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The Subtle Artistry of the *Minos* and the *Hipparchus*[*]

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SUMMARY: Despite being labeled as works of doubtful authenticity, the *Minos* and the *Hipparchus* are remarkably artful and thought-provoking. They are designed to be studied together with Plato's *Laws* and illustrate the misleading disjunction with which the latter begins: who is responsible for good laws, a god or a man? The *Minos* satirizes excessive reliance on divine revelation while the *Hipparchus* takes on the pretensions of a merely human legislator. What emerges from them jointly is a picture of the ideal citizen as a rare combination, a high-spirited intellectual *and* a humble theist.

THERE ARE SKETCHES BY PICASSO THAT LOOK AT FIRST LIKE CARELESS SCRIBBLES. The skill behind them becomes apparent only upon close inspection. The viewer's surprise at that point is part of the sketches' aesthetic effect.

This essay defends the proposition that two brief Platonic dialogues of "doubtful authenticity," the *Minos* and the *Hipparchus*, are, in fact, works of the highest quality. As the number of scholars that have rejected the two brief dialogues shows, their merits are not instantly obvious.[1] Both at times

[*] Professor Jill Frank read two earlier drafts of this essay and made a number of excellent suggestions for revision and expansion. I hope that I have done them justice. I would also like to acknowledge my debt to Richard W. Johnston, Travis Mulroy, and Shawn Welnak for rekindling my interest in Plato.

[1] Doubt about the authenticity of the *Hipparchus* was expressed by Aelian *VH* 8.3 in antiquity. The dialogue was accepted by Friedländer II. 119–28, 319–22, but rejected by Souilhé 51–54, Geffcken 261, and Thessleff 228. The *Minos* was rejected by Friedländer II. 322n16, Souilhé 81, Geffcken 184–85, and Thesleff 229, but Morrow 35 is inclined to accept it. Both the *Hipparchus* and the *Minos* are rejected in Lamb's Loeb library edition and asterisked in Cooper's table of contents with the comment, "It is generally agreed by scholars that Plato is not the author of this work." Evans's Pennsylvania State dissertation presents a strong case for accepting both dialogues and for their complementary nature. My interpretation is broadly similar to his. Pangle 1987: 1–22 argues that scholars have generally been too quick to label short Platonic dialogues as spurious.

seem clumsy and incomplete, as though dashed off by second-rate imitators. When they are viewed in the proper light, however, I think that impression changes. Like those sketches by Picasso, their apparent artlessness is part of their artistry.

I maintain that the proper light for studying the *Minos* and the *Hipparchus* is that cast on them by Plato's last work, the *Laws*. I argue that much is gained by considering the three works together and that Plato himself viewed them as closely connected. My starting point then is the evidence that the *Minos* and the *Hipparchus* were linked with the *Laws* in Plato's mind. The mainstay of that conclusion is a sentence at the very beginning of the *Laws* that must, in the final analysis, be seen as an emphatic allusion to the *Minos*. It is the Athenian's comment that Clinias of Crete evidently "agrees with Homer" that King Minos met with Zeus every nine years (624ab). Where exactly does Homer say that? The answer, such as it is, is found in the *Minos*. In that dialogue, which also concerns the nature of law, Socrates argues that genuine laws are grounded in eternal truths and never change. Minos's Cretan constitution, he says, is a possible example. His companion objects that Minos was reputedly an evil ruler. Socrates replies that his reputation has been distorted by Athenian tragedians, who were prejudiced. In contrast, he says, Homer and Hesiod praised Minos. The greatest proof of Minos' excellence, he adds, is a line from the *Odyssey* (19.179). There the disguised Odysseus tells Penelope that he is from the great city of Knossos where: "*(Minôs) enneôros basileue, Dios megalou oaristês*" ("Minos being in his ninth season was king, great Zeus's intimate"). According to Socrates, these words mean that Minos was educated by Zeus every nine years inside his sacred cave. Furthermore, he says, Homer makes it clear in many passages that Zeus was a sophist and that sophistry is an altogether excellent art. From 19.179, we supposedly learn that Minos was not only Zeus's son, but his pupil, and received instruction from Zeus acting as a sophist. This was a unique honor and advantage, from which we can safely infer that Minos was an excellent king.

Socrates' companion accepts all of this without question. Whether the reader is expected to do so is another matter. In my opinion, Socrates is depicted as making up this particular piece of mythology; it is a transparent "*jeu d'esprit*" (in Morrow's terms), a tall tale at his gullible companion's expense (Morrow 39). This assertion has an important implication because of Plato's allusion to this *jeu d'esprit* at the beginning of the *Laws*. Apparently, he expected readers of the *Laws* to have the *Minos* fresh in their minds.

Of course, this argument turns on the playfulness of Socrates' interpretation of *Odyssey* 19.179. If it could be understood as a serious, defensible interpretation of Homer's words, then the story of Minos's meetings with Zeus

might have multiple sources, all reliant on a careful reading of Homer, and there would be no necessary connection between the *Laws* and the *Minos.* In fact, the capriciousness of Socrates' interpretation is rather obvious. His gloss on *enneôros* is based on the word's etymology: its roots do mean "nine" and "year" or "season" respectively, but there is no other passage in which *enneôros* bears anything like the meaning that Socrates attributes to it, i.e., operating in nine-year cycles, "nono-ennial." In all of its attested uses in archaic and classical literature it means mature, fully grown or aged,[2] which fits the context of *Odyssey* 19.179 perfectly: Minos became king when he grew up.

Oaristês occurs only in the *Minos* and in one other passage, which does not do much to clarify its meaning.[3] It is derived from *oar* (spouse), a stem that also occurs in several other words denoting affectionate, typically sexual association. In *Iliad* 14.216, the related abstraction *oaristus* is listed with love and desire among the effects of Aphrodite's sash. In 13.291 and 17.228, it is used ironically for the "dalliance" of combat. In 22.127, Hector reflects that it is not possible to *oarizemenai* with Achilles as a maiden and a bachelor might do. *Oaroi* are the kinds of words exchanged between lovers, "sweet talk." In *Theogony* 206, for example, they are the first items listed as constituting Aphrodite's realm: virginal *oaroi,* smiles, tricks, sweet pleasure and gentle love. This nuance is incompatible with Socrates' interpretation. He attempts to eliminate it with obvious sophistry. *Oaroi,* he says, are words, *logoi* (which is true but misleading, like saying that "candy" is "food"); hence, an *oaristês* is someone who shares in conversation (and a "candy man" is a "dinner companion"). Some people, he says, infer from this passage that Minos was Zeus's drinking companion or playmate, but that is impossible. No people are more abstemious than the Cretans, and they are the heirs of Minos's laws.

[2] In *History of Animals* 6.21 (575b), Aristotle says that cattle reach the peak of their strength when they are five years old. Hence people have commended Homer for using the phrases *(boun) arsena pentaetêron* (male five-year-old ox) and *to (askon) boos enneôroio* (hide of an *enneôroio* ox) "since they mean the same thing" *(dunasthai gar tauton).* In other words, Homer was correct to use the epithet "five-years-old" interchangeably with *enneôroios* of a mature ox. The remark makes sense only on the assumption that Aristotle understood *enneôroios* as meaning "mature," not "nine-years-old." This is consistent with the two other occurrences of *enneôroios* in Homer. In *Odyssey* 10.390, Odysseus's men resemble *enneôroiosin* swine; in *Iliad* 18.351, the dead Patroclus is anointed with *enneôroios* oil, i.e., aged, ripe or mature oil. Olive oil is aged for several months to reduce acidity, but nine-year-old olive oil would be rancid.

[3] Diogenes Laertius 8.36 quotes two lines from the *Silloi* of Timon in which Pythagoras is called a *semnêgoriês oaristên,* a "companion" or "sweetheart," perhaps, of grandiloquence.

Hence, he says, we must infer that Minos himself was outstandingly sober. Of course, the argument is invalid, an example of positing the consequence even if nothing else is wrong with it. Socrates uses it to camouflage the implausibility of his interpretation of Homer's words. The actual meaning of *Odyssey* 19.179 is not particularly obscure. It is that Minos, Zeus's "darling," presumably as a young child, ruled Crete when he grew up. The impression that the story of Minos's education in Zeus's cave is the product of Socratic whimsy is reinforced by the fact that there is no trace of any other origin for it.[4] If then the *Minos* is the only source of the story that the Cretan king was educated by Zeus in his cave every nine years, we must infer that Plato wanted to bring the *Minos* to the reader's mind as he began the *Laws*.

[4] The only passage that has been mentioned as an independent witness for the myth that Minos was trained in Zeus's cave every nine years is a discussion by Ephorus of *Odyssey* 19.179, which is preserved by Strabo 10.4.8. Morrow 24 adduces reasons for the belief that Ephorus's discussion was published after Plato's death. Nevertheless Russell 41 and Schöpsdau 154 both feel that it is natural to assume that Ephorus, Plato, and a third party who wrote the Hipparchus all depended on a common, unknown source. In fact, a close reading of the Ephorus proves his dependence on the *Minos*.

The evidence lies in the arrangement of topics in the two passages. In the *Minos*, Socrates offers his interpretation of Homer to justify his belief that Minos was an excellent legislator and superior to his brother Rhadamanthus, who was only a judge. His companion then asks why Minos has a bad reputation. Socrates replies, ironically, that it is a serious mistake to offend poets. Minos's great error lay in attacking a city, Athens, in which various types of wisdom and poetry, especially tragedy, flourish. The present tense in the relative clause makes the chronological assumptions behind the statement ambiguous. Socrates could be saying that Minos's mistake lay in attacking a city in which tragedy would *later* flourish. That would be consistent with a normal view of literary history, but Socrates immediately eliminates that interpretation. Tragedy, he says, is an ancient thing in Athens. It did not begin, as people commonly think, with Thespis and Phrynichus, but is an entirely ancient invention in the city. Thus he would have us believe that Athenians were writing tragedies in the days of King Aegeus, before the Trojan War, when Minos exacted his cruel tribute. As authors of the most crowd-pleasing and emotional kind of poetry, tragedians naturally targeted the city's oppressor for abuse. That is the supposed origin of his bad reputation. One might believe that Socrates found the story about Minos's periodic meetings with Zeus the sophist in the works of some other author. For his idiosyncratic history of tragedy, however, there is no one else to blame. In the place of evidence for his theory, he says it is so "if you are willing to think about it" (321a: *ei theleis ennoêsai*).

Ephorus's discussion is obviously a rationalization of the story in the *Minos*. He has in mind reports that a man named Rhadamanthus was the great Cretan lawgiver. According to him, Minos's brother was named after an earlier Rhadamanthus, who *was* Crete's great lawgiver. That Rhadamnthus *claimed* to have divine inspiration for his laws. Hence, Minos,

The *Minos* and the *Laws* are thus linked by one specific allusion. Between the *Minos* and the *Hipparchus*, on the other hand, there are a number of striking formal similarities that make it natural to think of the two works together. Alone among works attributed to Plato, they are both named after characters from the historical past. Both feature digressions by Socrates praising the eponymous character and are otherwise sparse. No setting is indicated in either. Socrates speaks with an unnamed "companion" (*hetairos*), and both dialogues conclude with the companion reduced to *aporia.* To this list of previously recognized similarities, I would add that both dialogues feature legends improbably revised in such a way that education becomes a central issue. In the *Minos*, we are told that Zeus was a sophist, Minos, his disciple. In the *Hipparchus*, the rivalry between Hipparchus and Harmodius and Aristogeiton is said to have turned on their respective reputations as educators. Their fatal quarrel supposedly concerned a boy who abandoned Harmodius's instruction for Hipparchus' (229cd). If Plato was thinking of the *Minos* when he composed the beginning of the *Laws*, there is some likelihood that he had its companion piece, the *Hipparchus*, in mind as well.

The evidence mentioned so far for the interconnectedness of the *Laws*, *Minos*, and *Hipparchus* pertains to superficial features. The value of studying the dialogues together, however, lies in the appreciation that the reader gains thereby of their complementary approaches to an underlying philosophical theme: the tension between piety and rational discourse. The theme is central to all three works. In the *Laws*, it is raised by the question with which the whole conversation begins: whether god or some individual mortal deserves credit for the creation of laws. One answer seems to imply that pious submission is the essence of lawful behavior; the other provides grounds for independent judgment. As it unfolds, the *Laws* combines praise of piety and obedience with the rational critique of institutions, suggesting that Plato envisioned a synthesis between submission and independent thought. In fact, the nature of the synthesis is indicated in 713de, a passage that begins with emphasis on

his successor and emulator, went to the sacred cave every nine years, bringing back new legislation and *pretending* that he had gotten it from Zeus. That is why Homer refers to him as Zeus's *enneôros oaristês.* Athough Homer gave this account (*toiauta d'eipontos*), ancient sources (*hoi archaioi*) told stories about Minos that contradicted it. They said that Minos was tyrannical, violent, and an exactor of tribute, in tragedies depicting the story of the Minotaur, the labyrinth, and the travails of Theseus and Daedalus. The fact that Ephorus goes from *Odyssey* 19.179 to the status of Minos as an evil tribute-exactor in sources that he describes as tragic and ancient in comparison with Homer makes it clear that he is revising the passage in the *Minos* and cannot be listed as an independent witness to its strained interpretation of *Odyssey* 19.179.

obedience. The Athenian says that just as we do not put cattle in charge of cattle, so the gods would not allow men to rule themselves. Cronus governed the human race through the agency of supernatural spirits, who brought about an age of peace and justice. By the same token, there is no escape from toil and evil for cities where man rules in god's place. To be happy, we must govern our private and public lives by obedience to the portion of divinity that resides in us, viz., our own rational minds (*nous*).

To say that we should govern ourselves through our own use of reason sounds like license to do whatever we choose, but to the Athenian it is a kind of obedience. Reason is informed by commands from above. It tells us that we must adhere to the virtues of wisdom, moderation, justice, and courage, in all of our actions, but we cannot quite grasp their essence, that which makes them all virtues (965de), on our own. Pursuing them requires an element of divine guidance (968b).

Toil, evil, and unhappiness occur when rationality is corrupted by human vice, the collaboration of god and mortal ends, and we have government by man alone. The culprit is always immoderate desire. The Athenian stranger uses the three original Dorian kingdoms, Sparta, Argos, and Messenia, as an example (690e–691a). If these kingdoms lived in harmony, Greek power would have flourished. The opposite occurred because the kings did not realize the truth of Hesiod's saying, "the half is often greater than the whole." Their desire for more than established law provided (*to pleonektein tôn tethentôn nomôn*) ended their solidarity (*ou sunephônêsan hautois*). The ensuing discord—the height of stupidity masquerading as wisdom—undermined their power. Later in the dialogue, the Athenian stranger emphasizes the correlation between immoderation and such discord in an epigrammatic remark (716c): "Whereas like is dear to like, when it is moderate," he says, "the immoderate is pleasing neither to itself nor to the moderate." In other words, greedy people naturally come into conflict with each other, as well as with moderate people, in their quest for excessive acquisitions. Hence, even though they are greedy, they do not approve of greed. As we will see, immoderation's opposition to itself is one of the themes of the *Hipparchus.*

Often in the *Laws*, the Athenian stranger depicts situations that revolve around the tension between submissiveness and autonomy. It comes up, for example, when he describes the two mothers of all constitutions, the monarchic and the democratic (693a). The former is embodied by the Persians; the latter, by the Athenians. Ideally, each type should be tempered by features borrowed from the other. The Athenian says that such moderation was displayed by Cyrus and Darius, who, though monarchs, treated subjects with respect and welcomed intelligent advice (694b). Their successors were spoiled

as children and became despots, unable to tolerate any display of equality. At the other end of the spectrum, the Athenians carried democracy to the extreme in which all respect for tradition and higher authority was lost, and each individual considered himself wise in all things (701a). The Athenians' faults lay not so much in particular fallacies as in their underlying intellectual conceit. In losing sight of their own intellectual limits, they were failing in self-knowledge and *sophrosunê* (moderation), which are, in fact, ultimately identical (cf. *Charmides* 164de).

A synthesis of submission and autonomy is sought by noble physicians who educate their patients, persuading them to do what is necessary for their good health (720a–e). Such physicians are contrasted with their servile counterparts who merely issue orders. The example of the noble physicians helps explain the Athenian stranger's predilection for attaching explanatory preambles to his laws, so that they not only command but also persuade.

The synthesis is reflected in the institutions proposed for Magnesia insofar as they combine democratic features with traditional religious observances. For example, on the democratic side, a council of 360 is constituted by an annual election of 720 individuals representing all four property classes with half chosen to serve by lot (756b–e). In contrast, the religious festivals to be held by the state are simply prescribed by Delphi (828a).

That the *Minos* and the *Hipparchus* are also largely meditations on the tension between piety and rational discourse is suggested by a diametrical contrast amid all of their similarities. As we have seen, both eponymous figures, Minos and Hipparchus, are praised for their wisdom. Minos, however, has been instructed privately by Zeus. Except for giving limited guidance to his brother Rhadamanthus, he shares his wisdom with no one. In contrast, Hipparchus disdains the divine assistance of Delphi and seeks wisdom from his own invention and reading. Far from begrudging it to his fellow citizens, he goes to great lengths to disseminate it. The contrast between Minos and Hipparchus dramatizes the question with which the *Laws* begins. Another way of asking whether god or some man deserves credit for the laws is to ask whether Minos listening to Zeus in his cave or Hipparchus studying in his library is the ideal legislator. The final answer is neither. At first glance, each ruler seems to be praised, but the praise becomes increasingly ambiguous upon reflection. In the end, the reader is left with ironic depictions of flawed, antithetical ideals and an enhanced appreciation of the need to synthesize the tendencies that they embody.

The *Minos* begins when Socrates challenges his unnamed companion to define laws (313a–c). The companion replies that they are the things that are accepted or believed (*nomizomena*). Socrates tries to deepen his understanding

by pointing out that as a thing seen differs from sight, so a thing accepted or believed must differ from the capacity by which things are accepted or believed. Socrates wishes his companion to think of the rule of law as consisting of the activity of the minds of subjects when they apprehend the desirability of the actions commended by laws. The example of the *Laws*'s noble physicians and their patients come to mind. People are truly lawful when they understand and are persuaded by the legislator's decrees. His laws, if valid, are correct statements of how people should behave in order to be happy. They are discoveries of truths.

Socrates' companion resists the idea. To him lawfulness consists of the passive acceptance of arbitrary dictates. Otherwise, if laws were the discoveries of truths, he says, they would not differ from place to place and time to time. Here he strings together five sentences developing the thesis that laws do in fact differ and change (315b–d). It is the best evidence that he gives of intellectual vitality. He points out that there have been cities, even Greek ones, in which human sacrifice was condoned by the laws. In the past too, Greeks thought it proper to bury the dead within their homes.

Rather than dealing with these specific examples,[5] Socrates rebukes him for delivering a "speech," saying that they will never reach genuine agreement unless they use the method of question and answer (315de). The companion complies, and Socrates tries to show via interrogation that moral laws are always and everywhere the same. He deduces this notion from the assumptions (1) that just actions really are just, fair ones fair, etc., and (2) that "laws," properly so-called, represent discoveries about the just and the fair, etc. He amplifies his point by analogy with studies of medicine, farming, gardening, and cookery. In each case, he argues that universal laws have been discovered by experts. They have been accepted and do not change. His examples are not entirely compelling because good cooking and gardening can be seen as matters of taste and fashion. Socrates' point of view, however, becomes quite clear in the context of the later transference of the notion of "law" to the realm of science. Of course, the moral laws of which Socrates speaks describe how human beings should behave, whereas scientific laws describe how objects do behave. The similarity is that moral laws in Socrates' view and scientific laws in ours are universal and unchanging and embody the discoveries of truths. All nations "use" the same laws of physics. The same is true in Socrates' view of moral laws. For him, in morality as in science, discrepant opinions mean

[5] In the Laws 682a–c, human sacrifice exemplifies the disorderly practices that have sprung up throughout history in response to changing tastes in food and the evolution of agriculture.

that someone has made a mistake. The companion assents to Socrates' assertions without really being persuaded (316b).

At this point, Socrates changes tactics. The dialogue will eventually end with a riddle designed to reduce the companion to *aporia.* The riddle will be based on a play on words that Socrates now introduces out of the blue (317d) by saying: "In this matter, we must still deal with the following question: who understands how to apportion (*dianeimai*) seeds upon the earth?" Instead of demanding—as would be perfectly reasonable—what earthly connection this question has with anything previously said, the companion meekly provides the right answer, "a farmer." He then finds himself trapped in a bewildering exchange in which laws (*nomoi*) are transformed into "allocations" because of the word's etymological association with the verb *nemein* (to distribute) and cognates like *dianomê* (allocation). The farmer is, indeed, a good distributor (*nomeus)* and his laws (*nomoi*) and allocations (*dianomai*) are correct. A musician is a good distributor (*nomeus*) of sounds, knowing how to allocate (*neimai*) good ones and his laws or melodies (*nomoi)* are correct.[6] The functions of physical trainers and shepherds are subjected to the same kind of analysis. It suddenly appears that "distribution" lies at the heart of every endeavor.

At the end of the dialogue, Socrates recapitulates these points. Trainers, he says, allocate food and exercise and a shepherd distributes or grazes (*nemein*) his flock, but what do great kings and lawgivers distribute (*dianemein*) to improve the souls of their human flock (321d)? The answer that he wants is provided in the *Laws* (714a), the passage previously cited as illustrating a synthesis between obedience and independent judgment. There law is described as the distribution (*dianomê*) of *nous,* intellect or reason. In the *Minos,* however, Socrates' companion cannot even hazard a guess what good legislators distribute. The dialogue ends with his *aporia.* He is unable to grasp the idea that genuine lawfulness means governing oneself—or being governed—by reason.

Socrates, however, does not proceed directly from creating a connection between *nomos* and *nemein* to the climatic riddle. Instead, he digresses, asking which ancient ruler would provide the best example of a successful legislator. It must be someone whose laws have stood the test of time. He then answers his own question, overriding his companion's nominee, Lycurgus, with the even more ancient Minos.

As the *Laws* shows, Plato's attitude towards ancient wisdom is ambivalent. Moderation dictates that one give the benefit of the doubt to judgments of

[6] *Nomos* has the secondary meaning of song or melody.

the past. On the other hand, true lawfulness requires rational criticism to separate the mistakes of the past from its discoveries. Uncritical veneration for the past based on myths of divine revelation is no better than blind submission to the party in power. The digression on Minos makes this point by means of parody.

When Socrates nominates Minos as an exemplary ruler, his companion asks why Minos is thought to have been wicked. After having rebuked him for a very brief "speech" just moments before, Socrates replies with a considerably longer and less plausible one (318c–321b). In it, he pretends to prove Minos's excellence as a lawgiver with the improbable interpretation of *Odyssey* 19.179 (319de discussed above). The real point here is that ancient poetry can "prove" anything. Socrates' companion finds nothing to question, however. His only nagging doubt stems from Minos's bad reputation.

Socrates' explanation of that turns on a historical "fact" that he invents for the occasion, the existence of tragedy in Athens centuries before Thespis and Phrynichus (321a). Prehistoric Athenian tragedians falsely depicted Minos as an evil king because of his injury to their native land in the form of "those tributes he forces us to pay." Those tributes, as everyone knows, consisted of the periodic sacrifice of youths and maidens to the Minotaur.[7] If nothing else in Socrates' praise of Minos has given the reader pause, this should. Minos himself, it seems, authorized human sacrifice. Hence his rough treatment by Athens' bronze-age tragedians. But that also clearly implies that Minos was an unenlightened ruler, at least in regard to human sacrifice. Zeus should have said something.

None of the absurdities in Socrates' speech troubles his companion. His only comment is, "You seem to me, O Socrates, to have given a reasonable account (321b)." He is as credulous as his counterpart in the *Hipparchus* is skeptical, and this characterization is part of the *Minos*'s message. True lawfulness requires critical intelligence. Mere acquiescence leaves one with absurd beliefs and no notion of one's own good.

[7] This is a point misunderstood by Souilhé 80. He believes that the author of the dialogue was an historical rationalizer who did not think that Minos's tribute involved human sacrifice. To illustrate that school of thought, he cites a fragment of an Aristotelian constitutional work quoted by Plutarch (*Theseus* 16). In it, the Athenian youths taken to Knossus grow old there working in menial positions. There is, however, no indication in the *Minos* that anything other than the standard sacrifice is meant by the phrase "those tributes." Even after rationalized versions of the story circulated, the original would be the one understood by default, in the absence of explicit revision. Besides, Socrates' story demands that the tributes be extremely harsh because their harshness supposedly explains the unremitting, centuries-long hostility to Minos by Athenian tragedians. The deaths of youths sent to Minos is mentioned specifically in the *Laws* (706c).

Socrates' companion in the *Hipparchus* is angry from the outset, annoyed by what he calls *to philokerdes*. The term, which means "love of profit," is used in an expansive sense by Plato to cover the love of all material possessions (e.g. *Rep.* 518b) and thus corresponds to "greed" in some contexts. Socrates' companion is angered by the *philokerdes* of others and then perplexed to find that he is unable to define the term to his own satisfaction. Instead of attributing this inability to ignorance, he accuses Socrates of tricking him.

He first tries to define greedy people as those who expect to profit from worthless things. Socrates points out that no one expects to profit from what they *know* to be worthless. Accordingly, greed must be a form of ignorance. This displeases his companion who is sure that the greedy are *knowingly* vicious. He redefines greed as being *too* eager for profits (226d). Socrates, however, points out that profits are good by definition since they are the opposite of losses, which are necessarily bad. Everyone is eager for all good things (227c). If greed is eagerness for good things, it is no vice. The companion then tries to argue that some profits may be bad (230a), but he finds that he cannot do so without contradiction (231b). Profit is by definition good and everyone wants as much of the good as possible. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with greed. The companion still feels deceived. He says that he is forced to accept the argument, but he is not persuaded by it (232b).

What eludes Socrates' companion is the Hesiodic wisdom cited by the Athenian stranger in the *Laws* (690e—691a), that half is often greater than the whole. He seems close to realizing this at 231a where he considers the example of a free feast that makes a person sick. He would not consider that profitable because it provides no benefit. On the other hand, an exchange of gold and silver that leaves a person with possessions of greater monetary value would constitute profit. What he fails to see is the universal importance of *to metrion* (measure, moderation, proportionality), which is stressed in the passage mentioned above (*Laws* 691c). There, according to the Athenian stranger, "If you neglect *to metrion* and give excessively large sails to smaller ships, excessive nourishment to smaller bodies, excessive authority to smaller souls, everything is ruined, swells up, and rushes into diseases or injustice, the child of arrogance." Beneficial things are beneficial only in the correct amounts. A feast does not have to make a person violently ill to constitute a loss. Any food consumed in excess of the perfect amount is a loss. The same principle applies to money. The acquisition of wealth is profitable only to the extent that it makes a person better. Half is often greater than the whole. Like too much power, too much money makes a soul disorderly and is therefore a loss.

It is ironic that Socrates' companion is angry about greed. As his responses show, he himself has no understanding of moderation. He believes that the

maximum amount of any good thing is necessarily desirable. As Socrates says at the end of the dialogue, a person who rebukes another for being greedy while desiring all good things is himself greedy. The fact that he is angry at greed exemplifies the Athenian stranger's remark in the *Laws* (716c) that immoderation is hostile even to itself.

Socrates could perhaps have relieved his companion's perplexity by introducing the notion of *to metrion*. There is therefore a sense in which Socrates is tricking him. When the companion accuses him, however, Socrates denies the charge by way of elaborate, seemingly irrelevant comments about the Pisistratid Hipparchus. The digression is the mirror image of the one in the *Minos*, offering ostensible praise while subtly depicting a mental defect. In the *Hipparchus*, the defect is a lack of moderation through excessive esteem for one's own wisdom.

Since the only thing we learn about Socrates' companion is that he is an Athenian, it is reasonable to suppose that his ignorance of moderation is characteristic of Athenians generally (with the exception of the *Laws*'s Athenian stranger, of course). The actual relevance of the digression is to suggest the origin of the young man's own immoderation and that of his fellow citizens. The seeds, it seems, were planted before the Persian Wars.

Socrates explains that he would not trick his companion because that would involve disobeying a "wise and good man," their fellow citizen, Hipparchus. The latter, he says,

> Was the eldest and wisest of Pisistratus's sons. Among his many fair deeds of wisdom, he first brought Homer's verses into this land and compelled the rhapsodes at the Panathenaea to go through them in order, taking turns, as they still do at the present time. He dispatched a 50-oared vessel to bring Anacreon of Teos to the city and kept Simonides of Ceos always at hand, winning him over with fees and gifts. He did all that to educate his citizens, so that he might govern them at their best. Being a gentleman, he thought it wrong to begrudge wisdom to anyone.
>
> When the city-dwellers had been educated and were marveling at Hipparchus's wisdom, he wanted to educate the country folk as well. So he erected herms for them along the roads midway between the city and each of the townships. Selecting the highlights of his wisdom, all that he had learned from others or discovered for himself, and stretching these out into elegiac verses, he inscribed them as his own poems and proofs of his wisdom (on the herms) in order that his fellow citizens would no longer marvel at the wise inscriptions of Delphi, e.g. "Know thyself" and "Nothing in excess" and so forth, but rather consider the sayings of Hipparchus wise. He intended that after traveling here and there, reading the herms and getting a taste of his wisdom, they would come out of the fields to complete their educations.

> There were two inscriptions (on each herm). On the left side, Hermes is represented as saying that he stands at the midway point between the city and the deme. On the right side, however, he says (for example):
>
> "This is Hipparchus's monument: walk thinking just thoughts."
>
> In fact, there are many other lovely poems inscribed on the other herms. Among them, there is this inscription on the Stiria road:
>
> "This is Hipparchus's monument: do not deceive a friend."
>
> Thus, since you are my friend, I would certainly not dare to trick you and distrust such a man as that (228b–29b).[8]

The use of the proverb, "Do not deceive a friend," as the epitome of Hipparchus's wisdom hints at the irony of Socrates' praise. Points made emphatically by him in the *Republic* put the proverb in a bad light, especially if one considers its corollary that it is permissible to deceive non-friends. In the *Republic*, Polemarchus tries to define justice as helping one's friends and hurting one's enemies (332ab), but he is brought around to seeing that a truly just man would not injure anyone (335e). Hence if deception is equated with injury, one should never deceive anyone, friend or foe. In the *Republic*, however, Socrates goes on to show that it is sometimes good for those with superior knowledge to deceive friends (331c), and he later recommends the use of "royal lies" by the rulers of his ideal state (414bc, 449c). Xenophon (*Mem.* 4.2.17) also attributes the doctrine of justified lying to Socrates. To anyone familiar with Socrates' teachings, Hipparchus's motto is simplistic at best.

Socrates says that Hipparchus wanted his sayings to supersede Delphi's (228e). That means that he abandoned the collaboration of the human and the divine for purely mortal wisdom. One example of Delphic wisdom to be superseded is "Nothing in excess." Hipparchus thus opened the door to immoderation. We are told in this regard that Simonides was one of the poets brought to Athens to educate the citizens and that Hipparchus induced him to stay by giving him great gifts and fees (228c). The remark is a reminder of Simonides' notorious love of profit.[9] The educational effect of his example, if not his poetry, would inevitably be to instill his *philokerdes* in the hearts of the Athenians.

That Hipparchus thought it wrong to "begrudge wisdom to anyone" is an indication of his democratic inclinations and hints at a connection between democratic equality and immoderation. In the *Laws* (757c), the Athenian stranger distinguishes two kinds of equality. The first consists simply of distributing equal benefits by size and weight. The second and superior method

[8] All translations are my own.

[9] Cf. Aristophanes' *Peace* 695 with scholia. For other evidence of Simonides' reputation for greed, see Campbell 1991: Simonides Testimonia 3, 22, 23, Apophthegms 47d,e,f,g.

"allocates large benefits to the greater recipient, and smaller ones to the lesser, giving the fitting (metrion) amount to each according to their nature." Hipparchus's fostering of the simplistic model of equality is a precursor of its prevalence in democratic Athens and another way in which his influence undermined the ideal of moderation.

The other maxim that Hipparchus sought to displace is "Know thyself," which lies at the heart of Delphic wisdom. The *Philebus* (48c–49a) contains a marvelous exposition of it. There Socrates says that there are three ways in which people most often fail to know themselves: they think that they have more money than they do (a very common failing!); they consider themselves better looking than they are; and they consider themselves more virtuous than they are. Among the virtues, people most often lay claim to more wisdom than they have. Such ignorance leads them to fail by overestimating their own abilities. The same point is made by Xenophon's Socrates (*Mem.* 4.2.25).

Danger always arises from overestimating. The opposite problem, foolishly refraining from action because of excessive modesty, is never mentioned. Plato's spokesmen never seem worried about low self-esteem. That is clear in the *Laws* (731e) where the Athenian stranger discusses self-love:

> The cause of all mistakes for every person on every occasion is the excessive love of the self. The lover is blinded concerning the beloved so that he judges the just, the good, and the fair badly, believing that he must always honor what belongs to himself ahead of the truth. In fact, it is necessary for one who is going to become a great man not to love himself or his own accomplishments but things that are just whether done by himself or by another.

"Know thyself" is an injunction against self-infatuation: "be objective about yourself."

Hipparchus's herms are depicted as antithetical to self-knowledge. They perfectly embody the shortcomings of written wisdom spelled out in the *Phaedrus*. There Socrates maintains that true education occurs in interpersonal relationships, in a spoken dialogue where the teacher crafts his words to suit the needs of the student and explains his doctrines by answering all the student's questions (276a). Neither texts nor inscriptions do that. They have the appearance of wisdom but lack the reality. The herms are a case in point. They are designed precisely to create the appearance of wisdom. They seem to be talking to you, but try asking one a question. Hipparchus even appropriated the sayings of others and presented them as his own in order to enhance his reputation for wisdom. He clearly fell prey to excessive self-love, honoring his own accomplishments before the truth.

Viewed in isolation, Hipparchus's defects seem innocuous. Socrates, however, depicts him as a tyrant determined to influence as many of his fellow

citizens as he could. We read in the *Laws* that a tyrant is in fact in the best position to transform the character of the state (711b):

> It does not require labor or any time to speak of for the tyrant who wishes to transform the character of his city. It is just necessary for him to go first in whatever direction he wishes to guide the citizens whether in the practice of virtue or the opposite, outlining everything for them first by his own action.

What seemed to be praise of Hipparchus was just the opposite. He was a victim of excessive self-love, valuing the honors given to his own wisdom ahead of truth. As a tyrant, he was a model for his fellow citizens, leading them down the garden path. When Socrates remarks that after reading a selection of Hipparchus's aphorisms, residents of the countryside would come to the city "to complete their educations" (228e: *kai epi ta loipa paideuthêsomenoi*), the irony becomes particularly marked. Clearly, the effect of Hipparchus's educational program was not the cultivation of true wisdom by the Athenians but the reverse. Hipparchus gained an undeserved reputation for wisdom while his fellow citizens began to think of themselves as intellectual cynosures because they could quote a few lines of poetry.

Socrates describes Hipparchus as the eldest Pisistratid and Pisistratus's successor (228b). That he thus contradicts Thucydides' carefully argued position (6.55) without explanation suggests that he is adopting an air of playful carelessness towards historical detail. For the story he wants to tell, it is simpler to call Hipparchus the eldest brother and a tyrant in his own right. Socrates picks the version that best suits his thematic purposes. Furthermore, he seems to have invented the motive for Hipparchus's murder out of whole cloth (229cd). Thucydides' version is strange in its own way, but readers are inclined to believe his story precisely because of its oddness and because Thucydides had no obvious reason to make it up. In Socrates' version, Hipparchus, Aristogeiton, and Harmodius all take pride in educating youths and cultivate reputations for wisdom. Harmodius and Aristogeiton murder Hipparchus for alienating the affections of Harmodius's prize pupil. This is exactly the kind of story that Socrates would make up. Hipparchus, the sophist, bears a strong family resemblance to Zeus the sophist. The assertion that Hipparchus was killed in a conflict over a student is another indication of immoderation on his part. The situation brings to mind the discord of the Dorian kingdoms in the *Laws* (690e–91a). In fact, sophists fighting over pupils is an even better example of great stupidity masquerading as wisdom.

A picture of the *Laws*'s ideal, thoughtful but pious citizen emerges by contrast with the intellectual faults skewered in the *Minos* and the *Hipparchus*. Unlike Socrates' companion in the *Minos*, genuinely just citizens view laws primarily as theoretical formulations to be understood and only secondarily

as prescriptions to obey. Their judgments are restrained by respect for the past and for authority as well as by a modest estimate of their own wisdom. Unlike Hipparchus and Athenians generally, they do not think of themselves as omniscient or strive for glory by showing up the past.

In a remarkable passage in book ten of the *Laws*, we learn that this form of intellectual moderation is to be enforced by the laws of Magnesia at least in one area: atheism. The Athenian maintains that the arguments for theism are decisive but beyond the comprehension of many citizens. The arguments are like a swift river fordable only by the strong, experienced traveler (892d–93a). For others, the contrary arguments have some plausibility. Hence atheism needs to be opposed not only by argument but also by force. Secret atheists using impious means to achieve their selfish ends are apparently punished, when detected, by life imprisonment (909bc). Sincere skeptics are re-educated for at least five years in the *sophronistêrion* or "moderation tank,"[10] (908a, 909a), an allusion to Aristophanes' *phrontistêrion*, his "thinkery" (*Clouds* 94). The august nocturnal council of theologians is in charge of their rehabilitation. If they are cured at the end of their treatment, they rejoin the community of the "moderate"; otherwise, they are killed!

It is hard to believe that Plato is being completely serious here, especially in view of his allusion to Aristophanes. At times, it seems, his spokesmen carry things to absurd lengths, as if to challenge the reader to answer the question "Why not?" Still, Plato does seem to think that some deleterious theories, epitomized by atheism, should not be tolerated in a well-governed society. Aware of cities like Athens where sophistry in a bad sense flourished and others like Sparta that were intellectually arid, he imagined a happy medium: a state whose citizens would be inquisitive intellectuals, thinking for themselves, but only within proper limits. The ideal verges on the utopian, raising the question of whether it is, in fact, possible, to promote thinking in moderation. The project seems to run up against basic limitations in human nature, rather like the Athenian's other idea that drinking parties could be so managed that they would foster modesty and restraint (671cd).

One's first impression of the *Minos* and the *Hipparchus* is that they are clumsy and abrupt, possibly the works of inferior imitators. If they are read carefully, in close conjunction with the *Laws*, they take on new life. They dramatize ideas that are central to the *Laws*, and each features an ironic digression as charming as anything in Plato's writing. Once raised, doubts about authenticity are nearly impossible to lay to rest. Whether genuine or not, the dialogues reward close reading and enhance one's appreciation of

[10] The translation suggested by Pangle 1976: 1072.

the *Laws*. Personally, I am inclined to see them as little gems shining in the twilight of Plato's career.

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