This education of Cyrus in σωφροσύνη is seen even more clearly through two other examples. Firstly, during a hunting expedition Cyrus ignores the instructions for caution and places himself in unnecessary danger. Xenophon makes it clear during this episode that Cyrus is overtly in the wrong and he is scolded by his uncle for his foolhardiness.²⁹⁴ Not long after, Cyrus is described charging against the Assyrian force without orders, causing Astyages to advance the whole Median army to protect him. Again, Cyrus is portrayed as acting rashly, ignoring the instructions of his guardian:²⁹⁵

²⁹² Xen, Cyr, 1.2.8.

²⁹³ Danzig, 2009, 283. Danzig argues that Cyrus is using natural law to override Persian natural law, this will be assessed in more depth below.

²⁹⁴ Xen, Cyr, 1.4.9.

²⁹⁵ Xen, Cyr, 1.4.19.

*As a well-bred but untrained hound rushes recklessly upon the
boar, so Cyrus rushed on, with regard for nothing but to strike down
what he overtook and reckless of anything else.*²⁹⁶

Xenophon's portrayal of Cyrus' action explicitly demonstrates Cyrus' immaturity and lack of σωφροσύνη. After the battle, Cyrus is mentioned to be gloating upon the slain enemy drawing the reader to a more sinister and potentially more concerning side to Cyrus.

Importantly, this comparison to the animalistic is a key contemporary understanding of untrained virtue. There are direct links with this passage to Xenophon's *Cynegeticus*,²⁹⁷ Hiero,²⁹⁸ Plato's *Protagoras*²⁹⁹ and Isocrates' *Antidosis*.³⁰⁰ These references all directly link the lack of education with references to wild animals. Individuals may display courage, wisdom or endurance as part of their innate ability but like untrained hunting dogs, to borrow Xenophon's example in his *Cynegeticus*, they are hunting for their own ends with no understanding of working together in a society. These bestial references are heavily loaded with contemporary ideals of education as a tool for rulers to refine an individual's nature and wield it for the benefit of the society. It is the same bestial or animalistic portrayal that we see in the character of the young Cyrus in book one of the *Cyropaedia*. He is painted as clever but untrained, courageous yet foolhardy, the ideal student in clear need of training so as to benefit the society. The reader is expected to see Cyrus' immaturity, to admire his bravery and determination but also to be concerned of his lack of care or discipline.³⁰¹ The claim that Cyrus' character progresses throughout the *Cyropaedia* is not new. Attention has also been drawn to his initial appearance as similar to a democratic champion, progressing into a more

²⁹⁶ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.4.20.

²⁹⁷ Xen, *Mem.* 2.1.5; *Cyn.* 1.3.11;

²⁹⁸ Xen, *Hier*, 7.3.

²⁹⁹ *Pl, Prt.* 325d; Poulakos, 2008, 32. Farrar, 1988, 89. Both Poulakos and Farrar highlight the value of Protagoras in educating the youth away from an animalistic nature.

³⁰⁰ Isoc, *Antid*, 2.12, 8.34.

³⁰¹ Buzzetti, 2014, 68. Buzzetti also draws attention to Cyrus' lack of virtue in order to distance him from divinity.

traditional Persian kingship.³⁰² This suggests that the *Cyropaedia* was designed, quite literally, to show the education of Cyrus, the lessons he learnt and how he went from a talented but reckless youth into an idealised ruler.

Through viewing the *Cyropaedia* as a process of learning we can understand how Xenophon believes ἀρετή should be cultivated. The reader is supposed to see the young Cyrus as an ideal student learning how to control his emotions. His powerful innate virtues must be tempered with σωφροσύνη described by Xenophon as the basis of all virtue.³⁰³ This is perhaps the most crucial lesson that Xenophon has Cyrus learn.³⁰⁴ By the end of Cyrus' visit to his grandfather Xenophon describes how Astyages did not know how to deal with Cyrus:

*Then Astyages marched back, greatly rejoicing over the victory of his cavalry but not knowing what to say of Cyrus; for though he realized that his grandson was responsible for the outcome, yet he recognized also that he was frenzied with daring.*³⁰⁵

This passage hits precisely upon the issue with Xenophon's young Cyrus. In all three examples Cyrus' actions display his bravery, ambition and importantly skill because we must remember that Cyrus is successful in each case. Yet the reader is left highly aware of Cyrus' dangerous immaturity, with no control over his desires or his ambition. Xenophon's comparisons to wild animals is very telling of his attitude toward any who have yet to learn σωφροσύνη and a very vivid means to portray the lessons Cyrus has to learn.

³⁰² Mitchell, 2013, 290.

³⁰³ Xen, *Mem*, 1.5.4; It should be noted that Xenophon uses 'ἐγκράτειαν' but this can be interpreted as a more specific translation of 'self-control' see North, 1966, 127. Johnson, 2003, 269; Seems to go too far in his translation of ἐγκράτειαν as self-centred or selfish.

³⁰⁴ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.4.19, 1.4.24.

³⁰⁵ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.4.24.

3.3. Cambyses' meritocracy

The society that Cyrus goes on to create is dedicated to the cultivation of education to an almost obsessive degree. Xenophon depicts a social hierarchy grounded on the principle of rewarding those who display ἀρετή. Critically, it is Cyrus' meritocracy that is one of the central themes of Xenophon's portrayal of Persian society, not the creation of a militarised society. Distribution of wealth or spoils occupies significant episodes of the *Cyropaedia* with great effort given to reward those who demonstrate ἀρετή³⁰⁶ and was often left for Cyrus himself to mediate. Critically, the reason for this meritocracy was not only to further enhance the education and ἀρετή of the society but also to strive to create what Xenophon calls 'willing subjects'. This is one of the central lessons Cyrus learns in the *Cyropaedia*.³⁰⁷ Cyrus' father is one of his key educators and his principal lesson was that while Cyrus understands how to maintain compulsory obedience, if he could become capable of governing others better than any individual could govern themselves then his subjects would follow him willingly. Xenophon has Cambyses say:

*...compulsory obedience, indeed, but there is another road, a short cut, to what is much better—namely, to willing obedience. For people are only too glad to obey the man who they believe takes wiser thought for their interests than they themselves do. And you might recognize that this is so in many instances but particularly in the case of the sick: how readily they call in those who are to prescribe what they must do; and at sea how cheerfully the passengers obey the captain; and how earnestly travellers desire not to get separated from those who they think are better acquainted with the road than they are.*³⁰⁸

Cambyses instructs Cyrus that the ideal ruler must be wiser in all aspects and dedicated to improving the lives of his subjects. If he is successful in this regard, he will not need to force others to follow him. The argument for a meritocracy is

³⁰⁶ Xen, *Cry*, 1.5.7, 2.2.20, 7.2.11.

³⁰⁷ Tamiolaki, 2017, 191.

³⁰⁸ Xen, *Cry*, 1.6.22.

one that Xenophon labours, even going as far as to have Cyrus summarise his argument in case the reader was to miss his point.

Cyrus: "You mean to say, father, that nothing is more effectual toward keeping one's men obedient than to seem to be wiser than they?"

Cambyses: "Yes," said he, "that is just what I mean"³⁰⁹

As I have highlighted, Xenophon is rarely this deliberate and the importance of this notion of willing obedience should not be understated. That a leader must be superior to his subjects in every respect is an argument so common to Xenophon's works we should acknowledge it as a theme in its own right.

As part of Cambyses' instruction, he reminds Cyrus of a previous lesson, that a good commander should not only understand the strategy of battle but, even more relevant is the ability to govern your troops well, to care for their morale and cater to their supplies.³¹⁰ As we saw at the start of this chapter, this discussion is particularly curious because it mirrors almost identically an episode from Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.³¹¹ Xenophon's emphasis is on education in all matters, and not just on those disciplines that appear most practical and that by placing the virtuous in influential positions, they are likely to inspire others to follow them out of choice. In addition, to demonstrate superior ἀρετή a leader must be superior in every respect, not just in those skills beneficial to their personal ambition.

³⁰⁹ Xen, *Cry*, 1.6.23.

³¹⁰ Xen, *Cry*, 1.6. 12.

³¹¹ Xen, *Cry*, 3.3.1-15.

3.4. Cyrus, divinity and law

The other major lesson that Cambyses offers to Cyrus returns us to the question of law. Through Cambyses' instruction we see Xenophon's understanding of the relation between νόμος and education. Cyrus learns that civic law is localised to his polis and therefore when confronting an enemy, he may use any and all means at his disposal to be victorious while remaining just. This appears to contradict Xenophon's previous argument that "justice is law",³¹² a contradiction Cyrus raises himself.³¹³ To explain this contradiction we must return to Xenophon's understanding of the relation between νόμος and φύσις. Xenophon is arguing that the νόμος of a society must always be obeyed because the laws are essential for the success of the polis. Xenophon makes several clear distinctions between Persia and Media.³¹⁴ Most notably when Cyrus' mother states:

*"Yes, my son," said she; "but at your grandfather's court they do not recognize the same principles of justice as they do in Persia."*³¹⁵

In fact, due to the strength of the Persian constitution, Media is portrayed as distinct from Cyrus' empire almost entirely.³¹⁶ Civic law, and the education in it, is not designed to unlock natural truths normally reserved for the gods³¹⁷ but to create a constitution that is uniquely complementary to the society in question.

It follows then that Cyrus should be encouraged to use any means at his disposal to overcome his opponent, because to do so is in Persia's best interest. The νόμος of Persia is not universal but localised to the members of that society.³¹⁸ Through this logic Xenophon argues that justice follows νόμος because of its unique design that compliments the needs of the local populace.

³¹² Xen, *Mem*, 4.4.18.

³¹³ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.6.27.

³¹⁴ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.3.2, 1.2.2.

³¹⁵ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.3.18.

³¹⁶ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.3.18.

³¹⁷ Morrison, 1995, 340.

³¹⁸ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.2.2. Especially where Xenophon states: "... but he was educated in conformity with the laws of the Persians; and these laws appear in their care for the common weal...". Although there are other examples of this argument.

Xenophanes makes a similar connection in his fragments where he outlines that different peoples would depict the gods in their own images.³¹⁹ It was within this context that σωφροσύνη was outlined as so important because all members of a society must learn to follow the civic law regardless of their own ambition or innate ability. Cyrus' lesson then is that human law is not universal or absolute and in the right context can be broken while remaining just. For the leader, no matter how capable, they must commit themselves to becoming the best of that society.

It is within this context then, that Xenophon is writing his portrayal of Cyrus. Ultimately, Cyrus' proximity to the divine is irrelevant to the *Cyropaedia*. As we have seen, one of the key factors for Xenophon's understanding of νόμος is that all members of a society have to learn σωφροσύνη. Moderation is not a virtue that can be granted innately because it will be unique to the society in question. In that respect whether Cyrus has divine knowledge or not he must still be educated in the laws of Persia. There is however, one passage that questions this reading. This is within Xenophon's description of Cyrus as becoming βλέπων νόμος.³²⁰

*αἰσθάνεσθαι μὲν γὰρ ἐδόκει καὶ διὰ τοὺς γραφομένους νόμους
βελτίους γιγνομένους ἀνθρώπους: τὸν δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἄρχοντα βλέποντα
νόμον ἀνθρώποις ἐνόμισεν, ὅτι καὶ τάττειν ἱκανὸς ἐστὶ καὶ ὁρᾶν τὸν
ἀτακτοῦντα καὶ κολάζειν.*³²¹

*For he thought he perceived that men are made better through
even the written law, while the good ruler he regarded as a law with
eyes for men, because he is able not only to give commandments
but also to see the transgressor and punish him.*

Specifically, by using βλέπων νόμος in the context of γραφόμενοι νόμοι Xenophon is not suggesting Cyrus has a divine insight into the true root of justice nor that he has become divine himself. Rather that Cyrus had been

³¹⁹ Xen. Fr. 15-16.

³²⁰ Xen. Cyr. 8.1.22.

³²¹ Xen, Cyr, 8.1.22.

educated to such a competent level of ἀρετή that he could see what was best for his people and be capable of judging accurately in accordance with their written law. This passage places Cyrus as a law-bound ideal of kingship,³²² an embodiment of civic law³²³ who understands what was best for his people and by extension, what is just. Ultimately, Cyrus and Socrates³²⁴ do not disagree about what justice is,³²⁵ since they both understand that obedience to law is vital for the success of a society. Regardless of whether we should see Cyrus as divine or not, the definition of justice is the obedience to the law. As we have seen, through discussing Xenophon's understanding of νόμος, Cyrus' idea of justice is localised to within his own society. As a result, we must conclude that it is education that gives Cyrus his right to rule.

3.5. Xenophon on divinity

For the characters of Xenophon, good leadership came partly from natural gifts but also from education. The role of divinity appears secondary, piety and religious practice is important but need not suggest divine interference.³²⁶ To understand Xenophon's portrayal of Cyrus and his proximity to divinity we must return to Xenophon's intellectual context and the discussion of law at the end of the fifth century. In the works of Homer, leadership was justified through divine authorisation, rather than personal ability or a superior education.³²⁷ Agamemnon's divine right to rule is symbolised by his sceptre, made for him by Hephaestus, for example.³²⁸ In contrast, Cyrus is never portrayed to be ruling through a divine sanction and nor are any of the leaders Xenophon idealises. Instead, Xenophon and many of his contemporaries were attempting to understand idealised leadership outside of divine interference.³²⁹

³²² Tuplin, 2013, 82; Mitchell, 2012, 95.

³²³ Xen. *Cyr.* 8.1.21.

³²⁴ That is Xenophon's portrayal of Cyrus and Socrates.

³²⁵ Danzig, 2009, 180. Danzig argues there is a contradiction between Cyrus and Socrates on justice and law.

³²⁶ Buzzetti, 2014, 72. Buzzetti highlights that for Xenophon while Cyrus plays the role of a divine, he is also showing that such a leader cannot exist.

³²⁷ Hom. *Il.* 2.50-110; 8.490-508; *Od.* 2.20-40.

³²⁸ Hom. *Il.* 2.180-220.

³²⁹ Leshner, 2008, 459. Leshner argues that even the pre-Socratics were engaged in explaining the world without divine input.

On the topic of divinity Xenophon is distinctly obscure and unclear, the gods play only a supportive role to the human struggles he portrays.

Xenophon also appears to hesitate and obscure his portrayal of his characters' proximity to divinity. This can be seen perhaps most notably within the *Apology*, Socrates tells us that Apollo greets Lycurgus with overt uncertainty about his divinity:

*And yet, gentlemen, the god uttered in oracles greater things of Lycurgus, the Lacedaemonian law-giver, than he did of me. For there is a legend that, as Lycurgus entered the temple, the god thus addressed him: 'I am pondering whether to call you god or man.' Now Apollo did not compare me to a god; he did, however, judge that I far excelled the rest of mankind.*³³⁰

Xenophon is being deliberately obscure in his portrayal of Socrates and Lycurgus. They are both characters that play the role of great thinkers. Indeed, for Lycurgus, his laws depend on his personal excellence. Importantly, Xenophon avoids making the connection to the divine. His reaction to oracles appears to follow the same rationality vocalised through the mouth of Socrates to Euthydemus:

*Nay, be not down-hearted, Euthydemus; for you know that to the inquiry, 'How am I to please the gods?' the Delphic god replies, 'Follow the custom of the state'; and everywhere, I suppose, it is the custom that men propitiate the gods with sacrifices according to their power.*³³¹

Xenophon's argument proposes that one must always follow the νόμος of the state, even during sacrifices. This is because the authority of civic law is based on a common desire to see the polis become successful. To that end, law, and by extension justice, must be for the betterment of the society as a whole. For Xenophon, the gods are not overlooked nor disputed, and the role of oracles

³³⁰ Xen, *Apo*, 15.

³³¹ Xen, *Mem*, 4.3.16.

and sacrifices play a notable role in his portrayal of Cyrus.³³² In the *Hellenica*, divine intervention consistently acts in a supportive role to the struggles of humanity.³³³ Yet ultimately, the character of Cyrus is one of human excellence not divine sanction. Equally, the *Hellenica* displays the gods as separate from human history, rarely interfering directly through offerings, signs, or oracles

Xenophon's attitude toward divinity stems from the same intellectual discussion as his contemporaries. Plato's *Laws* proposes a similar view to that of Xenophon stating that:

*The truth of my statement, which is disputed by many, it is for God to assert; but I am quite ready to give, if required, my own opinion, now that we have, in fact, embarked on a discussion of laws and constitutions*³³⁴

While divinity plays an important role in Plato's *Laws*, his focus is clearly attuned to human struggle for understanding and constitutional design.³³⁵ Evidence for this contemporary debate is also demonstrated by Farrar. Using the Praxiergidai decree and Aeschylus' *Suppliants* Farrar argues that during the fifth century, religious decisions were being made through secular means in the assembly.³³⁶ This shows that a wider discussion was taking place within Athens during the fifth century. This then demonstrates that while Xenophon is writing within an intellectual context that acknowledged and respected the gods it ultimately focused on how best to cultivate virtue through mortal means so as to best benefit society.

³³² Xen, *Cyr.* 8.3.11.

³³³ Xen. *Hell*, 6.4.2-3, 7.5.10-13.

³³⁴ Pl, *Laws*, 1.641d.

³³⁵ Larkin, 2019, 81.

³³⁶ Farrar, 1988, 23.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been the intention of this chapter to suggest that education played a central role in Xenophon's works. To become a leader, innate ability and ambition was important to succeed in Xenophon's meritocracy but crucially, it is not enough. The lesson of the *Cyropaedia* is that to rule well a leader must actively learn how to moderate and tailor their innate desires, ambitions and virtues to the needs of their society. A leader must rule for the betterment of the society as a whole and not for the individual. This mindset runs throughout Xenophon's works, but the *Cyropaedia* is one of the most blatant demonstrations of this attitude. His portrayal of law and meritocracy both lend themselves to the cultivation of education.

To show this, I argued that Xenophon's works must be read together to fully explain his thinking and demonstrate the relevance of education. The chapter then displayed the intellectual context to Xenophon's writings. Athens, by the end of the fifth century, was shown to be redesigning its laws and thereby encouraged a popular discussion on νόμος in relation to φύσις. This discussion then laid the groundwork for an outline of Xenophon's portrayal of law, particularly his reconciliation of νόμος and φύσις. We saw that it was education that harmonised these legal systems. Notably σωφροσύνη was needed by all members of society demanding an education in the societies νόμος.

I demonstrated how learning σωφροσύνη was critical to the creation of a good leader. Attention was drawn particularly to the portrayal of Critias and Alcibiades who ruled selfishly, driven by their own ambition uncontrolled by σωφροσύνη. This argument was then developed within the *Cyropaedia* specifically. Cyrus and his fellow citizens learnt above all that they must obey the laws of the state. In addition, we saw that the use of force was seen by Xenophon as tyrannical, and that Cyrus must rule with σωφροσύνη to acquire

the 'willing obedience' of those he ruled. Through the portrayal of Cyrus' flaws, we can see what Xenophon considered vital for good leadership. Exploring the portrayal of the young Cyrus, this chapter assessed Cyrus' lack of σωφροσύνη in book one. We saw that in several examples the bravery, ambition and skill of Cyrus was unmatched. Yet his failure to follow orders and his inability to control his emotions result in a wild and animalistic portrayal. This was shown to demonstrate the importance of σωφροσύνη for even the most skilful and ambitious individuals.

When considering meritocracy, I demonstrated how Cambyses' meritocracy placed education at the centre of society. Hierarchy was established via the display of ἀρετή, predominantly through battle. Only by holding a superior grasp of ἀρετή could Cyrus hope to gain willing obedience from his subjects. Notably, Cyrus would have been more able to make decisions in his subjects' best interests. Finally, the thesis turned its attention to Cyrus' proximity to divinity. The chapter argued that if every member of society needed to learn σωφροσύνη this would, logically, also apply to a divine. It is therefore shown to be irrelevant whether Cyrus is considered divine or not, he would still have needed to have learned σωφροσύνη. It has been through this method that the essay has demonstrated the central role that education played within Xenophon's works. For Xenophon then, what makes a good leader? One who uses their innate abilities but dedicates themselves to learning the νόμος of their society, to rule for the good of the whole society and to reward similar displays of education through social advancement. The need to learn how to rule is paramount to Xenophon's understanding of leadership, structuring his portrayal of law, leadership and society.

Chapter 4: Isocrates

*And so far has our city distanced the rest of mankind in thought and in speech that her pupils have become the teachers of the rest of the world; and she has brought it about that the name Hellenes suggests no longer a race but an intelligence, and that the title Hellenes is applied rather to those who share our culture than to those who share a common blood.*³³⁷

For Isocrates it seems, education was the mark of civilised man. It was not enough to be born well and possess desirable natural virtues; an individual must actively learn how to be a citizen or leader. Education, for Isocrates is not only the means to good citizenship, it has the potential to form the basis of a meritocracy. Those with the most refined virtues should be given the most responsibility while those who are more ignorant and selfish are kept away from positions of power. This meritocracy shapes how Isocrates depicts Athens as well as the wider world and describes a right to rule through willing obedience. This education-based meritocracy forms one of the key foundations to Isocrates' philosophy. While his contexts and audience certainly changed over the many years he was writing, this understanding of education and meritocracy is consistent throughout his works. What is more, Isocrates is remarkably unique among his contemporaries because his works were not just designed to be hypothetical, but to offer a real-world blueprint that could be actively taught in society.

To demonstrate the importance of education in Isocrates' philosophy and his portrayal of leadership, we will initially assess Isocrates as a thinker along with the composition of his works. This will establish some general points about the intentions of his works as well as the contexts in which he was writing and teaching. The chapter will then assess Isocrates' use of language, focusing on several key terms and explore how they are used to articulate his beliefs. It will be through the definition and use of the term δόξα³³⁸ in a similar way to Xenophon's use of σωφροσύνη that Isocrates' philosophy may become clearer.

³³⁷ Isoc. *Panegyricus*. 50. (trans by) Norlin. 1980.

³³⁸ See below for a full definition of δόξα.

Isocrates' use of *δοξα* will be shown to refer to one of the primary skills a prospective leader must learn in order to judge, and by extension rule, with wisdom. The chapter will then assess the theme of leadership within Isocrates' works. Initially the chapter will demonstrate the consistency that leadership plays throughout Isocrates' works. From there, the section will enter discussions upon Isocrates' meritocracy and his ordering of society from a democratic standpoint. Finally, the chapter will assess the expansion of Isocrates' theories to the Greek world more generally. This section will argue that this is not a new philosophy but simply an extension of his previous understandings. With this method, the chapter will demonstrate how Isocrates' philosophy resonates with themes of education, leadership and meritocracy.

1.1. On Isocrates

At the heart of Isocrates' works, education presides as a constant theme forming the basis of his political thought. Of all our sources, Isocrates is perhaps the most grounded within Athens. He is one of the few who had a non-nomadic, fee-paying school within Athens, with at least some level of participation in Athenian politics and oratory.³³⁹ His writings are clearly targeted toward Athenian³⁴⁰ success and, when assessing foreign politics, he is Athenian-centric to a fault.³⁴¹ Yet while Isocrates fails to hold any real political power. His speeches, many of which appear to be directly aimed at engaging with popular controversies, appear to be used for practice or study, propelling others into political success.³⁴² His discourses to the Cypriot kings and to Philip are prefaced with personal validations, justifying Isocrates' own authority.³⁴³ The reader is left asking why, if Isocrates is so knowledgeable in political thinking and oratory, could he not achieve political prominence in his own right? It is a question Isocrates might have shared. Like many of his peers we may expect

³³⁹ J. Poulakos, 2004, 75.

³⁴⁰ See J. Poulakos (2004, 75) on the impact of Isocrates' localised schooling.

³⁴¹ Edwards, Isocrates, 2004, 342.

³⁴² Heilbrunn, 1975, 169. Heilbrunn demonstrates Isocrates' desire to enable others rather than himself.

³⁴³ Heilbrunn, 1975. 169. See Heilbrunn's preface to Philip that democracy is destined to clash with wise leaders a notion also raised by Ober (1998, 272).

the Athenian elite to feel out of place in a *demos*-focused democracy.³⁴⁴ They were intelligent and wealthy with insights into both leadership and the affairs of the state. Yet the only political place for them in Athens' democracy was amongst the rank and file of common citizens. Perhaps it is unsurprising that the elites felt victimised by democratic reforms of the fifth and fourth centuries and while they clearly maintained influence over Athenian politics there is an observable intention in the fourth century to re-carve a place for themselves.³⁴⁵ Isocrates complains that he and his peers are trapped by the very political system that he wants to support and help strengthen.³⁴⁶ Through placing education as the primary factor for creating a social and political hierarchy, Isocrates is trying to carve a place for himself and his peers within this Athenian political landscape.

1.2. Sophist or Socratic?

Isocrates does not fit neatly within either the Sophistic or the Socratic circles of thinkers. Instead, he must be considered a hybrid of these schools arguing for his own philosophy, breaking away from his sophistic influencers³⁴⁷ but never fully joining his Socratic peers of the fourth century. His philosophy picks up the same topics, and even reaches similar conclusions, as his contemporary Socratic thinkers yet I argue his approach stemmed from a different, sophistic angle. Ultimately, Isocrates never studied under Socrates and unlike his Socratic peers, spends no time attempting to glorify his teachings or exalt him as a martyr. Quite the opposite in fact; I argue that Isocrates is modelling himself upon Socrates, placing himself at the centre of his own school unique to both sophistic and Socratic thought. This modelling is quite plain

³⁴⁴ Heilbrunn, 1975, 158.

³⁴⁵ See Osborne & Rhodes, (2017) for evidence that the Aeropagus and other examples of elite power was able to maintain influence even by the end of the fourth century. For example RO 79. That said, we must remember that social elites still made up a large number of important political positions in the late fifth and fourth centuries.

³⁴⁶ Isoc. *De Pace*. 10. For example, Isocrates criticises the demos for ignoring/punishing the wise who are in positions of leadership.

³⁴⁷ J. Poulakos, 2004, 69. Poulakos demonstrates the subtle difference between sophistic understanding of *λογος* and Isocrates' understanding. I also argue that Isocrates begins from a sophistic base and steps toward a more Socratic philosophy below.

within his *Antidosis* where Isocrates portrays himself as willing to sacrifice himself in order to teach Athens difficult lessons it does not want to hear. He states:

*... yet I would rather lay down my life this day – for you shall have the truth even though the words be inept – after having spoken adequately upon this theme and persuaded you to look upon the study of eloquence in its true light, than live many times my allotted span and see it continue to fare among you as it now does.*³⁴⁸

This self-portrayal of Isocrates as a would-be martyr for education is strikingly similar to Socrates' reality.³⁴⁹ He writes his *Antidosis* as a hypothetical trial, primarily designed for educational purposes³⁵⁰ yet continuously he mirrors the trial of Socrates.³⁵¹ Within this imaginary trial, Isocrates has himself accused of corrupting young men,³⁵² the primary accusation made against Socrates³⁵³ and then sacrifices his defence to teach his audience one 'final' lesson.³⁵⁴ Too also draws attention to explicit connections to Socrates including old age,³⁵⁵ an argument similarly made by Ober.³⁵⁶

In reality, Isocrates' trial was based upon the charge of trierarchy, requiring Isocrates to pay an extra tax due to his perceived wealth. Yet Isocrates repeatedly exaggerates the magnitude of this trial stating: "*Yet I am not utterly discouraged because I face so great a penalty*".³⁵⁷ Despite the result of the trial to be, at worst, a fine, it is also worth highlighting again that *Antidosis* was designed as an educational tool for Isocrates' students. The resulting portrayal of a defiant elite attempting to talk his way out of paying an extra contribution to the state precisely echoes dissatisfaction with egalitarian Athens.

³⁴⁸ Isoc, *Antidosis*, 177.

³⁴⁹ Ober, 2004, 32.

³⁵⁰ Isoc, *Antidosis*, 8-9.

³⁵¹ Or at least the portrayals within Socratic works.

³⁵² Isoc, *Antidosis*, 30.

³⁵³ Plat. *Apol.* 26.

³⁵⁴ Too, 2008, 94.

³⁵⁵ Too, 2008, 98.

³⁵⁶ Ober, 1998, 258.

³⁵⁷ Isoc, *Antidosis* 28.

Antidosis is almost symbolic of Isocrates' elitist argument reflecting both his sophistic background and his present teaching to wealthy elites. Yet I am arguing that *Antidosis* is not just an educational tool. By the time the *Antidosis* was written we can expect the emulation of Socrates' martyrdom to be a commonplace among the Athenian elite. Written shortly after Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and shortly before Plato's *Apology*, Isocrates' *Antidosis* is his own spin on Socrates' trial. The key difference is that the character of Socrates is replaced with Isocrates himself. Other than this major alteration, the themes of Isocrates' *Antidosis* are close to identical to his Socratic contemporaries. All portray an unjust trial against an innocent thinker, who is willing to jeopardise his own trial to teach Athens another lesson. All go to great lengths to separate Socrates/Isocrates from the negative label of 'sophist'. Finally, all portrayals feature the importance of education and justice as the central lesson for the accused thinker to sacrifice himself for. The major difference is of course that the *Antidosis* does not feature Socrates, and why should it? Isocrates has no attachment to Socrates³⁵⁸ and has no reason to attempt to defend his memory. Instead, Isocrates is engaging with a popular portrayal of the martyred teacher, but places himself as the protagonist and head of his own philosophical school.

Isocrates certainly shared many beliefs and theories with his Socratic peers, but the emulation of Socrates was not one of them. In addition, we must remember that Isocrates established his own, fee paying, school in Athens. Charging students for their education is a practice the Socratics are firmly against, yet Isocrates attempts to justify. Unlike his Socratic contemporaries, Isocrates is firmly grounded in designing real-world teaching that is designed actively to instruct upcoming statesmen. In contrast, Socratics tend to push for far more hypothetical or idealised models. This desire to create real-world theories will be shown to distance Isocrates from certain Socratic beliefs such as willing obedience.³⁵⁹ Yet ultimately, these are minor differences and, for the most part, Isocrates' philosophy is very closely aligned to the Socratics. Yet,

³⁵⁸ There is no clear evidence to say that Isocrates studied under Socrates.

³⁵⁹ See chapter one & two.

these differences are not the product of innovation or independent thought but a sign that Isocrates is approaching these same topics from a different sophistic angle.³⁶⁰

Like the Socratics, Isocrates dedicated considerable time in his works to distancing himself from the sophists. By the end of the fifth century the portrayal of sophists as greedy, corrupting, manipulative and ultimately dangerous is likely to be a broadly popular belief within Athens.³⁶¹ Isocrates argues for this most overtly within his *Against the Sophists* where Livingstone has demonstrated Isocrates' desire to create space for his own beliefs, distinct from the sophists.³⁶² Similarly, however, in the *Antidosis* Isocrates also dedicates considerable effort to establishing the difference between sophistic thought and his own beliefs. Yet while Isocrates is clearly attempting to recast himself, his practices, philosophies and conclusions have clear connections to typical sophistic beliefs.

1.3. Teaching like a Sophist

For Isocrates, the best way to cultivate virtue was through the study and the practice of oratory. Only through guided practice could an individual learn how to construct an argument and tailor it to his audience. For a leader, it was through refining their *λογος*³⁶³ that they might be able to act for the betterment of their society and attempt to control the unpredictable. The notion that an individual could learn virtue through study alone is rejected by Isocrates. In his *Against the Sophists* Isocrates condemns as frauds those who claim to be capable of teaching virtue directly.³⁶⁴ Isocrates does not believe virtue can be

³⁶⁰ While maintaining that he is not a sophist.

³⁶¹ As discussed in chapters one and two but most notably within Aristophanes' *Clouds* where Socrates is personally and publicly branded the archetype of sophist thinking.

³⁶² Livingstone, 1998, 368.

³⁶³ For a definition of *λογος*, see the section one introduction above.

³⁶⁴ Isoc. *Against the sophists*. 21.

simply transmitted via study, but the good teacher must facilitate and support practical experience of oratory in order to develop a student's virtue.³⁶⁵

Isocrates is not alone in this belief. Scholars have drawn parallels with several sophist thinkers,³⁶⁶ most notably Gorgias, who appears to have particular influence over Isocrates' beliefs.³⁶⁷ Yet Isocrates is not as sceptical as Gorgias. He sees hope for society in that an educated leader might cultivate λόγος and move closer to ἀρετή. He says:

*And let no one suppose that I claim that just living can be taught; for, in a word, I hold that there does not exist an art of the kind which can implant sobriety and justice in depraved natures. Nevertheless, I do think that the study of political discourse can help more than any other thing to stimulate and form such qualities of character.*³⁶⁸

Here Isocrates demonstrates that while virtue itself cannot be taught, “*political discourse*”³⁶⁹ is the best method to cultivate the soul. Isocrates argues that true or universal wisdom is unteachable, even unknowable. All an individual can do is practice making good political decisions, decisions made in the best interests of their society as a whole, and speak in a manner tailored to the audience. This argument in his *Against the Sophists* is attempting to carve a space for Isocrates' own teachings.³⁷⁰ He is attempting to undermine his sophist competitors, along with the popular distrust of oration in general, and offering his own unique tuition instead.³⁷¹ Yet this is more than a marketing scheme. Isocrates is arguing that the refinement and education of λόγος is the best way to cultivate virtue. Isocrates' focus on guided practice and experience rather than direct transmission through study is a step away from the sophistic teachings of his predecessors, while still maintaining a practical means to teach leadership.

³⁶⁵ Collins, 2015, 186

³⁶⁶ J. Poulakos, 2004, 69. Poulakos demonstrates the subtle difference between sophist understanding of λόγος and Isocrates understanding.

³⁶⁷ J. Poulakos, 2004, 72; T. Poulakos, 2004, 49;

³⁶⁸ Isoc. *Against the sophists*. 21.

³⁶⁹ Isoc. *Against the Sophists*. 21.

³⁷⁰ Livingstone, 1998, 268.

³⁷¹ Collins, 2015, 187.

1.3. Theatre, Poetry and Oratory

Teaching through oratory was designed by Isocrates to build upon the traditional sources of education. Theatre and poetry were as influential to Athenian thinking as the Pynx.³⁷² Yet for Isocrates, oratory should act as a polished and modified version of poetry or theatre, as it was designed to educate rather than primarily to entertain. This is demonstrated perhaps most clearly within his *Antidosis* where Isocrates criticises the poets for writing

*...in a style more imaginative and more ornate; they employ thoughts which are more lofty and more original, and, besides, they use throughout figures of speech in greater number and of more striking character.*³⁷³

Isocrates clearly acknowledges the power of the theatre and the wisdom of poetry, yet he believes that by attempting to entertain the audience certain lessons can be lost or misconceptions could arise. An example of this can be found in his *Against the Sophists* where Isocrates feels the need to interpret Homer's poetry so as not to give the reader a false impression.³⁷⁴ He states:

*...Homer, who has been conceded the highest reputation for wisdom, has pictured even the gods as at times debating among themselves about the future—not that he knew their minds but that he desired to show us that for mankind this power lies in the realms of the impossible.*³⁷⁵

Here Isocrates acknowledges Homer's impressive ability to portray wisdom, yet Isocrates is clearly aware that an audience may misinterpret his 'real' message. The fact that Isocrates feels Homer's works need a commentary to prevent an audience from drawing the wrong conclusions demonstrates his main concern with theatrical or poetic works.

³⁷² Carey, 2019, 233.

³⁷³ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 46.

³⁷⁴ Isoc. *Against the sophists*. 2.

³⁷⁵ Isoc. *Against the sophists*. 15.47.

Isocrates does not overlook the value of theatre and poetry to entertain, acknowledging that oratory too must strive to engage its audience.³⁷⁶ Indeed the links between theatre and the oratory of the pynx has been heavily underlined in recent publications.³⁷⁷ I would argue however, that Isocrates included poetry and theatre in order to contrast his teachings against the traditional authorities on wisdom such as Homer and Solon.³⁷⁸ This implies that rather than actively using poetry to further his rhetoric, Isocrates is simply referencing common understandings, expected to be held amongst his audience. I argue Isocrates' attitude toward theatre and poetry as a means to education is one of caution. While he clearly accepts and is prepared to reference poetic works, he is concerned with their accuracy, their intention to entertain rather than to educate, and the audience's ability to learn the appropriate lessons. On the contrary, Isocrates views oratory as purpose-made to cultivate virtue within the audience as well as within the speaker.³⁷⁹ This shows that Isocrates saw his teachings in oratory as a real-world practice, superior to traditional forms of education, that had the means to cultivate virtue through guided practice.

1.4. Construction of works

This chapter will argue that while there are developments within Isocrates' works, he also maintains consistent themes of education and moderation that traverse his writings. Many scholars have drawn attention to the

³⁷⁶ Isoc. *To Nicocles*. 42-44, 48-49.

³⁷⁷ Carey, 2019, 234-236.

³⁷⁸ Edwards, 2019, 332.

³⁷⁹ J. Poulakos, 2004, 71.

variety of literary techniques Isocrates uses to present his beliefs and often then suggest that his philosophy is ever changing.³⁸⁰ Yet we must remember that his audience may well be changing too and that some works simply expand upon the original topics rather than actively change direction. Isocrates is also writing over a significant length of time and so some degree of change is expected within his works. Yet this essay will argue his general themes of education, leadership and moderation are broadly consistent and unchanging. It will also demonstrate that contrast plays a significant role in Isocrates' expression. Good ruling is often compared to its polar opposite. In the *Panathenaicus* for example, written around 339, the wisdom and ἀρετή of Athenian mythic leaders is contrasted against Sparta's tyrannical military expansion.³⁸¹ In the *Antidosis*, written between 354-353, the multitude play the role of the ignorant leader while Timotheus is idealised.³⁸² Similarly in his *De pace*, the *demos* again takes the role of tyrannical imperialists contrasted against the wisdom of legendary Athenian leaders of the Persian wars.³⁸³ Through this method, Isocrates attempts to prove his philosophy by re-writing historical episodes to create a clear black and white conflict between the wise and good rulers and the ignorant and tyrannical. Through this method of 'alternative' history, Isocrates aims to prove the need for education, particularly in moderation, as the primary means to good leadership; an argument that spans the full length of his works.

2.1. Isocrates and δόξα

To understand the philosophy of Isocrates, we must acknowledge the importance of δόξα within his works. Isocrates understands δόξα not to be an idealised or universal judgment, but as a judgment tailored toward a specific socio-political context. This understanding is the basis for Isocrates'

³⁸⁰ Flower, 2000, 95; Edwards, Isocrates, 2004, 339.

³⁸¹ Isoc. *Pan.* 209; Livingstone, 1998, 237.

³⁸² Isoc. *Antidosis*. 109-139.

³⁸³ Isoc. *De Pace*. 30.

commitment to education. Isocrates uses *δοξα* to refer to a primary virtue that leaders need to learn actively, in order to rule effectively. He believed that regardless of an individual's natural virtue, all leaders must learn the needs of their society, in order to rule successfully. As we have seen, where Xenophon uses *σωφροσυνή* ³⁸⁴ to refer to one's ability to moderate natural talents and ambitions to the needs of the society; Isocrates' focus revolves around *δοξα* and a leader's ability to judge what is in the society's best interest. This can be seen within his *Antidosis*:

*For since it is not in the nature of man to attain a science by the possession of which we can know positively what we should do or what we should say, in the next resort I hold that man to be wise who is able by his powers of conjecture to arrive generally at the best course, and I hold that man to be a philosopher who occupies himself with the studies from which he will most quickly gain that kind of insight.*³⁸⁵

Isocrates' *φιλοσοφία* is grounded in his definition of *δοξα*.³⁸⁶ There is no universal lesson nor accurate calculation that can produce good decision-making. The student of *δοξα* is one who can understand the needs of the social context and thereby may enable them to make wise decisions and actions.

Again, in *de Pace* Isocrates underlines the importance of *δοξα* in achieving personal success:

*For the matter stands thus. It seems to me that, while all men crave their advantage and desire to be better off than the rest, they do not all know the kind of conduct which leads to this end but differ from each other in judgement (*δοξα*), some possessing a judgement*

³⁸⁴ See Chapter 3.

³⁸⁵ Isoc. *Antidosis*, 271.

³⁸⁶ Ober, 2004, 46.

*which is sound and capable of hitting the right course of action,
others one which completely misses their true advantage.*³⁸⁷

The key to success is through an understanding of *δοξα* translated here as ‘judgment’. But a self-serving ambition should be tempered with a study of *δοξα* that will enable the student to align their ambition with the current, localised needs of the society, thereby allowing success for all. For Isocrates, virtue is localised within the speaker’s context. The right judgment may change between polities or societies and will certainly be subject to current events and opinions. In addition, it is worth mentioning that this notion that the ‘right judgment’ is unattainable, and students instead should focus upon practising oratory appears to follow almost directly from the works of Gorgias.³⁸⁸

In such an environment, no universal truths would be capable of consistently predicting the best course of action. For one to decide upon a “*best course*”, they must first acknowledge that the ‘correct’ decision is dependent upon a plethora of variables, some of which will certainly be unknowable. The task for the student of *δοξα* is to learn the needs and contexts of their society and thereby develop the ability to make an informed decision.³⁸⁹ Isocrates’ education in *λογος* is not a golden ticket to good ruling as there will always be variables that prevent a leader from making a truly informed decision. Yet, through study, a leader may take better aim and more consistently decide well. Through this practice an individual can learn to act in a way that is most beneficial to their society and for themselves.

2.2. *ειδος*, *ιδεα* and *δοξα*

It is because of this understanding of *δοξα* as a localised judgment,³⁹⁰ that Isocrates places so much emphasis on the study of oratory. The good orator must build their speech from *ειδος* or *ιδεα* that acknowledge and cater to the speaker’s context. Translating these terms accurately is difficult, with nine

³⁸⁷ Isoc. *De pace*. 28.

³⁸⁸ See chapter two and below.

³⁸⁹ J. Poulakos, 2004, 53.

³⁹⁰ Localised within a specific society and audience.

potential definitions of εἶδος and a further five for ἰδέα,³⁹¹ but understanding how Isocrates uses them is more achievable. Hermann has traced the terms to the earliest mention, and suggested they could refer to both ‘appearance’ in some context and ‘type’ in others.³⁹² Hermann is attempting to move away from Plato’s hijacking of εἶδος and ἰδέα where they refer to a specific philosophy commonly known as Plato’s forms.³⁹³ Unfortunately, ‘appearance’, ‘type’ or ‘form’ are not sufficient to understand Isocrates’ use of these terms. Yet Sullivan highlights, that in almost every instance where these terms are used, Isocrates is referring to a speech composition.³⁹⁴ I argue that Isocrates uses the terms εἶδος and ἰδέα to refer to several separate and independent building blocks of wisdom.³⁹⁵ They form an arsenal, that a skilled orator could wield to complement the needs, fears, desires or beliefs of their audience.³⁹⁶ Through guided practice, students could actively learn how to build speeches honed to their context. Isocrates uses εἶδος and ἰδέα as variables or components with which an orator can strive toward δόξα. In addition, I would add that Isocrates may be, once again, building upon Gorgias. While it is far from clear how Gorgias used εἶδος and ἰδέα, in the limited examples we have they appear to refer to a technical categorisation rather than appearance.³⁹⁷ It is possible that Isocrates’ use of εἶδος and ἰδέα as building blocks for decision-making followed one of his primary influencers.³⁹⁸ Regardless of how Isocrates come to use εἶδος and ἰδέα there appears sufficient evidence to understand how he used them. For Isocrates εἶδος and ἰδέα referred to the needs of society. A good leader must understand these needs and make decisions using εἶδος and ἰδέα so as to be an educated citizen or leader.

2.3. Knowledge and δόξα

³⁹¹ According to the Cambridge lexicon: Diggle, 2021.

³⁹² Hermann, 2007, 95.

³⁹³ Hermann, 2007, 148.

³⁹⁴ Sullivan, 2001, 90.

³⁹⁵ Sullivan, 2001, 79.

³⁹⁶ Collins, 2015, 191.

³⁹⁷ Hermann, 2007, 145.

³⁹⁸ The impact Gorgias specially had upon Isocrates is debatable, but there does seem to be a similarity in the way they both approach these terms.

For Isocrates, the term *δοξα* does not refer to a learnable knowledge. All an individual can do is to practice *εἶδος* and *ἰδεα*, study their socio-political context and attempt to incorporate knowable variables to increase the reliability of any decision made, while accepting they will never master it. His definition was likely influenced by Gorgias who uses *δοξα* in a similar manner defining it as a chaotic unknowable.³⁹⁹ While Isocrates holds a more optimistic understanding, he still acknowledges the randomness and unpredictability of *δοξα*. He states:

*... I know that in times when your city deliberates on matters of the greatest import those who are reputed to be the wisest sometimes miss the expedient course of action, whereas now and then some chance person from the ranks of men who are deemed of no account and are regarded with contempt hits upon the right course and is thought to give the best advice.*⁴⁰⁰

Isocrates here is building on Gorgias' scepticism, arguing that while no one may ever achieve a complete understanding of *δοξα*, through practise, they may increase the likelihood of a successful judgment. Poulakos uses the metaphor of an archer training to hit their mark; while there is always uncertainty, practice may improve the frequency of success.⁴⁰¹ Through acknowledging that there will always be unknowable elements in *δοξα* Isocrates is demonstrating an awareness of Athenian political thinking that was popular by the end of the fifth century.

As I have already touched upon, there was a popular understanding that society can, and even should, be governed by mortal laws (*nomos*) rather than nature (*physis*). Examples of this understanding can also be found within Plato's portrayal of Protagoras which suggests that "*man is measure of all things*".⁴⁰² Similarly for Thrasymachus, the root of justice stems from the power of the stronger.⁴⁰³ Xenophon too, as the thesis demonstrated previously, considered

³⁹⁹ Pl. *Timaeus* 28a; *Meno*, 86a, 97b-c.

⁴⁰⁰ Isoc. *Pan.* 248.

⁴⁰¹ Poulakos, 2004, 52.

⁴⁰² Plat. *Theaet.* 152a.

⁴⁰³ Plat. *Rep.* 1.338c.

justice to be localised within the society and for φυσικς to be enhanced and controlled by the νομος in question.⁴⁰⁴ Isocrates builds upon this sceptical belief on the boundaries of human knowledge. He accepts that no human can attain a complete understanding of δοξα because there will always be ειδος and ιδεα that are unknowable or uncontrollable. Through the study of δοξα, however, an individual might better understand the needs of their surroundings and aim to make good decisions more reliably.

2.4. Isocrates on moderation

An individual's ability to align their ambitions to the needs of their society is a central theme of Isocrates' philosophy. The most consistent way Isocrates demonstrates this is through his use of the term δόξα. However, a more overt example of this argument is the theme of moderation. In many ways, Isocrates uses the term σωφροσυνη as an adjunct to δόξα. The term σωφροσυνη often translated as 'moderation' or 'temperance'⁴⁰⁵ is a central virtue for leadership and is used alongside δόξα. This can be seen quite clearly in his *Nicocles* or *The Cyprians* where he states:

τούτων ενεκα καὶ ταυτα διανοηθεῖς περιττοτέρως τῶν ἄλλων ἡσκησα
τὴν **σωφροσυνη** καὶ προειλόμην τῶν ἡδονῶν οὐ τὰς ἐπὶ τοῖς ἔργοις
τοῖς μηδεμίαν τιμὴν ἔχουσιν, ἀλλὰ τὰς ἐπὶ ταῖς **δόξαις** ταῖς δι'
ἀνδραγαθίαν γιγνομέναις. χρὴ δὲ δοκιμάζειν τὰς ἀρετὰς οὐκ ἐν ταῖς
αὐταῖς **ιδέαις** ἀπάσας, ἀλλὰ τὴν μὲν δικαιοσύνην ἐν ταῖς ἀπορίαις,
τὴν δὲ **σωφροσυνη** ἐν ταῖς δυναστείαις, τὴν δ' ἐγκράτειαν ἐν ταῖς
τῶν νεωτέρων ἡλικίαις.⁴⁰⁶

For these reasons, and with these thoughts in mind, I was more assiduous than anyone else in the practice of temperance, and I choose for my pleasures, not those which are found in acts which yield no honour, but those which are found in the good repute which

⁴⁰⁴ See chapter 3.

⁴⁰⁵ As argued in chapter three.

⁴⁰⁶ Isoc. *Nicocles*. 44

rewards nobility of character. However, we ought not to test all the virtues⁴⁰⁷ in the same set of conditions but should test justice when a man is in want, temperance when he is in power, continence when he is in the prime of youth.⁴⁰⁸

Isocrates is demonstrating here that for Nicocles to achieve σωφροσύνη he must use δοξά to decide upon actions that yield the most nobility and least lack of honour. For Isocrates, σωφροσύνη is a key virtue for a leader but the best, and perhaps only, way to learn this virtue is through the study of δοξά. Additionally, the passage also demonstrates his use of the term ἰδέα as the variable Nicocles must take into consideration. This passage is valuable for showing the relationship between each of these terms. The virtue of σωφροσύνη is the ultimate ideal that is unlearnable through any dedicated science. The only way to develop one's σωφροσύνη is through the study of δοξά which, as we have seen, has limitations of its own. Isocrates then demonstrates that the individual must be capable of selecting and accounting for ἰδέα in order to make the most informed judgement possible. In other words, a decision-maker must acknowledge their social context, their audience and any other variable that is relevant (while acknowledging they will not know them all) to create the best judgment (δοξά) and thereby judge with moderation (σωφροσύνη).

Moderation, or temperance, is a virtue that occurs repeatedly within Isocrates' works as the principal means to control the ambition and desires of an individual and to direct their natural virtues toward the benefit of the state.⁴⁰⁹ Surprisingly however, σωφροσύνη is used fairly infrequently when compared to δοξά and Isocrates seems content to interchange σωφροσύνη with other similar terms such as being μέτριος⁴¹⁰ or having εγκράτεια.⁴¹¹ Isocrates' inconsistency

⁴⁰⁷ The term 'virtues' as translated here from ἰδέα is perhaps misleading. As we have seen ἰδέα is not a virtue but the building blocks of wisdom (see Sullivan, 2001, 79). Having said that, 'virtues' is probably the best translation providing we are conscious it is not ideal.

⁴⁰⁸ Isoc. *Nicocles*. 44.

⁴⁰⁹ Ober, 2004, 22.

⁴¹⁰ Isoc. *Demonicus*. 28, 42.

⁴¹¹ Isoc. *Demonicus*. 21.

with the term σωφροσύνη can be largely put down to Isocrates' consistent use of the term δοξα. Nevertheless, Isocrates appears to use the terms somewhat interchangeably and the value of moderation as a means to harness the ambition of the ruler to the needs of the state has been shown to be a central theme.

3.1. Leadership

Isocrates is writing over an extended period of time and has many different works written through a variety of methods and with different aims. Leadership, however, is a consistent theme that remains throughout Isocrates' philosophy. This is clear within Isocrates' earlier works, written in the first decades of the fourth century, where his discourses offer direct instruction and council to the Cypriot kings. Similarly, *Helen*⁴¹² and *Busiris*⁴¹³ also feature the character of leadership as central themes within lengthy descriptions of Theseus and Busiris. Isocrates' early works are clearly written with leadership as a key theme. They aim to draw parallels between legendary leaders in order to prescribe virtues and lessons that help to prove his argument as to the importance of certain virtues for current leaders, as we will discuss in more depth below. Crucially however, this is not a theme that is dropped or surpassed within Isocrates' later writings. Ruling with ἀρετή and σωφροσύνη also dominates the *Areopagiticus* written around 355.⁴¹⁴ Even toward the end of Isocrates' career, his theory of a leadership based upon a leader educated in δοξα is simply expanded to refer to Greece in general.⁴¹⁵

3.2 Rewriting history

⁴¹² Isoc. *Helen*. 18-44.

⁴¹³ Isoc. *Busiris*. 15.

⁴¹⁴ Isoc. *Areopagiticus*. 4-5,24,27,37,40-54.

⁴¹⁵ See below.

Isocrates uses leadership as a central theme within his later works to act as proof to support the virtues and education that he believes were so important.⁴¹⁶ To this end, Isocrates takes a selective interpretation of past events, drawing out key individuals for analysis while minimising the accomplishments of the Athenian *demos*. Isocrates' choice to use Theseus as Athens' figurehead allows him to bypass the last century of democratic reform. Instead, he focuses upon the virtues and accomplishments of a single leader as seen in his *Helen*⁴¹⁷ and *Panathenaicus*.⁴¹⁸ Similar examples can be found in the *Antidosis* where Isocrates credits the major Athenian achievements of the fifth century to the prowess of individual leaders.

*And of these men who carried out such great enterprises not one neglected the art of discourse; nay, so much more did they apply their minds to eloquence than to other things, that Solon was named one of the seven sophists.*⁴¹⁹

Isocrates is choosing to focus on the achievements of specific individual leaders who he uses to press his argument for the importance of education. In the preceding passages Isocrates systematically accredits Athenian achievements to great leaders, and specifically the strength of their virtuous characters.

This point is developed further within his *De pace* where Isocrates criticises the assembly for failing to capitalise on good leaders. He states:

So far are we different from our ancestors that whereas they chose the same men to preside over the city and to be generals in the field, since they believed that one who could give the best counsel on this platform would best take counsel with himself when alone, we ourselves do the very opposite.

⁴¹⁶ Collins, 2015, 220.

⁴¹⁷ Isoc. *Helen*. 23-37. Note specifically 35 where Isocrates credits Theseus with bringing together the Athenian villages.

⁴¹⁸ Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 127.

⁴¹⁹ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 235.

Isocrates' rewriting of history is designed to provide evidence for the importance of education and virtue.⁴²⁰ Some scholars have drawn attention to this history, suggesting that Isocrates is attempting to actively redefine Athenian history and airbrush out the populist movements of democratic Athens.⁴²¹ I think there is some truth to this, particularly within Isocrates' reassessment and redefinition of equality, which we will cover below. We should be cautious, however, not to overestimate Isocrates' intentions. Above all, he is using history as a rhetorical tool to articulate his philosophy. He is not engaging in a scientific assessment of the past but overtly pulling on the specific examples that support his view. Attack highlights a similarity between Isocrates' use of Athenian history and Xenophon's use of Persian history in the *Cyropaedia*.⁴²² This is perhaps a more constructive way to assess Isocrates' use of the past. Like Xenophon, Isocrates is not necessarily attempting a serious historical study, simply to use the near-distant past as a proving ground for his ideas and political theories.

3.3. Learning to rule in Isocrates

This chapter has already demonstrated the basis of Isocrates' philosophy through his use of δόξα, but now we must demonstrate specifically how Isocrates links education to leadership. Principally, Isocrates must be seen as an educator. Commonly we read Isocrates as a political thinker, but he is one of the few thinkers who actively teaches his beliefs to paying students and would-be statesmen. As a result, his political thinking is not just theoretical but designed to be used as a real-world blueprint for training oneself in successful leadership. To this end, all his works have clear instructional characteristics and some act directly as practical guides to specific leaders.⁴²³ Education in ἀρετή is not just a theme of Isocrates' works it is his primary purpose for writing. This can be seen most clearly within his early works and particularly within his *To*

⁴²⁰ Attack, 2018, 178; Collins, 2015, 220; Raaflaub, 2003, 63-66; Pownall, 2018, 140.

⁴²¹ Pownall, 2018, 140; Raaflaub, 2003, 63-66; Pontier, 2018, 101-105.

⁴²² Attack, 2018, 176. A similar argument can also be found in Pontier, 2018, 101.

⁴²³ Isoc. *Nicocles*; *To Nicocles*; *To Demonicus*; *Philip* are more obvious examples.

Nicocles where Isocrates sets out the aims and requirements of kingship. He states:

*... to relieve the state when it is in distress, to maintain it in prosperity and to make it great when it is small... and surely this much is clear, that those who are able to do all this, and who pronounce on matters of so great moment, must not be indolent nor careless, but must see to it that they are superior to all others in intelligence; for it is evident that they will reign well or ill according to the manner in which they equip their own minds.*⁴²⁴

A good leader must learn how to rule, in order to be successful. He argues “...that education and diligence are in the highest degree potent to improve our nature”⁴²⁵ and demonstrates how wild animals can be tamed away from their natural demeanour.⁴²⁶ In his *Antidosis*, Isocrates dedicates eighteen sections to proving that education equips individuals⁴²⁷ to have greater intelligence and oratorical skill.⁴²⁸ As we have seen, this work is also more cautious in its description of learning virtues, highlighting that ἀρετή itself is not learnable through any specific science.⁴²⁹ For Isocrates, it was via the study of oratory and δοξα that an individual might best equip themselves to hone their ἀρετή. This demonstrates Isocrates’ belief that everyone must dedicate themselves to education, particularly those who wish to rule others. Leaders had to learn to rule regardless of their natural ability because those abilities and ambitions needed to be trained to acknowledge the needs of the society.

3.4. σωφροσύνη, δικαιοσύνη and the character of the young

For Isocrates, the key lessons for a leader are in σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη. These virtues are key for two reasons: firstly, because through δοξα a student can learn to cultivate them. Secondly, because these virtues are vital to training the student to respect the needs of their society. By cultivating these

⁴²⁴ Isoc. *To Nicocles*. 9-10.

⁴²⁵ Isoc. *To Nicocles*. 12.

⁴²⁶ Isoc. *To Nicocles*.12.

⁴²⁷ Ober (2004, 22) specifically argues that the *Antidosis* demonstrates the desire to combine the individual to the state.

⁴²⁸ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 197-215.

⁴²⁹ Isoc. *Antidosis* 271.

virtues an individual may learn to tame their youthful immaturities and make self-less judgments aimed at the good of their society over their own personal ambitions.⁴³⁰ Isocrates makes this need for training clear within his *To Demonicus* stating: “...*Consider that no adornment so becomes you as modesty, justice, and self-control; for these are the virtues by which, as all men are agreed, the character of the young is held in restraint*”⁴³¹ What is interesting about this passage is that σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη are both used to restrain a youthful character.

The “*character of the young*” is frequently described as possessing a brazen desire for violence and willingness to engage in dishonourable pleasures. Similarly, his *Archidamus* states: “...*since it is not by the number of our years that we differ in wisdom from one another, but by our natural endowments and by our cultivation of them...*”⁴³² Here Isocrates highlights specifically that the youth have not cultivated their natural virtues. Again, in his *Aeropagitus* Isocrates praises the way Athens used to educate its youth.

*...they were subjected to greater supervision in the very prime of their vigor than when they were boys. For our forefathers placed such strong emphasis upon sobriety that they put the supervision of decorum in charge of the Council of the Areopagus.*⁴³³

This description is then reinforced later in the dialogue stating that “*They saw that at this age men are most unruly of temper and filled with a multitude of desires, and that their spirits are most in need of being curbed by devotion to noble pursuits and by congenial labour*”.⁴³⁴ In these passages, Isocrates describes the character of the young as in possession of wild virtue, susceptible to dishonourable pleasure or brash, warlike, aggression. In his *Antidosis* men are argued to be driven by “*pleasure or gain or honour*” arguing that it is the

⁴³⁰ Isoc. *To Demonicus*. 29.

⁴³¹ Isoc. *To Demonicus*. 15.

⁴³² Isoc. *Archidamus*. 4.

⁴³³ Isoc. *Areopagiticus*. 37.

⁴³⁴ Isoc. *Areopagiticus*. 43.

responsibility of a teacher to educate his students in self-control.⁴³⁵ Isocrates argues that through an education in σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη a student might learn to tame their inner virtue. I do not think that Isocrates considers the character of the young to be a decisively negative character. Indeed natural ability is praised in almost every description of good leadership. It is key however that the student learns how to attune their natural virtues toward the needs of the state in order to make informed decisions, tailored to the needs of society rather than themselves.

3.5. σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη and Timotheus

In addition to taming the character of the young, Isocrates' leader must be able to moderate or control both frivolous desires and personal ambitions. Cultivating σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη is central in setting aside personal gain for the benefit of the society. Isocrates attempts to prove this point within his defence of his student Timotheus who was broadly unpopular in Athens. For Isocrates, the ultimate strength of Timotheus was his dedication to Athens above his own reputation.⁴³⁶ Isocrates portrays Timotheus as underequipped by the Athenians,⁴³⁷ yet capable of bringing twenty-four poleis under Athenian control,⁴³⁸ without the need of extra funding through taxation.⁴³⁹ As Ober points out, Isocrates is deliberately attempting to include Timotheus as one of Athens' great historic leaders⁴⁴⁰ and I would add that he is even portrayed as a superior to Pericles in his taking of Samos⁴⁴¹ and the Spartan commander Lysander.⁴⁴² Timotheus' military achievements are used as proof to support Isocrates' own teaching⁴⁴³ in the importance of moderation and justice. Isocrates claims that:

⁴³⁵ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 221-222.

⁴³⁶ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 121.

⁴³⁷ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 109.

⁴³⁸ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 113.

⁴³⁹ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 109-110.

⁴⁴⁰ Ober, 1998, 269.

⁴⁴¹ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 111.

⁴⁴² Too, 2008, 156.

⁴⁴³ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 104-106.

*...without support from the city, he brought them all to a successful issue, and convinced all the Hellenes that he won them justly. And what greater or clearer proof of his wise judgement could one adduce than this fact?*⁴⁴⁴

Here Isocrates directly connects Timotheus' accomplishments to his own teachings of σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη. Indeed, as Too points out, Timotheus represents the legitimacy of Isocrates' teachings.⁴⁴⁵ The key requirement for military leadership, was the ability to make selfless and well-informed decisions in the best interests of the army and of Athens.⁴⁴⁶ Through analysis of the character of Timotheus we can better understand Isocrates' own teachings.

In comparison to Timotheus, those generals who are veterans of conflict, good fighters⁴⁴⁷ with "*robust bodies*",⁴⁴⁸ are argued to be unable to "*take even a single village*".⁴⁴⁹ Timotheus on the other hand is portrayed as an intellectual citizen, a statesman, dedicated to Athens "*who lacks a robust physique and has not knocked about with itinerant armies but has shared ... the duties of a citizen, [and] has accomplished such great things*". For Isocrates, Timotheus' success as a military leader comes from his civic education and devotion to Athens and the Athenian allies with, at times, complete disregard for his public reputation. He states: "*...he did not fall in with your prejudices, nor was he willing to enhance his own reputation to the injury of Athens*".⁴⁵⁰ Timotheus is, for Isocrates, an idealised general, one who is genuinely striving toward the benefit of Athens and never to gain his own renown or prestige. Ober would point out here that Timotheus is not perfect, and that Isocrates criticises him for being too 'great in spirit'.⁴⁵¹ Yet I would argue that Timotheus is not so complex

⁴⁴⁴ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 118.

⁴⁴⁵ Too, 2008, 138.

⁴⁴⁶ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 117-118.

⁴⁴⁷ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 115.

⁴⁴⁸ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 116; Too (2008, 152) understands this phrase to suggest that Timotheus follows Socrates in being perceived as weak yet still achieving great things.

⁴⁴⁹ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 115.

⁴⁵⁰ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 121.

⁴⁵¹ Ober (1998, 272) argues that the portrayal of Timotheus is indicative of a complex relationship between the leader and the state, see page 274. I argue that Ober is reading too deeply into Isocrates'

a character as Ober asserts. The primary criticism that Isocrates levels at his former student was that he should spend some time catering to his public image and tackling his jealous enemies in the assembly.⁴⁵² He states:

*For while he was no anti-democrat nor a misanthrope, nor arrogant, nor possessed of any such defect of character, yet because of his proud bearing—an advantage to the office of a general but out of place in dealing with men from day to day—everyone attributed to him the faults which I have named; for he was by nature as inept in courting the favour of men as he was gifted in handling affairs.*⁴⁵³

I do not see this passage as a legitimate criticism of Timotheus, rather as a jab at the flaws of Athenian democracy. If anything, Isocrates praises the decision-making and virtues of Timotheus, while at the same time, criticising the judgments of the *demos*. His description of Timotheus is designed not only to paint a picture of idealised leadership, incorporating an active use of σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη but also to demonstrate how lacking those virtues are within current Athenian politics. Timotheus' success was a result of his character, a character that was cultivated by Isocrates to place Athens and Athenian reputation⁴⁵⁴ above all else, including his own reputation. Furthermore, Timotheus is Isocrates' proof of his own teachings on σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη. What makes Timotheus a good general is his ability to make wise decisions and to strive to better Athens and not himself. For Isocrates, Timotheus is an idealised leader who has successfully learnt to control his inner ambition and not allow it to dictate his actions.

4.1. Meritocracy

account of the charges placed against Timotheus. While Isocrates is very concerned about leadership, he is also very defensive of his student and critical of the *demos*' capacity for decision making.

⁴⁵² Too (2008, 154) even argues that this was not really a criticism of Timotheus as being disliked by the Athenian *demos* actually allowed him to negotiate more effectively with other *polies*.

⁴⁵³ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 131.

⁴⁵⁴ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 134.

If education is at the core of leadership, then it must also be at the core of social hierarchy. For Isocrates, education is the mitigating factor in his proposed social hierarchy.⁴⁵⁵ Isocrates argues for his meritocracy most clearly within his *Panathenaicus* where he makes it clear that whether the society employs a monarchy, oligarchy, or democracy it must structure its society with the most educated in positions of influence. He states:

*But I, for my part, hold that there are three types of polity and three only: oligarchy, democracy, and monarchy, and that of the people who live under these all who are wont to place in charge of their offices and of their affairs in general those of their fellow-citizens who are most competent and who will most ably and justly direct the affairs of state...*⁴⁵⁶

Isocrates' proposed social hierarchy is based upon the same theory of education that we see in his teachings on leadership. Here Isocrates demonstrates that regardless of the constitution the educated must be in positions of influence to capitalise on their virtues for the good of the society.⁴⁵⁷ In contrast, Isocrates warns against employing citizens with unrefined ambition as potentially damaging for the polis, stating:

*On the other hand, when men employ in these positions of leadership those of their citizens who are the most brazen and the most depraved and who take no thought for the things which are advantageous to the commonwealth but are ready to go to any extreme to further their personal advantage, the character of their government will correspond to the depravity of the men at the head of their affairs.*⁴⁵⁸

Isocrates demonstrates that if unvirtuous individuals are elected to positions of power, they may encourage others to act in a similar, self-serving manner.⁴⁵⁹ There is also a criticism here of the *demos* itself, arguing that they have a

⁴⁵⁵ Too, 2008, 121. Too also points out Isocrates' use of a hierarchy based upon philosophy.

⁴⁵⁶ Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 131.

⁴⁵⁷ Attack, 2018, 180. Attack argues that, for Isocrates, good values make a society rather than law.

⁴⁵⁸ Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 133.

⁴⁵⁹ Too, 2008, 174.

tendency to elect individuals that do not conform to Isocrates' educationally-based criteria.⁴⁶⁰

This criticism of the *demos* can also be found in his *Areopagiticus* where he highlights the difficulty for the 'best' candidate to be drawn by lot.⁴⁶¹ For Isocrates, a successful constitution must include "*the rule of the best*".⁴⁶² Arguments for meritocracy are not confined to the *Panathenaicus*, and similar examples can be found in his *Antidosis*. In his description of Timotheus' leadership Isocrates argues that the 'robust' and ambitious military veterans should be placed as captains and division commanders, leaving the educated and virtuous Timotheus to lead the force in general.⁴⁶³ Again in *To Nicocles*, Isocrates states that a good king must surpass all others in his virtue.⁴⁶⁴ Later Isocrates advises Nicocles that: "...*the strongest challenge to your task you will find in yourself, if only you consider it monstrous that the worse should rule the better, and that the more foolish should give orders to men of greater wisdom*".⁴⁶⁵ This passage is followed by the encouragement to reward those in society who display wisdom while punishing and discouraging ignorance or self-serving ambition.⁴⁶⁶ Leaders remain at the centre of Isocrates' rhetoric. Those in positions of power will be emulated by the rest of society. Therefore, a society that fails to instigate Isocrates' education-based meritocracy risks improper or damaging lessons being taught to the wider society. To prove this, Isocrates draws on an interpretation of the early fifth century.

The fact, then, that our city was governed in those times better than the rest of the world I would justly credit to her kings, of whom I spoke a moment ago. For it was they who trained the multitude in the ways of virtue and justice and great sobriety and who taught through the manner of their rule the very truth which I shall be seen

⁴⁶⁰ Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 131, Isoc. *Antidosis* 115.

⁴⁶¹ Isoc. *Areopagiticus*. 23.

⁴⁶² Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 131.

⁴⁶³ Isoc. *Antidosis*. 116-117.

⁴⁶⁴ Isoc. *To Nicocles*. 11-12.

⁴⁶⁵ Isoc. *To Nicocles* 14.

⁴⁶⁶ Isoc. *To Nicocles* 16.

*to have expressed in words after they had expressed it in their deeds, namely, that every polity is the soul of the state, having as much power over it as the mind over the body.*⁴⁶⁷

This logic underlines what Isocrates believes to be one of the central flaws with Athenian society, elevating the self-serving and ignoring or actively punishing the educated members of the citizenry through fear of oligarchy. We must also acknowledge that Isocrates is carving a place for himself, and his educated peers within the political landscape. Nevertheless, Isocrates' meritocracy comes off the back of education and leadership. Isocrates explains that while kingship and individual leaders hold primary responsibility for a society's success, education must also be spread throughout the society. Education is the method by which an individual might bind their personal desires to the needs of the state. Isocrates then argues that those who are most able and devoted to the needs of the state ought to be placed in positions where they can benefit the society and act as an example to others.

So far, we might expect Isocrates' meritocracy to have been considered a conservative but perhaps not overly radical theory in the fourth century political climate. At times however, Isocrates puts forward a far more radical meritocracy, one that educates different members of society to different levels and different ranks. In his *Aeropagiticus* he states:

*...since it was not possible to direct all into the same occupations, because of differences in their circumstances, they assigned to each one a vocation which was in keeping with his means; for they turned the needier towards farming and trade, knowing that poverty comes about through idleness, and evil-doing through poverty.*⁴⁶⁸

This addition to Isocrates' primary rhetoric of meritocracy is certainly more extreme and could even be seen to undermine the logic that the best should rule. It would suggest some degree of a paywall be erected between a citizen

⁴⁶⁷ Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 138.

⁴⁶⁸ Isoc. *Aeropagiticus*. 44-5.

and socio-political prominence. Even if Isocrates considered this to be a low bar to set, it betrays a separation between his views and the egalitarian attitudes of his Athenian context.

It was a frequent elitist criticism of Athenian politics that many poorer citizens tended to rely upon payments from the state for civil service rather than becoming financially independent themselves. We see this criticism occur again in the *Aeropagiticus* where Isocrates argues magistrates should be appointed from those citizens who had the leisure time to conduct the role without neglecting their own financial stability.⁴⁶⁹ This argument appears notably more sympathetic to oligarchic values and a rejection of the egalitarianism that Athens has developed over the last century. We can also expect this addition to his meritocracy to be met with particular resistance from the Athenian *demos*. It is worth noting however, that this addition may stem from Isocrates' tendencies to produce a real-world, practical theory. We should also consider that this work may have been intended for an audience that was more sympathetic to his arguments. Either way, this addition to Isocrates' meritocracy certainly places his thinking at odds with the traditional understanding of Athenian egalitarianism.

4.2. Equality and Meritocracy

A meritocracy, of any kind, is not compatible with the broad concept of egalitarianism that can be seen to have developed in Athens by the end of the fifth century. Importantly however, Isocrates' meritocracy is not a proposition to oligarchy, but as Attack shows, an attempt to redefine the popular Athenian concept of equality.⁴⁷⁰ To the modern reader there is a very fine line between the education-based hierarchy Isocrates proposes and an oligarchy, a point that does not appear to be lost on Isocrates' opponents or even to Isocrates himself.

⁴⁶⁹ Isoc. *Areopagiticus*. 26.

⁴⁷⁰ See Attack, 2018, 176.

Frequently, Isocrates feels the need to defend himself against the predictable accusation of an oligarchic sympathiser. In his *Areopagiticus*, as soon as Isocrates finishes detailing his meritocracy in the context of Athenian 'history' he immediately defends himself stating: "*.... I even ran the risk, although giving you the very best advice, of being thought an enemy of the people and of seeking to turn the state into an oligarchy*".⁴⁷¹ Isocrates knows, even as he writes his amended account of Athenian history that he will be challenged as an oligarch, or at least said to be contrary to Athenian values. He even proceeds this passage with a summary of The Thirty, in an attempt to demonstrate the differences between his meritocracy and this infamous example of oligarchic tyranny.⁴⁷² The key here, is that regardless of how the modern or ancient reader might categorise Isocrates' works, Isocrates did not consider himself an oligarch.

To demonstrate this, Isocrates must marry his meritocracy to equality, redefining what is meant by equality, and even democracy more generally. It is within his *Areopagiticus* that Isocrates proposes a second definition of equality, one based upon giving to each man his due. He states:

*But what contributed most to their good government of the state was that of the two recognized kinds of equality—that which makes the same award to all alike and that which gives to each man his due—they did not fail to grasp which was the more serviceable; but, rejecting as unjust that which holds that the good and the bad are worthy of the same honours.*⁴⁷³

Here Isocrates is attempting to give his meritocracy licence by redefining the notion of equality.⁴⁷⁴ Instead of seeing equality as a universal right to participate in Athenian politics, here Isocrates can be seen to alter that definition. To give everyone what they deserve is far more fitting with the meritocracy he then

⁴⁷¹ Isoc. *Areopagiticus*. 57.

⁴⁷² Isoc. *Areopagiticus*. 64-69.

⁴⁷³ Isoc. *Areopagiticus*. 21.

⁴⁷⁴ Attack, 2008, 176.

describes, based solely on education rather than a universal right to socio-political participation.

As we have discussed above, many have criticised Isocrates for rewriting Athenian history, focusing upon the characters of key individuals while minimising the achievements of the democracy. Normally, Isocrates uses history simply as a tool to articulate his rhetoric; yet in the context of equality, Isocrates is actively attempting to redefine the Athenian political culture. Scholars have demonstrated at length the importance of the tyrannicides and Persian wars in creating a culture defined by political equality,⁴⁷⁵ yet Isocrates portrays Athens as slipping from a 'traditional' understanding of equality (i.e., *his* definition of equality) toward equality for all. Isocrates points to the constitutions of Solon and Cleisthenes⁴⁷⁶ arguing that what made their reforms so successful for Athens was the acknowledgment of a second form of equality. Isocrates' redefinition of equality actively supports his argument for a meritocracy based upon education. By defining equality as giving to each what they deserve, the state is free to praise and distribute honours upon those who display a cultivated virtue tailored toward the needs of the state. Equally, the state could punish or rebuke those who are ruled by pleasure or self-serving ambition. It is worth acknowledging that Isocrates may have redefined equality as part of a rhetorical device to persuade his audience. Yet this would conflict with his self-portrayal within his *Antidosis*, where we saw the portrayal of a stubborn thinker who argues his beliefs regardless of popular opinion or prejudice. I argue that Isocrates considered himself to be a devoted Athenian but also proud of his education and privileged position. His redefinition of equality was an attempt to, once again, create a space for both himself and his philosophy in the political landscape.

⁴⁷⁵ Raaflaub, 2003, 63-66; Pownall, 2018, 140.

⁴⁷⁶ Too, 2008, 179. Too argues that education should imitate a farther-figure. Specifically, the traditional rulers such as Solon and Cleisthenes.

4.3. Willing obedience

Finally, a key component in Isocrates' meritocracy is the importance of willing obedience. The reason an education-based meritocracy could work where financial or hereditary hierarchy failed was because educated leaders would be capable of ruling an individual better than they could rule themselves. As outlined in his *To Nicocles* Isocrates states:

*Be not willing to show your authority by harshness or by undue severity in punishment, but by causing your subjects one and all to defer to your judgement and to believe that your plans for their welfare are better than their own.*⁴⁷⁷

Isocrates argues that by ruling in the best interests of their subjects, a leader would find citizens who willingly desired to put themselves under their leadership. By doing so, subjects might learn to live virtuously through imitating their rulers. Willing obedience can be seen again when Isocrates argues for Athenian leadership in his panhellenism, stating that Athens was:

*... able to conquer in battle all who invaded their territory; that they were awarded the meed of valor in the wars which they fought for the sake of Hellas; and that they were so trusted that most of the states of their own free will placed themselves under their leadership.*⁴⁷⁸

Isocrates uses the Delian league as evidence of willing obedience in action. Free states willingly placed themselves under Athenian control due to their wise leadership. It is worth noting however, that Isocrates does not have the allies place themselves under Athenian hegemony but specifically under the leadership of "*Aristides and Themistocles and Miltiades*"⁴⁷⁹. Again, Isocrates writes the individual leaders into his rhetoric and credits them specifically with the ability to cultivate willing obedience. Nevertheless, willing obedience plays a central role in Isocrates' understandings of an ideal hierarchy.

⁴⁷⁷ Isoc. *Nicocles*. 24.

⁴⁷⁸ Isoc. *De Pace*. 76.

⁴⁷⁹ Isoc. *De Pace*. 75.

5.1. Panhellenism

In his later works, Isocrates expands upon his understanding of leadership, meritocracy and the role of education beyond Athens. He argues that his education-based meritocracy does not just apply to Athenians, not even to Greeks, but to humanity in general. While the notion of a unified Greece, designed to overpower Persia, was already well established in Greek thought,⁴⁸⁰ Isocrates' arguments for panhellenism are deeply rooted within his own ideas of meritocracy and education. As a result, Isocrates must first argue that humanity shares the same intellectual foundation that Isocrates recognises amongst the Athenian citizenry. He states:

*And so far has our city distanced the rest of mankind in thought and in speech that her pupils have become the teachers of the rest of the world; and she has brought it about that the name Hellenes suggests no longer a race but an intelligence, and that the title Hellenes is applied rather to those who share our culture than to those who share a common blood.*⁴⁸¹

This controversial passage⁴⁸² highlights the notion that an individual might have to learn how to become human, an argument we can consider to be a logical extension of Isocrates' meritocracy. Education in oratory and virtue is a universal language needed by all societies to understand their own needs. Isocrates' meritocracy can then order those citizens into a hierarchy based upon individual's ability to align their ambitions with the need of the state.

Isocrates categorised and judged the world based on his own meritocracy. To be Greek was less about your race or heritage and more about your education. Greekness, even one's humanity, needed to be learnt actively and that should ultimately be the scale upon which individuals or societies could

⁴⁸⁰ Low, 2018, 457.

⁴⁸¹ Isoc. *Panegyricus*. 50.

⁴⁸² Livingstone, 1998, 275. Livingstone argues that this actually tightens the description of Greekness.

be judged. Using this logic Isocrates even challenges Sparta's right to call themselves Greek due to their failure to educate their citizens. He states:

*But in these respects, the Lacedaemonians are more backward than the barbarians. For you will find that the latter have been both pupils and teachers of many discoveries, while the Lacedaemonians have fallen so far behind our common culture and learning that they do not even try to instruct themselves in letters.*⁴⁸³

Isocrates is judging Sparta by his own meritocracy, highlighting that they fail to follow a common learning and their lack of education places them below even barbarians. Isocrates' focus never changes from education and leadership; his understandings on Panhellenism are not the introduction of new themes, but the application of his understandings onto a wider context. Traditionally, Isocrates' theories were designed as real-world policies, to be used as blueprints rather than a hypothetical discussion.

5.2 Athenian hegemony

If humanity is to be structured around Isocrates' meritocracy, then societies would lose the need for independence. Logically, all peoples would willingly choose to obey whoever appeared to be most educated or the most capable, regardless of their nation. From this logic, Isocrates suggests a panhellenic alliance with Athens at its head.⁴⁸⁴ Importantly, I argue that it is specifically due to his belief in an educationally based meritocracy, that the leader of this panhellenic alliance should be Athens. Isocrates argues that Athenians are the most educated and virtuous of all Greeks and so logically should hold the hegemony.⁴⁸⁵ Isocrates demonstrates this most clearly within his *Panegyricus* which reads almost as an application for leadership, based on a superior dedication to learning and virtue. While the *Panegyricus* does propose panhellenic alliance with shared leadership, the prowess of Athens is placed in stark contrast with fierce criticisms of Sparta. Sparta is frequently

⁴⁸³ Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 209.

⁴⁸⁴ Mitchell, 2007, 83; Low, 2018, 4.

⁴⁸⁵ Isoc. *Panegyricus*. 50.

portrayed by Isocrates as acting tyrannically, using martial strength⁴⁸⁶ to press their own ends at the cost of fellow Greeks.⁴⁸⁷ I argue that Sparta's portrayal is a rhetorical device, used by Isocrates to address Athens' most obvious competitor for the Greek hegemony. Isocrates contrasts the selfish, immoderate, and ignorant Sparta against the wise, modest, just and self-less leadership of specific Athenian leaders. The ideal of good leadership is contrasted with tyranny and ignorance arguing for Athens' place within Isocrates' meritocracy. As argued by Mitchell and Edwards the *Panegyricus* is always Athenian centric and places national pride as a key bias for Isocrates' panhellenic ideas.⁴⁸⁸ I would argue that Isocrates is not just bias toward Athens, he is applying a Atheno-centric philosophy to the wider Greek world.⁴⁸⁹

This portrayal of Sparta can be seen most clearly within the *Panathenaicus*. Written from 342 and finally published in 339,⁴⁹⁰ the *Panathenaicus* demonstrates Isocrates' focus on leadership in the way it accredits praise and brandishes blame. Scholars appear to have overlooked the consistency of who is labelled a hero or villain. I would argue that in almost every instance, positive outcomes are accredited to single, normally Athenian, individuals. In contrast, when the work goes into the severe criticisms of Sparta, the polis, as a whole, is criticised and not its leaders or generals. This is seen most clearly when we consider that Isocrates' critical description of Spartan foreign affairs falls perfectly into his description of a tyrannical use of power. For example, he says:

... having learned from the actual course of events that while according to law states and territories are deemed to belong to those who have duly and lawfully acquired them, in fact, however,

⁴⁸⁶ Isocrates also criticises the Spartan agoge for rewarding youths for theft and other dishonest practices. Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 213.

⁴⁸⁷ Isoc. *Panegyricus*. 46.

⁴⁸⁸ Edwards, 2004, 341-342; Mitchell, 2007, 83.

⁴⁸⁹ Low, 2018, 10.

⁴⁹⁰ Norlin, 1992, 368-369.

*they fall into the hands of those who are most practised in the art of warfare and are able to conquer their enemies in battle...*⁴⁹¹

Isocrates presents Sparta as unlawful, using physical force to acquire benefits for themselves at the cost of others. Accusations that a polis, as a whole, acted in a tyrannical manner is not unusual by c.399.⁴⁹² This is, however, one of the first times we see the accusation of tyranny made against an entire population other than democratic Athens.

Accusations of tyranny were likely to be broadly common within Athenian political discussion as an attempt to alienate a rival speaker from Athens' egalitarian culture.⁴⁹³ Isocrates' choice to accuse Sparta, as a whole, of tyrannical actions can be expected to have raised the eyebrows of his audience. While Sparta is unlikely to have been particularly popular in Athens,⁴⁹⁴ both Xenophon and Plato promote some level of sympathy for the Spartan politics. The age of its constitution alone is also likely to have resulted in at least some level of respect, even from an Athenian audience.⁴⁹⁵ Isocrates then is stepping away from the Socratics and leaning into a more critical understanding of Spartan politics. This shows how Isocrates intends to disqualify Sparta from leadership of a Panhellenic alliance, but it also demonstrates that, even in his later works, Isocrates is relying upon a consistent understanding of education and its relevance to good leadership.

Similarly, in his *de Pace*, Isocrates contrasts the Athenian leadership of their current empire, with an idealised depiction of historic Athenian leadership

⁴⁹¹ Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 46.

⁴⁹² Thuc. 3.10.3; 3.36.

⁴⁹³ Raaflaub, 2003, 79; Pownall, 2018, 138. Both argue that accusation of tyranny were used to attack other orators or politicians.

⁴⁹⁴ Although we can expect some Laconophiles among the Athenian elite.

⁴⁹⁵ Plato's *Laws* (713a1; 691d8-e1) can be seen to favour a mixed constitution, similar to Sparta's constitution, despite its flaws. Xenophon on the other hand is far more overt in his support for Spartan constitution and many scholars have drawn attention to the similarities between Cyrus' Persian constitution and that of Sparta's. Buzzetti, 2001, 12; Ferrario, 2017, 61.

over the Delian league. While not as extreme as his description of Sparta in the *Panathenaicus*, the *demos* is still guilty of judging in an unlawful and even tyrannical manner. He states that: “*At this time ... we recognised that the principle that it is not just for the stronger to rule over the weaker, even as now we recognise it in the nature of the policy which has been established amongst ourselves.*”⁴⁹⁶ It is important to note here that it is the *demos* that is criticised for the poor leadership of the Athenian empire, not its leaders. In contrast, it is the great leaders of the Persian Wars that are praised for their virtue, selflessness and wisdom.⁴⁹⁷ Conversely, the *Panathenaicus* portrays Sparta as an immoral, selfish and intemperate military aggressor, not due to the flaws of an individual, but of a polis in general. In contrast, when describing the Spartan defeat at the battle of Cnidus Isocrates credits the victory to “*...the forces of the King and by the leadership of Conon...*”⁴⁹⁸. These portrayals perfectly correlate with Isocrates’ definition of educated leadership and tyranny.

Isocrates also places his criticism of Spartan expansion in stark contrast with the leadership of the mythic past. Isocrates covers the leadership of Agamemnon and Theseus where considerable focus is placed upon their achievements alongside their wisdom and ἀρετή.⁴⁹⁹

*...since I have already exhausted it for my present purpose, and shall mention only a single course of action which, as it happens, has neither been discussed by anyone before nor been achieved by any other man but Theseus, and which is a signal proof of his virtue and wisdom.*⁵⁰⁰

Isocrates’ contrast between the tyrannical portrayal of Sparta against the heroic leadership of key Athenian individuals is designed to point the reader toward one conclusion. The *Panathenaicus*, *De Pace* and *Areopagiticus* are all designed to contrast the ignorant, even tyrannical rule of a *demos* against an

⁴⁹⁶ Isoc. *De pace*. 69.

⁴⁹⁷ Isoc. *De pace*. 53-5.

⁴⁹⁸ Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 105.

⁴⁹⁹ Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 76-81.

⁵⁰⁰ Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 127.

idealised individual leader. The need for a wise, moderate leader is not a new philosophy but simply an extension of the same theory of individual leadership demonstrated in his earlier discourses. Isocrates is demonstrating that his meritocracy eliminates the need for conflict as individuals and societies will acknowledge the wisdom and virtues of the educated and moreover will choose to follow them willingly.

5.3. The role of Persia

It would be inappropriate to leave this section before acknowledging the Persian influence within Isocrates' later works. While Persia becomes increasingly prominent within his works, I consider its relevance to be primarily rhetorical. Persia presents the opportunity to unite the Greek world against some 'other' and allows Isocrates to demonstrate his leadership theory on a wider scale. This is not to say Isocrates was not serious about war but that he was not entirely clear on the justifications for it, other than its capacity to unify Greece and its potential to be lucrative.⁵⁰¹ The notion of a panhellenic crusade against Persia is not new to Isocrates. Scholars have demonstrated this desire since the Persian wars⁵⁰² forming a perception of Persia as a 'natural enemy'.⁵⁰³ Yet, as touched upon above, I would argue that 'natural enemy' is too crude for Isocrates' use of the term. I argue he is more pragmatic. While Isocrates condemns Persia for poor education, he similarly extends a similar criticism to Sparta. Instead, I argue that for Isocrates, Persia was not a natural enemy as much as a historic and convenient enemy. War with Persia was designed to act as a unifier of Greece as a whole rather than to right a wrong. As Mitchell points out, the Persian wars were a temporary and limited blip in a history that was dominated by inter-Greek conflict. As a result, I would argue that the only perception of a unified Greece came as a result of the Persian wars and therefore was seen to be the only means to achieve panhellenism.

⁵⁰¹ Mitchell, 2007, 207.

⁵⁰² Flower, 2000, 66-69; Mitchell, 2007, 184.

⁵⁰³ Heilbrunn, 1975, 155; Mitchell, 2007, 138.

Isocrates' references to a panhellenic crusade were an incorporation of a common ideal to achieve peace amongst the Greek states rather than a committed condemnation of Persia. This is not to say that Isocrates is passive on the subject as Flower points out, Isocrates highlights the benefits of such an invasion.⁵⁰⁴ Flower even suggests that a Greek crusade is Isocrates' primary argument and that when his idea of a Panhellenic alliance did not work out he turned to Philip.⁵⁰⁵ While I agree that Isocrates panders to the anti-Persian sentiment, I would argue that this goes too far. The role of individual leaders is intrinsic to Isocrates' philosophy and those themes of education and leadership are continued within the *Panegyricus*. While Persia is present within Isocrates' works, it hardly dominates. As Tuplin highlights, the majority of these references are used as arguments for Greek unity and not as a genuine attempt to accurately assess Persia.⁵⁰⁶ While certainly, Flower draws attention to the beginning of the *Panathenaicus* where Isocrates states the benefit of colonising Persia,⁵⁰⁷ he omits Isocrates' context. The invasion is designed specifically to unify Greece, to overlook the selfish aims of some orators and work together for a common cause.⁵⁰⁸ For a writer that idealised the Persian wars and Athenian hegemony over the Delian league it is not surprising that he indulged the belief that Persia was enemy of Greece. It was this doctored history that Isocrates used as evidence to support his rhetoric.

Interestingly, Isocrates does not actually portray Persia as the opposite of Greece. His *Panathenaicus* is full of opposites, contrasts and identities yet Isocrates never chooses to compare Greece and Persia. As we have discussed above, it is Sparta that is portrayed as an opposite to Athens leadership, and is even portrayed as beneath barbarians in Isocrates' meritocracy.⁵⁰⁹ This implies that Persia was not the real focus of Isocrates' writings and instead, he was

⁵⁰⁴ Flower, 2000, 95; Isoc, *Panegyricus*. 13-14.

⁵⁰⁵ Flower, 2000, 94.

⁵⁰⁶ Tuplin, 2018, 13-15. Tuplin considers the proportion of Isocrates' works referencing Persia to be at 11%, in contrast to 40% for Xenophon.

⁵⁰⁷ Isocrates, *Panathenaicus*, 13-14.

⁵⁰⁸ Isoc. *Pan.* 14-15.

⁵⁰⁹ Isoc. *Pan.* 209.

focused upon Greece and articulating his original philosophy. By referencing a panhellenic crusade against Persia Isocrates is attempting to unify Greece based upon a popular belief of a common enemy. His primary focus is still with his philosophy that has not dramatically changed or developed and remains Athenian-centric.⁵¹⁰ To conclude that Isocrates was focused upon a Persian invasion would ignore themes of education, leadership and meritocracy. Themes that this chapter has shown to traverse the entirety of Isocrates' works and are the basis of his political thinking.

6.1. Isocrates and Xenophon

Finally, it is important to clarify Isocrates' relation to Xenophon. As is likely to be apparent at this stage, the thesis argues that major themes of education, leadership, moderation, and decision-making are shared between Xenophon and Isocrates. By looking at both sources together (within the thesis generally rather than this specific chapter) we can ascertain a more developed understanding of political thinking in the fifth and fourth centuries. It is important to note, however, that I am not proposing Xenophon and Isocrates were engaged in a discussion with each other.⁵¹¹ Instead, any similarity should be viewed as stemming from a common intellectual topic or in shared experiences as Athenian elites with similar political and cultural concerns.⁵¹²

That said, having demonstrated the major themes in Isocrates' works, it is worth acknowledging the similarities shared with Xenophon's portrayal of leadership. Recently there have been several publications aimed at drawing connections between these two political thinkers.⁵¹³ I would add to that

⁵¹⁰ Edwards, 2004, 341. Edwards also believes Isocrates' work is Athenian central throughout his references to a panhellenic crusade.

⁵¹¹ Schofield, 2019, 55-56. Although Schofield does propose that Isocrates could be directly responding to Plato at times.

⁵¹² Attack, 2018, 190.

⁵¹³ Pownall, 2018; Attack, 2018; Tuplin, 2018.

discussion that the most relevant connection is related to their portrayal of ἀρετή and education specifically. The most striking resemblance between the writings of Isocrates and Xenophon is within the belief that the natural ability and ambition of a leader must be harnessed toward the needs of the society in question.⁵¹⁴ The significance of this understanding, for both thinkers, has already been detailed within this thesis but there are some specific similarities that are worth assessing. Both writers refer to the characteristics of the uneducated child/youth. As we have seen, Isocrates references that modesty, justice and self-control are the most effective virtues to hold the character of the young in restraint.⁵¹⁵ They both explain that a youth is likely to be warlike and hot headed, specifically mentioning a sadistic enjoyment in the martial defeat of others.⁵¹⁶ In stark comparison, Xenophon's young Cyrus is also criticised for charging into battle and gloating over the slain enemy.⁵¹⁷ Xenophon is more deliberate with his description, highlighting that this stems from a youthful virtue of courage that needs to be trained to work in support of the army. Yet both thinkers see courage as a virtue that must be used alongside wisdom.⁵¹⁸ Similar examples can be seen in the reference to the training of wild animals. Isocrates makes several references to the benefit of taming wild animals, cultivating the virtues of their nature to make them beneficial to society.⁵¹⁹ Xenophon also uses a similar example describing the young Cyrus as charging off like "a well-bred but untrained hound"⁵²⁰ with similar examples to be found in his *Cynegeticus*⁵²¹ and the *Memorabilia*⁵²². Both thinkers are using the same means to argue for the same point, specifically that education is vital to cultivate the natural virtues of the individual toward the needs of the society. In this way education is demonstrated to be at the base of successful leadership and forms the foundation of both thinker's political thinking.

⁵¹⁴ Mitchell, 2019.

⁵¹⁵ Isoc. *To Demonicus*. 15.

⁵¹⁶ Isoc. *To Demonicus*. 15.

⁵¹⁷ Xen. *Cyr.*110.

⁵¹⁸ Pontier, 2018, 108.

⁵¹⁹ Isoc. *To Nicocles*. 12; *Antidosis*. 213.

⁵²⁰ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.4.19.

⁵²¹ Xen, *Cyn*, 1.3.11.

⁵²² Xen, *Mem*, 2.1.5.

Additionally, for both writers, education then forms the mitigating factor in a proposed social hierarchy. A meritocracy based upon education is a logical development from placing education as the key for successful leadership. As we have seen previously, Xenophon demonstrates this form of meritocracy at several points within his description of Cyrus' society, dividing loot based upon the display of virtue, for example.⁵²³ Isocrates goes even further, dedicating considerable portions of his *Panathenaicus* to describing meritocracy as well as references in almost all of his other works.⁵²⁴ The meritocracy proposed by both authors is then further developed with the inclusion of willing obedience. Xenophon explains willing obedience most clearly through Cambyses⁵²⁵ and as we have seen, Isocrates also uses willing obedience to legitimise his meritocracy. Willing obedience is important to both thinkers because it provides a right to rule for a leader with education. Furthermore, both thinkers acknowledge the idealism in such a theory: Cambyses advises Cyrus that the best way to convince his subjects that he is superior in virtue and education is to genuinely be superior. Cyrus appears to have adhered to this advice by incorporating an authoritative dress upon taking Babylon. Similarly, in his *To Nicocles* and his description of Timotheus Isocrates argues that a leader must actively cater to their public image to allow subjects to realise the leader's superiority. Education then is at the centre of both these thinkers and that understanding constructs an education-based meritocracy through willing obedience.

⁵²³ Xen, *Cyr*, 1.5.7, 2.2.20, 7.2.11.

⁵²⁴ Isoc. *Panathenaicus*. 131-133.

⁵²⁵ Xen. *Cyr*. 6.1.22.

7. Conclusion

It was the intention of this chapter to demonstrate the importance of education within Isocrates' works. Initially, I showed how Isocrates should be seen, as a member of the educated Athenian elite, carving a place for himself within a difficult political climate. Isocrates was painted as stubborn and defiant, prepared to stand by his beliefs and his teachings despite the expected opposition from members of the Athenian *demos*. His instruction was shown to be grounded in oratory in an attempt to refashion a new, more educationally minded, alternative to poetry and theatre.

From this basis, I demonstrated that Isocrates' key lesson for leaders to learn was *δόξα*. The chapter showed that Isocrates used *δόξα* to define an ability to accurately judge what was best for a society. To do this, the individual must attune themselves to the needs of the polis, to act with moderation to control their own desires and judge in accordance with the local laws and values. The chapter then expanded the discussion of *δόξα* to demonstrate that in turn *δόξα* was made up of *εἶδος* and *ἰδέα* that acted as building blocks from which an orator may construct a speech that compliments their audience. Finally, the chapter demonstrated that while no leader could ever master *δόξα*, through its study, they could learn to make better judgments.

From here, I showed how the theme of leadership was central and constant throughout Isocrates' works. Even in Isocrates' later works, ideals of leadership were contrasted against the proposed tyranny of Spartan history. The chapter then entered the key lessons leaders would need to learn. Along with *δόξα* we assessed *σωφροσύνη* and *δικαιοσύνη* demonstrating that through cultivating these virtues an individual might control their personal ambition and desires. It also demonstrates that these virtues are central to taming the 'character of the young' training youths into becoming beneficial to the state. Having demonstrated the importance and specifics of education for leadership

the chapter then discussed meritocracy. Isocrates' meritocracy was demonstrated to be a logical expansion of ideal leadership. A variety of examples were used to show the role meritocracy played in dividing society based upon education. In addition to this the chapter assessed Isocrates' redefining of equality in a way that would support his beliefs. At this point I argued that this redefinition was an attempt to align his views with a democratic Athens and not to invoke a revolution. Once again, we saw Isocrates attempting to carve a place for himself and his beliefs in Athenian democracy.

Meritocracy was then underpinned with the understanding of willing obedience which provided a logical right to rule for leaders who could make decisions that were in the best interests of their subjects. I showed how Isocrates' later works also displayed the same beliefs and understandings that we saw in his early works. His theory on education, leadership and meritocracy are not changed or developed they are simply being superimposed upon a wider context than Athens.

Finally, I demonstrated how both Isocrates and Xenophon placed education at the centre of their theory on leadership. They focused on leadership with the cultivation of identical virtues used to train the young away from wild temperaments and toward society. They both proposed similar descriptions of an education-based meritocracy and included ideas of willing obedience. Through this method the chapter has demonstrated the role of education as a means to power and good leadership within Isocrates' works.

Chapter 5: Plato's *Republic*

For Xenophon and Isocrates, education has been shown to act as an essential means for individuals to learn how to become good, and often idealised, leaders. Plato, in many ways, can be seen to share these views and uses education as a pivotal component in designing his own idealised society. Yet in the *Republic*, education is not just a means to achieve a social ideal, but a means to resist a universal injustice. As a result, modern scholars frequently view the *Republic* as a pessimistic work,⁵²⁶ that describes both individuals and communities as locked in a constant, and ultimately hopeless, struggle against injustice. In this chapter, I argue that education acts as Plato's primary means for humanity to resist that injustice. Education will be shown to equip individuals, and by extension societies, with lessons that might empower them to live as virtuously as possible.

The chapter will begin by connecting the *Republic* to Plato's political context. So many of the challenges that Plato has humanity face appear to be inspired by his own perception of Athenian society. I will demonstrate how Callipolis was set up in contrast to Athens, and designed to resist the moral deterioration Plato saw around him by the end of the fifth and early fourth centuries. The chapter will ask how education could be so relevant to justice for Plato. What specifically are the challenges an individual might face, and what lessons could they benefit from? As we have seen with Xenophon and Isocrates, the greatest challenge, and indeed the greatest lesson an individual must learn, is how to overcome their natural desires and ambitions. Instead, they must learn to rule in the best interest of their society as a whole. Plato, I argue, is no different in this respect. Like Xenophon, he uses the term σωφροσύνη to describe the means by which an individual might moderate their desires. However, I will assess how Plato's use of the term is notably more complex. At this point in the chapter, I will have demonstrated both, the challenges an individual would face, and the need to actively teach σωφροσύνη. This should underscore the conflict at the heart of the *Republic*; the constant struggle between humanity and desire, where only through the

⁵²⁶ Bobonich, 2002, 81; Schofield, 2006, 321; Klosko, 2007, 217.

study of σωφροσύνη can an individual hope to act with justice. From here, I will show how Plato builds on this eternal conflict between desire and education, applying it to societies as well as individuals. Plato traces a hierarchy of constitutions, based on their ability to educate their citizens. I argue that Plato sees this hierarchy to be in a constant state of erosion. Each constitution will be shown ultimately to fail to educate properly the next generation, thereby causing lessons in virtue and justice to be lost. This loss of education then allows desire to draw the society away from moderation and into greater and greater injustice, chaos and suffering.

Yet despite humanity's adverse prospects, the second half of this chapter will demonstrate the social mechanisms that Plato engineers to help his Callipolis resist the pull of desire. First, I will draw attention to the simplest, and frequently overlooked, constitution that Plato describes at the start of book two. I will argue that Plato's city of pigs offers a legitimate means to resist desire without the need to study moderation due to an absence of war and luxury. I also argue that this is not just a passing mention, but that Plato incorporates many of the principles raised in this section to design the guardian class of his Callipolis. Outside of minimalistic societies, Plato acknowledges that, realistically, war and luxury are relevant variables that need considering. As a result, Plato's question then becomes, how might a society best to regulate desire with education. Specifically, I argue that Plato designs an environment conducive to education in σωφροσύνη, thereby insulating his Callipolis from desire as much as possible. Principally, I will draw attention to the guardian class, to prove how Plato carefully designs their environment to physically limit their access to luxury (a principle taken from the city of pigs) and cultivate lessons of moderation. These guardians, I argue, are less for the physical defence of Callipolis from abroad, and more to police the morality of the citizens within. I argue Plato's guardians act as symbols and teachers of moderation designed to be part of the educational machine themselves.

Finally, the chapter will address the last, but perhaps the most important, method for creating an environment conducive to education. Callipolis' laws are argued, not only to be highly relevant to the *Republic* but, critically, need not be entirely punitive. While the modern reader would find Callipolis' legislation oppressive, I do not consider this to be Plato's intention. Law, I will argue here and expand upon in the following chapter, was a means to educate and guide – if a citizen is driven to breaking a law, then that law has already failed, regardless of whether the perpetrator was caught or what punishments they receive. Through this method, the chapter will demonstrate Plato's intentions for the *Republic* as a political theory.⁵²⁷ It is less a matter of designing an ideal society and more a matter of establishing the threats that all constitutions must face and, ultimately, fail to resist. From that pessimistic foundation, Plato then constructs a constitution obsessed with creating an environment that cultivates education and thereby hopes to maintain virtue and justice for as long as possible.

1.1. Plato, Athens and the *Republic*

Callipolis is a product of Plato's personal environment, and a response to Athenian democracy. As highlighted by Wolin, the key themes of chaos, injustice, ignorance and revolution that we see in the *Republic* were not invented by Plato; they were his perceived reality.⁵²⁸ Plato frequently condemns Athens, and indeed all contemporary constitutions, for failing to educate sufficiently its citizens, a matter he intends to rectify with his *Republic*.⁵²⁹ In this section, I will argue that while the *Republic* is a rejection of Athenian democracy, Plato can never escape the influence of his environment that shapes, and defines, his philosophy.

⁵²⁷ Schofield, 2006, 8-9.

⁵²⁸ Wolin, 2004, 11.

⁵²⁹ Finley, 1983, 28.

Plato saw Athenian politics as being ruled by the emotion of the *demos*. Its lack of rationality was stirred up by politicians and sophists who catered to, and expanded upon, this populist ignorance for their own ends. Plato can be seen to criticise both the democratic leaders, and the *demos* itself when he states that:

*Whoever most agreeably serves them (the demos) governed as they are and who curries favour with them by fawning upon them and anticipating their desires and by his cleverness in gratifying them.*⁵³⁰

Here Plato portrays the chaos of democracy, with leaders pandering to the desires of the *demos* with no intention of ruling in the best interests of Athens. In other references, democracy is portrayed as amateurish, choosing magistracies by lot rather than by knowledge or experience of candidates, resulting in impulsive, and short-sighted regimes.⁵³¹ Wolin also demonstrates how sophists catalysed this chaos by spreading misinformation in a constitution that already lacked professional officials.⁵³² These criticisms of democratic Athens can be seen to form the primary obstacles Plato's Callipolis must overcome within the *Republic*.

Moreover, I would draw attention to Plato's portrayal of education and ignorance, as expressed within Plato's cave, where Socrates states:

...before his eyes were accustomed to the dark—and this time required for habituation would not be very short—would he not provoke laughter, and would it not be said of him that he had returned from his journey aloft with his eyes ruined and that it was not worthwhile even to attempt the ascent? And if it were possible to lay hands on and to kill the man who tried to release them and lead them up, would they not kill him? ... before he has become sufficiently accustomed to the envioning darkness, he is compelled

⁵³⁰ Pl. *Rep.* 426c. (trans by) Shorey. 1969.

⁵³¹ Pl. *Rep.* 561

⁵³² Wolin, 2004, 31-33.

*in courtrooms or elsewhere to contend about the shadows of justice or the images that cast the shadows and to wrangle in debate about the notions of these things in the minds of those who have never seen justice itself?*⁵³³

These passages are loaded with references to democratic Athens, and Plato's perceived place in that society.⁵³⁴ He paints himself and his fellow philosophers as ridiculed and overlooked for their understandings. Yet it also shows an appreciation of the *demos*. Plato is acknowledging that from the position of the ignorant, the philosopher would appear ridiculous and even a threat to the status quo.⁵³⁵ This is not the only message or conclusion that can be drawn from Plato's cave; indeed, the passage is one of the most discussed within scholarship. Yet, it is difficult to see the portrayal of a philosopher's struggle toward understanding, while being misunderstood and overlooked by others, without acknowledging at least some relevance to Plato's own experience.

The *Republic*, then, is an attempt to design a fresh start. It is a rejection, principally of Athenian democracy, but ultimately a stepping away from any contemporary polis,⁵³⁶ as Plato makes clear when his Socrates proposes: "*But which of our present governments do you think is suitable for philosophy?*" "*None whatever,*" I said; "*but the very ground of my complaint is that no polity of today is worthy of the philosophic nature*".⁵³⁷ This passage explains that the *Republic* is removed from any contemporary political system.⁵³⁸ Plato's Callipolis was a theoretical, idealistic society, that aimed to make sense of the chaotic popularism that Plato saw around him. Yet, the problems Plato saw were bigger than Athens, and his *Republic* aims to design a society that might nurture education, justice and ultimately, happiness. Yet Plato's political theory never falls far from Athens; the challenges that face Callipolis, the difficulties in

⁵³³ Pl. *Rep.* 517a-e.

⁵³⁴ Bobonich, 2002, 81.

⁵³⁵ Schofield, 2019, 46.

⁵³⁶ Mitchell, 2019.

⁵³⁷ Pl.*Rep.* 497a-b.

⁵³⁸ Annas, 2017, 24.

establishing philosopher rulers, and the inevitability of injustice,⁵³⁹ are all rooted within his own perception of the Athens that surrounds him.

1.2. Composition and aims

In both the *Republic*, and the *Laws*, Plato makes the reader painfully aware of the danger that ignorance presents. Failure to educate does not just prevent societies from excelling. It is the cause of their fall into suffering and injustice. To address this, Plato's works offer, what many scholars consider to be, the first example of political theory.⁵⁴⁰ The complexity of Callipolis, and the detail of the *Republic*, has provoked scholars to appreciate the step Plato is taking. Some might even draw a line between Plato and contemporary thinkers, labelling him as the first political theorist. I would add to this argument however, that Plato remains a writer of his context, and his philosophy can be better understood through its similarity to that of contemporary thinkers, than it can through its originality. The aim of the *Republic* is to set out a new society, one that can break free from the complexity of Athenian democracy and educate its citizens to master leadership, both within themselves, and their state. Callipolis is a leap away from Plato's social, political, and intellectual context, but it is specifically that leap that characterises the *Republic*. In other words, Plato may be the first political theorist, but he was not the first political thinker, and his *Republic* is evidence of that.

Plato is quite clear that the aim of the *Republic* is to understand the role of justice in developing an individual's happiness (εὐδαιμονία)⁵⁴¹ as Plato's Socrates states:

...there is a justice of one man, we say, and, I suppose, also of an entire city." "Assuredly," said he. "Is not the city larger than the

⁵³⁹ All three of these topics will be discussed at length below.

⁵⁴⁰ Wolin 2004, 7; Finley, 1983, 124. Although both authors do acknowledge the impact of Protagoras.

⁵⁴¹ Pl. *Rep.* 354, 357a; Annas, 2017, 9; Morrison, 2007, 233.

man?" "It is larger," he said. "Then, perhaps, there would be more justice in the larger object and easier to apprehend. If it please you, then, let us first look for its quality in states, and then only examine it also in the individual, looking for the likeness of the greater in the form of the less."⁵⁴²

The *Republic*, then, is introduced as an outline of a society that encourages its citizens to live a just and, by extension, happy life.⁵⁴³ Through designing a just society, Plato must also examine how justice can be achieved by an individual. The individual, like a society, must learn how to rule both their own needs and desires in order to live with justice.⁵⁴⁴ For Plato, it is essential for individuals and states to learn how to lead justly, partly in order to be successful and prosperous, but primarily as a means to avoid injustice and suffering.⁵⁴⁵ As a result, this chapter will argue that Plato's *Republic* warns the reader of the dangers of ignorance, as much as acknowledging the benefits of wisdom.

In addition, it has been a matter of debate among scholars as to how realistic the *Republic* should be considered to be.⁵⁴⁶ Certainly, there is a realism and attention to detail in the *Republic* that lends itself to plausibility.⁵⁴⁷ Yet, I would argue that the *Republic* was not designed to act as a blueprint for social development.⁵⁴⁸ While certainly a piece of political theory, the *Republic* is as much a means to prove the need for education, as it was a genuine attempt to design a society. Plato is interested in understanding justice, and the exploration of his philosophy in the context of a society. While Plato goes into considerable detail, we should not confuse this precision with the intention to create a real-world constitution. The reason for this is that Plato overlooks or ignores some of the most fundamental challenges a real-world constitution

⁵⁴² Pl. *Rep.* 368-369a.

⁵⁴³ Everson, 2011, 251.

⁵⁴⁴ Quite how Plato understands the individuals struggle against desire will be outlined below.

⁵⁴⁵ Pl. *Rep.* 428b, 435, 544d.

⁵⁴⁶ Morrison, 2007, 233; Zuckert, 2009, 179. Zuckert would even ask if it was relevant for the *Republic* to be any more than a paradigm for Plato.

⁵⁴⁷ Wolin, 2004, 7.

⁵⁴⁸ Morrison, 2007, 232.

would face.⁵⁴⁹ Plato glosses over the external threats from economic or militaristic rivals,⁵⁵⁰ considering the only real weakness to stem from a failure to educate its citizens. This willingness to overlook what both ancient and modern readers would anticipate to be some of the most obvious threats to any state, highlights Plato's real aims. His focus is on proving the importance of education and justice and not on providing lawmakers or statesman with a blueprint for the ideal state. As I shall argue, Plato's *Republic* aims to design an environment where justice and happiness can thrive. This should be seen as more an attempt to understand justice and education than a serious constitutional proposal.

2.1. Learning to Resist

This chapter intends to demonstrate that the *Republic* aimed to prove the dangers of ignorance, as much as the benefits of cultivating wisdom. Perhaps the clearest example of this can be seen within Plato's use of σωφροσύνη, which is unique, yet also similar to its use by his intellectual peers. In this section, I will demonstrate how Plato uses the term σωφροσύνη to refer to three slightly separate forms of moderation, each corresponding to a distinct section of Plato's three-part-soul. Through this discussion I will outline not only the precise lessons that individuals must learn but also why that education is important to overcome the inherent challenges to humanity. Education will be shown not just to be an individual's means to power, but also for Plato's *Republic*, the only way that individuals can stave off slavery from their own desires.

The idea that education plays an important role in Plato's *Republic* is far from a new contribution to this field. Scholars frequently acknowledge that σωφροσύνη controls an individual's desires, and wards off a tyrannical

⁵⁴⁹ These threats will be looked at in more depth below.

⁵⁵⁰ See below for more depth on Plato overlooking external threats in favour of constitutional erosion.

character.⁵⁵¹ Recently, when addressing education in the *Republic*, scholars have preferred to reference Plato's use of the term *technē*,⁵⁵² to refer to the technical knowledge of leadership⁵⁵³ or the art of statesmanship.⁵⁵⁴ Yet, *technē* does not sufficiently address Plato's approach to education in the *Republic*. Leadership is central, but unlike the *Statesman*, Plato's *Republic* is not confined to those in leadership but aims to address a wider, philosophical and constitutional matter. Which is not to say that *technē* is irrelevant to Plato's *Republic*, or that scholars are wrong to focus on it,⁵⁵⁵ but simply that σωφροσύνη better speaks to Plato's aims in the *Republic* and the focus of this thesis. What this thesis intends to add to this discussion, is that Plato, as with Isocrates and Xenophon, is not consistent with his use of the term σωφροσύνη. North has demonstrated just how broad a meaning σωφροσύνη can have at this point in contemporary works, and Plato is no exception.⁵⁵⁶ So far, the thesis has drawn a similarity between Xenophon and Isocrates, pointing to their shared focus on education as a means to rule, both a society, and the individual. In both cases I have highlighted their terminology used: σωφροσύνη for Xenophon and δοξα (and at times σωφροσύνη) for Isocrates. In both cases I have not attempted to set a universal translation of these terms, nor even to propose a common usage for these thinkers;⁵⁵⁷ instead I have highlighted only that these thinkers share similar conclusions. That is, by learning how to control or understand emotions, variables and contexts, one might be able to make better decisions as a leader.

⁵⁵¹ Kraut, 2006, 326. Kraut chooses to focus on σωφροσύνη when addressing education.

⁵⁵² Wilms, 1995, 208-216. Wilms specifically focuses on *technē* and *paideia* with the works of Isocrates and Xenophon but, as with Plato, I have argued that σωφροσύνη or δοξα is a better term to understand the lessons in moderation that were seen to be so relevant to good leadership.

⁵⁵³ In this case.

⁵⁵⁴ Weinstein, 2019, 118; Sørensen, 2016.

⁵⁵⁵ Indeed, *technē* is used twice as often in the *Republic* than σωφροσύνη.

⁵⁵⁶ North, 1966, 127.

⁵⁵⁷ Schofield, 2008, 230-232. Schofield also highlights this change in usage choosing the translation 'harmony'. While I agree with Schofield's conclusions, I feel that 'harmony' is not sufficient a term to define the struggle against desire, nor the pursuit of prudence over spirit. In short, the result Plato aims for is harmony, but that is not necessarily the specific lessons that one must learn to achieve it.

I consider Plato to share this understanding of moderation, and in this section, I will demonstrate Plato's varied usage of σωφροσύνη, not in order to set a precedent for other works, but simply to articulate Plato's perception that the individual must dedicate themselves actively to learning how to moderate desire in order to live and think freely. I argue that Plato uses σωφροσύνη to refer to three distinctly separate virtues that must be actively learnt in order to control the three separate parts of the soul. This ability to 'govern' one's soul and stave off slavery to desire forms a key theme which Plato will later expand upon in designing his Callipolis, and later again refers to within his *Laws*.⁵⁵⁸

The most literal use of σωφροσύνη is found within the context of desire. For Plato, desire is the most overt and animalistic⁵⁵⁹ part of the soul, encouraging individuals to pursue pleasure.⁵⁶⁰ This is seen most clearly within Plato's lengthy descriptions of the tyrannical character, which hangs over the reader throughout the *Republic*. He has his characters discuss:

*"What desires do you mean?" he said. "Those," said I, "that are awakened in sleep when the rest of the soul, the rational, gentle and dominant part, slumbers, but the beastly and savage part, replete with food and wine, gambols and, repelling sleep, endeavours to sally forth and satisfy its own instincts."*⁵⁶¹

Plato elaborates that such a character will commit "...any foul deed of blood..."⁵⁶² and "...attempt to lie with a mother and in fancy or with anyone else, man, god or brute."⁵⁶³ It is within this description, that we see the rawest form of human desire governing the individual. This character of desire, is entirely

⁵⁵⁸ Weinstein, 2018, 34. It is worth mentioning that Weinstein would argue that every part of the soul has a candidacy for ruling over the other parts. However, Plato also explains the hierarchy he considers best for both constitutions and the individual as I shall explain below. To be clear, it is not that I disagree with Weinstein, I am simply focusing on that hierarchy and the dangers Plato sees from becoming ruled by desire.

⁵⁵⁹ Lorenz, 2019, 520. As Lorenz points out, Aristotle even criticises Plato for his reference that the soul imparts movement to an animal.

⁵⁶⁰ Parry, 2007, 396. Parry argues that the tyrannical desire is specifically eros, an erotic desire.

⁵⁶¹ Pl. *Rep.* 571c.

⁵⁶² Pl. *Rep.* 571d.

⁵⁶³ Pl. *Rep.* 571c-d.

“*purged of σωφροσύνη*”,⁵⁶⁴ becoming incapable of controlling their search for pleasure.⁵⁶⁵ Specifically, as Parry highlights, this is a desire for the unnecessary, beyond what is needed to function sufficiently.⁵⁶⁶

Plato acknowledges that these pleasures take a more cultivated degree of σωφροσύνη to control, yet they remain governed by desire as his Socrates makes clear stating: “...*And is it not at once apparent in a state that this honouring of wealth is incompatible with a sober and temperate citizenship...*”.⁵⁶⁷ Again, Plato highlights this in a similar manner later, where he states:

...The good that they proposed to themselves and that was the cause of the establishment of oligarchy—it was wealth, was it not?”
*“Yes.” “Well, then, the insatiate lust for wealth and the neglect of everything else for the sake of money-making was the cause of its undoing.” “True,” he said. “And is not the avidity of democracy for that which is its definition and criterion of good the thing which dissolves it too?” “What do you say its criterion to be?” “Liberty,” I replied...*⁵⁶⁸

In these passages, Plato defines the weaknesses of both constitutions as being driven by a love of wealth or freedom respectively. The idea that excessive wealth stems from desire is a more common contemporary perception⁵⁶⁹ but adding the desire for freedom as an urge that should also be moderated is highly revealing about Plato’s views on democracy.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁴ Pl. *Rep.* 573b.

⁵⁶⁵ It is worth drawing attention here to Xenophon who also sees freedom as an ability to control desire. Xen. *Mem.* 4.5.3.

⁵⁶⁶ Parry, 2007, 388.

⁵⁶⁷ Pl. *Rep.* 555c.

⁵⁶⁸ Pl. *Rep.* 562b.

⁵⁶⁹ Xen. *Cyr.* 8.2.23; Isoc. *Ad Demonicum.* 1.37-8.

⁵⁷⁰ Plato’s views on constitutional hierarchy and the role of σωφροσύνη will be assessed below.

Plato defines σωφροσύνη quite explicitly at the initial outline of Callipolis where his Athenian states:

*Again, will our lads not need the virtue of σωφροσύνη?" "Of course." "And for the multitude are not the main points of σωφροσύνη these—to be obedient to their rulers and themselves to be rulers over the bodily appetites and pleasures of food, drink, and the rest."*⁵⁷¹

In this context, σωφροσύνη takes a very literal definition, referring directly to one's ability to control material pleasures. This passage is useful in demonstrating the importance of σωφροσύνη but also of the danger of desire. Desire appears the most guttural part of the soul, and potentially even connected it to *eros*.⁵⁷² Ultimately, desire is a constant temptation that must be actively combated through learning σωφροσύνη in order to allow the individual to make rational and 'free' decisions.⁵⁷³

2.2. Spirit

The second drive⁵⁷⁴ that makes up Plato's three-part soul is spirit; the love of honour or victory. Yet spirit is not controlled by σωφροσύνη, as Ferrari points out; it is the soul's third element, reason, that is responsible for moderating spirit.⁵⁷⁵ Yet I argue that the definition and role of σωφροσύνη changes. In the context of spirit σωφροσύνη now becomes a drive in and of itself, a pursuit toward the understanding of the good. Plato explaining that *...the right love a sober (σωφροσύνη) and harmonious love of the orderly and the beautiful.*⁵⁷⁶ Again a similar usage can be found slightly later where Plato cautions against *"employing that simple music which we said engendered sobriety (σωφροσύνη) will, it is clear, guard themselves against falling into the*

⁵⁷¹ Pl. *Rep.* 389.

⁵⁷² Parry, 2007, 386.

⁵⁷³ As I have already mentioned, these 'free decisions' are never truly free.

⁵⁷⁴ Lorenz, 2011, 518. Lorenz specifically highlights the drive or motivation of Plato's soul.

⁵⁷⁵ Ferrari, 2007, 170.

⁵⁷⁶ Pl. *Rep.* 403a.

need of the justice of the court-room".⁵⁷⁷ These passages both use σωφροσύνη to refer to a specific lesson, not tasked with controlling another virtue, but in establishing an understanding of the good. Plato specifically states that a musical education will encourage σωφροσύνη, which will give the students an appreciation of the good.

Moreover, σωφροσύνη may even become a vice that needs to be controlled itself. When discussing the way music can teach σωφροσύνη, Plato's Socrates goes on to highlight:

*In respect of savagery and hardness or, on the other hand, of softness and gentleness?" "I have observed," he said, "that the devotees of unmitigated gymnastics turn out more brutal than they should be and those of music softer than is good for them."*⁵⁷⁸

Here σωφροσύνη is not being used to moderate spirit. Instead, it has job of the teacher to moderate. Instead σωφροσύνη is referred to as a drive in its own right, running parallel to spirit. This is the drive that we see referenced in the *Statesman*⁵⁷⁹ and the *Laws*⁵⁸⁰ which highlights the need for a good citizen to have both spirit and σωφροσύνη in equal measure. Too much σωφροσύνη would cause the individual to be too gentle and cautious, yet too little of it would cause rash actions. The teacher then, is required to balance these virtues, to use σωφροσύνη as a means to temper spirit but not to govern it.

⁵⁷⁷ Pl. *Rep.* 410a.

⁵⁷⁸ Pl. *Rep.* 410d. It is important to note that σωφροσύνη is specifically used in Pl. *Rep.* 410 but not exclusively within the passage quoted here.

⁵⁷⁹ Pl. *Statesman.* 306b (trans by) Fowler. 1921.

⁵⁸⁰ Pl. *Laws.* 1.630. (trans by) Bury. 1967

2.3. Rationality

The third, and most common, use of σωφροσύνη within the *Republic* is in connection with the rational element of the soul. In this context σωφροσύνη refers to the ability to govern. Specifically, the ability to govern every part of the soul and achieve a harmony between all its elements. Plato defines this usage by stating:

...that our intuition was not a bad one just now that discerned a likeness between σωφροσύνη and a kind of harmony?" "Why so?" "Because its operation is unlike that of courage and wisdom, which residing in separate parts the one wise and the other brave. That is not the way of σωφροσύνη but it extends literally through the entire gamut throughout, bringing about the unison in the same chant of the strongest, the weakest and the intermediate, whether in wisdom or, if you please, in strength, or for that matter in numbers, wealth, or any similar criterion."⁵⁸¹

Plato is explicitly⁵⁸² distancing σωφροσύνη from his use of spirit. Now σωφροσύνη takes on an additional meaning by establishing harmony.⁵⁸³ Here Plato is using σωφροσύνη to refer to the ability to mediate between an individual's desire (for pleasure) and spirit (for honour/victory) and, by doing so, governing the soul.

Similarly, this use of σωφροσύνη can be seen again, slightly earlier in the *Republic*, where Plato states: "*Σωφροσύνη is a kind of beautiful order and a continence of certain pleasures and appetites, as they say, using the phrase 'master of himself'.*"⁵⁸⁴ Plato here is quite explicit in his definition. We see σωφροσύνη used as a term to govern and bring order to the various temptations of the soul. Again, later in the *Republic* we see the same definition:

⁵⁸¹ Pl.*Rep.* 431e-432a.

⁵⁸² Although not necessarily deliberately differentiating the use of σωφροσύνη.

⁵⁸³ Schofield, 2008, 231.

⁵⁸⁴ Pl. *Rep.* 430e.

...the soul has madness for his body-guard and runs amuck, and if it finds in the man any opinions (δόξα) or appetites accounted worthy and still capable of shame, it slays them and thrusts them forth until it purges him of σωφροσύνη, and fills and infects him with frenzy brought in from outside.⁵⁸⁵

What is particularly interesting about this reference, is that Plato refers to a tyrant losing the ability to govern himself twice. Firstly, with the image that madness became the bodyguard for the soul (instead of σωφροσύνη) and secondly, that any good judgments (δόξα)⁵⁸⁶ are slayed. Here σωφροσύνη is specifically shown to refer to the ability to govern the soul. This connection between δόξα and σωφροσύνη is very similar to the uses we have seen in Isocrates, helping to highlight the similar ways in which thinkers used these terms to refer to primary lessons for leadership.

There is, however, an important complication raised by Ferrari that is worth noting. Ferrari argues that Plato's understanding of the rational part of the soul actually develops over the course of the *Republic*. He suggests that it begins in the form of harmony that this thesis has outlined, but then develops into a pursuit of its own, the pursuit of knowledge.⁵⁸⁷ As we will see later when Plato expands his understanding of an individual to the wider state, it is this personal pursuit of knowledge that provokes philosopher-rulers to drift away from their responsibilities as leaders of the state. As a result, Plato proposes the need for laws to bind the philosopher to the state, as their inclination would always be to pursue a personal wisdom. We will return to this topic later, but to summarise this section: Plato's complex use of σωφροσύνη should not be seen as deliberately confusing but rather a fairly typical use of an unclear⁵⁸⁸ and malleable language. Moreover, as I disclaimed at the start of this section, it is not my intention to offer a concrete definition of σωφροσύνη; instead I have simply unpicked Plato's use of the term under changing contexts and

⁵⁸⁵ Pl. *Rep.* 573a-c

⁵⁸⁶ I think 'judgment' is a better translation of δόξα in this context.

⁵⁸⁷ Ferrari, 2007, 165; Kraut, 2006, 322.

⁵⁸⁸ At least to the modern reader.

conditions. Ultimately, Plato believed the individual had to actively learn to moderate the three separate parts of their soul. Those who fail to learn, run the risk of being ruled over by their spirit, or worse, becoming a slave to their most base desires. No matter how naturally gifted an individual might be,⁵⁸⁹ they must always actively learn σωφροσύνη in order to govern themselves, let alone others.

2.4. Learning to be free

Humanity then is under a constant assault by the drive of Plato's soul,⁵⁹⁰ persistently, and perhaps inevitably leading the individual to place pleasure before rationality, good judgment or justice. Many have highlighted that this is a resoundingly pessimistic assessment of humanity.⁵⁹¹ Scholars have drawn attention to the non-philosopher's inability to recognise what is good, and as a result, the uneducated are condemned to a life without real justice.⁵⁹² The uneducated are not just at a disadvantage, they are portrayed as enslaved by their desires and an inability to act justly.⁵⁹³ What is particularly ominous about Plato's portrayal is that the *Republic* is not limited to the virtues and desires of the individual but is looking to society as a whole. As a result of this focus on society, rather than just on an individual, the *Republic* becomes more than just pessimistic, it becomes apocalyptic. It condemns the uneducated to a life of servitude and oppression, not necessarily from others but from their own desires. As I will highlight later, this summary is not an entirely accurate one, and there are indeed means for the uneducated to live with justice,⁵⁹⁴ but, first, I must describe the dangers that all individuals, and by extension all societies, must face.

⁵⁸⁹ Indeed, as we have seen in both Xenophon and Isocrates, the greater an individual's natural gifts the greater the need to learn σωφροσύνη.

⁵⁹⁰ Lorenz, 2019, 508.

⁵⁹¹ Bobonich, 2002, 81; Schofield, 2006, 321. Bobonich actually argues that Plato is so pessimistic of humanity that he resorts to laws within the *Republic* because education is not enough. This thesis will disagree with that below.

⁵⁹² Bobonich, 2002, 82.

⁵⁹³ This attitude is also highlighted by Xenophon who argues that if the poor learn how to act justly, they are, in reality, far richer than those with great wealth. Xen. *Mem.* 4.2.39.

⁵⁹⁴ See 'city of pigs' below.

The dangers that arise through ignorance are outlined most clearly in book 6 where Plato's Socrates states:

Or do you think there is any profit in possessing everything except that which is good, or in understanding all things else apart from the good while understanding and knowing nothing that is fair and good?" "No, by Zeus, I do not," he said. "But, furthermore, you know this too, that the multitude believe pleasure to be the good, and the finer spirits intelligence or knowledge." "Certainly." "And you are also aware, my friend, that those who hold this latter view are not able to point out what knowledge it is but are finally compelled to say that it is the knowledge of the good." "Most absurdly," he said.⁵⁹⁵

Here Plato outlines the desire-driven ignorance of the multitude that, confuse pleasure with the 'good' and so are unable even to begin to resist desire. As a result, Plato can be seen to understand the uneducated to be trapped in a servile pursuit of pleasure, constantly striving to satisfy a desire that will never be sated.

This comparison between the educated and the ignorant can be seen most strikingly through Plato's references to animalism. Comparisons between the uneducated and animalistic behaviour are common references for Plato's contemporaries, particularly when considering to the character of the youth.⁵⁹⁶ This same comparison can be found within the *Republic*, particularly within his description that the tyrannical character would never have:

... tasted stable and pure pleasure, but with eyes ever bent upon the earth and heads bowed down over their tables they feast like cattle, grazing and copulating, ever greedy for more of these

⁵⁹⁵ Pl. *Rep.* 505b.

⁵⁹⁶ Xen. *Cyr.* 1.4.21; Isoc, *Antidosis.* 213.

*delights; and in their greed kicking and butting one another with horns and hooves of iron they slay one another in stateless avidity, because they are vainly striving to satisfy with things that are not real the unreal and incontinent part of their souls.*⁵⁹⁷

By comparing the tyrant to cattle, Plato is highlighting both their shallow search of base pleasures, but also their lack of freedom or power to do otherwise. In this context, education is quite literally the means to establish personal freedom.⁵⁹⁸

Similar examples can be found in reference to the excess of spirit where Plato's Athenian states: *"He no longer makes any use of persuasion by speech but achieves all his ends like a beast by violence and savagery, and in his brute ignorance and ineptitude lives a life of disharmony and gracelessness."*⁵⁹⁹

Again, we see an animalistic reference used to describe a lack of σωφροσύνη, only here Plato is referring to a failure to balance one's spirit with σωφροσύνη. In addition, it is worth noting that no animal references are used to describe those who focus too much on developing σωφροσύνη. Instead, Plato simply refers to them as "spiritless".⁶⁰⁰ This demonstrates that Plato's use of animalistic references is used to highlight a specific lack of σωφροσύνη.

Similarly, Plato also links education to the training of dogs in his description of the guardians.⁶⁰¹ Again Plato is addressing spirit, and while bravery and aggression are important traits for guardians, they must not allow that spirit to overtake what is in the best interests of society. These passages demonstrate that, for Plato, education is the ability to master the soul through σωφροσύνη. Education is the means to prevent slavery, and to balance one's

⁵⁹⁷ Pl. *Rep.* 585-6.

⁵⁹⁸ Xenophon argues a similar idea on freedom from desire at Xen. *Mem.* 4.5.3.

⁵⁹⁹ Pl. *Rep.* 411e.

⁶⁰⁰ Pl. *Rep.* 411d.

⁶⁰¹ Pl. *Rep.* 375.

wild, natural spirit with prudence so that the individual might effectively support the society. By highlighting the dangers that face the uneducated individual, Plato is able to demonstrate the need for a society to be structured by education. In short, this philosophy forms the basis for Plato's education-based meritocracy. The uneducated are portrayed as servile cattle or wild animals, feeding off their surroundings and driven by pleasure. For a society to incorporate these uneducated persons it must dedicate itself to supporting their education. If a society fails to properly educate its citizens to strive to overcome their desires, those citizens will begin to feed off their state so as to indulge their personal pleasures.

3.1. Constitutional erosion

The greatest threat to an individual then is the failure to learn how to control desire and to work cooperatively with their society.⁶⁰² Plato details this uneducated character as slavish, wild and a threat to their society and it is this threat that will ultimately cause the downfall of all constitutions. It seems quite clear that Plato takes the same philosophy of individual struggle and expands it onto a city-wide level in the search for justice.⁶⁰³ Plato's Socrates states:

*Then, perhaps, there would be more justice in the larger object and more easy to apprehend. If it please you, then let us first look for its quality in states, and then only examine it also in the individual, looking for the likeness of the greater in the form of the less." "I think that is a good suggestion," he said. "If, then," said I, "our argument should observe the origin of a state, we should see also the origin of justice and injustice in it."*⁶⁰⁴

Plato is quite explicit about the aims of this constitutional study; he is searching for justice and how best to examine it.⁶⁰⁵ Similar references to these aims can

⁶⁰² Weinstein, 2019, 105. Weinstein points out that the Republic explores how a society might be constructed to prevent humanity's natural injustice from damaging society.

⁶⁰³ Scott, 2019, 207.

⁶⁰⁴ Pl. Rep. 368e-369a.

⁶⁰⁵ Scott, 2019, 208. Scott points out specifically that this notion that understanding is a journey that can be explored through discussion is a hallmark of Socratic teaching.

also be found just preceding Plato's account of constitutions.⁶⁰⁶ This demonstrates that the need to enter such a thorough assessment of political constitutions is born from the need to prove a link between the just life and the happy life, expanding theories for the individual to a city-wide level so that they may be better understood.

Desire, for the individual, is a constant struggle. For society, it is a terminal illness. When an individual fails to overpower desire, they will begin to feed on their society. Education is not a cure but if a society can teach its citizens to resist desire it can minimise injustice. Plato's constitutional meritocracy, like the meritocracies of Xenophon and Isocrates is based upon education, but more specifically, Plato ranks constitutions on their ability to teach a resistance to desire. Importantly however, Plato sees all constitutions, even his own idealised Callipolis, as destined to have their education eroded by desire, steadily pulling the society away from rationality and order into injustice and slavery.⁶⁰⁷ This section will go through Plato's education-based hierarchy, demonstrating the erosion of education in each phase. I will thereby demonstrate Plato's use of education as a means of resistance to injustice as much as a means of achieving justice.

Plato portrays this constitutional hierarchy as divided into five separate constitutions, each promoting an environment conducive to cultivating a more refined level of σωφροσύνη.⁶⁰⁸ This hierarchy is articulated quite explicitly at the start of this discussion where Plato states:

⁶⁰⁶ Pl. *Rep.* 544d.

⁶⁰⁷ Schofield. 2019, 49. Schofield argues that Plato is demonstrating that democracy is not the only constitution that is prone to "pressure of its own contradictory dynamic".

⁶⁰⁸ Scott, 2019, 210. Scott controversy suggests that these are constitutions of vice while I maintain they can be best separated by the level of their education. See Sørensen (2016) on the use of education within constitutions outside of Callipolis.

... your Cretan and Spartan constitution; and the second in place and in honour,⁶⁰⁹ that which is called oligarchy, a constitution teeming with many ills, and its sequent counterpart and opponent, democracy; and then the noble tyranny surpassing them all, the fourth and final malady of a state.⁶¹⁰

That Plato considers there to be a hierarchy of constitutions is clear. What I intend to show is that this hierarchy is specifically based upon a varying refinement of σωφροσύνη.

At the top of this hierarchy is Plato's own idealised aristocracy. It is a society that is entirely defined by its ability to educate all members of its society and maintain the most expert individuals as its guardians and leaders. Yet despite Callipolis' idealised means to cultivate education and thereby resist desire, Plato still tells us that it is not perfect and had only one inevitable flaw. Plato's Socrates states:

The men you have bred to be your rulers will not for all their wisdom ascertain by reasoning combined with sensation, but they will escape them, and there will be a time when they will beget children out of season ... the offspring will not be well-born or fortunate. Of such offspring the previous generation will establish the best, to be sure, in office, but still these, being unworthy, and having entered in turn into the powers of their fathers, will first as guardians begin to neglect us, paying too little heed to music and then to gymnastics, so that our young men will deteriorate in their culture; and the rulers selected from them will not approve themselves very efficient guardians for testing.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁹ After Plato's own idealised aristocracy.

⁶¹⁰ Pl. *Rep.* 544c

⁶¹¹ Pl. *Rep.* 546a-c

Even Plato's idealised aristocracy is not infallible, and perhaps this is the point. Plato is drawing attention to Callipolis' only flaw so as to demonstrate that no constitution can ever be resistant to the pull of desire and pleasure.

In addition, when I say 'Callipolis' only flaw' I would argue that Callipolis' failure to maintain shared virtues via education is, quite literally, the only way Plato envisages Callipolis might fall. Plato gives almost no space to addressing the economic or military challenges his Callipolis might face. In the brief mention Plato does make of the world outside Callipolis, he argues that due to the superior virtue and justice of Callipolis they will comfortably defeat any hostile state, even if they face an adversary superior in size or wealth.⁶¹² In defence of this, Plato gives the odd metaphor of a trained boxer defeating two overweight opponents by running away and then engaging each combatant individually.⁶¹³ This is a surprisingly lacklustre response to a fairly legitimate concern raised by Adeimantus. Yet the dismissive response is simply a reminder that Plato is far more concerned with domestic design than including the vast number of unique challenges that may arise from foreign policy.

Plato makes this quite clear when he first mentions the idea of a guardian class; arguing that it is as much to keep watch over those within the city as from those outside.⁶¹⁴ The only factor that Plato acknowledges will cause Callipolis to fall is through internal revolution as he mentions at the start of book eight.⁶¹⁵ This then is where Plato chooses to draw the line on realism and idealism. Plato's Callipolis will fall but it is important to note, how this constitution is to fall. Despite all the wisdom and *σωφροσύνη* of the philosopher rulers, they will ultimately be unable to resist having children that fall outside of the restrictive breeding of Callipolis. This inability to sufficiently educate the next

⁶¹² Pl. *Rep.* 422b.

⁶¹³ Pl. *Rep.* 422a-b.

⁶¹⁴ Pl. *Rep.* 414a.

⁶¹⁵ Pl. *Rep.* 546a.

generation is precisely what Callipolis was designed to guard against yet ultimately will still fail. It is this failure to educate the subsequent generation that causes the erosion of every constitution Plato addresses and furthermore is an argument he expands upon in his *Laws*.⁶¹⁶

3.2. Timarchy

When σωφροσύνη is eroded in Plato's aristocracy the harmony that comes from a rationally guided soul is replaced instead by spirit. This lack of harmony and a dependence upon spirit to dominate the soul is reflected in constitutions that Plato is familiar with, in Sparta and Crete.⁶¹⁷ It is the same constitution that Plato will attempt to work from in his *Laws* in order to engineer σωφροσύνη as a balance to spirit.⁶¹⁸ Plato articulates how the timarchy will rise and how it too will ultimately fall stating:

*...the two groups were pulling against each other, the iron and bronze towards money-making and the acquisition of land and houses and gold and silver, and the other two, the golden and silver...But in its fear to admit clever men to office, since the men it has of this kind are no longer simple and strenuous but of mixed strain, and in its inclining rather to the more high-spirited and simple-minded type, who are better suited for war.*⁶¹⁹

Here Plato demonstrates the conflict that ensues after the fall of reason and the impact of an uncontrolled spirit. The passages show how citizens and leaders will become simple-minded and war-like, fuelled by a desire to achieve honour or personal ambition rather than acting in the best interest of the society.

⁶¹⁶ See the chapter on *Laws* below.

⁶¹⁷ Pl. *Rep.* 554c; Klosko, 2007, 226.

⁶¹⁸ Griffith, 2001, 52; Klosko, 2007, 226. See Griffith on the education of Sparta and Crete that both appear to favour militaristic zeal and obedience (rather than balancing spirit with moderation). Additionally, Klosko argues that the constitutions of Sparta and Crete offer the basis for Plato's timarchy.

⁶¹⁹ Pl. *Rep.* 547e.

This lack of reason is explicitly spelled out as the virtue that is lacking within the character of timarchy:

And would not such a man be disdainful of wealth too in his youth, but the older he grew the more he would love it because of his participation in the covetous nature and because his virtue is not sincere and pure since it lacks the best guardian?" "What guardian?" said Adeimantus. "Reason," said I, "blended with culture, which is the only indwelling preserver of virtue throughout life in the soul that possesses it." "Well said," he replied. "This is the character," I said, "of the timocratic youth, resembling the city that bears his name."⁶²⁰

Here Plato explicitly portrays how the character of timarchy is one lacking in reason and therefore is unable to govern the soul. Without this form of leadership, spirit and the pleasure that comes from victory dominates and rules unregulated. This demonstrates that what separates timarchy from aristocracy⁶²¹ is the erosion of σωφροσύνη, that can create harmony within the soul and by extension the state. It is also worth drawing attention to how Plato sees this erosion taking place, it is the failure of the society to educate sufficiently the following generation, causing them to indulge in pleasure out of ignorance.

3.3. Constitutions of desire

At each turn, we see the steady erosion of education, and specifically lessons of σωφροσύνη. Within each constitution, it is consistently the failure to create an environment capable of sufficiently educating the citizens that is responsible for its downfall. Plato demonstrates that without σωφροσύνη timarchy can quickly slide into oligarchy. This is signified by the pleasures of the spirit becoming overtaken by the pleasures of wealth, as Plato describes:

⁶²⁰ Pl. Rep. 549a-b.

⁶²¹ Aristocracy to specifically refer to Plato's idealised Callipolis.

Why, since its rulers owe their offices to their wealth, they are not willing to prohibit by law the prodigals who arise among the youth from spending and wasting their substance. Their object is, by lending money on the property of such men, and buying it in, to become still richer and more esteemed.” “By all means.” “And is it not at once apparent in a state that this honouring of wealth is incompatible with a sober and temperate citizenship...”⁶²²

Here oligarchs are shown to be driven by the love of wealth above all else, succumbing to Plato’s final section of the soul – desire.⁶²³ We can see this through Plato’s use of σωφροσύνη, referring quite literally to the ability to resist excess of material pleasures.

Once again, the reason for the erosion comes from a failure to educate the young, permitting them to become influenced by pleasure-seekers, in this case the pleasure that comes from wealth. Plato demonstrates this in the progression from oligarchy to democracy when he states that:

*... those Lotus-eaters and without disguise lives openly with them.
.... And they themselves prevail in the conflict, and naming reverence and awe ‘folly’ thrust it forth, a dishonoured fugitive. And σωφροσύνη they call ‘want of manhood’ and banish it with contumely, and they teach that moderation and orderly expenditure are ‘rusticity’ and ‘illiberality,’ and they combine with a gang of unprofitable and harmful appetites to drive them over the border.⁶²⁴*

Again, we see Plato specifically stating that it is a rejection of σωφροσύνη that drives the young ‘over the border’. Education is also shown to allow for order and control, something that Plato sees as a symptom of democratic constitutions. Unlike oligarchy, the democratic character is portrayed as being

⁶²² Pl. *Rep.* 555c.

⁶²³ Parry, 2007, 387. It is worth noting that desire is not inherently bad, only excessive desire as Parry argues.

⁶²⁴ Pl. *Rep.* 560c-d.

ruled by a chaotic randomness.⁶²⁵ Whereas oligarchy was the known evil of desire for excessive wealth, Plato describes the democratic character that:

...the fiercest tumult within him passes, and he receives back a part of the banished elements and does not abandon himself altogether to the invasion of the others, then he establishes and maintains all his pleasures on a footing of equality, and so lives turning over the guard-house of his soul to each as it happens along until it is sated, as if it had drawn the lot for that office, and then in turn to another, disdaining none but fostering them all equally.” “Quite so.”⁶²⁶

The democratic character is one so lacking in σωφροσύνη that it is drawn to a new pleasure each day. Sometimes that is a lofty/highbrow pleasure, at others, it can be the most base. Plato sees democracy as one step from tyranny for this reason.⁶²⁷ The comparison between drawing lots for a political office and one's ability to control one's own soul is also a strikingly vivid insight into Plato's criticisms of the democratic character, and indeed of Athenian politics.

Finally, Plato enters the last and complete erosion of σωφροσύνη. The tyrant, as we have seen, is defined by a complete lack of σωφροσύνη. He is entirely at the mercy of his desires, feeding on his surroundings.⁶²⁸ Plato articulates this quite overtly stating:

...and when these dread magi and king-makers come to realize that they have no hope of controlling the youth in any other way, they contrive to engender in his soul a ruling passion to be the protector of his idle and prodigal appetites, a monstrous winged drone. Or do you think the spirit of desire in such men is aught else?” “Nothing but that,” he said. “And when the other appetites, buzzing about it, replete with incense and myrrh and chaplets and wine, and the pleasures that are released in such revelries, magnifying and

⁶²⁵ Scott, 2019, 221. Or more specifically as absolute freedom.

⁶²⁶ Pl. Rep. 561b.

⁶²⁷ Sørensen, 2016, 13.

⁶²⁸ Scott, (2019, 210,) highlights the tyrant as the height of injustice.

fostering it to the utmost, awaken in the drone the sting of unsatisfied yearnings, why then this protector of the soul has madness for his body-guard and runs amuck, and if it finds in the man any opinions or appetites accounted worthy and still capable of shame, it slays them and thrusts them forth until it purges him of sobriety, and fills and infects him with frenzy brought in from outside.” “A perfect description,” he said, “of the generation of the tyrannical man.”⁶²⁹

Again, in the final constitution the tyrant is ‘purged’ of all σωφροσύνη. In this context we can consider σωφροσύνη to be referring to a resistance to materialistic excess, yet in this case it is irrelevant as Plato is clear that no form of σωφροσύνη is present. It is also worth highlighting that Plato’s focus is again upon the youth. Plato is not attempting to criticise the mistakes of an individual, or even of the ignorance of younger generations, but pointing to their innocence. In every constitution it is the failure of a society to create an environment capable of sufficiently cultivating education among the next generation. The fact that such youths then fail to control the demands of the three-part soul is seen by Plato to be inevitable. The tyrannical youth is infected with frenzy “from outside”.⁶³⁰ The democratic youth is influenced by lotus-eaters⁶³¹ and taught to actively reject σωφροσύνη.⁶³² The timocratic youth misreads his father’s σωφροσύνη as weakness.⁶³³ That a youth is a product of his environment is a theme central to Plato’s understanding of education, as we have seen. In summary, this section has demonstrated how Plato’s constitutional meritocracy is ordered based on a society’s capacity to educate its citizens. All constitutions, no matter how idealised, were shown inevitably to fall into injustice due to their inability to maintain these lessons in σωφροσύνη and resist desire. Education for Plato offers the only means to living a just and therefore happy life; yet understanding and practicing σωφροσύνη is a constant struggle, and ultimately, a futile one.

⁶²⁹ Pl. *Rep.* 573a-b.

⁶³⁰ Pl. *Rep.* 573b.

⁶³¹ See Sissa, 2016, 173-200. Sissa demonstrates the relevance of lotus-eaters within a Platonic context and with reference to care for the polis.

⁶³² Pl. *Rep.* 560c-d.

⁶³³ Pl. *Rep.* 549a-b.

4.1. City of Pigs

So far, Plato's *Republic* has been underlined as a resoundingly pessimistic outlook on both the individual and constitutional capacity to achieve justice and, by extension, happiness. I have demonstrated how Plato sees humanity to be trapped within an endless struggle to master, or even simply to control the irrational and unjust desires of the soul. It is a struggle that no individual or constitution can hope to overcome, even when designing an ideal city like Callipolis. It is Education, I argue, that Plato casts as his saving grace. Only by learning to control your desires, to understand and address the needs of your society and allow reason to govern your decisions can anyone hope to delay their inevitable fall. Justice, then, is more about avoiding injustice than achieving an ideal. Yet as I mentioned above, this is not entirely true. Plato does see a constitution where the uneducated can live a simplistic, yet ultimately just, life.

Scholars have often glossed over Plato's city of pigs, and some even dismiss the tale as irrelevant to Plato's main argument.⁶³⁴ Conversely, Morrison has proposed that Plato's first city was his 'true' utopia,⁶³⁵ and had Glaucon permitted Socrates to finish, we would be left with a far simpler *Republic*.⁶³⁶ While I feel Morrison goes too far with this argument, I would suggest that he is right to place more focus on this city of pigs. We must remember that Plato's first constitution was still an idealised one, where justice, and by extension happiness, could exist without the need for education. The key to achieving this justice revolves around an absence of pleasure rather than the cultivation of ones means to control it. Yet the main reason I consider the city of pigs to be relevant to the *Republic*, and to this thesis, is because Plato incorporates many of its principals into the legislation of his Callipolis as a means to control pleasure.

⁶³⁴ Annas 1981, 78; Crombie 1962.

⁶³⁵ Morrison, 2007, 232. Morrison clarifies his definition of utopia as an idealised but impossible city.

⁶³⁶ Morrison, 2007, 251.

Firstly, Morrison is right in saying that this initial city is a utopia, at least for Plato. In this city two parts of Plato's three-part soul become irrelevant. An individual has no need to train and then balance spirit with σωφροσύνη because there is no war, no honour or victory to chase after. Because of this, there is also no need for reason to govern the soul because individuals simply do not have access to luxury.⁶³⁷ As a result, the individual has the capacity to live justly in moderation because there is nothing to corrupt them, as Plato states. *"The true state I believe to be the one we have described—the healthy state, as it were. But if it is your pleasure that we contemplate also a fevered state, there is nothing to hinder."*⁶³⁸ Here Plato is quite clear that his discussion has already defined the healthy state and draws attention to the fact that from here onwards they are describing a city that pursues pleasure. Plato is demonstrating that a city can exist without such rigorous education in moderation. He discussed how the citizens will eat modestly, wear clothes only when necessary, enjoy sex but never have more children than they can afford.⁶³⁹ This modest life has no war and no philosophy because there is no search for excessive pleasure and thus, no need to control it. Recent scholars appear to have overlooked this link between σωφροσύνη and the city of pigs, yet Plato deliberately places this as the preface to Callipolis. Plato's portrayal of Callipolis is always in the shadow of the city of pigs, for every added unnecessary pleasure, a new degree of education in σωφροσύνη is needed to maintain justice and happiness.

Education then is only needed to counterbalance the luxuries and prosperities that come with larger, more 'civilised' societies. Many scholars then follow Glaucon's complaint that this city is almost irrelevant; it is too idealised, it offers so few luxuries that not only is the city undesirable, but it is also over-

⁶³⁷ Weinstein, 2019, 139. Weinstein argues that luxury in moderation is not unjust, it is specifically the abuse of luxury that becomes a vice.

⁶³⁸ Pl. Rep. 372e.

⁶³⁹ Pl. Rep. 372a-c.

simplified. I argue that the city of pigs is important, not because it offered a genuine political theory but because it allowed Plato to play with concepts and create a foundation that Callipolis could be built upon. Plato returns to his city of pigs repeatedly in the *Republic* as well as references resurfacing within his *Laws*.⁶⁴⁰ Perhaps the clearest example of similar principles being incorporated into Callipolis can be seen within Plato's creation of the guardian class, where his Socrates states:

*In addition, moreover, to such an education a thoughtful man would affirm that their houses and the possessions provided for them ought to be such as not to interfere with the best performance of their own work as guardians and not to incite them to wrong the other citizens." "He will rightly affirm that." "Consider then," said I, "whether, if that is to be their character, their habitations and ways of life must not be something after this fashion. In the first place, none must possess any private property save the indispensable. Secondly, none must have any habitation or treasure-house which is not open for all to enter at will. Their food, in such quantities as are needful for athletes of war sober and brave."*⁶⁴¹

Here Plato specifically limits the luxuries available to the guardian class so as to remove the temptation to make war upon the other citizens. By removing avenues to achieve pleasure, guardians will be a more stable section of society, achieving the just life more easily than those attempting to balance other desires. Additionally, guardians are said to eat in communal meals and are forbidden to even touch gold or silver.⁶⁴² This can be linked directly to Plato's description of the city of pigs and is for the same intention,⁶⁴³ so as not to encourage citizens to make war on each other.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴⁰ Pl. *Laws*. 3.679, 3.680.

⁶⁴¹ Pl. *Rep.* 416c-d.

⁶⁴² Pl. *Rep.* 416e-417a.

⁶⁴³ Pl. *Rep.* 372.

⁶⁴⁴ Pl. *Rep.* 416b.

There is an important development, however, between the guardians and Plato's initial city. Plato makes it clear that in Callipolis there is war, and that the guardians are responsible for defending the polis. As a result, Plato tailors most of the guardian's education toward achieving a balance between spirit and σωφροσύνη, because less attention is needed to control base desires.⁶⁴⁵ The guardians then, must be educated in both honing their spirit and in σωφροσύνη equally.⁶⁴⁶ Plato's desire to minimise desire within the guardian class is a hallmark of his initial utopia. The idea that pleasure should be regulated in order to encourage citizens to follow a just life can also be seen within Plato's censorship of music and poetry. Plato states quite clearly that: "...we have all unawares purged the city which a little while ago we said was wanton. In that we show our good sense...".⁶⁴⁷ Here Plato demonstrates that justice, and by extension happiness, can be achieved through the limitation of pleasure. Again, in his *Laws* Plato returns to this simplistic and just society, only here he claims it has some historical credit. Plato speaks of a theoretical history, of how societies rebuild following a great natural disaster:

Moreover, civil strife and war also disappeared during that time, and that for many reasons." "How so?" "In the first place, owing to their desolate state, they were kindly disposed and friendly towards one another; and secondly, they had no need to quarrel about food." For they had no lack of flocks and herds ... They were also well furnished with clothing and coverlets and houses, and with vessels for cooking and other kinds; for no iron is required for the arts of moulding and weaving, which two arts God gave to men to furnish them with all these necessities, ... Consequently, they were not excessively poor, nor were they constrained by stress of poverty to quarrel one with another; and, on the other hand, since they were without gold and silver, they could never have become rich. Now a community which has no communion with either poverty or wealth is generally the one in which the noblest characters will be formed; for in it there is no place for the growth of insolence and injustice, of

⁶⁴⁵ Pl. *Rep.* 414. The thesis maintains that Plato's primary focus is internal, as this quote demonstrates, however, the guardians also perform a role as soldiers against an external faction.

⁶⁴⁶ Pl. *Rep.* 375c.

⁶⁴⁷ Pl. *Rep.* 399e.

*rivalries and jealousies. So these men were good, both for these reasons and because of their simple-mindedness, as it is called; for, being simple-minded, when they heard things called bad or good, they took what was said for gospel-truth and believed.*⁶⁴⁸

There is a clear connection between this alternate history and the *Republic's* city of pigs. Again, we see a complete removal of pleasures that enflame desire and spirit within Plato's soul. Humanity will always be beset with a search for pleasure that inevitably leads to injustice. Ultimately, only rigorous education in σωφροσύνη can result in a just life. Yet, Plato's city of pigs acknowledges that through a modest environment and limited sources of pleasure a more 'natural' ideal could be achieved without excessive pleasure, but also without extensive education.

By glossing over Plato's city of pigs, scholars have been too attracted to the idea that Plato is pessimistic of the non-philosopher's ability to be just or happy.⁶⁴⁹ But this preface to Callipolis demonstrates the opposite, that philosophy stems from a need to counterbalance excessive pleasure. In fact, Plato sees the limitation of excessive pleasure as a more reliable means to control his guardians than cultivating such refined levels of education.⁶⁵⁰ To this end, Wolin argues that Plato was the first to see society as a series of interlinking cogs each actively building society.⁶⁵¹ I would add a condition to this however. Callipolis is exploring the ways that a society might indulge in luxuries while resisting injustice. Pleasure for Plato was a corruptor, but also a necessary reality of society. Plato then offers a divided society where the educated could be protected from temptation and could mediate those who were free to indulge pleasure. This section aimed to demonstrate that while Plato is clearly pessimistic about humanity's ability to resist pleasure and fall into injustice, he still acknowledges that there are some methods that might resist that decline. By controlling the supply of luxuries Plato is able to limit the

⁶⁴⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 679.

⁶⁴⁹ Bobonich, 2002, 82.

⁶⁵⁰ See Lege, 2013, 48-53.

⁶⁵¹ Wolin, 2004, 5.

decline of his Callipolis without needing to achieve such a high, and even unrealistically well refined, degree of education within the citizenry.

5.1. Meritocracy

Plato's *Republic* then is not without some degree of hope. By establishing an environment where education could flourish, a society might resist or delay its inevitable fall into injustice and tyranny. The city of pigs demonstrated that, at least in theory, justice and happiness could be achieved providing there was a minimal supply of excessive pleasure. Yet, if luxury is inevitable, the task for Plato is to design a society that might accommodate indulgence.⁶⁵² So how then does Plato propose this educational environment might be achieved? I argue that Callipolis was designed as an education-based meritocracy, structured to guard against greed and injustice. Callipolis is not an ideal because it creates the greatest level of happiness but because it is so resilient to the erosion of its virtues.

Fortunately, Plato offers a clear summary of his hierarchy, designed to be taught to the society's youth so as to teach them their place and responsibility in the state. The Phoenician story, firstly, describes the rulers as being infused with gold because they are so precious to society. Secondly, the "helpers" or guardians infused with silver and thirdly, the Craftsmen and farmers infused with bronze and brass.⁶⁵³ Plato stresses that while these classes are all "brothers" and some parents may give birth to a child at home in another class he also includes an oracle that predicts Callipolis' destruction if a child of bronze or brass becomes a ruler.⁶⁵⁴ The Phoenician story is clearly an attempt to add

⁶⁵² Sørensen, 2016, 13. Sørensen argues that for Plato, a division of labour was needed to sufficiently practice *technē*.

⁶⁵³ Scott, 2019, 208.

⁶⁵⁴ Scott, 2019, 219. Scott points out however, that a democrat might claim that given enough education a bronze child might learn how to become gold. It is worth noting then that for Scott, Plato does not consider education to be the only ticket to power, the individual must also have natural talents.

gravity to Plato's hierarchy discouraging rebellion and encouraging the careful allocation of youths to appropriate classes. We must also remember that this story is part of Plato's educational environment, even going as far as to consider how long it would take until this story became genuinely believed by the citizenry.⁶⁵⁵ When considering Plato's three-part soul and the constitutional hierarchy I have concluded above, it should be clear why Plato organises the hierarchy of Callipolis as he does. Here we have all the constitutional characters collected into one society, ordered through the understanding of σωφροσύνη.

5.2. The Guardians

I have already drawn a connection between the city of pigs and Plato's design of the guardian class but now it is worth establishing the role of the guardians more specifically. As I have demonstrated, the guardian class is a combination of education in σωφροσύνη and a limitation of their access to pleasure. This can be seen most clearly within Plato's initial description of the guardians:

...since many impious deeds have been done about the coin of the multitude, while that which dwells within them is unsullied. But for these only of all the dwellers in the city it is not lawful to handle gold and silver ... So living they would save themselves and save their city. But whenever they shall acquire for themselves land of their own and houses and coin, they will be house-holders and farmers instead of guardians, and will be transformed from the helpers of their fellow citizens to their enemies and masters, and so in hating and being hated, plotting and being plotted against they will pass their days fearing far more and rather the townsmen within than the foemen without—and then even then laying the course of near shipwreck for themselves and the state.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁵ Pl. Rep. 415c.

⁶⁵⁶ Pl. Rep. 416b.

This passage demonstrates the way in which Plato is attempting to control or design the guardian's environment. Schofield is correct when he argues that the guardians' education aimed to counter the impulses of the soul⁶⁵⁷ but we should clarify that that education stems from the creation of a constrictive environment. By restricting and limiting their freedom to indulge in pleasures as well as teaching them moderation, Plato is helping to create a section of society that can resist pleasure (through lack of access) and balance spirit with σωφροσύνη through education.

As a result, the guardians may focus on working selflessly for the good of the state rather than individual benefit, a point Plato makes quite clear stating:

*Well then, as I was just saying, we must look for those who are the best guardians of the indwelling conviction that what they have to do is what they at any time believe to be best for the state. Then we must observe them from childhood up and propose them tasks...*⁶⁵⁸

Again, slightly earlier, Plato summarises this point stating:

*I think, then, we shall have to observe them at every period of life, to see if they are conservators and guardians of this conviction in their minds and never by sorcery nor by force can be brought to expel from their souls unawares this conviction that they must do what is best for the state.*⁶⁵⁹

These passages demonstrate just how proactive Plato is in controlling the guardians' environment. Everything is watched and monitored, ensuring that every guardian is educated “*from childhood*” into becoming a dedicated servant of the state, fully in control of their desires and capable of balancing their spirit with moderation.⁶⁶⁰ Plato even argues that by comparing the education of the guardians to the education of dogs, arguing that they should be tamed enough

⁶⁵⁷ Schofield, 2008, 230.

⁶⁵⁸ Pl. *Rep.* 413c.

⁶⁵⁹ Pl. *Rep.* 412e.

⁶⁶⁰ Weinstein, 2019, 161.

to serve the city while remaining aggressive enough to protect it.⁶⁶¹ The education of the guardians is an explicit example of Plato designing a highly controlling environment that is conducive to cultivating σωφροσύνη. Both through limited access to pleasure and by teaching moderation they are able to work alongside their natural spirit to create both protectors and enforcers of Callipolis' virtues and customs.

5.3. Guardians that can lead and be lead.

The guardians, then, must learn how to be ruled by wisdom and the virtues of the state; but they must also learn how to rule others. As I demonstrated above, Plato is dismissive of any external threat that might face Callipolis, giving lacklustre responses to the notion of militaristic adversaries. The only threat Plato seriously acknowledges is that which we have already outlined: the inevitable erosion of virtues and education, causing the youth⁶⁶² of the polis to indulge in greater and greater injustice in search for pleasure.⁶⁶³ As a result, the primary responsibility of the guardians is less to protect Callipolis from external threats and more to police those within. The guardians are to act as leaders, positive examples for citizens to follow and to guide them toward a just and happy life in service to their state. Plato discusses this responsibility where he states:

*Then would it not truly be most proper to designate these as guardians in the full sense of the word, watchers against foemen without and friends within, so that the latter shall not wish and the former shall not be able to work harm, but to name those youths whom we were calling guardians just now, helpers and aids for the decrees of the rulers?" "I think so," he replied.*⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶¹ Pl. *Rep.* 375b.

⁶⁶² See constitutional erosion section.

⁶⁶³ Klosko, 2007,222. Klosko argues that for Plato that children should be moulded like wax and should learn to believe that happiness and virtue are the same thing.

⁶⁶⁴ Pl. *Rep.* 414a.

The guardians then are more than physical defenders against external threats; they are leaders for their fellow citizens, instructing them on moderation and policing their indulgences. A similar reference can be seen slightly later where Plato's Socrates states:

*...it is to this that the overseers of our state must cleave and be watchful against its insensible corruption. They must throughout be watchful against innovations in music and gymnastics counter to the established order, and to the best of their power guard against them.*⁶⁶⁵

Here the guardians are portrayed as an internal moral police force rather than an externally focused military. The meritocracy that we find within Callipolis is one centred around education, one's ability to moderate one's own pleasures and dedicate one's self toward the needs of the state.

Plato neatly summarises this role by explaining the balance that must be achieved within the guardian's education describing the good guardian as:

*... a good guardian of himself and the culture which he has received, maintaining the true rhythm and harmony of his being in all those conditions, and the character that would make him most useful to himself and to the state*⁶⁶⁶

Again, we see Plato describing the moderation that the guardian must learn. They must learn the customs of the state, their virtues and they must be prepared to act as an exemplar, as well as to actively policing the dedication of others. In summary, the guardian must not only learn how to be ruled by reason and moderation but also how to rule others and be part of their educational environment.

⁶⁶⁵ Pl. Rep. 424b.

⁶⁶⁶ Pl. Rep. 413e.

5.4. Philosopher rulers

Plato's portrayal of a meritocracy, based on education, is familiar to students of Isocrates and Xenophon, yet Plato spends far more time designing and detailing the educational environment. This environment aimed to teach his citizens both how to lead themselves toward justice while also learning how to be led by others. More so than his peers, Plato's education is directed to the whole of society rather than relying upon the wisdom of an individual leader.⁶⁶⁷ Plato's philosopher rulers are used hesitantly by Plato⁶⁶⁸ who acknowledges that no philosopher has ever ruled a polis and moreover is unlikely ever to rule.⁶⁶⁹ Partly, he says, this is because the uneducated are often highly sceptical of the educated, and partly because no philosopher would want to be pulled away from their own personal pursuit of wisdom.⁶⁷⁰ This image of the overlooked philosopher who had the power to improve the society if only someone would ask him, is a likely reflection of Plato and his intellectual peers. This thesis has frequently drawn attention to the impact that political obscurity has had upon our political thinkers, and again we must remember Plato's democratic context. In many ways then, Plato's portrayal of his golden, ruling philosophers is largely abstract; yet his characterisation of these idealised leaders helps to prove the aims of Plato's idealised polis.

⁶⁶⁷ Sørensen, 2016, 13; Rowe, 2008, 244. It is worth mentioning that Rowe would argue that the art of ruling was not something that everyone could learn, adding to Plato's resistance to democracy. While I would agree that that Plato saw this education as difficult for a majority to learn and the uneducated should be kept away from responsibility, he is also aware that every member of society should be educated to resist desire.

⁶⁶⁸ *Pl. Rep.* 499. states this quite explicitly. Mitchell & Melville, 2012, 97.

⁶⁶⁹ Morrison, 2007, 241. Morrison argues that Callipolis is only possible if an idealised ruler existed.

⁶⁷⁰ *Pl. Rep.* 499.

The defining feature of a good leader⁶⁷¹ is one who can lead for the benefit of others, even if that is contrary to the ruler's pleasure.⁶⁷² Plato highlights this quite clearly in his defence against Thrasymachus where his Socrates argues:

*Thrasymachus, neither does anyone in any office of rule in so far as he is a ruler consider and enjoin his own advantage but that of the one whom he rules and for whom he exercises his craft, and he keeps his eyes fixed on that and on what is advantageous and suitable to that in all that he says and does.*⁶⁷³

Plato is quite explicit here when he explains what a leader should strive towards.⁶⁷⁴ The idea that a leader must rule in the best interests of others is why Plato's emphasis on σωφροσύνη is so important to the *Republic*.⁶⁷⁵ Plato's guardians, and by extension his rulers, must learn to become masters of their own search for pleasure. In addition, rulers must have moderation and spirit balanced in harmony with each other, so the leader is neither aggressive nor too gentle.⁶⁷⁶ At the height of understanding, Plato states that philosophers will become incensed with the pursuit of knowledge. In Ferrari's words, reason will not only be a governor over the soul but will become a drive itself.⁶⁷⁷ I would add to Ferrari that for Plato this is not a negative drive and that the individual will be far more content to pursue wisdom. This is one reason why Plato believes it so unlikely that any philosopher could become a ruler; they are far too interested in their own pursuit of knowledge.⁶⁷⁸ As a result, Plato speaks of the need to force the philosopher to return from their pursuit of wisdom to help rule.⁶⁷⁹ The philosopher ruler is one that has a complete understanding of what

⁶⁷¹ Sørensen, 2016, 20-31. Sørensen focuses extensively on Thrasymachus' argument in order to demonstrate that the expert ruler was actually already established as the leaders of democratic or oligarchic states. Justice, in this case is defined as for the advantage of that expert ruler. Unpicking Thrasymachus' argument is a common point for scholarly discussion on justice but is less relevant to this thesis.

⁶⁷² Pl. *Rep.* 342e, 345e.

⁶⁷³ Pl. *Rep.* 342e.

⁶⁷⁴ Novitsky, 2009, 11-20.

⁶⁷⁵ Pl. *Rep.* 412c.

⁶⁷⁶ Pl. *Rep.* 503.

⁶⁷⁷ Ferrari, 2007, 170.

⁶⁷⁸ Bobonich, 2019, 594; Sørensen, 2016, 12-13. Sørensen argues that Plato is particularly highlighting that a philosopher ruler is highly unlikely to emerge within a democracy specifically.

⁶⁷⁹ Pl. *Rep.* 499.

their society needs, as well as what they as individuals need to live a just and happy life.

In addition, it is worth noting that Plato's perception of leadership is placed in a direct contrast with Athenian democracy. This can be seen most clearly within the notion that the ideal leader has no interest in ruling where Plato states:

So our city will be governed by us and you with waking minds, and not, as most cities now which are inhabited and ruled darkly as in a dream by men who fight one another for shadows and wrangle for office as if that were a great good, when the truth is that the city in which those who are to rule are least eager to hold office must needs be best administered and most free from dissension, and the state that gets the contrary type of ruler will be the opposite of this. "By all means," he said. "Will our alumni, then, disobey us when we tell them this, and will they refuse to share in the labours of state each in his turn while permitted to dwell the most of the time with one another in that purer world?" "Impossible," he said: "for we shall be imposing just commands on men who are just. Yet they will assuredly approach office as an unavoidable necessity, and in the opposite temper from that of the present rulers in our cities." "For the fact is, dear friend," said I, "if you can discover a better way of life than office-holding."⁶⁸⁰

Here Plato's comparison with the Athenian reality is clear; Plato objects to democratic participation, and to career politicians who make decisions for their own benefit, or who are ignorant as to what decisions to make at all. This criticism of the Athenian norm is articulated again:

But if, being beggars and starvelings from lack of goods of their own, they turn to affairs of state thinking that it is thence that they should grasp their own good, then it is impossible. For when office and rule become the prizes of contention, such a civil and

⁶⁸⁰ Pl. Rep. 502c-e.

*internecine strife destroys the office-seekers themselves and the city as well.*⁶⁸¹

These are precisely the amateurish institutions that isolate Plato and his intellectual peers. As we will discuss later, Plato's *Laws* offer a more inclusive attitude toward democracy. These rejections of amateur participation and self-driven politicians are a consistent objection for Plato. As a result, Plato's portrayal of leadership is focused on the mastery of σωφροσύνη. Leaders may need to be forced to lead society and make decisions on behalf of non-philosophers. As Bobonich points out, only the philosopher rulers receive this form of education. The lower class citizens rely upon the guardians and the rulers to guide them toward justice.⁶⁸² While I agree with Bobonich, it is worth mentioning, however, that while education is certainly focused on the guardian and ruling classes, Plato designed this meritocracy to help educate the whole of society. The guardians and leaders are designed not just as punitive enforcers but as teachers. Through this meritocracy, Plato cultivates virtues and customs within his citizens, promoting those who excel to positions of power and influence so as to guard and police those who may struggle to restrain their desire for pleasure.⁶⁸³

6.1. Law

The second half of this chapter has aimed to demonstrate that Plato's perception of humanity is pessimistic but not hopeless. We have seen a variety of means to create an environment conducive to education; an education that can enable its citizens to lead their desires and understand the needs of their state. Those who excel in this education, are expected to lead, and police others, becoming part of that educational environment. Finally, I will demonstrate, what will become perhaps the most influential mechanism of education in Plato's philosophy, his laws. Recently scholars have made a point

⁶⁸¹ Pl. *Rep.* 521a.

⁶⁸² Bobonich, 2019, 589.

⁶⁸³ Bobonich, 2002, 81. Bobonich argues that one of the key proposals of the Republic is how the philosopher and non-philosopher can live together in one society.

of underlining the importance of law within the *Republic*, re-assessing the traditional developmentalist perspective that law was a later addition that we see in the *Statesman* and of course Plato's *Laws*. Most recently, Annas has argued that law is of 'equal' importance to education in the *Republic* and together, they aim to encourage citizens toward justice.⁶⁸⁴ While I certainly agree with Annas' conclusions I take slight issue with the role of law. Annas sees law in the *Republic* as acting as a punitive measure to ensure citizens do not fail to succumb to pleasure. I argue that law plays a more supportive role for the education of Callipolis' citizens rather than a punitive one. Callipolis' laws are designed to create an environment free from corruption, that would allow the youth to become educated in moderation and the customs of the polis. Plato is not worried about an individual's corruption or injustice but of a generation of uneducated. This is how Plato sees law in the *Republic*, it is a guardian against the erosion of education, specifically amongst the young. Critically, this definition of law is taken almost verbatim from Plato's own definition:

*...that this is the purpose of the law, which is the ally of all classes in the state, and this is the aim of our control of children, our not leaving them free before we have established, so to speak, a constitutional government within them and, by fostering the best element in them with the aid of the like in ourselves, have set up in its place a similar guardian and ruler in the child, and then, and then only, we leave it free.*⁶⁸⁵

Plato is quite explicit here in his understanding of the role of law; it must unite the citizens together. This relates to perhaps the most fundamental role of any leader; that they must rule for the benefit of their citizens as a whole.

To the same extent, the primary function of law is to unite the polis through a shared acceptance of justice. This can also be found within Plato's first mentions on law:

⁶⁸⁴ Annas, 2017, 23; Rowe, 2008, 256; Klosko, 2007, 224.

⁶⁸⁵ Pl. *Rep.* 590-591a.

*“So that when men do wrong and are wronged by one another and taste of both, those who lack the power to avoid the one and take the other determine that it is for their profit to make a compact with one another neither to commit nor to suffer injustice; and that this is the beginning of legislation and covenants between men...”*⁶⁸⁶

Again, we see Plato articulating the most fundamental requirement of law, a contract to bring a society together in a universal virtue. From this point on, every reference to law relates to establishing an environment conducive to education. Plato’s first law for the city of Callipolis is a censorship of music and theatre, specifically to ensure an appropriate education of the youth.⁶⁸⁷ Again, later, Plato defines lawful as what new soldiers should be taught to fear and what should not.⁶⁸⁸ As Schofield has pointed out, we should also notice the restrictions on sexual intercourse and private property.⁶⁸⁹ Schofield argues that judges should be seen as doctors targeting injustice.⁶⁹⁰

It is easy to see why scholars have viewed Callipolis as a place of legal absolutism; its restrictions on its citizens appear severe. Yet we should not confuse Plato’s extreme use of law as targeted at eliminating injustice but about ensuring no form of corruption could influence the younger generation. We see this within Plato’s account of the guardian class, and the restraints upon wealth and private property. As we have seen Plato is specifically designing a context where pleasure is limited so as to reduce temptation.⁶⁹¹ As for the restrictions on sexual intercourse, this is entirely constructed around the concept of selective breeding within the society. This is not to say that Callipolis’ laws are not restrictive, or that Plato does not use law to challenge injustice but I would argue that this was not Plato’s primary aim when designing Callipolis’ laws. They remain entirely focused on the creation of a constructive environment for

⁶⁸⁶ Pl. *Rep.* 358e-359a.

⁶⁸⁷ Pl. *Rep.* 380b.

⁶⁸⁸ Pl. *Rep.* 430b; Weinstein, 2019, 161.

⁶⁸⁹ Schofield, 2006, 323.

⁶⁹⁰ Schofield, 2006, 323.

⁶⁹¹ As argued in ‘city of pigs’ and ‘constitutional erosion’ sections.

the younger generations. This targeting of the future generation is repeatedly a focus for Plato.

Scholars have also spent considerable time on a controversial passage that implies citizens do not need excessive laws because, if they are well educated, they will act justly whether the law demands it or not. Plato's Socrates states:

But what, in heaven's name," said I, "about business matters, the deals that men make with one another in the agora and, if you please, contracts with workmen and actions for foul language and assault, the filing of declarations, the impanelling of juries, the payment and exaction of any dues that may be needful in markets or harbours and in general market, police or harbour regulations and the like, can we bring ourselves to legislate about these?" "Nay, 'twould not be fitting," he said, "to dictate to good and honourable men. For most of the enactments that are needed about these things they will easily, I presume, discover." "Yes, my friend, provided God grants them the preservation of the principles of law that we have already discussed."⁶⁹²

This passage throws into question the role of Plato's legislation and the citizen's power in relation to it. What we need to remember is that this passage follows a definition of the laws governing a child's educational schedule: *"the direction of the education from whence one starts is likely to determine the quality of what follows. Does not like ever summon like?"*⁶⁹³ Plato is not permitting citizens, nor leaders to enact their own laws. He is demonstrating that when laws governing education are followed accurately, they will in turn produce citizens that will instinctively follow a just and wise path in all areas of their life, even the most trivial.⁶⁹⁴ In summary, law plays a central role within Plato's *Republic*, but that role is less of a punitive one and more of an educational one, focused on

⁶⁹² Pl. *Rep.* 425c-e.

⁶⁹³ Pl. *Rep.* 425b-c.

⁶⁹⁴ Annas, 2017, 19.

creating a constructive environment for the youth. This is the only weakness Plato acknowledges is present within Callipolis, and so ensuring effective education is the best way to resist the inevitable erosion of Callipolis' values and customs. While Plato does include references to maintaining law amongst the citizens, Plato either assumes that these individuals will not pose a threat, or a good educational system will eliminate the need for dedicated criminal law. In short, if an individual commits a crime, the laws have already failed.

6.2. Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has shown how Plato's *Republic* is dedicated to designing an environment that supports a sophisticated education for its citizenry. This education is essential for Callipolis to resist the universal temptation for luxury and excessive pleasure that Plato sees to inevitably erode the virtues and customs of the state. I demonstrated how the principal challenges Plato saw society's face actually stemmed from his own experience of Athenian democracy. I showed how Callipolis was set up in contrast to Athens, designed to resist the moral deterioration Plato saw in the political turmoil present in Athens at the end of the fifth century. From here the chapter outlined that the primary danger an individual must overcome was their desire for pleasure. I demonstrated how the greatest threat posing Plato's Callipolis, was a failure to properly educate the next generation. As a result, the fall of each constitution should be seen to be an erosion of that education, always causing the youth to pursue honour or pleasure rather than the needs of their society.

When considering the guardian class, I showed that their primary role was to police the morality of the citizens inside the walls rather than physically defending the city from abroad. The guardians were shown to act as symbols and teachers, becoming part of the educational environment. Finally, I demonstrated that while the modern reader would see Plato's laws as

oppressive, they were not designed to be purely punitive. Instead, Plato's legislation ought to be seen as a control on the social environment, targeted at minimising any corruption the youth might be exposed to. Through this method, the chapter has demonstrated the importance of education within Plato's *Republic*.

Chapter 6: Plato's *Laws*

*But we, naturally, in our present discourse are not taking the view that such things as these make up education: the education we speak of is training from childhood in goodness, which makes a man eagerly desirous of becoming a perfect citizen, understanding how both to rule and be ruled righteously. This is the special form of nurture to which, as I suppose, our present argument would confine the term 'education'...*⁶⁹⁵

In this definition of education, Plato perfectly ties together so many of the themes and ideas we have assessed so far. Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated how education could play such a fundamental role in how our sources understood leadership; morality, society, and citizenship. The *Laws* pulls on all these themes, and outlines a second utopian society,⁶⁹⁶ once again dedicated, from the ground up, to cultivate education. A key difference from the *Republic* is that the *Laws* is less interested in fostering education within an individual, nor even within a select group; for the first-time, education is tied to citizenship, and thereby raises the challenge to educate every citizen in Magnesia.⁶⁹⁷ The task for a lawmaker, or political theorist, is to create an environment that can encourage its citizens to learn the virtues and customs of their society. They must learn how to control their own desires for pleasure and become an example for others to follow. This, I argue is a principal aim of the *Laws*, to build upon and to hone the ideas we saw theorised in the *Republic*, and set them into a more realistic scenario, one that does not rely upon a utopian society. Instead, Plato's *Laws* proposes that the golden rule for good leadership, is not the ability to grasp some supernatural virtue or idealised technical knowledge, but the ability to successfully teach your successor to rule, and to be ruled in turn. If successful, Plato hopes that Magnesia can resist the erosion of education that was underlined in the *Republic* and maintain a just society for as long as possible.

⁶⁹⁵ Pl. *Laws*. 643-4.

⁶⁹⁶ See Bobonich, 2002, 374; Prauscello, 2014, 57.

⁶⁹⁷ Bobonich, 2002, 105.

To demonstrate this, the chapter will begin, as Plato begins, with a historical study of bygone constitutions. I will argue that this extensive section of the *Laws* aims, not just to add context, or underline a philosophical argument, but is intended as a serious historical narrative. Through demonstrating the rise and fall of, often idealised constitutions, Plato outlines an innate human condition. This condition will be defined as a wild, self-serving nature that will continuously drive individuals toward base pleasures. I will argue that each constitution is seen to fall, due to a failure to educate sufficiently the following generation of rulers. As a result, I propose that Plato's history of constitutions is perhaps better termed a history of education. What I believe scholars have overlooked, is the impact that this history has upon Magnesia. I propose that it is this human condition that gives Magnesia its primary purpose. Plato must design a society that can resist this human condition, and the only means to do that, is to design a constitution obsessed with the successful education of the next generation.

By this point, Plato will be shown to have reinforced the groundwork he explored within the *Republic*. He will be shown to have highlighted the challenges that any society might face and articulated education as the primary means to resist these challenges. From here, I will demonstrate how Plato aims to design a constitution that might endure, where historical constitutions fell into injustice. Rather than relying upon philosopher rulers or guardians to educate the next generation, Plato's *Laws* uses law. Plato is literally designing an environment that educates. To demonstrate Plato's method, the chapter will initially argue that Magnesia was designed for the longevity of the whole society, and not to push individuals to ideals of virtue as we saw in the *Republic*. Next, the section will argue that legislation was designed, not to be threatening or coercive, but encouraging and persuasive through a new redefinition of law. I will argue that Plato deliberately plays into the grey area between written law, *nomos* and status quo, in order to avoid punitive laws.

Finally, it is worth noting that this thesis has already spent enough time detailing and understanding the importance of σωφροσύνη in resisting desire, and there is no dramatic change within the *Laws*. That said, while I will not go into depth on σωφροσύνη in this chapter, I still consider it to be essential to our understanding of education. As a result, I direct readers to previous discussions on σωφροσύνη and to Prauscello, who has demonstrated how obtaining σωφροσύνη should be the primary definition of a citizen in Magnesia.⁶⁹⁸

The final section of this chapter will discuss the role of magistrates and elected officials within Plato's society. Here I propose that Plato's understanding of a mixed constitution, is not a mixture of monarchical and democratic political structures, but of their values. From here, the section will demonstrate that while Plato clearly has a role for philosophers, statesman and lawmakers, he has no presumption that they will be capable of creating an ideal society, nor possess any idealised wisdom themselves. I will argue that lawmakers can only aim at designing a good constitution. In reality, societies are impacted by current events and reactionary politics. This dismissal of idealism will then allow the final discussion on magistrates and officials. I will argue, that while institutions such as the nocturne council and the *nomophylakes* are important to the running of Magnesia, they must be considered maintainers and not rulers. This is particularly true of the nocturne council, which will be shown to act only as an adviser to the society, and never as its governor. From here, we will see the dramatic repositioning of philosophers from rulers to advisers. In this way, this chapter will argue that Plato's *Laws* offers a golden rule for leadership and law-making, to ensure that successor generations are properly educated in the virtues of that society, thereby encouraging them to willingly obey the laws and prolong the constitution in its struggle against the human condition.

⁶⁹⁸ Prauscello, 2014, 60.

1.1. Aims and Intentions of the *Laws*

As we have seen, the *Republic* was broadly pessimistic about humanity, and its ability to achieve a just and, by extension, a happy society. Plato describes his Callipolis as struggling against an ultimately inevitable collapse into desire, excessive pleasure, and injustice. Every possible measure and precaution is taken to create an environment where virtues and customs could be taught to the next generation. Yet ultimately, the fate of any society, even an idealised one, was to fail these lessons and slide into injustice, as Plato underlines stating:

*Hard in truth it is for a state thus constituted to be shaken and disturbed; but since for everything that has come into being destruction is appointed, not even such a fabric as this will abide for all time, but it shall surely be dissolved, and this is the manner of its dissolution.*⁶⁹⁹

From this frank picture of society, there comes an important assertion that Plato takes up in the *Laws*. That there is no pure, divine, or absolute good from which to base any theory of an idealised society. The *Republic* is pragmatic because it assessed how an idealised constitution would inevitably fall. In the *Laws*, Plato starts from the premise that a constitution must aim for conservation over idealism. This then is one of the primary tasks of the *Laws*: to pick up and hone several of the mechanisms that Callipolis explored, without relying on the assumption that any idealised good might be achieved or incorporated into this new Magnesia.⁷⁰⁰ To do this, Plato aims to demonstrate that there is historical proof to the idea that all constitutions will fall, no matter the wisdom of their lawmaker. Through understanding this rise and fall of historic constitutions, Plato aims to demonstrate the erosion of virtues and customs that we saw proposed in the *Republic*, now argued in a historical study. This would not only

⁶⁹⁹ Pl. *Rep.* 546a-b.

⁷⁰⁰ Bobonich, 2002, 119. Bobonich would add that one key difference between the *Laws* and the *Republic* is that education is needed across the whole of society and not just within its leaders.

set the groundwork for his own laws on education, but also offer a genuine historical analysis that may be used by future thinkers.

1.2. A Historical Study

At the beginning of his *Laws*, Plato sets out a lengthy, and highly detailed account of several historical constitutions. This was designed to apply his theory of constitutional erosion, outlined in the *Republic*, to a historical setting. I will demonstrate how this human condition⁷⁰¹ or innate tendency toward self-destruction is a key conclusion that Plato uses to set up the parameters for his Magnesia. To do this I will show how Plato portrays a consistency with the rise and fall of historic constitutions due to a failure to educate appropriately the next generation in the virtues and customs of the society. I will argue that Plato's intentions are comparable to those of Thucydides and other fifth century writers. I will also suggest that this historical study is broader than many scholars have given credit and is relevant for books one and two of the *Laws*, expanding Plato's history from the mythic to the near-contemporary. From here, the chapter will be able to follow Plato's analysis of these ancient constitutions, understanding how, and why, they fell from virtue into injustice and destruction, and how his Magnesia might endure.

Scholars since Ernest Barker in 1918 have seen a genuine historical narrative within book three of the *Laws*, focused upon the distant past, specifically around the Persian Wars and Cyrus the Great.⁷⁰² More recently, Farrar has argued that Plato incorporates a Thucydidean technique that aims to demonstrate the best way of living from a historical perspective.⁷⁰³ Similarly, Schofield points out that this narrative is designed to provide a lesson in how best to design a healthy and stable community.⁷⁰⁴ His aim was to create a guide for future generations, a guide, Farrar would argue, that was even designed to

⁷⁰¹ See below for a definition of 'human condition'.

⁷⁰² Barker, 1918, 307; Schofield, 2010, 18.

⁷⁰³ Farrar, 2013, 32.

⁷⁰⁴ Schofield, 2010, 18.

rival Thucydides.⁷⁰⁵ Yet scholars have overlooked a key component to this history: Plato is not trying to indicate a good society but a consistent flaw. While there are good societies in his history, Plato's point is that they are all fundamentally flawed because they cannot maintain their education into the next generation. I argue this is the primary conclusion of Plato's history and moreover sets up the premise for the *Laws*.

Firstly, I must highlight why scholars see book three to be a genuine historical study. Plato is quite clear in his incorporation of a historical method, having his Athenian state that:

During this time, have not thousands upon thousands of States come into existence, and, on a similar computation, just as many perished? And have they not in each case exhibited all kinds of constitutions over and over again? And have they not changed at one time from small to great, at another from great to small, and changed also from good to bad and from bad to good?

Clinias: Necessarily.

*Athenian: Of this process of change let us discover, if we can, the cause; for this, perhaps, would show us what is the primary origin of constitutions, as well as their transformation.*⁷⁰⁶

Plato could scarcely be more explicit that he intends to enter into a historical study. I would highlight how Plato describes the rise and fall of constitutions. There is a clear depiction of how Plato sees the fragility of human society. Here Plato sets out the goals of his history, but importantly, he begins with a hypothesis that something consistently undermines a good constitution.

⁷⁰⁵ Farrar, 2013, 36.

⁷⁰⁶ Pl. *Laws*. 676.

Farrar has demonstrated several overt ties between Thucydides' historical analysis and Plato's *Laws*.⁷⁰⁷ The key difference between these thinkers are, as Farrar highlights, that Thucydides looks to the near historical past in order to understand how it is shaped by our human condition. Plato, in contrast, looks to a broader history to demonstrate a continuous, universal flaw that erodes every good constitution.⁷⁰⁸ Similar to Plato's historical preface at 422a-b, Thucydides gives a clear and detailed expression of his historical investigation stating:

*The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content. In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time.*⁷⁰⁹

In an almost identical fashion to Plato, Thucydides makes it clear that he intends to explore a human condition, that makes sense of the chaotic rise and fall of history.⁷¹⁰ Farrar especially points out that Plato intends his work to be a reference point for future thinkers, an intention we clearly see in this passage of Thucydides.⁷¹¹ For both thinkers, the human condition is portrayed in similar terms:

*In the confusion into which life was now thrown in the cities, human nature, always rebelling against the law and now its master, gladly showed itself ungoverned in passion, above respect for justice, and the enemy of all superiority; since revenge would not have been set above religion, and gain above justice, had it not been for the fatal power of envy.*⁷¹²

⁷⁰⁷ Farrar, 2013, 32.

⁷⁰⁸ Farrar, 2013, 38.

⁷⁰⁹ Thuc. 1.22.

⁷¹⁰ It is worth noting here that Thuc. 3.84 is widely considered to be spurious, and not comparable with what Thucydides says elsewhere.

⁷¹¹ Farrar, 2013, 56.

⁷¹² Thuc. 3.84.2.

Thucydides describes human nature as a destructive, rebellious and a chaotic passion, that always acts against the legal established order of constitutions.⁷¹³ Repeatedly we see Thucydides describing the dangers of individuals that give into a selfish desire for power.⁷¹⁴ The similarities between Thucydides and Plato's definition of human condition are striking. The belief that the most serious threat to any constitution would come ultimately from within innate, self-preserving, human nature was clearly not new to Plato. Yet what scholars appear to have overlooked is that the *Laws* is unique because it takes up this challenge directly. To this end, the *Laws*' primary aim is first to demonstrate a historical human condition that spans from early primitive society through to a distant/mythic history and into current events. At each point, Plato demonstrates that it is only through education that a society can hope to equip itself so as to delay the society's inevitable fall.

In addition to Farrar's argument, I suggest that Plato need not be directly following or competing with Thucydides. He is simply drawing upon a well-established idea of an innate, self-destructive human nature.⁷¹⁵ Bobonich has argued that Plato's Magnesia is particularly distinct because human nature is seen to set a limit on social and individual attainment.⁷¹⁶ While I agree that the notion of a human condition is not new to Plato, I argue it is a recurring philosophy that, as far back as Hesiod, we can see this belief circulating in Greek thought. In his *Works and Days*, Hesiod outlines a mythological history of humanity. Yet even in this description, we see the rise and fall of each race, first of Gold and Silver, and then of Bronze and Iron, each creation moving further and further from virtue and order. Hesiod's phrasing is also indicative of major later theories stating:

⁷¹³ Thucydides uses the word στάσις at 3.82.1 referring to Greek-wide civil strife. It is worth a note here that Thucydides would also have been impacted by the Athenian plague.

⁷¹⁴ Thuc. 1.20, 1.8, 1.17–18.

⁷¹⁵ There are of course differences in the way Thucydides sees the rise and fall of society's when compared to Herodotus or Hesiod who lean toward the idea that simply fate is to blame. My point here is that there is a common tendency to see society's as temporary bouts of order in an otherwise chaotic world.

⁷¹⁶ Bobonich, 2002, 109.

*A child was brought up at his good mother's side a hundred years,
an utter simpleton, playing childishly in his own home. But when
they were full grown and were come to the full measure of their
prime, they lived only a little time and that in sorrow because of their
foolishness, for they could not keep from sinning and from wronging
one another...*⁷¹⁷

In a similar manner, Hesiod later offers a second comment on the erosion of virtue and humanity's slump back into evil and chaos later in his work.⁷¹⁸

Interestingly, in these passages, Hesiod's understanding that ignorance leads to injustice and disorder is remarkably relevant to the conclusions of later thinkers. Particularly, that this ignorance would lead individuals to commit evil unknowingly, is very reminiscent of Plato's arguments in the *Republic*, *Statesman* and *Laws*. I am not trying to argue that Plato directly followed Hesiod or any other thinker. Yet we should acknowledge, that both look to the mythic past as a way to describe the inevitable decline of humanity.

This notion that humanity was destined to rise and fall was part of the ancient Greek psyche. Plato, then, is hardly breaking the mould by engaging in a serious historical study in order to prove a constitutional tendency. In addition, I would argue that Plato's historical study is not as limited as Farrar proposes, and that Plato also extends his study to the near-contemporary. Plato even opens his *Laws* with a historical narrative explaining the creation of the Cretan constitution and similar methods of comparison are used later in reference to Sparta.⁷¹⁹ The historical narrative we see within Plato's *Laws* is not simply a literary technique, but a genuine attempt to demonstrate a historical rhythm or trend that was designed both to prove Plato's own theories, as well as to act as a guide for future readers. Ultimately, Plato's history sets up the challenge for any would-be lawmaker; to design a society that can resist this human tendency for self-destruction. The answer, for Plato, is education.

⁷¹⁷ For example, Hesiod, *Work and Days*. 130-5.

⁷¹⁸ Hesiod. *Work and days*. 174.

⁷¹⁹ Pl. *Laws*. 1.625d.

2. A History of Education

If Plato was engaged in a genuine historical study for such a substantial section of his *Laws*, then it is worth defining his aims and conclusions. I argue that, for Plato, every constitution inevitably fails due to its inability to educate the following generation in the virtues and customs of the society. It is ignorance, Plato argues, that causes these great constitutions to fall into the selfish desire and wild chaos of the human condition. As a result, Plato's history aims to trace society's failure to educate. Either through negligence or through corruption, historical constitutions are shown to fall to the ignorance of the following generation. In short, Plato's history is a history of education or, perhaps more appropriately, a history of ignorance.

2.1. Human condition

Before continuing, it is worth underlining exactly what we mean when referring to a human condition within Plato's *Laws*, afterall, it was Thucydides who is credited with considering it a 'human condition'.⁷²⁰ As we have seen in the *Republic* and will demonstrate in the *Laws*, Plato sees humanity to be engaged in a constant struggle against inherent desires and selfish goals. As Metcalf demonstrates, humans are seen as enemies to each other and to themselves at the start of the *Laws*, with every individual fighting an internal war.⁷²¹ The discussion in the opening stages of the *Laws* is thereby framed:

⁷²⁰ Thuc. 1.22.4. Although as I have shown, the idea of human self-destruction was not new to Greek thought.

⁷²¹ See Metcalf, 2013, 118.

how an individual could achieve “*victory over oneself*”?⁷²² This uncivilised, wild and chaotic nature is universal, and, without education, individuals have no hope of creating a civilised society.⁷²³ Yet Plato accepts that no society will ever be capable of fully educating an individual away from their nature, and so, no constitution can ever last indefinitely.⁷²⁴ As we saw in the *Republic*, Plato was not concerned that his ideal city would fall from some foreign invader; the only way his Callipolis would fall, was through an internal failure to resist temptation and evil.⁷²⁵ Even with idealistic levels of education and discipline, guardians and philosopher kings can never guarantee that their virtue and knowledge will be passed on to their successors. It is within this idea of the fall of the ideal aristocracy, that Plato’s Athenian is most explicit in his definition of the human condition stating:

*Hard in truth it is for a state thus constituted to be shaken and disturbed; but since for everything that has come into being destruction is appointed, not even such a fabric as this will abide for all time, but it shall surely be dissolved, and this is the manner of its dissolution. Not only for plants that grow from the earth but also for animals that live upon it there is a cycle of bearing and barrenness for soul and body as often as the revolutions of their orbs come full circle, in brief courses for the short-lived and oppositely for the opposite; but the laws of prosperous birth or infertility for your race, the men you have bred to be your rulers will not for all their wisdom ascertain by reasoning combined with sensation, but they will escape them.*⁷²⁶

It is a “*hard truth*” Plato states, that nothing, no matter how ideal will ever last indefinitely. Plato never designed Callipolis as a never-ending utopia. It was an attempt to find justice through designing a society that could resist injustice. This innate temptation toward injustice is also demonstrated within the *Statesman* where Plato argues that only a divine leader could ever successfully

⁷²² Pl. *Laws*. 626e.

⁷²³ As demonstrated previously, Xenophon and Isocrates use wild, animalistic references to highlight the need for education.

⁷²⁴ Klosko, 2007, 217: Klosko argues that Plato’s *Laws* is so pessimistic as to society’s ability to break away from the human condition that Plato has in fact ‘given up’ on politics.

⁷²⁵ Pl. *Rep.* 546a-c.

⁷²⁶ Pl. *Rep.* 546a-b.

maintain a good society. Even the political expert, can only hold back the inevitable decline into injustice and disorder.⁷²⁷

For Plato, the human condition is our natural self-interest, governed by desire and a search for pleasure. It is wild, animalistic and self-serving, the opposite of what is needed to create a harmonious society.⁷²⁸ As Irwin puts it, “Human nature without law cannot achieve the distinctive excellences of human society.”⁷²⁹ It is the daunting challenge of all constitutions to try tame that desire through education, and teach how one might rule oneself.⁷³⁰ This can be seen most clearly within his portrayal of uneducated youths who are described as hot headed,⁷³¹ full of fire and unpredictable actions.⁷³² As we will assess at length below, Plato concentrates on what he sees as the wild nature that uneducated youths share with untamed animals.⁷³³ I have already demonstrated how both Xenophon and Isocrates share similar definitions of the innate wildness in humanity, which, in turn, makes education in moderation so crucial to a societies success.⁷³⁴ Yet only Plato deliberately attempts to trace the human condition through history. Plato sees humanity as part of a cycle, rising due to some great leader or divine intervention, before desire and ignorance slowly erodes that wisdom, and pulls the society back into wildness, chaos and self-serving injustice.

2.2. Constitutional Erosion

For Plato, then, the human condition was the greatest obstacle any political thinker would have to tackle. In book three of his *Laws*, Plato sets out

⁷²⁷ Pl. *Statesman*. 273b-d.

⁷²⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 874e-875b.

⁷²⁹ Irwin, 2010, 94.

⁷³⁰ Pl. *Laws*. 644b; See Metcalf, (2013, 118) on the connection between ἀρετή and ruling oneself.

⁷³¹ Pl. *Laws*. 3.695d-e.

⁷³² Pl. *Laws*. 2.666.

⁷³³ Pl. *Laws*. 710a.

⁷³⁴ Xen. *Cyr*, 1.4.20; Isoc. *To Demonicus*. 15.

the history of this human struggle.⁷³⁵ If the only means to resist this human condition is to educate the members of a society, the primary requirement of a leader is not to necessarily reach an ideal of virtue themselves, but to successfully teach their successors to avoid injustice. Thus, this section will demonstrate that in Plato's history, it is the failure of education, that results in the collapse of every constitution.

This constitutional collapse can be seen most clearly within the opening passages of book three. Plato explicitly portrays the idea that it is the lack of education that results in decline, when the Athenian states:

That want of accord, on the part of the feelings of pain and pleasure, with the rational judgment is, I maintain, the extreme form of ἀμαθίαν,⁷³⁶ and also the “greatest” because it belongs to the main mass of the soul, — for the part of the soul that feels pain and pleasure corresponds to the mass of the populace in the State. So, whenever this part opposes what are by τοῖς φύσει ἀρχικοῖς⁷³⁷ — knowledge, opinion, or reason, —this condition I call folly, whether it be in a State, when the masses disobey the rulers and the laws, or in an individual, when the noble elements of reason existing in the soul produce no good effect, but quite the contrary.⁷³⁸

In this preface, Plato demonstrates that societies fall because they pursue the desire to achieve pleasure and avoid pain, in ignorance of the “*ruling principles*”. As a result, a just society must maintain an environment where every member can actively learn how to rule, as well as how to be ruled over.⁷³⁹ Here I argue that Plato is offering a contextual background to define the aims of his *Laws*.

⁷³⁵ Pl. *Laws* 3.676.

⁷³⁶ It is relevant that this word choice places the focus on ἀμαθίαν “*want of learning*” rather than a lack of intellect.

⁷³⁷ Specifically, “*the things that rule by nature*”.

⁷³⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 3.689a-c.

⁷³⁹ Pl. *Laws*. 644b.

In addition, book three also aims to demonstrate that Plato's ideal society would be a mixed constitution, acknowledging the benefits of both democracy and monarchy. The Athenian summarises that:

*...There are two mother-forms of constitution, so to call them, from which one may truly say all the rest are derived. Of these the one is properly termed monarchy, the other democracy, the extreme case of the former being the Persian polity, and of the latter the Athenian; the rest are practically all, as I said, modifications of these two. Now it is essential for a polity to partake of both these two forms, if it is to have freedom and friendliness combined with wisdom. And that is what our argument intends to enjoin, when it declares that a State which does not partake of these can never be rightly constituted.*⁷⁴⁰

From these passages, we can understand Plato's aims within his historical study. He intends to demonstrate the erosion of two 'good' constitutions. He shows how both Athens and Persia shared the same fate. Persia, "... *through reducing their people to the extreme of slavery,*" and Athens "...*on the contrary, by urging [the] populace to the extreme of liberty*".⁷⁴¹ This idea of a mixed constitution acknowledges the benefits of both systems, and their respective weaknesses. Placing Athens in the same boat as tyrannical Persia can certainly be expected to have been a controversial argument for Plato. Yet his argument remains focused on his perception of the historic rise and fall of these constitutions, due to the ultimate failure to cultivate education within their society as whole, and especially within the following generation.

2.2.1. Cyrus' Persia

Plato's first case study is also the clearest example of his emphasis on ignorance as a threat to a society's longevity. For a 'good' form of monarchy, Plato chooses to assess Cyrus' leadership over Persia. He gives a positive

⁷⁴⁰ Pl. *Laws*. 3.693d-e.

⁷⁴¹ Pl. *Laws*. 699e.

description of Cyrus' rule, considering it to be a time where "*Cyrus, maintained the due balance between slavery and freedom...*".⁷⁴² It is important to note immediately that what Plato chooses to praise is Cyrus' ability to limit the degree of oppression that contemporary readers might traditionally associate with Persian tyranny. On the contrary Cyrus enjoys a long history of positive representations in Greek thought.⁷⁴³ Plato's Athenian continues stating:

*...when the rulers gave a share of freedom to their subjects and advanced them to a position of equality, the soldiers were more friendly towards their officers and showed their devotion in times of danger; and if there was any wise man amongst them, able to give counsel, since the king was not jealous but allowed free speech and respected those who could help at all by their counsel,—such a man had the opportunity of contributing to the common stock the fruit of his wisdom.*⁷⁴⁴

Interestingly, what makes Cyrus' Persia great is not that it offers an ideal of education, but an incorporation of principally democratic values. This freedom created an environment in which, wisdom and education could flourish. As we saw in Plato's *Republic*, and will now explore again within his *Laws*, Plato is primarily concerned with designing an environment conducive to education. Unlike the *Republic*, or indeed Xenophon's *Cyropaidea*,⁷⁴⁵ it is not necessary for Cyrus to achieve the position of a philosopher king or even promote others into an idealised level of virtue. It is enough that Persia can cultivate education universally.

Cyrus then was not a philosopher king nor even an idealised leader, and Plato's Athenian comments explicitly that Cyrus' education was lacking in some key areas stating: "*What I now divine regarding Cyrus is this, —that, although otherwise a good and patriotic commander, he was entirely without a right*

⁷⁴² Pl. *Laws*. 3.694a-b.

⁷⁴³ See Michell, 2013, 285.

⁷⁴⁴ Pl, *Laws*. 3.694a-b.

⁷⁴⁵ See chapter three.

παιδεία, and had paid no attention to household management.”⁷⁴⁶ This sole criticism of Cyrus is key to Plato’s argument. By neglecting household management, Cyrus failed to properly educate his children.⁷⁴⁷ Plato labours this point extensively arguing that Cyrus

... entrusted his children to the women folk to rear up; and they brought them up from earliest childhood as though they had already attained to Heaven's favour and felicity, and were lacking in no celestial gift; and so by treating them as the special favourites of Heaven, and forbidding anyone to oppose them, in anything, and compelling everyone to praise their every word and deed, they reared them up into what they ...were without training in their father's craft, which was a hard one, fit to turn out shepherds of great strength, able to camp out in the open and to keep watch and, if need be, to go campaigning. He overlooked the fact that his sons were trained by women and eunuchs and that the indulgence shown them as “Heaven's darlings” had ruined their training, whereby they became such as they were likely to become when reared with a rearing that “spared the rod.” So when, at the death of Cyrus, his sons took over the kingdom, over-pampered and undisciplined as they were, first, the one killed the other, through annoyance at his being put on an equality with himself, and presently, being mad with drink and debauchery⁷⁴⁸

This passage demonstrates Plato’s explicit condemnation of Cyrus. Through failing to educate his successors, Cyrus doomed his kingdom to die with him. Cyrus’ education is then contrasted with that of his own children. This decline following the death of Cyrus is strikingly similar to the portrayal at the end of Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*. Specifically, Xenophon refers to a decline in moral standards⁷⁴⁹ along with a failure to provide appropriate education to the boys.⁷⁵⁰ For Plato, the lesson of a soldier is principally to learn how to be ruled as well as how to rule, whereas Cyrus’ sons could do neither. Similar lessons in

⁷⁴⁶ Pl. *Laws*. 3.694c.

⁷⁴⁷ See Mitchell, 2013, 290.

⁷⁴⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 3.694d -695.

⁷⁴⁹ Xen, *Cyr*. 8.8.3.

⁷⁵⁰ Xen, *Cyr*. 8.8.13.

endurance and virtue were central to Cyrus' success as a leader but were lost to his children.

Yet Cyrus' failure is only the beginning of Plato's history of Persia's decline. Plato then highlights that Darius succeeded Cyrus (rather than Cyrus' own sons) principally because he was not "*reared luxuriously*".⁷⁵¹ It is because Darius shared a similar education to Cyrus that he was also successful. While he did not bring the same level of equality or freedom as Cyrus did, there was certainly an attempt.⁷⁵² Following his account of Darius, Plato's Athenian then narrates the rule of Xerxes and again underlines the leader's education stating:

*"O Darius"—for it is thus one may rightly address the father—"how is it that you have ignored the blunder of Cyrus, and have reared up Xerxes in just the same habits of life in which Cyrus reared Cambyses?" And Xerxes, being the product of the same training, ended by repeating almost exactly the misfortunes of Cambyses.*⁷⁵³

By portraying Xerxes as an uneducated tyrant, incapable of controlling his wild and self-serving desires, Plato aimed to show how education could be eroded over subsequent generations of rulers. Plato's conclusion to his Cyrus narrative is explicitly reminding the reader of his overall aims stating: "*So let this be the conclusion of our account of the Persian empire, and how its present evil administration is due to excess of slavery and of despotism.*".⁷⁵⁴ Cyrus is not a philosopher king, but he understands how to be ruled, and how to rule others. He understands moderation and incorporates some typically democratic values into his monarchy. The reason this mixed constitution is so important is because they allowed him to create an environment where these lessons can be spread

⁷⁵¹ Pl. *Laws*. 3.695c.

⁷⁵² Pl. *Laws*. 3.695d. Specifically Darius is said to have been raised with a not thoroughly pampered παιδεία, unlike Cyrus' sons.

⁷⁵³ Pl. *Laws*. 3.695d-e.

⁷⁵⁴ Pl. *Laws*. 3.685a.

to the society as a whole. Plato demonstrates that each successor to Cyrus took a step further and further away from these principles. This was not because they disagreed with his policies, but because their flawed education left them ignorant to a human flaw that needed to be actively resisted.

2.2.2. Traditional Athens

Having outlined the Persian decline, Plato's Athenian then states that he will assess Athens in a like-minded manner.⁷⁵⁵ Again Plato aims to demonstrate a fall from virtue, due to a failure to properly educate the subsequent generation. The 'good' democracy will never be as virtuous as the good monarchy, but Plato certainly acknowledges merit in the isonomic constitution Athens supported during the Persian wars. As he states:

We ought to examine next, in like manner, the Attic polity, and show how complete liberty, unfettered by any authority, is vastly inferior to a moderate form of government under elected magistrates. At the time when the Persians made their onslaught upon the Greeks—and indeed one might say on nearly all the nations of Europe—we Athenians had an ancient constitution,⁷⁵⁶ and magistrates based on a fourfold grading; and we had Reverence, which acted as a kind of queen, causing us to live as the willing slaves of the existing laws. Moreover, the vastness of the Persian armament that threatened us both by sea and land, by the desperate fear it inspired, bound us still more closely in the bonds of slavery to our rulers and our laws...⁷⁵⁷

He describes that while free, the Athenians placed themselves willingly under the laws and even that the laws themselves acted as a 'queen'.⁷⁵⁸ As Metcalf

⁷⁵⁵ Pl. *Laws*. 3.698a-b.

⁷⁵⁶ This would appear to be a reference to the laws of Solon.

⁷⁵⁷ Pl. *Laws*. 3.698a-c.

⁷⁵⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 3.698b-c.

highlights,⁷⁵⁹ Plato encourages the idea that individuals “*should instead always pursue someone who is better than himself, without putting any feeling of shame in the way.*”⁷⁶⁰ This notion of voluntary slavery to law has also been highlighted by Schofield and I would add that there is a parallel here to Xenophon’s willing obedience that we assessed above.⁷⁶¹ Moreover, it was the threat of Persian invasion that drove the citizens into the arms of its leaders.⁷⁶² This introduction of what made traditional Athens a good democracy is important for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates a common concern for Plato, and his contemporaries, that citizens must be willing to be ruled.⁷⁶³ This leads us onto the second observation of this passage, that the proximity of war with Persia was relevant to encourage citizens to pursue patriotic ends, rather than their own benefit. This should be seen to refer to Plato’s principal issue with democratic constitutions, namely, that freedom is left unbridled, permitting individuals to pursue their own needs rather than the needs of the state.

Just as Isocrates tries to advocate a policy of Panhellenism through war with Asia, Plato makes it quite clear in the subsequent passages that Athenian citizens were driven together through the fear that they must face Persia alone. His Athenian states:

*So all this created in them a state of friendliness one towards another—both the fear which then possessed them, and that begotten of the past, which they had acquired by their subjection to the former laws—the fear to which, in our previous discussions, we have often given the name of “reverence,” saying that a man must be subject to this if he is to be good.*⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁵⁹ Metcalf, 2013, 122-3.

⁷⁶⁰ Pl. *Laws*. 732b.

⁷⁶¹ Schofield, 2010, 25. See also chapter three on Xenophon and willing obedience.

⁷⁶² Pl. *Laws*. 3.698b.

⁷⁶³ This notion is picked up by both Xenophon (Xen, *Mem*, 4.6.12) and Isocrates (Isoc. *Nicocles*. 24), but also within Plato’s description of Cyrus’ education, in that he must learn how to be ruled as well as how to rule: Pl. *Laws*. 643.

⁷⁶⁴ Pl. *Laws*. 699c-d.

Plato's Athenian goes on to state openly that if it had not been for this fear
*"...they would never have united in self-defence, nor would they have defended their temples and tombs and fatherland, and their relatives and friends as well".*⁷⁶⁵ While Plato is clearly interested in the strengths of democracy and of a mixed constitution, we should remember that Plato is fundamentally opposed to many of the realities of a democratic constitution. Nevertheless, this 'ancestral constitution' that existed at the start of the fifth century, is seen as a good democracy. It is unclear exactly which Athenian constitution Plato is trying to pay tribute. While references to the Persian Wars imply Cleisthenes' constitution was the focus, Plato does not seem interested in historical accuracy here. Instead, like Isocrates, Plato is more interested in reflecting his own ideas of good virtues and customs onto the past.⁷⁶⁶ It clearly pains Plato to say positive comments about a democratic society, as he feels the need to fill the account with conditions and exceptions that portray the good democracy as a fleeting, chance happening. It is nevertheless, a 'good' democracy, featuring willing obedience, and a widespread dedication to the polis.⁷⁶⁷

As he did with Persia, Plato now describes how Athens failed to educate the next generation in the same virtues that made traditional Athens a good democracy. To demonstrate this, Plato first turns to music, arguing that the failure to properly regulate the practice resulted in individuals becoming corrupted and unable to moderate their desires. He states:

...it was a rule made by those in control of education that they themselves should listen throughout in silence, while the children and their ushers and the general crowd were kept in order by the discipline of the rod. In the matter of music the populace willingly submitted to orderly control and abstained from outrageously judging by clamour; but later on, with the progress of time, there

⁷⁶⁵ Pl. *Laws*. 699d.

⁷⁶⁶ See chapter four above.

⁷⁶⁷ Morgan, 2003, 269-70.

*arose as leaders of unmusical illegality poets who, though by nature poetical, were ignorant of what was just and lawful in music.*⁷⁶⁸

Here again we see the erosion of education, though this time it comes from corruption rather than negligence. Music (along with theatre and dance) played a central role to the education and expression of identity within a polis,⁷⁶⁹ yet Plato is constantly fearful that the use of any modes that did not support civic virtues could undermine and corrupt the youth.⁷⁷⁰

Again, we must draw attention to the fact that it was the teachers that failed to properly moderate musical freedom, and that this failure was born out of their own ignorance. Their failure to teach the subsequent generation resulted in an unregulated spirit,⁷⁷¹ or in the words of Plato's Athenian:

*By compositions of such a character, set to similar words, they bred in the populace a spirit of lawlessness in regard to music, and the effrontery of supposing themselves capable of passing judgment on it.*⁷⁷²

This then is what Plato describes as a θεατροκρατία, (quite literally *theatreocracy*)⁷⁷³ a rule of an ignorant audience that has been persuaded by corrupted arts that they ought to object to their leaders, laws and customs in the name of freedom. This notion is an interesting development from my conclusions from previous chapters. Rather than the theatre being a place of education, here Plato is suggesting the theatre has become a place of dis-education and misinformation. As Plato outlined in the *Republic*, freedom was an important virtue for a society but too much of it created impulsive chaos. For Plato, these arts were a means to consolidate and educate but also a means to corrupt.

⁷⁶⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 3.700c.

⁷⁶⁹ Griffith, 2013, 17-18.

⁷⁷⁰ Pl. *Laws*. 2.668.

⁷⁷¹ See Chapter five on Plato's three-part soul and the role of spirit.

⁷⁷² Pl. *Laws*. 3700c-d.

⁷⁷³ Pl. *Laws*. 701a.

To summarise this section, we should not underestimate the historical study that Plato embarks upon in his book three. Farrar concludes that the primary lesson Plato intends us to take from the *Laws* is similar to that of Thucydides; that humanity possesses an untamed and rebellious human condition.⁷⁷⁴ Certainly, as we have seen, Plato depicts society in a constant effort to avoid falling into chaos and injustice. What this thesis would add, however, is that education is specifically the means by which a constitution can endure. In every case study Plato chooses to examine, he proposed that it was ignorance that caused the constitution to decline. Plato's plan for Magnesia and his key to good law-making are based around the need to take all precautions necessary to ensure the leader/s successors are sufficiently educated.⁷⁷⁵ Understanding how Plato intends to cultivate that education will be our next question. For now, we can conclude that the fall of a good constitution is not only inevitable, but due to a specific failure to sufficiently educate the next generation of leaders and citizens. In this manner, Plato's history is less a history of constitutions and more a history of failure to control the human condition.

2.3. Education within the *Laws*

By assessing Plato's *Laws* as a work of historical analysis, as well as political theory, we have been able to understand education's role as a preserver. This section will demonstrate that Plato is not restricted to the distant past to form his history, but that he also includes contemporary history. That education is linked to a constitution's ability to survive can be seen from the very start of the *Laws*. The Athenian stranger is clear that he has considerable respect for the constitutions of Sparta and Crete.⁷⁷⁶ Yet he focuses his praise

⁷⁷⁴ Though I would argue there are notable differences between Thucydides and Plato's approach to the human condition.

⁷⁷⁵ Klosko, 2007, 218.

⁷⁷⁶ Pl. *Laws* 1.631.

and criticisms upon the constitution's ability to address this human condition. In his praise of Sparta's constitution Plato's Athenian states:

The rules about pleasures at Sparta seem to me the best in the world. For our law banished entirely from the land that institution which gives the most occasion for men to fall into excessive pleasures and riotous and follies of every description; neither in the country nor in the cities controlled by Spartiates is a drinking-club to be seen nor any of the practices which belong to such and foster to the utmost all kinds of pleasure.⁷⁷⁷

This is genuine praise for the Spartan laws and specifically their ability to resist the dangers of desire. Plato's Athenian also sets himself up in the dialogue to offer his own analysis on Spartan legislation stating:

O Stranger of Lacedaemon, all such indulgences are praiseworthy where there exists a strain of firm moral fibre, but where this is relaxed, they are quite stupid... So let us deal more fully with the subject of drunkenness in general for it is a practice of no slight importance, and it requires no mean legislator to understand it. I am now referring not to the drinking or non-drinking of wine generally, but to drunkenness pure and simple, and the question is—ought we to deal with it as the Scythians and Persians do and the Carthaginians also, and Celts, Iberians and Thracians, who are all warlike races, or as you Spartans do...⁷⁷⁸

Here Plato acknowledges that while drinking parties are prone to a corruption of the participants, Plato also highlights that other, historically warlike constitutions, also included drinking parties. Plato is trying to demonstrate that a conservative abstinence from a source of corruption is not the only answer to educate a society,⁷⁷⁹ an interesting argument when considering the conclusions from the city of pigs in the *Republic*.⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁷ Pl. *Laws*. 1.637a.

⁷⁷⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 1.637b-e.

⁷⁷⁹ Bobonich, 2002, 403.

⁷⁸⁰ See chapter five on the city of pigs.

Importantly, these descriptions should be seen as part of the same historical analysis that Plato engages in with Athens and Persia, a point Plato's Athenian makes himself when in the following passage he replies to Megillus stating:

Megillus: But we, my good Sir, when we take arms in our hands, put all these people to rout.

Athenian: Say not so, my dear Sir; for there have been, in fact, in the past and there will be in the future many a flight and many a pursuit which are past explaining, so that victory or defeat in battle could never be called a decisive, but rather a questionable test of the goodness or badness of an institution. Larger states, for example, are victorious in battle over smaller states, and we find the Syracusans subjugating the Locrians, who are reputed to have been the best-governed of the peoples in that part of the world: and the Athenians the Ceians,—and we could find countless other instances of the same kind.⁷⁸¹

Plato here is using the same historical technique that was demonstrated to be present within book three. He is using his near history to assess constitutions on their ability to protect against this human condition. We should remember, as Bartels demonstrates, that books one, two and twelve are notably distinctive from the rest of the *Laws*. Yet I argue themes of constitutional analysis continue.⁷⁸² The primary notion that Plato proposes in these passages is that civic practices, such as symposia and music, can help to create an environment conducive to education, and even educate directly. Yet if these practices are unregulated and become corrupted, then they may actively encourage their audience to move away from the society's values.⁷⁸³

⁷⁸¹ Pl. *Laws*. 1.638a-b.

⁷⁸² Bartels, 2017, 77.

⁷⁸³ Pl. *Laws*. 700-701. As we saw above, Plato believed it was partly the corruption of music and theatre that led to an Athenian breakdown in the latter 5th and fourth centuries.

From this assessment of near-contemporary constitutions, Plato argues that societies should be dedicated to the education of their children “*from infancy*”.⁷⁸⁴ As we saw in his argument in book three, Plato looks to education to maintain the virtues of a constitution and thereby prevent the society’s fall. Plato’s Athenian is explicit in this definition of education stating:

*First and foremost, education, we say, consists in that right nurture which most strongly draws the soul of the child when at play to a love for that pursuit of which, when he becomes a man, he must possess a perfect mastery... the education we speak of is training from childhood in goodness, which makes a man eagerly desirous of becoming a perfect citizen, understanding how both to rule and be ruled righteously.*⁷⁸⁵

These are precisely the virtues that Plato will praise in Cyrus’ good monarchy and Athens’ good, traditional democracy: firstly, to learn how to rule, and to be ruled in turn;⁷⁸⁶ secondly, a patriotic devotion to the state⁷⁸⁷ as portrayed through citizenship. This definition is crucial to the argument of this chapter because it demonstrates that law had to actively teach citizens the virtues of leadership in order to preserve justice.

Plato pays considerable attention to the youth of Athens. Both the *Republic* and the *Laws* observed ignorance within the up-coming generation to be the source of the constitutions’ destruction. Plato sees the uneducated youth as unpredictable. He describes them as dangerously innocent, prone to corruption from anything that is not supportive of the state.⁷⁸⁸ As the child enters adolescence and early adulthood, even if they have been educated successfully, Plato fears that they are still too naturally aggressive. Plato’s Athenian describes them stating:

⁷⁸⁴ Pl. *Laws*. 1.643b.

⁷⁸⁵ Pl. *Laws*. 1.643c-d.

⁷⁸⁶ Mitchell & Melville, 2012, 92.

⁷⁸⁷ Pl. *Laws*. 694b.

⁷⁸⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 2.666a.

*Shall we not pass a law that, in the first place, no children under eighteen may touch wine at all, teaching that it is wrong to pour fire upon fire either in body or in soul, before they set about tackling their real work, and thus guarding against the excitable disposition of the young? ...But when a man has reached the age of forty, he may join in the convivial gatherings and invoke Dionysus, above all other gods, inviting his presence at the rite (which is also the recreation) of the elders, which he bestowed on mankind as a medicine potent against the crabbedness of old age, that thereby we men may renew our youth, and that, through forgetfulness of care, the temper of our souls...*⁷⁸⁹

The portrayal of youth as full of “fire” with a “temper” within their souls, creates a vivid portrayal of the precariousness of any constitution. What is curious, is that Plato encourages elders to drink heavily in order to relight that youthful fire. For Plato, this fire is dangerous but when harnessed properly can be used to drive the society to greater consolidation and away from injustice. The context of this passage considers how best to encourage patriotic songs pressing the value of music as a positive educational tool.⁷⁹⁰ Descriptions of the dangers of the untrained youth, can be seen in Plato’s description of Xerxes in book three.⁷⁹¹ Xerxes is described as hot-headed, leading an aggressive and foolhardy invasion of Greece. The youth of a society represents, for Plato, a wild and volatile section of society. This description can be seen in the final, foreboding word from Plato’s *Alcibiades* where his Socrates states: “*I should like to think you will continue to do so; yet I am apprehensive, not from any distrust of your nature, but in view of the might of the state, lest it overcome both me and you.*”⁷⁹² This passage reads as a double prophecy, both detailing that the ignorance of Alcibiades will overcome him, but also that the ignorance of the state will overcome Socrates. For Plato then, the proper training and education of the young are the fundamental tasks for any lawmaker in order to maintain their constitution’s customs and virtues from those who do not fully understand.

⁷⁸⁹ Pl. *Laws*. 2.666.

⁷⁹⁰ Griffith, 2013, 20-40.

⁷⁹¹ Pl. *Laws*. 3.695d-e.

⁷⁹² Pl. *Alcibiades*, 1.135.

In summary, this section has argued that Plato engages in historical investigations, from the distant, mythological past, to his contemporary near history. This was used to demonstrate a self-destructive human condition that will ultimately undermine any constitution, no matter how virtuous. The only goal of a constitution is to maintain its virtues and customs for as long as possible. This section demonstrated that for Plato, the only means a society has to preserve itself, is to actively educate the next generation. In addition, I demonstrated that this history of education is relevant to a larger section of the *Laws* than scholars normally account for, applying to the contemporary history of books one and two along with the distant history of book three. While Plato's claims are solidly based in political theory, his initial writings are supported and dedicated to serious historical study. This study describes a human condition that continuously undermines the virtues needed for a good society. Plato aimed to design a constitution that takes the best from Cyrus' monarchy and the democracy of ancestral Athens, a society that is dedicated to educating its youth, both through instruction and by creating an environment in which wisdom can flourish. As I will now consider, it is within a state's laws that Plato believes this goal is achievable.

3. Learning and ruling through law

The conclusion of Plato's historical study poses the task of designing a society that was capable of enduring where Persia and Athens failed. To this end, Plato proposes that by focusing on a constitution's laws, he could design an environment where education could flourish.⁷⁹³ This wisdom would then encourage the citizens of Magnesia away from overindulgence or becoming corrupted by personal desire. As we discussed above, Plato has noteworthy respect for the Spartan and Cretan constitutions, because of their ability to suppress this damaging human nature. While they appear overzealous and

⁷⁹³ Bobonich, 2002, 90-3.

restrictive, Plato acknowledges their effectiveness and credits their legal obedience for the longevity of their constitutions.⁷⁹⁴ Yet these constitutions were still seen to be flawed because they overlooked the need for freedom and willing obedience.⁷⁹⁵ Instead, Plato argues, law should be used to moderate indulgence and freedom rather than enforce abstinence.

As mentioned above, cultural practices such as music, theatre or symposia offer an opportunity to educate, but could also become corrupting if they are mismanaged. This need for regulation can be seen clearly within Plato's restrictions on music, the practice said to be at the start of a child's education in book two.⁷⁹⁶ Plato's understanding of music as a potential corruptor is based on an acknowledgement that music is capable of stirring emotion more than any other art:

Let us not hesitate, then, to mention the point wherein lies the difficulty of music. Just because it is more talked about than any other form of representation, it needs more caution than any. The man who blunders in this art will do himself the greatest harm, by welcoming base morals; and, moreover, his blunder is very hard to discern, inasmuch as our poets are inferior as poets to the Muses themselves. For the Muses would never blunder so far as to assign a feminine tune and gesture to verses composed for men, or to fit the rhythms of captives and slaves to gestures framed for free men, or conversely, after constructing the rhythms and gestures of free men, to assign to the rhythms a tune or verses of an opposite style.

Music, for Plato, is a means to teach identity, culture and social homogeneity, as Griffith demonstrates.⁷⁹⁷ It is due to music's importance that Plato feels the need to regulate it so fervently. Plato's description ought to remind us of his portrayal of 'youthful fire', that hot-headed and passionate drive. Music, like

⁷⁹⁴ Pl. *Laws*. 1.637a.

⁷⁹⁵ Though as we saw with Plato's city of pigs, abstinence will still play an important role within both Callipolis and Magnesia.

⁷⁹⁶ Pl. *Laws*. 2.666a.

⁷⁹⁷ Griffith, 2013, 17-18.

drinking parties, can enflame these passions; encouraging individuals to respond with anger or with pacifism. There is a danger then of pouring “... *fire upon fire either in body or in soul...*”.⁷⁹⁸ Plato is as wary of the mismanagement of music as a mismanagement of alcohol. Both provoke participants to break from reason and engage in desire. While there are times where desires ought to be enflamed,⁷⁹⁹ the laws must closely regulate these arts to protect the society from corruption. Yet Russon and Bartels rightly point out that Plato also sees music to be one of the best ways to teach children about order and harmony, making it a clear example of a discipline that must be incorporated in society providing it is well regulated.⁸⁰⁰ Specifically then, Plato intends music to be free from foreign or innovative influences, that Griffith, ash shows, risk corrupting the morality of the citizens.⁸⁰¹ This need for guidelines is particularly relevant when considering the upbringing of children, youths and young adults. It is within the regulation of these practices that law becomes so important.

Law, in a restrictive capacity, returns in book seven, where Plato again outlines in detail, the fierce regulations that must be placed on children’s games. From 793-799 Plato explains how, from infancy a child should be encouraged and scolded. Children up to the age of six would be gathered together and their play would then be supervised by women chosen from each tribe by the *nomophylakes*.⁸⁰² It is worth remembering that this is a legal regulation, as Plato makes it clear that disobedience among the citizen children could even go to trial before the city stewards. In the subsequent passages, Plato details how youths would train, primarily in martial or gymnastic exercises.⁸⁰³ To the modern reader, these passages appear to be concerned with education, rather than legislation, and perhaps the ancient reader would be inclined to the same conclusion. Yet this is exactly the point. The importance of

⁷⁹⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 2.666a.

⁷⁹⁹ Pl. *Laws*. 2.666c.

⁸⁰⁰ Bartels, 2017, 108; Russon, 2013, 60-3.

⁸⁰¹ Griffith, 2013, 16. Griffith particularly draws attention to Plato’s avoidance of the Dorian mode and certain foreign instruments.

⁸⁰² Pl. *Laws*. 7.794b-c.

⁸⁰³ Pl. *Laws*. 7.795-6.

education is so paramount that legislation needs to be used as a tool to support that learning.

In a similar fashion, Bartels has drawn attention to the connection between symposia and education within the *Laws*. Based primarily on discussions in books one and two, Bartels argues that Plato is trying to design a regulated symposium where citizens can learn virtue.⁸⁰⁴ I broadly agree with Bartels here but would draw attention to the primary need to teach citizens the virtues and customs of that society, rather than any particular focus on Magnesia needing to mirror a symposium. Where I particularly agree with Bartels is with the idea that law can help shape an environment of education. One of the clearest examples of this can be seen within the tuition of children. Plato makes it clear that it is within children's games that legislation is most important.

I assert that there exists in every State a complete ignorance about children's games—how that they are of decisive importance for legislation, as determining whether the laws enacted are to be permanent or not. For when the program of games is prescribed and secures that the same children always play the same games and delight in the same toys in the same way and under the same conditions, it allows the real and serious laws also to remain undisturbed; but when these games vary and suffer innovations, amongst other constant alterations the children are always shifting their fancy from one game to another, so that neither in respect of their own bodily gestures nor in respect of their equipment have they any fixed and acknowledged standard of propriety and impropriety; but the man they hold in special honour is he who is always innovating or introducing some novel device in the matter of form or colour or something of the sort; whereas it would be perfectly true to say that a State can have no worse pest than a man of that description, since he privily alters the characters of the

⁸⁰⁴ Bartels, 2017, 99-102.

*young, and causes them to condemn what is old and esteem what is new. And I repeat again that there is no greater mischief a State can suffer than such a dictum and doctrine.*⁸⁰⁵

Within this passage, we see Plato's fear of corruption to be driven particularly by unregulated innovation.⁸⁰⁶ It is the same concern with innovation that Lutz sees driving Plato's regulation of music.⁸⁰⁷ In this way, while Plato is clearly referring to a system of education, these passages are actually a description of legislation. We are reminded here that Magnesia is being designed, from the ground up, to protect against the human condition, and any corruption of the status quo. The primary function of law was not punitive, but a means to provide an environment capable of cultivating education.

3.2. Law as an educator

Separating education and law in Magnesia is impossible. The previous section sought to demonstrate that law was the first line of defence in protecting against the human condition, but this is not the whole story. As we have seen, Law must act in a supportive role to help teach and cultivate a common dedication to the polis over the individual. The ability to teach the following generation the virtues and customs of the polis is what will enable longevity. Law cannot rule without contradicting the idea of willing obedience. Citizens must first learn to moderate their own desires and strive toward the common good of the polis. If this education is successful, punitive law would become unnecessary. To demonstrate this, I will show how law acted as Plato's primary means actively to educate the population of Magnesia through creating an environment conducive to learning. It is law specifically that is responsible for this education. At the start of book nine Plato's Athenian states that it is shameful "*to make all those laws that we are proposing to make in a State like ours, which is, as we say, to be well managed and furnished with all that is right*

⁸⁰⁵ Pl. *Laws*. 797.

⁸⁰⁶ See Russon, 2013, 65.

⁸⁰⁷ Lutz, 2015, 102.

for the practice of virtue".⁸⁰⁸ As Schofield highlights,⁸⁰⁹ law for Plato is not just a means to enforce virtuous behaviour, but to act as a guide. The idea that law is needed to prevent criminal activity should be unnecessary if the citizenry have been sufficiently educated.

In a similar example, law must educate an individual away from their chaotic and untamed nature, and toward the needs of the polis.

*It is really necessary for men to make themselves laws and to live according to laws, or else to differ not at all from the most savage of beasts. The reason thereof is this,—that no man's nature is naturally able both to perceive what is of benefit to the civic life of men and, perceiving it, to be alike able and willing to practice what is best. For, in the first place, it is difficult to perceive that a true civic art necessarily cares for the public, not the private, interest,—for the public interest bind States together, whereas the private interest rends them asunder,—and to perceive also that it benefits both public and private interests alike when the public interest, rather than the private, is well enacted.*⁸¹⁰

This is a key passage in demonstrating the need for education. Plato argues that “no man’s nature is naturally able ... to perceive what is of benefit to the civic life of men”. Everyone, no matter how naturally gifted, must learn the needs and customs of their society in order to best serve them. Furthermore, Plato places law as society’s primary means to encourage this education.⁸¹¹

⁸⁰⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 9.853b.

⁸⁰⁹ Schofield, 2010, 23.

⁸¹⁰ Pl. *Laws*. 8.874e-875a.

⁸¹¹ Klosko, 2007, 224.

Similarly, Plato's biggest criticism of Spartan and Cretan legislation is that it neglected to educate the citizens in moderation. Plato's Athenian describes in book six how law must be used to prepare its citizens to struggle against their wild, self-serving and desire-driven human condition, stating:

*You alone of Greeks and barbarians, so far as I can discover, possess a lawgiver who charged you to abstain from the greatest of pleasures and amusements and taste them not; but concerning pains and fears, as we said before, ... anyone who shuns them continuously from childhood onward, when confronted with unavoidable hardships and fears and pains, will be put to flight by the men who are trained in such things, and will become their slave. Now I presume that this same lawgiver should have held the same view about pleasures as well...*⁸¹²

The Stranger argues that while Spartan and Cretan law ensures courage is fostered above all else, they fail to cultivate moderation, instead, choosing to abstain completely. While legislation is seen to be chiefly responsible for the education of its citizens, Plato is simply adding here that this legislation is incomplete. As we saw above, Plato frequently places legislation alongside education.⁸¹³ It is even spelt out directly within his definition of education.⁸¹⁴ Plato understands that law must be primarily concerned with supporting education. Without it, law cannot rule while maintaining willing obedience.

Despite his extensive criticism of unfettered liberty, Plato did want his city to be free. He sees it as a principal goal of a mixed constitution, to have the patriotism or common dedication of a good monarchy, combined with the freedom and willing obedience of a good democracy. This mixed constitution is also present within his *Laws*. As we have seen, law acts principally as a means to maintain and regulate education. In doing so, it becomes an educational tool in itself. The laws that Plato describe in Sparta and Crete were ultimately based

⁸¹² Pl. *Laws*. 1.635.

⁸¹³ Pl. *Laws*. 7.795-6.

⁸¹⁴ Pl. *Laws*. 659d.

on a threat of punishment.⁸¹⁵ This is an interpretation of law that would be familiar to every thinker or reader at the time, and would even correlate with our perception of law today. Yet the legislation that Plato proposes is very different. While it never loses its ability to punish, the laws of Magnesia are designed to encourage and persuade rather than to enforce. This attitude can be seen most clearly within Plato's analogy of the slave doctor and the free doctor where his Athenian states:

*The slaves are usually doctored by slaves, who either run round the town or wait in their surgeries; and not one of these doctors either gives or receives any account of the several ailments of the various domestics, but prescribes for each what he deems right from experience, just as though he had exact knowledge, and with the assurance of an autocrat; then up he jumps and off he rushes to another sick domestic, and thus he relieves his master in his attendance on the sick. But the free-born doctor is mainly engaged in visiting and treating the ailments of free men, and he does so by investigating them from the commencement and according to the course of nature; he talks with the patient himself and with his friends, and thus both learns himself from the sufferers and imparts instruction to them, so far as possible; and he gives no prescription until he has gained the patient's consent, and only then, while securing the patient's continued docility by means of persuasion...*⁸¹⁶

This much discussed passage,⁸¹⁷ is part of a description of how a lawgiver should impart laws to a society. The principal difference between the two doctors is the need to persuade the patient to do what is in their own best interests, as Schofield highlights.⁸¹⁸ Lutz and Bobonich add that Plato uses the above passage to demonstrate the need for supplementary reasoning to be used alongside the law.⁸¹⁹ I argue that law is portrayed, not as a punitive

⁸¹⁵ Griffith, 2013, 30-40. Although, as Griffith highlights, we should see the depiction of Crete as more an Athenian perception of the island and not a point of historical accuracy.

⁸¹⁶ Pl. *Laws*. 720.

⁸¹⁷ Bartels, 2017, 138; Schofield, 2010, 26; Lutz, 2015, 94.

⁸¹⁸ Schofield, 2010, 26.

⁸¹⁹ Lutz, 2015, 94-5; Bobonich, 2002, 99.

enforcement, but specifically as a means to persuade the individual to do the right thing. Only when the doctor has been successful in his persuasion, will he treat the patient. Plato is juggling two needs of a society. Firstly, as we see in this passage, law needs to be an educator and a persuader rather than a threat, so as to maintain willing obedience within the society. The second, as we saw above, is that all citizens need to understand how to rule, and how to be ruled in turn.⁸²⁰ Through a combination of these methods, Plato believes individuals will be able to interact properly with a city's laws. Plato is not suggesting that law is only suggestive, nor that it is always a threat. As Lutz highlights,⁸²¹ Plato acknowledges that some individuals will only obey the law through the threat of punitive action or violence.⁸²² The wise lawgiver should use a combination of both in order to properly encourage the population toward a just, and thereby happy polis, defending against corruption while maintaining liberty.

3.3. Persuasive law

This notion that legislation is primarily designed to educate and persuade rather than to punish, is key to understanding Plato's use of law.⁸²³ This section will argue that the *Laws* proposes a uniquely different and reformed use of law than seen in any of his previous works, or within works of his contemporaries. Unlike the *Statesman* and the *Republic* where law acts as a way to enforce an environment that can allow education and virtue to flourish, the *Laws* uses legislation as a more active, persuasive, and encouraging method of education. As Irwin argues, it is not enough for a citizen to be moral through learning the laws they must learn the grounds for the laws; what they protect against, and how they allow victory over oneself.⁸²⁴ What scholars have overlooked is how Plato incorporates, not just written law, but unwritten law and custom into

⁸²⁰ Bartels, 2017, 138. Bartels argues that law makes both the doctor and the patient a better learner by understanding each other.

⁸²¹ Lutz, 2015, 93.

⁸²² Pl. *Laws*. 718b.

⁸²³ Schofield, 2010, 24; Rowe, 2008, 246-7. Rowe specifically draws attention to the role of Law in Plato's previous dialogues, arguing that law was the only means for a society to maintain virtue without an idealised statesman or philosopher king. I argue the *Laws* is a decisive break from Plato's original definition.

⁸²⁴ Irwin, 2010, 97.

Magnesian legislation. Plato is actively playing on the legal uncertainties that plagued Athens in the late fifth and fourth centuries.⁸²⁵ Plato designs a *nomos* that is so universal and in tune with a society's needs that it can be treated like an artificial natural law. Plato uses this middle-ground between custom and nature to influence the population while avoiding the threat of force that is implied by conventional written law. In other words, Plato attempts to create a form of law that operates like natural law, yet has the social awareness of *nomos*. In this way Plato rarely feels the need to resort to written law and the threat that inherently comes with punitive legislation. In fact, the very need for written law implies the failure of persuasive law.

I argue that scholars have missed the way Plato deliberately plays into the grey area between law and nature and uses it to educate his society while maintaining liberty. This break from traditional understandings on law is not lost on Plato, who proudly highlights that the law he is describing is new, and everything that came before this work was but a prelude to him:

In the time we have been talking of nothing but laws, yet it is only recently that we have begun, as it seems, to utter laws, and what went before was all simply preludes to laws. What is my object in saying this? It is to explain that all utterances and vocal expressions have preludes and tunings-up (as one might call them), which provide a kind of artistic preparation which assists towards the further development of the subject. Indeed, we have examples before us of preludes, admirably elaborated, in those prefixed to that class of lyric ode called the "nome," and to musical compositions of every description. But for the "nomes" (i.e. laws) which are real nomes—and which we designate "political"—no one has ever yet uttered a prelude, or composed or published one, just as though there were no such thing. But our present conversation proves, in my opinion, that there is such a thing; and it struck me

⁸²⁵ As we have touched upon in previous chapters Athenian use of written law as an extension of populist decision-making in the assembly led to a reform of legal practice at the end of the fifth century.

just now that the laws we were then stating are something more than simply double, and consist of these two things combined—law, and prelude to law.

Here Plato ‘modestly’ explains that he is embarking on a new, and unprecedented use of law, seen, by Plato at least, as his greatest innovation. This innovation is specifically the use of custom to actively educate the population in virtue. Plato states this intention quite clearly arguing that: “*Thus much at least you are quite right in saying—that public opinion has a surprising influence, when there is no attempt by anybody ever to breathe a word that contradicts the law*”.⁸²⁶ Plato is suggesting that by influencing a society’s *nomos*, he can influence and regulate without resorting to written law, law that carries with it a threat of punishment. By this method Plato aims to avoid the slavish obedience to oppressive law that he observes in Sparta and Crete⁸²⁷ and encourages a willing obedience through creating a positive status quo within the society’s unwritten laws and customs.

This can be seen again within a previous passage, where Plato’s Athenian takes inspiration from natural law stating:

*Athenian stranger: The sentence that these acts are by no means holy, but hated of God and most shamefully shameful. And does not the reason lie in this, that nobody speaks of them otherwise, but every one of us, from the day of his birth, hears this opinion expressed always and everywhere, not only in comic speech, but often also in serious tragedy—as when there is brought on to the stage a Thyestes or an Oedipus, or a Macareus having secret intercourse with a sister, and all these are seen inflicting death upon themselves willingly as a punishment for their sins?*⁸²⁸

The Athenian stranger offers an ideal example of how a society could regulate against certain behaviour without the need for explicit legislation. Specifically,

⁸²⁶ Pl. *Laws*. 8.838c.

⁸²⁷ Griffith, 2013, 44. Griffith highlights the Cretan focus on continuity and tradition over innovation.

⁸²⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 8.838c.

Plato highlights that from birth, an individual will be raised with these attitudes. They would be reinforced within the theatre, and encourage individuals to punish themselves if they ever act contrary to those customs, negating the need for the offence to be actually written into law. It is “*public opinion*” that encourages the individual to live a virtuous life, not an obedience to legislation. Particular attention should be drawn to the stranger’s terminology, that those guilty of incest “*inflict death upon themselves willingly as a punishment for their sins*”. Plato’s use of punitive law is sparse and appears to be a last resort.⁸²⁹ The choice to use incest as an example is also interesting because when contrasted with Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, incest is used to demonstrate the effects of disobeying natural law.⁸³⁰ I argue this is very telling as to Plato’s use of law. He aims to create an artificial form of natural law that is self-maintaining. The need to resort to punitive law is an acknowledgement that the system of education had already failed. As has been highlighted by Bartels and Lutz, Plato is not designing a strict code of laws, they are vague and guiding, designed as a middle ground between a reprimand and a law code.⁸³¹ Plato is proposing here that if the lawmaker is clever enough, he need not make any punitive laws at all, relying entirely upon the society’s public opinion and common moralities to educate an individual into virtue.

4. A new form of philosopher rulers

So far, this chapter has demonstrated how challenges, inherent in constitutional design, might be overcome through education. Law was shown to act as one of the primary educators within Plato’s Magnesia, but there are other crucial mechanisms that help create an environment where learning can flourish. It is now worth turning our attention to the role of meritocracy, and the power of the magistrates within Plato’s *Laws*. In this section, the chapter will demonstrate that while the higher echelons of Magnesian society would have more political power, Plato only tasked them with legal maintenance, and not

⁸²⁹ Laks, 2008, 265. Laks argues that ‘real’ punitive legislation is rarely used by Plato.

⁸³⁰ Xen. *Mem.* 4.4.19-22.

⁸³¹ See Bartels, 2017, 133; Lutz, 2015, 94.

directly with ruling. I argue that we should interpret these magistrates as advisers, rather than rulers in their own right.

4.1. Mixed constitution

Plato's understanding of a mixed constitution is not as simple as splicing together monarchy and democracy, or even the Spartan and Athenian constitutions.⁸³² Plato's historical study in book three, outlines the virtues of a good monarchy and a good democracy. It is these virtues that he intends to combine, rather than a hybrid constitutional structure. For the most part, Magnesian socio-political structure mirrors what Plato saw as the traditional Athenian democracy, a democracy that leans into social division and hierarchy rather than the "unbridled liberty"⁸³³ of the late fifth and fourth century. In order to include a meritocracy within a democracy, Plato needed to reconcile his definition of equality.⁸³⁴ To do this, Plato attempts to redefine equality, specifically he states:

For there are two kinds of equality which, though identical in name, are often almost opposites in their practical results. The one of these any State or lawgiver is competent to apply in the assignment of honours,—namely, the equality determined by measure, weight and number,—by simply employing the lot to give even results in the distributions; but the truest and best form of equality is not an easy thing for everyone to discern. It is the judgment of Zeus, and

⁸³² Hahm, 2009, 181-185. See Hahm on mixed constitution in Plato.

⁸³³ Pl. *Laws*. 700.

⁸³⁴ Russon, 2013, 70. Russon here sees a contradiction within Plato's *Laws*, arguing that the meritocracy is at odds with the egalitarian education that is outlined in book seven. I argue that Plato never loses his meritocratic attitudes and while he stresses the importance of educating every member of society that does not imply social equality.

*men it never assists save in small measure, but in so far as it does assist either States or individuals...*⁸³⁵

In a fashion almost identical to Isocrates,⁸³⁶ Plato proposes that equality should be defined as giving to each man what he deserves.⁸³⁷ Moreover, Isocrates and Plato all imply that this was the original definition of equality, and that its meaning had been corrupted into the contemporary understanding that everyone should receive an equal share. Scholars have noted the contradictory nature of this meritocratic redefinition of equality, particularly when Plato stresses the need to educate every member of the society.⁸³⁸ Nevertheless, this redefinition is fundamental to the meritocracy of Plato's Magnesia. Without it, he could not justify how an 'equal' society could support a meritocracy that involved a hierarchy based upon education.

The meritocracy that we see within Plato's *Republic* is simple, and familiar to the meritocracies we saw in Isocrates and Xenophon. Those with higher education⁸³⁹ should receive more power so as both to lead the society most effectively, and to act as symbols for others to mirror. What is original for Magnesia, as Bobonich has highlighted, is that every member of the society must receive education.⁸⁴⁰ Yet, Magnesia remains a deeply hierarchical society.⁸⁴¹ Plato's meritocracy was based on the notion that the educated would be constantly be driven toward an ideal of virtue and ruled by the best of that society. This theory falls into a contradiction that Plato highlights at the beginning of the *Republic* and appears to become a debate that persists. In the *Republic's* opening passages, Plato portrays Thrasymachus as aggressively proposing that justice is simply rule by the stronger.⁸⁴² While Plato goes to great length, to explain and define justice, Thrasymachus' argument is a relevant

⁸³⁵ Pl. *Laws*. 757b.

⁸³⁶ See above for Isocrates' attempt to redefine equality.

⁸³⁷ See Schofield, 2010, 24.

⁸³⁸ See Russon, 2013, 70; Bobonich, 2002, 91.

⁸³⁹ By 'higher' education, I specifically mean a superior capacity to achieve 'victory over oneself' through successful education.

⁸⁴⁰ Bobonich, 2002, 91.

⁸⁴¹ Prauscello, 2014, 68.

⁸⁴² Pl. *Rep.* 342e.

concern to any meritocracy. What is stopping Magnesia from confusing justice with the rule of the stronger? In fact, there is a frequent assumption within the contemporary thinkers that military might would logically stem from a wise constitution.⁸⁴³ Xenophon makes this connection quite clearly, suggesting that Cyrus' military success⁸⁴⁴ could be credited to his ability to establish a wise constitution in Persia.⁸⁴⁵ Even Plato in his *Republic* argues that Callipolis will be superior to any outside aggressor even without excessive wealth.⁸⁴⁶ Yet in contrast, Plato's Athenian states in the *Laws* that:

*Say not so, my dear Sir; for there have been, in fact, in the past and there will be in the future many a flight and many a pursuit which are past explaining, so that victory or defeat in battle could never be called a decisive, but rather a questionable, test of the goodness or badness of an institution. Larger States, for example, are victorious in battle over smaller States, and we find the Syracusans subjugating the Locrians, who are reputed to have been the best-governed of the peoples in that part of the world.*⁸⁴⁷

Here Plato steps away from an established assumption: that military prowess is an indication of a well-constructed constitution. Plato's meritocracy is not the rule of the stronger but the rule of the most dedicated. This may be why Plato makes such a point of focusing on willing obedience within the *Laws*, but it is also worth noting that Magnesia's meritocracy is distinctly different to that of Callipolis.

This chapter has demonstrated that education in the *Laws* is designed to resist the human condition and prolong a just society. The aim is not to achieve some ideal of virtue, but it is to reinforce the unique customs and virtues of the

⁸⁴³ See Irwin, 2010, 100.

⁸⁴⁴ See chapter three.

⁸⁴⁵ It is worth noting that Plato also makes a similar reference to Cyrus' military success and the strength of his constitution: Pl. *Laws*. 3.694a-b.

⁸⁴⁶ Pl. *Rep.* 422a-b: As I argued in the previous chapter, I maintain that this is not a serious argument by Plato but an indication that he is focused upon the domestic structure of Callipolis.

⁸⁴⁷ Pl. *Laws*. 1.638a-b.

society.⁸⁴⁸ As a result, the ideal Magnesian citizen needs only to be able to learn the customs of their state, and in turn, successfully teach their children in the same manner. When Plato defines the tests for the magistrates, he states that: “...we must mark out those who are to hold high offices in the State and those who are to hold low offices, after applying in each case an adequate educational test.”⁸⁴⁹ Here when Plato refers to an educational test, he is referring to an individual who fully understands the lessons of the state, not an ideal of virtue. In a similar passage, Plato’s Athenian describes how individuals must be rewarded or criticised stating:

*Along with sacrifices, they must continually devise noble games, to serve as festival-contests, modelled as closely as possible on those of war. At each of these they must distribute prizes and awards of merit, and compose for one another speeches of praise and blame, according to the character each one exhibits not only in the contests, but in his life generally, magnifying him who is accounted most good and blaming him who is not...*⁸⁵⁰

Meritocracy in the *Laws* is based upon an individual’s ability to overcome their own selfish desires and strive to support the virtues and customs of the whole polis.⁸⁵¹ Additionally, Plato also criticises Athens’ dependency on naval power due to the difficulty in praising those who deserve praise.⁸⁵² In short, Plato’s meritocracy is specifically designed with a mind to equality and to avoid the rule of the stronger. Instead, Magnesia is based upon the promotion of those who are most dedicated to the needs of the state over their own desires.

4.2. An unstable society

⁸⁴⁸ Bartels, 2017, 102. Bartels argues that the education is designed to promote socialisation as well as virtue.

⁸⁴⁹ Pl. *Laws* 735.

⁸⁵⁰ Pl. *Laws* 829c.

⁸⁵¹ Bartels, 2017, 103. While Plato does outline this meritocracy based upon age, Bartels argues that Magnesia is far more homogenous than the strict hierarchy we see in the *Republic*. I would agree the meritocracy is less obvious within the *Laws* yet its principles are still very much at work.

⁸⁵² Pl. *Laws*. 707: Specifically, that when success is a combined effort of a multitude of rowers it is more difficult to congratulate any one act of bravery.

The above argument requires some unpacking. Perhaps most importantly is the idea that law is the only ruler in Magnesia. This usurpation of the philosopher kings by the rule of law is a dramatic step away from the *Republic* and the *Statesman*. Leaders, even ideal leaders, are scrutinised and seen only to be keepers or protectors to the *Laws* rather than the primary decision-makers themselves. Plato seems content to demonstrate that any leader is ultimately still at risk from the human condition,⁸⁵³ and while those individuals can be educated to resist desire, if they are corrupted, their fall from virtue may take the whole society with them.⁸⁵⁴ What is more, Plato is also not content with the notion of idealised lawmakers, nor the laws that they create. He argues that there is no perfect, divine,⁸⁵⁵ or purely virtuous base from which to build any form of idealised legislation, and perhaps it is because of this realisation, that the *Laws* has been considered by some to be the first work of actual political theory.⁸⁵⁶

To demonstrate this imperfection within law-making, we should start with the lawmaker's impossible task to design a society's legislation. Plato's definition of law-making is remarkably vivid and elegant:

*Therefore, all the great labour that impious men spend upon the gods is in vain, but that of the pious is most profitable to them all. Here, then, is the mark at which we must aim; but as to shafts we should shoot, and (so to speak) the flight of them, —what kind of shafts, think you, would fly most straight to the mark?*⁸⁵⁷

Here the legislator is described as an archer aiming for a mark. Regardless of his knowledge or understanding there is no guarantee the archer will hit that mark, and design laws that complement the society. In addition, it might be helpful to highlight the connection between this passage and Isocrates' use of

⁸⁵³ See Irwin, 2010, 95.

⁸⁵⁴ Parry, 2007, 390.

⁸⁵⁵ Crucially, that is not to say that divinity does not play a role in Plato's *Laws* simply that it does not rely upon divine intervention to operate Magnesia.

⁸⁵⁶ Laks, 2008, 258.

⁸⁵⁷ Pl. *Laws*. 4.718.

the term *δοξα* that I discussed in the above chapter. Both thinkers acknowledge the unpredictability of leadership. No matter how skilled or gifted an individual might be, there are always unknowns and the unexpected that threaten to make even the wisest laws or judgments appear short-sighted, insufficient, or downright foolish. In this passage, Plato is acknowledging there is no sure footing from which to base even the most central governing feature of Magnesia.

So far, this chapter has assumed, as Plato's readers have assumed, that the laws Plato proposes are good laws. What Plato demonstrates is that achieving good legislation is far from a certainty. Yet this does not take away from Plato's Magnesia. The aim has always been perseverance through education. Plato's Athenian demonstrates this further when explaining the realities of law-making he states:

Athenian: My good Sir, in returning to the subject of lawgivers in our investigation, I may probably have to cast a slur on them; but if what I say is to the point, then there will be no harm in it. Yet why should I vex myself? For practically all human affairs seem to be in this same plight.

Clinias: What is it you refer to?

Athenian: I was on the point of saying that no man ever makes laws but chances and accidents of all kinds, occurring in all sorts of ways, make all our laws for us. For either it is a war that violently upsets politics and changes laws, or it is the distress due to grievous poverty. Diseases, too, often force on revolutions, owing to the inroads of pestilences and recurring bad seasons prolonged over many years. Foreseeing all this, one might deem it proper to say—as I said just now—that no mortal man frames any law, but human affairs are nearly all matters of pure chance.⁸⁵⁸

Here Plato argues for the flaws in law-making, that it remains unpredictable because the world is unpredictable and moreover that humans are

⁸⁵⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 4.708-9a.

unpredictable. As Metcalf reminds us, Plato never designs laws to act as a divine or even unquestionable rule.⁸⁵⁹ Magnesia aims to be a step toward virtue and order but is ultimately a doomed endeavour as no system of education is powerful enough to fully tame the wildness in humanity or within their environment.

The wildness of the human condition is a key reason for Plato's usurpation of the philosopher kings. Their flaw is that even if they are wise enough to moderate desire themselves, they will not always succeed in educating their successors sufficiently. Plato makes this clear, as we saw above, within his description, and criticism of Cyrus. It would appear that Plato is as pessimistic about the successful rule of philosopher leaders as he is about the population as a whole. Specifically, Plato's Athenian describes this concern in book three stating:

*We declare, then, that a State which is to endure, and to be as happy as it is possible for man to be, must of necessity dispense honours rightly. And the right way is this: it shall be laid down that the goods of the soul are highest in honour and come first, provided that the soul possesses temperance; second come the good and fair things of the body; and third the so-called goods of substance and property. And if any law-giver or State transgresses these rules, either by promoting wealth to honours, or by raising one of the lower goods to a higher rank by means of honours, he will be guilty of a breach both of religion and of statesmanship.*⁸⁶⁰

It is important to note here that Plato specifically directs this rule toward lawgivers and states. Plato is focusing on the idea that leaders are flawed and prone to press their own desires, even if they are wise and well educated. It is specifically because leaders cannot be trusted that Plato turns his attention to law moving away from achieving an ideal good, and toward sustainability.

⁸⁵⁹ Metcalf, 2013, 124.

⁸⁶⁰ Pl. *Laws*. 697a-c.

This reality that all societies are limited by their limited education, and order can only be established through good law, is argued again by Plato's Athenian when he states:

And even today this tale has a truth to tell, namely, that wherever a State has a mortal, and no god, for ruler, there the people have no rest from ills and toils; and it deems that we ought by every means to imitate the life of the age of Cronos, as tradition paints it, and order both our homes and our States in obedience to the immortal element within us, giving to reason's ordering the name of law.⁸⁶¹

Here we see Plato removing any absolute good from the equation. Constitutions are always doomed to fall back into the wild chaos and injustice of the human condition. In summary then, Plato's Magnesia is a not an attempt toward idealism, but a frank and pessimistic attempt for longevity. Within this endeavour, human error is removed as much as possible by placing persuasive law as the only absolute ruler, with its primary responsibility to be ensuring the successful education of the citizens.

4.3. Ruling by law

Finally, it is worth discussing the role that magistrates actually played within Magnesia. As we have seen, Plato is not prepared to trust individual rulers, instead putting his trust in law.⁸⁶² Yet the goal of Plato's education was to cultivate good citizens, and, through his meritocracy, push those citizens toward positions of responsibility thereby creating, what Prauscello describes as, the 'vision of the perfect citizen'.⁸⁶³ To this end, I will now demonstrate how

⁸⁶¹ Pl. *Laws*. 714.

⁸⁶² Pl. *Laws*. 713c, 875b-c.

⁸⁶³ Prauscello, 2014, 73.

magistrates and political officers in Magnesia act in the capacity of ‘advisers’ or maintainers to the law. Plato’s description of the *Nomophylakes* is quite explicit:

*This joint body must, I say, go to the new State and arrange in common that the magistrates be appointed according to the laws and be tested after appointment...First, they shall act as Wardens of the laws, and secondly as Keepers of the registers in which every man writes out for the officials the amount of his property...*⁸⁶⁴

Nomophylakes: quite literally named, guardians of the law are specifically designed to enforce and protect the law.⁸⁶⁵ As Lutz highlights, Plato characterises those who administer the laws to be “servants” and “slaves”⁸⁶⁶ implying that office holders are not free to do as they think best.⁸⁶⁷ Furthermore, in Plato’s subsequent passage, these magistrates are to judge whether an individual is guilty of “*despising law because of lucre*”. These guardians of the laws are not only responsible for enforcing the laws, but enforcing the ‘spirit’ of the laws, encouraging citizens to use the laws as guidelines.

The same point is made later in book six, where Plato’s Athenian quite plainly speaks to the *Nomophylakes*, directly:

*Let us address them thus:— “Beloved Keepers of the Laws, in many departments of our legislation we shall leave out a vast number of matters (for we needs must do so) yet, notwithstanding, all important matters, as well as the general description, we shall include, so far as we can, in our outline sketch. Your help will be required to fill in this outline.”*⁸⁶⁸

Here Plato is not suggesting that the *Nomophylakes* can create laws, but only that they can act within the intention of the law, even if the legislation is not explicit.⁸⁶⁹ This belief that the lawmaker need not legislate every parameter of

⁸⁶⁴ Pl. *Laws*. 754d-e.

⁸⁶⁵ Bobonich, 2002, 380.

⁸⁶⁶ Pl. *Laws*. 715d.

⁸⁶⁷ Lutz, 2015, 93.

⁸⁶⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 770b.

⁸⁶⁹ Annas, 2017, 2.

civic life is taken from the *Republic*⁸⁷⁰ as well as closely paralleled in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* with reference to Cyrus becoming "βλέπων νόμος".⁸⁷¹ In both examples, Plato acknowledges that the aim of law is to persuade the society to live with certain values and virtues.⁸⁷² If law needs to account for every specific daily practice, then it has already failed in educating the citizens. As I have already argued, law in Magnesia plays a supportive role for education, designed to persuade rather than force citizens and thereby ruling through willing obedience.

To this end, Klosko has given an extensive account of every aspect of law that Plato states should remain unchanged.⁸⁷³ From this, Klosko then asks, what is the role of the nocturnal council? If law should remain unchanged and any extensions are made by the *Nomophylakes* what role does the nocturnal council play? Some have argued that these are philosopher kings still governing from the *Republic*.⁸⁷⁴ Klosko and Bobonich alternatively suggest that this is specifically the separation from philosopher kings articulating their demotion. They argue that the nocturnal council is laden with checks and balances on their power.⁸⁷⁵ I would argue that the nocturnal council, or any of Magnesia's officials, were never in the position of philosopher rulers. Instead, the role for the philosopher has changed in the *Laws*. Where philosophers were originally seen as the means to lead and drive a polis into idealised virtue, now they are simply advisers, to the citizens, and to other officials. Bartels has argued that the nocturnal council, like the Athenian stranger, are designed as external literary components to frame the ideas and aims of the *Laws*, and therefore to not take a 'real' position within Magnesia.⁸⁷⁶ Finally, the idea that any magistrate

⁸⁷⁰ Pl. *Rep.* 425.

⁸⁷¹ Xen. *Cyr.* 8.1.22.

⁸⁷² Bobonich, 2002, 90.

⁸⁷³ Klosko, 2008, 462: Musical education 656c-57b, Sacrifices and dances 772c, Children's games, dances and music 798a-b, Rules on agriculture 846c, Legal procedure 957a-b, Festivals 828b, Rhapsodes and choral competitions 835a-b, Sexual matters 840c-e.

⁸⁷⁴ Zuckert, 2009, 179.

⁸⁷⁵ Klosko, 2007, 467; Bobonich, 2002, 391.

⁸⁷⁶ Bartels, 2017, 189. This change of heart, placing philosophers as advisors rather than leaders, may have been influenced by Plato's second or third trip to Sicily in ~367 and ~361 respectively (see Schofield, 2008, 298-299). The reasons for this trip are not certain and maybe irrelevant as it is unclear when Plato actually wrote *Letters*, the only source for this argument. While the authorship of the seventh letter remains an unknown, it seems enough to speculate that Plato's faith in philosopher kings, and the role of the philosopher within politics in general, may have changed as a result of his time in Sicily. This is, of course, only an assumption, but one that certainly fits with the chronology of his works (see Klosko, 2008, 467).

or elected official would have any direct power over the laws would undermine Plato's whole thesis that law is far more resilient to corruption than individuals.⁸⁷⁷ The nocturn council does not need a designated role or set of powers, they are simply designed to act as advisers to the laws and thereby to support the education of the citizens. They would only need to acknowledge the need for continuity and the struggle against the human condition.

In summary then, this section has demonstrated that Plato's *Laws* is written with the acknowledgment that there is no divine or absolute good from which to build the perfect society. Instead, Plato aimed to design a sustainable constitution, no matter how flawed that constitution may be. To this end, it is education that holds the key to longevity and, by sanctifying and cultivating that education through law, Plato described the aims of Magnesia. This section highlighted that the laws were supportive of education and so Magnesia's meritocracy promoted those who could be seen to best serve the polis. This was shown to contrast with the *Republic*, that aims toward a universal ideal of virtue. Finally, the section argues that the magistrates and officers of Magnesia were dedicated to the maintenance of the laws and not to the law's improvement. Specifically, the nocturnal council was shown to be the largest split from the *Republic*, showing the move from philosopher kings to philosopher advisers.

5. Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, *Laws* offers one of the clearest uses of education as a means to create a just and enduring society. Unlike previous works, Plato attempted to distance Magnesia from idealism. The result is that despite the *Laws* beginning from a scenario just as bleak as the *Republic*, it still feels more optimistic. Magnesia is not designed to achieve great knowledge or

⁸⁷⁷ Laks, 2008, 277.

justice; it is simply attempting to preserve its values and unique customs from the pull of the human condition. If, Plato thought, a society was successful in replicating its virtues onto the next generation, it may hope to prolong that inevitable erosion.

The chapter began by arguing that Plato engages in a genuine historical narrative that spanned from mythic history, through to the contemporary. Plato's study aimed to demonstrate the rise and fall of historical constitutions, in order to propose the detrimental presence and consistency of the human condition. It is here that the chapter demonstrated how Plato intended to setup the challenge for his Magnesia, by demonstrating the rise and fall of historic constitutions that all declined due to an inability to educate. Initially, this section defined Plato's understanding of the human condition, arguing that Plato saw this wild and desire-driven nature as innate. From here, the section then discussed Plato's extensive historical account to show that the constitutional decline of both Athens and Persia were the result of ignorance. In both cases, the section showed that Plato blamed the failure to successfully educate, as the core reason for the erosion of the society's virtues.

In the following section, the chapter explored education within Plato's *Laws* as an attempt to resist the pull of self-centred intentions and desire driven actions. From here, the chapter was in a good position to enter Plato's use of law as a means to support education. Firstly, the section argued that Plato's focus was always dedicated toward the longevity of the constitution. The section also argued that Plato's redefined law through the incorporation of unwritten law and the *nomos* of a society in order to influence the status quo. This use of law as a persuasive educator was a complete split from the traditional punitive attitude that we see in Plato's earlier works.

In the final section, the chapter discussed the magistrates and elected officials of Magnesia. This section argued that Plato aimed to develop a mixed constitution that shared the values of monarchy and democracy. It also argued that by re-defining equality, Plato was able to create a meritocratic society based on education. The section then argued that Plato saw all leaders, philosophers and lawmakers as vulnerable to the same desire and self-focus that endangers the rest of society. For the first time, Plato acknowledges that there is no pure 'good' from which he can design an idealised constitution. From this backdrop, the section could then demonstrate the advisory role that philosophers played within Magnesia. All magistrates and political institutions were shown to maintain the society's legislation, not to rule themselves. This demonstrates the drastic change in responsibility of the expert statesman or the philosopher king to a purely advisory role. Through this method, the chapter has argued that Plato's *Laws* attempts to design a society that places continuity above all else. To do that, its principal responsibility is to educate the future citizens to preserve dedication and commitment to the virtues of the society.

Conclusion

At the start of this thesis, I asked how we might understand education in fifth and fourth century Athens? What was its relevance to good leadership and how did education become such an important factor for political thinkers of the time? In order to answer these questions, I initially needed to define education not only as an accumulation of knowledge but the ability to apply that knowledge in a way that might benefit one's society. Throughout this thesis, I have drawn attention to how ancient thinkers see citizenship, community and even humanity, not as something to be just born into, but also as something that needs to be actively learnt. With this, the connection between education and leadership should become apparent. Good leaders are not good because they understand some skill or knowledge that is unattainable to others, instead they are experts of their communities, capable of judging instinctively what is in the best interests of their society. They have such a thorough understanding of how to be a good citizen that they can act as a guide for others and deserve to be entrusted with responsibility.

Initially, this connection between education and good leadership needed to be grounded within Athenian history and in the first section of this thesis, I demonstrated how an individual could be exposed to education in the fifth century. Through assessing the theatre and the impact of sophist teachings, I demonstrated how education had an unavoidable impact upon the *demos* of Athens, as well as its leaders. I showed how Athenian citizens actively learnt how to live, communicate and participate within their society as political actors

and social leaders. Yet this section raised questions about good leadership. Certainly, education impacted Athenian citizens and its leaders, but the extent to which it created good leaders is far more debatable. The question of how to teach good leadership, is also the challenge taken up by our ancient thinkers of the late fifth and fourth century and leads the thesis onto its primary question: how did education become so fundamental to good leadership for political thinkers of the late fifth and fourth century Athens?

Yet understanding the impact of education on the ideas of ancient thinkers raises more questions: what specifically were the lessons and proficiencies that could be expected to be so crucial for a leader to learn? Why was this education so important for good leadership? And finally, but perhaps most importantly, how did these thinkers propose lessons could be built into a society, so that these skills and virtues maybe consistently learnt by future generations? The remainder of this thesis was concerned with tackling these questions through assessing the works of Xenophon, Isocrates and Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*.

For each thinker, I began by pinpointing the lesson, skill or virtue that, through extensive study, they believed might allow an individual to become a good leader. For every thinker I assessed, the key to good leadership was the ability to judge selflessly, in the best interests of the society as a whole. For Xenophon and Plato, used the term σωφροσύνη to refer specifically to the ability to moderate one's own desires for the good of others. For Isocrates, the term δόξα better reflects his belief that good, self-less decision making was only achievable through guided practice. That any leader, even a divinely inspired leader, would need to actively learn the customs, laws and status quo of the society they intended to lead, in order that they might judge effectively is one of the fundamental findings of this thesis.

But why was this education in moderating personal desire and ambition as well as understanding the needs of society so important for our ancient thinkers? All of the sources I assessed share a common belief that individuals are born wild and must be taught how to live within the customs of society. In turn, the greatest threat to a society stems from its citizens serving their own ends in spite of the needs of those around them. For Plato, the dangers that face an uneducated society, form the foundation to his *Republic* and *Laws*, providing a justification for designing societies so obsessed with education. As for Xenophon and Isocrates, they hold up the great achievements of Cyrus or Timotheus as what can be achieved when a leader strives for the common good, in spite of their own desires.

From here we are left with the question of how these lessons might be successfully taught to a population, and particularly to its leaders. Each of our sources have been shown to engineer meritocracies, that order society based on an individual's grasp of σωφροσύνη or δόξα. Those who could demonstrate a greater understanding of society's needs and moderation over their own desires, would be granted greater responsibilities. I demonstrated how these thinkers thereby created an environment for education, where individuals would be naturally encouraged toward these lessons of σωφροσύνη and δόξα. While this was important for all our sources, Plato was the most explicit. Especially within his *Laws*, I demonstrated how Plato created a meritocracy so obsessed with education that every aspect of the state, including its laws and wise individuals, were tasked with cultivating lessons of moderation within the citizenship.

Education played a fundamental role in the works of political thinkers in fifth and fourth century Athens. It became understood as an ability to appreciate one's social environment and overcome one's own desires and ambitions,

seeing intuitively what was in the best interests of society. Moreover, this was a difficult and arduous art to study, and even those who succeeded may not have been able to compete with others to enter positions of power. And even in the unlikely event that an individual, educated in social awareness and self-control, found themselves with the opportunity to lead, they would always be human and open to mistakes or corruption. Education then, is not only relevant to the leader but to every member of society, and our thinkers design societies, obsessed with education. Constantly learning and understanding the needs of others and control over one's own needs.

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