The Roles of Solon in Plato’s Dialogues

Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of Plato’s use and adaptation of an earlier model and tradition of wisdom based on the thought and legacy of the sixth-century archon, legislator, and poet Solon. Solon is cited and/or quoted thirty-four times in Plato’s dialogues, and alluded to many more times. My study shows that these references and allusions have deeper meaning when contextualized within the reception of Solon in the classical period. For Plato, Solon is a rhetorically powerful figure in advancing the relatively new practice of philosophy in Athens. While Solon himself did not adequately establish justice in the city, his legacy provided a model upon which Platonic philosophy could improve. Chapter One surveys the passing references to Solon in the dialogues as an introduction to my chapters on the dialogues in which Solon is a very prominent figure, *Timaeus-Critias, Republic*, and *Laws*. Chapter Two examines Critias’ use of his ancestor Solon to establish his own philosophic credentials. Chapter Three suggests that Socrates re-appropriates the aims and themes of Solon’s political poetry for Socratic philosophy. Chapter Four suggests that Solon provides a legislative model which Plato reconstructs in the *Laws* for the philosopher to supplant the role of legislator in Greek thought. The Athenian Stranger orients legislation towards virtue. I conclude that figure of Solon provides a basis for Plato to redirect the aims of politics towards philosophy and cultivation of virtue in the soul.
Dedication

For Lola (1923-2007)
Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1: Solon within the Context of Plato’s Dialogues

I. Introduction

This dissertation studies how Plato employs and adapts a well-known Athenian paradigm of wisdom, the archaic legislator and wise man Solon, to help define the political and philosophical project of his dialogues. In Plutarch’s *Life of Solon*, the biographer gives the following anecdote about Solon’s “philosophy”:

φιλοσοφίας δὲ τοῦ ἕθικοῦ μάλιστα τὸ πολιτικὸν, ὡσπερ οἱ πλεῖστοι τῶν τότε σοφῶν, ἤγάπησεν. (3.5-6)

In philosophy, like most of the wise men of that age, he was concerned above all with applying morals to politics.¹

While this is not a particularly in-depth analysis of Solon’s philosophical aims, the passage defines two specific things: (1) Solon’s place among the “wise men” or “sages” of archaic Greece;² and (2) the major concern of these sages, “applying morals to politics.” During the classical period of Greek history, a group of archaic wise men had

¹ *Life of Solon* 3.5-3.6, trans. I. Scott-Kilvert. All translations hereafter are my own, unless otherwise noted.

² Plutarch in fact relates the famous tale of the Seven Sages and the lost golden tripod of Helen in this biography. In this tale, some Coan fishermen discover a golden tripod, and quarrel with Milesian strangers about the find. The Pythian priestess of Apollo then pronounced that the tripod go “to the wisest man,” and it was thus given to Thales, and from Thales on to another sage until it came round again to Thales. At this point, Thales sent it to Thebes to be dedicated to Ismenian Apollo. Plutarch reports an alternate version of the story, according to Theophrastus, in which Bias is the first and last to receive the tripod, and he dedicates it to Apollo at Delphi (*Life of Solon* 4). Diogenes Laertius, whose account I discuss in section II below, says Thales was the first to receive the tripod, and Solon received it last. It was then Solon who sent it to Delphi (*Thales* 1.28).
become canonized as the “Seven Sages” (οἱ ἐπὶ τὰ σοφοὶ). According to Martin, there are three distinguishable attributes of these seven wise men: (1) they were all poets; (2) they were all involved in politics; and (3) they were all performers of their wisdom. All these aspects are visible in the Solonian tradition, as we retain (1) fragments of his poetry; (2) accounts of his legislation as well as specific laws attributed to him; and (3) accounts of his “performance” of wisdom both inside and outside of the realm of politics. Solon’s legacy encompassed multiple aspects of Greek intellectual thought, and, as I demonstrate in this introduction, these aspects were still prevalent during Plato’s time. In fact, Solon is more than an intellectual predecessor to Plato: the fourth century philosopher’s family claimed to be descended from the sixth century Sage, as the Charmides and Timaeus-Critias make clear. Through a close reading of Solon’s roles in Plato’s dialogues, I suggest that Plato adapts, rewrites, and replaces Solon as a model of wisdom.

The members of the “Seven” vary from source to source, starting with the first attested list in Plato’s Protagoras (342e-343a), but awareness of such a group may have existed as early as Herodotus, as I will discuss below. The Sages themselves, furthermore, are all products of the sixth century BCE. Still, the traditions surrounding them continued on into the classical period and beyond: these stories served as models for new generations of intellectuals. This is especially apparent in the middle and late parts of the fifth century BCE, when the figures we now call “sophists” traveled around Greece as teachers. Like the Seven Sages, many of these intellectuals claimed that the education they imparted benefitted their students in politics. Thus Plato’s character Protagoras

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4 This relationship is explored in depth in chapter two.
claimed to teach “good counsel concerning household affairs—how [one] may best arrange his household—and concerning the affairs of the city, how he may become most able to act and speak on these matters” (εὐβουλία περὶ τῶν οίκείων, ὡς ἄν ἄριστα τὴν αὐτοῦ οἰκίαν διοικοῖ, καὶ περὶ τῶν τῆς πόλεως, ὡς τὰ τῆς πόλεως δυνατώτατος ἄν εἰη καὶ πράττειν καὶ λέγειν, Protagoras 318e-319a). While many wealthy Athenians were supporters of these intellectuals, many others were critics. Aristophanes, for example, makes a mockery of them through his character “Socrates” in the Clouds.

Throughout his corpus, Plato portrays his own Socrates and the practice of philosophy as distinct from (even if influenced by) the other intellectual trends of his time. These portrayals serve not only to defend Socrates from his critics, but also to establish the utility of philosophy in classical Athens. One of the many ways Plato has his characters demonstrate this utility is through direct mention of or allusion to Solon, one of the most revered figures of Athenian history. Ferrari, speaking of philosopher-rulers in the Republic, says that, “historically, the coincidence of philosophic ability and political power in notable individuals was by no means unprecedented. One intellectual who drafted a code of law…[was] Solon, Plato’s sixth-century ancestor, who not only brought social reform to Athens but composed poetry on the political issues he was responsible for resolving.” Solon was thus a strong figure, whether spoken or unspoken, in the literary and historical background of any conversation on Athenian political thought.

Less than a century after Solon’s reforms,\(^6\) which resulted in what sources identify as a “mixed constitution,”\(^7\) Athens had undergone and overcome a tyranny—albeit an apparently mild one at first\(^8\)—and set up a radical democracy unlike the world had ever seen before. Despite these changes, the Athenians still viewed themselves as continuing ancient, ancestral traditions.\(^9\) Recent scholarship has argued that even Cleisthenes, whom we today credit as the founder of the Athenian democracy, portrayed himself not as setting up a new constitution, but restoring the constitution of Solon and Theseus.\(^10\) Solon thus played an important role in the ideology of classical Athens, and this affects his role in Plato’s dialogues as well. In Plato’s *Second Letter*, the speaker tells the tyrant Dionysius that

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\text{πέφυκε συνιέναι εἰς ταῦτον φρόνησις τε καὶ δύναμις μεγάλη, καὶ ταύτ' ἄλληλα ἄει διώκει καὶ ζητεῖ καὶ συγγίγνεται. (310e)}
\]

Wisdom and great power naturally come together, and they continually pursue each other, seek each other, and associate with each other.

Whether or not Plato is the author of these words, this passage alludes to the philosopher-kings of the *Republic*, the amalgamation of philosophy and political power (δύναμις τε πολιτική καὶ φιλοσοφία, 473d).\(^11\) It is not until these two things come together, Socrates

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\(^6\) I am assuming the consensus date of 594/593 BCE as the year of Solon’s eponymous archonship here, but I discuss other possible dates for Solon’s archonship in Chapter 2.

\(^7\) Cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1273b.

\(^8\) Herodotus 1.59; Thucydides 6.53-54.

\(^9\) Cf. Pericles’ Funeral Oration, Thucydides 2.36.

\(^10\) Anderson (2007).

\(^11\) The phrasing is not exactly the same, since φρόνησις and φιλοσοφία are not directly synonymous, nor δύναμις μεγάλη and δύναμις…πολιτική, but they are close enough in meaning and context to establish an allusion to the latter terms and passage in the former.
says, that the ideal city can come about. In the *Second Letter*, the author tells Dionysius that these two things in fact seek each other out, and he gives several examples from history, the last of which is the encounter of Croesus, Solon, and (via Croesus) Cyrus. We know from Book I of Herodotus that Solon attempted to advise the powerful Croesus and, after Croesus failed to understand Solon, the fallen Lydian king then attempted to advise Cyrus. The speaker of the letter thus puts himself in the position of wise adviser to the tyrant of Syracuse. Like Solon, Plato fails. Still, Solon, the most famous of Athenian statesmen, serves as an image of philosophical wisdom as well.

This chapter is a study of the appearances of Solon, either invoked by name or alluded to through direct or indirect quotation of his poetry, in several of Plato’s dialogues. It provides a methodological lens for the arguments I make about the role of Solon in Plato in the chapters that follow. Glenn Morrow, in a footnote in his monograph on Plato’s *Laws*, categorizes four different ways in which Solon appears in Plato: (i) as wise man (or “Sage”) (*Protagoras, Timaeus, Letter II*); (ii) as legislator (*Republic, Symposium, Phaedrus, Laws, Timaeus*); (iii) as poet (*Charmides, Timaeus, Critias, Laches*); and (iv) as archon (*Hippias Major*).\(^1\) I begin this chapter with the Solon-Croesus scene in Herodotus, compared with the single mention of Solon in Plato’s *Protagoras* as a test case for Solon’s philosophic importance in Plato. If we arrange Plato’s dialogues by their dramatic dating, the *Protagoras* is the first appearance of

\(^{12}\) Morrow (1960) 80n16. I add to Morrow’s list *Lysis* 212e, in which a fragment of Solon’s poetry is quoted, though Solon is not named directly as its author. Morrow perhaps does not mention this passage because Solon is not directly named. I limit discussion of the *Second Letter* to what I have said above in this introduction. I discuss the relevant passage of the *Charmides* in chapter two. I discuss Morrow’s work further in Chapter Four on the *Laws*.
Socrates in the corpus.\textsuperscript{13} The remainder of this chapter will survey the relatively minor instances of Solon in Plato’s corpus that my other chapters will not focus on. In Chapter Two, I examine Critias’ use of his ancestor Solon to establish his own philosophic credentials in Plato’s \textit{Timaeus-Critias}. I suggest that both Critias and the Solon of his narrative fail to grasp the philosophic importance of the tale as an ethical guide for their own times. I pursue this theme further in the \textit{Republic} in Chapter Three. In this chapter, I suggest that Socrates re-appropriates the aims and themes of Solon’s political poetry for Socratic philosophy. The polyvalence of the figure of Solon provides an identifiable model against which Socrates defines philosophers. In Chapter Four, I use the work of several scholars, especially Glenn Morrow and Thanassis Samaras, on Solon’s role in the \textit{Laws} as a foundation for examining how the Athenian Stranger steps into the Solonian role of legislator. The Stranger redirects Solon’s laws and redefines the practice of legislation within a virtue-oriented constitution. The figure of Solon provides a basis for Plato to redirect the aims of politics toward philosophy.

\textbf{II. Solon and Philosophy from Herodotus to Plato}

Book I of Herodotus describes the rise and fall of the Lydian king Croesus during the sixth century. When Croesus comes to the height of his power, Herodotus tells us, all the wise men (σοφισταί) of Greece came to visit him, the foremost among them being Solon the Athenian (1.29). After writing a code of laws for the Athenians, Solon traveled

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{13} Cf. Zuckert (2009) 8-9; 217ff; also Lampert (2010) 9-10. Lampert points out that Socrates does in fact appear earlier dramatically in internal narrations within the \textit{Phaedo}, \textit{Parmenides}, and \textit{Symposium}, a set of dialogues which he plans to discuss in his forthcoming book \textit{How Socrates Became Socrates} (8-9). However, as Lampert says, these appearances of a younger Socrates all occur within the frame of dialogues occurring much later dramatically than the \textit{Protagoras}.}
abroad for ten years so that he would not be forced to repeal the laws he had enacted (1.30). A few days after he had arrived at Croesus’ court, the king had his servants give Solon a tour of his treasuries; he then he addressed Solon in the following way:

Ξείνε Ἀθηναῖε, παρ’ ἡμέας γὰρ περὶ σέο λόγος ἀπίκται πολλὸς καὶ σοφίς εἶνεκεν τῆς σῆς καὶ πλάνης, ὡς φιλοσοφέων γῆν πολλὴν θεωρίςει εἶνεκεν ἑπελήλυθας· νῦν ὄν ἐπειρέσθαι σὲ ἰμερὸς ἐπήλθέ μοι εἴ τινα ἦδη πάντων εἰδες ὀλβίωτατον.

Athenian Stranger, I’ve heard many things about you, both because of your wisdom and because of your travels, how you’ve come to many lands, for the sake of sight-seeing, and seeking wisdom (philosophizing). Now the desire has come upon me to ask you whether anyone you have already seen is the happiest of all men.” (1.30)

In this passage, Croesus depicts Solon as a traveling wise man of great repute. He says that Solon was φιλοσοφέων, “seeking wisdom.” This is the only appearance of the word “philosophy” in all of Herodotus’ Histories. Andrea Nightingale, in pointing out the link between Solon’s wandering and his philosophizing in this passage, says that the term philosophein in the fifth century referred to “intellectual cultivation” in a general sense, rather than a “specialized discipline” as it later would for Plato. She furthermore says that “Herodotus would probably have placed himself in this same tradition, as a theoros wandering the world in search of knowledge.”

Later fourth-century authors such as Plato, Xenophon, and Isocrates then tried to appropriate the meaning of “philosophy” for their own purposes. Whatever meanings they tried to project onto the word, they already had Solon available, through Herodotus, as a model for their discipline.

Nightingale further points out that Herodotus does not provide very much in terms of what Solon’s “intellectual cultivation” is. “In the scene with Croesus,” she says,

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“Solon does not appear to learn anything at all; on the contrary, he attempts to teach the king a lesson” (64). He does, however, learn about Croesus’ palace and the region of Sardis. Herodotus later tells of a law of Amasis which Solon found in Egypt and implemented in Athens: each Egyptian had to declare his source of livelihood annually. Herodotus remarks that it is a “blameless law” (ἁμαρτάνων νόμων).\textsuperscript{15} Nightingale concludes that Solon’s \textit{theoria}, his “wandering” or “sight-seeing,” aims to discover something useful for his city.\textsuperscript{16} James Ker points out that the observations of a \textit{theoros} “are always concerned with the comparison of \textit{nomoi} and with the goal of strengthening the \textit{nomoi} of his own city.”\textsuperscript{17} Philosophy (or “intellectual cultivation”) in Herodotus, as pertains to Solon, has direct importance for the city.

But Solon is not just described as “philosophizing” in Herodotus 1.30; he is also described as one of the σοφισταὶ, “wise men” or “sophists,” of this time period. It is possible that Herodotus alludes to the so-called “Seven Sages” of ancient Greece in this passage, although he never directly talks about them as a group. Scholars have long debated the origin of this group of archaic wise men, who first appear explicitly in Greek literature in Plato’s \textit{Protagoras}.\textsuperscript{18} Kurke points out a potential allusion to the Seven Sages in Herodotus’ introduction to Solon (1.29) in the phrase ἀλλοι τε οἱ πάντες ἐκ τῆς Ἑλλάδος σοφισταὶ, οἱ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον ἐτύγχανον ἔόντες (“all the Wise Men of

\textsuperscript{15} Herodotus 2.177, cf. Nightingale (2004) 64.

\textsuperscript{16} Nightingale (2004). See also Ker (2000).

\textsuperscript{17} Ker (2000) 311, summarizing Redfield (1985).

\textsuperscript{18} 342e-343a, discussed in detail later in this section.
Greece, who happened to be living at this time").\textsuperscript{19} Martin furthermore notes that “the syntax of [Herodotus] 1.29.1, ‘the wise men (\textit{sophistai}) who happened to exist (\textit{etunkhanon eontes}) at that time,’ with an imperfect indicative verb (rather than indefinite relative construction, “whichever…existed”) implies that Herodotus thought the sages \textit{were} actually all living at the same time.”\textsuperscript{20} If Herodotus is indeed referring to the Seven Sages in this passage, we can assume a connection between Solon’s wisdom and his politics, the latter of which Herodotus emphasizes by narrating the reason for Solon’s journey.

The wisdom that Solon tries to impart to Croesus likewise has political applicability. Croesus simply seeks Solon’s praise: after having his servants show Solon all his treasuries, he asks Solon who the happiest of men is, thinking himself to be the obvious answer. Solon’s two answers—(1) Tellus the Athenian, a citizen of a prosperous city who had fine sons and grandchildren, and who died fighting bravely for his city; and (2) Cleobis and Biton, a pair of brothers who performed a noble deed for Hera and died in their sleep soon after receiving the praise of their fellow Argives—emphasize one’s standing with regard within the city and among one’s fellow citizens.\textsuperscript{21} Solon points to the end to judge one’s happiness, and thus refuses to call Croesus happy before he knows how Croesus reaches the end of his life (1.32). Soon after Solon departs, Croesus

\textsuperscript{19} Translation from Kurke (2011) 104.

\textsuperscript{20} Martin (1998) 125n16. Kurke (2011) 104n24 also points out Momigliano (1971) 35: “The meeting of the Seven Wise Men at Croesus’ court is implied in Herodotus 1.29”; Kurke furthermore notes that “Plutarch (Mal.\textit{Hdt.} 857f) understands Herodotus’s \textit{sophistai} here to be a designation of the Seven Sages as a group.”

\textsuperscript{21} It is noteworthy that Solon ranks Tellus higher than Cleobis and Biton, despite the fact that Cleobis and Biton received goods attached to a divinity, while Tellus’ goods exist only at the human level. See Benardete (1969) 132-133. Also, chapter four, section III below.
experiences serious misfortunes: the death of his son and the fall of his empire. He finally realizes the wisdom of Solon in a near-death experience, as he stands upon the pyre about to be burned alive.

Herodotus’ Solon is a traveling wise man, learning about the Lydians and Egyptians much as Herodotus himself did. Although he does not appear again as a character in Herodotus’ narrative,\(^2\) his sentiments live on through the rest of the *Histories*.\(^3\) Such an image of Solon would resound for Plato’s Athenian audience when Socrates and others call upon the Athenian Sage.

The *Protagoras*, the first work of Greek literature that directly mentions the Seven Sages, also acts as Socrates’ introduction of philosophy into the public sphere as the first dialogue in Plato’s dramatic universe.\(^4\) In this dialogue, both Protagoras and Socrates attempt to establish their respective practices of wisdom within long-standing traditions. Protagoras claims that “sophistry is an ancient art” (ἐγὼ δὲ τὴν σοφιστικὴν τέχνην φημὶ μὲν ἐίναι παλαιάν, 316d), and its earliest practitioners cloaked this art under other names. He identifies nine figures—the poets Homer, Hesiod and Simonides; the mystics Orpheus and Musaeus; the gymnasts Iccus and Herodicus; and the musicians Agathocles and Pythocleides—as earlier practitioners of sophistry. His teaching is thus a continuation of this long-standing tradition. He in fact depicts himself as the most

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\(^2\) He is mentioned again twice in in passing after Book I: 2.177 (in Egypt, as discussed above) and 5.113.

\(^3\) Cf. Chiasson (1986).

\(^4\) Cf. Lampert (2010) 9: “How fitting that *Protagoras* be chronologically first: it is the dialogue in which Socrates mounts the public stage bent on winning a reputation for what he represents: by going public with his victory over Protagoras, he aims to give philosophy a Socratic public face that will eclipse its Protagorean public face.”
distinguished member, because he practices sophistry openly, whereas his predecessors disguised themselves within other arts.

Socrates later narrates a history of philosophy ("love of wisdom") with origins in Sparta and Crete:

\begin{equation}
\text{φιλοσοφία γὰρ ἐστὶν παλαιότάτη τε καὶ πλείστη τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐν Κρήτῃ τε καὶ ἐν Λακεδαιμονί, καὶ σοφισταὶ πλεῖστοι γῆς ἐκεῖ εἶσιν. (342a-b)}
\end{equation}

The love of wisdom is oldest and greatest among the Greeks in Crete and in Lacedaemon, and the greatest number of sophists in the world exist there.

This history of philosophy, as Patrick Coby notes, “is a close parallel—and no doubt deliberate rejoinder—to Protagoras’ discourse on the history of Greek sophistry.”

Socrates’ opening, in fact, directly contrasts with Protagoras’ account. While Protagoras said that sophistry (τὴν σοφιστικὴν τέχνην) is ancient (παλαιάν), Socrates calls love of wisdom (φιλοσοφία) most ancient (παλαιοτάτη), as if it far predates Protagoras’ art. Socrates argues that the Cretans and Lacedaemonians hide this from the rest of Greece. This parallels Protagoras’ notion that earlier sophists had to disguise their practice of sophistry behind other arts. Likewise, the Spartans and Cretans disguised their love of wisdom behind physical prowess. It is peculiar, though, that Socrates does not call these ancient practitioners of wisdom φιλόσοφοι, “lovers of wisdom,” but σοφισταί, “sophists.” Rather than simply opposing philosophy to sophistry, he uproots Protagoras’ sophistry and plants philosophy in its place. This replacement can be seen in the methodological differences between Protagoras and Socrates: Socrates, the lover of wisdom, seeks wisdom, whereas Protagoras, the sophist, attempts to transmit wisdom.

\footnote{Coby (1987) 105-106.}
Socrates’ use of the term σοφίσται may recall Herodotus’ use of the same term for the Seven Sages at 1.29. By Plato’s time, and perhaps because of Plato, the terms σοφοί and σοφίσται begin to take on meanings more distinct from one another than they had in Herodotus’ time. This particular group of σοφίσται eventually becomes known as οἱ ἐπὶ τὰ σοφοῖ, “the Seven Sages.” Plato’s Protagoras thus marks a transition point between the archaic Seven Sage tradition (which is identifiable in Herodotus) and the reception of this group after the classical period.

In his history or philosophy, Socrates mentions the Seven Sages as an example of the earliest philosophers:

τούτο οὖν αὐτὸ καὶ τῶν νῦν εἰσίν οἱ κατανεοήκασι καὶ τῶν πάλαι, ὅτι τὸ λακωνίζειν πολὺ μᾶλλον ἔστιν φιλοσοφεῖν ἢ φιλογυμναστεῖν, εἰδότες ὅτι τοιαύτα οἴον τʼ εἶναι ρήματα φθέγγειται τελέως πεπαιδευμένον ἔστιν ἀνθρώπου. τούτων ἦν καὶ Θαλῆς ὁ Μιλήσιος καὶ Πιττακός ὁ Μυτιληναῖος καὶ Βίας ὁ Πριηναῖος καὶ Σόλων ὁ ἡμέτερος καὶ Κλεόβουλος ὁ Λίνδιος καὶ Μύσων ὁ Χηνεύς, καὶ ἕβδομος ἐν τούτοις ἐλέγετο Λακεδαιμόνιος Χίλων. (342e-343a)

There are both men today and men of long ago who have understood this, that to Laconize is much more to love wisdom than to love gymnastics; for they know that to be able to speak these phrases is characteristic of a completely educated man. Among these men were Thales the Milesian, Pittacus the Mytilenean, Bias the Prienean, our own Solon, Cleoboulus the Lindian, Myson the Chenaean, and the seventh among these was said to be Chilon, a Lacedaemonian.

Socrates’ list does not overlap with Protagoras’ at all, but consists of “an intellectual tradition separate from the tradition of sophistry.” This separation of philosophy from sophistry is reflected at large in the context within which Socrates’ history of philosophy

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26 For an in-depth analysis and bibliography of “wisdom” terms, see Kurke (2011) 95-102. See also Tell (2011).

appears. This account is framed within his defense of a Simonides poem against Protagoras’ criticisms. Simonides was a member of Protagoras’ list of ancient sophists. His poem, which states that “it is truly difficult for a man to become good” (ἀνδρὸν ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἀλαθέως γενέσθαι χαλεπών, 339b), later critiques the saying of Pittacus, that “it is difficult to be noble” (χαλεπόν φάτ’ ἐσθλὸν / ἐξεμεναι 339c). These two sentiments, according to Protagoras, are the same, so Simonides’ poem is contradicts itself and is not well-written. Simonides, one of Protagoras’ predecessors, is in rivalry with Pittacus, one of the Seven Sages, and thus one of Socrates’ philosophical predecessors. Socrates’ defense of Simonides, however, complicates this duality between sophistry and philosophy, because Socrates must defend one of Protagoras’ forebears. This reflects a major distinction between the ways in which Protagoras and Socrates portray their respective practices: Protagoras made himself not just the most recent sophist, but the best, inasmuch as he does not conceal his practice the way his predecessors did. Sophistry, as he describes it, is competitive in nature. Socrates says that the Seven all came together at the temple of Apollo at Delphi and produced the Laconic sayings “Know yourself,” γνῶθι σαυτόν, and “Nothing in excess,” μηδὲν ἀγαν (343a-b). Socrates’ philosophy is a practice of cooperation rather than competition. Thus, despite the agonistic nature of Socrates and Protagoras’ conversation, the Protagoras ends on a congenial note, with Socrates suggesting that he and Protagoras further investigate virtue together (μετὰ σοῦ...συνδιασκοποῖν, 361d), and Protagoras praising and admiring Socrates (361e).
Later traditions on the Seven Sages embody this anti-competitive nature. Diogenes Laertius reports the story of a tripod discovered by some Milesian fishermen. When they consulted the oracle at Delphi about it, they were told it belonged to the one “who was preeminent in wisdom” (τίς σοφία πάντων πρῶτος, Thales 1.28). They gave it to their own Thales, who passed it on to another Sage, who in turn passed it on again until finally Solon received it. Solon then decided that the god was preeminent in wisdom, so he sent it to Delphi. Unlike Protagoras, who desires a reputation for wisdom, the Seven Sages were all willing, and perhaps wise enough, to pass on this reputation.

The identification of Solon in the Protagoras plays on his prominent role in Athenian ideology. He is our Solon (Σόλων ὁ ἡμέτερος), emphasizing his (and philosophy’s) importance to the young Athenians present. This importance is heightened by the fact that Solon appears at the very center of the list. Herodotus likewise highlighted Solon’s status within the group by setting him apart: καὶ δὴ καὶ Σόλων ἄνὴρ Ἀθηναῖος (1.29). But what makes Socrates’ Seven Sages philosophic is their Laconic brevity. Neither Protagoras nor anyone among his audience would dare deny the wisdom of Solon the Athenian. And yet his wisdom, as Socrates describes it, is revealed in a way directly opposite to Protagoras’ lengthy epideixeis. Wisdom, then, is not what the Athenians think it is; or rather, the appearance of wisdom (Protagoras) does not correspond with its actuality (Spartans and Cretans).

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28 The story is likewise recounted in Proclus’ Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus; Plutarch narrates a similar version, but in his account, it is Thales rather than Solon who gives the tripod to the god at Delphi. On Plutarch’s account, see note 2 above.
Socrates cannot be entirely sincere in his attribution of philosophy’s origins to Sparta and Crete. Beresford notes that the idea that the Spartans and Cretans were extremely philosophic cultures “is like claiming that the English rugby team are closet existentialists.” There was good reason that these Dorian cultures were known for their “love of gymnastics” (φιλογυμναστείν, 342e). In the Laws, for example, the Athenian Stranger converses with two relatively non-philosophic interlocutors, the Cretan Clinias and the Spartan Megillus. But Socrates nonetheless claims philosophy originated in Sparta and Crete in order to force his predominantly Athenian audience to reconsider their traditional understandings of wisdom.

The specific use of the infinitive φιλοσοφεῖν in the passage above emphasizes the link Socrates is creating between the Seven Sages and the practice of φιλοσοφία. In fact, forms of the root φιλοσοφ- appear a total of five times in this dialogue, four in this history alone. It is fitting that Solon is a member of this group of prominent wisdom-seekers. The only appearance of a form of the base φιλοσοφ- in Herodotus’ Histories occurs when Croesus addresses Solon as one who is “philosophizing” (φιλοσοφέων, 1.30). By identifying the Seven Sages as the earliest practitioners of philosophy, Plato also links Solon with philosophy. Furthermore, Socrates’ description of Solon and the Seven Sages is consistent with Herodotus’ depiction of Solon. Maxims such as those Socrates attributes to the Seven are characteristic of Solon in Herodotus. One of the most famous phrases in all of Herodotus’ Histories comes from the mouth of Solon: “Call no


30 Socrates uses forms of this root four times between 342a and 343b. The only other appearance occurs at 335d, when Socrates claims that he is astounded by Critias’ φιλοσοφία: Ὡ ταῖ Ἰππονίκου, ἀεὶ μὲν ἐγώγε σου τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἄγαμαι…
man *happy before he dies, but lucky*” (πρὶν δ’ ἄν τελευτήσῃ, ἐπισχεῖν μηδὲ καλέειν κω ὀλβίον, ἀλλ’ ἑὐτυχέα, 1.32). While Solon makes this pronouncement at the end of a long speech, it is not the whole speech that Croesus remembers while sitting on the pyre, but a condensed, pithy summary: “no one of the living is happy” (μηδένα εἶναι τῶν ἐχωντων ὀλβίον, 1.86).31

For Socrates, these short, enigmatic sayings lead to further dialogue. The phrase “know yourself” (Γνῶθι σαυτόν) leads to much examination for Socrates and others in several of Plato’s dialogues.32 The enigmatic saying of Solon in Herodotus, “call no man happy before he dies, but lucky,” also demands Croesus’ contemplation. Like Oedipus, however, Croesus does not know that he does not understand this riddle until it is too late.

Socrates provides the counterpoint to Croesus: he sets out on a philosophical journey to try to understand the Delphic oracle’s riddling statement that “no one is wiser than Socrates” (*Apology* 21a-b). These pithy sayings of the Sages, therefore, are philosophic not because they divulge wisdom outright, but because of the philosophic inquiry they inspire. Socrates uses the sayings as a model similar to his own method of *elenchus* to convince those present of the superiority of his mode of conversation in eliciting wisdom over the long speeches of Protagoras and other sophists.

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31 Herodotus’ Athenian companion Sophocles depicts versions of this saying in gnomic fashion in two of his plays. *Trachinia 2-3; Oedipus Tyrannus* 1529-1530. On the literary relationship between Herodotus and Sophocles, see Heiden (2012); Saïd (2002).

32 The phrase “Γνῶθι σαυτόν” appears six times in the Platonic corpus (five times with Socrates as one of the interlocutors): *Philebus* 48c; *Alecibades I* 124a (discussed again at 129a, 132c); *Hipparchus* 228e; *Charmides* 164e, 165a; and here at *Protagoras* 343b. It is also discussed at *Phaedrus* 229e, where Socrates paraphrases it as γνῶναι ἐμαυτόν, “to know myself”; and alluded to at *Laws* 923a, where the Athenian Stranger proclaims, χαλεπόν ύμην ἐστίν γνωστέων τὰ ὑμετέρα αὐτῶν χρήματα καὶ πρός γε ὑμᾶς αὐτός (“it is difficult for you to know your own possessions and to know yourselves”). The phrase Μηδέν ἄγαν appears several times in Plato’s corpus, often in conjunction with Γνῶθι σαυτόν (*Philebus* 45e, *Hipparchus* 228e, *Charmides* 165a, *Menexenus* 247e, and here at *Protagoras* 343b). See note 72 below.
Socrates’ account of the Seven Sages seems to correspond with Herodotus’ account of them, but it also departs from the wisdom tradition within Book I of Herodotus in an important way: the pertinence of wisdom to one’s own city. This can be seen from the connection between wisdom and travel in Herodotus. In the historian’s account of Solon, the Seven Sages all travel to Croesus’ court to see him, emphasizing the role of travel in their tradition. Croesus says that word of Solon has reached him because of both Solon’s wisdom and his travel (καὶ σοφίης εἶνεκεν τῆς σοῆς καὶ πλάνης, 1.30), as Tell points out. Croesus’ address to Solon as “Athenian Stranger” (Zeîne Ἀθηναῖος) further connects Solon’s wisdom and travel by identifying him as a “visitor” or “stranger” from another land. Herodotus himself is a traveling wise man. He learns through his inquiry (ιστορίη). Throughout the Platonic corpus, the new fifth-century σοφισταί, “sophists,” are characterized as traveling figures as well. Thus Protagoras of Abdera—Socrates identifies him as a “foreigner” (Zeînω) from Abdera (Αβδηρίτη) before even mentioning his name (309c)—has come to Athens in the Protagoras, and the other figures Plato depicts as “sophists” come to Athens from various other places.

Although Socrates depicts the Seven Sages as travelers, their travel and its purpose differs greatly from the sophists. They come together at a Pan-Hellenic center—Delphi, the central point or “navel” (ὁμφαλός) of the world—for the benefit of all Greece. The sophists, on the other hand, come together at Athens—which Hippias calls “the very center of wisdom in Greece” (τῆς τε Ἑλλάδος εἰς αὐτὸ τὸ πρωτανεῖον τῆς

33 Tell (2011) 111-112.
34 Tell 100-101.
σοφίας, *Protagoras* 337d), supposedly to educate the Athenians. But Plato depicts their motives as financial—they teach for pay, unlike Socrates—and their wisdom, even if it does benefit the Athenians, does not benefit their own respective cities. Socrates likewise wanders, but his wandering is almost exclusively within his home city of Athens. Socrates is more similar to Solon than Protagoras or Hippias, because his wandering is a search for wisdom (more specifically, a search for someone wiser than he). As Ker points out, Socrates has never left Athens except on military service, but “his trial and the last days of his life...fell within the period of the Delos *theoria*.”

In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates defines his own life’s mission as both service to the god Apollo (23b) and furthermore a benefit to the Athenians (36c ff.). Socrates and Solon both, therefore, go on *theoriai* for the benefit of the city. But Socrates’ lack of travel, among other factors, makes him distinctly non-Solonian as well. Socrates’ use of Solon (and the Seven Sages) in the *Protagoras* suggests a kinship between this tradition and Socratic and Platonic philosophy. But philosophy develops apart from these archaic wise men, and throughout Plato’s corpus there is a distinction between the *lovers of wisdom* (φιλόσοφοι) and those who think themselves, or are reputed, to be wise (σοφοί).

This dissertation thus examines how Plato uses Solon as a figure to advance the practice of philosophy, as Solon stands as a starting point for philosophy in Plato’s *Protagoras*. Chapters 2-4 examine Solon’s major role in the projects of Plato’s *Timaeus*.

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35 *Apology* 19e-20a.

36 22a6; Cf. Kurke (2011) 327.

37 Ker (2000) 327, on *Crito* 52b and *Phaedo* 58a-c.
Critias, Republic, and Laws respectively. For the remainder of this chapter, I examine the lesser roles Solon plays in the other dialogues in which he appears.

III. Plato’s Hippias Major

In this dialogue, the sophist Hippias tells Socrates that the Spartans, although they enjoy listening to Hippias, do not pay him to educate their sons, for their law forbids foreign education. Socrates then finds out that they only listen to Hippias tell stories of ancient history, such as genealogies of heroes and men and how cities were founded (285d-e). Socrates exclaims how difficult such a practice would be for Hippias in Athens, listing archons “from the time of Solon” (ἀπὸ Σῶλων, 285e). This passing reference to Solon may simply convey the meaning of “a long time ago.” But the passage also marks a beginning point for archon lists. Solon became eponymous archon when the Athenians asked him to reform the constitution, perhaps in 594/3 BCE. During the classical period, Solon became known as the legislator and founder of the Athenian democracy, despite the fact that his constitution was “mixed.”

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38 In the Table of Contents to his Plato: Complete Works (1997), Cooper notes that “it is not generally agreed by scholars whether Plato is the author” of Hippias Major, while “it is generally agreed by scholars that Plato is not the author” of Lovers (section IV) below. I nonetheless include both works in this chapter, as both were accepted throughout antiquity as authentic parts of the Platonic corpus (e.g. Diogenes Laertius, III.5). On the authenticity of these two and other “lesser” dialogues, see Pangle (Cornell 1987) The Roots of Political Philosophy: Ten Forgotten Socratic Dialogues, “Editor’s Introduction.”

39 This idea falls in line with what Socrates says about the Spartans in the Protagoras. See section II above.

40 I discuss potential problems in the dating of Solon’s eponymous archonship—or at least the Athenian perspective of its dating—in section III of chapter two below.

41 See Anderson (2007), as well as section II of chapter two below.
comment about Solon in *Hippias Major* then may acknowledge the view of Solon as the beginning of Athens as Socrates and his contemporaries knew it.

**IV. Plato's Lovers**

In Plato’s *Lovers*, Socrates interrogates an anonymous “lover” on what philosophizing (τὸ φιλοσοφεῖν) is, so that they can determine whether it is something noble or something shameful (εἴτε καλὸν εἴτε αἰσχρόν, 133b). The lover responds not only that he thinks philosophy is something noble, but also that he knows what philosophy is, and he uses Solon to define the practice:

> Τί δ’ ἄλλο γε ἢ κατὰ τὸ Ὑδσόνος: Ὑδσόν γάρ που εἶπε –
> γηράσκω δ’ αἰεὶ πολλὰ διδασκόμενος:
> καὶ ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ οὕτως ἂεὶ χρῆναι ἐν γέ τι μανθάνειν τῶν μέλλοντα
> φιλοσοφήσειν, καὶ νεώτερον ὄντα καὶ πρεσβύτερον, ἵν’ ὡς πλείστα ἐν
> τῷ βίῳ μάθη. (133c, quoting Solon 18 W.)

What else is [philosophy] other than that adage of Solon; for he said:

> I grow old, always learning [or “being taught”] many things…

And it seems to me that the one who intends to philosophize must always learn at least some one thing, both when he is younger and when he is older, so that he may learn as many things as possible in the course of his life.

In quoting Solon, the lover establishes him as an authority in the realm of philosophy. But he also manipulates Solon’s words, replacing Solon’s διδασκόμενος with his own μανθάνειν. Leake, in his translation, notes that “[t]he primary sense of the word Solon had used is “being taught” (as a father has his son brought up to be a good citizen), whereas the speaker’s [i.e. the “lover”] word has a primary sense of learning for oneself.
Solon’s word embraces learning how to live, while the speaker’s word often implies more intellectual learning. The difference, then, between Solon’s word and the lover’s word is learning for the sake of one’s life versus learning for the sake of accumulating knowledge.

Socrates seems to notice such a distinction in his response. He asks the lover whether he considers philosophy to be polymathy (πολυμαθίαν), and the lover replies that he does (133c-d). Socrates shows, through analogy, that philosophy is not an accumulation of knowledge, as knowledge within any specific field in quite an endeavor in itself to learn (135b-d), and one who tries to learn so many arts must be inferior to individual experts in each art, as a pentathlete does not excel in any one competition, but is second to runners in running and wrestlers in wrestling (135e). Socrates then shows that philosophy is not polymathy (139a), but he does not show what it is. He furthermore never denies that Solon’s verse applies to what philosophy is, only that the lover’s interpretation is incorrect. The notion that it is a type of learning, then, could be correct, and the type of learning is not concerned with accumulating as much knowledge as one can, but, more specifically, with learning how to be a good citizen. This type of learning is further expanded upon in the Laches, where the interlocutors also use Solon’s verse as a measure for learning.

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42 Leake (1987) 82n5.
V. Plato's *Laches*

Solon is twice mentioned in the *Laches*, both with reference to the connection between wisdom and old age. First, Nicias mentions Solon and a sentiment in his poetry, while discussing the way conversations always go with Socrates:

χαίρω γάρ, ὃ Λυσίμαχε, τῷ ἀνδρὶ πλησιάζων, καὶ οὐδὲν οἴμαι κακὸν εἶναι τὸ ὑπομονησκεθαι ὅτι μὴ καλῶς ἢ πεποιήκαμεν ἢ ποιοῦμεν, ἀλλ' εἰς τὸν ἐπείτα βίον προμηθέστερον ἀνάγκη εἶναι τὸν ταύτα μὴ φεύγοντα ἀλλ' ἐθέλουντα κατὰ τὸ τοῦ Σόλωνος καὶ ἀξιοῦντα μανθάνειν ἐσωπερ ἀν ζη, καὶ μὴ οἰόμενον αὐτῷ τὸ γῆρας νοῦν ἔχον προσέναι. (188a-b)

For I am glad, Lysimachus, to associate with [Socrates], nor do I think it bad to be reminded that either we haven’t done good, or do not do good now, but for the rest of life, it is necessary for one to have more forethought, one who does not flee these things, but who is willing and deems it worthy to learn, according to that saying of Solon, just as he lives, and who does not think that old age comes to one along with wisdom.

In this passage, Nicias recalls Solon 18 W., the same fragment recalled in *Lovers*:

γηράσκω δ' αἰεὶ πολλὰ διδασκόμενος,

But I grow old, always being taught many things…

Nicias uses the sentiment of this fragment to demonstrate his own learnedness. Though being older (Socrates had already mentioned that he is younger than his interlocutors Nicias and Laches, both of whom may have learned something which he has not, so he is willing to listen to them on matters of courage, 186b-e), he claims to enjoy conversing with Socrates, because he is still able to learn (μανθάνειν). Nicias seems to have a familiarity with Socrates’ method of *elenchus*.

Laches next responds to Nicias’ appeal to Socrates’ conversational style, saying that he enjoys conversing with Socrates as well, but not because he has previously seen
Socrates in conversation; rather, he has seen Socrates in action: he had earlier praised Socrates’ conduct during the Athenian retreat at the battle of Delium. Laches is eager to converse with Socrates, provided his words and actions accord. Like Nicias, Laches says, he is in agreement with Solon’s sentiment, so he mentions the poet again:

καὶ οὐκ ἂν ἀχθοίμην μανθάνων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔγώ τῷ Σόλωνι, ἐν μόνοι προσλαβών, συγχωρῶ: γνάσεωι γὰρ πολλὰ διδάσκεσθαι ἐθέλω ὑπὸ χρηστῶν μόνον. τούτῳ γάρ μοι συγχωρεῖτω, ἀγαθόν καὶ αὐτὸν εἶναι τὸν διδάσκαλον, ἵνα μὴ δυσμαθῆ χαίνωμαι ἀπὸδώς μανθάνων.

(189a)

…and I would not be annoyed at learning, but in fact I too agree with Solon, if I can add just one thing: As I grow old, I wish to be taught many things only by good men. For let [Solon] agree with me that the teacher is also himself good, lest I appear to be bad at learning, if I learn in an unpleasing way.

Laches does not simply repeat Nicias’ statement here; rather, he corrects it. For Solon said that he is “being taught” (διδασκόμενος), rather than learning in an active way, as Nicias suggests (μανθάνειν). Laches uses the passive infinitive διδάσκεσθαι, and he puts emphasis on the character of the teacher (διδάσκαλον). Nicias furthermore uses the same terminology as the lover from Plato’s Lovers, perhaps implying that Nicias sees Socratic philosophy as an accumulation of knowledge, rather than learning how to be a good citizen.

Laches not only corrects Nicias regarding what Solon said, but he “adds one thing” (ἐν μόνον προσλαβών): the character of a teacher. One’s learning goes hand in hand with the goodness of one’s teacher. Laches is improving upon Solon’s idea: it is not

43 181a-b; cf. Symposium 220e-221b.

44 For more on Nicias’ misquotation and Laches’ correction, see Schmidt (1992), who cites Leake (1987) and makes the same distinction between didaskein and manthanein, thus suggesting that Nicias also sees philosophy as equivalent to polymathy (86 and 194n44).
just learning by itself that is important, but the type of person from whom one learns also ought to be important. Throughout Plato’s dialogues, Socrates tests various teachers—sophists, poets, rhapsodes, etc.—to see whether they are appropriate educators or not. Laches, unlike Nicias, can see the importance of this. Nicias accepts Socrates as an interlocutor because he has seen Socrates speak before, and he enjoys such questions and answers. To him, Socrates is really no different from the sophists. Laches accepts Socrates because, as a man of action, he has seen Socrates not in words, but in deeds. While Nicias thinks Socrates is a good speaking partner, Laches—so he himself believes—knows Socrates to be a good man in deeds. Although he is unfamiliar with Socrates’ customary manner in conversation, Laches seems to be a step ahead of his rival Nicias; in the same way, he interprets Solon’s poem better than Nicias does.

The interpretation of Solon’s poem here is emblematic of Socratic elenchus. Nicias puts forth an opinion, and Laches then improves upon this. Likewise, Socrates often questions the common opinions others have, in order to improve upon them, even if no final verdict on the issue is reached. As a perceived authority on education, Solon thus represents a means of moving the conversation forward in the Laches. In the Republic, as I discuss in Chapter Three, Socrates questions the same verse of Solon, and in doing so, he questions Solon’s authority.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Republic 536d. Cf. Nichols (1987) 251n21: “Solon (ca. 640-560), the famous Athenian legislator and one of the “Seven Sages,” expressed his wisdom in poetry. Nicias refers to a line of elegiac poetry that has come down to us: “I grow old ever learning (or being taught) many things.” Solon criticizes the validity of this saying in Republic 536d.”
VI. Plato’s Lysis

In this dialogue, Socrates discusses what “friendship” or “love” (φιλία) is with the young boys Menexenus and Lysis. After Menexenus briefly leaves (207d) and returns (211a), Socrates must catch him up on the conversation: Socrates is particularly concerned with possessing friendship, so he wants to know how one becomes the friend of another (211e-212a). He uses different possibilities in a lover-beloved relationship to interrogate Menexenus on the matter. Is the lover or the beloved the friend of the other? Or, if one loves another but is hated in return, is the lover still the friend? Menexenus agrees that if both do not love each other, they are not friends (212c-d). This leads to Socrates’ further suggestion that there cannot be horse-lovers, “unless the horses love them in return” (οὖς ἄν οἱ ἵπποι μὴ ἀντιφιλώσιν, 212d), nor quail-lovers, dog-lovers, wine-lovers, or exercise-lovers. Socrates concludes that “the poet lies” (ψεύδεθ’ ὁ ποιητής, 212e) who wrote these lines:

οἷβιος, ὃ παῖδες τε φίλοι καὶ μῶνυχες ἵπποι καὶ κῦνες ἀγρευταί καὶ ξένος ἀλλοδαπός.

Happy is he who has dear children and single-hoofed horses and hunting-dogs and a foreign host.

Although Socrates does not give the source of this poem, its author is Solon (23 W.). At this point, Menexenus refuses Socrates’ suggestion, believing that “the poet” is correct, despite the fact that these lines contradict Socrates and Menexenus’ discussion. Socrates soon says they must change the course of their conversation, looking to the poets “as if they are the fathers and leaders of wisdom” (ὡσπερ πατέρες τῆς σοφίας εἰσὶν καὶ ἥγεμόνες, 214a). While Solon is never directly identified as the author of the verses Socrates recites, his poetry acts as some sort of authority on friendship, through which
Socrates and Menexenus can reorient themselves in the conversation. Whether or not the sentiment of Solon’s poetry is correct, it points out a possible flaw in Socrates and Menexenus’ approach towards the question. Menexenus was easily agreeing with Socrates’ questions and suggestions, until the poem put a new perspective on the problem of friends between lovers and beloveds. Just as Nicias and Laches use Solon’s poetry as a method of moving the conversation forward in the Laches, so do Socrates and Menexenus in the Lysis.

VII. Plato’s Symposium

In the Symposium, during Socrates’s recollection of his conversation with Diotima, the priestess mentions Solon as the revered legislator among Athenians. He comes into discussion as Diotima outlines an aspect of mortal nature, its desire to become immortal. Since mortals by nature cannot do so, it is through engendering (γέννησις) that they become immortal (207a-208b). Furthermore, they prefer to produce the most beautiful offspring possible. Diotima says that people feel envy when they look at the immortal offspring (i.e. poetry) of Homer, Hesiod, and “the other good poets” (209d). She also places legislators among the parents of immortal offspring:

εἰ δὲ βούλει, ἔφη, σέους Λυκούργους παῖδας καταλίπετο ἐν Λακεδαίμονι σωτήρας τῆς Λακεδαίμονος καὶ ὡς ἔπος εἴπειν τῆς Ἑλλάδος. τίμιος δὲ παρ’ ὑμῖν καὶ Σόλων διὰ τὴν τῶν νόμων γέννησιν, καὶ ἄλλοι ἄλλοι πολλαχοὶ ἀνδρεῖς, καὶ ἐν Ἑλλησὶ καὶ ἐν βαρβάροις, πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ ἀποφημανομεῖ τέρα, γεννήσαντες παντοῖαν ἄρετήν· ὠν καὶ ἱερὰ πολλὰ ἤδη γέγονε διὰ τοὺς τοιούτους παῖδας, διά δὲ τοὺς ἀνθρωπίνους οὐδενὸς πώς. (209d-e)

“And if you prefer,” she said, “Lycurgus left behind these sort of children in Lacedaemon as the saviors of Lacedaemon and, so to speak, of Greece. And Solon is also honored among you for the engendering of his laws, and
other men everywhere else, among both Greeks and non-Greeks, who displayed many noble deeds and begat every kind of virtue; many temples already have been made for these men because of such noble children; but never has a temple been made for someone because of mortal children.

Solon and the other famous lawgivers attained immortality through their laws. It is worth noting here that Solon is grouped with legislators such as Lycurgus rather than the poets Homer and Hesiod. This image of Solon as lawmaker—and not poet—may remind us of the image Critias creates of the Solon who set aside the writing of poetry because of the political crisis to which he had to attend (Timaeus 21b-d, see chapter two). Diotima puts forth no positive statement about Solon; rather, she simply acknowledges the honor he holds among the Athenians. While the dialogues we have already discussed all acknowledge Solon the poet, he is portrayed in the Symposium and Phaedrus as a legislator and politician.

VIII. Plato's Phaedrus

Socrates grants immortality to Solon again in the Phaedrus, where he mentions Solon’s lawmaking and political influence twice. First, after Socrates finishes his palinode to atone for possibly offending Eros, he mentions Solon as part of an introduction into the discussion of rhetoric. Phaedrus says that politicians are afraid to leave their speeches behind in writing, lest they be labeled “sophists.” Yet Socrates says the very opposite is the case, that they prefer to leave such speeches behind so people approve of what they write (257d-e). After convincing Phaedrus that they prefer to be approved for their speeches, he asks,
Whenever someone becomes a sufficient orator or king, so that he takes the power of a Lycurgus or a Solon or a Darius and becomes an immortal speech-writer in the city, does he not consider himself equal to the gods while he is still alive, and do not those who come after him think these same things about him, when they look at his writings?

By grouping the speech-writer with these famous statesmen, Socrates acknowledges the power of a name such as “Solon.” The fact that there is no definite article, making Solon’s name indefinite (“a Solon”), further emphasizes this point. Thus Socrates and Phaedrus conclude that writing speeches is not itself shameful (οὐκ αἰσχρὸν αὐτό γε τό γράφειν λόγους, 258d). Socrates will later undermine this with his myth of Theuth and Thamus, where he argues against the art of writing. But at this point at least, Solon appears in a positive light because of his writing.

When Socrates brings up Solon again near the end of the dialogue, it is in less positive light. Most speeches, Socrates has convinced Phaedrus, are like statues, inasmuch as they stand silent when questioned, unable to answer and defend themselves. Socrates instead proposes a living and ensouled speech (λόγον...ζώντα καὶ ἐμψυχον, 276a), one able to defend itself and to know to whom it should and should not speak: dialectic (τῇ διαλεκτικῇ τέχνῃ, 276e). Thus, Socrates says he and Phaedrus must bid writers as follows:

Οὕκοιν ἡδη πεπαισθω μετρίως ἡμῖν τὰ περὶ λόγων· καὶ οὐ τε ἐλθὼν φράζει Λυσία ὅτι νῦν καταβάντες ἐς τὸ Νυμφών νάμα τε καὶ μουσείων ἱκουσαμεν λόγων, οἱ ἐπέστελλον λέγειν Λυσία τε καὶ εἰ τις ἄλλος συντήθησι λόγους, καὶ Ὠμήρω καὶ εἰ τις ἄλλος αὐ τοίς ψιλῆν ἢ ἐν ὠδῇ συντῆθηκε, τρίτων δὲ Σόλωνι καὶ ὡστὶς ἐν πολιτικοῖς λόγοις νόμος ὁνομάζων συγγράμματα ἐγραψεν· εἰ μὲν εἰδώς ἢ τῷ ἄληθες ἔχει συνεθήκε ταῦτα, καὶ ἔχων βοηθεῖν, εἰς ἔλεγχον ἰών περὶ ὧν
Therefore, let’s play moderately with the matters concerning speeches. And you, go tell Lysias that we went down to the spring of the Nymphs and the Muses and we heard speeches that commanded us to tell Lysias and anyone else who composes speeches, and also Homer and anyone else who composes poetry with or without song, and third, Solon and whoever writes in political speeches and calls them laws: if he knows the truth when he composes these things, and he is able to come to help them, coming to a cross-examination concerning the things he wrote, and when he recites them, if he is able to point out the bad parts, then it is necessary that he not have an eponymous title, but a title from the things he took seriously.

Such a person shall be called, instead of a poet or a writer of speeches or a lawmaker, a *philosopher* (φιλόσοφος, 278d-e). Since Socrates and Phaedrus could still talk to Lysias and other such contemporary speech-writers, as well as contemporary poets and lawgivers, for them, the title of *philosopher* is still attainable. But for Homer and Solon, and others who have died and left their “children” mute and without defense, they retain the mere title of poet or lawmaker. This is not to say that their pursuits are completely negative; but Socrates presents a better alternative path for Phaedrus to pursue.

**IX. Conclusion**

From the above passages, we can see that most of the references to Solon in Plato’s dialogues are in fact vital to the arguments at hand. In the *Protagoras*, Solon is one of the figures to whom Socrates appeals to move his audience, and even his interlocutor, beyond the limits of sophistry and into the new practice of philosophy. In the *Hippias Major*, Solon comes into conversation as a point of reference that comments on the Athenian perspective of their own history. In the *Lovers, Laches* and *Lysis*, Solon’s
poetry acts as a guide for the direction of the conversation, and helps to propel the philosophical discussion forward. In the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, Solon’s *gravitas* as the great lawgiver of the Athenians allows Socrates to supplant the authority of the poets; but Socrates further supplants Solon’s authority with that of wisdom-seeking philosophers. These many uses illustrate the polyvalence of Solon’s name in the context of classical Athens, in both a positive and a negative way. While Socrates can call upon Solon to enable the practice of philosophy, so can Critias to establish his own authority. In the following chapters, I will examine the narratives Plato is able to construct, first in relation to Critias in the *Timaeus-Critias* (Chapter 2), then within each of Plato’s longest two dialogues, the *Republic* (Chapter 3) and the *Laws* (Chapter 4).

**X. An Index of the Occurrences of Solon in Plato’s Dialogues**

1) Direct mention (32 instances)

   a. *Charmides* 155a3; 157e6
   b. *Critias* 108d5; 110b3; 113a3
   c. *Hippias Major* 285e4
   d. *Laches* 188b3; 189a4
   e. *Laws* 858e3
   f. *Letter II* 311a6
   g. *Lovers* 133c4
   h. *Phaedrus* 258c1; 278c3

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46 Partially taken from Morrow. See note 12 above.
i. *Protagoras* 343a3

j. *Republic* 536d1; 599e3

k. *Symposium* 209d7

l. *Timaeus* 20e1; 21a6; 21b6; 21c1; 21d8; 21e8; 22b4; 23b4; 23c4; 23d2; 23d5; 25b5; 25e1; 25e5; 27b1

2) Uncited Quotation of Poetry Fragments (2 instances, 3 lines total)

a. *Lysis* 212e2-3

b. *Lovers* 133c5 (cf. *Laches* 188b3, 189a4; *Republic* 536d1)
I. Introduction: The Relevance of Critias’ Invocation of Solon to Fourth-Century Athenian Ideology

In this chapter, I analyze Critias’ use of Solon, both as source of the Atlantis tale and as his own ancestor, in an attempt to legitimate himself as a philosopher in Plato’s Timaeus-Critias dialogues. Critias’ family, which included Plato himself, claimed to have a familial relationship to Solon, and Critias emphasizes this relationship in the framing of his tale. Critias, as I will suggest, saw his own claim to Solon as proper and even hereditary. I also contextualize this use of Solon within the larger traditions concerning Solon in Plato’s time, especially the one offered by Herodotus in Book I of his Histories. By the fourth century, the figure of Solon had become as legendary as he was historical, a stock name to which orators and politicians could refer in order to justify their own motives or attack their opponents. According to the Aristotelian Athenian Constitution, the oligarchs of 411 claimed that they were investigating the ancestral laws (τοὺς πατρίους νόμους) of Cleisthenes, whose constitution was not democratic but

47 Throughout this chapter, I assume (as most scholars have) that Timaeus and Critias are a two parts of a continuous dialogue sequence. Clay (1997) goes ever further in suggesting that the two are in fact one and the same dialogue, separated later by manuscript editors.

48 Plato was the maternal second-cousin of Critias. Section III explores this relationship in depth.
similar to Solon’s (οὐ δημοτικὴν ἄλλα παραπλησίαν οὖσαν τὴν Κλεισθένους πολιτείαν τῇ Σόλωνος, 29). The democrats of classical Athens likewise claimed Solon as their own. 49 Isocrates, for instance, in the Areopagiticus, says to his fellow Athenians,

Εὑρίσκω γὰρ ταύτην μόνην ἀν γενομένην καὶ τῶν μελλόντων κινδύνων ἀποτροπῆν καὶ τῶν παρόντων κακῶν ἀπαλλαγῆν, ἢν ἐθελήσωμεν ἐκείνην τὴν δημοκρατίαν ἀναλαβῆν, ἢν Σόλων μὲν ὁ δημοτικότατος γενομένος ἐνομοθέτησε, Κλεισθένης δ’ ὁ τοὺς τυράννους ἑκβαλὼν καὶ τὸν δῆμον καταγαγὼν πάλιν εἰς ἀρχῆς κατέστησεν. (7.16)

For I find that the only way to rescue ourselves from our present evils and head off future dangers is if we are willing to restore the democracy which Solon, the most democratic man, legislated, and which Cleisthenes, who drove out the tyrants and led the people back to power, restored. 50

Isocrates reduces the man whom we today credit as the founder of Athenian democracy to simply its restorer. More recently, Greg Anderson argues that Herodotus and Thucydides believed that “democracy was not invented from scratch in 508/7, but more or less automatically resumed its earlier course when the tyrants were removed back in 511/0.” 51 This perspective, Anderson suggests, stems from Cleisthenes himself, who, in order “to deflect attention from the novelty of his innovations and forestall any damaging accusations of ‘revolution,’” suggested that his “new order was no more than the revival of a traditional old order that the Peisistratids had supposedly dismantled,” 52 i.e. the legislation of Solon or Theseus.

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50 Translation modified from Finley (1987). All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted. For a study of καθίστημι meaning “restore,” see Anderson (2007) 117-119.


52 Anderson (2007) 123.
Solon’s status as *the* ancient lawgiver of Athens allowed orators to interpret his laws to suit their own purposes and show how their opponents were ruining the city through neglect of *his* laws. Furthermore, Aeschines calls upon Solon as a paradigm of morality in his *Against Timarchus*. As Thomas says, Aeschines gives “a blatant eulogy of the laws and the ancient lawgiver [i.e. Solon] in order to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that Timarchus is violating the laws, and the intentions of the ancient lawgiver, and therefore destroying the city.”

Regardless of what the laws stated, the figure of the lawgiver stood above all of this because he himself set down these laws. Fourth-century rhetoricians, orators, and politicians appealed to Solon to further their own means.

Kathryn Morgan claims that “there was…an extent to which the figure of Solon was ‘up for grabs’ in the fourth century.” In discussing the *Timaeus* and *Critias*, she argues that “Solon’s role as authoritative source of the Atlantis tale parallels his function as a signifier of constitutional legitimation in contemporary rhetoric” (108-109). Thus, “by associating the myth of Athens and Atlantis with Solon, Plato has Critias engage in a characteristically fourth-century practice of tapping into an historical source for political validation” (112). Morgan’s argument goes against the interpretation of Finley, who notes that Solon’s name appears in Plato’s dialogues “some eighteen times,” and yet claims that “these references to Solon [in Plato] are casual but friendly” (50), and furthermore, “no serious argument ever rests on these casual remarks; they are simply part of the Platonic style of discourse, with its constant citation of the activities and

53 Thomas (1994) 123.
54 Morgan (1998) 111.
references familiar to every ordinary Athenian” (51).55 In this chapter, I suggest that Critias appeals to Solon for more than political validation: he wants philosophical validation as well. Plato was writing in a time when the definition of “philosophy” was contested.56 In the Timaeus-Critias, his character of Critias uses the name of Solon to legitimate himself as a true philosopher.

Before looking at the Timaeus-Critias, let us first review the appearances of Solon in the Protagoras and Charmides, where Socrates called upon the Athenian statesman as a philosophic figure.57 These two dialogues are particularly relevant to the Timaeus-Critias, because they are the only other dialogues in which the character Critias appears, and the link between Solon and philosophy is also called upon in both. In the Protagoras, Socrates presents Solon and the Seven Sages as early examples of philosophers in his history of philosophy.58

There are men today and men of long ago who have understood this, that to Laconize is much more to love wisdom than to love gymnastics; for

55 Finley (1987).
56 Cf. Nightingale (2004) 3: “The Greek thinkers of the fourth century BCE were the first to call themselves philosophers, the first to define philosophy as a specialized discipline and a unique cultural practice. Creating the professional discipline of philosophy required an extraordinary effort of self-definition and legitimation. In addition to developing ideas and arguments, these philosophers had to stake out the boundaries of their discipline and articulate the ways that it differed from other modes of wisdom.” See also Nightingale (1995), chapter 1, “Plato, Isocrates, and the property of philosophy.”
57 I discuss the role of Solon in the Protagoras in depth in chapter one section II. I discuss Solon in the Charmides further below in this section.
they know that to be able to utter such phrases is characteristic of an educated man. Among such men were Thales the Milesian, Pittacus the Mytilenaean, Bias the Prienean, our own Solon, Cleoboulus the Lindian, Myson the Chenaean, and the seventh among these was said to be Chilon, a Lacedaemonian.

The identification of Solon here plays on his prominent role in Athenian ideology. He is “our Solon”—not just “Solon the Athenian,” as the other Sages are identified—because of his importance to the young Athenians present in this dialogue. This importance is heightened by the fact that Solon appears at the center of the list. The specific use of the infinitive φιλοσοφεῖν in the passage above also emphasizes the link Socrates is creating between the Seven Sages and loving wisdom (i.e. “philosophy”).

Solon is again linked with philosophy in the Charmides in relation to the potentially philosophic character of Critias and Charmides. In this dialogue, Socrates, who has just recently returned from Potidaea, wants to know the status of philosophy in Athens while he was away. He therefore asks “whether any young men have become distinct in wisdom, beauty, or both” (153d). Critias is quick to point out his younger cousin Charmides. Socrates, while impressed with the young man’s physical beauty, asks one more thing: whether Charmides is noble in his soul. “This is somehow appropriate, Critias,” Socrates says, “since he is a member of your family” (154d). Socrates here praises Critias and his family as if there is something particularly philosophical about them. Critias replies that this is indeed the case: Charmides is considered to be a philosopher and quite a poet too. Socrates then replies, “This noble thing, my dear Critias, goes way back for you, to your kinship with Solon” (Toῦτο μὲν, ἤν δ’ ἔγω, ὥ φιλε Κριτία, πόρρωθεν ύμῖν τὸ καλὸν ύπάρχει ἀπὸ τῆς Σόλωνος συγγενείας, 155a). In this passage, Socrates insinuates that there is something hereditary about philosophy
and poetry. Elsewhere in the Platonic corpus, Socrates hardly believes philosophy is hereditary. In the Noble Lie of the Republic, for example, in which the golden race represents the ruling class, Socrates notes that oftentimes a silver child may be born from a golden parent, or a golden child from a silver parent, and so on (415a-b). Such circumstances suggest that the qualities of a person are not simply inherited. Rather, Socrates calls upon the noble origins of Critias and Charmides so that he may attempt to develop any philosophic potential they do have. The two young men, both potential students of Socrates, were also present at Callias’ house during the conversation of the Protagoras, a dialogue set a few years earlier than the Charmides. In Plato’s dramatic universe, Critias and Charmides were already familiar with Socrates’ link between Solon and the origins of philosophy.

Socrates points out the nobility of Charmides’ and Critias’ family again in the Charmides at 157e ff.: he tells the young Charmides that it is appropriate for him stand out among everyone else because of his lineage. On his father’s side, Anacreon and Solon are among the poets who praise members of his family for their “beauty” (κάλλει), “virtue” (ἀρετῇ), and “prosperity” (or “happiness”) (εὐδαιμονίᾳ) (157e-158a). Even within the frame of the dialogue, it is unlikely that Socrates actually believes this. However, once we move outside this frame, we can see inherent problems with this characterization. Critias will forever be remembered as the most evil of all fifth-century Athenian politicians, the leader of the so-called Thirty Tyrants. Association with him—

59 I discuss this passage further in section II of this chapter.
along with Alcibiades—helps incriminate Socrates in 399 as a corrupter of the youth. Furthermore, Critias will appoint Charmides as one of the ten leaders in the Piraeus, allied with his Thirty in Athens. Neither ever attains the philosophical potential they had as young men, and neither is portrayed as a follower of Socrates in the dialogues with dramatic dates after that of the *Charmides* (429 BCE), although Alcibiades in the *Symposium* (416 BCE) groups Charmides with himself and others as those whom Socrates rejects (222b).

If any member of Critias’ family did inherit and develop this philosophic potential, it was Plato himself, the nephew of Charmides and second cousin of Critias. Yet Critias, as Plato portrays him, does not seem to forget the link between Solon, philosophy, and himself. Rather, in the *Timaeus-Critias*, Plato presents Critias’ development of this link in the tale of Atlantis. In this suite, Critias invokes his kinship to Solon, which Socrates had once praised, to affirm his story’s suitability as an example of Socrates’ ideal city in action and, furthermore, his own legitimacy as a philosopher-statesman.

II. Critias and the Source of the Atlantis Tale

Plato’s *Timaeus* begins with Socrates counting out his three interlocutors—Timaeus of Locri, Critias of Athens, and Hermocrates of Syracuse—before noting that a fourth person is missing. Socrates then recounts the main points he made in the previous

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60 Cf. Aeschines, *Against Timarchus* 173: Ἐπειδὴ ὑμεῖς, ὥσπερ Αθηναίοι, Σωκράτην μὲν τὸν σοφιστήν ἀπεκτέινατε, ὅτι Κριτίαν ἐφάνη παιδευκώς, ἕνα τῶν τριάκοντα τῶν τῶν δήμων καταλυσάντων ("When you, Athenians, killed Socrates the sophist, because he clearly educated Critias, one of the Thirty who destroyed the demos…").
day’s discussion of the makeup of the best possible city and its citizens. Socrates’
description recalls many elements of the ideal city Callipolis which he describes in the
*Republic*, though several elements remain missing. Scholars have especially focused on
one missing detail: the rule of philosopher-kings.\(^{61}\) But there are in addition several other
aspects of the *Republic*’s conversation missing. There is no mention of the key analogy of
the Socrates’ ideal city in the *Republic*, the soul. Nor is there mention of the role of
poetry within the city and the succession of types of governmental regimes. These
missing elements suggest two different, although not mutually exclusive, possibilities: (1)
the conversation Socrates had the previous day with this group of interlocutors was a
different one from the conversation he had at Cephalus’ house in the *Republic*; (2) the
fact that all these elements are missing suggests a fault in the memory of Socrates and his
interlocutors; otherwise, someone of the three would have made mention of these
important tenets. The latter possibility—which remains open regardless of the first
possibility—problematises Critias’ narration of the Atlantis tale. How much can we trust
his account, given the fact that it is so indebted to memory? Critias’ tale has come down
from Solon through many generations, and he heard it many years ago. Timaeus’

\(^{61}\) Since antiquity, scholars have debated the relationship between the *Republic* and *Timaeus*. Proclus, for example, says that the *Timaeus-Critias* takes place the day after Socrates recounts the happenings of the *Republic*, thus two days after the discussion that took place at Cephalus’ house. There seem to be two main lines of argument about this relationship, in both of which there are variations. First, the developmental approach notes that Plato probably wrote *Timaeus-Critias* later than the *Republic*. Therefore, it represents a further development in his thought, namely that he has abandoned the several aspects of the *Republic* left out in this summary of the ideal city that opens the *Timaeus*. Cf. Schofield (1999) chapter 2, “‘The disappearing philosopher-king.’” The more dramatalogical scholars of Plato emphasize the separation between *Republic* and *Timaeus-Critias*, especially the two separate festivals occurring in the two separate works (Bendidiae and Panathenaeia respectively), which take place months apart and show that the *Timaeus-Critias* could not have taken place a day or two after the *Republic*. The two conversations are probably set years apart dramatically, though there is no consensus on the dramatic dating of either dialogue. Cf. Nails (2002) 326; Zuckert (2009) 420n1; Clay (1997).
cosmology, in contrast, an account that he himself must admit is fabricated (29c-d), is
dependent not upon memory, but upon reason.

Nonetheless, Timaeus and the other interlocutors accept Socrates’ summary.
Socrates wishes to see his city put into motion, that is, in some sort of interaction with
other cities. He finds that his interlocutors can do this, because their kind ἀμα
ἀμφοτέρων φύσει καὶ τροφῇ μετέχον, “by nature and upbringing, has a share in both
[politics and philosophy]” (19e), that is, they are philosopher-statesmen. Each in fact has
his own field of expertise. Our knowledge of the first interlocutor is limited to what the
dialogue tells us: Timaeus, according to Socrates, holds positions of highest authority and
honor in his well-governed (ἐνομωτάτης) city of Locri, and he has furthermore reached
“the peak of all philosophy” (φιλοσοφίας…ἐπ’ ἄκρον ἀπάσης ἐλήλυθεν, 20a). Critias
later says that Timaeus is an expert in astronomy, and he has taken up the task of learning
the nature of everything (27a).

We know much more biographically about Socrates’ other two interlocutors.
Critias, a one time associate of Socrates, was educated by the sophists.62 He was a poet
and politician, and he eventually would become leader of the infamous “Thirty Tyrants”
at the end of the Peloponnesian War. In Timaeus-Critias, Socrates says he is not an
“amateur” (ἰδιῶτης) in the matters at hand (20a). He certainly had some degree of
philosophical training, but he did not associate with Socrates in this regard. Even in the

62 In the next section of this chapter, I argue that this Critias must be the tyrant and oligarch, not the tyrant’s
grandfather, as others have argued. Philostratus’ inclusion of Critias in his Lives of the Sophists is evidence
of the view that Critias was later received as a sophist. Plato shows Critias associating with sophists as
early as 433/432 BCE in the Protagoras.
Charmides, Critias already seems to be beyond the stage of listening to Socrates.\textsuperscript{63} Whereas Timaeus is the expert in astronomy, Critias believes he is an expert on the affairs of Athenian citizens—for he has Solon’s account as well as his laws (27a-b). Given his training as both a sophist and a poet, we should not overlook the fact that Socrates finds both sophists and poets unable to appropriately praise the ideal city and its citizens (19d-e).\textsuperscript{64} Hermocrates was the Syracusan general who defeated the Athenians at Sicily. Like Critias, who seems to be his ally in Timaeus-Critias, he was an opponent of democracy.\textsuperscript{65} Socrates seems less aware of Hermocrates’ philosophical inclinations, as he has to rely on the testimony of others (20a-b). There is no direct indication in the Timaeus that Hermocrates will speak, but Socrates does expect a speech of Hermocrates in the Critias. Moreover, Thucydides’ description of Hermocrates tells us of the Syracusan’s intelligence as a statesman.\textsuperscript{66} Given his political activity in Syracuse before and during the Sicilian Expedition, in addition to the speeches of Timaeus (the origins of the cosmos through the creation of man) and Critias (the men of long ago), Lampert and Planeaux infer that Hermocrates’ speech—and thus his realm of expertise—must consist of human affairs in the present and future.\textsuperscript{67} The fourth-century Athenian readership of Plato’s

\textsuperscript{63} At Charmides 176c-d, Socrates seems worried about the controlling nature of Critias. See also the discussion of Critias in section III below.

\textsuperscript{64} Cf. Welliver (1977) 26: “In contrast to Timaeus, the true philosopher, [Critias] is the Sophist and orator skilled in making the better appear the worse. In his pursuit of this objective he degrades the discussion of divine things, for Socrates the most sacred of topics, to a golden opportunity to deceive his listeners…” (26).

\textsuperscript{65} Nails (2002) 162.

\textsuperscript{66} Thucydides 6.72.2; cf. Lampert and Planeaux (1998) 100-107.

\textsuperscript{67} Lampert and Planeaux (1998) 106.
dialogues would be familiar with the characters Socrates, Critias, and Hermocrates, and their importance to a conversation on political philosophy.

These three men, then, possess the expertise to put Socrates’ ideal city into motion. Once Socrates finishes his summary, Hermocrates says that he and his fellow interlocutors have been thinking about how to fulfill Socrates’ request since they left him the previous day. Critias brought up a story that may serve that very purpose. Thus, just as Socrates had narrated the main points of yesterday’s conversation, Critias now narrates the main points of the story he is going to tell:

’Ακουε δή, ὦ Σώκρατες, λόγον μάλα μὲν ἀτόπου, παντάπασι γε μὴν ἀληθούς, ὡς ὁ τῶν ἑπτά σοφῶτατος Σόλων ποτ’ ἔφη. (20d-e)

Listen, then, Socrates, to this tale, which, though strange, is entirely true, as Solon, the wisest of the Seven, once claimed.

In this passage, Critias cites Solon as the source of his tale, using Solon’s name to establish its veracity and authority. This invocation of Solon is similar in aim and effect to such invocations of the same Athenian legislator by orators of the fourth century. He cites Solon as an authority again in the Critias, while discussing the names that have passed down through Athenian mythology:

λέγω δὲ αὐτὰ τεκμαιρόμενος ὅτι Κέκροπός τε καὶ Ἕρεχθέως καὶ Ἐριχθοῖου καὶ Ἐριχθείου τῶν τε ἄλλων τὰ πλείστα διαστεράτως καὶ Θησέως τῶν άνω περὶ τῶν ὄνομάτων ἐκάστων ἀπομνημονεύεται, τούτων ἑκείνως τὰ πολλὰ ἐπονομάζοντας τοὺς ιερέας Σόλων ἔφη τὸν τότε διηγεῖσθαι πόλεμον… (110a-b)

I say these things and I give as my proof the fact that Solon said the priests, when they narrated the war, often gave names such as Cecrops and Erechtheus and Erichthonius and Erysichthon and other such names that are recorded for those before Theseus.
Critias uses the word τεκμαίρομαι to cite Solon as a token of evidence. What Solon says is important enough that Critias cites him rather than the priests who tell Solon the tale. Just as political opponents of classical Athens sustained themselves on the merits and exempla of Solon, so Critias calls upon Solon as a source that his interlocutors—and rivals—do not dare refute. It is notable that Critias uses the term λόγος (“account” or “report”) to describe the Atlantis tale rather than μῦθος (“tale”), although most translators have translated λόγος as “story” in this passage. While μῦθος in Plato often suggests a “myth” that is made up, λόγος suggests that the account has some element of “truth.”

In the Gorgias, for example, Socrates creates a dichotomy between μῦθος and λόγος before narrating his “myth” of the soul:

"Ἀκοῦε δὴ, φασί, μάλα καλοῦ λόγου, ὅπως εἶ ἐγώ σοι εἰμι, ἐγὼ δὲ λόγου· ὥσ ἁληθή γὰρ οὖν τὰ σοι λέει τῷ μέλλω λέγειν."

(523a)

Listen, then, as they say, to a particularly beautiful λόγος. Although you consider it a μῦθος, I consider it a λόγος, because I’m going to tell you what I’m about to tell as if it is true.

According to this passage, Socrates defines a λόγος as something that is “true,” while a μῦθος is something “like” (ὡς) what is true. Critias, by using the term λόγος to

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69 I refer to the Atlantis account as a “tale,” a term which seems less charged than “myth” given Critias’ terminology and retains the “telling” element of the word λόγος from λέγω. We can compare the use of the term in relation to Solon in Herodotus, where Croesus acknowledges the λόγος that has reached him about Solon’s wisdom and travels (1.30). λόγος here takes the sense of “news” or “report,” the point being that it spread by word of mouth.

70 Cf. For more on the dichotomy between λόγος and μῦθος in Plato’s dialogues, see Morgan (2000). Zuckert points out that, via a TLG search, when Socrates says he is retelling “myths” or combinations of mythos and logos (mythologia), these all concern the soul and afterlife, as opposed to speakers such as Protagoras, the Eleatic Stranger, and the Athenian Stranger, who tell “myths” about the origins of cities, but not the soul or afterlife (379n181). On the Timaeus-Critias in particular, much work has been done on this
describe Solon’s account, is appealing to its historicity, i.e. the notion that it corresponds to facts. Critias thus ranks his λόγος above Socrates’ account of the ideal city from the day before, which he characterizes as a “made-up story” (πλασθεντα μῦθον, 26e).

Critias thus misunderstands the distinction between μῦθος and λόγος. Although a μῦθος may not be “true” in the same sense that a λόγος is, it is not false in the sense that, for instance, a lie is. When Timaeus begins his cosmology, he calls it not a λόγος, but a “likely story”:

\[ \text{άλλως} \text{ ἐὰν ἄρα μὴ ἔχεις ἣττον παρεχωμεθα εἰκότας, ἀγαπάν χρή, μεμυσμένους ὡς ὁ λέγων ἐγὼ ἦμεις τε ἰδιὶ κρίται φύσιν ἀνθρώπινην ἔχομεν, ὥστε περὶ τούτων τὸν εἰκότα μῦθον ἀποδεχομένους πρέπει τούτου μὴ θέν ἐτι πέρα ζητεῖν. (29c-d) \]

But if I give an account no worse than what is likely, you must be content, keeping in mind that both you and I are judges with a human nature, so that it is appropriate in these matters that we accept the likely story and seek nothing further.

For Timaeus, what is “true” accords with divine truth; he and his interlocutors must be content, then, with “a likely story,” as their human nature prevents them from knowing more (i.e. divine knowledge). His words here directly contradict the sentiments of Critias, who uses the name “Solon” to affirm his account’s truth. For Critias, the factual occurrences of history truly are; for Timaeus, they are only becoming.\(^{71}\)

dichotomy. See especially Gill (1977), (1979) and (1993); Johansen (1998); Clay (1999); Rowe (2003); Burnyeat (2005).

\(^{71}\) Tim. 27d-28b. Cf. Gill (1993) 58: “It is argued that the degree of truth attainable by a given form of discourse (logos) is necessarily limited by the subject-matter of the discourse. Logoi whose subject-matter is ‘being’ (ousia) are, in principle, capable of achieving ‘truth’ (aletheia), while those whose subject-matter is ‘becoming’ (genesis), can only be ‘likely’ (eikos) and merit ‘trust’ or ‘credibility’ (pistis). Hence, as regards the genesis (‘coming-to-be’ or ‘becoming’) of the universe, we must be content if we can achieve ‘likelihood’, and so the status of the account is presented as being, at best, a ‘likely story’ (eikos muthos, 29d2).” See also Burnyeat (2005) for an extended discussion of Timaeus’ use of μῦθος.
Critias further establishes his tale’s authority by describing Solon as “wisest of the Seven.” That Solon could be the wisest contradicts Socrates’ depiction of the group in the Protagoras (342e ff.)—a dialogue in which Critias is present. Socrates there emphasizes the cohesion and cooperation of the Seven as a single unit. They came together at Delphi as a group, and it was there as a group, and not as individuals, that they composed the two Delphic maxims, sayings “Know yourself,” γνῶθι σαυτόν, and “Nothing in excess,” μηδὲν ἀγαν (343a-b). From the Protagoras on, the sources on the tradition of the Seven Sages have followed suit in emphasizing this unity and disavowal of each Sage’s individual reputation. We can see glimpses of Critias’ character here, as Plato depicts it: it is not enough that one of the Seven Sages, or any wise man, was his source. It was specifically Solon, the Athenian, the wisest.

Furthermore, Critias says that Solon told the story to his “kinsman and close friend” (ὁικείος καὶ σφόδρα φίλος) Dropides (Critias’ great-grandfather), who in turn told it to his son (the grandfather and namesake of the speaker Critias in this dialogue). In

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72 Critias’ presence in the Protagoras is notable in itself, because of the later infamous association between him and Socrates (on which, see Lampert (2012), especially 36-37). But it is of further importance, considering the Delphic maxims, which Critias discusses in the Charmides, where he serves as Socrates’ primary interlocutor. We can compare the role of these maxims to the appearance of one in a fragment of Critias: ἦν Λακεδαιμόνιος Ἀχιλλὸς σοφός, ὅς τάθ’ ἔλευε· / “μηδὲν ἀγαν” καὶ πάντα πρόσεστι καλά” (“It was the Lacedaemonian wise man Chilon who said the following: / “Nothing in excess. All things at the right time are noble,” fragment B7). Chilon of Sparta is the final name Socrates mentions in his list of the Seven Sages, perhaps fitting for Critias because of his supposed pro-Spartan tendencies. If Plato was aware of Critias’ poem—perhaps even in its full context—Critias’ laudation of Solon in the Timaeus supplements it with further illustration of Critias’ misunderstanding of the Seven.

73 I discuss this tradition in depth in the Protagoras section of chapter one. Proclus comments on Solon’s status as the wisest as follows: “That Solon should have been called “the wisest of the Seven” was entirely reasonable, given that it was said (i) by a relative, (ii) to another Athenian, (iii) at the Panathenaea, and (iv) to demonstrate that what will be said is aiming at complete wisdom. And one shouldn’t be surprised that he is described as “wisest” of them all, nor be over-desirous for a way that he could be called wisest of the other men, but one of the sages, all of whom were wisest” (I.80, trans. Tarrant, italics are Tarrant’s; I have chosen to use quotation marks, as opposed to Tarrant, who bolds the words which Procles cites from Timaeus).
this way, the tale was transmitted down through Critias’ family to himself: he first heard it at the Apaturia festival when he was just ten years old, from his then ninety-year-old grandfather. I discuss this genealogy further in the next section of this chapter, but it is important now to point out the kinship to Solon which Critias expresses. Not only is this story from the paradigmatic Athenian statesman, but Critias’ own family can trace its lineage back to him, albeit indirectly. Critias depicts himself as the heir to the tale.

The fact that Critias first hears the tale at the Apaturia festival is itself notable for the Athenian statesman. Herodotus connects the festival with the Ionians:

Εἰσὶ δὲ πάντες Ἰωνεῖς, ὃσοι ἀπ’ Ἀθηναίων γεγόνασι καὶ Ἀπατούρια ἁγούσι ὀρτήν. (1.147)

They are all Ionians, as many as are from Athens and celebrate the Apaturia festival.

Burkert says that the Apaturia is a three-day festival for the Ionians for phratries. Critias places the tale in a particularly Athenian context, before reciting it to a primarily non-Athenian audience.

Socrates acts excited at the prospect of listening to Critias’ tale of ancient Athens, since he had never heard it before (21a). He has never heard it, apparently, because Solon never put the story down into verse, and none of his kinsmen or descendants had taken the time to do so either. Critias, as heir, now offers the tale which he never thought to tell before. According to his own introduction (21b-d), his grandfather and namesake said Solon never finished the story because of the political turmoil he found when he returned home. He thus put his duties as statesman above those as poet. Had he finished the poem,

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74 Burkert (1985) 255.
however, he would have surpassed Hesiod, Homer, and the other poets in his reputation. In this description, Critias’ Solon does not seem to understand the importance of the Atlantis tale for the Athenians: his politics overrides his poetry, as if his poetry were a less important task. In Book 10 of the Republic, Socrates criticizes Homer for not being able to name any city he has directly benefitted through his poetry (599c-e). Solon is among the legislators Socrates offers as a counter-example: through his legislation, Solon could name the Athenians as his beneficiaries. But Socrates’ interrogation demands a defense of poetry (in this case, Homer’s poetry) as political. His recognition of Solon as a legislator, but not as a poet, in this passage ought to bring to the minds of his interlocutors that Solon too was a poet, but it does not. In Critias’ Atlantis narrative, Solon does not see the political relevance of poetry, but he turns to legislation instead. Further, Critias’ account of Solon’s turn away from poetry does not harmonize with many of the fragments of Solon’s poetry that we still have today, in which the speaker tries to put forth his political and moral ideals, as well as defend his intentions against the criticisms of his retractors.75

Yet this is the prelude with which Critias tries to establish Solon as an outstanding statesman who could have been an equally outstanding poet. Solon’s skill as a poet was far from lacking, but it was his dedication to being a political leader that takes precedence. Critias will now tell the story in Solon’s place, a task that Solon would have undertaken, if he had not had more pressing matters at hand. Solon’s actions, Critias thinks, further enhance his own authority. Socrates, Timaeus, and Hermocrates ought to

75 For example, Solon 32 W. and 33 W.
listen to Critias’ tale, because it came from so dedicated a statesman. Critias tries to
depict Solon in a way that accords with Socrates’ earlier reasons for believing his current
company is fit for putting his ideal city into motion:

For Timaeus here is from the well-governed city of Locri in Italy, and he’s
second to none there in property and lineage. He has served the highest
offices and honors in their city, and also, in my opinion, come to the peak
of all philosophy. And all of us here [in Athens] know Critias is an
amateur in none of the things we’re talking about. Finally, concerning the
nature and upbringing of Hermocrates, we must believe
they are
sufficient in all these things because so many testify to it.

All three of Socrates’ interlocutors seem qualified to handle his assignment because they
all have reputations as philosopher-statesmen. He describes their credentials, however, in
diminishing sequence: Timaeus’ reputation is the most established, for Socrates himself
holds a high opinion of him; the Athenians in general regard Critias as no “amateur” in
the matters at hand; for Hermocrates, Socrates must rely on hearsay. These credentials
are hardly equivalent to truth for Socrates, the philosopher who denied even his own
wisdom. Nonetheless, Critias sets up Solon as a philosopher-statesman in the eyes of the
Athenians. His status as philosopher-statesman is evident because he put his hobby
(poetry) to the side to handle political matters. Critias—his descendant, and a poet
himself—will now finish Solon’s project by passing on the tale Solon did not have time
to complete. The real Critias would soon take up Solon’s political tasks as leader of the
Thirty.
A scholiast, quoted by Proclus, gives a supposedly common anecdote about the notion that Critias is not an “amateur” (ἰδιώτης) in philosophy:

Ὁ Κρίτιας ἦν μὲν γενναῖος καὶ ἀδρας φύσεως, ἦπτετο δὲ καὶ φιλοσόφων συνοικισμὸν καὶ ἑκαλεῖτο ἰδιώτης μὲν ἐν φιλοσόφοις, φιλόσοφος δὲ ἐν ἰδιώταις, ὥς ἐν ἱστορία φησίν.

Critias was of a stout and noble nature, and he used to take part in philosophical gatherings as well. He was called ‘an amateur among philosophers, but a philosopher among amateurs,’ as history says.76

And furthermore,

tὸ μὲν γὰρ μὴ ἰδιώτην εἰρήσθαι, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ μέτοχον τῶν τοῦ Τιμαίου πλεονεκτημάτων, τὴν ὕφεσιν αὐτοῦ δείκνυσι τὴν πρὸς τὸν πρώτον, τὸ δὲ μὴ παντάπασιν αὐτὸν ἀποδείξει τὴν συγγένειαν τὴν πρὸς ἐκεῖνον. (I.71)

That he has been called “no amateur,” while still not sharing in Timaeus’ outstanding qualities, signifies his lower rank as compared with the first, while the fact that he does not entirely lack them signifies his close relation to him. (Trans. Tarrant)

If the saying that Critias was a philosopher among amateurs and an amateur among philosophers really did circulate around late fifth-century Athens, Socrates’ description of Critias is probably ironic.77 Yet recognition of his status as a philosopher and politician is probable at the time of the dialogue’s dramatic setting, sometime before the end of the Peloponnesian War.78 Proclus acknowledges this by saying that Critias is not a

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76 I.70, trans. modified from Tarrant. The scholium on Plato’s Timaeus also quotes this saying about Critias, though probably taking Proclus as its source (Tarrant 164n291).

77 Contra Lampert and Planeaux (1998): “Plato’s treatment of Kritias suggests an old and respected statesman (which Kritias the Tyrant could not have been in 421).”

78 As I mentioned above, there is not consensus on the dramatic dating of the Timaeus-Critias. See discussion in section III below. Johansen (1998) suggests that Socrates must mean Critias has held public office (200). For my own part, I agree with those who believe the Timaeus-Critias must be set before the Sicilian Expedition because of the presence of Hermocrates. While it is true that Athenian nobility often associated with nobility of other cities regardless of political circumstances (e.g. Pericles and Archidamus, Thucydides 2.13), it still seems unreasonable that Hermocrates could have come to Athens as a guest after the Sicilian Expedition, even in a fictionalized setting.
philosopher and statesman to the same degree that Timaeus is, but still partakes of these qualities. Socrates’ description of the three statesmen indeed follows a descending pattern. He himself thinks (κατ’ ἐμὴν δόξαν) Timaeus is a philosopher—albeit a natural philosopher perhaps more akin to Socrates’ descriptions of his youthful self than the Socrates of the dialogue, (and further, what value is the opinion of the man most famous for disavowing any knowledge?). “We [Athenians] know” (οἱ τήδε ἔσμεν) about Critias, i.e. Athenians in general have this opinion of him. Socrates himself may not hold this opinion himself, and he would hardly accept the opinion of the many as truth without testing it first. Finally, concerning Hermocrates, Socrates must rely on the testimony of others (πολλῶν μαρτυροῦντων πιστευτέον), giving the Sicilian general the least amount of credence.  

Critias furthermore cites Egypt as Solon’s source for the Atlantis tale. Solon traveled to the city of Sais, the home of King Amasis. Critias’ mention of Amasis represents more than a simple point of reference: Herodotus gives an extended narrative of Amasis (2.161 ff.), but more importantly, it is Amasis whom Herodotus says Solon visits in Egypt, in addition to Croesus in Sardis. Critias’ account of Solon’s journey, then, at least accords with the stories that circulated about Solon and his travels. Proclus further suggests that Amasis represents an analogy to Solon, inasmuch as each was a just

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79 Proclus discusses an interpretation by which the three characters, as ranked, represent the tripartite cosmology put forth in the *Timaeus* (Proclus I. 69-72).

80 1.30; cf. 2.177, where Herodotus mentions a law Amasis enacted in Egypt in which each Egyptian had to declare his annual source of livelihood. He claims that Solon implemented the same law in Athens, and that it continued to be employed up to Herodotus’ own times. Plutarch also asserts that Solon visited Egypt, going so far as to quote a line of poetry Solon supposedly composed, Νεῖλου ἐπὶ προχειοῖ, Κανοβίδος ἐγγύθεν ἀκτής, “At the outpouring of the Nile, the Kanobic shore hard by” (fr. 28, Plutarch, *Solon* 26.1, trans. Owens).
and temperate leader: Amasis is to Solon as Sais is to Athens, since the priests there will later tell Solon that the two cities and peoples are related.\textsuperscript{81}

In suggesting that Critias’ depiction of Solon in Egypt follows the tradition of Herodotus, I am in disagreement with Kathryn Morgan. Morgan notes that Herodotus and Ps.-Aristotle place Solon’s legislation before his journey. She therefore claims that Plato reverses the order of Solon’s visit to Egypt and his legislation in Athens.\textsuperscript{82} In Critias’ account, Solon returns to Athens, and must set poetry aside for the sake of legislation. Critias’ narrative does not, however, prevent the possibility that Solon had already set forth his legislation and returned to find that it had failed. In fact, both Herodotus and Pseudo-Aristotle suggest that there was political turmoil in Athens after Solon’s legislation and journey. Herodotus’ account at least indirectly suggests that Solon had to enact further legislation upon his return because of the political disorder he found. After Solon’s departure from Croesus’ court, Croesus learns of dissension in Athens because of Peisistratus’ attempts at tyranny. The exact time frame in Herodotus is not clear, but Solon’s visit marks the beginning of the following trajectory of events for Croesus: (1) Soon after Solon leaves, Croesus’ son dies, and he grieves for two years before (2) diverting his mind by planning a war with the Persians (1.46); (3) he then investigates Greek cities as potential allies and finds that the Athenians and Spartans are the most powerful of his potential allies. At this point in the narrative, Herodotus digresses on Peisistratus’ rise in Athens (1.59 \textit{ff.}). Therefore, Solon likely found Peisistratus’ tyranny implanted in Athens when he returns. Morgan claims that Plutarch “must put Solon’s

\textsuperscript{81} Proclus 97.15-25. Cf. \textit{Timaeus} 23d-24d.
\textsuperscript{82} Morgan (1998) 109-110.
abandonment of the Atlantis narrative after the rise of Peisistratus” (109n28), to account for inconsistencies between Herodotus’ narrative and his own, but Plutarch’s account can easily accord with that of Herodotus if Solon continued to legislate after his return.

Likewise, Pseudo-Aristotle says that peace only lasted four years in Athens before Damasias refused to give up his archonship (Ath. Const. XIII); faction soon arose from this, culminating in Peisistratus. Morgan alludes to the possibility of Solon returning after Peisistratus’ rise:

While this formulation does not rule out the possibility that the factions (στάσεις) in question are different from the ones that led to Solon’s legislation (Plato might be referring, for instance, to the rise of Peisistratus), the most natural reading is that Solon’s legislation followed the trip to Egypt.\(^\text{83}\)

She nonetheless suggests Critias’ account of Solon’s legislation after his trip reverses the standard order of events. Yet Herodotus, Pseudo-Aristotle, and Plato’s Critias all seem to be in agreement that Solon would have had further political duties due to the faction that he found upon his return. Herodotus in fact says that Solon took a law from Amasis concerning each person’s yearly income and established it in Athens (2.177), indicating that Solon continued to enact laws after his journeys to Sardis and Egypt. If Plato himself changes anything in the narrative, it is the fact that he does not outright say it is Peisistratus who has brought about such political turmoil. It may still be implied.\(^\text{84}\)

Furthermore, it is Critias who outlines the details of Solon’s trip. As a human narrator, he is prone to both falsification and incorrect memory. In fact, he suggests his


\(^{84}\) While there is no mention of Peisistratus in the Timaeus-Critias, I will suggest in the next chapter that Plato does see a connection between Solon’s legislation and the rise of Peisistratus, and he alludes to it in Republic VIII-IX.
memory is faulty: He claims that he did not speak up on the previous day because he did not remember Solon’s story very well, since he had heard it so long ago (25e-26a). He then contradicts himself in claiming that the things people learn in childhood cling amazingly. Although he may not remember everything that was said on the previous day, he would be surprised if he had forgotten any part of the Atlantis tale he had heard so long ago. His memory did not even last long enough for him to remember his previous sentiment.

In telling the tale, Critias intends to highlight Solon’s status as a philosopher-ruler. Instead, he reveals a fault in Solon’s legislation. Solon must now change his former legislation, since order did not last the duration of his ten-year journey. Perhaps focus on writing the poem would have been more beneficial, as Solon’s legislation did not successfully prevent Peisistratus’ rise to power! The Atlantis tale could have imparted wisdom to prevent such a thing.\footnote{Historically, it is improbable, if not impossible, that Solon could have lived through the rise and reign of Peisistratus. I am not here suggesting this, but rather, as the next section of this chapter will detail, that Athenian social memory, shaped by authors such as Herodotus, in fact led most Athenians to believe that Solon and Peisistratus were closely conjoined. On Critias’ misapprehension of the Atlantis tale, see Broadie (2012) 131.} Despite the actual poetry of Solon, such as the “Elegy on the City” (4 W.), which has clear political import, Critias’ Solon does not seem to recognize the relationship between poetry and politics.

Through the mention of Egypt, Critias aligns himself with an ancient and well-established authority,\footnote{Along different lines, there is a tradition discussed in Proclus, in which Plato was criticized for stealing the institutions of the Republic from Egypt, and so Plato responded in the Timaeus by suggesting that the Egyptians actually copied ancient Athenians (I.76). Isocrates’ Busiris, in which he describes institutions similar to those of the Republic and Timaeus, is a possible contemporary criticism of Plato. See Morgan (1998) 110, especially n. 30.} although Socrates presents such ancient accounts as unreliable (as
I discuss further in the next section). According to Critias’ account, Solon, upon questioning the priests in Sais, discovered that he and all the other Greeks knew very little of their own history, whereas the Egyptians had all this information written down in their temples (22a ff.). Solon thus asked to learn more about his own city’s history from the Egyptian priests (23d-e). Critias depicts Egypt as a younger civilization than Athens, but one whose knowledge of history goes back thousands of years further than that of the Athenians. The idea of Athens being older than Egypt contradicts Herodotus, who claims that Egyptians were among the first inhabitants of the world (2.15). Yet Herodotus’ account accords with Critias’ in representing Egypt as a source of ancient knowledge. So the historian says,

Αὐτῶν δὲ δὴ Ἄιγυπτίων οἳ μὲν περὶ τὴν σπειρομένην Ἀἴγυπτου οἰκέουσι, μνήμην ἀνθρώπων πάντων ἐπασκέοντες μάλιστα λογιῶτατοί εἰσι μακρῶ τῶν ἐγώ ἐς διάπειραν ἀπικόμην. (2.77)

Those who inhabit the arable part of Egypt cultivate memory of all peoples, and they are the most learned by far of all that I have experienced.

For Herodotus, a key aspect of the Egyptian reputation for knowledge is the fact that they “cultivate memory,” i.e. keep an accurate record of the past.

Critias’ tale also depends upon the Egyptian cultivation of memory as a sign of their wisdom. He says that Solon was discussing the ancient history of the Greeks, mentioning Phoroneus, Niobe, and Deucalion and Pyrrha (22a-b). Solon then attempted

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87 Cf. Gill (1979) 66: “…all muthoi about the distant past (including those retailed by Homer, Hesiod, and the tragedians, to judge from Plato’s examples), are, on the literal level, “false”; they are not the factual accounts they seem to be. However, this is not the falsity of which Plato, primarily, complains. As Plato goes on to say (382d2-3), although any muthos about the distant past is factually false, we can “assimilate our falsehood to the truth as far as possible and so make it useful.”
to calculate the exact date of their events by counting back the number of years. It is at this point that “an especially old priest” (ἰερέων εὖ μάλα παλαιόν) exclaims,

ὡς Σόλων, Σόλων, Ἑλλήνες αἰεὶ παιδεῖς ἔστε, γέρων δὲ Ἑλλὴν οὐκ ἔστιν. (22b)

Oh, Solon, Solon, you Greeks are always children; no Greek is an old man.

Critias’ description of the priest as εὖ μάλα παλαιόν correlates with the notion that the Greeks, as a race, are relatively young, and—by Critias’ reasoning—less wise. The priest goes on to tell Solon of the many floods and conflagrations that have occurred, leaving only the “illiterate and unmusical” (τοὺς ἀγραμμάτους τε καὶ ἁμούσους, 23b) of the Greeks, so that they do not retain an accurate memory of ancient times. Herodotus also depicts a Solon who cannot accurately calculate time because of the flawed Greek calendar. Seth Benardete thus suggests that Herodotus “makes us consider…how much credence we ought to give Solon” in the narrative:

He emphasizes the Greek and hence partial view of Solon by attributing to him a mistake in calculation. Solon tells Croesus there are seventy years in a man’s life, and in trying to bring home to him its instability he calculates the number of days they make up. His use of the Greek calendar for his reckoning compels him to add separately the days in an intercalary month, which he says occurs every other year “so that the seasons might come out as they should.” Their addition makes the total too large by 700 days. That Herodotus deliberately had Solon make this error he indicates in Book II, where he says the Egyptians deal with the solar year more wisely than the Greeks; for they divide it into twelve equal parts of thirty days each and then add five days at the end of the year (II.4.1). The Greeks’ inability to adapt astronomical evidence to their own use brought about Solon’s error.\(^{88}\)

\(^{88}\) Benardete (1969) 17.
Both Critias’ Solon and Herodotus’ Solon display wisdom through the delineation of time. But in both cases, Solon’s calculations are incorrect because of Greek limitations on computing exact chronology. Critias’ Egypt, then, like Herodotus’ Egypt, represents a source of knowledge older and better than that of the Greeks. That Critias emphasizes the view that older is better can be seen by the parallelism between (1) the old Egyptian priest and younger (at least in his “soul”) Solon and (2) old grandfather Critias and young grandson Critias. Socrates’ interlocutor received the Atlantis tale from an older, supposedly wiser, source. Socrates himself could hardly have agreed with such a notion. After all, he was the philosopher who questioned such reputedly wise old men—e.g. Protagoras, Gorgias, Cephalus—and found their wisdom to be lacking.

Yet Egypt seems to be held in high regard elsewhere in Plato’s corpus as well. In the *Philebus*, for example, Socrates attributes the discovery of the alphabet to the Egyptian deity Theuth (18b-d). He attributes the alphabet to Theuth again in the *Phaedrus* (274c-275b), in a story in which he seems to denounce the practice of writing, because of its anti-philosophic character. This latter Egyptian tale is particularly relevant, because Phaedrus questions it veracity. When Socrates has finished the account, Phaedrus exclaims,

�� Σώκρατες, ῥάδις σὺ Αἰγυπτίους καὶ ὀποδαποὺς ἀν ἑθέλης λόγους ποιεῖς.

O Socrates, how easily you fashion *accounts* about Egypt or whatever country you want.

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89 Cf. *Republic* 536d.
Phaedrus here uses the term λόγος to describe the tale Socrates has just told. This contradicts the dichotomy between myth and reason that seems so evident in the Gorgias and Protagoras. But it is fitting in accordance with the greater truth the story implies.

Socrates replies to Phaedrus,

Οἱ δὲ γ', ὦ φίλε, ἐν τῷ τοῦ Δίω τοῦ Δωδώναιοι ἱερῷ δρυὸς λόγους ἔφησαν μαντικός πρῶτος γενέσθαι. τοῖς μὲν οὐν τότε, ἀτε οὐκ οὐκ σοφοῖς ὡσπερ ὑμεῖς οἱ νέοι, ἀπέχρη δρυὸς καὶ πέτρας ἀκούειν ύπ' εὐθείας, εἰ μόνον ἀληθὴ λέγοιεν´ (275b-c)

My friend, those at the temple of Zeus in Dodona say that the words of an oak tree were the first prophecies. For the people then, who weren’t clever (“wise”) like you young men today are, it was enough for them to listen to an oak tree and a rock, because of their gullibility, so long as these things were speaking the truth.

Socrates’ point here is that it is not the source of the story that matters, but, as Gill says, “the truth or falsity of the idea it conveys.” Critias, in his narration, emphasizes the authority and factual historicity of the account he is giving. He stresses the importance of the Atlantis tale, because it involved real deeds done by real people, within a framework similar to that of Socrates’ ideal city. He tries to give his tale more authority by claiming that it comes from Solon, and furthermore that Solon learned it from the reputedly wise Egyptians. Johansen suggests that “the Egyptians, like the Phoenicians, are known as traders, a profession with which typically comes a reputation for greed and deceptiveness. Plato is building on a stereotype of the Egyptians as cheats and liars already present in

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Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and Cratinus.” 91 Thus, Johansen says, “we should expect a story told by an Egyptian to be deceitful.” 92

In Plato’s corpus, however, the source and historical veracity of an account are not necessarily important. Socrates often tells tales such as the one in the Phaedrus, in which a simple “they say” or “I heard” should suffice, because it is not the source that matters, but the underlying truth the tale conveys. The source-based nature of Critias’ tale in fact is symptomatic of what Socrates diagnoses as a shortcoming of writing. If Critias really did receive this story from his grandfather, who received it from Solon, it was by chance that it reached the ears of Critias. Socrates in the Phaedrus says of written accounts,

οταν δὲ ἀπάξ γραφῇ, κυλινδεῖται μὲν πανταχοῦ πᾶς λόγος ὁμοίως παρὰ τοῖς ἑπαίουσιν, ὡς δὲ αὐτῶς ἐπάρ οἷς οὖδὲν προσήκει, καὶ οὐκ ἐπίσταται λέγειν οἷς δεῖ γε καὶ μή. πλημμελούμενος δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἐν δίκῃ λοιδορθείς τοῦ πατρὸς ἀεὶ δεῖται βοηθοῦ: αὐτὸς γὰρ οὔτ᾽ ἀμύνασθαι οὔτε βοηθῆσαι δυνατὸς αὐτῶ. (275d-e)

Once in writing, every speech rolls around everywhere, among those who understand it, and likewise among those for whom it is not fitting, and the speech does not know whom it ought to speak to, and whom it ought not. But it is wronged and reviled unjustly, always needing the help of its father. For it is not able to defend itself nor run to its own aid.

Critias describes the way in which he inherits this tale from his noble ancestor, but this does not mean he is the one to whom the tale should be speaking. Rather, he asked his grandfather to recite the tale again and again—and later in the Critias he mentions studying writings of Solon 93—but he was unable to understand their meaning. He

93 Critias 113a-b.
approached the tale in a non-dialectical fashion, hearing it over and over again, and practically memorizing it, but not really thinking about it. He thus learned and understood the story without questioning its “father,” Solon, who learned and understood the story from the Egyptian priests and their records, without dialectic as well. Critias presents the story to his audience without any intention of dialectic. If Socrates’ narration of the ideal city—so much like the city of the Republic—was narrated in a fashion similar to the conversation of the Republic, then it was a dialectical one. In the Timaeus-Critias, however, Critias and Hermocrates set up a situation in which Timaeus and Critias will each give a speech for Socrates to take in, as if he were reading any λόγος that happened to roll by. Critias thus tells the Atlantis tale, not so that Socrates might think about it further, but for Socrates to acknowledge the legitimacy of the tale in connection with his motionless, ideal city.

When Critias tells Socrates about the story’s transmission, it is not the source that interests Socrates, but what deed the Athenians performed—that is, what the story is. So Socrates asks Critias,

άλλα δὴ ποῖον ἔργον τούτῳ Κριτίας οὐ λεγόμενον μέν, ὡς δὲ πραξάθεν ὄντως ὑπὸ τῇδε τῆς πόλεως ἀρχαίου διηγεῖτο κατὰ τὴν Σόλωνος ἄκοην; (21a)

But what sort of deed did Critias narrate not as one something spoken, but actually performed by this city long ago, according the report of Solon?

Socrates reduces Critias’ λόγος to ἄκοη. The term ἄκοη is often interpreted to mean “report” as it is used of Solon’s account, but in Herodotus and Thucydides, it takes on the connotation of “hearsay.”94 Socrates’ word ἄκοη is taken up by Critias, who then calls

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94 LSJ I.2 on ἄκοη examines the semantic range of the term in Plato, Herodotus, and Thucydides.
his account an ἀκοή as well when he finishes his summary (25e). In other words, despite Critias’ insistence, Socrates is not particularly concerned with the historicity of the event. He asked not for an accurate history, but simply an account of his hypothetical city in action. Socrates assumes that the practical application of his ideal city is still inevitably hypothetical—and he has no problem with this. Thus he says, at the end of Critias’ summary, τὸ τε μὴ πλασθέντα μὺθὸν ἀλλ’ ἀληθινὸν λόγον εἶναι πάμμεγά ποι, “that this is not a made-up story, but a true account, is very important, I suppose” (26e). The indefinite particle ποι, “I suppose,” suggests Socrates’ doubt that the historicity of the event is very important. For Socrates, it is not that the tale is a historically true account that is important, but rather, as with Socrates’ sentiment in the Phaedrus, that the account’s idea has true meaning.\(^\text{95}\)

Critias, on the other hand, does think the historicity is important. He wants not simply a movement from a stationary hypothetical city to a mobile hypothetical city, but from a city-in-words to a city-in-history. It is fitting, then, that Socrates’ recapitulation of the “ideal city” in the Timaeus, which seems so much like that of the Republic, lacks the rule of philosopher-kings: Socrates is talking with a group of philosopher-king-like figures, and Critias, the most notorious member of this group, refuses to be content with just a paradigm. He needs a Solon to represent the best possible city, and real citizens to stand in for Socrates’ hypothetical citizens. We must note that, despite Timaeus’ detailed cosmology, the philosopher from Locri does not cite any examples from history. His

95 Cf. Gill (1993), who argues for two levels of truth in fiction, so that something may be “false (in intention or fact) on the literal level but true (in intention or fact) on the figurative level” (39). I am in disagreement with Gill, however, when he goes on to argue that such a distinction did not exist in Plato’s conceptual framework (40 and passim).
account is based in the probability of what humans cannot truly know, i.e. divine knowledge.\textsuperscript{96} When Critias follows Timaeus’ account, he begs for pardon, because his account deals with mortals rather than gods (as Timaeus’ account does, \textit{Critias} 107).

Furthermore, despite Critias’ emphasis on the truth of his account, there are several factors indicating it is a false one. First, the distance of time that has passed—how could anyone, even the careful Egyptians, hold a correct record of events from nine thousand years ago? Thus Socrates, in the \textit{Republic}, amidst his critique of the poets’ falsehoods, still suggests that “we” make up falsehoods about the past because of our lack of knowledge of it (382d).\textsuperscript{97} In addition, Welliver suggests that the setting of Critias’ tale—the Apaturia festival (which Welliver connects with Απάτη, “deception”)\textsuperscript{98} provides several elements of deceit: the Feast itself, the “possible false compliment of Amynander, the praise of poetry (of deceit, Plato would say)” (14n15), and perhaps most of all, Critias’ lie that the poems of Solon were “new,” although no chronological grounds make this possible (14). In addition, the entire story may be made up.

What Critias is trying to portray, then, is an “ancestral constitution” of the Athenians. He is linking Socrates’ story with his own city, in the company of a Locrian and a Syracusan, as if to demonstrate his superiority over them. Socrates had no such desire: he wanted to know the ideal city, regardless of whether it had ever existed before

\textsuperscript{96} Cf. Burnyeat (2005).

\textsuperscript{97} Christopher Gill (1979) says of this passage of the \textit{Republic} that “all muthoi about the distant past (including those retailed by Homer, Hesiod, and the tragedians, to judge from Plato’s examples), are, on the literal level, “false”; they are not the factual accounts they seem to be” (66).

\textsuperscript{98} Welliver (1977) 14-15. Cf. also 20: “In view of Critias’s and Hermocrates’s [sic] understanding of agreements it is instructive to look at the supposed origin of the Apaturia, the Feast of Deception at which Critias heard Solon’s story and received some of his early moral and rhetorical training. The traditional origin of this feast was a celebrated Athenian victory won by the deceitful abuse of an agreement…”
in some place. Solon, for Critias, represents an ideal at which Socrates’ and Timaeus’ accounts must aim.

This accords with circumstances of the historical Critias in the late fifth century. In the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians*, the author suggests that the politicians at the end of the fifth century were trying to reestablish the legislation of Solon. They attempted to show that Solonian government was actually oligarchic rather than democratic. We saw in the beginning of this chapter that orators of the fourth century also appealed to Solon, but claiming him instead as a democrat. Plato’s Critias also depicts a Solonian constitution, but it is one that predates Solon by nine thousand years. It is so ancestral to Athens that Critias’ claim to a Solonian constitution outranks all other such claims. It goes back to Solon’s sources, rather than using Solon as its source.

Kathryn Morgan suggests that, “[b]y associating the myth of Athens and Atlantis with Solon, Plato has Critias engage in a characteristically fourth-century practice of tapping into an historical source for political validation” (112). Many Athenian orators invoked Solon as a “trump card.” Likewise, the advocates of the restored democracy in 403 “appropriate[d] Solon as their ‘trump card,’” and so did the oligarchs of 411. *Timaeus-Critias*, as Morgan suggests, at least somewhat reflects this Solonian ideology (111). As these turn-of-the-century politicians called for a return to the “ancestral constitution” of Solon, Critias presents the ultimate ancestral constitution, one which

99 *Constitution of the Athenians* 29 (see introduction to this chapter above).

100 Morgan 111, discussing Finley (1987, on the democracy of 403) and Hansen (1990, on the oligarchs of 411). It is not unlikely that Critias and the Thirty Tyrants of 404 also used Solonian rhetoric.
predates Solon. Yet the authority of Critias’ Solon is further supported by the greater authority of Egypt, Solon’s source for the tale.

Morgan argues that through Solon, “the treatment of the myth of Atlantis in the Timaeus and Critias is precisely an attempt to claim that the constitution of the Republic is the ancestral constitution of Athens and that the report of it was brought back to Athens by the fourth century’s most famous lawgiver and framer of constitutions, framed and narrated in terms that would have a particular fourth-century appeal.” She adds, however, that Plato’s appeal to Solon does not imply that “he yearned for the days of oligarchic aristocracy,” but rather, “his use of the figure of Solon is closer to a parody of contemporary practice than an appropriation of it.” Morgan associates the Atlantis tale with “charter myths” akin to the ‘Noble Lie’ of the Republic. While I agree with the overall functional role the Atlantis tale plays in these dialogue as a form of ancestral constitution and a parody of fourth-century practice, I am hesitant to parallel Atlantis so closely with the ideal city of the Republic, because of the differentiation, which Plato takes great care to note in the beginning of the Timaeus, of the previous day’s conversation from the conversation that took place in the Republic. There is certainly an intertextual relationship between the Atlantis tale and the ideal city of the Republic, but the dramatic setting demands a careful distinction of the two. This is the charter myth of Critias, not Socrates. If anything, it is the product of one of Socrates’ failed students.

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101 On the search for the “ancestral constitution” at the end of the fifth century, into the fourth, see Finley (1987); Hansen (1990); Walters (1976).


103 See note 61 above.
The fact that the speaker is Critias complicates the matter. It is Critias, and not Socrates, who aligns Socrates’ ideal city of the previous day’s conversation with the tale of Solon. Morgan notes that “the terms in which Critias refers to the similarity between the Solonian and the Socratic constitutions, ‘You [Socrates] agreed with Solon’ (25e), are nicely calculated to invert the real state of affairs in which Plato has made Solon agree with Socrates.”104 This note does not take enough into consideration that Plato has the character Critias claim that Socrates’ description accords with the narrative of Solon. Critias says of the similarities,

λέγοντος δὲ δὴ χθές σοῦ περὶ πολιτείας τε καὶ τῶν ἀνδρῶν οὔς ἔλεγες, ἐθαύμαζον ἀναμιμησικόμενος αὐτὰ ἃ νῦν λέγω, κατανοῶν ὡς δαιμονίως ἐκ τινος τύχης οὐκ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ συνηνέχθης τὰ πολλὰ οἷς Σόλων εἶπεν. (25e)

As you were speaking yesterday about the constitution and the men you were describing, I was amazed as I remembered the things I was just now discussing, and I perceived how, by some miraculous chance, you did not stray far from the mark with what Solon said.

Although Critias first heard the story when he was a child, he suddenly remembers it as Socrates describes the ideal city. But he phrases his statement so that Socrates accords with Solon, and not the other way around. Critias gives priority to Solon, who discovered the ideal city and ideal citizens long before Socrates did; he furthermore gives priority to himself, since he had heard the story before Socrates came up with a similar version. Critias does not just take up Socrates’ challenge to put the ideal city into motion. He tries to supplant Socrates’ account with his own. It was only “by some chance” that Socrates was able to fit his own narrative to that of Solon; it is as if some god had brought this

104 112n40, brackets are Morgan’s.
about connection “miraculously” (δαμωνίως), not through philosophic reason or Socratic anamnesis.

Critias’ description of his recollection also alludes to Socrates’ description of recollecting innate knowledge through anamnesis, as put forth most clearly in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*. Critias even uses the term ἀναμιμησικόμενος to describe the process of recollection he underwent while Socrates was describing the ideal city. But the fact that Critias says this all happens “miraculously” shuns any possibility that Critias recognizes anything Socratic about his process of recollection. Rather, Critias usurps Socrates’ control of the conversation in perhaps a characteristically tyrannical fashion. In the *Charmides*, Socrates gives the following anecdote about Critias:

οἷς γὰρ ἐπιχειροῦντι πράττειν ὁτιοῦν καὶ βιαζομένῳ οὐδεὶς οἶός τ' ἐσται ἐναντιοῦσθαι ἄνθρωπον. (176d)

For no one can oppose you [Critias] if you are trying to do something and using force.

In line with this description, Critias takes control of the conversation in *Timaeus-Critias*, and there is nothing Socrates or Timaeus can do about it. Critias appropriates Socrates’ ideal city as a part of his own narrative. The Atlantis tale does not reflect Socrates’ ideal city in practice, but Critias depicts Socrates’ ideal city as a merely theoretical version of the actual Athens of Solon’s Atlantis tale. Critias takes control of Socrates’ ideal city, just as he takes control of the current day’s conversation, in which he outlines what Timaeus will discuss and how he will follow. Perhaps the future tyrant thinks it is right for a descendant of Solon to be in charge.

105 Cf. *Meno* 81a-c; *Phaedo* 73a-e.
III. Solon and the Family of Dropides

In his preface to the Atlantis tale (*Timaeus* 20d), Critias establishes Solon as his authority through his family’s ancient relationship with the Athenian sage. The genealogy which Critias outlines establishes his great-grandfather Dropides as Solon’s “kinsman and very good friend” (οἶκεῖος καὶ σφόδρα φίλος, 20e). There is no further clarification of this relationship. Nonetheless, it places a long distance of time between Critias and the source of his work. If we group Solon and Dropides into the same generation, the tale travels through four generations to reach Critias, who first hears it as a young boy. The fact that the tale is so ancient puts its accuracy into doubt. Socrates in the *Republic* suggests that he and his interlocutors do not know the truth of the ancient past, so they must “liken falsehood to truth as much as possible” (ἀφομοιοῦντες τῷ ἁληθεῖ τῷ ψεύδος ὅτι μᾶλλον, 382d). Yet Critias, as we have seen, claims his ancient tale is “entirely true” (παντάπασι γε μὴν ἁλθοῦσ, *Timaeus* 20d). In this section, I first use various sources to identify Plato’s character Critias as a fictionalized version of “Critias the Tyrant.” I then analyze how Critias’ problematic chronology removes credence from his Solonian tale. Finally, I suggest that Critias’ chronology takes a Herodotean perspective on Athenian history. In section IV, I offer a second alternative: that the imprecision of Critias’ chronology makes his tale, or at least his perspective on the tale, untrustworthy, if not fictional.

It is first necessary to identify who the “Critias” of *Timaeus-Critias* is. Scholarship remains divided on whether this character is the oligarchic leader of the so-called “Thirty Tyrants” or his grandfather, who also bore the name “Critias.” If the
character is to be identified with the former—as I suggest—the fact that this character narrates the Atlantis tale affects our (as well as Plato’s audience’s) interpretation of it.

Although non-essential to identifying the “Critias” of *Timaeus-Critias*, the fact that Plato was a member of Critias’ family, thus also related to Solon, stands in the background of Critias’ narrative. Since antiquity, scholars have attempted to trace out the lineage from Solon to Plato. The following three genealogies all come down to us from antiquity:

I. Apuleius, *De Platone et eius Dogmate* 1.1:

*nam Ariston pater per Codrum ab ipso Neptuno originem duxit, a Solone sapientissimo, qui legum Atticarum fundator fuit, maternus deiuitatus est sanguis.*

For Ariston, [Plato’s] father, led down his ancestry through Codrus, and his maternal blood was derived from the wisest Solon, who was the founder of the Athenian laws.

Apuleius’ genealogy gives Plato a lineage both divine and noble. Though he notes Plato’s descent from Solon through his mother’s side of the family, the relationship is not set out in detail.

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II. Diogenes Laertius 3.1 (*Life of Plato*)

Πλάτων, Ἀρίστωνος καὶ Περικτίωνη — ἤ Πωτώνης — Ἀθηναῖος, ἦτις τὸ γένος ἀνέφερεν εἰς Σόλωνα. τούτου γάρ ἦν ἄδελφος Δρωπίδης, οὗ Κριτίας, οὐ Κάλλασχρος, οὐ Κριτίας ὁ τῶν τριάκοντα καὶ Γλαύκων, οὗ Χαρμίδης καὶ Περικτίωνη, ἣ καὶ Αρίστωνος Πλάτων εἶκός ἀπὸ Σόλωνος.

Plato, an Athenian, the son of Ariston and Perictione (or Potone), who traced her lineage to Solon. For Solon was the brother of Dropides, whose son was Critias, whose son was Callaeschrus, whose sons were Critias, one of the Thirty, and Glaucon, whose children were Charmides and Perictione; Plato was the son of her and Ariston, in the sixth generation from Solon.
Diogenes Laertius makes Solon and Dropides brothers, thus further elaborating on the relationship between Solon and Plato. He includes Critias the Tyrant (son of Callaeschrus) and Charmides, both of whom appear in Plato’s dialogues, and sets the whole family in a tree descended from Dropides. According to this genealogy, Charmides was Plato’s maternal uncle, while Critias the paternal uncle of Charmides and maternal great-uncle of Plato.

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III. Proclus, *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* 1.81-82.

Tell blond-haired Critias to listen to his father;  
For he will not obey an errant leader.

The sons of Critias were Callaeschrus and Glauccon, and the son of Callaeschrus was this Critias [in the *Timaeus*]; in the *Charmides*, ‘Critias’ identifies Glauccon, the father of Charmides, calling him his uncle. The children of Glauccon were Charmides and Perictione, and the son of Perictione was Plato, so that Glauccon was the uncle of Critias, who was the cousin of Charmides, who was the uncle of Plato, and Solon was the brother of Critias’ great-grandfather. This version is the truth. But the divine Iamblichus has handed down a somewhat different family succession: For he makes Glauccon the child of Dropides. And still others say that Critias and Glauccon are the sons of Callaeschrus, as even Theon the Platonist does. Still, in the *Charmides*, ‘Critias’ says that Charmides is the son of ‘Glauccon, my uncle,’ and he uses the exact words, ‘my cousin.’ Thus Glauccon was neither the son of Dropides nor the younger brother of Critias.
Proclus’ genealogy makes Critias the Tyrant (son of Callaeschrus) the cousin of Charmides (and thus second-generation cousin of Plato) rather than the uncle of Charmides. His genealogy thus has one generation less than Diogenes Laertius’ tree, because Callaeschrus and Glaucon (Charmides’ father and Plato’s maternal grandfather) and brothers rather than father and son respectively. Proclus acknowledges the disagreement over Glaucon’s place in the genealogy. Tarrant suggests that “such matters may be complicated by the duplication of names that tends to occur every two generations” (176n343). It is uncertain whether Proclus knew Diogenes Laertius’ account, since he does not mention it here, but the latter’s account accords with what Proclus claims “others” (ἄλλοι) say.

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We can attribute the inconsistencies between the genealogies of Diogenes Laertius and Proclus to at least two factors: (1) the long span of time between Plato and these later commentators; and (2) the fact that Plato does not himself give an elaborate genealogy of his lineage. We only get pieces of his family tree from the dialogues (*Charmides* and *Timaeus-Critias*). Further, because the dialogues are fictional in nature, there are several reasons to distrust the accuracy. The timeline which Critias of *Timaeus-Critias* sets out, for example, may be affected by (a) a fictional and timeless setting for the dialogue itself, as Sarah Broadie suggests,\(^\text{106}\) (b) Critias’ own miscalculations of the length of time between Solon and himself; or (c) Critias’ rhetorical manipulation of the length of time to make Solon seem closer to his own time and his own family than was actually the case. Nonetheless, the ancient sources seem to use Plato’s dialogues to reconstruct the genealogy, and, lacking better historical sources, we are bound to consult the dialogues as well. Therefore, if we take Plato as our source, we can question at least one aspect of Diogenes Laertius’ genealogy, that Critias and Glaucon were the sons of Callaeschrus. For, as Proclus points out, Critias in the *Charmides* refers to Glaucon (Charmides’ father) as his uncle. So Proclus’ genealogy, at least from Dropides on, seems to be more in line with the clues Plato may be giving us. Furthermore, we can question both Diogenes Laertius and Proclus on Solon and Dropides as “brothers,” a relation not expressed by Critias’ term oikēios in the *Timaeus*.

Despite potential inaccuracies, the genealogies from Solon to Plato may help us identify the Critias of *Timaeus-Critias*. All of the ancient sources seem to read Critias in

these dialogues as the leader of the Thirty Tyrants. It seems that only one Critias, Critias the Tyrant, was famous in antiquity, and only one Critias was known as a contemporary and one-time associate of Socrates. But over the last century scholars have become divided over his identity. This approach ignores the lack of evidence for an elder Critias in the ancient sources, but look instead to the span of time from the life of Solon (eponymous archon in 594/3) to that of Critias ‘the Tyrant’ (c. 460-403).  

If Critias was ten years old when he heard the tale of Atlantis from his ninety-year-old grandfather and namesake (Tim. 21a-b), circa 450, his grandfather would have been born circa 540, at which point it is highly unlikely that Solon still would have been alive (even if he lived to 90, he would not have written a poem commenting to Dropides on the behavior of his infant child). Therefore, it seems mathematically improbable that four generations could cover the amount of time between Solon and the latter Critias, even if Dropides were quite younger than Solon.

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107 Dates of Solon and Critias according to Nails (2002).

108 Tuozzo (2011) suggests not a familial relationship, but possibly a pederastic context for the poem (76n68), which would suggest that Dropides was somewhat younger than Solon.
Figure 3: Problematic timeline of Critias’ family. Dates of Dropides, Solon, Callaeschrus, and Critias are based on Nails (2002). I hypothesized the dates of the “grandfather” Critias from the character Critias’ assertion that he first heard the tale when he was ten years old (hence ca. 450 BCE) from his then 90-year-old grandfather (21a-b).

This time disparity has led some scholars to argue for an additional two generations between Dropides and Callaeschrus, identifying the interlocutor of Timaeus-Critias not as Critias of the Thirty, but his grandfather, and the “grandfather” Critias as great-great-grandfather of the tyrant.109 The tyrant’s grandfather, by Nails’ estimation, would have lived ca. 520-429, making him a rather old man himself by the dramatic date of Timaeus-Critias, which Nails dates to August of 429.110

109 Among scholars on this side of the debate, see Nesselrath (2006); Nails (2002) 106-108; Lampert and Planeaux (1998); Cornford (1935).

110 Nails (2002) 326. There is not consensus on the dramatic dating though, as Lampert and Planeaux (1998) suggest 421 (94-95), and Zuckert 409-408 (9; cf. also 429n21).
Figure 4: Genealogy based on two additional generations. According to this genealogy, "Critias III" is the interlocutor of *Timaeus-Critias*, while “Critias II” is his grandfather, and “Critias IV” is the tyrant.

Figure 5: Timeline of events based on two additional generations.
Many scholars on this side of the argument derive the age of Critias from comments he makes about age and memory:

\[ \text{ός δὴ τοι, τὸ λεγόμενον, τὰ παίδων μαθήματα θαυμαστῶν ἔχει τι μνημεῖον. ἔγώ γάρ ἂ μὲν χθές ἤκουσα, οὐκ ἂν οἶδ᾿ εἰ δύναμιν ἄπαυτα ἐν μνήμῃ πάλιν λαβείν ταῦτα δὲ ἂ πάμπολυν χρόνον διακήκοα, παντάπασι θαυμάσασίμ᾿ ἂν ἐἴ τι με αὐτῶν διαπέφευγεν.} \]

(26b-c)

Some marvelous memorial preserves the lessons we learn as children, as they say. For I don’t know whether I would be able to recall everything that I heard yesterday; but I would be altogether amazed if any part of the story escaped me, though I heard it a very long time ago.

Scholars take this statement to imply that Critias is an old man. Sarah Broadie argues against this, pointing to the unreal nature of Plato’s dialogue world.\(^{111}\) Critias’ statement can furthermore apply to anyone of middle age, and there is no need to require that an elderly man speak such a sentiment.\(^{112}\) By Lampert and Planeaux’s dramatic dating of the \textit{Timaeus-Critias} to 421, the tyrant’s grandfather would likely have been dead (aged 99), and the tyrant nearly 40; by Zuckert’s dating of 409-408, it must be the tyrant, now over the age of 50, whose grandfather would have died long ago. Although hardly an “old man,” it is not unlikely for a man of this age to speak of his childhood as distant.

Another piece of evidence for not identifying the Critias of these dialogues with the tyrant, but with his grandfather, is an \textit{ostrakon} discovered in 1949. It shows that a

\(^{111}\) Broadie (2012) 134.

\(^{112}\) Cf. Davies (1971): [Burnet’s suggestion of identifying the interlocutor as an old man] makes too much of phrases (\textit{Timaios} 20 e and 21 a) which could be uttered by any man of middle age” (325). Contra Davies, Lampert and Planeaux (1998): “An aged Kritias [sic] is suggested by his remark that he has trouble recalling what happened yesterday but not what happened a great time ago. In addition, it would hardly sound fitting for someone who was only thirty (as Kritias the Tyrant would have been) to say that the tale of Atlantis had been told to him “a great time ago”” (96). Lampert and Planeaux miscalculate the numbers, however, as they just had mentioned the tyrant being born between 460-455 and that the \textit{Timaeus-Critias} took place in 421, putting Critias the tyrant at an age between 34-39.
Critias, son of Leaïdes, was nominated for ostracism sometime during the 480s. Such material evidence, if it is to be correlated with Solon and Plato’s genealogy, suggests the Critias whom Nails says was born ca. 520 is this ostracism candidate and furthermore the ‘Critias’ of this pair of dialogues. His father, Leaïdes, would represent the second added generation. Lampert and Planeaux mention the fact that Critias (the tyrant) is referred to as “son of Callaeschrus” elsewhere in Plato’s dialogues:

There is an interesting and overlooked fact about Plato’s manner of referring to Kritias that may also signify the existence of two prominent Kritiases: in every dialogue in which Kritias appears except *Timaeus-Critias*, Plato identifies Kritias as the “son of Callaeschrus.” In the *Timaeus-Critias*, however, he is not so identified. He is named with no patronymic as if Plato is indicating a figure so prominent that he needs no further identification, so prominent in fact that when a different Kritias is referred to he needs further identification.

Although this point is just a footnote, the distinction in identification does not take account of the dramatic dating which Lampert and Planeaux stress throughout the rest of their article. Besides the *Timaeus-Critias*, a character named “Critias” appears in only two other Platonic dialogues, the *Protagoras* and *Charmides*. Unlike the *Timaeus-Critias*, there is general consensus on the dramatic dating of these two dialogues. The *Protagoras* dates to 433-432, before the onset of the Peloponnesian War, while Pericles is still in power, and Protagoras is in Athens. The *Charmides* dates to 429, as Socrates tells his unnamed interlocutor that he has just returned from the battle of Potidaea. In these two dialogues, Critias would have been 27-28 and 31 years old respectively, perhaps not yet an established politician in Athens. A patronymic then would seem fitting to help identify

him, especially since he was from an identifiable aristocratic family. If we date the *Timaeus-Critias* to 421, as Lampert and Planeaux do, Critias the tyrant-to-be would be 39, and perhaps by now a more established politician. Furthermore, Zuckert’s dramatic dating of 409-408 show a middle-aged Critias, just 5 years away from the peak of his political power, and it is at this point improbable that one would need a patronymic to identify him. Socrates himself suggests the Athenians know who he is (20a). The Critias in these dialogues is not necessarily an old man. The *ostrakon* with a vote against “Critias son of Leaïdes” may provide substantial enough evidence that all our ancient genealogies have omitted two generations within Dropides’ family tree. However, this still does not necessitate that this candidate for ostracism must be the Critias of *Timaeus-Critias*, and I would still maintain that the Critias of *Timaeus-Critias* is indeed the tyrant.

I hope to have shown that the *Timaeus-Critias* does not give any indication that the character of Critias must be distinct from the tyrant, and if Plato intended to make this distinction, the ancient testimony shows that he did not do so successfully. Both Diogenes Laertius and Proclus, as quoted above, take the Critias of *Timaeus-Critias* to be the tyrant, and they suggest no indication for thinking otherwise. If Plato intended this character to be identified as the tyrant’s grandfather, he would have been more careful in clarifying this, as the name “Critias” would quickly resonate with the tyrant in the minds of his fourth-century Athenian audience. Hence, Proclus quotes the verse of Solon addressing Dropides to suggest that this Critias is the grandfather who passed on the

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116 Cf. Johansen (1998) 200: “Meanwhile, the Athenians are said ‘all to know that Critias is ἤξευτης in none of the matters about which we speak’ (20a6-7), which must mean that Critias himself has held public office, as well as having had some philosophical experience.” If we assume this Critias is the same Critias as elsewhere in Plato’s corpus, we know the latter is true, because he associated with Socrates at a young age.
Atlantis tale to his grandson, the future tyrant. Furthermore, none of the ancient genealogies suggest the existence of these extra two generations.\textsuperscript{117} There is at least an ancient perception, I suggest, that Solon and Critias the tyrant are much closer in time than we know they were.

This perception does not begin after Plato’s dialogues, however, nor does Plato himself confuse or miscalculate his own family’s history, as some scholars suggest. Rather, by the middle of the fifth century, many Athenians believed Solon to have lived about two generations later than we today think he did.\textsuperscript{118} The meeting of Solon and Croesus in Book I of Herodotus, although generally accepted today as a fabrication,\textsuperscript{119} puts forth a narrative about Solon in which he had to live later in the sixth century than a 594 BCE archonship would imply. Even Plutarch acknowledges this problem in his Life of Solon:

\begin{quote}
Τὴν δὲ πρὸς Κροίσον ἐντευξὶν αὐτοῦ δοκοῦσιν ἐνὶ ὀἰς χρόνοις ὡς πεπλασμένῃ ἔξελέγχειν. ἐγὼ δὲ λόγον ἐνδοξοῦ οὔτω καὶ τοσοῦτος μάρτυρας ἔχοντα καὶ (δ ἡμείζον ἐστὶ) πρέποντα τῷ Σόλωνος ἢβει καὶ τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλοφροσύνης καὶ σοφίας ἀξίου, οὐ μοι δοκῶ προίσασθαι χρονικοῖς τισὶ λεγομένοις κανόνισι, οὐς μυρίοι διορθοῦντες, ἀχρὶ σήμερον εἰς οὐδὲν αὐτοῖς ὁμολογούμενον δύνανται καταστῆσαι τὰς ἀντιλογίας. (27)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{117} For a detailed analysis of this family’s genealogy, see Davies (1971) 322-335, who does acknowledge the likelihood of an extra two generations, but is not convinced.

\textsuperscript{118} Scholars have conjectured about the dates of Solon’s life based primarily on the date of his archonship (cf. Linforth (1919), esp. chapter 2). But as Linforth (1919) 27 says, “No precise date is known for any event in Solon’s life. Even the year of his archonship cannot be fixed, and we can only say that it fell within the period between 594 and 590 B.C.” This dating is dependent upon sources written long after Solon’s time. The only classical literary source is Pseudo-Aristotle’s Athenian Constitution, which is not only after Plato’s time, but at least two centuries after the time of Solon. For the sources, see Linforth (1919), Appendix 2, “Date of the Archonship.” What we are able to gather and conjecture from these sources, however, does not coincide with the dating that our classical literary sources suggest.

\textsuperscript{119} Cf. Owens (2010), “…Herodotus’ fable of [Solon’s] meeting with Croesus” (44); “…the myth that is Solon’s interview with Croesus” (235).
As for his meeting with Croesus, there have been various attempts to prove on the grounds of chronology that this must have been an invention. However, when a story is so celebrated and is vouched for by so many authorities and, more important still, when it is so much in keeping with Solon’s character and bears the stamp of his wisdom and greatness of mind, I cannot agree that it should be rejected because of the so-called rules of chronology, which innumerable authors have continued to revise, without ever being able to this day to reconcile their inconsistencies. (trans. Scott-Kilvert)

Scholars today generally agree on the fictional status of this account due to chronological problems. Plutarch asserts the likelihood of the Croesus meeting not on chronological grounds, but on the appropriateness of the description of Solon. Nonetheless, Plutarch’s narrative accords with Herodotus’, because he follows the section on Croesus (Solon 27-28) with Solon’s return to Athens, amidst the rise of Pisistratus (29-31). In Herodotus, soon after Solon’s departure from Sardis, Croesus learns of a faction-torn Athens, and Herodotus narrates Pisistratus’ three attempts at the tyranny. Plutarch likely uses this Herodotean narrative as the major source for his own account, but he appeals to several unnamed authorities (λόγον ἐνδοξον οὕτω καὶ τοσούτως μάρτυρας ἔχοντα, 27), implying that the Solon-Croesus meeting was a well-attested story. While I do not question the fictional status of the encounter, I think that Herodotus and Plato do more than fabricate Solon’s trips or miscalculate the number of years between Solon and themselves. Rather, their accounts reveal a notion in classical Athens that Solon lived and

120 If Solon lived 630-559, he could not have possibly traveled to Sardis to meet with Croesus, who reigned 560-547. Furthermore, it is somewhat unlikely that he could have traveled to visit Amasis in Egypt (reign 570-526) in his old age, although not chronologically impossible (dates of Croesus and Amasis’ reigns according to Marincola (2003) 615-617). Less attention is paid to the conflict of Solon’s dates with Amasis’ reign than to Croesus’ due to Herodotus’ extended Solonian narrative of the latter, while only passing references to the former. Herodotus’ narrative seems to correctly date the contemporary reigns of Croesus in Lydia and Amasis in Egypt.
legislated one to two generations later than our current calculations suggest. It is possible that they themselves understood this timeline to be such.

In the *Timaeus-Critias*, then, in the sequence of generations from Solon to Critias (the tyrant), Plato may reflect the social memory of fifth- and fourth-century Athenians, who for the most part believed that Solon lived sometime toward the middle of the sixth century. He may also have held the same belief himself. Solon’s legislation is therefore the direct predecessor to Pisistratus’ rise. The fact that Solon’s poetry was “new” (νέα, *Tim. 21b*) for the grandfather of Critias in the *Timaeus* accords with Plutarch’s narrative, in which he says that Solon continued to write poetry in his old age, after the rise of

**Figure 6: Theoretical timeline based on a later dating of Solon’s archonship.**
Peisistratus (Solon 30). If our Critias’ grandfather was eighty years older than Critias himself, thus born around 540, during Peisistratus’ reign, it would seem likely to Plato’s contemporary audience that the Critias of this dialogue was none other than the infamous tyrant of the turn of the century. The “Critias” of Timaeus-Critias, then, can sensibly be identified with Critias the tyrant, the same Critias who appears in Plato’s Protagoras and Charmides.

In the Protagoras, which is dramatically set as the first dialogue in which Socrates appears, Critias listened to Socrates establish Critias’ own kinsman Solon, one of the Seven Sages, as a model for Socrates’ practice of philosophy, in opposition to Protagoras’ practice of sophistry. Although nowhere in the dialogue is there any mention of the relationship of Critias and Charmides to Solon, their presence represents, within the dramatic setting of Plato’s universe, the earliest association of Socrates to prominent and wealthy young Athenians. This kinship between Solon and Critias is then pointed out in the Charmides, just a few years after the conversation of the Protagoras. Socrates insinuates that there is something hereditary about philosophic ability. Since Charmides and Critias are descended from Solon, they may be like him. In the Timaeus-Critias, Critias seems to take his descent from Solon and its effect on his own philosophic and political capabilities very seriously. In like manner, the historical Critias may have seen himself as a philosopher-king-like figure. But Socrates could not

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121 Even Critias’ mention of the novelty of Solon’s poetry is made too much of in scholarship aiming to identify Critias. Rather than provide a definite date, this statement suggests how long ago the time Critias is talking about was. Johansen (1998) further suggests that the novelty of Solon’s poetry may itself be a fiction.

122 See opening Protagoras section of chapter one above.

123 Cf. Lampert (2010) chapter one on the Protagoras
have been sincere in suggesting that philosophic ability is inherited. Rather, the way he discusses Critias and Charmides’ kinship to Solon appears ironic, as if members of this family were quick to point out their noble ancestry. It was in fact common practice in classical Athens for prominent families to do so. This accords with the characterization of Critias in *Timaeus-Critias*, where he emphasizes his kinship with Solon and his inheritance of the Atlantis narrative.

Socrates elsewhere takes care to point out that the virtues of philosophy are in fact not hereditary. In the *Protagoras*, for example, Socrates says that Pericles, although himself wise in many things, has not been able to educate his own sons in the same things in which he is wise (319e-320a). In *Republic* III, moreover, Socrates discusses generations and inheritance in the Noble Lie (415a ff.): the god, when he made the citizens of the ideal city, mixed in different metals in the creation of each person. For rulers, he mixed in gold; for auxiliaries, silver; for farmers and craftsmen, iron and bronze. But Socrates then adds a condition:

\[ \text{ατε οὖν συγγενεῖς οὗτες πάντες τὸ μὲν πολὺ ὁμοίους ἀν ύμῖν αὐτοῖς γεννώτε, ἐστὶ δὲ ὁτὲ ἐκ χρυσοῦ γεννηθείη ἀν ἄργυρου καὶ ἐξ ἄργυρου χρυσοῦν ἐγγονοῦ καὶ τάλλα πάντα οὕτως εῖ ἀλλήλων. (415a-b)} \]

Since you are all related, often you will produce children similar to yourselves. But it is possible that a silver child be born from a golden parent, or a golden child from a silver parent, and likewise all the rest of the metals from one another.

The Noble Lie suggests that wise parents do not always give birth to wise children. Therefore, just because Critias is born of Solon’s family, he is not necessarily like Solon.
The fact that Socrates points out Critias and Charmides’ relationship to Solon is all the more reason to consider the possibility that they are not like him. At the end of the *Charmides*, Charmides decides he should continually study under Socrates until he figures out what σωφροσύνη is. Apparently Socrates and Charmides never come together in understanding the subject. Nonetheless, his cousin and fellow interlocutor Critias puts himself in Solon’s place in the *Timaeus-Critias*. He invokes his kinship with Solon to place himself in an authoritative place within the conversation of these dialogues. While his ancestor was not in a position to complete the Atlantis narrative, Critias inherits Solon’s unfinished task, and as the new Solon, he will—so he thinks—complete the telling of the Atlantis story, surpassing the Homers and Hesiods of Greece. Given the incompleteness of the *Critias*, we know that Plato’s Critias really did follow in the footsteps of Solon: he too never completed the epic. Historically, Critias will become a legislator of Athens like his most famous ancestor. In the *Critias*, he unsuccessfully completes the Atlantis tale, and so he does not fulfill Socrates’ request to put the ideal city into action. Likewise, the real Critias fails to achieve his ideal Athens, and a year after he establishes his Thirty, his reign and his memory are abolished. Both Solon and Critias fail in their projects. Just as neither is able to complete his narrative of Atlantis, neither is completely successful in his legislation.

124 For a contrasting view, see Tulli (2000), who suggests that “the association of Charmides with Solon, coupled with Socrates’ later comment that Solon wrote encomia on Charmides’ ancestors, should be taken to connect Charmides and Solon with the kind of poets – authors of encomia of good men and hymns to the gods – that Socrates allows into the ideal city in *Republic X*” (paraphrased in Tuozzo (2011), 107-108n13).

125 *Charmides* 176b-c.

126 It is not irrelevant that the historical Critias was himself a poet. On the literary remains of Critias, see Stephans (1939).

Solon’s return to Athens is plagued by political faction and his need for further legislation, because the laws he set in place before his ten-year journey had not prevented tyranny. Likewise, Critias tries to establish what he believes to be a rightful oligarchy, only to be overthrown shortly afterwards. Although both know the ancient Athens of their Atlantis tale, neither seems to understand its relevance to the cities they legislate.128 Unlike the seemingly ideal city of ancient Athens in the Atlantis tale, Solon’s Athens and Critias’ do not exemplify virtue, but rather they decay into vice.129 In the next section, I will examine Critias’ misapprehensions of the Atlantis tale’s aim.

IV. Problems in the Transmission of the Atlantis Tale from Solon to Critias

Socrates’ request on the day of the Timaeus-Critias is that his interlocutors put the ideal city, which Socrates detailed the previous day, into motion. Critias is apparently so overjoyed at doing so that he has been rehearsing the tale of Atlantis to Timaeus and Hermocrates since the previous evening. Critias claims that, upon hearing Socrates describe the ideal city and its citizens, he remembered (ἀναμιμησκόμενος, 25e) the Atlantis tale. Despite his excitement, Critias did not speak up at the moment, because he could not remember it well enough through the lapse of time (διὰ χρόνου γὰρ οὐχ ικανῶς ἐμεμνήμην, 26a). He therefore recalled the details to Hermocrates and Timaeus as they left, and he spent the entire night “reviewing nearly every thing” (σχεδὸν τι πάντα ἐπισκοπῶν, 26b). Still, moments later, he claims that what people learn as children is

129 Broadie (2001) 6 argues that the Athens of Critias’ tale, because it is destroyed by the gods, remains eternally virtuous and escapes moral decay, much like Cleobis and Biton, as recounted by Solon in Herodotus Book I.
amazing, because, although he hardly remembers all the details of Socrates’ speech the
day before, he would be surprised if he had forgotten any of the details of this story he
heard as a child (26b-c).

Memory plays a vital role in the Atlantis tale. Although Critias says he could not
forget the story he heard long ago, he had trouble remembering every detail the previous
day, as Socrates was describing the ideal city, because he heard it so long ago. This
narrative suggests that Critias’ memory may be incorrect: he likens Solon’s tale, which he
heard so long ago, to Socrates’ city (rather, he claims that Socrates’ city is similar to the
tale he heard long ago), perhaps because it is similar in some ways, but also—just as
probable—because Socrates’ description may have affected his memory of Solon’s tale.
Furthermore, the complicated transmission of the tale lends further doubt to Critias’
accuracy. There are several links in the chain of transmission where error may have
occurred, up to and including the errors in memory of a man who heard this tale as a
young boy. Although Critias emphasizes the authority of Solon in the transmission of the
account, even Solon is only at a third remove from the actual source, the Egyptian
records which the priests recount to him. Dropides then receives the tale from Solon and
passes it on to his son Critias, who finally tells the tale, at a sixth remove from its original
source, to his grandson Critias, who is only ten years old at the time. We can compare the
problems of this transmission to those of the conversation at Agathon’s party in the
Symposium. The events of the Symposium, which occurred many years before the time of
their narration, are recounted by Apollodorus to an unnamed comrade, and Apollodorus
had narrated the same conversation to his companion Glaucon a few days before (172a).
Apollodorus gives this recent rehearsal as a reason for confidence in the report’s
accuracy, although Apollodorus was not actually present at Agathon’s party, and only learned about it from Aristodeamus, who was (172c-173b). Yet Aristodemus’ narration itself was incomplete. He had fallen asleep during several parts, including its conclusion, and forgotten others parts that occurred while he was awake.\(^\text{130}\) Although Apollodorus checked Aristodemus’ account with Socrates and Socrates agreed to all the points (173b), Socrates did not add any of the missing elements. Apollodorus still acts as if his account is accurate. Likewise, Critias heard the tale long ago, and multiple times, but he too heard it second (or sixth) hand, and the passage of time may have erased parts. He then recalls it to his companions, reviews it all night, and then tells it again in the morning so that he gains the confidence to bring the story to Socrates, telling it now for at least the third time.

The story itself emphasizes the problems with oral transmission (\(\alpha\kappa\omega\iota\)). When Solon tries to tell the Egyptians about ancient Athenian history, the priests tell him that no Greek knowledge is old (22b). Rather, everything the Greeks know begins only when their most recent art of writing has been invented to record such things. For the Egyptians, on the other hand, all \(\alpha\kappa\omega\iota\) has been recorded as well, and preserved for a much longer period of time because of the country’s endurance through floods and conflagrations. It is through these writings that the Egyptians have preserved Athens’ shining moment in its battle against Atlantis. It is ironic, then, that Solon never completes the epic: once again, the tale succumbs to oral tradition, and so, by Socrates and Critias’

\(^\text{130}\) Aristodemus passes over the speeches he cannot remember after Phaedrus’ speech at 180c. He then falls asleep after Alcibiades’ speech (223c) and wakes up the next morning near the end of Socrates’ speech to Agathon and Aristophanes about how the same man should be able to write both comedy and tragedy (223d), missing Socrates’ entire point.
time, it has once again become forgotten. Critias is charged with the task of reminding his interlocutors of Athens’ noble history, but at a point when the story may have become cloudy.

In the Critias, when the namesake of the dialogue begins his actual narration (as opposed to the overindulgent summary at the beginning of the Timaeus), he opens with an invocation to Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory.\textsuperscript{131} Timaeus had opened his speech with an invocation to the gods so that they approve of what he says. Critias, in his turn, calls upon the gods, but especially Mnemosyne, “for nearly all the greatest parts of our speeches exist through this goddess” (σχεδόν γὰρ τὰ μέγιστα ἤμιὰν τῶν λόγων ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ θεῷ πάντ' ἐστίν, 108d). It is therefore through the help of a goddess, so Critias asserts, that he will be able to remember Solon’s account, despite the fact that he studied and practiced the account so many times over the course of the last day.\textsuperscript{132}

After Critias finishes discussing the ancient Athenians, he introduces the Atlantians by questioning the childhood memory he had affirmed so strongly in his earlier summary:

\begin{quote}
\textit{τὰ δὲ δὴ τῶν ἀντιπολεμησάντων αὐτοῖς οἶε ἣν ὡς τε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἐγένετο, μνήμης ἄν μὴ στερηθῶμεν ᾧν ἐτι παῖδες δύτες ἦκουσμεν, εἰς τὸ μέσον αὐτὰ νῦν ἀποδώσομεν ὑμῖν τοῖς φίλοις εἶναι κοινά. (112e)}
\end{quote}

As for the affairs of those who went to war against [the Athenians], and how they came about in the beginning, I will now tell you these things as an exchange-gift, as if common property among friends, if I have not been deprived of the memory of things I heard as a child.

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\textsuperscript{131} As mentioned earlier, I am assuming the Critias is a continuation of the dramatic sequence which begins in the Timaeus. Thus, the characters and plot carry through. Cf. Clay (1997).

\textsuperscript{132} Timaeus and Hermocrates, on the other hand, give no indication that they have rehearsed their speeches in advance.
Now Critias seems to have doubts about the memory of the things he heard as a child, although earlier everything was so clear to him. He follows with a disclaimer concerning the names in his story: it may seem odd to his audience that the names he uses in the story of the Atlantians are Greek names, since the people themselves are not Greek. This is because Solon learned that the Egyptians discovered the meanings of the Atlantian names and translated them into their own language. Solon followed suit and translated the names into Greek. Critias claims that he possesses the manuscripts on which Solon produced these names, further enabling the authority of Solon in his narration. The fact that Critias must point this out shows a hesitancy he has about the tale. He must therefore call upon Solon to prove the legitimacy of what he is about to say.

The problem of memory in Critias’ tale of Solon again evokes Socrates’ account of Theuth in the *Phaedrus*. In this account, Theuth extols the art of writing to the Egyptian king Thamus:

“The knowledge, my king,” Theuth said, “will make the Egyptians wiser and better at remembering. A drug for memory and wisdom has been discovered.”

Thamus then tells Theuth that his discovery will actually worsen the memories of the Egyptians rather than improve them. For they will trust in the writings to remind them of things externally, rather than use their abilities in memory to recollect from within. “You

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133 The exact nature of these “manuscripts” (τὰ γράμματα, 113b) is unclear. All that can be determined for sure from Critias’ description is that they contain Solon’s translations of the Atlantian names from the original Atlantian tongue through Egyptian hieroglyphics into Greek. Critias does not mention these manuscripts at any earlier point in the narrative of *Timaeus-Critias.*
discovered a drug not for memory,” Thamus says, “but for reminding” (οὐκοῦν μνήμης ἀλλὰ ύπομνήσεως φάρμακον ἔρεες, 275a). The case of Critias in the *Timaeus-Critias* embodies both “memory” and “reminding.” While listening to Socrates describe the ideal city, Critias internally remembers the Atlantis tale he heard as a child. But he says that he often studied the manuscripts which contained Solon’s translations of names, suggesting his need to be reminded of the story externally as a child. Even the Egyptian priests in Solon’s tale depend on external reminding. They tell Solon that their memories stretch further back than the Greeks’, but only because their written records go back the furthest (22e-23a). The priests know more than Solon only because they have had the opportunity to study these written records, and Solon himself is able to equate his own memory to theirs by studying these records.

Like the Egyptians, Solon places too much emphasis on the writing: upon his return, he decides to set the Atlantis tale, already preserved in writing in Egypt, in writing in Athens as well. Although he does not complete his epic poem, the story preserves itself through oral transmission, as he told it to his kinsman Dropides, and the story lives still through Critias several generations later. The way in which Critias depicts the transmission shows that it was not through written records that it was truly preserved. It was the repetition of the tale that engraved it in Critias’ mind. He would repeatedly ask his grandfather questions about it, and his grandfather would answer (*Timaeus* 26c). This back-and-forth between grandfather and grandson is similar to Socratic dialectic. But Critias simply asked for the same story, again and again, unlike the progressive method of Socratic questioning to reach a point of better understanding. Critias—and Thamus in the myth of the *Phaedrus*—both miss an important point about memory and wisdom:
there is a process of *elenchus* in the remembering and reminding of *anamnesis* that elicits wisdom in a way written word cannot (i.e. the development of Platonic philosophy). In the end, Critias resorts to written records—in addition to the phrase “Solon said”—as the source of his tale. Furthermore, he seems to forget the tale at some point in his life, since he needs Socrates’ narration of the ideal city as an inspiration to revisit the tale as an adult. At the time of his recitation, he has become an unreliable narrator.

In addition to Critias’ faulty memory, the long transmission of the tale itself raises questions. Morgan points out the similarities between the Atlantis tale and the Noble Lie of *Republic* III (414c-415e). Socrates’ Noble Lie suggests that all the citizens of the ideal city were born from the earth, their mother, and a god mixed in different metals in each of them, gold for ruling, silver for being an auxiliary, bronze and iron to be craftsmen. Socrates asks Glaucon if it is possible that anyone believe this tale. Glaucon replies that they would not, but their children and the children of following generations might. Likewise, Morgan says, “Solon has been given a charter myth for Athens from the Egyptians, conveniently fetishized as preservers of accuracy about the past. He tells this story to Critias’ grandfather, and the tale is passed down with the stamp of Solon’s authoritative truth on it. This tale has not yet been made available to the citizens of Athens at the dramatic date of the dialogue…but it has already persuaded Critias, and it shows every sign of having persuaded Socrates, Timaeus, and Hermocrates in advance” (104). It is actually not clear whether the tale has persuaded anyone or not. Even Critias acknowledges unbelievable aspects of it when he preempts his audience and defends the all-too-familiar-sounding names. We never hear Socrates’ reaction to the story, but if he recognized the “Noble Lie” aspects of it, he hardly would have believed it to be
historically true. Critias presents it in such a way—locating it in the distant past, with Solon affirming it along the way—that it has already passed through several generations, as the Noble Lie must do before it is believed.

The fact that the story resonates so strongly with the Noble Lie suggests it is a fiction. Broadie has argued that the entire narrative of *Timaeus-Critias*, as a part of Plato’s “dialogue-world,” is itself a fictional reality. While this is true—and we are certainly to take Plato’s dialogues as fictional rather than historical accounts of Socrates’ life and conversations—a more important point about the narrative fiction is the likely fictionality of Critias’ account. We saw above how Socrates, in the *Republic*, admits that our knowledge of the past is limited (382d). In cases where knowledge limits us, we are forced to make up lies. Critias is concerned with the veracity of his tale, because this is what he sees as most important. Yet the setting of the Atlantis tale a long time ago (nine thousand years ago) on an island far, far away (beyond the Pillars of Heracles) suggests that it is not a “true account,” despite Critias’ protestations.

But the content of the tale is not problematic. In fact, since it has been preserved over several generations, its transmission has made it more believable, and more useful as well if it is used to a noble end: like the Noble Lie, its setting in some distant past makes it more believable to later generations. If we can assume that Socrates’ critiques of poetry

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134 Broadie (2012) 115-172; see especially 133-134. She argues especially for these dialogues to be occurring in a world “without Marathon” (as two sections of her chapter are entitled “Athenian History without Marathon”), as such would allow for the greatest of Athenian exploits to be their victory over the Atlantians. It would also relieve the dialogue of any chronological problems associated with the length of time between Solon and Critias.

135 Cf. Johansen (1998), who goes as far as to say that Critias is outright lying; Welliver (1977), especially 28n19.
in the *Republic* serve as guidelines for the stories he would welcome or censor elsewhere in Plato’s dialogues, Solon’s Atlantis tale fits the rubric of an acceptable poem. It depicts the gods as good, as Socrates deems necessary in Book II-III of the *Republic*. Furthermore, it extols the virtues of good people, while not laying blame on the gods for punishment of bad people, but on the people themselves. If properly presented, it could have enhanced the audience’s characters and souls. As a charter myth similar to Socrates’ Noble Lie, it could serve as more than an imitation of the truth: it could have claimed to benefit Athens—and so could have Solon—by demonstrating how good people ought to act and praising those who have done good things. It perhaps would have been right that Solon surpass Homer and Hesiod, had he written the tale of Atlantis. But he neglected this task in favor of another, and the tale did not benefit Athens in the way it could have. Many scholars have noted the similarity between the ancient Athens of Critias’ tale and the Athens of the Persian Wars, which likewise defended all of Greece from an outside invader.¹³⁶ And yet the Athens of Critias’ time, during the Peloponnesian War, has become aggressive Atlantis amidst the Peloponnesian War.¹³⁷ The “true” (i.e. factual) historical lessons of the Persian Wars were clearly not enough for the aggressors against Sicily.

It is therefore not the tale, but the new narrator, who is problematic. Since the tale holds the Solonian stamp of approval, Critias is persuaded of its truth, or he at least has the option to present it to an audience that could be persuaded. This truth—that is,

¹³⁶ Especially P. Vidal-Naquet (1986); most recently, S. Broadie (2012).

¹³⁷ This is argued more completely and persuasively in Vidal-Naquet (1986), though many others have further supported this comparison between Socrates and Critias’ own Athens and the ancient Atlantis of the tale.
historicity—is what matters to Critias, and he justifies the tale on the grounds of historicity alone. But historicity is not enough for Socratic philosophy, and Critias’ “truth” (Solon) does not meet the standards of Socratic truth. Critias needs the name of Solon because he misunderstands the moral truth that lies within his story and the goodness it could have taught. Critias does not successfully validate himself as a philosopher-statesman (nor for that matter, is his ancestor Solon up to par). His need for historical actuality misses the mark on the imitative nature of historical occurrences, which exist in the world of “becoming” rather than the world of “being.” Critias does not understand “being” separate from “fact.” Because of this, his Athens will be an Athens of imperfection and degeneration, as Solon’s Athens was previously.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how Critias invoked the name of “Solon” to demonstrate the factual truth of his narrative. Solon served as a paradigmatic figure for the orators of classical Athens. Plato cast Critias in a similar role to the orators. Critias called upon Solon (1) as an authoritative source to legitimate his tale and (2) as his own ancestor to legitimate himself as a philosopher-statesman. In depicting Critias in this way, Plato imitated or parodied the political rhetoric of late fifth- and early fourth-century Athens. But he did so in a way that demonstrated the dangers of this rhetoric. Plato’s Critias manipulates the authority of Solon in Timaeus-Critias to dominate the conversation. The historical Critias of the Thirty Tyrants may have manipulated similar authority at the end of the Peloponnesian War to dominate Athens.
Critias’ Solon, then, is the Solon of rhetoric, the trump card to win a debate or convince an audience. But *Timaeus-Critias* also presents the possibility for a different interpretation, one outside of Critias’ understanding. Critias fails to understand the application of his tale’s “truth” to politics. History shows his attempt at philosopher-kingship was catastrophic. In Plato’s dialogues, Critias likewise misapprehends Socratic philosophy and his inherited tale of Solon. I ended this chapter by comparing the Atlantis tale to the Noble Lie and critiques of poetry in the *Republic*. The next chapter will further analyze Solon’s role within the framework of the *Republic*, this time through the eyes of Socrates rather than of Critias. Socrates also calls upon Solon’s authority, but as something to cross-examine rather than as a trump card. The model of Solon, for Socrates, like any model of wisdom, provides an opportunity to work toward or elicit greater understanding, rather than impart it.
Chapter 3: Negotiating Solon in Plato’s *Republic*

**I. Introduction**

In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates claims to have received the oracular pronouncement that no one is wiser than he (21a). Socrates doubted the validity of this statement, so he cross-examined representatives from three groups of reputedly wise men, a politician, a poet, and a master-craftsman. He found that none of these were as wise as he supposed himself to be (21c-22e). The three people he questioned each represent a type of educator for the Athenians. In the previous chapter, we saw that Critias cited Solon’s authority in several ways: as poet, as statesman, as legislator, and he was furthermore remembered as one of the Seven Sages, a role which combines wisdom, poetry, and politics. Solon’s embodiment of all these aspects constitutes his relevance to Athenian education. Therefore, it is to be expected that he stands somewhere in the background of Plato’s most pedagogical dialogue, the *Republic*. In this dialogue, Socrates and his interlocutors set out to find what justice is with respect to the soul, using the city as a macrocosmic analogy. In doing so, they discuss the characteristics of the ideally just city and how to properly educate its citizens. This dialogue about justice sets the philosopher, once seen as a bumbling figure with his head in the clouds, into a serious role in the city—as its

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138 A Sage, as Richard Martin defines one, is (1) a poet, (2) involved in politics, and (3) a performer [of his wisdom] (1998) 113; on the classification of a Greek “Sage,” see also Kurke (2011).
ruler and educator. In the central book of the Republic, Socrates declares that the ideal city cannot come about unless philosophers become kings or kings become philosophers. He completely redefines the figure of the wise man at a time when philosophers and wise men were criticized by comedians such as Aristophanes and orators such as Aeschines.\(^1\) While the “wise” men of classical Athens (i.e. the sophists) seemed untrustworthy, and more importantly, unconcerned with politics,\(^2\) other figures were less disputed as educators of Greece: the poets and legislators. For Plato’s Athenian audience, no figure would stand out more than Solon, their own wise man, poet, and legislator. In this chapter, I examine how Socrates defines his new educative model of philosophy in contradistinction to or, further, as a replacement of Solon’s poetry and legislation. I suggest that the tenets of Socrates’ just city (and just soul) can be interpreted vis-à-vis the tenets of “Solonian” Athens.\(^3\) Socrates’ philosopher is a Solon-like figure, and aspects of Solon’s life and poetry can help Socrates to develop this figure; but the philosopher is not equivalent to Solon. Rather, Solon represents only a step on the ladder up to the philosopher.

In the next two sections of this chapter, I examine Solon in two different, but related, roles—as poet and as statesman—through the lens of the Republic. In section four, I suggest a new reading of Books VIII-IX of the Republic in relation to the

\(^1\) E.g. Aristophanes, Clouds; Aeschines, Against Timarchus 173.

\(^2\) On the importance of politics in classical Athens, cf. Thucydides 2.40.2, where Pericles describes the one who does not participate in politics as “not minding his own business, but useless” (οὐκ ἀπράγμονα, ἀλλ’ ἄχρηστον).

\(^3\) Cf. Ehrenberg (1967) 2: “[Solon and Socrates], neither of them an extremist, tried to create new bonds between the extremes in society, a new unity within the state, or a new picture of a man. Neither of them was completely successful, but both are symbolic of that moderation and clarity of mind which are the mark of Athenian greatness.”
historical circumstances of Solon’s poetry and legislation. In section five, I end this chapter with an examination of how Socrates appropriates Solon’s role as legislator as distinct from that of poet.

II. Solon the Poet in Socrates’ Callipolis

Socrates’ two major critiques of poetry in the Republic have long been a topic of debate among scholars. In this section, I approach the first critique of Books II-III, the critique of moral content, vis-à-vis the content of Solon’s poetry. I examine the second critique of poetry, the epistemological critique of Book X, in section five.

In Book III of the Republic, Socrates suggests that the rulers of the ideal city should be the older, and the ruled should be the younger:

Ωὐκοῦν ὅτι μὲν πρεσβυτέρους τοὺς ἄρχοντας δεῖ εἶναι, νεωτέρους δὲ τοὺς ἄρχομένους, δῆλον;

Δῆλον. (412c)

[Socrates]: Isn’t it clear, then, that the older ought to be the rulers, and the younger the ruled?

[Glaucon]: Yes, it’s clear.142

Glaucon readily agrees that Socrates’ suggestion is “clear” or “obvious” (δῆλον). The obviousness of this remark stems from the traditional notion that the older are the wiser. In Book V, Socrates suggests that there is a physical prime of life (ἀκμή) for child-producing, the ages of twenty to forty for a woman and twenty-five to fifty-five for a man (460d-e). Glaucon agrees:

142 All translations from Republic are my own, unless otherwise noted.
“Yes,” he said, “this [age range] for both of them is the prime of both body and prudence.”

While this seems to be a simple agreement on Glaucon’s part, he has actually added a new aspect to the conversation. They were discussing the ἀκμή of life only in terms of physical ability to produce children. Socrates does not comment on Glaucon’s mention of prudence (φρόνησις) at this point, but the fact that Glaucon includes it suggests that he accepts a general notion that age eventually brings deterioration of both body and mind. Socrates returns to this topic in Book VII, and amends his earlier proposition that the older should rule and younger be ruled:

Let’s not disregard this: in our earlier selection, we chose the old [as rulers], but in this selection, this will not be permissible. For we must not believe Solon that one who grows old is able to learn many things; rather, he is worse at learning than he is at running, while all great and many toils belong to the young.

Socrates (perhaps picking up on Glaucon’s mention of prudence) attributes the sentiment that greater age brings greater learning to Solon, alluding to a line of Solon’s poetry:

γηράσκω δ’ αἰεὶ πολλὰ διδασκόμενος (18 W.)

As I grow old, I continually learn (teach myself) many things…

143 Cf. Laches 188a-189a; Rival Lovers 133c. See Chapter One sections IV and V above. We unfortunately do not have the original context for fragment 18 W., and it is not unlikely that Socrates intentionally misquotes it here, as he does with other poets. Cf. Mitscherling (2005); Benardete (1963).
The iterative verb γηράσκω and present participle διδασκόμενος, whose contemporaneous tense is dependent upon the tense of γηράσκω, suggest the continual nature of Solon’s aging and learning. Socrates suggests, however, that the young are better equipped to learn, and thus have the potential to become better rulers, in contrast to this Solonian notion that age brings the capacity for learning. He debunks the standard hierarchy of age in his ideal city. The rulers should be those who best learn how to rule. Socrates creates a system of rule based on learning, not on age.

The progression of interlocutors in the Republic itself suggests that the older are not necessarily the wiser or the more capable of learning. The oldest character of the dialogue is Cephalus, an elderly shield-maker and businessman. He also happens to be Socrates’ first main interlocutor in the dialogue, and the opening theme of their conversation is the hardship of old age. Socrates’ ultimate aim in approaching the topic is to discuss justice, as he quickly diverts Cephalus’ narration into the Republic’s first definition of justice, repaying one’s debts (331b-d). Cephalus’ dialogue with Socrates is the shortest among the five main interlocutors, as he grows disinterested in Socrates’ cross-examination. He leaves the conversation in order to perform sacrifices to the gods, fearing the stories of Hades he heard as a child. Cephalus is therefore not present to hear Socrates and his interlocutors banish such tales from their ideal city. His son Polemarchus inherits the conversation about justice (331d), and Socrates spends the majority of his time in the Republic conversing with the young Athenians Glaucon and Adeimantus. Just as the older Protagoras of the Protagoras turned out not to be wiser than his younger

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144 On the iterative -σκ-, see Smyth & Messing (1956) 495 & 495a.
interlocutor Socrates, Socrates in the Republic recognizes again that it is not always the older who are the wiser. He must instead appeal to a younger audience. In Book VII, therefore, Socrates outlines a curriculum for future philosopher-rulers to begin their learning as children, since they learn better at a younger age. Those who are able to complete the curriculum are qualified to rule.

Although Socrates disagrees with Solon’s sentiment in 18 W. about learning in old age, other fragments of Solon’s poetry may be more amenable to Socrates’ viewpoint. In fragment 24, while commenting on mortality’s effect on rich and poor alike, the poet groups old age together with death and disease:

\[
\text{οὐδὲ ἀν ἀποινα διδοὺς θάνατον φύγοι, οὐδὲ βαρείας νούσους, οὐδὲ κακῶν γῇρας ἐπερχόμενον. (24 W. II. 9-10)}
\]

Neither could one pay a ransom and escape death, nor hard diseases, nor the approach of evil old age.

The general notion of these lines is that old age, due to its hardships, is not a good thing, which it would be if it were the pinnacle of learning. Likewise in Solon’s elegy on the stages of life, it is not the oldest who is wisest:

\[
\text{παῖς μὲν ἀνήφω ἐὼν ἔτι νήπιος ἔρκος ὀδώντων φύσας ἐκβάλλει πρῶτον ἐν ἐπτε ἐτεισί.}
\text{ποὺς δὲ ἐτέρους ὅτε δὴ τελέοι ὁδὸς ἐπτε ἐναιστούς, ἡβης τὸ ὄνομα σύμμετα γεινομένης.}
\text{τῇ τριτάτῃ δὲ γένεσιν ἀειμεμένων ἔτι γυίων λαχυνύται, χροιῆς ἀνδρὸς ἑμιμμένης.}
\text{τῇ δὲ τετάρτῃ πᾶς τις ἐν ἔβδομάδι μέγῃ ἀριστος ἑνχύν, ἵ τ ἄνδρες πείρατ ἐξουσί ἀρετῆς.}
\text{πέμπτῃ δὲ ὄριον ἄνδρα γάμου μεμημένου κτίναι}
\]

145 Cf. Protagoras 320c.

146 Cf. Zuckert (2009), who creates a narrative through the Platonic dialogues in which Socrates first approaches his contemporary intellectuals (cf. the title of her fourth chapter, “Socrates Interrogates his Contemporaries about the Noble and the Good”), before eventually finding a younger following of disciples.
An immature child, when he is still young, grows and then loses his bulwark of teeth during his first seven years.

When the god has finished out the next seven years, the signs of coming youth appear.

In the third period, while his limbs are still growing, his chin sprouts hair, the bloom of changing skin.

In the fourth seven-year cycle, everyone is greatest in strength, with which men hold the goal of excellence.

In the fifth, it is the proper time for a man to be mindful of marriage and to seek the next generation of children.

In the sixth, a man’s mind is strong in all affairs, and no longer wishes to do reckless deeds.

In the both the seventh and eighth seven-year-cycles, fourteen years combined, he is at his best in mind and tongue.

In the ninth, he is still capable, but both his tongue and wisdom are weaker in respect to great excellence.

And if someone should fulfill the tenth and arrive at the full measure, he would not be untimely in meeting the fate of death.

Although the child clearly progresses, physically and mentally, as he grows older, he reaches the peak of his intellect during the seventh and eighth 7-year-periods (ages 43-56). By the ninth period (ages 57-63), as the man comes into old age, he is already on the decline in terms of wisdom (σοφίη)—not worse, as Socrates suggests, mentally than physically, since his physical peak came three periods earlier (22-28). But the poem still suggests a decline in wisdom during old age.

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147 Solon’s description of this 14-year-period has led many scholars to suggest that Solon must have been somewhere within this range during his archonship, dated 594/593 BCE.
By citing and discussing Solon’s sentiments on old age in 18 W., Socrates acknowledges the fact that poetry and the poets are an authoritative presence in the matters at hand. The poets are in fact present from the beginning of the *Republic*. In his conversation with Cephalus, Socrates asks the old man how difficult old age is, since he is upon what “the poets” (οἱ ποιηταί) call “the threshold of old age” (ἐπί γρήγορος οὐδῆς, 328e). Ferrari and Griffith note that this phrase is common in Homer and other epic poets.\(^\text{148}\) Socrates himself does not single out any specific poet here as the source of this phrase (and by extension, the source of this notion concerning old age), as he later does in citing Solon’s verse about old age, but rather he classifies them together as an authoritative source on the matter. From the very beginning of the dialogue, Socrates will have to contend not just with a Homer or a Solon individually, but “the poets” as a collective. The poets represent an entire group of “wise men” whose authority stands firm in the minds of Socrates’ interlocutors, as well as the mind of Socrates himself.\(^\text{149}\) We can see this at the very beginning of Cephalus’ reply, where he uses a poet, Sophocles, to demonstrate the merits of old age (329b-c). According to Cephalus, when someone asked Sophocles whether he were still to have sex, the poet rebuked him, saying he was glad to have escaped from such an insane master. Cephalus calls upon another poet, Pindar, to support his claim that one who pays what he owes may endure old age more easily (331a).

\(^{148}\) Ferrari and Griffith (2000) 328.e. 3n6 on 328.e.

\(^{149}\) Specific poets, above all Homer and Hesiod, still play vital roles in the *Republic*. As we will see later in this section and in section V below, Socrates appropriates many of the poets’ tales and themes throughout the conversation.
Cephalus’ son and “heir” to the conversation, Polemarchus, follows suit when he steps in to defend his father’s definition of justice by calling upon the authority of the poet Simonides. Polemarchus paraphrases Simonides’ opinion that “it is just to repay to each what he is owed” (τὸ τὰ ὕφειλόμενα ἐκάστῳ ἀποδιδόναι δίκαιον ἔστι, 331e). Socrates, after praising Simonides as “a wise and godlike man” (σοφὸς γὰρ καὶ θεῖος ἀνήρ, 331e), i.e. a poet,\textsuperscript{150} interrogates Polemarchus as to what Simonides means. Polemarchus comes to the conclusion that Simonides means doing good to friends and harm to enemies (332a-c). While we do not have any fragment of Simonides’ poetry that suggests this exact sentiment,\textsuperscript{151} it was a very common trope throughout Greek poetry.\textsuperscript{152} Simonides then acts as a representative of “the poets” in his definition of justice, as much as Sophocles (for Cephalus) and perhaps Solon (for Socrates) represent “the poets” in their sentiments on old age. Once Socrates and Polemarchus debunk Simonides’ supposed definition, particularly about harming one’s enemies, Socrates encourages Polemarchus:

Μαχούμεθα ἃρα…κοινῇ ἔγώ τε καὶ σύ, ἕαν τις αὐτὸ φῆ ἢ Σιμωνίδην ἢ Βιάντα ἢ Πιττάκον εἰρήκεναι ἢ τιν’ ἄλλον τῶν σοφῶν τε καὶ μακαρίων ἀνδρῶν. (335e)

We shall fight together then, you and I, if someone says that Simonides or Bias or Pittacus or some other of those wise and blessed men said this.

\textsuperscript{150} Cf. the Athenian Stranger’s description of poets in the \textit{Laws}: θεῖον γὰρ οὖν δή καὶ τὸ ποιητικὸν ἐνθεαστικὸν ὁν γένους ὑμωδοῦν (682a), “For divine is the race of poets, being inspired, when it sings hymns.”

\textsuperscript{151} Ferrari and Griffith (2000) 6n9 on 331e.

\textsuperscript{152} For example, Solon 13.5-6; Archilochus 23, 126; Theognis 337-338, 871-872, 1107-1108, 1318. The idea of justice as “helping friends and harming enemies” is also prevalent in characters throughout the surviving corpus of Sophocles, as evidenced by Blundell’s monograph of Sophoclean ethics, \textit{Helping Friends and Harming Enemies} (Cambridge 1991).
Polemarchus agrees that they should. The naming of Simonides along with Bias and Pittacus, two of the Seven Sages\(^{153}\) (the Sages, by definition, are all poets in their own right),\(^{154}\) and furthermore “another of” the poets, suggests this common grouping of “the poets” as a collective authority. But this passage refutes the definition of justice as “helping friends and harming enemies” without contesting the authority of reputedly wise men such as poets: it falsifies the attribution of this definition of justice to them. Since no inspired poet could ever say such a thing, Socrates reassigns the definition to a different kind of person:

\begin{quote}
Οἶμαι αὐτὸ Περιάνδρου εἶναι ἢ Περδίκκου ἢ Ζέρξου ἢ Ἰσμηνίου τοῦ Ἱθυβαίου ἢ τινὸς ἄλλου μέγα οἰσιμένου δύνασθαι πλουσίου ἀνδρός.
\end{quote}

(336a)

I think this is a saying of Periander or Perdiccas or Xerxes or Ismenias the Theban, or some other rich man thinking himself powerful.

Periander, Perdiccas, Xerxes, and Ismenias were some of the famous tyrants of the ancient world. It is such men Socrates attributes the notion, which he deems incorrect, that it is ever beneficial to do harm to anyone.\(^{155}\) Long before discussion of the tripartite soul or the five different types of regimes and their corresponding character-types,\(^{156}\) Socrates begins drawing distinctions between types of persons here. He presents a

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\(^{153}\) For purposes of Plato, I assume “the Seven Sages” to consist of Socrates’ list at Protagoras 342e-343a. See Section II of Chapter One above.

\(^{154}\) On the poetic aspect of the Seven Sages, see Martin (1998), as well as note 138 above.

\(^{155}\) It should be noted that this statement on tyrants breaks Thrasymachus’ silence and causes him to verbally attack Socrates in the manner of a wild animal (ἄφωνες θηρίων), as Socrates himself says (336b-c). Segal (1978) 332 describes the transition from man into beast (e.g. Odysseus’ men at Circe’s island, or the tyrant’s bestial in Republic VIII) as a counterpart to the Platonic notion of “becoming like God.”

\(^{156}\) Book VIII. See section IV below.
dichotomy between wise and blessed men (in this case, inspired poets), who have
attained something greater (wisdom) than the wealthy (tyrants).

The two groups of names listed seem to be two distinct classes, but the lines
between them may be blurred. Socrates’ list of the Seven Sages in the Protagoras
includes Bias, Pittacus, and Cleobulous, who were also tyrants (although they do not
appear on Socrates’ list of tyrants in the Republic).157 Periander, the first name on
Socrates’ list of tyrants, was sometimes named as one of the sages, although not by
Socrates.158 The development of the term τύραννος over the course of the sixth and fifth
centuries BCE perhaps helped keep these definitions blurry.159 The classification of
tyrans as sages suggests that they were poets and performers of wisdom who aimed to
make their cities and citizens better.160 Solon, the central figures in Socrates’ list of the
Seven Sages, was a well-known poet who could have also been included in Socrates’ list
of wise poets. In the Timaeus, Critias calls Solon the “wisest of the Seven Sages” (20e)
and says that Solon could have surpassed Homer and Hesiod as a poet (21d).161

In the Republic, however, Socrates usually characterizes Solon as a legislator.162
Since the figure of Sage embraces both poets and legislators, the boundary between the
two groups may not be distinct. But Socrates establishes a difference between the two in

157 Protagoras (342e-343a). See also chapter one above. Plutarch describes Cleobulus as tyrant at On the
E’ at Delphi 3.


159 For further discussion, see Parker (1998); Anderson (2005).

160 This is admittedly an oversimplification of the identification of Sage. See Martin (1998) and note 138
above for further. See also chapter one above.

161 See chapter two above.

162 599c-e. See section IV below.
the Republic. Solon is perhaps the only figure in the Republic who can cross the boundary and fit into both groups. But he is not mentioned once in the first six books of the Republic. This is not entirely by chance. Solon does not appear in the invocation of poets as authorities during Socrates’ conversations with his first two interlocutors, nor anywhere in the critique of the poets in Books II-III, for good reason. He represents a different type of poet. To understand how he is different, we must first look at the critique of poetry in Books II-III.

Socrates’ rejection of the second definition of justice in the Republic, “helping friends and harming enemies” (Polemarchus’ definition), entails a redefining of the poet qua wise man. He attributes this definition of justice to the tyrant, because justice must be a good thing, and no good thing could do harm. So no wise man, with this understanding, would say such a thing. Simonides, Bias, Pittacus, et al. could not have said such a thing because they are wise. This redefinition of the poets is problematic, since the poets did in fact put forth this idea. Polemarchus claims that the notion of justice as paying back each what is owed to him stems from Simonides. As mentioned above, we have no fragments of Simonides that put forth this idea. However, Polemarchus’ explanation and interpretation of this saying (that it means “helping friends and harming enemies”), although not discussed in Simonides’ surviving fragments, does appear throughout archaic and classical Greek poetry,163 even in Solon. In the “Elegy to the Muses” (13 W.), Solon prays to the daughters of Mnemosyne and Zeus:

ολβων μοι πρός θεών μακάρων δότε, καὶ πρός ἄπαντων ἀνθρώπων αἰεὶ δόξαν ἔχειν ἄγαθήν

163 See note 152 above.
Grant me prosperity from the blessed gods, and that I have a good reputation always among all mankind; That I be sweet to my friends and bitter to my enemies, revered by my friends, terrible to behold for my enemies.

Owens says of this section, “Solon…goes on to substantiate an ethical argument that each person has a moral obligation to return good for good and evil for evil. A moral view of the world that remained unchallenged in Greek thought until [Socrates], in Plato’s Republic, demonstrated that returning evil for evil is a morally untenable position for the ‘good man’ to hold.” Whether or not Socrates was the first to challenge this view is beyond the scope of this project, but Owens is correct in asserting the dominant status of this ethical view in Greek thought. It is thus one of the first definitions of justice that Socrates has to refute. Given its authority through the words of multiple poets, it is impossible for Socrates to deny its attribution to this group. He nonetheless does so, implying that the wise poets must have meant something else.

Glaucon perhaps understands Socrates’ implication that poetry is to be interpreted differently. In Book II, he reinvigorates the conversation by demanding that Socrates defend justice in itself. He uses the mythological story of Gyges and the ring of invisibility to elucidate his point (359b-360c): Socrates must defend the idea that justice is beneficial to even one who can get away with being unjust. Although a historical figure named Gyges has a prominent role in Book I of Herodotus’ Histories (1.7-14), the story

\footnote{Owens (2000) 197.}
of Gyges narrated by Glaucon is mythological and belongs to the realm of the poets. Glaucon has no problem using poetry as a basis for philosophical inquiry, as is shown not only by the Ring of Gyges tale that Glaucon tells, but also by the fact that Socrates narrates several poetic tales—e.g. the (Hesiodic) Noble Lie, the (Homeric) Allegory of the Cave, and the (Homeric) Myth of Er—to Glaucon, and ultimately convinces him of each tale’s utility.

Although the utility of poetry is clear to Glaucon, it is not clear to everyone else. As Socrates is about to respond to Glaucon’s demands to defend justice in itself, Adeimantus speaks up and adds another element to Glaucon’s story of getting away with injustice: the idea that the gods can then be bought off for any penalties (362d ff.). This seemed to be a possibility at the beginning of the dialogue when Cephalus spoke of his ability to perform sacrifices to the gods and atone for any past misgivings. This perhaps continued to make Adeimantus anxious until he speaks up and demands that Socrates address this additional aspect of injustice. The discussion of poetry then becomes necessary, as the poets discuss justice in many and disparate ways, and Adeimantus has a

165 While this is an oversimplification of the Socratic and Platonic notions of “mythology” and “poetry,” and I do not mean to equate the two, it becomes clear over the course the critique of poetry in Books II-III that Socrates equates poetry with mythology in his discussion with Adeimantus, for the sake of the argument. He in fact begins the critique of poetry by calling out the “myth-makers” (τοῖς μυθοταιοῖς, 377b), not the “poets.” But his use of the poets, especially Homer and Hesiod, as his examples, further clarifies the equivalency of terms. I follow suit with this simplification within this specific context.

166 On the poetic aspects of these tales, see e.g. O’Connor (2007); Boys-Stones and Haubold (2009); Brann (2004); Howland (2004) and (2006).

167 O’Connor (2007) discusses two anxieties of Adeimantus in relation to justice in Book II of the Republic: (1) the possibility, first mentioned by Cephalus, that the gods can be bribed; and (2) the difficulty of attaining virtue, i.e. Adeimantus wants an easy path to virtue. “Adeimantus demands a simpler, purer virtue, and he is willing to pay an inhumanly high price to get it,” O’Connor suggests. “Not that Adeimantus is unintelligent; far from it. But he is a horizontal man. He lacks the erotic lift of his vertical brother” (78). We can compare the fact that Adeimantus is happy with the so-called “city of pigs,” whereas his erotic brother demands relishes, and thus, the “fevered city.”
different idea from his brother Glaucon of how people learn justice. Glaucon thinks they
arrive at justice by calculation. As evidenced by his Ring of Gyges myth, he sees the
utility of myth and poetry. Adeimantus, on the other hand, thinks people are taught
justice. He has qualms with the apparent dichotomies and inconsistencies of the poets, the
established teachers of justice and virtue.

Therefore, during the course of his defense of justice, Socrates sets out on his
longest critique of poetry, in Books II-III, to appease Adeimantus’ demands. The critique
stems from the discussion of how to properly educate the city’s guardians. Socrates and
Adeimantus agree that their education ought to consist of gymnastics for the body and
music for the soul (ἔστιν δὲ ποι ἡ μὲν ἐπὶ σώμασι γυμναστική, ἡ δ’ ἐπὶ ψυχῆ μουσική, 376e). The telling of stories (λόγους) is a part of musical education, the earliest part, in
fact. Therefore, Socrates says that in their hypothetical city, they should not let children
hear any random stories. They must supervise what type of stories are to be told,
particularly because these stories can leave lasting imprints on the young (376e-377c).
Socrates’ main concern, then, is not simply censorship of poetry, but prevention of early
impressions which cannot easily be undone.\textsuperscript{168} The stories currently being told (ὤν δὲ
νῦν λέγουσι, 377c) must be rejected. When Adeimantus pressures Socrates to explain
what type of stories he means, Socrates begins his critique.

He first points out that stories ought not to give a wrong impression of the gods
and heroes, that they act in immoral ways, making war with one another, plotting against
one another, and the like, for then they could be heralded as examples for mortals who act

\textsuperscript{168} Cf. \textit{Apology} 18b-c.
in the same way (378b-c). For gods must necessarily be good, and what is good cannot be harmful (βλαβερόν), nor produce any bad (κακόν τι ποιεῖ), nor be the cause of any bad (τινος εἰπεν κακον αἰτίαν) (379b). The gods cannot be blamed in any way for bad things, then, but rather, some other cause must be found (379c). Thus Socrates goes through a select list of verses—mainly from Homer and Aeschylus—that must be banished from the city.

Solon does not appear by name in this section; neither do any of the fragments of his poetry. Solon’s poetry seems safe from Socrates’ critique, at least in terms of its content. Socrates’ description of how to portray the gods in poetry accords with Solon’s sentiments in his “Elegy on the City” (4 W.). The poem opens,

But our city will never perish through the decree of Zeus
And the will of the immortal gods;
For such a great-hearted guardian is the thunder-god’s
Daughter, Pallas Athena, who holds her hand over it.
But they wish to destroy our great city through folly,
The citizens, persuaded by money,
And the unjust intentions of the people’s leaders, who are going
To suffer many things because of their insolence.

These lines suggest that Athens will never undergo suffering because of the gods. Rather, it is under the constant protection of Athena. Solon therefore looks elsewhere for the blame of any evil that is to come upon Athens: it is through the folly of the citizens
themselves, and their leaders, that Athens could be destroyed. Solon’s poem goes on to discuss all the evils that arise from their folly, including faction (στάσιν) and war (πόλεμόν) (4.19). These evils are a result of the intentions and actions of the mortals within the city and have no bearing on the will of the gods. Solon expresses a similar sentiment in fragment 9 W.:

\[
\text{αὐτοῖο γὰρ τούτους ἡνξήσατε ρύματα δόντες,}
\text{kai diα ταύτα κακὴν ἔσχετε δουλοσύνην.}
\]

The city perishes through great men, and the demos falls into the slavery of a monarch through ignorance.

Again, the city is destroyed not by the gods, but by the city’s leaders. In fact, the other part of the city, the demos or people (δῆμος), suffers from the ill intentions of the leaders.

This notion comes to fullest fruition in fragment 11 W., where Solon suggests his audience is responsible for their own suffering:

\[
\text{εἰ δὲ πεπόνθατε λυγρὰ δι’ ἕμετέρην κακότητα,}
\text{μὴ θεοίσιν τούτων μοίραν ἐπαμφέρετε;}
\text{αὐτοὶ γὰρ τούτους ἡνξήσατε ρύματα δόντες,}
\text{kai diα ταύτα κακὴν ἔσχετε δουλοσύνην.}
\]

If you suffered wretched things through your own wickedness,
do not attribute the allotment of these things to the gods;
For you yourselves empowered these men by giving them guards,
and because of this, you endure terrible slavery.
Each one of you walks in the tracks of a fox,
but all your minds are empty;

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169 Owens (2000) 158 suggests that Solon’s transplantation of blame onto human agents is “a clear move away from those contemporary beliefs, based in Homer and Hesiod, which held to a divine cause for such calamities.” While Socrates suggests that these were contemporary beliefs about the gods, we see from Homer (Odyssey 1.32-34, discussed below) that it is not Homer and Hesiod, but misreading of Homer and Hesiod which would suggest these incorrect views.
For you look at the tongue and words of a wily man, but you perceive no deed when it is occurring.  

Solon’s poem emphasizes that the source of the city’s problems is not the gods, but the people. Long before Plato’s Socrates or even the presocratic Xenophanes, Solon acknowledges that moral failings do not come from the gods. In this context, it is not even simply the leaders, but possibly the people as well whom Solon criticizes. Solon’s analysis of catastrophe may be compared to the Atlantis tale which Critias attributes to Solon in Timaeus-Critias. In this tale, the gods are free from responsibility for mortal suffering. They destroy the Atlantians because of the latter’s arrogance and violence in trying to take over the Mediterranean. It is not simply the gods who destroy them: their destruction is a consequence of their own actions.

In his critique of poetry in the Republic, Socrates defends the punishments doled out by the gods as corrective in nature (380b-c). Anyone the gods punish needs the punishment, so the gods are actually benefitting them. Likewise, Solon suggests that Zeus doles out punishment to mortals as they deserve:

\[
\text{τοιαύτη Ζηνός πέλεται τίσις: οὔδε ἔρη ἐκάστωι}
\]
\[
\text{ώσπερ θυντός ἀνήρ γίγνεται ἄξιος,}
\]
\[
\text{αἰεὶ δ’ οὔ ἐ λέληθε διαμπερές, ὡστὶς ἀλτρῆν}
\]
\[
\text{θυμὸν ἔχει, πάντως δὲ ἐ τέλος ἐξεφανής}
\]
\[
\text{ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν ἀὐτίκ’ ἔτεισεν, ὁ δ’ ὑστερον’ οἴ δὲ φύγωσιν}
\]
\[
\text{αὐτοί, μηδὲ θεῶν μοῖρ’ ἐπιόύσα κίης,}
\]

---

170 The historical context of this poem is uncertain. Owens (2000) 183 attributes it to the rise of Damasias in 583-582 BCE, although ancient sources attribute both fragments 9 and 11 to the rise of Pisistratus. Owens says of fragment 9 W., “Diodorus Siculus cites these six lines of elegy in a context [where] he discusses the rise to tyranny of Peisistratos and Solon’s trenchant opposition to those political ambitions” (173); on fragment 11 W., see Owens (2000) 182.

171 Owens (2000) 181 claims that this poem “is the earliest ethical, philosophical statement we have in Greek thought concerning the moral responsibility and culpability of human agents, qua moral agents.” This idea is not entirely correct, as Zeus in Homer’s Odyssey (1.32-34) puts forth a similar idea in a passage that probably influenced Solon’s poem.
Such is the retribution of Zeus. He does not become quickly angry at each individual, as a mortal man does. But he does not completely forget forever the man who has a wicked heart, and that man is revealed fully in the end. But one pays immediately, another later; to those who escape themselves, and the gods’ allotment does not attack and hit them, eventually it comes; the blameless pay for their deeds, whether their children or a later generation.

The punishment of Zeus is not simply an evil which is cast upon mortals, but retribution for something they have done. Even those who seem blameless are punished for the crimes of their ancestors. Such is the punishment of Croesus for his ancestor Gyges (Herodotus 1.13).

Solon’s notions on divine versus human responsibility in human suffering rely upon ideas expressed in Homer himself. In Book I of the *Odyssey*, Zeus complains about the unwillingness of humans to take responsibility for their own suffering:

> ῥό πόποι, οἶον δὴ νῦθεν βροτοὶ αἰτιώνται. εἶ ἠμέων γάρ φασὶ κάκ’ ἐμεῖναι: οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ σφήσιν ἀτασθαλίσιν ὑπὲρ μόρον ἄλγε ἔχουσιν… (Odyssey 1.32-34)

My goodness! How mortals are always blaming the gods. They say that *we* are the cause of their troubles. But *they themselves*, through their own folly, suffer pains beyond what is allotted.

Zeus goes on to discuss the fate of Aegisthus, who seduced Clytemnestra and killed Agamemnon upon his return home from the Trojan War. Irwin notes that this section of the *Odyssey* creates a dichotomy between gods and mortals similar to that of Solon 4 W.

Solon not only draws upon thematic parallels to the characterization of mortals and gods

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172 For discussion of Homer’s influence on Solon, see especially Anhalt (1993); Irwin (2005).
in the *Odyssey*, but he also employs linguistic parallels in his description of Athena as Athens’ mighty protector. Socrates, in using Homer and Hesiod as his primary scapegoats to critique the ethical content of poetry, conveniently omits the fact that Zeus himself in the *Odyssey* expresses similar notions about the gods as causes of evil and human suffering. But this omission is not out of neglect. As his direct quotations show, Socrates knows his Homer very well. Rather, he challenges Adeimantus and Glaucon in the *Republic* to defend the poets and their place within the city. Within the dialogue, at least, they do not step up to the challenge. The texts of Homer (*Odyssey* 1.32-34) and Solon (9 and 11 W.) provide their own defense as appropriate models of ethical behavior, but Socrates’ interlocutors apparently do not recognize this.

Naddaff points out that one specific aspect of Socrates’ critique of poetry in Book III, the censoring of excessive laments for the dead, alludes to Solonian legislation. While critiquing the poets, Socrates focuses especially on the laments of Achilles, Priam, and Zeus for their loved ones in the *Iliad* (388a-d), suggesting that these famous heroes and the god should not have behaved in this way. Socrates later prohibits the guardians from imitating inappropriate things lest enjoyment of this imitation transfer to reality (395c-d). Therefore, they may not imitate women in excessive grief. Naddaff suggests that

...in this literary censorship of feminized grief, Socrates reproduces as well as reinterprets the type of legislation that Solon, in the sixth century, used to restrict the politically dangerous effects of female funerary practices...For Solon, the political and social implications of women’s

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173 Irwin (2005) chapter 5, “Solon’s *Odyssey*.”

174 Naddaff (2002) 45. Naddaf quotes Foley (1993) 104: the “privatizing of funerals for individuals and specific restriction of female participation in death rituals may have served to foster the interests of the state over those of the family and to isolate the family from powerful groups of intermarried aristocrats” (147n28).
funerary and grieving practices were tremendously disturbing. So disturbing, in fact, that he enacted legislation restricting the grieving of women in public, curtailing hyperbolic expressions of loss and lament. While the motives for Solon’s legislation are many and complicated, scholars have speculated that his reforms tended to support a democratic ideology wherein the power and interests of the aristocratic genos as well as the honoring and monumentalizing of an individual’s death were severely restricted.

Like Solon, but in the realm of literature, Socrates restricts and legislates grieving practices to forge a new politics for his (imaginary) city. Whereas Solon’s calls to curtail public expressions of grief were perhaps related to his democratic reforms, Socrates’ interventions relate to his attempt to restore an aristocratic ethos, if not politics, to his antidemocratic, imagined polis. The movement, then, seems to reverse that of Solon. Furthermore, Socrates directs his legislation not toward women but toward men or, more precisely, toward men behaving like women. While literary representations permitted males to imitate feminine behavior prohibited by Solon’s legislation, to enact precisely what Solon excluded, Socrates directs his prohibitions toward literary representations.

Naddaff suggests that Socrates applies the actual legislation of the historical Solon to the actions and imitations of the literary world. I agree with Naddaff on this point. I differ from her, however, in the interpretation of this Solonian appropriation. Socrates’ reforms here aim not at restoring an aristocratic ethos in his imagined polity, but at correcting ethical behavior in general in his guardian class. In appropriating Solonian measures, Socrates connects poetry to politics in a way that the Critias of Timaeus-Critias could not. Whereas Critias’ Solon did not complete his Atlantis epic because he spent his time on political reforms (and thus did not comprehend the political import of the tale), Socrates enacts strict demands for the poets because he recognizes the importance of poetry from the beginning. The project of his poetic censorship is based on the knowledge that poetry can make an impact ethically. The regulations of the city, for Socrates, should aim towards the betterment of its citizens, rather than the citizens aim
towards the betterment of the city. This will become clearer as we further elucidate Socrates’ critiques.

Content (i.e. what stories should be told about the gods, heroes, and mortals) is just the first aspect of Socrates’ critique. The second, and perhaps more important, aspect is how the poets ought to present the stories, i.e. the imitative or non-imitative nature of the stories. In this critique, Socrates lays out three different types of narrative: (1) purely imitative narrative, where the poet conceals his own voice and “imitates” the voices of others in their poetry, such as the narratives of tragedy and comedy; (2) simple narrative, where the narrative is through the voice of the poet, such as that of dithyramb; and (3) mixed narrative, where at times there is imitation, and at times simple narrative, such as in epic, where the poet sometimes narrates the events, and sometimes imitates the voices of others (394b-c). Socrates and Adeimantus decide that the poets in their city ought to use the mixed narrative of Homer, with just a small amount of mimesis, imitating only the good (396e-397a).

Based on both form and content, Solon would be a fine example of the type of poet which Socrates upholds in Books II-III. All of Solon’s surviving fragments fall under Socrates’ dithyrambic category, and the only intimation of Solonian imitative poetry is suggested by Plato’s Critias, who claims that Solon intended to write an Atlantis epic. The Critias in fact breaks off just before the first imitative section of Critias’ narration, as if his Solon stopped just short of transgressing Socrates’ laws of genre. The actual poetry of Solon, then, is almost immune to Socrates’ critiques in Books II-III of the Republic.

116
Later traditions about Solon apply seemingly Socratic critiques of poetry to Solon. Plutarch, for example, recounts an encounter between Thespis, the legendary inventor of tragedy, and Solon, after watching one of Thespis’ productions:

metros de tın thēan prosoagoreússas autón hērōtisem, eî tōsoútwv enantidion ouk aïsichýnteta thilikauta venu'doumenvos. phísanotos de toû Thespidios, mh deinov eînav to metá paidia's lêgein tâ toiauta kai prássein, sôdora tê bakteria tîn yên ó Solôn patáza 'tachû mèntoi tîn paididíán' érh 'tâuptvn ëpainoúntes ou'to kai timóúntes eûrísomenv en toîs spoudaiçois.' (Life of Solon 29.7)

After the show, [Solon] addressed [Thespis] and asked him whether it was not shameful to tell such lies before so many people. Thespis said that it was not wrong to say and do such things in jest; Solon then struck the ground violently with his staff and replied, “But if we praise and honor this as ‘jest,’ we will soon find it in our serious matters as well.”

In discussing this passage, Podlecki jokingly suggests that Solon speaks these words “like a good Platonist.”175 This comment highlights Plutarch’s Platonist bias in his biographies. In telling such a story, Plutarch inevitably described Solon in a way in which Plato’s Socrates would have approved. While Critias’ Solon in Timaeus-Critias failed to connect the mythopoetic with the real, the Solon after Plato was able to do so. Podlecki points out that “many scholars have taken the story as pure invention, an improvement upon Solon’s own reported strictures against poets, about whom he allegedly said that they ‘told many lies.’”176 Likewise, Diogenes Laertius says that Solon “prevented Thespis from producing tragedies, because falsehood was unprofitable. Then when Pisistratus wounded himself, [Solon] said that this happened because of Thespis’ plays” (Θέσπιν ἐκὼλυσε

176 Podlecki (1987) 7, quoting Solon fragment 29 W.
The fact that the only allusion to Solon in Books II–III touches upon his legislation rather than his poetry may come as no surprise. The extant poetry of Solon for the most part adheres to Socrates’ strict guidelines and begin addressing Adeimantus’ concerns. Socrates’ critique of poetry, however, is much more nuanced than what the Solon-Thespis encounter depicts. For Socrates, poetry affects the shaping and development of the souls of those who hear it. In the critique of Books II–III, he is already challenging the great teachers of Greece. In Book X, as we will later see, Socrates challenges the defenders of poetry to stand up against him and show why poetry ought to remain in the city. But throughout the Republic, Socrates himself acts as a poet and uses poetic tales to explain his arguments. Poetry, in fact, has played an essential role in the Republic ever since Socrates’ opening words, κατέβην χθές (literally, “I went down yesterday,” 327a) set the foreground for his conversation. While these words on the surface suggest simply that Socrates travelled downward from the polis of Athens to the harbor, they also suggest Socrates takes a katabasis, i.e. a journey to the underworld, just as—most famously at least—Homer’s Odysseus in Book XI of the Odyssey. Also like Odysseus, Socrates goes on to relate the tale of his descent.177 The very opening words of the dialogue allude to the Odyssey and set the reader within the literary context of Greece’s most famous poet. Socrates of the Republic is a new Odysseus, or perhaps, as

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177 On the relationship between the Republic and the Odyssey, see especially Segal (1978); Brann (2004); Howland (2004) and (2006); and O’Connor (2007). Lampert (2010) points out that the only occurrence of the first-person-singular aorist form κατέβην in the Odyssey occurs when Odysseus recounts his katabasis to Penelope in Book XXIII (244).
O’Connor suggests, a new Tiresias, guiding the Odyssean Glaucon out of the underworld.\textsuperscript{178}

The reworking of Homer appears explicitly in Socrates’ re-writing of Achilles’ words in the analogy of the cave in Book VII: after the philosopher has seen what is outside the cave, Socrates asks Glaucon whether the philosopher would envy the most honored of the prisoners who remain in the cave,

\begin{quote}
"\text{\textgreek{η} τὸ τοῦ \textgreek{Ομήρου} ἀν πεπουθέναι καὶ σφόδρα βουλέσθαι "<ἐπάρουρου ἔοντα θητεύμεν ἄλλῳ ἀνδρὶ παρ’ ἁκλήρῳ>" καὶ ὅτιοιν ἂν πεπουθέναι μᾶλλον ἡ 'κείνα τε δοξάζειν καὶ ἑκείνως ζῆν; (516d)}"
\end{quote}

…or would he experience Homer’s saying and prefer “to be a serf and to serve another lotless man,” and to suffer anything rather than to think those things and to live in that way.

Glaucon agrees that the philosopher would prefer what Achilles says. Achilles’ words here play multiple roles. First and foremost, they defend Homer against Socrates’ earlier accusations. In Book III, Socrates and Adeimantus had censored negative depictions of the underworld in poetry, because such depictions prevent people from being fearless concerning death (386b-c). Achilles’ words to Odysseus (Odyssey 11.489-491) were among the verses Socrates cited as inappropriate. The fact that Socrates uses the same lines again in Book VII shows the utility Homer does in fact have, but apparently only Socrates and Glaucon understand this, as no one else speaks up in Homer’s defense. This understanding draws out a second role for this quote: re-appropriation. The demands of Socrates’ critique of poetry suggest a reworking of the poetic tradition. Socrates does more than simply displace poetry with philosophy in the ideal city: he uses poetry to

\textsuperscript{178} O’Connor (2007) 71-72.
reinforce philosophy. Third, as I discuss further in section V below, Plato, as author of the *Republic*, becomes the new Homer.

We return now to the question of Solon’s place among these critiques and re-appropriations. If Naddaff is correct in asserting that Socrates’ censorship of laments reworks Solonian legislation, Socrates’ critique of ethical poetry may likewise mimic Solonian ideas. Solon’s poetry emphasizes human culpability, and the traditions surrounding Solon (albeit heavily Platonist traditions) portray him as a stern critic of tragedy. By censoring of the poets in Books II-III, Socrates may appropriate Solon’s censorship. But he does so merely to open up further dialogue about poetry’s role within the ideal city. In the tradition of interactions between Solon and Thespis, we must remember that Thespis’ legacy remained intact and the composition and performance of Greek tragedy in fact outlasted the legislation of Solon. The Solonian critique of poetry in the *Republic* does not fully threaten poetry’s current role as a form of education in the city. In Book X Socrates again discusses poetry and its role in the city. To further understand the philosophic role of poetry, we must understand what philosophy in Socrates’ ideal city (or soul) is: the ruling element. While it seemed somewhat surprising that Solon did not come up directly in Socrates’ first critique, it is still more surprising that he does not appear in Books V-VII of the dialogue, with the lone exception of the allusion to fragment 18 on learning and old age. These central books of the *Republic* discuss the nature and education of the philosophers who are to rule the city. Socrates may not have had a better model to call upon than Solon, who served as both philosopher and statesman. Yet he chooses not to invoke him. Instead, he chooses to introduce philosopher-rulers as a novel and shocking concept.
III. Solon the Philosopher-King

In this section, I approach Solon as a precursor to the “philosopher-kings” of Socrates’ ideal city. As a member of the Seven Sages, Solon was a poet, politician, and performer of his wisdom.179 He is therefore, as Ferrari notes, a historical example of the combination of wisdom and political authority for Plato to draw upon.180 But the philosopher-king is not simply an adaptation of Solon; rather, Solon encompasses only a few parts of this far more complex figure. I will therefore outline some major aspects of Socrates’ philosopher-king and discuss how Solon represents an early stage in the development of this figure.

The philosopher-king enters the discussion of the Republic by way of a digression from the analogy of city and soul. By the end of Book IV, Socrates has suggested an analogous relationship between the city and the soul. Since it is difficult to see what justice is like in the soul (the soul, after all, is invisible), it may be easier to see justice in the city. The assumption of correspondence finds that both are tripartite: the city which Socrates has outlined has three classes—the guardians, soldiers, and producers—each of which correspond to the three parts of the soul—the rational part, the spirited part, and the appetitive part. Socrates furthermore suggests there are five types of regimes and five corresponding types of souls (445c-d). In the transition from Book IV into Book V, Socrates prepares to discuss the various types of political regimes and souls (445c-e, 449a-b). But he is interrupted when Polemarchus and Adeimantus begin whispering about whether or not they ought to release Socrates from explaining an earlier point, the

180 Ferrari and Griffith (2000) xx. See further discussion of Ferrari’s claim later in this section.
sharing of women and children (449c, in reference to 423e-424a). This leads to a
digression on possibility of establishing the ideal city Socrates and his interlocutors are
describing. Socrates establishes “three waves” in Book V, three tenets necessary for the
city’s existence. The first two derive from Polemarchus and Adeimantus’ hesitancy:
(1) the equality of the sexes and (2) the sharing of women and children. Once Socrates
explains these waves to his interlocutors’ satisfaction, Glaucon returns to the question of
the city’s possibility in practice. Socrates then introduces the “third wave,” which he
describes as “the greatest and most difficult of the three waves” (τὸ μέγιστον καὶ
χαλεπώτατον τῆς τρικυμίας, 472a):

“Unless,” I said, “either philosophers rule as kings in the cities or those
who are now called kings and masters genuinely and sufficiently become
philosophers, and these two things become one and the same—
political
power and philosophy—and the many kinds of people who now pursue
one of the two things separately be prevented from doing so out of
necessity, unless this happens, there will be no end of sufferings, my dear

Sedley (2005) and (2007) suggests that in the image of a “triple wave” (τρικυμία) has an underlying
allusion and meaning: in “later ancient (and indeed modern Greek) usage, in which the word is extremely
common…the τρι- prefix becomes a mere intensifier, so that the word comes to mean something no more
specific than ‘storm.’ But in Plato, the earliest surviving prose author to use the word, the meaning ‘triple
wave’ is plainly still alive…” (2005:206). Furthermore, the imagery of waves (Rep. 457b-d; 472a; 473c-d)
always coincides with imagery of a deluge (κατακλύζειν): “[a]lthough in English usage…can be deployed
hyperbolically to describe something as mild as a downpour of rain, the Greek verb κατακλύζειν…is the
proper word for singling out the action of genuinely catastrophic floods – natural ‘cataclysms,’ in fact. The
easy assumption that Plato is envisaging ordinary waves on the beach has hidden from view his actually
rather pronounced allusions to the tsunami phenomenon” (2005:213-214). Thus the imagery of a “triple
wave” (τρικυμία) and “deluge” (κατακλύζειν) alludes to the structure of a tsunami, meaning that Socrates
expects this section to be a “veritable tsunami of change” (2007: 256).
Glaucon, for the cities, nor—I think—for the human race, nor will this constitution which we have now elaborated in speech come about—as much as it is possible—and see the light of the sun.

Glaucon agrees that Socrates will get humiliated for such a suggestion. He cannot help but suggest that the people would attack Socrates with weapons (474a), a statement which Plato’s readers ought hardly to dissociate from the execution of the historical Socrates.

Yet, as I intimated at the beginning of this section, Plato’s Athenian audience could have recognized several “wise” rulers in their own mythology and history, rulers whose wisdom, justice, cleverness, or persuasiveness guided the Athenians: most preeminently Theseus and Solon, but even a “clever” leader such as Themistocles. Recent scholarship on Plato’s political philosophy has suggested that the combination of philosophy and political power, as put forth in Socrates’ “philosopher-rulers,” was not an idea which originated with Plato. Rather, there were several historical and literary precedents for such rulers. Socrates’ philosopher-ruler must be somehow different in nature from the wise rulers of Athenian history.

Furthermore, the general public in classical Athens viewed intellectuals such as philosophers with overwhelming negativity. Although seemingly wise rulers had illuminated Athenian history from the time of Theseus on, the “wise” figure had obtained a bad reputation by Plato’s time, which is attested by the fact that the Greek word σοφός can also mean “clever,” and practitioners of wisdom, literally “sophists,” take both

\[182\] Among the many definitions LSJ gives for σοφός are “skilled,” “clever,” “wise,” and “prudent,” showing the great variety of “wisdoms” which the term could imply.

\[183\] For instance, Ferrari (2008): “historically, the coincidence of philosophical ability and political power in notable individuals was by no means unprecedented.” Cf. also Schofield (1999); Desmond (2011).
positive and negative connotations. Plato’s Socrates felt the need to introduce and immediately defend the philosopher-ruler. This defense is not unwarranted. To take an example from history, Pericles says in his funeral oration, “we consider the man who does not participate in politics not to be minding his own business, but useless, ” (γὰρ τὸν τε μηδὲν τῶνδε μετέχοντα οὐκ ἀπράγμονα, ἀλλ’ ἄχρείου νομίζομεν, Thucydides 2.40). The leading man of Athens in the fifth-century defined one’s value via his usefulness to the city. Socrates, as Plato depicts himself, avoided politics as much as he could. He is one of the “useless” intellectuals to whom Pericles refers.

Andrea Nightingale upholds such a notion of utility in her discussion of intellectuals in classical Athens:

Indeed, the Greeks demanded from their sages that they benefit society; the sage was defined precisely by his possession of useful knowledge that had evaded the average man. In the latter half of the fifth century, in fact, as sophists and philosophers began to lay claim to new kinds of wisdom, intellectuals (such as Socrates) were repudiated because their alleged wisdom was not considered useful or beneficial. In the fourth century, moreover, we find numerous references to attacks on sophists and philosophers on the grounds of uselessness. As these references attest, the public demanded that intellectuals be useful and beneficial to family and city; if they did not prove useful, they were denounced as fraudulent.

Nightingale expresses a similar sentiment elsewhere, using Old Comedy as evidence:

“What we find in Old Comedy is a tendency to attack specific intellectuals of varying

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184 See σοφιστής under LSJ, esp. II.2.
185 Socrates defines justice in the Republic as “minding one’s own business and not being a busybody” (τὸ τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν καὶ μὴ πολυπραγμονέν, 433a-b), very much in opposition to Pericles’ definition. At the end of the Republic, Odysseus, the last soul to choose a new lot in the Myth of Er, chooses the “life of a private man who minds his own business” (βίον ἀνδρός ἰδιωτοῦ ἀπράγμονος, 620c).
186 Cf. Callicles in Plato’s Gorgias, 484c-485e.
persuasions for being self-serving imposters who had a bad influence on society.”¹⁸⁸ The historical Socrates was a favorite target of attack in Old Comedy, most famously in Aristophanes’ *Clouds.*¹⁸⁹ In this play, the character Socrates run a sophistic thinkery in which students can learn to use rhetoric for political as well as personal gain. In the *Republic,* Plato has his Socrates introduce philosophers as rulers in an Athens that feared such intellectuals for their potential harm. It is no coincidence that the historical Socrates was brought to trial for “corrupting the youth” under such circumstances. The tragedy of his life and death pervades Plato’s depictions of him.

Plato redefined *philosophia* partly in response to the fourth-century demands Nightingale describes. In the *Republic,* when Socrates discusses the nature of the philosopher, he must present a figure who is useful to the city, although, as he says, “to the majority of people the best of those doing philosophy are useless (ἀξιωτοί)” (489b). “The Greeks….considered wisdom inherently useful and identified pretenders by reference to their uselessness. Indeed, it was in response to such attacks,” Nightingale says, “that intellectuals such as Plato, Isocrates, and Xenophon…explicitly argued that philosophic knowledge is exceptionally useful.”¹⁹⁰ There is an apparent disconnect


¹⁸⁹ For a survey of Socrates in Old Comedy, see Nails (2002) 266-268.

¹⁹⁰ Nightingale (2004) 232. Cf. Lampert (2010) 254 on the *Republic:* “useless philosophy needs a defense before the city, which measures the value of everything by its use; philosophy really is nothing very serious where the serious is the useful. It is useful to useless philosophy to appear to have a use. The conclusion of Socrates’ first argument about justice signals is primary purpose in the *Republic:* he will do justice to philosophy in its uselessness through a useful political philosophy”; Bloom (1968) 307: “The *Republic* is the true *Apology* of Socrates, for only in the *Republic* does he give an adequate treatment of the theme which was forced on him by Athens’ accusation against him. That theme is the relationship of the philosopher to the political community.” Also, Nightingale (1995) 79 on the *Gorgias:* “It is the philosopher, according to Socrates, who confers the greatest benefit on his city, and this same person turns out to be the ideal friend and relative.”
between the wisdom tradition and the figure of philosopher in the late fifth and early fourth centuries. Plato in the Republic—and in his corpus overall—must present a philosophy distinct from the public perception of it. Socrates thus follows his third wave with a defense of philosopher-rulers, and spends the majority of Books VI-VII defining what philosophers are and establishing their education so that they may appropriately rule the city. The notion of utility comes to fulfillment in the analogy of the cave in Book VII, where those within the cave, rather than the philosophers, are the truly useless. The philosophers must educate them and make them better.

The notion of a “philosopher-ruler” dates back at least to the archaic period, embodied most explicitly in the tradition of the Seven Sages, all of whom were renowned, at least in part, for their practical wisdom and involvement in politics. Aristotle lays out three levels of wisdom in Nicomachaen Ethics VI.7: first, excellence in a specific technē, such as Phidias’ wisdom in the art of sculpture; second, practical wisdom (phronēsis); and third, “knowledge of first principles and of things which cannot change.”\textsuperscript{191} In Plato’s corpus, the concept of wisdom is often more theoretical than the practical wisdom of the Seven Sages. For example, the theory of Forms, which philosophers contemplate in the final stage of their education in the Republic, is comparable to Aristotle’s third level. Nevertheless, in Socrates’ allegory of the cave in Book VII, those philosophers who have ascended out of the cave and contemplated the heavens must go back down and use the theoretical knowledge they have acquired to rule among those still below. We see in the Republic an application of theoretical wisdom to

\textsuperscript{191} Kerferd (1976) 19.
the city in a practical way. Those who gain wisdom, the philosophers, must use that wisdom for ruling the city. In this way, Plato’s philosopher-rulers fall into, and perhaps recall, a tradition of wise rule that existed since at least Hesiod. Martin goes so far to say that Socrates “provides a sort of endpoint” to the evolution of the concept of the Greek sage. 192

To understand why Martin says this, we have to seek out the elements of wise rulers that made them particularly appealing to an archaic and classical Greek audience. The figure of Greek Sage provides a useful paradigm. Martin identifies three “features” that stand out in the tradition of sages: (1) “the sages are poets”; (2) “they are involved in politics”; and (3) “they are performers.” 193 Although he concludes that “the practical skill of the wise person, the hallmark frequently mentioned as that which distinguishes archaic wisdom from later theoretical investigation, is just one feature – and not the most important – in the representation of these figures” (124), it is still an essential feature.

We have laid out some of the nuances of terms like “philosopher” and “sage” (or “wise man”) that are implicit in Socrates’ “philosopher-rulers.” The other aspect of the term, however, “ruler” or “king,” may be less obvious. The fact that Socrates traces out the education of the rulers so extensively suggests he is not only redefining philosophy, but political authority as well. Desmond stresses the importance not just of what the philosopher-rulers are, but what they are not: “They are not public magicians, god-kings or rulers by the “grace of God,” conceived of as a personal being. Still less do they rule by right of conquest or inheritance. And even less are they tyrants who rule for their own

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narrow benefit. Rather, Socrates’ guardians gain their position because they are “the best” at the royal craft and most qualified to exercise it.”194 Not only are Socrates’ philosophers not the “philosophers” in the way that his fifth-century Athenian audience perceives them (i.e. they are not Aristophanes’ riddling Socrates, or Thales, who cannot see the ditch into which he falls as he gazes at the stars); they are also not rulers as “rulers” are thought to be: they are not descendents of a royal line like the Spartan kings or Critias as he portrays himself in Timaes-Critias.195 Rather, they rule because they are most capable of ruling through their education—they are the wisest because they have studied the Form of the Good and can thus bring it down from the heavens to earth, as Cicero says Socrates did with philosophy (Tusculan Disputations 5.10-11). In the Republic, Socrates imagines philosophers being given the authority to use their wisdom through a redefinition of what is civically useful. In Hesiod, the Muses inspire kings, so that they rule with “straight judgments” (ιθείησι δίκησιν) and “knowledge” (ἐπισταμένως).196 They are not only wise, but accepted as such. Likewise, Socrates’ philosopher-rulers use the knowledge they attain for their rule. The “Noble Lie” suggests that these rulers can come from any family or class.

Socrates furthermore defines his philosopher-rulers particularly in contradistinction to the politicians of fifth-century Athens, such as Alcibiades and Critias, who are overcome with ambition to rule.197 The philosophers rule not because they want

195 On Critias’ self-portrayal, see chapter two above.
196 Theogony 85-87.
197 Cf. Republic 494b-e.
to, but because they have to and, through their knowledge of the Good, they are most qualified to do so. Still, Socrates’ description of his guardians and their rise to power do invoke aspects of the past. G.R.F. Ferrari suggests that “Plato wrote the Republic…as a writer who looked back at literary models,” and that the “Republic fits a mould when it indicts the wretched condition of the tyrant from the perspective of the sage, and when it brings its political and moral reflections to a focus in the figure of the enlightened king.”

Although Ferrari suggests that Plato breaks a literary mould when he imagines a philosopher-ruler as one unit, as opposed to the literary trope of the grouping philosopher-and-king (e.g. Solon and Croesus, Simonides and Hiero), he still acknowledges that “historically, the coincidence of philosophic ability and political power in notable individuals was by no means unprecedented. One intellectual who drafted a code of law…[was] Solon, Plato’s sixth-century ancestor, who not only brought social reform to Athens but composed poetry on the political issues he was responsible for resolving.”

Ferrari goes on to list several other examples, but no historical and literary figure would be more prominent to an Athenian audience than Solon: the Athenian sage, poet, statesman, and—by Plato’s time—a man whom they credited as founder of their democracy. The traditions surrounding Solon’s life and politics can be compared to the

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201 See introduction to chapter two above.
development of Socrates’ philosopher-ruler to establish a literary relationship between
the two.

Herodotus, our earliest historical source on Solon’s life, first mentions Solon in
the context of Croesus’ rise to power. He gives the following introduction to Solon:

κατεστραμμένων δὴ τούτων καὶ προσεπικτωμένου Κροίσου Λυδοίσι, ἀπικνέονται ἐς Σάρδις ἀκμαζούσας πλούτω ἄλλοι τε οἱ πάντες ἐκ τῆς Ἑλλάδος σοφισταί, οἱ τούτον τὸν χρόνον ἐτύγχανον ἑόντες, ὡς ἕκαστος αὐτῶν ἀπικνέοιτο, καὶ δὴ καὶ Σόλων ἀνὴρ Ἀθηναῖος, ὃς Ἀθηναίοις νόμους κελεύσας ποιήσας ἀπεδήμησε ἐτεά δέκα, κατὰ θεωρίας πρόφασιν ἐκπλώσας, ἱνα δὴ μὴ τινα τῶν νόμων ἀναγκασθῇ λύσαι τῶν ἔθετο. Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οὐκ οἱ οἱ τε ἦσαν αὐτὸ ποιήσας Ἀθηναίοι· ὅρκοισι γὰρ μεγάλοις κατείχοντο δέκα ἐτεά χρήσεσθαι νόμοις τούς ἀν σφι Σόλωνθῇται. (1.29)

While these things were happening and Croesus was increasing the Lydian
empire, all the wise men of Greece—who happened to live at this time—
came to Sardis (at the pinnacle of its wealth) one by one. Foremost among
them was Solon, an Athenian man, who at the bidding of the Athenians
made laws, and then left for ten years. He departed on the pretext of
theoria, so that he would not be forced to repeal any of the laws he made.
For the Athenians could not do this, since they were forced by a solemn
oath to employs Solon’s laws for ten years.

The Protagoras, the drama which Plato sets first in universe of his Socratic dialogues,
mentions Solon in the context of the Seven Sages; Herodotus likewise first mentions
Solon as a member of this archaic intellectual circle.202 His status as one of “the wise men
of Greece” legitimates Solon’s political capacity. He is in fact a distinguished member of
the group, as the emphatic καὶ δὴ καὶ Herodotus uses to introduce him suggests. The
political aspect of the Seven Sages is apparent from their interest in coming to see
Croesus. Solon is not the first to visit Croesus, but one of a series of wise men who meet

202 For the argument that the Seven Sages are not Plato’s literary invention, but in fact predate Plato’s
Protagoras, with Herodotus as evidence of an earlier source, see especially Martin (1998); see also Kurke
(2011) chapters 2-4; and chapter one above.
with the powerful king. But Solon’s encounter with Croesus is unique among the all the Sage encounters with the king. Solon comes to Croesus’ kingdom and views his treasuries, the physical emblems of his power and wealth, yet Solon refuses to acknowledge that Croesus is the happiest of men he has seen.

Similarly, in Socrates’ allegory of the Cave in Book VII of the Republic, the philosopher descends into the cave, where the prisoners who do not know about the world above compete for the highest honors in recognizing the passing shadows. The philosopher who has ascended out of the cave would think nothing of these honors, but rather, as Achilles in the underworld, he would prefer

<ἐπάροιτον ἑώτα θητευέμεν ἀλλω ἀνδρί παρ’ ἄκληρω> καὶ ὅτιον ἀν πεπουθέναι μᾶλλον ἤ ’κεινά τε δοξάζειν καὶ ἐκείνως ζην. (516d)

...“to live as a serf and serve another lotless man,” and to suffer anything rather than to think those things and to live in that way.

The reputedly wise Solon is like the philosopher who has escaped the cave and learned truer things—in Solon’s case, truer signs of happiness—while Croesus is under a cave-like allusion that his power and wealth equate to his happiness. Solon’s answer to Croesus’ question is that Tellus the Athenian, a man whose city was prosperous, who lived to see his noble children and grandchildren, and who died nobly in battle, for which he was honored by his city, this Tellus was the happiest of men. Solon has a different

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203 In fact, Herodotus only mentions two other Sages’ visits (those of Bias and Pittacus) in passing (1.27), and he does not even clarify which Sage it was who advised Croesus in this specific instance.

204 Socrates quotes Achilles in the underworld conversing with Odysseus (Odyssey 11.489-490). In this passage in Homer’s poem, Odysseus has just praised Achilles for both the honors he held while alive and the position he appears to hold now as lord of the underworld (11.484-485). But Achilles, who has come to understand the meaninglessness of honors in the world below (by Socrates’ analogy, in prison of the Cave), denies Odysseus’ praise, saying he would rather be the lowest of those outside the underworld (the Cave) than the most powerful of those within (11.490-491).
understanding of what prosperity is, one linked with one’s city and family.\textsuperscript{205} Furthermore, this prosperity means nothing if one’s life does not end well, in terms of self, family, and city. The eyesight of the philosopher who returns into the cave is overcome with darkness and unable to recognize the shadows the prisoners study, and they mock him and ridicule him (516e-517a). If he were to release them, they would attack him and kill him (517a). Likewise, Croesus sends Solon away, thinking him to be “ignorant” (ἀμαθεα, 1.33).\textsuperscript{206} Not until it is too late does Croesus realize the truth of Solon’s sentiment, as he sits upon the pyre about to die: although he is saved from the fire, he has seen his own fortunes crumble, his most beloved son die, and his empire fall. Solon, like Socrates’ philosopher-kings, is not at first accepted to be most fit for political affairs. Croesus thinks he knows more than Solon. Even the Athenians do not accept Solon’s measures without question. Despite his reputation for wisdom and justice, and his selection by his own people,\textsuperscript{207} they do not trust his measures and try to persuade him to change his laws. He thus leaves Athens so that he cannot be forced to do so.

Solon’s departure from Athens can be compared with the philosophers’ ascent out of the cave. Herodotus says Solon went on his journey κατὰ θεωρίης πρόφασιν (“under the pretext of \textit{theoria},” 1.29). Croesus likewise uses the term when addressing Solon, having heard that Solon “[has] come to many lands in search of wisdom, for the sake of \textit{theoria}” (φιλοσοφέων γῆν πολλήν θεωρίης εἶνεκεν ἐπελήλυθας, 1.30). The term

\textsuperscript{205} In the \textit{Laws}, however, Solon’s conception of happiness is criticized. See chapter four, section III below.

\textsuperscript{206} This is the same term used of ignorance throughout Plato’s corpus. See especially \textit{Symposium} 202a; 203e-204b.

\textsuperscript{207} Cf. Ps.-Aristotle, \textit{Ath. Consti.} 5.3; Plutarch, \textit{Solon} 14.
can be translated simply as “sight-seeing,” but it can also further denote, as Nightingale explains, “a journey or pilgrimage abroad for the purpose of witnessing certain events and spectacles.” Nightingale defines such journeys as either civic (where someone commissioned by the city reports back on what she saw) or private (where one does not have to report her findings to anyone else). She labels the journey of the philosopher in Books V-VII of the Republic as “the most detailed account of theory in the Platonic corpus”; in these books, Nightingale suggests, “Plato models philosophic theory on the traditional practice of civic theory.” After contemplating the Good, the philosophers of Socrates’ cave analogy then return down into the cave to apply their knowledge to their political rule. Croesus describes Solon as “philosophizing” in the context of theory as well. Nightingale describes Solon’s journey as a third type of theory, a secular journey “in pursuit of knowledge.” Although she admits that Solon does not seem to learn anything from Croesus, she points out another passage in Book II of Herodotus, where Solon in Egypt learned a law of Amasis, which he later implemented in Athens. “This offers one example of the kind of wisdom that Solon pursued,” Nightingale says; “it also gives evidence that this third kind of theory

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208 Cf. De Selincourt (1954) [= Marincola 2003] translates κατὰ θεωρίης πρόφασιν as “just to see the world” and combines Croesus’ words θεωρίης τῆς Εἰνέκεν with the verb ἐπέληλυθας to produce the translation “you have traveled.”


could serve the city as well as the individual.” Just as Socrates’ philosophers must return to the cave after their contemplation above, Solon must return to the city after his ten year journey, and Herodotus’ mention of the law Solon learned from Amasis suggests that Solon continued to participate in politics upon his return, using some of the knowledge he gained while on *theoria*.

Solon’s political rise is itself in keeping with Socrates’ philosopher-rulers. Ps.-Aristotle tells us that “Solon was by birth and reputation of the first rank, but by wealth and position belonged to the middle class” (ἣν δ' ὁ Σόλων τῇ μὲν φύσει καὶ τῇ δόξῃ τῶν πρῶτων, τῇ δ' οὐσίᾳ καὶ τοῖς πράγμασι τῶν μέσων). Likewise Plutarch describes Solon’s family origins as follows:

> Ἐξηκεστίδου γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀπαντεῖς ὁμαλῶς γεγονέναι λέγουσιν, ἀνδρὸς οὐσία μὲν ὡς φασι καὶ δυνάμει μέσου τῶν πολιτῶν, οἰκίας δὲ πρώτης κατὰ γένος. ἦν γὰρ Κοδρίδης ἀνέκαθεν. (Solon 1)

All [the sources] agree that Solon was the son of Execestides, a man said to be among the middle class of citizens in wealth and power, but among the first class in birth. For he is descended from Codrus. Although Solon’s family was itself descended from a renowned king, their wealth and influence was of moderate rank. It is thus not his family origins that permitted him to come to power. Rather, the Athenians chose Solon because of his reputation for justice:

> Ἐνταῦθα δὴ τῶν Ἀθηναίων οἱ φρονιμώτατοι συνορῶντες τὸν Σόλωνα μόνον ἢ μάλιστα τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων ἐκτὸς ὄντα, καὶ μήτε τοῖς πλοῦσιοις κοινωνοῦντα τῆς ἀδικίας, μήτε ταῖς τῶν πενήτων ἀνάγκαις ἐνεχόμενον, ἐδέοντο τοῖς κοινοῖς προσελθεῖν καὶ καταπαύσασι τὰς διαφορᾶς. (Solon 14)

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213 Nightingale (2004) 64. For further discussion of Solon’s *theoria*, see Ker (2000).

The most prudent of the Athenians saw Solon alone as separate from the mistakes, and that he did not partake in the injustice of the wealthy, nor was he restrained by the compulsions of the poor, so together they asked him to take public office and end the differences.

Solon was chosen as ruler because, as an objective figure between two parties, he was most qualified to take up political and legislative power in Athens. Likewise Socrates’ philosopher-rulers are “rulers” inasmuch as they are the most qualified to rule: through their rigorous educative curriculum, culminating in contemplation of the Good, they are the wisest. They are not children of the gods or inspired by the Muses in their rule; there is no divine sanction or royal familial line that justifies their rule. Socrates distinguishes one’s class from one’s philosophic talent. Just as Solon came from a family of middle rank, so a child born from a silver, bronze, or iron parent—to follow Socrates’ “Noble Lie”—could become a philosopher-ruler. He was made ruler because the Athenians believed that he would apply his own sense of justice in his laws.

The aims of Solon’s political legislation fall in line with the aims of Socrates’ philosopher-rulers. At the opening of Book IV, Adeimantus questions the potential happiness of the Guardians, given the impositions Socrates has placed upon them. Others have accumulated wealth: they have land, houses, furniture, guests, money; yet the guardian class, “like mercenary guards, appear to sit in the city doing nothing but guarding it” (ὁσπερ ἐπίκουροι μισθωτοὶ ἐν τῇ πόλει φαίνονται καθήσαται οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ φρούροιντες, 420a). They derive none of the benefits that other classes do. Socrates adds more to the list: they receive no pay above what they need, and so cannot spend money on any of the things they desire (420a). Adeimantus agrees, and asks again how
Socrates can defend such a position for the guardians. Socrates does so by reiterating their aim in establishing this hypothetical city:

\[ \text{οὐ μὴν πρὸς τὸῦτο βλέποντες τὴν πόλιν οἰκίζομεν, ὡς ἐν τῷ ἡμῖν ἔθνος ἔσται διαφερόντως εὐδαιμον, ἀλλ' ὡς ὡς ὧτι μᾶλιστα ὡλὴ ἡ πόλις. (420b)} \]

In founding the city, we are not looking for any one class to be distinctly happy, but for the entire city to be so, as much as possible.

The guardians rule then not for their own benefit—not to maximize their own happiness—but for the greatest benefit of the entire city, as shepherds shepherd for the benefit of their sheep and ship-captains captain for the benefit of their sailors.\(^\text{215}\) They must recognize themselves as a mere part of a greater whole of the city. In Book IV, Socrates defines justice as each part of the city or soul doing its own task (433a-b). The philosopher-rulers oversee the whole order.

This theme of ruling as a craft that benefits its subjects, not its practitioners, returns in the allegory of the cave. Once the philosophers have ascended out of the cave and contemplated the Good, Socrates says it is their (his and his interlocutors’) task as founders to not allow these guardians to do what they have so far been permitted,

\[ \text{καταμένειν καὶ μὴ ἑθέλειν πάλιν καταβαίνειν παρ’ ἐκείνους τοὺς δεσμώτας μηδὲ μετέχειν τῶν παρ’ ἐκείνους πόνων τε καὶ τιμῶν, εἴτε φαυλότεραι εἴτε σπουδαίότεραι. (519d)} \]

…to remain there and refuse to descend back down among the prisoners, not partaking of the toils and honors there, whether the more trivial or the more serious

\(^{215}\) Cf. Book I, 341c-d; 342e.
Rather, since they are attempting to benefit not themselves, but the whole city, the philosophers must rule, even if unwillingly (519e-520d). Socrates goes even further to say,

ἐν πόλει ἣ ἥκιστα πρόθυμοι ἀρχεῖν οἱ μέλλοντες ἀρχεῖν, ταύτην ἀριστα καὶ ἀστασιαστότατα ἀνάγκη οἰκεῖοθαι, τὴν δ’ ἐναντίους ἀρχοντᾶς σχούσαν ἐναντίως. (520d)

In the city in which those least eager to rule are the ones who are going to rule, it is necessary that this city exists in the best and most faction-free way, and the city with the opposite type of rulers will be the opposite.

It is the city in which the rulers rule unwillingly that is the best, Socrates suggests. Such a city seems to be the complete opposite of the Athens of Socrates’ own day, with overly ambitious figures such as Alcibaides, Critias, and Cleon.

If there were any historical models such as the one Socrates proposes, it would have been Solonian Athens. According to Plutarch,

ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς φησιν ὁ Σόλων ὁκυνὼν τὸ πρῶτον ἁγιασθαι τῆς πολιτείας, καὶ δεδοκὼς τῶν μὲν τὴν φιλοχρηματίαν, τῶν δὲ τὴν ὑπερηφανίαν. (Solon 14)

Solon himself says that he took hold of the constitution with hesitation, fearing the greed of some and the arrogance of others.

The fact that Plutarch says this was Solon’s own reason for why he came to power indicates that not everyone agreed. Plutarch, although himself suggesting that the Athenians went to Solon, does give a competing account where Solon may have gone to both the rich and the poor individually with promises in order to get himself into power, “to save the city” (ἐπὶ σωτηρία τῆς πόλεως, 14). Although the description still emphasized altruistic motives, Solon does not appear as reluctant to rule in this account.

In any case, in the most popular account of Solon, and thus the one with which Plato’s
audience would have been most familiar, Solon was an unwilling ruler who came to power only at the request of his people. This also seems to be the case in Herodotus’ account, where the historian says Solon “made laws at the bidding of the Athenians” (δὲ Ἀθηναίοις νόμους κελεύσας ποιήσας, 1.29). The participle κελεύσας suggests that Solon did not come into power through his own ambition. His reluctance makes him a particularly suitable legislator, because he seems to have no ulterior motives.

Ruling unwillingly is in fact a key aspect of the philosophers. The idea of a “philosopher,” as Socrates defines him, is innovative within the wisdom tradition. This figure is literally a “lover of wisdom,” and thus Socrates’ discussion in Book V has something to do with love. Ludwig interprets the three waves of Book V as being linked by the overarching theme of eros. He suggests that the first two waves, in which (1) women and men are to train naked together and (2) women and children are shared, philia—that is, “a feeling of attachment to what one already possesses (or once possessed), that is, a love of one’s own” is diminished. The guardians move from loving their own respective families to loving the entire city as its philoi. In the final wave, the philosophers attain “philosophic eros” in detachment from philia: the object of their love is now wisdom. They have thus climbed up the “ladder of love” of the Symposium from love of bodies to love of wisdom. In this way, the philosophers are the best to rule, because their desires are completely free of ambition and personal gain. They

\[\text{Ludwig (2007) 208.}\]

\[\text{Ludwig (2007) 209.}\]
are disinterested in the honors of the cave (which Adeimantus seeks, 420a), since their sole desire is wisdom, and wisdom is something that can be possessed in common.218

If Solon rose to power not out of ambition (philotimia, literally, “love of honor”) or concern for his family, but out of love and concern for the city, he represents a higher rung on the ladder of love. However, this is not the same rung as the love of wisdom. In fragment 32 W., Solon refuses to establish himself as tyrant in Athens despite a popular opinion that he should do so:

εἰ δὲ γῆς (φησιν)219 ἐφεισάμην πατρίδος, τυραννίδος δὲ καὶ βίης ἁμειλίχου οὐ καθησάμην μίαν καὶ κατασχύσας κλέος, οὐδὲν αἰδέομαι· πλέον γὰρ ὡδε νικήσειν δοκέω πάντας ἀνθρώπους.

If (Solon says) I spared my fatherland, if I did not take up tyranny and relentless force, polluting and shaming my reputation, then I am not ashamed; for in this way I think I will more fully surpass all men.

Solon claims that his political intentions were in the best interest of the city. This may be so, but he still shows concern for reputation here, a matter reminiscent of the dwellers of the cave. He stands somewhere between the ambitious and the truly altruistic.

Yet Solon’s self-portrayed altruism is at least a step towards true love of wisdom. In Book VI, Socrates says “that no city, regime or man can ever become perfect” (ὅτι οὐτε πόλις οὐτε πολιτεία οὐδὲ γ’ ἄνηρ ὀμοίως μὴ ποτε γένηται τέλεος) until some

218 Ludwig (2007) 221: “True philosophers fulfill the promise of communism simply owing to the nature of the objects they desire: the ideas they traffic in are common property for anyone who wants them and has the capacity. Philosophers (qua philosophers) therefore lack possessiveness, wanting only to behold, not to own.

219 The first part of this line, up to Plutarch’s interpolation of φησιν, is a short transition into the actual fragment.
necessity (ἀνάγκη τις) forces the philosophers to take charge of it (499b). The historical accounts suggest it was through compulsion of the city, because of its wretched condition, that Solon rose to prominence.\(^\text{220}\)

All the historical accounts also suggest, in accordance with fragment 32 W., that Solon did not take his power and influence to the furthest extent possible, tyranny, although many tried to persuade him to do so. Ps.-Aristotle says that the rich and poor each had different expectations of Solon, but he complied with neither, although he could have attained tyranny by succumbing to the demands of either side and thus attaining a large support group (\textit{Ath. Const.} 11). Solon “chose to incur the enmity of both by saving the country and introducing the legislation that was best” (εἰλετο πρὸς ἀμφοτέρους ἀπεχθέσθαι, σῶσας τὴν πατρίδα καὶ τὰ βέλτιστα νομοθετήσας).\(^\text{221}\) Ps.-Aristotle quotes several fragments of Solon’s poetry to indicate Solon’s self-portrayed motives (fragments 5, 6, 32, 33, 34, 36, and 37), all suggesting Solon gave neither the rich nor the poor too much power in his legislation, and although he declined tyranny and made many enemies, he acted in the best interests of the city. Just as the guardians of Socrates’ Callipolis, Solon puts the needs of the city above his own, and looks to the entire city’s happiness, rather than the happiness of any one part, even the ruling part.

Thus in fragment 5 W., Solon says,

\begin{quote}
δήμω μὲν γὰρ ἐδοκα τόσον γέρας, ὀσσου ἐπαρκεῖν,
τιμής ούτ’ ἀφελῶν οὔτ’ ἐπορεξάμενος,
οἱ δ’ ἔχον δύναμιν καὶ χρήμασιν ἦσαν ἄγητοι,
καὶ τοῖς ἐφρασάμην μηδὲν ἄεικες ἔχειν.
ἔστην δ’ ἀμφιβαλῶν κρατερὸν σάκος ἀμφοτέροις,
\end{quote}

\(^{220}\) For a detailed account, see Owens (2010) 71-81.

\(^{221}\) \textit{Ath. Const.} 11, trans. Rackham.
I gave as much privilege to the people as sufficed, 
neither taking away nor adding to their honor, 
And those who had power and were admired for their wealth, 
I contrived for them to have nothing unseemly. 
But I stood and cast a mighty shield around both of them, 
and I allowed neither to gain anything unjustly.

Solon outlines the two parts of the city he has to deal with, the rich and the poor, and how he handled each. To the poorer class he gave more, but not too much, and likewise he restrained the wealthier class only so much, so that they could retain their rank. Although both sides wanted Solon to do more for them, and they would have further supported him politically if he had done so, he chose only moderate reforms in the interest of both parties simultaneously. Just as Socrates calls his philosopher-rulers “Guardians,” Solon himself acts as a guardian to the city, casting a shield around the two factions to restrain them, but also to protect each from the other.

In two sets of tetrameters quoted in Plutarch’s Solon 14, fragments 32 and 33 W.—potentially two sections of the same longer poem which also included fragment 34 W.—Solon emphasizes his rejection of tyranny. In fragment 32 W., quoted above, Solon claims an honored status if he becomes remembered for refusing tyranny. In these lines, tyranny and force are both a threat to the fatherland and a stain on Solon’s

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222 Cf. fragment 6 W., quoted directly after fragment 5 in Ps.-Aristotle, Ath. Consti. 12, in which Solon again suggests the demos should be moderated, neither too free nor too restrained: δήμος δ’ ἄδει ἀν ἄριστα σὺν ἡγεμόνεσιν ἐποίησε / μήτε λιαν ἀνεθείς μήτε βιαζόμενος, / τίκτει γὰρ κόρος ὑβριν, ὃταν πολύς δῆλος ἐπιται / ἀνθρώποις, ὁσοὶ μὴ νῶς ἄρτιος ὤ. (“The people would best follow their leaders / if they were neither free nor constrained too much. / For satiety gives birth to insolence, whenever much prosperity follows / men whose minds are crooked”).

223 Owens (2010) 263.
reputation. His rejection of both produces two benefits: he has saved his city and preserved, if not enhanced, his own name.

In fragment 33 W., Solon gives voice to his critics, who would have taken up tyranny had they been in Solon’s position, and think him a fool for not doing so himself.

Solon is neither a man of deep thought nor counsel; For the god granted him noble things, and he did not receive them; Instead, he cast out his great net for hunting and marveled, but he did not draw it in, erring in his heart and slipping in his mind; For I would have ruled willingly, taking unenvied wealth and becoming tyrant over Athens, even if only for a single day, even if later my skin were flayed and my family destroyed.

Solon manipulates his critics’ words, so that no benefits of temporarily being tyrant seem to reasonably outweigh the catastrophes that befell former tyrants, once dethroned, and their families. Solon’s own decision to forsake tyranny seems the much wiser option. But the tyrannical person, as Solon portrays him, desires power at the risk of everything else. This falls in line with Socrates’ description of the tyrant, who desires power above all else, as we will see in the next section of this chapter. The tyrant, as Solon describes him, seeks satisfaction now, and does not think of the future. Croesus, for example, was unhappy with Solon’s replies to his question, because Croesus saw himself as happy in that specific moment in time. Solon is one of the many figures to whom the Delphic maxim “nothing in excess” (μηδὲν ἄγαν) is attributed.\footnote{Diels (1959); Owens (2010) 292. Cf. Protagoras 343a-b.} Regardless of who originally
authored this notion of moderation, it is completely in keeping with Solon’s self-portrayed political consciousness, especially in his rejection of tyranny.

In fragment 34, Solon most clearly articulates his motives for appeasing neither the rich nor the poor too fully:

{o\i \\delta' \ \epsilon' \ \alpha\upomicron\tau\acute{a}g\theta\acute{e}iv\i\nu \ \eta\lambda\theta\omicron\nu' \ \epsilon\lambda\pi\delta' \ \epsilon'\acute{\i}ch\omicron \ \alpha'\acute{f}neiv\i, 
k\acute{a}d\acute{\o}keon \ \epsilon\kappa\acute{a}stos \ \alpha'\upsilon\tau\omicron\nu \ \eta\lambda\theta\omicron\nu \ \epsilonu\rho\acute{\i}seiv \ \pi\omicron\upsilon\nu, 
\kappa\acute{a}i \ \mu' \ \kappa\omega\tau\iota\lambda\lambda\omicron\upsilon\tau\a\acute{a} le\acute{i}sw \ \tau\acute{a}x\omicron\nu\nu \ \epsilon\kappa\phi\acute{a}neiv \ \nu\omicron\omicron. 
\chi\acute{a}v\acute{n}a \ \mu'\nu \ \tau\omicron\omicron' \ \epsilon\phi\rho\acute{\alpha}\acute{s}\acute{a}nto, \ \nu\nu\nu \ \delta' \ \mu'\iota \ \chi\omicron\lambda\omicron\omicron\omicr\omicron\omicron\nu\e\mu\mu\omicron\nuoi \ 
\lo\xi'\omicron \ \o\phi\theta\alpha\omicron\lambda\omicron\mu\omicron\iota\iota\omicron\iota\iota \ \omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr' \ \omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr' \ \OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR' \ \omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr' \ \omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr' \ \omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr' \ \OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR' \ \OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR' \ \OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR' \ \OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR\OMICR.'

Some came for plunder and had hope for riches; and each thought that he would find great wealth, and that although I chattered smoothly, I would reveal a harsh mind. Well, they thought these things in vain, and now all are angry with me and they look askance at me with their eyes as if I were an enemy. There is no need for this. For I accomplished what I said I would through the gods,

And I did other things not in vain, nor was it pleasing that I [...] with the force of tyranny, nor that the rich have a share of the fertile earth of the fatherland equal to the poor.

Each side imagined that Solon would go to extremes. In these lines, Solon focuses specifically on the poorer classes, who thought that his rise to power would bring them wealth through a redistribution of land. Solon claims to have had no desire to accomplish this. He instead kept moderate in his reforms for both parties. In fragment 36 W., Solon says that he “wrote laws for poor and rich alike, fitting straight justice to each” (\theta'\omicron\omicron\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr' \ \omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr' \ \OMICR\OMICR' \ \OMICR\OMICR' \ \OMICR\OMICR', \ \omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr', \ \OMICR\OMICR', \ 36.18-20), and since he favored neither party over the other, he now “stands like a wolf among many hounds” (\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr\omicr' \ \OMICR\OMICR, \ 36.27) amid the two sides. He is prone to attack from both sides, because of his liminal position. Likewise in
fragment 37 W., Solon compares himself to a boundary-stone (ὦπος, 37.10) between the two parties. While Solon would seem to be in a better position personally if he were to choose one side over the other, his current position is the best one for the city. In the same way, Socrates’ philosophers return to the cave, not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of the entire city.

Solon’s rejection of tyranny and self-imposed exile made him a particularly potent image for the Athenian democracy; it could also place him on the side of the philosopher, as diametrically opposed to the tyrant, in the Republic. Plato’s dichotomy of philosopher and tyrant participates in the Athenian democracy’s image of the tyrant as a threat to the democracy. Solon as anti-tyrannical figure thus existed as a standard model for Plato to call upon. Solon, however, is not Socrates’ philosopher—instead, he seems to be a step on the ladder towards becoming a philosopher. In Herodotus’ encounter between Solon and Croesus, as well as in Solon’s own poetry, we see that Solon’s is at least one step higher on the ladder than Croesus (who desires monetary

225 See my discussion of democratic use of Solon in chapter two above. Even the non-Athenian Herodotus portrayed Solon as particularly anti-tyrannical by first mentioning Solon’s ten-year journey abroad. The departure from one’s city for the period of ten years cannot help but resonate with the democratic practice of ostracism, which was established in direct opposition to tyranny on multiple levels. On ostracism and democracy, see Forsdyke (2005).

226 On the direct opposition between philosopher-ruler and tyrant, see Republic 576d.

227 On the image of the tyrant in classical Athens, see Rosivach (1988) and Monoson (2000); for Plato’s use of this image, see Monoson (2000). Rosivach suggests that “[t]he tyrant becomes in effect an all-purpose symbol of villainous rule, and tyranny becomes simply the negation of good government, whatever a particular author considers good government to be, rather than any particular form of government itself. Indeed, so far does the emphasis shift from ideology to personality that, in the hands of Plato, the tyrant, who had once served as the categorical antithesis of democracy, can now be portrayed in the Republic as democracy’s natural result” (57). He further notes that “Plato is heir…to the aristocratic tradition which opposed tyranny to the rule of the best” (57n36), citing passages from Pindar, Aeschylus, Herodotus, and Thucydides as examples of this tradition. I disagree with Rosivach’s sentiment on Plato’s handling of democracy, since, as others have discussed (and I discuss below), the place of democracy is nuanced. My own account of Plato’s handling of tyranny also comes in the next section of this chapter.
wealth) and some of his fellow Athenians (who desire tyranny). Solon is able to recognize that happiness goes beyond one’s personal gain: it is attached to one’s family and city as well. But the stories he tells Croesus and his poems rejecting tyranny both show another motive: honor. Both Tellus the Athenian and the Argive brothers Cleobis and Biton strive for happiness, the Herodotean Solon suggests, through the honor their respective cities confer upon them. The Athenians honored (ἐτίμησαν, 1.30) Tellus with a public funeral, while the Agives dedicated statues of Cleobis and Biton in commemoration of the honor they bestowed (ἐτίμησαν, 1.31) upon their mother. Likewise, Solon himself rejects tyranny for the sake of his reputation (32 W.). The Herodotean Solon rejects the idea that Croesus is happy because he has not yet seen how Croesus’ life ends. We know from the rest of the Croesus-logos of Book I that Croesus’ son dies, his empire falls, and he himself becomes a servant to Cyrus. His end, by Solon’s count, is far from happy. But Herodotus omits Solon’s end. Aside from two passing references to other places he visited (Egypt, 2.177; Cyprus, 5.113), Solon does not appear again in Herodotus’ narrative. Concerning Solon himself, we know not only that he enacted further legislation (2.177) and wrote poetry (5.113), but also that his city of Athens underwent faction, which led to the rise of Pisistratus. While Solon dismissed the temporary prosperity of Croesus, he discovers no better fate for himself. Although he is honored in Athens for centuries after his death, his city (at least as Herodotus’ narrative presents it) is no happier than Lydia when he dies. This differentiates him from Socrates, who strives at the higher attainment of wisdom.

Solon’s qualified status in Plato’s thought becomes clearer in the section on the five regimes and the souls that correspond to each. Solon rejected tyranny and placed
himself in a liminal position between the rich and poor classes to prevent stasis or civil war within the city. Stasis was a major concern in classical political thought, especially in the Republic, as I will discuss in the next section. Solon’s concern with struggles within the limits of the city provided an important model for Plato’s Socrates to further develop and elaborate in the Republic. Solon’s perspective on this aspect of justice within the city is thus an important influence on the political thought of Socrates and Plato.

IV. Solon and the Five Types of Regimes and Souls

In this section, I put forward two ways in which Solon’s presence stands in the background of Socrates’ outline and discussion of the five types of regimes and their corresponding five types of souls in Books VIII-IX of the Republic: (1) through a thematic link (stasis) with Solon’s poetry on the decline of the city, particularly fragment 4 W.; and (2) through allusions to Solon’s life and legislation in the transition from democracy into tyranny. In his discussion of the give types of regimes, Socrates places tyranny fifth and furthest away from the best type of regime, the rule of philosopher-kings. Yet allusion to Solon, I suggest, appears not in the first type of regime and person, but the fourth, democracy, the regime out of which the fifth type, tyranny, may arise.228 Socrates’ description of the democratic soul is very reminiscent of Solon and his rise to power. There are furthermore several historical traditions which link the life of Solon

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228 Republic 565eff.
with that of the tyrant Pisistratus. In order to lay out these relationships, I must first begin with some methodological notes about the structure and aim of Books VIII-IX.

(a) Methodology and Overarching Interpretation of the Five Regimes

Socrates first posits the need for a discussion of the various types of regimes at the end of Book IV, before being distracted by Polemarchus and Adeimantus into a digression on the “three waves”: the sharing of wives and children, the equality of women, and the possibility of realizing the ideal city, the last of which leads into the nature and education of the philosopher. The original aim of the discussion, we must remember, was to find out what justice is in an individual person, using justice in the city as a suitable macrocosmic analogue. In proposing the three waves and then discussing the philosopher, Socrates suggests that he has described the philosophically-rulled regime and the philosopher. Glaucon agrees. In Book VIII, Socrates takes on the four other types of regimes (timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny), and their corresponding types of souls. In his discussion of the philosopher and philosophically ruled city, Socrates describes a city-in-words (592a-b). The changes of regimes and individuals in Book VIII puts Socrates’ stationary city into motion.

This discussion is also a further development of Socrates’ analogy of the city and the soul, first intimated in Book II (368a ff.) and further elaborated in Book IV. The four

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230 Republic 541b; summarized in 543a-544a.

231 This is further evidence to the suggestion that Socrates’ summary at the beginning of the Timaeus is emphatically not a description of the conversation of the Republic. See Chapter Two, section I above.
regimes Socrates describes in Republic VIII-IX are inferior to the ideal city, and likewise their respective souls or character-types to the philosophic soul. Socrates elaborates his application of the city to the soul in Book VIII. In Book IV, he correlated the city and its classes to the soul and its parts, so that the philosopher-rulers (then called “Guardians,” but more clearly defined in Book V as “philosophers” distinct from the “soldiers”) were to the rational part of the soul as the soldiers were to the spirited and the producers to the appetitive. Blössner suggests that in Book VIII, as lower parts of the city and soul become the ruling elements, so the regimes and individuals tend to correspond to these specific parts of the earlier structure of the soul. Each part of the soul has its own object of desire: the rational desires knowledge, the spirited desires prestige, and Socrates further divides the appetitive into three specific desires, wealth, freedom, and power. These (now) five parts of the soul thus correspond to the fives types of regimes as each part becomes the ruling entity in the soul. The aristocratic rule of philosophers and the philosopher have knowledge (of the Good) as their aim; timocracy and the timocrat have prestige; oligarchy and the oligarch, wealth; democracy and the democrat, freedom; tyranny and the tyrant, power. Each of the four latter regimes and souls is thus distorted from the ideal inasmuch as it holds a different desire from knowledge. “[W]hereas the philosopher’s conception of happiness is just and unselfish,” Blössner says, “those maintained by the four unjust types of individual are correspondingly unjust and egoistic.” We cannot then look at the five types of souls and regimes as a simple descent

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232 Glaucion in fact suggests that they are going to examine the “faults” (τὰ ἁμαρτήματα) of each (544a).

233 Blössner (2007) elaborates this structure and its application in Books VIII-IX in great detail. The remainder of this paragraph is summary of much of Blössner’s discussion of Books VIII-IX.
from best to worst, but as a categorization of types via their desires. “The reason for this is that the goods sought by these four unjust types cannot be shared. The unjust individuals engage in a zero-sum game, in which personal advantage can be gained only at another’s expense...Knowledge, by contrast, is a good that can be shared” (364-365).

To refer back to the role of eros in Socrates’ conception of the “philosopher” in the Republic (see section III above), philosophic souls and regimes are sharable because their ultimate desire can be attained by one without taking it away from another. Hence the non-competitive nature of philosophic rule.

Since these regimes are different types of regimes based on each one’s respective ruling entity, rather than regimes simply born out of one another, how to interpret the transition between the types of regimes in Book VIII is also of particular importance. This transition from one type to another has often been described as a “decline” or “fall,”234 despite the fact that no word denoting decline appears anywhere in the Greek text of Book VIII.235 Rather, as Saxonhouse (1998) suggests, the discussion of the five regimes represents not decline from best to worst, but movement between different categorical types:

234 Cf. Coby (1993), “Socrates on the Decline and Fall of Regimes”; Hitz (2010), “Degenerate regimes in Plato’s Republic.” I should note that I will at times refer to the transitions between regimes as a form of decline, partly because it is clear that the rule of philosophers and the rational part of the soul is superior to the other four regimes and tyranny inferior to the other four; and partly because the image of ascent is so important to the progression of the philosopher in the Platonic dialogues, so the image of descent is likewise appropriate for change and movement away from philosophy.

235 Saxonhouse (1998) 274n3: “The word eide appears frequently throughout Book 8; a word for "decline" does not appear in the text. We read of change (metaballei, 545d), movement (kinethetai, 545d) and "mistaken (hamartemenas) regimes" (544a). Yet, volume after volume on Plato records "the decline" but never the frequent appearance of eide.” Socrates does, however, refer to a “peak of the regimes” (τὸ ἀνατέτλοις τῶν πολιτεῶν, 568d) when discussing the welcoming of poets in democracy and tyranny as opposed to the other three regimes later in Book VIII.
Book 8 traditionally stands as the book that traces the decline of regimes, but attention to that aspect has led scholars to ignore the equally strong focus that Plato places on typology, on the five forms (*eide*) of regimes and their human counterparts. Socrates traces the movement from aristocracy to tyranny and the parallel personalities, how each one comes into being (the genetic analysis), but he also identifies the different *eide* of political regime and how we can distinguish one from the other (the eidetic analysis). (274)

This typological interpretation of the regimes suggests that the ordering of the five regimes (and more specifically, the placing of democracy as fourth and nearest to tyranny) is not representative of Socrates’ ranking of the five types. Although the aristocratic rule of philosopher-kings, the first type of regime, is portrayed as the best, and tyranny the worst, the three intermediate types are not successive degradations from aristocracy, but differing types that arise out of one another through certain causes. Later in this section we will examine why democracy is placed beside tyranny in Socrates’ discussion.

The interpretation of the five regimes as *change* rather than simple *decline* can be further supported by Socrates’ comparison of the regimes to Hesiod’s five races at the beginning of Book VIII. Socrates discusses how problems in succession lead to a change from aristocracy, when

\[\text{ἄρχοντες οὐ πάνυ φυλακικοὶ καταστήσονται πρὸς τὸ δοκιμάζειν τὰ Ἡσιόδου τε καὶ τὰ παρ’ ύμιν γένη, χρυσοῦν τε καὶ ἄργυροῦν καὶ χάλκουν καὶ σιδηροῦν}. \]

This passage refers back to the metallic races Socrates describes in the Noble Lie in Book III (415a-c). But it also sets up an analogy for the five types of regimes Socrates is about
to outline. Vernant has demonstrated that the five races of man outlined in Hesiod’s *Works and Days* (110-201)—Gold, Silver, Bronze, Heroes, and Iron—represent not a decline from best to worst, but categorically different types. Vernant’s interpretation is supported in part by the seemingly out-of-place Race of Heroes between the Bronze Race and Iron Race. The Race of Heroes is superior to the Iron Race that succeeds it, but it is hardly inferior to the Bronze Race that precedes it. In fact, the Race of Heroes is altogether superior to the hubristic, warrior-like men of Bronze. It is likely that Plato understood Hesiod’s races as types rather than chronological ages. For Socrates groups the races by their natures: the iron and bronze races draw souls “toward money and the possession of land and housing and gold and silver” (ἐπὶ χρηστισμὸν καὶ γῆς κτήσιν καὶ οἰκίας χρυσίου τε καὶ ἀργύρου), while the gold and silver races, “since they are not poor, but wealthy in nature, lead souls toward virtue and the traditional order” (ἀτε ὦ πενομένῳ ἀλλὰ φύσει δυντε πλουσίω, τὰς ψυχὰς ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ τὴν ἀρχαιαν κατάστασιν ἡγέτην, 547b). In the *Cratylus*, Socrates examines Hesiod’s races in a similar typological fashion:

Hesiod says at first there was a golden race of human beings, ‘but then this race [was] hidden as fated: they are called sacred spirits under earth, good guardians of death-suffering men.’ He called this race golden, not because it had sprung up for gold, but because it was good and noble, as he also says we are an iron race. But someone living now, if he is good, which means he is wise, belongs to that golden race. So I claim every man who is

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238 *Works and Days* 159.
239 It is thus in oligarchy and the oligarchic person that desire for money first arises (550dff.; 554aff.).
good is spiritual, both when he is alive and when he is dead, and is correctly called a spirit.\footnote{Translated and abridged in O’Connor (2007) 80.}

In this passage, Socrates interprets Hesiod’s races as if they are allegorical, and the name of each race embodies these types. The gold and silver races are “wealthy” not monetarily, but “by nature” (φύσει).

Since Socrates recognizes the allegorical potential of Hesiod’s races, he appropriates this myth for himself in the Republic. Besides simply alluding to the myth in his Noble Lie and discussion of the regimes, he alters it in presentation. Hesiod’s races were five different types, neither causally nor genetically related to one another. Rather, the gods created (and in some cases, destroyed) each race independently in a series. In Book VIII, Socrates portrays the regimes as evolving—something he does not do when he first alludes to the five types of regimes in Book IV (445c-d). The five regimes and five corresponding souls are connected to one another causally. Change will first occur when there is a miscalculation among the rulers in Socrates’ elaborate birth and breeding guidelines (546a-547a). This will cause stasis and change in the state, allowing a timocracy to come about, “a regime between aristocracy and oligarchy” (ἐν μέσῳ τις ἀν εἶ ἀριστοκρατίας τε καὶ ὀλιγαρχίας αὐτή ἐν πολιτείᾳ, 547c). Such a regime would thus give rise to a timocratic person (548d ff.), and this change in the city’s citizens will thus lead to a change in the regime as well. Therefore, the trajectory of Socrates’ regimes moves not simply from one regime into another, with corresponding individual souls listed in between the transitions as analogies, but the timocratic regimes produces timocratic people, who bring about an oligarchic regime, which produces oligarchic
people, and so on until the tyrant arises. Due to the nature of tyranny, the tyrant is more closely aligned with tyranny than the other individuals and their respective regimes. Furthermore, the evolution of regimes and characters occurs not through the will of the gods, but through faulty education.

The peculiar place of the Race of Heroes in Hesiod brings us to another important aspect of interpreting the five regimes in Books VIII-IX, how to interpret the place of democracy. As the fourth regime, democracy is Socrates’ equivalent to the Hesiodic race of Heroes. Thus democracy is not simply closest to tyranny in type because it is the fourth movement in a decline; rather, it is a type of regime born out of the oligarchy that precedes it but that is capable of then producing tyranny by giving way to a tyrannical spirit. While democracy, which aims at freedom, is clearly better than tyranny, which aims solely at power, there is nothing to suggest it is worse than oligarchy and its aim of money. Plato’s fourth century Athenian audience would have recognized oligarchy as particularly threatening, given the recent restoration of democracy in 403, after about a year of rule under the Thirty. Recent scholarship has suggested that the descriptions of democracy, influenced as they must have been by the fact that both Socrates and Plato grew up in democratic Athens, serve to praise democracy for its potential to allow philosophic souls to develop as much as they critique it for its potential to corrupt the

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241 Ferrari (2003): “A tyranny is distinct among other cities for being a mere extension of the interests of a single man, its tyrant. We cannot consider its civic life as a whole, as we have that of timocracy, oligarchy, and democracy, but must think of it as the life of one distinct star supported by a civic nebula” (95).

242 Likewise, the Race of Heroes was better than the Iron Age

243 Cf. Rosivach (1988): “Athenian democracy arose after the fall of the Pisistratids, it never had any direct experience with tyranny, and, as we know from history, its real enemy was the rule of the few and not the rule of the one.” But Socrates does not characterize the different regimes based on number of rulers, but ultimate aim of desire.
same souls. This comes counter to what have become standards readings of Plato as an anti-democratic thinker.

Socrates suggests that democracy leads to tyranny, the final, and worst type of regime. It should be noted that Hesiod’s Iron Race is not worst of the Five races, despite the fact that the speaker wishes he were born a generation earlier or later (Works and Days 175). For in this race, “the good is mixed with the evil” (μειξεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν, Works and Days 179). He further implies a sixth race to come. Thus Socrates does not simply incorporate a Hesiodic pattern into his movement of the regimes: he adapts and appropriates it. In the third part of this section, I suggest that Socrates’ description of the transition from democratic regime to tyrannical regime makes allusion to Solon. If Socrates’ critique of democracy were entirely critical, his allusion to Solon would be entirely critical as well. As we will see, his critique of Solon is mixed with a more elaborate critique of the tyrant Pisistratus, who came after Solon. While the Iron Race undergoes difficulties, tyranny—with its desire aimed solely at power—is the worst of the regimes and most antithetical to philosophy. While Hesiod’s races provide a guide to the pattern of Socrates’ regimes, it is the gods who cause the change in the former. Socrates is very clear about who is responsible for the change in his regimes: the citizens. In this regard, we can compare his discussion to the way Solon portrays the fall of the city in his poetry.


245 Most (in)famously Popper (1945).
(b) The Decline of the City in Solon’s “Elegy on the Polis” (4 W.)

In Solon’s “Elegy on the Polis,” the speaker attributes the decline of the city not to the gods, but to the city’s own people:

\[ \text{ήμετέρη δὲ πόλις κατὰ μὲν Διὸς οὐποτ’ ὀλεῖται \}
\[ \text{αἰσθαν καὶ μακάρων θεῶν φρένας ἀθανάτων’} \]
\[ \text{τοῖν γὰρ μεγάθυμος ἐπίσκοπος ὀβριμοπάτρη} \]
\[ \text{Παλλάς Αθηναίη χεῖρας ὑπὲρθεν ἔχει} \]
\[ \text{αὐτοὶ δὲ φθείρειν μεγάλην πόλιν ἀφραδίσαιιν} \]
\[ \text{ἀστοὶ βουλοῦνται χρήμασι πειθόμενοι,} \]
\[ \text{δῆμου θ’ ἥγειόνων ἀδίκος νόσος, οἰσίν ἐτοίμον} \]
\[ \text{ὕβριος ἐκ μεγάλης ἀλγείᾳ πολλὰ παθεῖν. (4.1-8)} \]

But our city will never perish through the decree of Zeus
And the will of the blessed immortal gods;
For such a great-hearted guardian is the thunder-god’s
daughter, Pallas Athena, who holds her hands over it.
But they wish to destroy our great city with their folly,
The citizens, persuaded by money,
And the unjust intentions of the people’s leaders, who are going
To suffer many things because of their insolence.

Just as Socrates forbade the poets from attributing any evils to the gods, Solon here disavows the possibility that the gods could be responsible for the destruction of the city.

Blaise suggests a reading of these opening lines in which the negation of divine responsibility equates with the gods’ (i.e. Zeus and the other gods’) protection of it.

While I think this reading is too strong, because it diminishes Solon’s emphasis on Athena specifically as Athens’ divine protector, it adheres to one of Socrates’ main tenets in Book II: that humans must look elsewhere for the cause of their troubles. The gods are not at fault. Athena’s role as ἐπίσκοπος suggests that the city is safe from external threats. Unlike the Hesiodic races, which were created and destroyed by the gods, Solon’s

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246 See section II above.
city is only protected by the gods. Humans are entirely at fault if destruction comes about. Anhalt contrasts this protection with what happened to Troy: Athens will never come to destruction via the gods or any foreign enemy.\(^{248}\)

This leaves only the possibility of destruction from within, as lines 5-8 suggest. It is only the citizens, internally, who potentially bring about the city’s destruction through their folly (ἀφραδίησιν, literally “thoughtlessness”) and greed (χρήμασι πειθόμενοι). Furthermore, it is the leaders (δήμου θ’ ἕγεμόνων) in particular who are to blame. Solon analyzes the way the citizens treat each other:

\[\text{οὐ γὰρ ἐπίστανται κατέχειν κόρον οὐδὲ παρούσας εὐφροσύνας κοσμεῖν δαίτος ἐν ἰσχίῃ (4.9-10)}\]

They do not know how to restrain their satiety nor order Their celebrations peacefully at banquets.

The leaders’ greed is unsatiable. This leads in turn to the destruction within the city. They begin stealing, from the temples, the people, and one another (4.12-13). From here, Solon makes explicit the way in which the city declines:

\[\text{τοῦτ’ ἦδη πάση πόλει ἔρχεται ἐλκος ἀφυκτον, ἐς δὲ κακὴν ταχέως ἠλυθε δουλοσύνην, ἦ στάσιν ἐμφυλὸν πόλεμον θ’ εὐδοντ’ ἐπεγείρει, ὅς πολλῶν ἔρατὴν ὄλεσεν ἠλικήν’ ἐκ γὰρ δυσμενέων ταχέως πολυήρατον ἀστυ τρύχεται ἐν συνόδοις τοῖς ἀδικέουσι φίλους. (4.17-22)}\]

And now this inescapable ulcer comes to the entire city, And soon it falls into wretched slavery, Which arouses civil strife and sleeping war, Which destroys the beautiful youth of many, For quickly, from these hostilities, the much-loved city Is consumed in conspiracies who do harm to friends.

\(^{248}\) Anhalt (1993) 73. Blaise (2006) goes even further, suggesting that the different diction regarding gods and mortals in the opening of this poem emphasizes that mortals only “intend to destroy” (φείρειν… βουλονται), whereas the gods actually are able, but “will never destroy” (οὐποτ’ ὀλείται) it (125-126).
Irwin suggests that the pairing of stasis (στάσις) and war (πόλεμος) in these lines creates a virtual equality between the two terms: stasis is virtual πόλεμος within the city. The two together represent internal and external conflict together. But given the external protection of Athena, Solon recognizes, or rather, himself suggests the role of justice in the city as something intrapolitical, i.e. based in the relations among the parts within the city, rather than interpolitical, i.e. based in the relations between separate cities. The city is consumed (τρύχεται) by those who harm their own friends, (ἐν συνόδοις τοῖς ἀδικέουσι φίλους), i.e. their fellow citizens, not by conflicts between enemies.

Socrates mirrors this emphasis on the dangers of stasis in the Republic. Near the end of Book I, Socrates gets Thrasymachus to agree that no group of people, whether a city, an army, a group of pirates, or a band of thieves, would able to accomplish anything if they acted unjustly toward one another (351c ff.), “because injustice, I suppose, creates factions and hatred and conflicts among one another, whereas justice creates harmony and friendship” (Στάσεις γὰρ ποι...ἡ γε ἀδικία καὶ μίση καὶ μάχας ἐν ἀλλήλοις παρέχει, ἥ δὲ δικαιοσύνη ὀμόνοιαν καὶ φιλίαν, 351d). Socrates likewise applies this theory of justice to the soul, because the unjust person will have faction within himself (στασιάζοντα) and he will become “an enemy to himself and to just people” (ἐχθρὸν καὶ ἑαυτῷ καὶ τοῖς δικαίοις, 352a). Socrates later applies these same principles to the rulers of the just city: “The city,” he suggests, “in which those who are to rule are most reluctant to do so will inevitably be the city which has the best and most stable (ἀστασιαστότατα, literally, “the most stasis-free”) government, whereas the city with

rulers of the opposite kind will have a government of the opposite kind” (520d). This Beautiful City (καλλίπολις), as Socrates calls it (527c2), is best because its rulers and legislators, once they have completed their studies and seen the Good, “must make [the Good] their model, and spend the rest of their lives, each group in turn, in governing the city, the individuals in it, and themselves” (540a-b). Since these rulers are not ambitious for political power, they do not create stasis with one another. Rather, they share their common goal, the Good, with one another without stasis.

Stasis first appears in the early stages of the Republic’s trajectory. In his conversation with Thrasymachus in Book I, Socrates indicates that στάσις is one of the products of injustice. It prevents people from working harmoniously together and individuals from being harmonious within themselves (351c-352a). Socrates later tells Glaucon that “in cases where Greeks fight Greeks…in this situation Greece is sick, and divided against itself,” and “hostilities of this kind are to be called a civil war” (στάσις; 470c-d). Socrates’ city must be faction-free to be just and good. Likewise, it is faction, στάσις, which causes the aristocratic regime of philosopher-rulers to change in Books VIII-IX: ἕν τὸ ἔργον ἄνθρωπον, οὐ τὴν συνεργίαν μεταβάλλει ἕξις αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἔχοντος τὰς ἀρχὰς. ὅταν ἐν αὐτῷ τοῦτω στάσις ἐγγένηται, “Is it a general rule that the cause of change in any regime is to be found in the sovereign body itself – when civil war arises within this group?” (545c9-d3). This descent from aristocracy will end in Book IX

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250 Translations from Ferrari and Griffith (2000).
251 Translations from Ferrari and Griffith (2000). Italics mine.
with the rule of tyrants, the regime furthest in type and aim from that of philosopher-rulers.

Just as stasis causes the deterioration of the city in Solon’s poem, it likewise causes Socrates’ ideal city to change. In his discussion, he calls upon the Muses (as Homer would) to tell the story (545e), and the Muses, he imagines, would suggest the following:

χαλεπόν μὲν κινηθήναι πόλιν οὕτω συστάσαν· ἀλλ’ ἐπεὶ γενομένῳ παντὶ φθορά ἐστιν, οὔδ’ ή τοιαύτη σύστασις τὸν ἄπαντα μενεῖ χρόνον, ἀλλὰ λυθήσεται. (546a)

It is difficult for a city organized in this way to be disturbed; but since destruction comes to everything that comes into being, such an organization will not remain intact for all time, but it will be destroyed.

The ideal city, once put in motion, will inevitably be altered, and any alteration from the perfect must be imperfect, and thus worse. Socrates and Solon’s parallel notions of human causation in regimental change can perhaps be mirrored in a mutual aim of Socrates’ conversation and Solon’s poem: protreptic encouragement of good ethical behavior. Solon ends 4 W. with this type of encouragement:

ταῦτα διδάξαι θυμὸς Ἀθηναίους με καλεῖνει,
ὅς κακὰ πλείστα πόλει Δυσνομή παρέχει’
Εὐνομίη δ’ εὔκοσμα καὶ ἄρτια πάντ’ ἀποφαίνει,
καὶ θαμὰ τοῖς ἄδικοις ἀμφίτιθησι πέδας’
τραχέα λειάνει, παύει κόρον, ὑβριν ἀμαυροῖ,
αὐαίνει δ’ ἄτης ἀνθέα φυόμενα,
εὐθύνει δὲ δίκαις σκολιάς, ὑπερήφανά τ’ ἔργα
πραύνει’ παύει δ’ ἔργα διχοστασίης,
παύει δ’ ἄργαλείς ἔριδος χόλον, ἔστι δ’ ὑπ’ αὐτῆς
πάντα κατ’ ἄνθρωπος ἄρτια καὶ πινυτά. (4.30-39)

My heart bids me to teach these things to the Athenians,
That evil Dysnomia grants many evils to the city;
But Eunomia reveals everything to be well-ordered and straight,
And often she binds the unjust with shackles;
She smooths over rough things, ends satiety, obliterates insolence,
And makes the blooming flowers of destruction wither away.
She straightens crooked judgments, and she tames arrogant
Deeds; she ends the deeds of dissension.
She ends the anger of painful strife. It is through her
That everything of mankind is proper and prudent.

Solon recites this poem because he wants to teach (διδάξει) the Athenians about Dysnomia and Eunomia. He wants to show them the negative effects of their greed and faction, as well as the positive effects of lawfulness and order. His poem is protreptic: it hopes to encourage the citizens towards proper behavior and proper action. Inasmuch as the poem is a “political” poem, it is an ethical poem, as ethics depend on the citizens’ interactions with one another. The Republic, a political dialogue, is also a protreptic work. But it strives further than Solon’s poem because Socrates looks toward a complete conversion of individual souls (518b-c). Solon’s emphasis on Eunomia, “Lawfulness,” is elucidated by his actions as lawgiver: he simply put the laws in place, and left the Athenians to fend for themselves, as if the laws alone were enough of an educator. He thinks the abstract concept of Lawfulness can straighten the city without a ruler or educator present as a guide. Socrates’ philosopher-rulers depart the cave, but only to return again. Likewise Socrates, although he wanted to make the ascent back up to Athens, stays in the Piraeus to act as Glaucon and Adeimantus’ guide and turn their souls around. In the next section, I examine this perspective on Solon in the Republic through allusion to Solon’s legislation and actions in the transition from democracy into tyranny.

(c) Solon and Pisistratus in the Transition from Democracy to Tyranny in Book VIII

Thus far in section IV, we have examined the relationship between the progression of regimes in Republic VIII-IX and the decline of the city in Solon’s “Elegy
on the City,” as well as the way in which Plato re-appropriates Solonian themes in the *Republic*. In this subsection, I examine allusions to the historical Solon in Socrates’ fourth and fifth types of regimes, democracy and tyranny respectively (555b-ff). I suggest that Socrates works Solon into the progression of regimes, and conflates him with Pisistratus, the tyrant who eventually gained control of Athens.252 While Socrates is not strictly anti-democratic in his discussion of the democratic regime and the democratic person, he undermines Solon as representative of democracy. While Solon’s intentions may have been good, history (and his own poetry) shows that he was unable to steer the citizens away from tyrannical aspirations. Thus the would-be tyrant Damasias tried to take Athens while Solon was away, but more famously, near the end of Solon’s life or perhaps soon after his death, the tyrant Pisistratus successfully took the city.

Democracy arises out of oligarchy, Socrates says, because the citizens become greedy (555b). The rulers rule because of wealth, and they buy up property or lend money with property as collateral (555c), while others become indebted or lose their citizens’ rights. The latter are eager for revolution, while the former are happy with the status quo (555d). It is a change in the orientation of the citizens’ souls that brings about a change in regimes. While many of the characteristics of democracy which Socrates then adds are not emblematic of Solon’s legislation,253 the conditions that bear forth a democratic regime resonate deeply with the conditions in which Solon rose to power. He

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252 Such conflation of these two figures became somewhat commonplace in later traditions. See especially Podlecki (1987) and Irwin (2005) ch. 8, “Rewriting (Some) History: Solon and Peisistratus.”

253 The killing of the demos’ enemies and granting of freedom and political participation to the people resonates more deeply with Cleisthenes post-Pisistratid reforms that with those of Solon in the early sixth century.
was chosen because of a rift between the wealthy and poor, and his “shaking off of burdens” was a way of releasing the indebted. He even brought back Athenians who had become indebted abroad and restored them as citizens in Athens. The desire for money resonates with Solon’s fragment 34 W., where he says that “some came for plunder and had hope for riches; and each of them hoped that he would find great wealth” (οἱ δ’ ἐφ’ ἀρπαγήσων ἠλθον· ἐλπίδ’ εἶχον ἀφετὴν, / κἀκεῖον ἐκαστος αὐτῶν ὄλβον εὐρήσειν πολὺν, 34.1-2). Solon claims that he disappointed their hopes through his moderation.\footnote{See section III above of this chapter for further discussion of fragment 34 W.} But his moderation did not instill an adequate change in the citizens’ desires. Socrates describe the political conditions which allow for a democracy to arise in a way very reminiscent of Solon’s own rise to power.

Solon’s legislation in fact was not democratic. In his poetry, he stresses the importance of not giving the demos too much freedom:

δῆμος δ’ ὁδ’ ἄν ἄριστα σὺν ἡγεμόνεσσιν ἔποιτο, 
μήτε λίαν ἂνθεῖς μήτε βιαζόμενος,
τίκτει γὰρ κόρος ὑβριν, ὅταν πολὺς ὄλβος ἐπηται ἀνθρώποισιν, ὁσοὶ μὴ νόδος ἀρτιος ἦ. (6 W.)

The people would best follow their leaders
if they were neither free nor constrained too much.
For satiety gives birth to insolence, whenever much prosperity follows men whose minds are crooked.

This poem embodies the Solonian notion of moderation: Solon gave the people neither too much freedom nor too little. Socrates’ description of democracy, on the other hand, is characterized by freedom (ἐλευθερία), and too much of it (556b). Solon was adamant in not giving too much freedom or establishing a democracy, despite the fact that centuries
later he was credited with doing those very things. But Solon’s political moderation did not lead to ethical moderation in the Athenians.\(^{255}\)

While the historical circumstances surrounding Solon seem to mirror those of the origins of democracy in Book VIII, it is in the development of tyranny that Solon emerges even further, along with the tyrant Pisistratus. Tyranny was seen as the antagonist of democracy in classical Athens. Socrates places tyranny at the furthest remove from philosophic-rule in his typology. The freedom of democracy allows a tyrannical figure to develop. Socrates and Adeimantus describe this development in the following way: the people set up a single leader as their “champion” or “defender” (προστάτης), and this champion develops into the tyrant (565c-d).

At this point, Socrates uses a mythological analogy for the development of the people’s champion into tyrant: at a sacrifice at the temple of Zeus the Wolf-god (τὸ τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Λυκαίου ἰερὸν), a piece of human meat is mixed up with the sacrifices, and the one who tastes it transforms into a wolf; in this same way, Socrates says, the people’s champion exiles and murders people, and he will not stop at even the blood of his kin. The image of the wolf—a rather solitary figure on the outskirts of society—becomes associated with the tyrant, in part perhaps because of Plato. Solon had used the wolf as an image for himself in his poetry. Irwin, in analyzing some key words and images in Solon’s poetry, points out the way in which Solon “exploit[s] contemporary political

\(^{255}\) This is not to say that Socrates’ caricature of democracy is entirely bad: he notes that it is in a democracy that there is liberty for citizens to found a city with various political arrangements, as he and his interlocutors are doing in the conversation of the Republic (557d). In the Crito, Socrates acknowledges the fact that he stayed in Athens his entire life, although he could have gone elsewhere if he thought there were somewhere else better to live (51d-e).
Among the images available to Solon in this discourse is that of the wolf (λύκος). Solon portrays himself as a wolf, prone to attack by the hounds (i.e. the rich and poor classes) in fragment 36 W.: “I stand like a wolf among many hounds” (ὡς ἐν κυσίν πολλήσιν ἐστράφην λύκος, 36.27). Irwin notes how in Homer, wolves generally are depicted as a collective, never a single animal. Solon’s self-portrayal as a lone wolf is particularly unheroic, in contrast to the more common single-animal image of the lion. Irwin further points out that the wolf is characterized by trickery and cunning. But she also associates the image of the wolf with tyranny, as most famously seen in the Republic passage above. The question remains “whether the connection between wolves and tyrants existed in the archaic period or whether it originated later or even with Plato himself.” Irwin suggests that the etymology of the name Sparta’s legendary lawgiver Lycurgus, “he who wards off the wolf,” may offer evidence for the connection between wolves and tyrants, “given the Spartan tradition of deposing tyrants and their own avoidance of tyranny despite having reportedly experienced those pressures which characterized the rise of tyrants in other cities.” Pindar likewise compares the tyrant Hieron to a wolf in Pythian 2.81-88, and “the persistence of certain attributes of the wolf” in several fables from the Aesopic corpus “argues for a consistency of character that may well reach back into the sixth century.” While Irwin is hesitant to use the evidence to

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256 Irwin (2005) 205.
257 Irwin (2005) 246-248
258 Irwin (2005) 249.
securely link Solon to such imagery (and rightly so), she adds further connotations of the wolf in the *Aesopica*—cooperation, equality, distribution—to conclude that “Solon’s measures were close enough to those of a tyrant. Solon delivered all that a tyrant would have done: he was a wolf.”261 But he is a wolf against many dogs, further complicating the image by making Solon the object of a hunt. Solon clearly depicts himself as a victim in this passage.

Whether or not Solon intended any tyrannical imagery in his poem, it nonetheless resonates with Socrates’ description of the tyrannical figure, linking Solon with the development of the people’s champion into tyrant. After the wolf analogy, Socrates gives Adeimantus a detailed narrative of how the tyrant blossoms. Socrates’ composite of the tyrant is very similar to Herodotus’ description of Pisistratus’ rise to power. But the description also bears aspects of Solon’s rise to power. I suggest that the allusions to both Solon and Pisistratus in this composite reflect a tendancy of ancient sources to conflate the two figures. Furthermore, this conflation represents a causal link between the reforms of Solon and the rise of Pisistratus. Socrates’ description is as follows:

> Ἀρ’ οὖν οὕτω καὶ ὁς ἀν δήμου προεστῶς, λαβὼν σφόδρα πειθόμενον ὅχλον, μὴ ἀπόσχιται ἐμφυλίου αἵματος, ἀλλ’ ἀδίκως ἐπαιτιώμενος, οία δὲ φιλούσιν, εἰς δικαστηρία ἄγων μιαφονῆ, βίον ἀνδρὸς ἀφανίζων, γλώττῃ τε καὶ στόματι ἀνοσίω γενόμενος φόνον συγγενούς, καὶ ἀνδρελατή καὶ ἀποκτεινύῃ καὶ ὑποσημαίνῃ χρεών τε ἀποκοπᾶς καὶ γῆς ἀναδασμόν, ἃρα τῷ τοιούτῳ ἀνάγκη δη τῷ μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ εἰμαρταὶ ἢ ἀπολωλέναι ὑπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἢ τυραννεῖν καὶ λύκῳ εξ ἀνθρώπου γενέσθαι:

> Πολλὴ ἀνάγκη, ἔφη.

> Οὕτος δὴ, ἔφη, ὁ στασιάζων γίγνεται πρὸς τοὺς ἔχοντας τὰς οὐσίας.

> Οὕτος.

Αρ' οὖν ἐκπεσὼν μὲν καὶ κατελθὼν βία τῶν ἐχθρῶν τύραννος ἀπειργασμένος κατέρχεται:

Δῆλον.

Εάν δὲ ἄδυνατοι ἐκβάλλειν αὐτόν ὡσιν ἢ ἀποκτείναι διαβάλλοντες τῇ πόλει, βιαίῳ δὴ θανάτῳ ἐπιβουλεύουσιν ἀποκτεινύναι λάβρα.

Φιλεῖ γοῦν, ἢ δ' ὅς, οὔτω γίγνεσθαι.

Τὸ δὴ τυραννικὸν αἴτημα τὸ πολυβρύλητον ἐπὶ τούτῳ πάντες οἱ εἰς τοῦτο προβεβηκότες ἐξευρίσκοντοι, αἰτεῖν τὸν δήμον φύλακάς τινας τοῦ σώματος, ἵνα σῶσ αὐτοῖς ἢ ὁ τοῦ δήμου βοηθός.

Καὶ μάλι', ἔφη.

Διδόσαι δὴ οἴμαι δείσαντες μὲν ὑπέρ ἐκείνου, θαρρήσαντες δὲ ὑπέρ ἕαυτῶν.

Καὶ μάλα.

Οὐκοῦν τούτῳ ὅταν ἢδη ἀνήρ χρήματα ἔχων καὶ μετὰ τῶν χρημάτων αἰτίαν μισόδημος εἶναι, τότε δὴ οὖτος, ὁ ἔταϊρε, κατὰ τὸν Κροῖσον γενόμενον χρησιμὸν —

πολυψήφιδα παρ' "Ερμον
Φεύγει, οὐδὲ μένει, οὐδ' αἰδεῖται κακός εἶναι.

Οὐ γὰρ ἂν, ἔφη, δεύτερον αὖθις αἴδευσθείη.

Ὁ δὲ γε οἴμαι, ἢν δ' ἐγώ, καταληψθεὶς θανάτω δίδοται.

Ἀνάγκη.

Ὁ δὲ δὴ προστάτης ἐκείνος αὐτὸς δῆλον δὴ ὅτι <μέγας μεγαλωστὶ> οὐ κεῖται, ἀλλὰ καταβαλόν ἄλλοις πολλοῖς ἐστηκέν ἐν τῷ δίφρῳ τῆς πόλεως, τύραννος ἀντὶ προστάτου ἀποτελεσμένος.

Τὴ δ' οὖ μέλλει; ἔφη. (565e-566d)

"Isn't the champion of the people also like this? Once he has persuaded the mob and gained their support, he does not hold back from the blood of his kin, but he makes unjust accusations (as such people are wont to do), he puts someone on trial and kills him, he erases the life of a man, tasting familial homicide with his unholy tongue and mouth, he drives people into exile and kills people and hints at cancellation of debts and redistribution of land; After this, isn't it necessary and decreed for this sort of man either to be killed by his enemies or to become tyrant and turn from a man into a wolf?"

"This is very necessary," he said.

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“This is the man who makes faction against landowners.”

“He is.”

“Then if he is banished in defiance of his enemies, but returns, does he come back a full-fledged tyrant?”

“Clearly.”

“But if they’re unable to banish him or kill him by slandering him in the city, do they secretly plot to kill him by a violent death?”

“It is customary,” he said, “for things to happen in this way.”

“Then everyone who has come to this stage devises that well-known tyrannical request, asking the people for a personal bodyguard, so that there is safety for the people’s champion.”

“Indeed,” he said.

“And they give him a bodyguard, I suppose, fearing for him and not for themselves.”

“Yes.”

“And then, whenever a man sees this, the man who has money and, with money, the charge of being against the democracy, then, in accordance with the oracle to Croesus,

He flees to pebbled Hermus,
He does not remain, and he is unashamed of being a coward.”

“Yes, he wouldn’t be ashamed a second time.”

“And I suppose he is doomed to death if he’s captured.”

“Necessarily.”

“And clearly that champion doesn’t lie down “great in his greatness,” but he casts down many others, and stands in the chariot of the city, and transforms from a champion into a tyrant.”

“What else?” he said.

Some of the tyrant’s actions—hinting at cancellation of debts and redistribution of land, causing faction against landowners—resonate with Solon. The other actions resonate with the tyrant Pisistratus and derive much from Herodotus’ narrative of Pisistratus.
Ferrari and Griffith note that this “generalized composite” seems to fit with the rise of “Pisistratus, ruler of Athens in the mid-sixth century, when the city was first becoming prominent.”\textsuperscript{262} The tyrant either is sent into exile and returns as a full-fledged tyrant, or if unable to be exiled, others plot to kill him. He then asks the city for a bodyguard for his own personal safety, and they grant it. In the end, he stands in the chariot of the city.

Socrates’ description of the tyrant thus blends the traditions concerning Solon and Pisistratus. In the digression on Pisistratus and Athens in Book I of Herodotus—narrated while Croesus is looking for allies to fight against the Medes, just a few years after he dismissed Solon the Athenian from his court—Herodotus discusses Pisistratus’ multiple attempts at tyranny (1.59-64). When Attica had split into three factions, with Megacles son of Alcmaeon taking the people of the coast and Lycurgus son of Aristoleides taking the people of the inland, Pisistratus rose to power as the “champion of the people of the hills” (τῶν ύπερακρίων προστάτων). He then wounded himself and his mules and rode into the agora, pretending that his enemies had harmed him. In this way, Pisistratus persuaded the people to give him a bodyguard, and with this bodyguard, he took control of Athens (1.59). We can see here the parallels between the deceitful Pisistratus and the tyrant whom Socrates describes. Like Socrates’ tyrant, Pisistratus convinces the people to take more concern for his safety than their own, and through them he obtains a bodyguard to secure power.

Socrates’ image of the tyrant asking for a bodyguard appears in Solon’s poetry as well. In section II above, I discussed the way Solon displaces responsibility from the gods

\textsuperscript{262} Ferrari and Griffith (2000) 279n33 that the composite fits the rise of both Dionysius I and Pisistratus. Cf. Reeve (2004) 265n42.
to humans themselves in fragment 11. This poem depicts a situation in which the demos had enabled some (tyrannical) men to come to power by giving them a bodyguard. It is reminiscent of both Herodotus’ account of Pisistratus and Socrates’ account of the tyrant. Plutarch says that Solon wrote this poem for the Athenians after Pisistratus had taken power (*Life of Solon* 30). While historical chronology may make such a context for fragment 11 impossible,263 the fact that Plutarch presents his narrative in this way can suggest a failure on Solon’s part and a causal link between Solon’s work and Pisistratus’ rise. Solon here rebukes the Athenians for empowering a tyrant. But he was the leader who failed to properly educate the Athenians, so that such a crisis would not occur. Contrary to his beliefs, his laws were not adequate educators for Athenian souls.

Socrates’ description of the tyrant also mirrors Herodotus’ account of Pisistratus in the description of each tyrant’s expulsion and return. In Herodotus, Megacles and Lycurgus, the rivals of Pisistratus, were able to drive him out—just as the enemies of Socrates’ tyrant attempt to do. They successfully do so twice. In Pisistratus’ third attempt, he persuades the Athenians bands, whom his own forces defeated, to take courage and return home (θαρσέειν τε…καὶ ἄπειναι, Herodotus 1.63)—hinting at a pardon from further repercussions. The Athenians complied, and Herodotus says that “in this way, then, Pisistratus took control of Athens for the third time and *firmly* planted tyranny there” (οὔτῳ δὴ Πεισίστρατος τὸ τρίτον σχῶν Ἀθηνᾶς ἔρριζος τήν τυραννίδα, 1.64). Socrates’ description of the champion’s return as a “full-fledged tyrant” (τύραννος ἄπειργασμένος) is reminiscent of Pisistratus’ final seizure of power, having once been a

263 I discuss issues of Solonian chronology in chapter two above. Owens (2010) suggests the poem is a response to Damasias’ attempt to retain his eponymous archonship in 583-2 (182-183).
champion of the people. The change in Pisistratus is apparent from the fact that Herodotus claims Pisistratus did not change any laws or magistracies during his first attempt (1.59), making the “tyranny” seem relatively mild; in his third attempt, he took stricter measure to ensure that he would remain in power (1.64). Socrates’ description also alludes to Pisistratus in the notion of the tyrant standing in a chariot: in Pisistratus’ second attempt, he dressed up a tall, beautiful woman from Paeania named Phye and drove his chariot into Athens with her standing at his side, appearing to be the goddess Athena approving his rule (1.60).

Socrates’ tyrant, then, is not simply a general composite of a “tyrant,” but a reenactment of Herodotus’ Pisistratus. The Greek term τύραννος may not have taken on the semantic meaning of “tyrant” until the late sixth or early fifth century, perhaps not coincidentally during the same time period when the Pisistratids were removed and democracy established in Athens. Although the historical narrative of Thucydides downplays the “tyrannical” nature of the Pisistratid era, Herodotus’ account of Pisistratus achieving power in Athens seems to be the standard of tyranny by the time of Aristotle, who takes Dionysius’ rise to power as a recognizable action because of the precedent that Pisistratus and Theagenes had already set. While it is possible that Plato

264 Cf. Parker (1998); Anderson (2005). This begs the question of how negative Solon’s use of the term τύραννος is. Parker suggests that Solon’s meaning of the word “tyrant,” although negative, is “a usurper, someone who grasps power, someone who wrongfully vaults himself to the pinnacle of the state” without taking on the other negative connotations. This does not affect my arguments, however, inasmuch as Plato and other fourth century authors utilized Solon’s discussion of tyranny for their own purposes.

265 Thucydides 6.56-59.

266 Aristotle, Rhetoric 1357b29-36: ὅταν ἄμφω μὲν ἢ ὑπὸ τὸ αὐτὸ γένος, γνωριμώτερον δὲ θάτερον ἢ βατέρου, παράδειγμα ἔστων οίνον ὅτι ἐπεβούλευε τυραννίδι Διονύσιος αἱτῶν τὴν φυλακὴν καὶ γὰρ Πεισίστρατος πρότερον ἐπιβουλεύων ἢτει φυλακὴν καὶ λαβὼν ἐτυράννησε, καὶ Θεαγένης ἐν Μεγάροις καὶ ἄλλοι ὀσοὺς ἵσασι, παράδειγμα πάντες γίγνονται τοῦ Διονυσίου, ὅν οὐκ ἵσασιν πω εἰ
alludes to Dionysius’ rise to power in Book VIII, he also has his reenact the paradigmatic actions of a tyrant which were earlier set by Pisistratus and narrated by Herodotus. Like Pisistratus, both Dionysius and Socrates’ tyrant acquire tyranny by asking for a guard.

Socrates’ mention of an oracle given to Croesus—one that is originally recorded by Herodotus (1.55), further recalls the link between this tyrant and Herodotus’ account of Pisistratus. Herodotus’ placement of this account suggests a further link between Solon and Pisistratus. Soon after Solon departs Croesus’ court in Herodotus’ narrative, Croesus loses his elder son Atys in a hunting accident. He mourns this death for two years, before diverting his mind by planning war with the Persians (1.46). In the course of investigating potential allies, Croesus learns of Pisistratus’ three attempts to establish himself as tyrant in Athens. Solon, Athens’ supposedly wise legislator, is nowhere to be found in the account of Pisistratus, but apparently his legislation did little to stop faction in Athens, as the countryside of Attica had become divided into three geographic factions in the wake of his reforms. It should be noted that he was attempting to fix a rift between just two parties—the wealthy and poor classes—when he came to power. Solon himself had divided the Athenians into four specific financial classes.²⁶⁷ Herodotus and Ps.-Aristotle both note the eventual development of three competing political factions.

²⁶⁷ Ps.-Aristotle, *Ath. Const.* VII.

"Whenever two things are of the kind, but one is more familiar than the other, it is a “paradigm.” For example, Dionysius plotted for tyranny by asking for a guard. For Pisistratus also had earlier plotted and asked for a guard—and once he acquired it, he became tyrant, and likewise Theagenes in Megara; and as many tyrants as others know, all of whom are a paradigm for Dionysius, since they don’t know him nor whether this was the reason he asked for a guard (i.e. becoming a tyrant). All these things fall under the same general rule: One who plots for tyranny asks for a guard.")
divided geographically, before Peisistratus took dominant control.\(^{268}\) Herodotus’ narrative hardly praises Solon’s success: Solon’s legislation and refusal to become tyrant, instead of repairing Athens, let the demos’ tyrannophilic desires linger until Pisistratus took advantage.

Socrates’ follow-up to this account of the tyrant further supports the notion that Solon’s reforms led to tyranny. When Socrates describes the early stages of the budding tyrant, his description resonates most with Solon’s rise to power:

\[\text{Ἄρ' οὖν, εἶπον, οὐ ταῖς μὲν πρώταις ἡμέραις τε καὶ χρόνῳ προσεγελᾷ τε καὶ ἀσπαζεῖται πάντας, ὃ ἂν περιτυχάνη, καὶ οὔτε τύραννός φησιν εἶναι ὑπισχυεῖται τε πολλά καὶ ίδια καὶ δῆμος, χρεών τε ἡλευθέρωσε καὶ γῆν διένειμε δήμῳ τε καὶ τοῖς περί ἐαυτόν καὶ πᾶσιν ἱλεώς τε καὶ πρᾶσος εἶναι προσποιεῖται;} (566d-e)

“Therefore,” I said, “doesn’t [the tyrant] at first laugh and smile at everyone he meets and deny that he’s a tyrant, promise many things to individuals and the public, free people from debts, redistribute land among the people and his supporters, and pretend to be kind and gentle to all?”

The fact that Socrates’ tyrant denies that he is a tyrant accords with Solon’s emphasis in his own poetry that he had rejected tyranny. As Irwin suggests, “[Solon’s] repeated claims to have refused [tyranny] can be read…as attempts to distance himself from the [behavior] which came too close to that of a tyrant, to ward off accusations of such, to make a virtue out of a missed opportunity, or – perhaps above all – to attempt to secure his later reception.”\(^{269}\) It apparently worked, as classical and post-classical authors

\(^{268}\) Herodotus 1.59; Ps.-Aristotle, \textit{Ath. Const.} XIII. Ps.-Aristotle likely used Herodotus as the main source for his own account.

\(^{269}\) Irwin (2005) 202-203.
depicted Solon as a democratic and/or anti-tyrannical figure. The cancellation of debts and redistribution of land accord with the reasons which various historical accounts give for how Solon came to power. He is most famous for his σεισάχθεια (“shaking-off-of-debts”), and although he did not redistribute land, there was an expectation that he would. Plutarch reports an account of Phanias of Lesbos, which claimed that Solon secretly promised redistribution of land to the poor, and confirmation of bonds to the rich (*Solon* 14). Plato recognized in Solon’s actions the potential for tyranny and failure to dissuade tyrannophilic desires.

Therefore, the description of the development of the tyrant recalls elements of both Solon and Pisistratus, conflating the historical traditions concerning the two. This conflation is common in the ancient testimony. I discussed above the complicated political chronology between the two figures in Herodotus. The historian juxtaposes Pisistratus’ rise next to Solon’s unsuccessful legislation, suggesting a connection between the tyrant and the legislator. Plutarch claims that Pisistratus and Solon were related—their mothers were cousins—and he even suggests that there was an erotic relationship between the two men. Furthermore, as Irwin suggests, a connection can be established between the two inasmuch as “the category of the archaic sage frequently overlaps with

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270 Irwin contrasts the success of Solon in his self-presentation to Pittacus, whom Alcaeus was able to vilify (203n3; 239).


272 See also chapter two.

273 *Solon* 1. This tradition apparently persisted to Plutarch’s time, although Ps.-Aristotle denies the erotic relationship (17.2).
that of the archaic tyrant." She names Periander and Pittacus as examples, while adding that even Pisistratus appears in Diogenes Laertius as a member of the Seven Sages. Thus “the normal assumption that a substantial gulf existed between these categories of archaic figures, tyrant, on the one hand, and sage or lawgiver, on the other, should be put under scrutiny, since it corresponds to the natural distortion that time would effect as historical persons became increasingly transformed into caricatures or ideal types.”

Solon became an ideal type of legislator in Fourth-Century Athens. The success of a given figure from the archaic period is indispensable to whether this figure became known as a Sage or a tyrant. Solon’s moderate success in establishing his authority and enacting his legislation resulted in later generations accepting him as a wise lawgiver, while the eventual displacement of the Pisistratid rule led to the Athenians remembering him as a tyrant.

Nevertheless, critique of Solon in Book VIII is targeted at what follows him, not what he himself did. He is not the tyrant, but the democrat who creates an opening for a tyrant to emerge. It is Solon’s successor, and not Solon himself, who is the tyrant of Athens. Socrates in fact makes a distinction in tyrannical souls in Book IX: it is not the tyrannical man who is most unhappy, but the tyrannical man who actually has the opportunity for becoming tyrant (578c). The first soul to choose a lot in the Myth of Er in Book X attains this unhappiness by choosing a tyrannical life (619b). While Solon had the opportunity to become tyrant, he did not do so, suggesting he was not a tyrannical

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275 276; 276n36. Diogenes Laertius 1.13; 1.108.
person. The criticism of Solon in Book VIII is that his legislation allowed the demos to remain a tyrannophile long enough for a tyrannical soul to embrace this opportunity.

In the trajectory of Books VIII-IX of the Republic, the allusions to Solon and Pisistratus constitute the transition from democracy into tyranny. Democracy’s place in Socrates’ description—fourth of five and nearest to tyranny—suggests that this type of regime may cause a tyrant to emerge. But just as Socrates indirectly critiques Solon for what his legislation enabled, he likewise critiques democracy not entirely in its own right, but because of what it can enable. Thus democracy is not in a particularly negative location in Socrates’ spectrum of regimes, just as the Race of Heroes in Hesiod shows an upward progression from the previous race. Democracy could also provide opportunity for a philosopher to develop, one who could try to enact a philosophic aristocracy, such as the imaginary community Socrates and his interlocutors discuss in the Republic. Solon likewise had the opportunity to enact a better regime. By alluding to Solon and Pisistratus, Socrates’ description of democracy’s transition into tyranny was unsuccessful.

Still, Solon is not completely undermined in the Republic; rather, he is appropriated and supplanted. While Socrates earlier rebuked Solon’s poetry, he later appropriates the Athenian lawmaker in Book X. We have seen how Solon appears as poet and as statesman in the Republic. In the final section of this chapter, I analyze how Solon appears in a third, although not mutually exclusive, category of legislator at the end of the dialogue.
V. Solon the Legislator in Plato’s Republic

In Book X, Socrates returns to his critique of poetry, focusing specifically on what type ought to be banned: imitative poetry. Stanley Rosen classifies Socrates’ criticisms of poetry under two categories: moral (Books II-III) and cognitive (Book X). We saw above how Socrates critiques the moral content of the poets. In his return to the critique of poetry in Book X, Socrates expels poetry based on its relationship to true knowledge. Socrates decides that imitative poetry, like painting, depicts objects at two removes from the truth, and is thus a poor teacher of what is. Socrates and Glaucon categorize three levels of makers: god (θεός), who is a maker (δημιουργός) of the “form” or “idea” of something; the carpenter (τέκτων), who is also a δημιουργός, who makes something in imitation of the god’s true form; and the painter (ζωγράφος), who produces an artistic imitation of what the craftsman makes, making him two removes from the god’s true product. Glaucon and Socrates decide that Homer and the other imitative poets belong to this third type.

As Rosen points out, Socrates’ criticism is not quite fair. Arts such as painting and poetry attempt to do much more than produce imitations of things, and these artists are not merely acting as mirrors to truth. Rosen gives the example of a brilliant playwright, who “copies certain types of human beings, not in order to display them as quasi-photographs of the original but to bring them to life in a new situation, or a new rendition of a famous situation.”

\(^{277}\) See section II of this chapter above.

\(^{278}\) Rosen (2005) 353.

\(^{279}\) Rosen (2005) 358.
interlocutors, nor does he give any hint as to how it would alter his position. Still, his critique via the Forms does not accurately apply to painters and poets either. “Socrates of course does not say so,” Rosen suggests, “but it seems to follow that the carpenter, who copies the original or ideal bed, is much better suited to rule the city than the poets or painters would be. In other words, the artisan should be at least an adjunct of the philosopher.”

Socrates’ use of a craftsman here—in this specific instance, a carpenter—is an analogy for the philosopher: just as the craftsman knows how to make a bed better than a painter of a bed (for he has used the Form of Bed as his model), the philosopher understands justice better than the painter or poet attempting to paint or write acts of justice (for the Form of Justice is his model). In the Apology, Socrates approaches three groups of reputedly-wise people—politicians, poets, and craftsmen—and he discovers that the craftsmen do know something—they are after all masters of their respective crafts—but they thought this gave them wisdom in other areas in which they were not wise. In this sense, Socrates thought himself wiser than the craftsmen, because he was able to recognize his own epistemological shortcomings: while they thought they knew what they did not know, Socrates at least knew that he knew nothing (22d-e). Socrates’ analogy in Book X seems silly. A bedmaker is hardly more qualified to rule in the city than a poet. Rosen thus adds, “poets are judged by their insight into the human soul, and we recognize that they can exercise this insight even when, like Homer, they speak of medicine and generalship and other technai about which they know nothing.”


But the poet is still in competition with the philosophical lawmakers as the teachers, and knowers, of justice. Socrates says that he will not question Homer and the others on most things, such as medical knowledge, of which they do not claim knowledge but are simply imitators. However,

...concerning the greatest and most noble things that Homer tries to talk about, i.e. war and armies and the arrangement of cities, and a man’s education, I suppose it is right to question him and ask: “My dear Homer, if you are not a craftsmen at a third remove of a reflection from the truth concerning virtue, one whom we have defined as an imitator, but if you are even at a second remove, and you were able to know what sort of pursuits make men better or worse both in private and in public, tell us, what city has been governed better because of you, just as Lacedaemon is better governed because of Lycurgus, and many cities both great and small through many other men? What city credits you as having been a lawmaker and benefitted them? For Italy and Sicily credit Charondas, and we credit Solon; who credits you?” Will he be able to name any?

Homer and the other poets are to be tested on these most important subjects, because many believe the poets teach on these subjects. Socrates does not deny the possibility that Homer may have this knowledge. But Homer must prove that such knowledge has been put into practice, just as a carpenter may present a tangible couch as evidence that he knows how to make couches. If Homer really knew about war, founding cities, and education, then there would have been a city to whom he taught these things. Socrates
presents the famous lawgivers of Greece as those who claim what perhaps Homer cannot. Among them, Socrates recognizes that “we” the Athenians consider Solon to be Athens’ greatest legislator. Although Solon earlier was mentioned vis-à-vis his poetry, his legislation may place him at just the second remove. Whereas Homer is an “imitator” (μίμητος), Solon is a “craftsman” (δημιουργός). His “couch,” so to speak, is the city of Athens. In regard to wars and armies, the Athenians remembered Solon as a general and soldier; in regards to cities, as a legislator; and through his legislation, as an educator.

But Socrates does not himself praise Solon here: rather, by saying that “we” (ἡμεῖς) consider Solon to be Athens’ benefactor, Socrates is echoing a common opinion. There is in fact no evidence that Socrates himself thinks any of these legislators are better teachers than Homer. Plato himself knew first-hand the political problems in Sicily and the dangerous tyrant there. These lawgivers provide Homer with an opportunity to prove his own utility, since their supposed influence is concrete through their laws. Several other dialogues mention Solon as Athenian legislator: Diotima names Solon as legislator in the Symposium, Socrates does so in the Phaedrus, and the Athenian Stranger in the Laws. In each of these instances, the speaker echoes common opinion. The history of Athens suggests that Solon’s laws did not teach the Athenians much. The Athenians of Solon’s own time produced a tyrant in Pisistratus. And the Athenians who claimed Solon as their teacher more than a century later produced Critias and Alcibiades. The Republic itself acknowledges the deficiency of laws alone: ideally, a group of philosopher-rulers would keep order; at the very least, a Socrates is needed as an ethical guide.

282 Symposium 209d-e; Phaedrus 258b-c; 278b-d; Laws 858d-e. See Chapter One above on the Symposium, Phaedrus. See Chapter Four below on the Laws.
Socrates critiques Homer and the imitative tragedians because their poetry is not an adequate teacher of virtue, and they ought to be banished for this reason. Philosophy, apparently, ought to take their place. In his interrogation of Homer, Socrates does not mention the fact that Solon wrote poetry too, although his earlier allusion to Solon’s poetry is evidence that he is aware of this. Perhaps, as discussed in section II above, Solon’s poetry is not imitative in nature, and thus it is permissible in the city. For Socrates commands Glaucon, concerning the permissible type of poetry, “to know that only hymns to the gods and encomia to good men are to be accepted into the city” (εἰδέναι δὲ ὅτι ὁσον μόνων ὕμνους θεοῖς καὶ ἐγκώμια τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ποιήσεως παραδεκτέον εἰς πόλιν, 607a). Such was the poetry that Solon wrote. But in Timaeus-Critias, we saw that Solon’s legislation was not as successful as Critias tried to make it. In fact, it was the poetry Solon did not write that was his ultimate failure.

There are two sides, then, to Socrates’ imaginary cross-examination. Does Homer have a specific city which he can call his own, whose laws he can say he wrote, whose people he can say that he specifically made better, and not someone else? “I don’t think so,” said Glaucon, “not even the Homeridae claim this” (599e). But do Solon, Lycurgus, and Charondas really overshadow Homer through their legislation? While these lawmakers certainly had reputations in Socrates’ time, neither Socrates nor Plato would claim the constitutions of Athens, Sparta, and Sicily were just. Just as Plato’s Socrates

283 Cf. Naddaff (2002) 6: “[Socrates’] construction of the ‘quarrel’ between poetry and philosophy…becomes a lure for him to think about how he can transform his own dialectical thinking in such a way that it has the same pedagogical effects and functions as the traditional Homeric and tragic poetry once did.”; 12: “Socrates does not…radically reject the tradition of poetry as paideia. Rather he mobilizes this tradition as tradition while modifying, revising, correcting, and reperforming its central, essential literature.”
finds many faults with the constitution of Athens, his Athenian Stranger critiques the failings of Sparta. Plato himself goes to Sicily, where he fails to institute philosophic rule and nearly becomes a casualty to the regime in place. But Plato’s trips to Sicily provide insight into the effect of laws alone. Plato did not think it satisfactory to simply send Dionysius II a set of guidelines to follow or a copy of his Republic to read: he went to Sicily himself to try to educate the young tyrant. Although his attempt failed, it suggests that laws alone are not adequate teachers. Socrates’ question to Homer, which assumes that the lawgivers made people better, is undermined. Neither poetry nor laws alone can educate, but a teacher is needed as well.

In further regard to Solon and Athens specifically, the literary drama of Timaeus-Critias suggests the Homeric Solon, i.e. Solon the poet, could have been more benefit to Athens than the legislator and statesman Solon was. Solon could have surpassed Homer and Hesiod, had he written his epic on Atlantis, but he did not. Homer and Hesiod, then, the poets whom Socrates criticizes so much in the Republic, are more beneficial to the citizens than Solon. It is not yet clear, however, how they are more beneficial. In Book X, Socrates challenges the defenders of poetry to give an adequate defense for why poetry should remain in the city. Neither Glaucon, nor Adeimantus, nor anyone else present at the discussion stands up to do so. Socrates must do so himself, completing the discussion by recounting a tale he once heard. It is not a tale of Alcinous, Socrates says (614b), suggesting something very different from the tales of Odysseus in Books IX-XII of Homer’s Odyssey. Yet the tale ends with Odysseus choosing his lot for a new life, last of

\[284\] Cf. Socrates on writing Phaedrus 274e-275b.
all, the life of a private citizen who minds his own business (620c-d). Socrates says that Odysseus had learned from the hardships of his previous life.

The narration of the Republic ends with Socrates telling this Homeric myth which itself concludes with Homer’s greatest hero. Socrates tells Glaucon that “myth was saved” (μῦθος ἐσωθή), and it can save them (621b-c). The lack of a definite article for μῦθος suggests that Socrates is not talking about the Myth of Er specifically, but “a myth” (if one myth can be saved, others can as well) or, perhaps, myth and poetry in general. Despite the Republic’s lengthy critiques of poetry, there is apparently at least one person whom Homer can claim to have made better: Socrates. He tells the Myth of Er as one who understands the allegories beneath Homer’s poetry and how these allegories can make himself and others (Glaucon and Adeimantus) live better lives. In Plato’s corpus, Solon also recounted a tale he had once heard, the major difference being that Socrates finishes his—and he understands its lesson.

VI. Conclusion

In Timaeus-Critias, Critias tries to establish himself as a philosopher among more renowned company, but he does not know what philosophy is, only that it has something to do with the good of the city. He tells a tale of Solon, but one which does not grasp the higher role of philosophy in the city. His Solon was quite a good poet, but he did not exceed Homer and Hesiod because he did not tell a story to make Greece, or even Athens, better. The Republic, Plato’s introduction of political philosophy to the world, establishes itself as the new poetry, the new education for Greece. Socrates tells the tale he heard about Er as a new Odysseus, and so Plato is not the new Solon, but the new
Homer, and all of western civilization can claim he made them better. Solon’s poetry and legislation aimed at producing harmony between citizens. In the *Republic*, Socrates reorients this Solonian theme towards guiding the individual citizens towards goodness.

In Athens, Solon was immortalized for laws he wrote on behalf of the city. The orators and politicians two hundred years after Solon’s time still called upon the “laws of Solon.” In the first half of the fifth century, the supposed laws of Solon were displayed on axones on the Acropolis as remnants of the great Athenian lawmaker, and they remained there until approximately 460 BCE. Although Solon had long since died, he remained immortal through his legislation. Socrates of the *Phaedrus* attacks Solon and other legislators for leaving behind products unable to participate in dialectic, because their “fathers” are unable to defend them. We see in the rhetoric of fourth century orators that Solon’s laws did indeed fall to the interpretation of others. In *Timaeus-Critias*, Critias cited and interpreted Solon as a means of unquestionable authority. In the *Republic*, Socrates also cites Solonian authority—Solon’s ethical critiques of poetry and displacement of blame from the divine to the human, his model of selfless statesmanship, his understanding of *stasis* as a threat to the polis—but Socrates does so in order to interrogate and cross-examine it and see whether it ought to hold this authority. He does not just cite Solonian authority, but uproots it and replaces it.

In Plato’s *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger puts forth a code of laws without philosopher-rulers, and he enacts reforms reminiscent of Solon’s legislation. The

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285 See section I of Chapter Two above.

286 See Owens (2010) 140.

287 Cf. *Symposium* 209d.
dialogue has often been interpreted as the “second-best” state, the closest approximation of the ideal city in practice. In the next chapter, we will look in further detail at how Plato depicts Solon as *legislator* and incorporates this figure into his longest dialogue.
Chapter 4: Replacing Solon in Plato’s *Laws*

I. Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I drew out Solon’s prominent role in the political philosophy of *Timaeus-Critias* and *Republic* respectively. Solon’s presence in *Timaeus-Critias* is direct: Critias invokes Solon as the source of his narrative. His presence in the *Republic* is drawn out through a variety of allusions to Solon’s life and poetry. Through these allusions, Socrates supplants Solon’s position in the history of political philosophy. In the *Laws*, Solon’s presence is again indirect—his name appears only once in Plato’s longest dialogue but through allusion to some of Solon’s legislation and political theory, I suggest in this chapter that the Athenian Stranger (hereafter referred to as A.S.) also serves as a replacement for Solon. I first review the major scholarship on the various allusions to Solon in the *Laws*, especially the work of Thanassis Samaras. I then suggest new models for interpreting these allusions, especially given the fact that Solon is so rarely mentioned during the course of the conversation. I conclude this chapter by applying Solon’s roles in the *Laws* to new interpretations of the place of the *Laws* in Plato’s corpus.

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288 858d-e. I discuss this passage at length in section III below.

289 Samaras (2002), *Plato on Democracy.*
Legislation is the primary theme of Plato’s *Laws* (Νόμοι), as its title suggests. The dialogue begins with A.S. asking his Dorian interlocutors whether it was a god or a man whom they credit as the source of their respective laws. Clinias quickly suggests that Zeus is the source of Crete’s laws, while Apollo is the source of Sparta’s laws. A.S. then asks Clinias and the SpartanMegillus what the aims of their respective laws are. Both Dorians acknowledge courage in war as that aim, and A.S. must show them that it is not this one part of virtue, but virtue entire, that must be the aim of legislation. Either the Cretan and Spartan laws hold virtue as their aim, or they are not divine, as Clinias and Megillus suggest. There were, in fact, human counterparts to the Dorian constitutions: Minos for the Cretans and Lycurgus for the Spartans. At the outset of the dialogue, the interlocutors begin to reenact the journey Minos took to consult with Zeus about the laws every ninth year as they proceed to the cave and temple of Zeus (625a-b), and A.S. suggests that they pass the time in a “conversation on constitution and laws” (περὶ τῆς πολιτείας...καὶ νόμων τὴν διατριβήν, 625a). They thus act as legislators in developing a constitution.

Unlike Socrates’ constitution in the *Republic*, this constitution is not modeled upon study of the Forms. Rather, A.S. seems sincere about the practical application of this constitution. Therefore, many scholars have suggested that the city of the *Laws*, unlike that of the *Republic*, is a practical (and non-utopian) city, a “city in deeds.” Scholars of such an approach cite Clinias’s revelation at the end of Book III that he has

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291 E.g. Morrow (1960); Strauss (1975).
been commissioned to found a new colony and his suggestion that he may apply the
framework of their discussion to his “future city” (εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πόλιν, 702c-d) as
evidence for this practicality. However, Clinias only mentions his task after A.S. has
already shown that they were discussing the establishment of the best city and how one
may best lead one’s life (702a-b). Furthermore, A.S. calls their city a “city in speech”
(τῷ λόγῳ συστησόμεθα πόλιν), suggesting that Magnesia, like Socrates’ Callipolis, is
a theoretical city. The major difference, then, between Socrates’ discussion and
founding of a city in the Republic and A.S.’s in the Laws is that Socrates discusses the
city in an attempt to discover what justice is (the actuals laws and institutions of this city
are thus of secondary importance), while A.S. attempts to establish a code of laws in
order to achieve a virtuous city. Neither project takes the practical establishment of a new
city and constitution as its aim. In the Laws, therefore, the potential for Magnesia to be
put into practice is merely a fortunate consequence of their theoretical discussion. Even
the seemingly exact physical location of Magnesia in Crete emphasizes A.S.’s description
of the ideal geographical setting for an ideal city more than the fortunate chance that the
location of Clinias’ colony corresponds to this ideal setting.

Over the course of Books I-III, A.S. carefully studies the historical constitutions
of Sparta, Crete, and his own Athens, looking specifically at the origins and aims of these
constitutions. Many of the major poleis of ancient Greece, these three included, held
specific individuals in particularly high regard as their respective lawgivers. Some of
these lawgivers were historical figures, while some mythical. But even the historical

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292 Cf. Republic 592a-b.
figures were received into traditions which crossed over into the mythical. Thus Sparta acknowledged Lycurgus as its great lawgiver; Crete acknowledged Minos; and Athens, Solon. Because the reputation of these ancient lawgivers was so prominent in ancient Greek political thought, they stand as a collective at the forefront of the *Laws*. But the interlocutors of this dialogue look to the divine (and thus the just and good)—and not the human—origins of legislation. In this way, then, they are do not call upon the legislators of old, whose laws, it seems, came from the gods. Rather, in searching out the divine origins of their own constitutions and then establishing a new constitution whose divine origin aims at virtue, they replace the authority of the legislators of old. The anonymous Athenian Stranger is thus an improvement and replacement of Solon, because he uses philosophy and reason in constructing his city. In the next section, I review the major scholarship that connects A.S. and his constitution with Solon. In section III, I re-

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293 Cf. Hansen (1991) 299: “Most Athenians in Demosthenes’ time no doubt genuinely believed their democracy went back to Solon (or even to Theseus); for they made no distinction – as we pride ourselves on doing – between history and myth. Nowadays we put Solon in history books and Theseus in books about mythology, but to the ordinary Athenian they were part of the same story; and that made Theseus more historical and Solon more mythical.”

294 Minos is a prominent figure in the *Laws*, since the dramatic setting is Crete and thus the home of Minos. Strauss (1975) points out that “[i]n the traditional order of the Platonic dialogues the *Laws* is preceded by the *Minos*, the only Platonic dialogue in which Socrates raises the question What is law?” On the one hand, Minos appears a particularly good legislator because he was (1) the son of Zeus and (2) educated by Zeus. But to the Athenians, as noted in the *Minos*, the Cretan legislator is seen as a savage and unjust figure, “but for no other reason than that Minos had waged victorious war against Athens. The best legislator was an enemy of Athens,” Strauss notes in summary of Socrates’ reply. Strauss thus suggests that “[t]he quest for the best laws seems to compel the Athenians to transcend the laws of Athens and to become pupils of an enemy of Athens—to act in a way which could appear to be unpatriotic” (1). Strauss is right in that the realm of Athens is transcended in the search for the best legislation in the *Laws*. However, that Minos is the best legislator is refuted in the Athenian’s biggest criticism of Dorian laws (or rather, their understanding of their laws) in Book I: they seem to aim towards war. Nightingale (1993) 283-283 further points out that the journey to Cnossos on which the interlocutors of the *Laws* embark may reenact the journey of Minos to visit his father.
differentiate the two figures, to show that A.S. does not allude to Solon, but supplants him.

II. Solonian Allusions in Plato’s *Laws*

Although Solon is mentioned by name just once in the entire dialogue, numerous scholars have demonstrated Solon’s presence in the *Laws* through multiple levels of allusion. Malcolm Schofield, for example, says of the dialogue’s main interlocutor,

The Athenian Visitor [“Stranger”] is not an anonymized Socrates, but a successor to wise lawgivers such as Solon (at Athens) and Lycurgus (at Sparta). The very designation ‘Athenian Visitor’ is doubtless meant to bring Solon to mind. Herodotus has Solon greeted on his arrival in Sardis by the Lydian king Croesus with the following words (I.30): ‘Athenian visitor, a great deal of talk has reached us about you, on account of your wisdom and your [traveling]. You have traversed much of the earth in your philosophical efforts to contemplate things.’ Just so the *Laws*’ Athenian has a wide experience of a range of different social and political institutions (I.639D), unlike his Spartan and Cretan interlocutors.\(^{295}\)

The passage Schofield points out from Herodotus, in which Croesus addresses Solon as Ἐξεῖνε Ἀθηναῖε (“Athenian stranger,” 1.30) is mirrored in the *Laws* when A.S. is directly addressed as “Athenian Stranger,” Ἐξεῖνε Ἀθηναῖε.\(^{296}\) Schofield also points out that “like Solon, the Visitor is both Athenian and yet in his breadth of knowledge and understanding detached from Athens.”\(^{297}\) He says that “Athenians of the fourth century


\(^{296}\) The simply address to an interlocutor as “Stranger” (Ἐξεῖνε) is fairly common in the *Laws* and throughout Plato’s dialogues. But the Athenian is only addressed five times as “Athenian Stranger” (Ἐξεῖνε Ἀθηναῖε): 626d, 634c, 642b, 747e, 885c (in this last instance, the Athenian hypothesizes an imaginary interlocutor addressing all three interlocutors, Ὑ Ἐξεῖνε Ἀθηναῖε καὶ Λακεδαιμόνε καὶ Κυρικάτε). Plato also employs the phrase once in the *Cratylus* (429e), when Socrates hypothesizes someone incorrectly addressing Cratylus in a foreign land.

\(^{297}\) Schofield (2006) 76.
believed that Solon was not only responsible for most of their laws, but the author of their
democratic politeia.” The three speakers in the Laws, however, are virtually silent
about the aims the human lawgivers of their respective cities (beyond the notion that
these humans received their legislation from the divine). This silence, in addition to his
inquiry into the origin and aim of legislation, suggests that A.S. is not a successor to the
Solons and Lycurguses of Greek history, but a replacement of them. A.S. remakes both
the laws and the process of lawgiving itself through his discussion.

Monoson links A.S. and Solon through the Greek practice of theoria (in a section
etitled “Why is Socrates absent from the Laws?”). She suggests the possibility that “the
unnamed Athenian interlocutor models the stranger/theoros [sic] engaged in his empirical
studies,” and she connects theoria with Athenian democracy via Solon:

…the most celebrated theoros in Greek history was probably Solon, an
Athenian statesman and poet closely associated in the Athenian imaginary
with the city’s democratic constitution…Solon traveled abroad for ten
years (chiefly in Egypt) following the institution of his reforms. In the
Histories, Herodotus uses the language of theoria to describe [Solon’s]
travels (1.29-30). Judging from his treatment in the dialogues, Plato
admired Solon and the use to which he put his intellect. In the Timaeus
we can observe two parallels between Solon the traveler and the research-
theoros of the Laws. The first comes in the course of Critias’ recollection
of the story of Atlantis (20e-25d), a tale Solon is said to have brought to
Athens from Egypt. Critias’ account of Solon’s intellectual labors while in
Egypt includes a report that Solon took up vigorous questioning of the
Egyptian priests about ancient history (22a, 23d). The second parallel
appears in the account of the use to which the interlocutors in the Timaeus
put the story of Atlantis. They employ it as a resource for thinking further
about the nature of the ideal city…Plato depicts the figures in the Timaeus

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298 Schofield (2006) 76. For more on Solon as the author of Athenian democracy, see introduction (Section I) of chapter two above.

299 Monoson (2000) 233-234. For further discussion of Solon as theoros, see Ker (2000) and Nightingale (2004). See also section III of chapter three above.
By Monoson’s account, Critias’ Solon in *Timaeus-Critias* is a *theoros* in a vein similar to A.S. in the *Laws*. But Monoson’s analogy of Solon and the Athenian does not and cannot extend beyond the parallel of the two characters as *theoroi*. In *Timaeus-Critias*, (Critias’) Solon travels abroad to Egypt and learns of a constitution very similar to one Socrates has outlined, while in the *Laws* A.S. travels to Crete and he himself outlines a constitution which, as we will see, is similar in some respects to the one established by the historical Solon.

There is in fact an antithesis between the two constitutions: Critias, on the one hand, attaches his fictional Solon to a constitution very dissimilar from that of the historical Solon; A.S., on the other hand, does not cite Solon, but his constitution at times parallels that of Solon, as Morrow and Samaras demonstrate. These two scholars attempt to link Solon and A.S. by showing that several of the latter’s institutions and laws seem to replicate those of the former. Morrow’s *Plato’s Cretan City* treats the *Laws* as the most practical and most historically-based work of Platonic political philosophy. I have already discussed above the deficiencies of treating the *Laws* as a work of “practical” political philosophy. The nature of Plato’s philosophy, as grounded in historical experience, has been a relevant and prevalent theme throughout this dissertation; however, Morrow and Samaras misinterpret the role historical experience plays in the *Laws* (and by extension, elsewhere in Plato’s corpus) by not treating the

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300 Monoson (2000) 236.

301 Morrow (1960); Samaras (2002). I discuss A.S.’s silence on Solon further in section III below.
fictional nature of Plato’s dramatic universe with enough care. This point will become clearer as I review this scholarship on the *Laws*.

Morrow begins his study with the historical resonances of Crete, Sparta, and Athens in the *Laws*. In his chapter on Athens, Morrow discusses A.S.’s praise of an earlier Athens in the following passage:

> ἠμῖν γὰρ κατ’ ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον, ὅτε ἡ Περσῶν ἐπίθεσις τοῖς Ἐλλησιν, ἵσως δὲ σχεδόν ἀπασιν τοῖς τὴν Ἐυρώπην ὀικούσιν, ἐγίγνετο, πολιτεία τε ἦν παλαία καὶ ἐκ τιμημάτων ἀρχαὶ τινὲς τεττάρων, καὶ διεστότις ἐνὴ τις αἰδῶς, δι’ ἦν δουλεύοντες τοῖς τότε νόμοις ζῆν ἡθέλομεν. (698b)

At the time when the Persians attacked the Greeks, our constitution was an ancient one. Our officers were drawn from four property classes, and there was in the city a mistress whose name was Modesty, and because of her we were willing to live in servitude to the laws then established.³⁰²

In this brief passage, Morrow points out three aspects of the described Athenian constitution that resonate with Solon’s legislation: (1) the mention of four property classes, “a well-known feature of Solon’s constitution” and division similar to the one which the Athenian later uses for the Cretan colony; (2) that the four property classes “in some way determined the eligibility of citizens for office,” a feature of both Solon’s laws and A.S.’s; and (3) “the respect accorded to the laws.”³⁰³ Furthermore, Morrow suggests, “[t]he central motive of [Solon’s] reforms…was to find a middle way between the claims of ‘those who had power and wealth’ and the demands of the demos, who had risen in revolt.”³⁰⁴ While Morrow acknowledges that faction continued after Solon’s legislation,

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³⁰² Trans. Morrow (1960). All other translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

³⁰³ Morrow (1960) 84.

³⁰⁴ Morrow (1960) 86.
he suggests that Solon’s “policy of moderation…finds its echo in Plato’s continued emphasis on μέτριον as the secret of health in a city, and in [Plato’s] description of his own projected constitution as a mean between monarchy and democracy.”\textsuperscript{305} The foundation of Solon’s legislation, moderation, thus reinforces the “mixed” nature of A.S.’s constitution, combining both oligarchic and democratic aspects. “[T]he Laws,” Morrow suggests, “shows that Plato thought the Athenians of his own day had departed from the moderation that characterized their ancestors.”\textsuperscript{306}

Morrow is correct in asserting that A.S. echoes the Solonian themes of moderation and the “mixed constitution” in his legislation. For example, early in Book I, A.S. depicts a family in which several brothers are at strife, since some are being unjust to the others (627c-628a). He gives three hypothetical stances for a judge to take to settle their disputes: (1) the judge could eradicate the wicked so that the just could rule themselves; (2) the judge could make the just ones rule and the unjust be ruled; or (3) the judge could reconcile the two parties by setting down laws for them (νόμους αὐτοῖς θεῖς), so that the two parties would be at peace with one another. “Such a judge and lawgiver would be far better” (Μακρῷ ἀμείνων γίγνοιτ’ ἂν ὁ τοιοῦτος δικαστής τε καὶ νομοθέτης, 628a), Clinias replies, in regards to the third type. A.S. alludes to lawgiving in his description, and Clinias seems to understand the analogy, since he now identifies the δικαστής as a νομοθέτης. This description is reminiscent of the historical

\textsuperscript{305} Morrow (1960) 86. Morrow does not distinguish between A.S. and Plato as carefully as I have tried to do in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{306} Morrow (1960) 86. Cf. 592: “…it is Athens which is the object of [Plato’s] chief concern, and in some respects the historical model that he likes to follow. Not indeed the Athens of his own time, except in so far as she had retained traces of her former constitution and was still capable of finding herself by returning to the older traditions neglected during the preceding century.”
Solon’s circumstances. In the factionalism between the wealthy and the many, he could have set one party in charge, creating either an oligarchy or a democracy. Instead, he tried to reconcile the two groups through his legislation, as A.S.’s third possibility entails: “I stood between [the demos and the wealthy],” Solon says, “like a boundary-stone on disputed lands (έγω δὲ τούτων ὀσπερ ἐν μεταίχμιοι / ὁρὸς κατέστη, 37.9-10 W.).

The Solonian features of Laws III and following are mirrored elsewhere in Solon’s poetry as well. A.S. critiques the Persian constitution of monarchy because it too severely restricted the demos, while the Athenian constitution gave the demos too much freedom:

έπειδή τινα τρόπον ταύτων ἠμῖν συμβεβήκει πάθος ὑπὲρ Πέρσαις, ἐκεῖνοι μὲν ἐπὶ πᾶσαν δουλείαν ἀγουσίν τὸν δήμον, ἠμῖν δ’ αὐτὸν τοῦναντίον ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἔλευθερίαν προτρέπουσι τὰ πλήθη... (699e)

Suffering came to us [Athenians] in the same way as to the Persians: they led the demos into complete slavery, while we led the majority to complete freedom.

Overtly, the Athenian seems to be praising Megillus’ Sparta the most, since its constitution’s strength lay in its moderation between extreme monarchy and extreme democracy. The Spartans neither restricted, nor freed, the people too much. But this model of moderation is found in Solon. In 5 W., Solon says he neither gave the demos too much, nor overly restricted them, and he likewise moderated the wealthy:

δήμῳ μὲν γὰρ ἔδωκα τόσον γέρας, ὄσσον ἐπαρκεῖν, τιμῆς οὔτ’ ἀφελῶν οὔτ’ ἐπορεύσαμενος:
οἱ δ’ εἶχον δύναμιν καὶ χρήμασιν ἥσαν ἄγητοι,
καὶ τοῖς ἐφρασάμην μηδὲν ἄεικες ἔχειν.
ἐστὶν δ’ ἀμφιβαλὸν κρατερὸν σάκος ἀμφοτέροις,
νικᾶν δ’ οὐκ εἶσα’ οὐδετέρους ἀδίκως. (5 W.)

I gave as much privilege to the people as sufficed, neither taking away nor adding to their honor,
And those who had power and were admired for their wealth,
I contrived for them to have nothing unseemly.
But I stood and cast a mighty shield around both of them,
and I allowed neither to gain anything unjustly.

Likewise in 6 W.:

δήμος δ' ὡδ' ἄριστα σὺν Ἦγεμόνεσσιν ἐποίητο,
μὴ πε γί άνεθείς μήτε βιαζόμενος.
τίκτει γάρ κόρος ὑβριν, ὅταν πολύς δόλος ἐπηται
ἀνθρώποισιν, ὁσοὶ μὴ νόσος ἅρτιος ἥ. (6 W.)

The people would best follow their leaders
if they were neither free nor constrained too much.
For satiety gives birth to insolence, whenever much prosperity follows
men whose minds are crooked.

In these poems, Solon expresses the need for moderation, neither constraining nor freeing
the demos too much. He moderates the wealthy and refuses to give them too much power
as well. In Sparta the two kings were checked by the Council of Elders and the Ephors
(691e-692a); likewise in Athens, the few wealthy and the many poor were checked by
one another in Solon’s constitution, with Solon himself as a further boundary between the
two (37 W.). The respect accorded to the laws, furthermore, is reminiscent of Solon’s
Eunomia or “lawfulness” (4 W.).

Throughout his book, Morrow outlines several Solonian aspects of A.S.’s
legislation to support his broader thesis that the dialogue is intimately connected with and
influenced by Plato’s own historical circumstances, and his work is certainly monumental
in opening up inquiry into the relationship between the Laws and the historical
experience of classical Athens. But he reads too far into these historical resonances by
connecting them with the ultimate aim of A.S.’s project, namely, creating a constitution
which would best foster virtue. In this regard, we must again look to A.S.’s silence on
Solon and other legislators when designing specific laws and institutions. He invokes neither the ancient legislators nor their legislation; rather, he treats each law or institution as that which would best foster virtue in the city and in its citizens, regardless of where or when it has previously appeared. A.S. then is legislating in a theoretical capacity well beyond the historical legislation of Solon, and in places in which these two codes of law intersect, they intersect without A.S.’s acknowledgement of any relationship of his own laws to Athenian law. Furthermore, metatheatrically speaking, it is not A.S. who alludes to Solon, but Plato; the philosophic author of this dialogue is thus the one adapting Solonian legislation. Plato displaces the legislative authority of Solon with the philosophic authority of his Athenian Stranger.

Samaras builds upon Morrow’s thesis and further suggests that “the Laws does not simply [represent] an attempt to construct a state on the grounds of the teachings of history, but a philosophical enterprise which aims at producing something even more specific and even more ambitious. It is an effort to reproduce the philosophical counterpart to a concrete historical legislation: the Reforms of Solon.” Samaras elaborates this thesis in the most detail in his chapter entitled “The Solonian Model.” In this chapter, he suggests that “[n]ot only does Plato justify the cardinal political principles of the Laws on the basis of [historical] experience, but, to a considerable extent, he draws his inspiration from one specific and concrete historical model: the constitutional Reforms of Solon.”

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Samaras lays out five major features of Magnesia’s political system which correspond to the constitution of Solon.\(^{309}\)

(1) *The division of citizens into four classes* (τυμήματα)\(^{310}\)

This feature of A.S.’s legislation, likewise noted in Morrow, seems to imitate Solonian legislation. Solon used the four classes for political purposes, and A.S. does likewise. Both legislators define the classes in terms of wealth, and both create certain eligibility guidelines based on these class distinctions, even if these guidelines and offices do not exactly correspond.

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(2) *The role of the Assembly and the Council*\(^{311}\)

Both in Solon’s constitution and in Magnesia, the Assembly and Council provide the foundation for a “mixed constitution.” Through the Assembly, Solon allowed for popular participation in government, and “Plato copies him exactly in this.” Likewise, the Council in Magnesia is modeled on Solon’s Council. Plutarch says that Solon created the popular council as a check on the Council of the Areopagus (*Solon* 19.1), and its chief function “appears to have been the deliberation on public matters before those matters were brought to the attention of the Assembly.” Samaras suggests that the Council of Magnesia served a similar function. Furthermore, he adds that A.S.’s Council served as a

\(^{309}\) Samaras (2002) 249. In the footnotes that follow, I cite the pages for each given section rather than cite each paraphrase and quote of Samaras’ argument one-by-one.


means of integrating the classes into a mixed form of government, a primary aim of Solon’s constitution.

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(3) The judicial system\(^{312}\)

Samaras notes that “Solon was the first to establish popular courts.” A.S. likewise establishes popular courts in Magnesia, “despite his outspoken view that many are unable to pass correct judgment (766d).” But Solon and A.S. both relegate “relatively minor offences” to the popular courts, with higher courts (the Areopagus Council for Solon; select judges in Magnesia) arbitrating over capital crimes. Samaras points out that this arrangement is contrary to the judicial practices of fifth- and fourth-century Athens, in which the popular courts and Assembly tried even capital crimes. He describes this fact as “one more piece of evidence that the Platonic system is informed by the Solonian one.” A.S.’s legislative measures that any citizen in Magnesia can bring a case to court and appeal a magistrate’s decision also invoke Solonian legislation. These strongly democratic judicial measures provide checks on the wealthier classes, making both Solon’s and A.S.’s constitutions “mixed.”

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(4) The power entrusted to the magistrates\(^{313}\)

While Solon increased the power of the masses through his institutions of the Council, popular Assembly, and popular courts, his constitution was nonetheless timocratic because it distributed political power on the basis of wealth. In this sense, his constitution


\(^{313}\) Samaras (2002) 255-256.
was not democratic because it restricted certain rights and eligibility for certain offices to the wealthier classes. Together with his establishment of the aforementioned democratic institutions, Samaras describes Solon’s constitution as “a moderate oligarchy,” and claims that “this description furnishes the measure of its affinity to the Laws.” A.S. likewise distributes power via wealth and thus gives the higher classes leading political offices. But both Solon and A.S. make concessions to the people to give their constitutions “a moderate character.”

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(5) The “mixed constitution”\(^{314}\)

Solon thus created a “mixed constitution,” that is, a constitution that balanced between oligarchy and democracy.\(^{315}\) Samaras says that Solon “[realized] precisely what the situation was and as a result he initiated policies which gave something to both factions. To put it more plainly, Solon thoughtfully took a middle course.” Aristotle suggests that “some” (ἐνιοί) praised Solon:

ολιγαρχίαν τε γὰρ καταλῦσαι λίαν ἄκρατον οὖσαν, καὶ δουλεύοντα τὸν δῆμον παύσαι, καὶ δημοκρατίαν καταστήσαι τὴν πάτριον, μείξαντα καλῶς τὴν πολιτείαν (Politics 1273b36-39)

For he put down an oligarchy that was too powerful and stopped it from enslaving the demos, and he set up the ancestral democracy by nobly mixing the constitution.

Morrow suggests (and Samaras agrees) that the “some” whom Aristotle mentions here are Plato and his school. Morrow supports this suggestion by noting that in the Laws, “Plato points out the danger of having ‘unmixed’ offices, and insists throughout on the


\(^{315}\) For more on the “mixed constitution,” see Hahm (2009).
necessity of a moderate—or ‘mixed’—constitution.” A.S. likewise sets up a mixed constitution. Samaras claims there is “a relationship between the legislative schemes of the two men—one imaginative, one real—which goes beyond the conspicuous resemblance between their administrative systems…There is little doubt that Solon did endeavor to create a legislation that balanced oligarchic and democratic elements, and which therefore unquestionably fell under the description of the ‘mixed constitution.’ In this sense, Plato follows him not only in the particulars of his legislation, but also in its basic principle.” Not only does A.S. espouse a Solonian ideal in establishing a mixed constitution, but, Samaras says, he denies that democracy, oligarchy, and tyranny are genuinely constitutions. Rather, they are “factions” (στασιώτεις, 832b-c). In his archaeology in Book III, A.S. notes that the Spartan constitution endured so long because of its combination of three separate ruling powers: two kings, the gerousia, and the ephors (691d-692b). The monarchical Persia and democratic Athens serve as counterpoints (694a; 698b-c). Both constitutions, Samaras suggests, “decayed when they moved to extremes.” Samaras concludes that “the principles of the ‘mixed constitution’…is the fundamental concept which informs the whole legislative enterprise of the Laws.”

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From the similarities between the constitutions of Solon and A.S., Samaras concludes that the mixed constitution of the Laws is “instantiated by history and
supported by historical examples."

He furthermore suggests that Plato’s use of a mixed constitution, “along with the Solonian inspiration of his entire political system,” is “a statement on the Athenian politics of its time and Plato’s contribution to a contemporary political debate,” the ancestral constitution. He in fact suggests that “[f]rom the early fourth century BC onwards, the ‘mixed constitution’ appears to be identified with the ‘ancestral constitution.’”

Samaras, like Morrow, however, fails to (1) note the very different aims of the historical Solon and the fictional A.S.; and (2) distinguish between A.S.’s legislative project inside the Laws and the metatheatrical way in which Plato the author alludes to and replaces Solon.

While Samaras’ study has done much to lay out the relevance of Solon to the Laws, I differ from him in his conclusions. His section on the Laws is the third part of his book, and it represents, for Samaras, a new stage in the development of Plato’s thoughts on democracy. Earlier in his book, Samaras suggests that “in his middle period in general, and in the Republic in particular, Plato believes that knowledge of the Forms provides the final answer to any moral and political problem that might arise in a human community…History, belonging to the world of particulars, is, more often than not, either ignored or distorted.” The Laws, then, for Samaras, “constitutes the culmination of a long philosophical course which leads Plato from the Socratic ethical inquiry and through the transcendent idealism of the Republic to the recognition of the substantial role that

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320 Samaras (2002) 260-261. On the search for the “ancestral constitution” at the end of the fifth century in Athens, see the introduction to chapter two.


historical experience can play in politics.”

323 I hope to have shown in earlier chapters the relevance of Plato’s historical circumstances and the influence of the historians on Plato’s writings.324 But Plato’s use of Solon and his historical circumstances elsewhere in the corpus, especially the Republic, suggest not a harkening back to Solon’s ideas and legislation, but rather, a problem (namely, Solon’s inability to turn the citizens away from their tyrannophilic desires) which needed a new solution, because Solon was not able to resolve it. Thus in Timaeus-Critias, Solon fails to understand the importance of the Atlantis tale, and in Republic, Socrates alludes to Pisistratus as the aftermath of Solonian legislation. Therefore, I differ from Samaras on two major points, which I discuss in the next two sections. In Section III, I suggest that A.S. and his legislation, although similar in some ways to Solon and his legislation, are fundamentally different because A.S. aims at cultivating virtue in the souls of his citizens, with legislation as his means to do so. While A.S. mimics aspects of Solon, he is adapted and recast towards Platonic ends. In Section IV, I discuss how approaching the Laws as the culmination of the development of Plato’s political philosophy is flawed, and what role Solon plays in a better approach to the dialogue.

III. Solon and the Athenian Stranger

In Section II of this chapter, I outlined three ways in which A.S. parallels Solon: (1) as a theoros figure; (2) as a proponent of moderation; and (3) in his emulation of...


324 For more on Plato and historiography, especially in the Laws, see Nightingale (1993). Plato’s Seventh Letter, whether authentic or not, also suggests a relationship between Plato’s philosophy and his historical experiences.
Solonian political institutions. Despite the prevalent allusions to Solon throughout the
dialogue, his legislative project differed greatly from what A.S. sets out to do in the
Laws. In fact, Solon’s nominal presence in the Laws is so lacking that he is mentioned
only once by name in the dialogue. An examination of this passage can help to lay out the
differences between the two figures. In Book IX, A.S. and his Cretan interlocutor Clinias
reflect on their fortunate position: they are not being forced to create laws. Rather, they
are examining different constitutions at leisure, and they may review each type of regime
and “examine how the best and most necessary regime comes about” (πειράσθαι
κατιδείν τό τε ἄριστον καὶ τό ἀναγκαίοτατον, τίνα τρόπον ἂν γίνομενον
γίνοιτο, 857e-858a). We can contrast this situation (as well as the situation of the
Republic, where Socrates and his interlocutors also discuss different constitutions at
leisure) with the political circumstances which Critias ascribes to Solon in Timaeus-
Critias: Solon was forced into political affairs because of the current crises in Athens. In
the Laws, A.S. and his Dorian interlocutors may take their time and inquire into what is
best. A.S. had in fact earlier suggested that human legislators are never actually
legislators, but chance and accident are the actual legislators of human affairs (709a-b).
Thus, for the best and happiest type of regime to come about, there must be, in addition to
good luck, “a lawgiver who possesses the truth” (τὸν νομοθέτην ἀληθείας ἔχομενον,
709c).³²⁵ That is, the lawgiver must not simply alleviate crisis, as Solon attempted to do,
but he must establish a regime or constitution that uses divine reason as its guide.

³²⁵ Trans. Pangle.
Given their leisurely (i.e. without crisis) approach to searching out the best regime, A.S. and his interlocutors decide that, among the many types of writings available to them, it is those of the legislators to which they must pay closest attention:

\{ΑΘ.\} Ἀλλὰ δῆτα οὗ χρῆ τόν νομοθέτην μόνον τῶν γραφόντων περὶ καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν καὶ δικαίων συμβουλεύειν, διδάσκοντα οία τέ ἐστι καὶ ὡς ἐπιτηδευτέον αὐτὰ τοῖς μέλλουσιν εὐδαίμοσιν ἔσοει:

\{ΚΛ.\} Καὶ πῶς οὖ;  

\{ΑΘ.\} Ἀλλὰ αἰσχρῶν δὴ μᾶλλον Ὀμήρῳ τε καὶ Τυρταίῳ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ποιηταῖς περὶ βίου τε καὶ ἐπιτηδευμάτων κακῶς θέσθαι γράφοντας, Λυκοῦργῳ δὲ ἤττον καὶ Σόλωνι καὶ ὅσοι δὴ νομοθέται γενόμενοι γράμματα ἔγραψαν; ἦ τὸ γε ὁρθὸν, πάντων δὲ γραμμάτων τῶν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι τὰ περὶ τοὺς νόμους γεγραμμένα φαινόειν διαπτυττόμενα μακρῷ κάλλιστά τε καὶ ἀριστα, τὰ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων ἢ κατ’ ἐκείνα συνεπόμενα, ἢ διαφωνοῦντα αὐτοῖς εἶναι καταγέλαστα; (858d-e)

Athenian: But is the lawgiver alone, among the writers, not supposed to give advice about the noble, good, and just things, teaching what sorts of things they are and how they must be practiced by those who are going to become happy?

Clinias: How could that be?

Athenian: But is it then more shameful for Homer, and Tyrtaeus, and the other poets to make bad written pronouncements about life and practices, and less so for Lycurgus, and Solon, and whoever has become a lawgiver and written down things? Or isn’t it correct, at any rate, that of all the writings in the cities, the things written about the laws appear, when opened up, by far the noblest and best, and that the writings of the others either follow those or, if they speak in dissonance, be laughed at? (Trans. Pangle)

A.S. had earlier suggested that he and his interlocutors, as legislators, ought to carefully monitor and regulate what the poets write.\textsuperscript{326} The situation is similar to Socrates’ cross-examination of Homer in Book X of the \textit{Republic} (599c-e), where he seems to criticize

\textsuperscript{326} On the authority, and thus greater responsibility, of legislators over poets in the \textit{Laws}, cf. 656c; 660a; 661c; 662b-c.
the poet for his inability to name any specific city which he has benefitted. Socrates compares Homer to famous legislators, whose respective cities generally praise them as benefactors. But as we saw in the previous chapter, the common opinion of these cities was not necessarily the correct view, and these legislators may not have benefitted their cities more than the poets. In fact, Homer may have had a more profound educative effect on Socrates than the lawgivers did, as he so often adapted the latter in his own stories and allegories.

In the *Laws*, A.S. more directly questions the authority of the legislators: since their influence over citizens is so profound, there is all the more reason to be critical of their laws. In *Timaeus-Critias*, Solon failed to compose the Atlantis tale and apply its lessons to his legislation in Athens. In the above passage from the *Laws*, A.S. does not simply praise Solon and the other legislators; rather, he challenges them and holds them to a higher standard than he does the poets, because their writings (the laws) are known to directly affect the city’s morals. A.S. and his interlocutors must study the legislation of Solon and others to check whether what they have written is worthy of being read or ought to be censored. The legislators, as A.S.’s argument suggests, must teach (διδάσκοντα) “about noble and good and just things” (περὶ καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν καὶ δικαίων). The passage is reminiscent of Solon’s *Eunomia* poem (4 W.), in which the speaker exclaims,

ταύτα διδάξαι θυμὸς Ἀθηναίους με κελεύει,
ὡς κακὰ πλεῖστα πόλει Δυσνομίη παρέχει·
Εὐνομίη δ’ εὔκοσμα καὶ ἁρτια πάντ’ ἀποφαίνει,
καὶ θαμά τοῖς ἀδίκοις ἀμφιτίθεσι πέδας·
τραχέα λειαίνει, παύει κόρον, ύβριν ἀμαυροῖ,
αὐαίνει δ’ ἅττης ἄνθεα φυόμενα,
εὐθύνει δὲ δίκας σκολιάς, ὑπερήφανά τ’ ἔργα
My heart bids me to teach these things to the Athenians,
That evil Dysnomia (Lawlessness) grants many evils to the city;
But Eunomia (Lawfulness) reveals everything to be well-ordered and straight,
And often she binds the unjust with shackles;
She smooths over rough things, ends satiety, weakens insolence,
And makes the blooming flowers of destruction wither away.
She straightens crooked judgments, and she tames arrogant deeds; she ends the deeds of dissension.
She ends the anger of painful strife. It is through her
That everything of mankind is proper and prudent.

As a poet and a legislator, the figure of Solon brings the two groups together. These closing lines of his Eunomia poem bridge any apparent gap. That Solon’s “heart bids [him] to teach…the Athenians” illustrates Solon’s awareness that he must be an educator for the Athenians. He does this through both his poetry and his legislation.

Despite the overlap of Solon and A.S. in regards to the role of poets and legislators, the former does not appear again in the conversation of the Laws. The pairing of Lycurgus and Solon as representatives of the category “legislators” in this passage is a fairly common grouping elsewhere in Plato’s corpus. But it may be more peculiar here in the Laws, because the mention of Solon elsewhere in Plato’s dialogues is made by Socrates or another Athenian in the company of one or more Athenians, with the one exception of Hippias Major, in which Socrates converses with Hippias of Elis in private. But no ideological aspect of Solon (i.e. Solon as legislator, poet, or the multifaceted sage)

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327 E.g. Symposium 209d-e; Phaedrus 258b-c; Republic 599e. See chapter one.
is called upon by Socrates’ reference to him.\textsuperscript{328} The \textit{Laws}, then, represents the only other passage in Plato in which an Athenian (A.S.) mentions Solon in the company of no other Athenians.

I suggest two reasons for this nominal absence of Solon from the \textit{Laws}, the first being this non-Athenian company. At the beginning of the dialogue, A.S. asks his interlocutors whether a god or a human laid their respective laws. Clinias suggests a god for both of them: Zeus for his own Cretans, and Apollo for Megillus and the Spartans. Neither ever asks the Athenian about the source of his city’s laws. In Plato’s portrayal of Cretans and Spartans, it is not in their nature to seek out the customs of others. At \textit{Protagoras} 342c-d, for example, Socrates says that the Spartans and Cretans do not let their young men travel to other cities, but educate their youth within the customs and confines of the city. Likewise Clinias in Book IV of the \textit{Laws} says that the Cretans are not very familiar with the verses of Homer, οὐ γὰρ σφόδρα χρωμεθα οἱ Κρήτες τοῖς ἕνικοῖς ποιήμασιν, “for we Cretans don’t make much use of foreign poetry” (680c, trans. Pangle). Megillus says, in contrast, that the Spartans are familiar with Homer (680d). This is likely part of the reason that A.S. later identifies Homer and Tyrtaeus (who wrote poetry in Sparta)\textsuperscript{329} as representatives of the category “poets” (858d \textit{ff}.), as opposed to Socrates, who generally cites Homer and Hesiod together, sometimes with others.\textsuperscript{330} For discussion with a Spartan, the martial poet Tyrtaeus could be more

\textsuperscript{328} See chapter one, section III above. Even the conversation of \textit{Timaeus-Critias} has at least two Athenians (Socrates and Critias) present.

\textsuperscript{329} At 629a-b, A.S. cites Tyrtaeus and notes that the poet, although an Athenian by birth, became a Spartan citizen.

\textsuperscript{330} Cf. \textit{Symposium} 209d; \textit{Republic} 600d; \textit{Timaeus} 21d; \textit{Apology} 41a;
recognizable than Hesiod, although the latter seemed (for the absent Socrates, at least) more recognizable or more esteemed for an Athenian audience.\footnote{331}

As Schofield says, the “Athenian has a wide experience of a range of different social and political institutions...unlike his Spartan and Cretan interlocutors.”\footnote{332} In fact, they may not even recognize the poets as an integral part of these institutions. Catherine Zuckert suggests that

Although Greek education was traditionally understood to be a combination of gymnastics and music...neither Clinias nor Megillus had mentioned the regulation of music or poetry as one of the ways in which their regimes fostered virtue. They had referred only to the regulation of bodily functions and activities—eating and gymnastics. As the Dorians see it, defense and acquisition are important, serious activities—matters of life and death; poetry, like speech making in general, is a frivolous enterprise for those at leisure. Although they grant the traditional attribution of the theater, poetry, and song to the gods—Dionysus, Apollo, and the Muses—the old Dorians do not understand the implication of the divine origins—that these activities are as important, as beneficial, as good for human beings as the “laws” they attribute to Zeus (who has traditionally been understood to be the source and enforcer of justice).\footnote{333}

In Zuckert’s discussion, she emphasizes the “laws” in quotation marks to elicit an important point about Plato’s Laws or Nomoi: the term nomos can mean “law” or “custom” or “song.”\footnote{334} A.S. brings out this parallelism between the two types of nomoi.

\footnote{331} The Cretan Clinias also appears unfamiliar with Hesiod when A.S. cites him at 718e-719a. Clinias remarks that Hesiod “resembles one who speaks nobly” (\textit{Kaì kàlòs ò} ‘ēòikèn lègonti). The use of òikèn (rather than a verb which would imply some knowledge or experience of Hesiod) suggests Clinias’ unfamiliarity with the poet.

\footnote{332} Schofield (2006) 76.

\footnote{333} Zuckert (2009) 70n37.

\footnote{334} Cf. Pangle (1980) 526n26 (note on Laws 722e): “The Greek word for law, nomos, was also the word for a form of poetry, a song sung by a chorus or by soloists to the accompaniment of the kithara.” Although Zuckert (2009) only alludes to the polyvalence of nomos in the passage quoted above, she clarifies the term’s range of meaning later in the chapter: see 88-89, 103, and 103n105.
several times. In doing so, he interweaves the virtue-oriented nature of both Greek customs (law and poetry). “In Athens,” Zuckert says, “people recognize the importance of music more than they do in Crete or Sparta, [A.S.] points out, but in Athens the many judge musical performances according to their pleasure; they do not accept the judgment of those wiser and better.” A.S. thus recognizes two aspects of poetry in Athens: (1) it can serve as a form of education; and (2) to do so, it needs appropriate regulation.

The fact that A.S. must defend Athenian symposia is evidence that the two Dorians are unfamiliar with the nomoi, i.e. both the “customs” and the “music,” of Athens. Given their ignorance of cultures and practices outside their own, they are likely also unfamiliar with Athenian “laws.” Clinias and Megillus do not question A.S. about the source or nature of his city’s laws at the beginning of the dialogue because they are neither knowledgeable about these laws nor aware of any benefit such knowledge would provide. Because of their unfamiliarity, A.S. does not need to cite Solon as a model for the institutions he establishes in the city of Magnesia. They may not know who Solon is, or even if they do, his name would not have the same rhetorical effect on them as it would on an Athenian audience, such as those Socrates or Critias address in Republic and Timaeus-Critias respectively.

A.S.’s defense of Athenian symposia and censorship of poetry in Laws II-III show another adaptation of a Solonian theme, but one which surpasses Solon himself. Plutarch recounts an encounter between Solon and Thespis, the legendary founder of Greek tragedy, in which the former critiques the latter for telling lies before so many people

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335 E.g. 722e; 734e; 799e; 800d.
(Solon 29). Thespis replies that the lies are “in jest” (μετὰ παιδίας), but Solon worries that the things done in jest will soon be found in serious matters (ἐν τοῖς σπουδαίοις) as well.  

This account suggests that Solon criticized the content of poetry in a way similar to Socrates’ ethical critique in Republic II-III. But in the biographical accounts of Solon, he merely critiques the poet. A.S. is more proactive in his censorship of poetry because of its moral effects: he does not just critique, but legislates concerning poetry to ensure it has a positive effect on citizens.

A second, more essential reason that Solon is so absent from the Laws is that A.S. and his interlocutors are not establishing a replica of Solonian Athens, but a new constitution. By inquiring into the supposedly divine origins of the Cretan and Spartan constitutions, A.S. suggests that true laws do not reflect the aims and purposes of the human constitutions which already exist. In his historical narrative on Athens in Book III, A.S. suggests that Athens was a moderate city at the time of the Persian Wars. Its mistress was Awe (αἰδώς), through whom the Athenians willingly were subservient to the laws (698b). But after the threat of Persia subsided, so did the Athenians’ moderation (699d-e). A.S. silently restores a constitution reminiscent of the Athenian constitution during the time of the Persian Wars (which, as he describes it, is Solonian). 

But by omitting this fact, he is able to produce a new constitution which can best make its citizens virtuous. He cites reason and virtue instead of Solon or Lycurgus. Morrow

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336 Cf. Diogenes Laertius 1.59-60.

337 See section II of Chapter Three for the similarities and differences between Socrates’ critique and Solon’s, including discussion of the encounter with Thespis.

338 Morrow (1960) 84; see discussion in section II above.
suggests that Plato’s “craftsmanship has turned out to be less the art of working upon alien and recalcitrant elements to make them serve an end to which they are indifferent, than the art of divining within the historical materials the immanent purpose which they imperfectly serve, and devising means for the better realization of their inherent ends.”

I agree that A.S., in alluding to Solon’s Athenian constitution to help construct Magnesia, does not use Solon’s means to an indifferent end. Solon’s aim was indeed to produce moderation in his citizens. But A.S. further qualifies Solon’s end. The historical Solon attempted to moderate the Athenians by establishing a system whereby they would not create faction with one another. In the Laws, A.S. attempts to establish a constitution similar in structure to that of Solon. But it aims not simply at cultivating harmony between citizens (to make a prosperous city), but at cultivating harmony within citizens, making the citizens themselves as just as possible. The latter type of harmony produces the former. His end is not indifferent to Solon’s, but it is fundamentally prior.

Plato thus casts his Athenian Stranger as a figure similar to Solon, but he is silent about this similarity because he modifies and improves upon Solon through A.S.. This silence allows Plato to rework both the means and end of Solonian legislation towards what the interlocutors have discovered to be the true aim of legislation: virtue. If we were to compare A.S. and Solon as legislators, we would find at least two integral differences between the two. First, A.S. orients his constitution towards virtue to cultivate this virtue within the citizens, not just between citizens. In other words, the Athenian

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legislates not just as a mediator, but also as an educator for the individual citizens.\textsuperscript{341} Second, his legislation employs preludes, i.e. a means of persuasion.

An example of the first point can be seen in the text in A.S.’s classification and ordering of divine and human goods in Book I. He prioritizes the divine goods (wisdom, moderation, justice, and courage) over the human goods (health, beauty, strength, and wealth), because the latter depend upon the former, and furthermore, “if any city receives the greater goods, it will the lesser ones as well” (ἐὰν μὲν δέχηται τις τὰ μείζονα πόλις, κτάται καὶ τὰ ἑλάττωνα, 631b-c). His laws thus should aim at the greater, divine goods, with the expectation that the lesser, human goods will naturally follow. He hypothesizes that the laws of Crete (assuming, in origin, they aim at virtue) are the correct laws, because they make those who use them happy (ἔχουσιν γὰρ ὀρθῶς, τοὺς σύντοις χρωμένους εὐδαίμονας ἀποτελοῦντες, 631b).

We can contrast the Herodotean Solon, who defines happiness via human goods in his account of Tellus the Athenian (1.30). When Croesus asked Solon who was the happiest of men, the latter replied that Tellus the Athenian was, because (1) his city was flourishing; (2) his children were noble; (3) he lived to see his grandchildren; (4) he had enough wealth; and (5) he died a glorious death for his city. Benardete says that “Tellus lived and died within the human horizon, the horizon of the city. He obtained everything that men regard as desirable.” Benardete points out that Tellus had human goods, tangible and visible: “money, beautiful children, grandchildren, public honor.”\textsuperscript{342} Solon attributes

\textsuperscript{341} Cf. Socrates in the Apology, who describes his mission as persuading the Athenians to care for their souls (30a-b). See discussion in section V below.

human goods to the happiest of men. In fact, the divine goods belong to those Solon ranks as second happiest, the Argive brothers Cleobis and Biton who die in their sleep in a sanctuary of Hera.⁴⁴³

Likewise, in his poetry, Solon seems to equate human goods with happiness. In 23 W., he calls the man who has such goods “happy”:

\[
\text{o} \lambda \beta \iota \omicron \sigma, \ \omega \ \pi a \iota \delta \epsilon \varepsilon \tau \varepsilon \ \phi \lambda \iota \omicron \ i \ kai \ \mu \omega \nu \chi \varepsilon \zeta \iota \omicron \pi o i\ 
kai \ \kappa \omicron \nu e s \ \acute{a} \gamma \rho e \nu \tau \alpha i \ kai \ \acute{e} \varepsilon \nu o s \ \alpha \lambda \lambda \delta \alpha \pi \tau \omicron \sigma. \\
\text{Happy is he who has children and friends and single-hoofed horses and hunting-dogs and a foreign host.}
\]

Socrates quotes these verses in the \textit{Lysis}, calling the poet who wrote them a liar. While the context of those lines is different from the discussion of human goods and happiness present in the \textit{Laws}, A.S. perhaps would call this poet a liar as well.⁴⁴⁴ The possessions described in this fragment are similar to those of Tellus the Athenian in Solon’s fable to Croesus. In his “Elegy to the Muses” (13 W.), Solon prays for such goods:

\[
\text{o} \lambda \beta \omicron \nu \ \mu o i \ \pi r o \zeta \ \theta e \acute{w} \nu \ \mu a k \acute{a} \rho \omega \nu \ \delta \acute{o} \zeta e, \ \kai \ \pi r o \zeta \ \acute{a} \pi \acute{a} \nu \tau \omicron \nu\ 
\text{\acute{a}n} \text{\acute{b}} \text{\acute{r}} \text{\acute{w}} \text{\acute{p}} \text{\acute{w}} \text{\acute{o}n} \ a \text{\acute{e}i} \ d \text{\acute{o} \zeta a} \ \acute{e} \text{\acute{c}e} \text{\acute{i}n} \ \acute{a} \text{\acute{g}a} \text{\acute{b}h} \text{\acute{i}n} \ 
\text{\acute{e}i} \text{nai} \ \acute{d}e \ \gamma \text{\acute{l}u} \text{\acute{k}u} \nu \ \acute{w} \text{\acute{d}e} \ \phi \text{\acute{i}l} \text{\acute{o}i} \zeta, \ \acute{e} \text{\acute{x}b} \text{\acute{r}} \text{\acute{o}i} \zeta \ \acute{d}e \ \pi \text{\acute{i}k} \text{\acute{r}o} \zeta, \ 
\text{t\'o} \text{\acute{t}i} \text{\acute{i}n} \ \mu \text{\acute{e}n} \ \acute{a} \text{\acute{i}d} \text{\acute{o}i} \text{\acute{o}n}, \ \text{t\'o} \text{\acute{t}i} \text{\acute{i}n} \ \acute{d}e \ \acute{d} \text{\acute{i}n} \acute{o}n \ \acute{i} \acute{d} \text{\acute{e}i} \text{\acute{n}.} (13.3-6) \\
\text{Grant me prosperity from the blessed gods, and that I have a good reputation always among all mankind;}
\text{That I be sweet to my friends and bitter to my enemies,}
\text{reverent to my friends, terrible to behold for my enemies.}
\]

³⁴³ Benardete (1969) 132-133 points out two levels of distinction between Tellus and the Argive brothers. Solon has “seen” Tellus, associated with human goods, while he has only heard about Cleobis and Biton, who receive the goods of the gods. Cf. also Benardete (2000) xiv-xv.

³⁴⁴ For his fragment in the context of Plato’s \textit{Lysis} (212e), see chapter one, section VI above.
Through good reputation (δόξαν) among mortals and an archaic notion of justice akin to Polemarchus’ suggestions in Republic, Solon here thinks that he can attain happiness (δήλον). He attributes the possession of these human goods to the goodwill and benefaction of the gods.

A.S. thus rearranges Solon’s goods. He recognizes the divine goods as more essential and as producers of the human goods. The historical Solon set up a constitution in which the city could best flourish because its citizens would not war with one another out of greed or ignorance. A.S. recognizes a more essential aim in legislation, that of the individual citizens. Thus, at the end of Book III, he claims that “everything [he and his interlocutors have discussed up to that point in the conversation] has been said in order to examine how the best city might be established and how in private one might lead his own life in the best way” (ταύτα γὰρ πάντα εἶρηται τοῦ κατιδεῖν ἑνεκα πῶς ποτ’ ἄν πόλις ἄριστα οἰκοίη, καὶ ἰδία πῶς ἄν τις βέλτιστα τὸν αὐτοῦ βίον διαγάγων, 702a-b, translation and emphasis my own). Legislation looks at the relationships between citizens as well as the lives of individual citizens.

A.S. also relies more on persuasion than Solon does in enacting his virtue-oriented legislation. The nature of the dialogue shows this employment of persuasion, as A.S. convinces his Dorian interlocutors to accept a constitution modeled upon the Athenian constitution as an outline of their new colony. His use of persuasion is even more evident in one of the most innovative aspects of his legislation: the preludes (722d

345 See note 152 above.

346 For further discussion of Solon 13.3-6, see chapter three section II above.
A.S. introduces the idea of prelude through an analogy of two types of doctors (720a-e). One doctor, the “slave” (δοῦλος) doctor, gives commands based on opinions and experience, and delivers these commands “like a stubborn tyrant” (καθάπερ τύραννος αὐθαδῶς, 720c), while the other doctor, the “free” (ἐλεύθερος) one, converses with the sick patient. The latter doctor himself learns something and he teaches the patient something in the process, giving orders only after persuading the patient first. A.S. likewise suggests that every law should have a prelude (προοίμιον), a persuasive speech which introduces it, “so that he to whom the lawgiver speaks the law might receive the command (the law) with good will, and through this good will he might be more ready to learn” (ϊνα γὰρ εὐμενῶς, καὶ διὰ τὴν εὐμένειαν εὐμαθέστερον, τὴν ἐπίταξιν, ὡ δὴ ἐστιν ὁ νόμος, δέξηται ὃ τὸν νόμον ὁ νομοθέτης λέγει, 723a). He in fact suggests near the end of Book IV that, although he and his interlocutors began speaking at dawn and it has now reached midday (722c), they have only just begun to speak about the laws, and everything previously said was just a prelude to the laws (νόμοις δὲ ἀρτί μοι δοκοῦμεν λέγειν ἄρχεσθαι, τὰ δὲ ἐμπροσθεν ἦν πάντα ἡμῖν προοίμια νόμων, 722d), i.e. the first four books of the Laws—the inquiry into the original aim of Cretan and Spartan legislation, the role and effect of poetry as education, the review of historical constitutions, the geography and demography of Magnesia, and the discussion of preludes itself—were a persuasive preamble to the code of laws that he is going to recommend to Clinias over the next eight books.

A.S.’s laws are thus twofold: prelude and law. Plutarch gives an account of Solon’s legislation which is contrary to this. In his Life of Solon, Plutarch says that people
questioned Solon’s laws after they were put in place; they not only praised or criticized certain laws, but they also demanded explanations for certain laws (25). Solon thus decided to leave Athens for ten years, “for he hopes that they would become accustomed to the laws during this time” (ἡλπίξε γὰρ ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ καὶ τοῖς νόμοις αὐτοὺς ἔσεσθαι συνήθεις, 26). According to Plutarch’s account, Solon attempts to escape cross-examination and explanation. This contrasts A.S.’s preemptive legal explanations through prelude.347

To clarify how A.S.’s use of preludes and persuasion distinguishes him from Solon, let us examine two points of similarity between the two figures. I will use two examples from the Laws as case studies: the four-class system and process of revision. Morrow, as discussed above, suggested that A.S.’s four-class system recalls the Solonian four classes.348 Ps.-Aristotle (Ath. Const. 7) and Plutarch (Solon 18) attest that these classes were based on levels of wealth (i.e. amount of property owned) and determined eligibility for office. A.S. likewise sets up four classes via wealth in Book V of the Laws, but he gives a further explanation for why the classes should be set up thus: τὰς τιμὰς τε καὶ ἀρχὰς ὡς ἰσαίτατα τῷ ἀνίσῳ συμμέτρῳ δὲ ἀπολαμβάνοντες μὴ διαφέροντα (“quarrels will be avoided because honors and offices will be distributed as equally as possible on the basis of proportional inequality,” 744c, trans. Pangle). A.S. proposes

347 This argument is of course based on Plutarch’s account. Schofield (2006) 316 presents a potential counterargument: “The resort to public persuasion that the Visitor advocates here should be seen as precisely the kind of approach an Athenian statesman of Solonian stamp (we still possess some of the poems Solon addressed to his fellow citizens on social and political disorder and its remedy) could be expected to adopt.” By such a reading, Solon’s political poetry could serve as a “prelude” to his legislation. This, however, brings up a further issue of debate: whether Solon’s political poetry and his legislation coincided or not. There is not enough evidence to suggest he wrote his political poems along with his laws, or even as a later defense for them.

348 Morrow (1960) 84. See also Samaras (2002) 251-252; and section II above.
these classes in order to avoid faction among the citizens when certain citizens have more than others. By explaining the reason for these classes, he is more easily able to persuade his interlocutors (and likewise he would more easily persuade his hypothetical citizens) of the need for this class system for the greatest good of the entire city. Solon, who did not provide such a prelude for his law, met much criticism and interrogation.\footnote{Cf. Herodotus 1.29; Ps.-Arist. Const. Ath. 11; Plutarch, Solon 25.}

This resistance to Solon’s reforms and his journey abroad are akin to points of similarity between A.S. and Solon which other scholarship has not taken into account: the trial period for the laws and potential process of revision afterward. Herodotus, in the earliest surviving tradition on Solon, says that the Athenian statesman departed from Athens for ten years in order to avoid repealing his laws, “for [the Athenians] were bound by great oaths to abide for ten years by the laws which Solon set for them” (.TryParse exceptions: string exception: 

\footnote{Zuckert (2004) 377. Cf. also MonoSon (2000) 233-234 and my discussion of Solon and \textit{theoria} in section II above.} This act of Solon is similar to A.S. in multiple ways on the surface (which in turn demonstrate differences between the two). First, the dramatic setting of the \textit{Laws}, Crete, is fitting for an Athenian who is away from his home to study the customs of others. Like Solon, A.S. travels to foreign lands to study the customs of other (non-Athenian) peoples. Zuckert points out that A.S. suggests, “both in practice and in precept, that a legislator must learn about the laws of other regimes, ideally by traveling around, observing and interviewing the inhabitants.”\footnote{Such a practice, I suggest, is both uncharacteristic of Socrates (who never left Athens except on military service) and more characteristic of A.S. in multiple ways on the surface (which in turn demonstrate differences between the two).}
Solon (particularly the Herodotean Solon, and to a high degree, of Herodotus himself). The Nocturnal Council which A.S. establishes at the end of the dialogue sends out trusted elders to study the laws of others and report back on their findings (951d-952b; 961a), a form of *theoria* in keeping with Solon’s own journey. A major difference is that Solon used this knowledge to revise his previous legislation and implement better laws in Athens upon his return, whereas A.S. initially sets up a constitution for a Cretan colony based on his philosophical inquiry. He then implements this constitution in a non-Athenian setting, suggesting the transferability of its value onto Athens or any other Greek polis. The Athenian’s Nocturnal Council, furthermore, is an improvement upon Solon’s constitution, since it establishes a form of succession in keeping watch over the laws. A large factor in Solon’s failure and his legislation’s aftermath in the rise of Peisistratus stemmed from inappropriate succession, a lack of “guardians of the laws” to ensure his legislation. Even Socrates in the *Republic* is concerned about ensuring the continuity of his *politeia* over the course of several generations.

A more important Solonian resonance in this trial-and-revision process comes from the fact that Solon had left the city, so that there was no one in Athens who was above the law, so to speak. No one could alter or repeal the laws while Solon was away. Upon his return, he had the ability to examine the effect of his laws and revise them.

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351 On the Greek practice of *theoria*, see Ker (2000), Nightingale (2004); section III of Chapter Three above; and discussion of Monoson (2000) in section II above.

352 See Herodotus 2.177 for an example of Solon revising his legislation upon his return. In Chapter Two above, I suggest that the Atlantis narrative of *Timaeus-Critias* likewise suggests Solon’s further legislation after his *theoria*.

353 See chapter two above on the failures of Solon.

354 *Republic* 546a; see section IV of chapter three above.
based on their successes and failures. No sources on Solon explicitly suggest this was his intention. Plutarch in fact suggests the opposite: Solon hoped the Athenians would become accustomed to his laws during the ten years he was away (Solon 25). Nonetheless, it is apparent in at least two sources that Solon did modify his legislation after his return. Herodotus tells us that Solon implements a law in Athens that every man had to declare the source of his livelihood to the state after he had learned of the law in Egypt (2.177); and Plato’s Critias, albeit in a fictional account, suggests that Solon had to put his composition of an Atlantis epic aside to alleviate the political turmoil he discovered in Athens upon his return from Egypt (Timaeus 21b-d). During his absence, the oaths he demanded of the Athenians created a sovereignty of law. This sovereignty is replicated in the constitution of Plato’s Laws. There are no philosopher-rulers in the dialogue, no set of educated figures who have contemplated the Forms and applied this knowledge to their political rule. Rather, a legislator (A.S.) has set down a constitution which cannot be revised until ten years have passed (772b-c), and even then only if they need revision, that is, if they prove to not be the best. For such revision, A.S. sets up the Nocturnal Council, a group which has no parallel in Athenian politics and legislation. This group, however, is akin to the legislator, and like Solon, the group cannot revise the laws until it can adequately reflect on their effectiveness over the course of ten years. A.S. and Solon both hope that such revision will not be necessary because the laws will prove effective over that course of time.\textsuperscript{355}

\textsuperscript{355} While Herodotus’ account says that Solon made the Athenians swear to maintain his laws for ten years (1.29), the Aristotelian Athenian Constitution suggests that Solon initially establishing his laws without alteration for one hundred years (7), and after much questioning, he announced that he would journey abroad for ten years (11). Plutarch, as mentioned above in this section, suggests that Solon thought the Athenians would become accustomed to his laws during that time (Solon 25).
While both legislators enact a process in which the established laws are to run their course for the duration of at least ten years before they can be changed, the way in which each legislator develops these processes differs. According to Ps.-Aristotle and Plutarch, Solon first established that his laws could not be altered for one hundred years. Then, in the face of ample questioning about the reasons behind certain laws, he decided to leave Athens and journey abroad for ten years, making the Athenians swear to abide by his laws during that time, in the hopes that they would become accustomed to his laws. In the *Laws*, A.S. also sets ten years as the standard duration of time for the trial of laws. He suggests that “ten years of sacrifices and dances would be a moderate and sufficient amount of time for the trial” (χρόνος μὲν οὖν μέτριος ἀμα καὶ ἰκανὸς γίνοιτ' ἀν τῆς ἐμπειρίας δεκαετηρίς θυσίῶν τε καὶ χορείων, 772b, translation my own) of the laws. Then, if any omissions in the laws need to be corrected, they should be corrected at that time by the Guardians of the Laws, “until each feature seems to be perfected in noble fashion” (μέχριπερ ἀν τέλος ἔχειν ἐκαστον δόξη τοῦ καλῶς ἐξειργάσθαι, 772c, trans. Pangle) and from thereon they are to be “unchangeable” (ἄκινητα). Thus, A.S. says that his laws may be revised only after ten years have passed, not so that his citizens may become accustomed to the laws (as Solon did), but rather to ensure that his laws be as perfect as possible. Plutarch says that Solon, when asked whether he had legislated the best laws for the Athenians, replied “the best they would accept” (ὡν ἄν…προσέδεξαντο τούς ἀρίστους, Solon 15). While Solon set laws in the

356 See note 355 above.
357 See note 349 above.
hopes that the Athenians would eventually accept or grow accustomed to them, A.S. set laws which would be the best possible, as far as he could reason.\footnote{However, A.S. does acknowledge the importance of the citizens accepting the laws. In Book IV, upon finding out that this colony will have citizens from all around Greece and Crete, rather than one from one specific place, he says that such a population would more willingly accept new laws, whereas a population collected from a single place with an identifiable cultural unity would be less willing to accept new laws, even if they had previously undergone strife or suffering (708b-d).}

This marks a pointed difference between Solon and A.S.. Solon, a historical figure within a specific historical political crisis, became legislator as a mediator between rival factions, while A.S., a fictional character in a leisurely peaceful setting, may theorize about the best possible laws. A.S.’s constitution, then, is a literary and theoretical construction, and A.S. and his interlocutors, like Socrates, are political philosophers and theorizers, while Solon was a political practitioner in his legislation of Athens.\footnote{\textit{Contra}, e.g., Strauss (1975) 1: \textquote{The \textit{Laws} is the most political work of Plato. One may even say that it is his only political work, for in it, his chief character, A.S., elaborates a code for a city about to be founded, i.e., he engages in political activity. In the \textit{Republic} Socrates founds a city in speech, i.e. not in deed; accordingly the \textit{Republic} does not in fact present the best political order but rather brings to light the limitations, the limits, and therewith the nature of politics (Cicero \textit{Republic} II 52).}}

But the need for any guidelines to oversee future legislative revision (i.e. Solon’s potential revision after ten years in Herodotus or the Nocturnal Council’s ten-year review period in Plato’s \textit{Laws}) suggests a fundamental problem with the constitutions of both Solon and A.S.: the sovereignty of law is still inferior to the rule of philosopher-kings. Socrates in the \textit{Republic} revises the ideal city several times over the course of the conversation, but he never implements a system of review for the city to use once it hypothetically exists. The only change he offers is its decline in Book VIII.\footnote{See section IV of chapter three above.} A.S.’s constitution clearly surpasses that of Solon: whereas Solon’s aimed at moderation...
between the wealthy few and the masses to avoid faction, the constitution of Magnesia aims higher, at the attainment of virtue. But its allusion to aspects of Solonian laws and institutions cannot help but acknowledge what the *Timaeus-Critias* and *Republic* pointed out: Solon’s measures, though well-intentioned, failed to prevent factionalism and tyranny. In many ways, A.S. is Plato’s adaption and improvement upon Solon. Through A.S., Plato reorients Solonian themes towards the cultivation of virtue within individual citizens. He makes A.S. employ persuasion as a means of enacting his laws. In essence, A.S. is a Socratic Solon. But inasmuch as A.S. is a replacement for Solon, he is not a replacement for Socrates. Instead, he provides a framework for Socrates to come about. In the next section, I use recent scholarship on the place of the *Laws* within Plato’s corpus to reposition A.S. between Solon and Socrates.

**IV. (Re)Locating the *Laws* within Plato’s Corpus**

Scholars generally agree that the *Laws* was the last dialogue Plato wrote. A driving force behind this hypothesis is Diogenes Laertius’ account that the “*Laws* was left unedited in a wax impression only.” Matters of stylometry, the characterization of the Athenians Stranger and his interlocutors as elderly men, the way in which it seems to convey doctrines decisively in opposition to earlier dialogues (e.g. the lack of Forms, a more accepting view of democracy), and, perhaps most striking, the absence of Socrates are some of the many features of the *Laws* which have led scholars to believe the

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361 On A.S. as a replacement for Socrates, see my discussion of the various hypotheses put forth in section IV below. On the differences between Socrates and A.S., see Zuckert (2009) 58-62.

dialogue is not only Plato’s last work, but the final stage in the development of his political philosophy. Even scholars who do not go this far still suggest it is at least Plato’s most practical political dialogue, compared to the utopian nature of the Republic.

The absence of Socrates, and his replacement with an “Athenian Stranger,” has long been a topic of debate among scholars. Some, as Zuckert summarizes, have taken this anonymous figure to be Plato himself, who either sets forth his own ideas or “responds to and corrects proposals he put forth in Socrates’ mouth in the Republic”; others “have suggested that the Laws constitutes a kind of thought experiment” about what Socrates would have said if he had left Athens to speak with statesmen from reputedly well-governed poleis. The former argument (that A.S. somehow serves as a mouthpiece for Plato himself) can be dismissed via the dramatic framework of the dialogues. As Strauss says of Plato’s Socrates, “the Platonic dialogues are dramas, if dramas in prose. They must then be read like dramas. We cannot ascribe to Plato any utterance of any of his characters without having taken great precautions.”

The same applies to A.S. in the Laws. If Plato wanted to write a treatise in which he expounded his doctrine (or if he wanted to put himself in his dialogues), he could have done so. However, with the exception of a brief cameo in the Apology (38b), he explicitly keeps

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363 Cf. Klosko (1986) 217: “The Laws of course was Plato’s last work, left unfinished at his death. According to ancient tradition, it was edited posthumously by Plato’s student Philip of Opus, who also wrote the Epinomis in order to complete various matters Plato left incomplete. The Laws is an old man’s work. In addition to Plato’s increased experience of human affairs, in many ways it shows a mood of tiredness and resignation. The aged Plato has turned his back on the world to face the heavens. Human life seems to him a paltry thing, no more than amusement for the gods (803c). His faith in man’s power and dignity, in man’s ability to know, has waned. The implication for political theory is an ideal state that approaches theocracy.”


365 Strauss (1964) 59.
himself out of his dramatic universe.\textsuperscript{366} He conceals himself, and his opinions, behind the settings, narratives, characters, and plots of his dialogues.

Zuckert convincingly argues against the latter suggestion (that the \textit{Laws} represents a thought experiment about what Socrates could or would have said) via two important points: (1) “not a single mention of the Peloponnesian War or any of the persons and events associated with it is to be found in [the \textit{Laws} and the \textit{Epinomis}]”,\textsuperscript{367} and (2) the central teachings of A.S. seem to be Presocratic (Pythagorean, Anaxagorean, and Heraclitan, in particular). The first point (which Zuckert especially emphasizes as an explanation for Socrates’ absence from the \textit{Laws}) is important because, as we have seen in this chapter, historical examples of constitutions (especially those of Athens, Crete, and Sparta) are particularly relevant to the framework of the constitution that A.S. outlines in this dialogue. That the Peloponnesian War should receive at least some mention seems likely given the way A.S. discusses and praises Athens and Sparta during the time of the Persian Wars. He then critiques the degeneration of Athens afterwards. For a reader of the dialogue, the culmination of this degeneration would be the events of the Peloponnesian War. Since the latter war is not mentioned, it is therefore likely that A.S.’s analysis of Athens’ degeneration occurs, dramatically speaking, in the intervening time. Zuckert suggests, since “there is no reference to any specific event in Greek political history after Salamis and Plataea,” that “the dramatic date of the \textit{Laws} is sometime during the following two—or perhaps three—decades; that is, at a time when

\textsuperscript{366} Cf. \textit{Phaedo} 59b, where Plato is pointed out as absent from Socrates’ final conversation and execution.

\textsuperscript{367} Zuckert (2004) 374-375.
Athens and Sparta were still allies.\textsuperscript{368} In line with this hypothesis, Zuckert has more recently given the \textit{Laws} a more specific dating of sometime from 460-450 BCE,\textsuperscript{369} a time period in which Socrates would have been between the ages of 9 and 19, far too young to take part in such a sophisticated political and philosophical conversation, and well before the onset of his public career. Such a dramatic dating would also allow for the possibility of an Athenian and a Spartan to discuss and critique each other’s native constitutions amicably.

But the second main point of Zuckert’s article, that the central teachings of A.S. are essentially Presocratic, is more important. She connects the Athenian’s emphasis on “the utility of the study of number”, the communal nature of property, and the notion that males and females should receive the same education with the practices of the Pythagoreans.\textsuperscript{370} The political project of legislating a new colony may itself be Presocratic. Zuckert connects the project with the request which the council of elders in Croton gave to the Samian exile Pythagoras to educate both their young men and their women.\textsuperscript{371} Morrow, although placing the setting of the \textit{Laws} at some point in the fourth century, makes a point which, if correct, could further support Zuckert’s thesis that A.S.’s philosophic teachings are Presocratic. Morrow suggests that colonization was less evident in Plato’s time than in earlier generations. This apparent inconsistency is easily alleviated if the dramatic timeframe of the \textit{Laws} is set into the first two-thirds of the fifth century,
when Greek colonization was still prevalent. It would have been more likely at that time for a Cretan elder to receive the assignment of legislating a new colony.\textsuperscript{372}

Zuckert also suggests that “[w]hen the Athenian offers an argument to prove that the gods exist, he seems to be addressing and refuting pre-Socratic philosophers like Archelaus (who was reputedly a student of Anaxagoras and a teacher of Socrates) as well as Anaxagoras himself.”\textsuperscript{373} She furthermore connects the Athenian’s notions of motion and change with Heraclitus, as if the the Athenian is unaware of Parmenides’ argument “concerning the complete and unchanging.”\textsuperscript{374} Zuckert suggests that “the Athenian Stranger recommends many of the institutions of pre-Periclean Athens to his Dorian interlocutors.”\textsuperscript{375} She goes on to point out the relatively non-philosophic natures of the Dorian statesmen and interlocutors of the dialogues, as well as the seeming incompatibilities between Presocratic philosophy (especially the natural philosophy of Anaxagoras, with whom Socrates claims to be conflated in the \textit{Apology}) and political thought.\textsuperscript{376} Several charges against Socrates in the \textit{Apology} (looking at things in the sky and under the earth, being an atheist, introducing new gods into the city) on the one hand seem resolved by the legislation the Athenian introduces, which prevents such impiety. But it also prevents a figure such as Socrates from speaking out. Rather than treat these

\textsuperscript{372} Morrow (1960) 3. Monoson (2000) 234-235 on the other hand suggests that “the establishment of new colonies was in the fourth century still very much a part of Greek life, and Plato, as well as other members of his Academy, was approached to give actual men in similar circumstances (as were other highly regarded intellectuals of the time).”

\textsuperscript{373} Zuckert (2004) 375.

\textsuperscript{374} Zuckert (2004) 375-376.

\textsuperscript{375} Zuckert (2004) 378.

\textsuperscript{376} See especially 392-393.
inconsistencies of the *Laws* with the rest of Plato’s corpus as Plato’s development and movement away from Socrates, as others have, Zuckert instead suggests the Presocratic inconsistencies demand a Socrates. She concludes, “[r]ather than solving the political problems associated with Socrates and his proposed ‘city in speech,’” as many scholars have suggested, “in the *Laws* Plato shows why Socratic philosophizing is politically necessary and desirable.”³⁷⁷

As we saw in the previous section, A.S.’s political recommendations are not just pre-Periclean, as Zuckert’s time frame and argument suggest; they are reminiscent of Solon’s Athens. Schofield suggests that A.S. himself is a Solonian (and thus “Presocratic,” chronologically speaking) figure and legislator.³⁷⁸ This point is intimated in the emphasis on Athens at the time of, and immediately after, the Persian Wars, as Zuckert points out. But as we saw above, Morrow pointed out the particularly Solonian nature of this early fifth century Athens (described at 698b). A.S.’s description of the four classes alludes to the legislation of Solon, and, as Pangle notes, “the Athenian ignores the changes and revolutions that had taken place prior to the time of the Persian Wars and that continued during those wars.”³⁷⁹ Schofield similarly suggests that “[i]n the account he gives of Athenian history, *aidōs* towards the Solonian laws still inspired those who fought against the Persians at Salamis, although even so the city and its sacred places would never have been defended had it not been for the solidarity engendered by fear of

³⁷⁸ Schofield (2006) 75-76. See section I above.
the enemy.” It is particularly noteworthy that this four-class system ignores the legislation of Cleisthenes not long before the Persian Wars. The Athens which A.S. describes in Book III is very much a Solonian Athens.

The Solonian resonances of A.S.’s legislative measures can help to further substantiate Zuckert’s placement of the *Laws* in a Presocratic world. In other readings of the *Laws*, such as those of Morrow and Samaras, a Solonian framework displaces the Socratic one, and Plato leaves behind the ideal world of Forms in his political philosophy for the more practical lessons of history and human experience. But Zuckert’s novel (and, I think, convincing) approach to the *Laws* helps to set Solon up as an initial step in the trajectory towards Socratic philosophy. By modifying and adapting Solon’s pre-Periclean legislation in the constitution of Magnesia in the *Laws*, Plato sets A.S. up as a new step above that of Solon, and furthermore, as a “prelude,” to use Zuckert’s term, to Socrates. Martin, in his discussion of the Seven Sages, suggested that Socrates “provides a sort of endpoint” to the model of Sage:

Against the background I have sketched, of Sages who are performers in several spheres, we can certainly see continuities in Socrates’ life, in the form of his relationship with Delphi, his role in politics, even his versifying of Aesopic fables. But as he is depicted, all these are marginal activities in Socrates’ career. No archaic sage invented the *elenchos*; it was the specialty of a man who constantly broke the frame of the performance by confronting his argument in dialogue and refusing to rely on the power of emphatic, unidirectional self-presentation.

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380 Schofield (2006) 95n84.

In line with Martin’s approach, the Solonian allusions in Plato’s *Laws* demonstrate the condition of a world without Socrates. In the next section, I explore the ramifications of this use of Solon in the *Laws* upon the rest of Plato’s corpus.

**V. Conclusion: Recasting Solon in Plato’s *Laws***

Through A.S. and the constitution of Magnesia, Plato reinvents Solon. In the previous chapters (especially chapters one and three), I suggested that Solon is often invoked as a democratic Athenian statesman in Plato’s dialogues, but only according to common opinion, which is distrustworthy. This notion of Solon as a democrat is never aligned with any specific character in Plato’s dialogues. Samaras suggests that “it can be asserted with some degree of certainty that [Plato] did not conceive [Solon] as a democrat,” citing the non-democratic nature of ancient Athens in the Atlantis tale attributed to Solon and, more importantly, the fact that Solon is often praised “as a wise man, an inspired poet or a good legislator” in Plato’s corpus, but never as a democrat, as opposed to the democratic leaders named and criticized at *Gorgias* 515c. Samaras concludes, then, “that Plato viewed Solon as a moderate conservative.”

Such a conception falls in line with the “mixed” nature of A.S.’s constitution. Plato’s Athenian Stranger is his own improved version of Solon. A.S. is a moderate Solon, not the oligarchic Solon or democratic Solon conceived of by common opinion or specific political parties of the late fourth century, and he is a philosophic Solon. But if

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382 See especially section VII (*Symposium*) of chapter one, sections III and IV of chapter three on the *Republic*, and the beginning of this section on the *Laws*. Cf. also Morrow (1960) 76-86.

the *Laws* is not the culmination, but the introduction, to Platonic philosophy, A.S. is not a new-and-improved fourth-century Socrates. Rather, he is a precursor to Socrates, a figure whom Socrates—or Socratic inquiry—completes. The most prominent substantiation and modification of Solon in Plato’s dialogues, then, is a stepping-stone towards Plato’s Socrates, and his project is an introduction to the development of Platonic philosophy. The fact that his own political activity (e.g. *theoria*) and legislation alludes to Solon, then, reflects the use of earlier historical models not by the fictional A.S., but by Plato himself, as planned within the greater scope of his corpus. Rather than stand in for Plato, the character of A.S. acknowledges the everlasting wall between the author and his fictional speakers.

Cicero famously said that

*Socrates autem primus philosophiam devocavit e caelo et in urbibus conlocavit et in domus etiam introduxit et coëgit de vita et moribus rebusque bonis et malis quaerere.* (Tusculan Disputations V.10-11)

Socrates was the first to call philosophy down from the heavens, place it in our cities, introduce it into our homes, and force it to question life and morals and what things are good or bad.

Socrates reoriented the teachings and discoveries of Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Thales, and the rest so that they applied to the appropriate arrangement of cities and households, and furthermore, to individual human lives. Although he was accused of searching into the sky and under the earth, the basis of his inquiry was its application to the moral life. In political affairs, he sought the relevance of philosophy to political rule. Plato’s recognition and reception of this goal is brought out most explicitly in the *Republic* and in the *Laws.* The Presocratic philosophers clearly had a huge influence on the philosophical doctrines of Plato’s dialogues. Solon represents another aspect of influence,
the political context. In the *Laws*, A.S. wrangles with Presocratic doctrines in his legislation and measures. He also wrangles with the aims and methods of constitutions in general. The majority of the first two books of the dialogue, therefore, examine the purposes and aims of legislation.

The Cretan Clinias and Spartan Megillus both suggest their native constitutions were designed with an aim towards victory in war (626a-b *ff.*). These Dorian interlocutors do not think to question A.S. on what he thinks is the aim of the Athenian constitution. They do not seek out the intents of Solon, the famous legislator of Athens. Given the early allusions to Minos and Lycurgus in the dialogue, it perhaps comes as a surprise that the nominal presence of Solon is so small in a dialogue on legislation whose main interlocutor is an Athenian. But the Dorians, as we have seen, are not particularly interested in studying the customs and laws of another city, such as Athens. Furthermore, A.S., as Schofield suggests, steps in the place of Solon. A.S. provides his own answer for what the Athenian constitution aims at, or should aim at: virtue. He says,

δῆλον ὅτι τόδε, ὡς παντὸς μᾶλλον καὶ ὁ τῆδε παρὰ Διὸς νομοθέτης, πᾶς τε οὐ καὶ συμκρόν ὄφελος, οὐκ ἄλλο ἢ πρὸς τὴν μεγίστην ἀρετὴν μᾶλιστα βλέπων ἀεὶ θήσει τοὺς νόμους· (630c)

This is clear, that more than everything else, both the lawgiver here from Zeus and every lawgiver who is worth even a little bit always looks at nothing other than the greatest virtue when he sets the laws.

He suggests that constitutions—true constitutions, at least—are set with virtue as their aim. Being a legislator himself, he provides a legislative goal not just for Athens, but for all cities. In the conversation of the *Laws*, he does not simply imitate Solonian institutions. He redirects them towards the cultivation of citizen virtue.
But this constitution, as Zuckert suggests, is not an endpoint. Rather, it opens up the need for Socratic investigation of questions about virtue and goodness.\(^{384}\) Even methodologies that read Plato’s dialogues in the developmental ordering of “early,” “middle,” and “late” acknowledge a dissatisfaction at the end of the *Laws* with the so-called “second-best state” (739a). Friedlander, noticing a dialectical (i.e. Socratic) nature to the conversation at the end of the dialogue, suggests that “[t]he Socrates in Plato still wins out over the Solon in him.”\(^{385}\) Klosko similarly states that “[i]n the *Laws*...Plato cannot break completely with the ideals of his youth. He cannot bring his last work to a close without returning to the hope that a philosophic element can raise Magnesia from the status of ‘second best.’”\(^{386}\) The *Laws* presents a framework that demands a Socrates. As Nightingale suggests, “[l]ike all technai...lawmaking takes a long time to reach maturity. Plato does not suggest that the early lawgivers had achieved a philosophic knowledge of justice; indeed, even famous legislators such as Minos and Lycurgus are treated to a good deal of criticism in the *Laws.*”\(^{387}\) Such an explanation, I suggest, applies to the role of Solon as a pre-philosophic legislator and his philosophic replacement with an Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*. Although it is unspoken, Solon receives much criticism as well, and his achievements fall far short of philosophic. Thus, just as Socrates reoriented philosophy towards ethics and politics, Plato reoriented politics towards

\(^{384}\) Zuckert (2004) 394. Cf. Blitz (2010) 112: “The members of the nocturnal council require precise education…Such philosophical questioning or knowledge is necessary if the city is to be well secured. The regime that the Athenian founds will at some point require someone such as himself.”


\(^{386}\) Klosko (1988) 87-88.

\(^{387}\) Nightingale (1999) 309.
philosophy. In Book V of the *Republic*, Socrates presents two conditions under which philosopher-kings can come to be: “there will be no cessation of troubles” (οὐκ ἔστι κακῶν παύλα) “unless *either* philosophers rule as kings in our cities, *or* those now called kings and rulers nobly and sufficiently philosophize” (Ἐὰν μὴ...ἡ οἱ φιλόσοφοι βασιλεύσωσιν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἢ οἱ βασιλῆς τε νῦν λεγόμενοι καὶ δυνάσται φιλοσοφήσωσι γνησίως τε καὶ ικανῶς, 473c-d). Either a Socrates must rule, or a Solon must philosophize.

Solon—as legislator, as poet, as statesman, as Sage—provides an appropriate stepping-stone towards Socrates, but he falls short in one important regard: nowhere in Solon’s poetry, nor in the historical accounts of him in Herodotus and Ps.-Aristotle, is there mention of a concept of soul. A.S. defines the political art as caring for (θεραπεύειν) “the natures and habits of souls” (τὰς φύσεις τε καὶ ἔξεις τῶν ψυχῶν, 650b). Politics in the *Laws* is thus reoriented towards Socratic philosophy inasmuch as Socrates’ greatest concern was the soul.\(^{388}\) Solon’s legislation attempted to dissuade factionalism and instill justice between citizens, but not within citizens.

Zuckert, in a further elaboration of her thesis that the *Laws* is a prelude to Socratic political philosophy, says that “[t]he question concerning virtue, the noble, and the good arises directly out of political life. To answer it and thereby achieve knowledge of their own purpose and goal, lawgivers need to become philosophers.”\(^{389}\) More specifically, as my study has shown, Solon has to become Socrates. In classical Athens, Solon held prominence as the city’s great wise man, poet, and legislator. Orators, politicians, and

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\(^{388}\) Cf. *Apology* 30a-b, discussed below.

\(^{389}\) Zuckert (2009) 146.
thinkers looked to him as their model. In the literature and history of time thereafter, Socrates would displace Solon as the beginning point of political philosophy. At the beginning of the *Laws*, the Dorian interlocutors believe a *polis* needs a safeguard against external enemies, and their respective *politeiai* thus aimed at courage in war. A.S. recognized, as Solon did, that the citizens needed to be safeguarded from one another. Socrates—at least, Plato’s Socrates—took Solon’s measures one step further, because he recognized that ultimately, each individual citizen needed to be safeguarded from himself, and thus needed to know how to care for his own soul. In the *Apology*, Socrates describes his own life as follows:

ταῦτα γὰρ κελεύει ὁ θεὸς, εὐ ἑστε, καὶ ἐγώ οἴομαι οὐδὲν πω ὑμῖν μείζον ἁγαθὸν γενέσθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει ἢ τῇ ἐμῆν τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο πράττων ἐγώ περιέρχομαι ἢ πείθων ὑμῶν καὶ νεωτέρους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους μὴτε σωμάτων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι μὴτε χρημάτων πρότερον μηδὲ ὑπὸ σφόδρα ὡς τῆς ψυχῆς ὁπως ὡς ἀρίστη ἔσται. (30a-b)

The god orders these things—know this well—and I think that no greater good has ever come to you in this city than my service to the god. For I try to do nothing other than persuade both the younger and the older of you not to take care of your bodies or money before you take care that your soul be as good as possible.

In line with A.S.’s definition of the political art, care for the natures and habits of souls (*Laws* 650b), Plato’s dialogues show that Socrates, and not Solon, is the most political of Athenians.
Conclusion: Adapting Solon to a Post-Socratic World

ταύτα γὰρ κελεύει ὁ θεός, εὗ ἱστε, καὶ ἐγὼ οἶμαι οὐδὲν πω ὑμῖν μείζον ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει ἢ τῇ ἐμὴν τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο πράττων ἐγὼ περιέρχομαι ἢ πείθων ὑμῶν καὶ νεώτερους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους μήτε σωμάτων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι μήτε χρημάτων πρῶτον μηδὲ οὕτω σφόδρα ὡς τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὥς ἀρίστη ἔσται.

The god orders these things—know this well—and I think that no greater good has ever come to you in this city than my service to the god. For I try to do nothing other than persuade both the younger and the older of you not to take care of your bodies or money before you take care that your soul be as good as possible.

- Plato, Apology 30a-b

In his seminal article on the Seven Sages, Richard Martin defined the Sages as figures who were composers of poetry, participants in politics, and performers of wisdom. He concluded that Socrates “provides a sort of endpoint” to the evolution of the Greek Sage:

Against the background I have sketched, of sages who are performers in several spheres, we can certainly see continuities in Socrates’ life, in the form of his relationship with Delphi, his role in politics, even his versifying of Aesopic fables. But as he is depicted, all these are marginal activities in Socrates’ career. No archaic sage invented elenchos; it was the speciality of a man who constantly broke the frame of the performance by confronting his audience in dialogue and refusing to rely on the power of emphatic, unidirectional self-presentation.390

Martin argues that Socrates’ life has several “continuities” with the lives of the Seven Sages. Yet his method of *elenchus*, Martin correctly points out, differentiates him from the Sages. Solon, of course, is a major component in this tradition of archaic Sages, and perhaps the most recognizable within Socrates and Plato’s Athens. In this dissertation, I have shown the many ways Plato adapts aspects of the life and thought of Solon, “wisest of the Seven,” as Plato’s Critias describes him (*Timaeus* 20d). In the realms of politics, poetry, and lawmaking—all of which the Greek Sage encompasses—Plato alludes to Solon’s biography, writings, and political institutions. Plato does this by having his philosophers—especially Socrates, as Martin suggests—engage in *elenchus*, discussing and adapting the various authorities and traditions that preceded them.

Naddaff, in discussing Socrates’ use of Homeric and tragic poetry in the *Republic*, suggests that “Socrates does not…radically reject the tradition of poetry as *paideia*. Rather, he mobilizes this tradition while modifying, revising, correcting, and reperforming its central, essential literature.” Along similar lines, I suggest that Plato modifies, revises, corrects, and reperforms Solon. The latter rose to prominence in a time of crisis and tried to resolve the conflicts among the Athenians by mediating between the wealthy and the demos. The former, his descendant two centuries later, learned from Socrates that human beings can only act justly with one another if they have justice in themselves. Thus Plato, throughout his corpus, modifies, revises, corrects, and reperforms the rhetoric, poetry, and legislation of Solon. In *Timaeus-Critias*, he illustrates the dangers of citing Solonian authority in Athenian rhetoric by putting the invocation of this

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authority in one of the most dangerous and violent men in Athenian history and depicting this man’s misuse of it. In the *Republic*, he recasts the themes of Solonian poetry and legislation within a new framework of philosophy through the character of Socrates. In the *Laws*, he entirely displaces Solon’s position as the quintessential lawgiver, setting an anonymous Athenian in his place.

The Athenian Stranger of Plato’s *Laws* is Plato’s most thorough imitation of Solon, but this character acts as an introduction to Plato’s Socrates, and the Stranger’s ideas are thus an initial step in the development of Plato’s philosophy. By theorizing and examining what laws and political institutions would best cultivate virtue, A.S. orients politics towards philosophy, a complement to Socrates’ own practice of bringing philosophy into politics. A.S. differs from Solon because of his primary interest in caring for souls, a concern missing from Solon’s own legislation. By recasting Solon, Plato looks towards the cultivation of souls with regard to virtue. I thus began this conclusion with the same passage from Plato with which I ended the final chapter of the dissertation. Solon understood that for a city to flourish, its citizens must live in harmony with one another. Through his poetry and legislation, he thus tried to impart this knowledge upon the citizens. Socrates, however, recognized an inherent weakness in this type of approach: for harmony to exist between people, it must first exist within people. Plato’s Socrates adds much more than *elenchus* to the tradition of archaic Sage: he makes the wisdom tradition something personal and appropriate to each individual. Plato thus depicts his teacher as living a mission of teaching people to care for their souls. While Solon’s thought was an essential step in the development of Platonic political philosophy, Plato’s philosophy appropriates and then subsumes it.

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