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Law and its Imitations in Plato's *Statesman*

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The concept of imitation plays a central role in many areas of Plato's philosophy. It does so, in particular, in the *Statesman*'s reflections on issues of philosophy of politics. In this dialogue, Plato identifies the art of the statesman, or statesmanship, with a highly specialized branch of knowledge. To this knowledge he attributes the highest authority in the state. He goes as far as to claim that only a regime based on statesmanship is a genuine constitution. To describe the relationship of present-day regimes, i.e. the regimes that have been realized until now, to the regime based on statesmanship, Plato resorts to the concept of imitation: present-day regimes imitate the regime based on statesmanship. However, he applies the concept of imitation not only to the relationship of present-day regimes to the regime based on statesmanship, but also to that of present-day politicians to the genuine statesman and to that of law to statesmanship: present-day politicians imitate the genuine statesman and laws imitate statesmanship.

These three applications of the concept of imitation are reciprocally connected. Plato explicitly argues that present-day politicians imitate the genuine statesman *because* present-day regimes (which are ruled by present-day politicians) imitate the genuine constitution (which is ruled by the genuine statesman). In this study I explore the possibility of crediting Plato with the further claim that present-day regimes imitate the genuine constitution *because* laws (on which present-day regimes rely) imitate statesmanship (on which the genuine constitution relies).

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1. *Present-day regimes as imitations*

In the *Statesman*, at 292A5-D1, the dialogue's main speakers, i.e. the Visitor and Young Socrates, agree that the only criterion for deciding whether a regime is 'correct', i.e. whether it is a genuine constitution, is its reliance on the specific form of knowledge which is statesmanship, the statesman's knowledge. Thus, the only genuine constitution is the regime that relies on statesmanship. The Visitor adds:

T1 ΞΕ. ὅσας δ' ἄλλας λέγομεν, οὐ γνησίας οὐδ' ὄντως οὔσας λεκτέον, ἀλλὰ μεμιμημένας ταύτην, ἃς μὲν ὡς εὐνόμους λέγομεν, ἐπὶ τὰ καλλίω, τὰς δὲ ἄλλας ἐπὶ τὰ αἰσχίονα [μεμιμῆσθαι][1]. 293E3 E5 293E6

VIS. As for all the others that we say ‹are constitutions›, one must say that they ‹are› not genuine nor really being ‹constitutions›[2], but imitating this one [*sc.* the regime based on statesmanship], those we speak of as well-governed[3] for the better, the others for the worse (Pl. *Plt.* 293E3-6).

The Visitor returns later to the claims of T1 by saying that

T2 ΞΕ. ... τὰς δ' ἄλλας μιμήματα θετέον, ὥσπερ καὶ ὀλίγον πρότερον ἐρρήθη, τὰς μὲν ἐπὶ τὰ καλλίονα, τὰς δ' ἐπὶ τὰ αἰσχίω μιμουμένας ταύτην. 297C1 297C4

VIS. … the others we must put down as imitations, as was said a little earlier, some of them imitating this one for the better, others for the worse (Pl. *Plt.* 297C1-4).

The only variation between the two passages worth highlighting is that in T2 the noun 'imitation' ('μίμημα', 297C2) occurs while T1 contains a form of the verb 'to imitate' ('μιμεῖσθαι', 293E4) at the corresponding point (the imitations, not their authors, are described as 'imitating').

[1] I adopt Stallbaum's expunction of 'μεμιμῆσθαι', accepted also by Burnet, which avoids a change of construction in the middle of the sentence: cf. Stallbaum 1841: 268-269; Burnet 1900-07, *ad loc.*

[2] On the basis of the 'πολιτείαν εἶναι ῥητέον' in the immediately preceding line (293E2), I supply two occurrences of 'πολιτείας εἶναι' after the two occurrences of forms of 'λέγειν' at E3 and E4.

[3] The expressions 'εὔνομος' and 'εὐνομία' are employed both in cases where good laws are present and in cases where the quality of being law-abiding is displayed: cf. Ast 1835-38, *s.v.* 'εὐνομία' and 'εὔνομος' (I 853-54) (for the second use, cf. *R.* 4. 425A3; *Sph.* 216B3; *Lg.* 2. 656C5). The English 'well-governed' has a similar extension.

2. *What sort of 'imitations' are present-day regimes?*

The Visitor does not justify his rather counter-intuitive claim that present-day regimes 'imitate' the genuine constitution. There are two possible reconstructions of his grounds for making this claim.

According to the first reconstruction, the Visitor relies on an 'ontological' use of 'to imitate' ('μιμεῖσθαι'), a use that does not involve any sort of intentionality: the idea he intends to convey by using a form of 'to imitate φ', the Visitor could also convey by using the corresponding form of 'to be a downgraded form of φ' or 'to be a surrogate of φ' (where 'φ' is a schematic letter that may be replaced with any grammatically suitable expression)[4]. According to the first reconstruction, the Visitor's reason for claiming that present-day regimes imitate the genuine constitution is the following: the only genuine constitution is the government based on statesmanship; present-day regimes are not genuine constitutions because they are not based on statesmanship; therefore, they are downgraded forms of the genuine constitution; hence, they imitate the genuine constitution. This first reconstruction has a weak spot: the argument it attributes to the Visitor is invalid because the claim that present-day regimes are downgraded forms of the genuine constitution does not follow logically from the claim that they are not genuine constitutions (many things are not genuine constitutions without being downgraded forms of the genuine constitution).

According to the second reconstruction of the Visitor's grounds for claiming that present-day regimes 'imitate' the genuine constitution, the Visitor relies on an 'intentionally loaded' use of 'to imitate' ('μιμεῖσθαι'): the idea he intends to convey by using a form of 'to imitate φ', the Visitor could also convey by using the corresponding form of 'to appear to be φ without being φ' or 'to instil the illusion of being φ' (this use of the verb is intentionally loaded because of the intentionality involved in the concept of appearance)[5]. According to the second reconstruction, the Visitor's reason

[4] Cf. Hirsch 1995- 185; Pradeau 2009: 114. An ontological use of expressions linked to 'μιμεῖσθαι' is perhaps attested in the *Statesman*'s myth: cf. 273E12; 274A2; 274D7. In some cases, imitations not only do not involve viewers, but they even actually are what they imitate (cf. Marušič 2011: 222-223). For instance, in Euripides' *Electra* Clytemnestra justifies her betrayal of Agamemnon by saying that 'whenever a husband goes astray by rejecting his marriage-bed at home, the woman is likely to imitate [μιμεῖσθαι] her husband and acquire another lover' (E. *El.* 1036-38): the imitation Clytemnestra is speaking about is not aimed at a viewer and actually is what it imitates (the wife imitates her husband who is betraying her by actually committing a betrayal).

[5] For the connection between imitating and appearing, cf. *R.* 10. 601A4-B2; *Sph.* 267A6-8. In the *Sophist* (at 234C5-6) the Visitor says that the 'images [εἴδωλα]' (234C5) of true statements

for claiming that present-day regimes imitate the genuine constitution is the following: the only genuine constitution is the regime based on statesmanship; present-day regimes are not constitutions because they are not based on statesmanship; however, they appear to be constitutions (this is shown, among other things, by the fact that 'we say' that they 'are constitutions', 293E3 – later I shall examine a further justification of the claim that present-day regimes appear to be constitutions); therefore, present-day regimes imitate genuine constitutions[6]. An analogous argument could be developed with reference to suitably shaped and polished pieces of glass: the only genuine diamonds are the bodies that have such-and-such a chemical structure; suitably shaped and polished pieces of glass are not diamonds because they do not have such-and-such a chemical structure; but they appear to be diamonds (this is the reason why they are often worn); therefore, they imitate genuine diamonds. This second reconstruction also has a weak spot: one of the premisses of the argument it brings up (specifically, the premiss to the effect that present-day regimes appear to be genuine constitutions) does not occur explicitly in passages T1 and T2.

It is difficult to choose between these two reconstructions of the Visitor's grounds for claiming that present-day regimes imitate the genuine constitution. The main difference between them is that the second reconstruction attributes a role to the concept of appearance whereas the first ignores it. Now, the concept of appearance is operative shortly before T1 (the participle 'δοκοῦντας', 'seeming', is applied to rulers at 293C8, only 12 lines before T1). Moreover, the concept of appearance is relevant to the broad context of passages T1 and T2. For, these passages are bits of an extended argument whose aim is to establish that the present-day politician is 'the greatest beguiler of all the sophists and the most expert in their art' (291C3-4)[7]. But, the sophist's art is the art of appearing to have knowledge without having it. Thus, a reconstruction of the Visitor's position that attributes a role to the concept of appearance is more plausible than one that

produced by the sophist lead certain inexperienced youths to 'judge [δοκεῖν] that truths are being stated' (234C6). The verb 'δοκέω', which here means 'to judge', can also mean 'to seem' (cf. LSJ *s.v.* 'δοκέω' I and II). This suggests that the inexperienced youths *judge* that truths are being stated in that it *seems* to them that truths are being stated. In the *Sophist*, the verbs 'φαίνεσθαι' and 'δοκεῖν' are used as equivalent variants (cf. below, n. 51 and text thereto), and there is no reason to doubt that their equivalence holds also in the *Statesman*.

[6] I am not making the (false) claim that 'to imitate φ' has 'to appear to be φ without being φ' as one of its lexical meanings. I am making the weaker claim that 'to imitate φ' can be used to convey the idea that could be more properly expressed by using 'to appear to be φ without being φ'.

[7] Cf. 303C4-5.

ignores it. For these reasons, I choose the second reconstruction of the Visitor's grounds for claiming that present-day regimes imitate the genuine constitution: the Visitor's reason for making this claim has to do with the fact that present-day regimes appear to be constitutions while they are not constitutions.

Whichever of the two reconstructions one favours, the arguments that they attribute to the Visitor share an important trait. In both arguments, those who rule over present-day regimes rule over what are in fact imitations of the genuine constitution. However, neither argument requires that these rulers themselves take what they rule over to be imitations of the genuine constitution: as far as the arguments are concerned, the possibility remains open that those who rule over kingships, tyrannies, etc. regard them (wrongly) as genuine constitutions. To view the matter from a different angle, in the arguments attributed to the Visitor by the two reconstructions, present-day regimes are called 'imitations' because they themselves 'imitate' something, but they are not called 'imitations' because the human beings who promote and support them intentionally bring it about that they 'imitate' that something.

3. *Better and worse imitations*

In passages T1 and T2 the Visitor makes two claims: first, that all present-day regimes imitate the genuine constitution; secondly, that some present-day regimes imitate the genuine constitution for the better whereas others imitate it for the worse. The Visitor endeavours to explain or justity the second claim. He begins by saying:

T3 ΞΕ. ... ὀρθῆς ἡμῖν μόνης οὔσης ταύτης τῆς πολιτείας ἣν εἰρήκαμεν, οἶσθ' ὅτι τὰς ἄλλας δεῖ τοῖς ταύτης συγγράμμασι χρωμένας οὕτω σῴζεσθαι, δρώσας τὸ νῦν ἐπαινούμενον, καίπερ οὐκ ὀρθότατον ὄν; 297D5–D8

VIS. … given that in our view the only correct constitution is the one we have spoken about [*sc.* the one whose government is based on the statesman's knowledge, cf. 293C5-8], are you aware that the others [*sc.* regimes that are not the genuine one] must save themselves by using the written rules of this one [*sc.* the genuine constitution], by doing what is now praised, although it is not the most correct thing? (Pl. *Plt.* 297D5-8)

He immediately goes on to explain what 'what is now praised' (297D7) is:

T4 ΞΕ. Τὸ παρὰ τοὺς νόμους μηδὲν μηδένα τολμᾶν ποιεῖν 297E1
τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει ... 297E2

VIS. That nobody in the state should dare to do anything contrary to the laws ... (Pl. *Plt.* 297E1–2)

It remains unclear what the 'written rules' (297D6) of the genuine constitution are. Earlier passages in the dialogue open up two possibilities. First, the written rules of the genuine constitution could be the laws which a statesman is obliged to issue for pragmatic reasons, namely because it is pragmatically impossible for him to evaluate and decide on the indefinitely many particular cases that could turn up (cf. 294C10-295B6). Secondly, they could be the laws which a statesman who anticipates being away for a long time has written down as reminders for his subjects (cf. 295B7-296A4). In fact, these need not be two distinct alternatives: for, the temporarily absent statesman who leaves written laws as reminders for his subjects during his absence could be a sort of 'enlargement' of the statesman who cannot pragmatically follow all the indefinitely many and varied cases that come up and therefore issues laws that will take care of the cases he cannot attend to. In this case, the laws which a statesman who anticipates being away has written down as reminders would coincide with the laws which a statesman is obliged to issue for pragmatic reasons.

4. *Mistrust of politicians*

The Visitor and Young Socrates continue their explanation of the claim that some present-day regimes imitate the genuine constitution for the better whereas others imitate it for the worse by developing (297E8-302B4) an elaborate analogy with an imaginary situation involving 'the likenesses [εἰκόνες] to which one must always compare the kingly rulers' (297E8-9), namely a steersman and a doctor[8]. It is a sort of thought-experiment where a situation is imagined in which progressively tighter restrictions are imposed on medicine and steersmanship. The restrictions are introduced in four stages.

[8] A steersman was already mentioned at 296E4-297A2, doctors at 293B1-C3, 295B10-E2, and 296B5-C3.

The first stage (297E11-298E4) is about the origin and the application of rules that codify artistic practice. Imagine a situation where someone is an exceptionally skilled doctor but the majority think that he is doing terrible things to them (I concentrate on the case of the doctor, that of the steersman is parallel): the majority think that this doctor saves only the ones he wishes to save, that he harms them for fees that he then spends not for his patients but for himself and for his own household, etc. Since the majority think this, they decide to convene a council that comprises either all the population or only the rich and contains individuals of all sorts – in particular, it does not contain only doctors but also laymen in medicine. This council issues rules about medical matters. Once these rules have been issued, they are engraved in stone and all medical practice is expected to be carried out in accordance with them. The rules have their origin in the agreement between the members of the council; but once they have been chosen, they have supreme authority. Young Socrates remarks (298E4) that such a situation would be 'very strange'.

In the second stage (298E5-10) officers that belong either to the mass of the whole population or to the group of the rich are chosen annually and are required to carry out medical practice in accordance with the written rules. The officers are chosen by lot, so there is no guarantee that they will have any medical competence. Young Socrates notes (298E10) that a situation of this sort would be 'even harder to take'.

The third stage (298E11-299B1) introduces a mechanism to examine the behaviour of the officers. At the end of each officer's yearly mandate, a court is set up whose members are either elected or chosen by lot. Thus, the judges in this court do not in general include medical experts. They are expected to examine whether the officers have operated according to the written rules. Penalties or fines may be imposed on those who are found not to have followed the rules. Young Socrates observes (299A8-B1) that whoever willingly accepted to operate as an officer in the circumstances described deserves whatever punishment is imposed on him.

In the fourth stage (299B2-E10) an additional law is introduced that forbids original and independent medical research. If anyone were to conduct research of this sort, he would not be called a doctor but a 'stargazer' and a 'babbling sophist'. Anyone would have the right to indict him and bring him before a court as corrupting the young and inducing them to practice medicine not in accordance with the laws, and if he were found guilty then the most extreme penalties would be imposed on him. The same holds for all other arts and disciplines. Young Socrates

comments (299E6-10) that in such a situation the arts would 'be completely destroyed'.

The expressions 'stargazer' ('μετεωρολόγος', 299B7) and 'babbling sophist' ('ἀδολέσχης τις σοφιστής', 299B8) make of this passage an unmistakeable allusion to the vicissitudes of (the elder) Socrates, who was attacked by means of expressions of this sort in comedy[9] and by the general public[10]. The allusion is confirmed by the mention of an indictment for corrupting young people: Socrates was indicted for corrupting the young and for not believing in the gods of the city[11]. Similar allusions occur elsewhere in Plato's dialogues[12]. However, the *Statesman*'s allusion has a novel aspect: it suggests that Socrates' condemnation by the Athenian democracy was not the result of unfortunate chance; rather, it derived from a fundamental and unavoidable incompatibility between Socrates' genuinely philosophical thought and present-day states[13].

The thought-experiment concerning medicine helps to explain the origin of laws and the way in which they are applied in present-day regimes. The citizens of present-day regimes believe that there could never be a ruler who combined the knowledge of political matters with the moral qualities that would refrain him from exercising his absolute and unchecked power for corrupt and malevolent ends (cf. 301C6-E5). A passage in Herodotus' *Histories* (3. 80) bears witness to this mistrust because it criticises monarchic rule by pointing out that if absolute power were given even to 'the best man on earth', it would corrupt him and breed arrogance. Plato himself seems in fact to share this mistrust. For, in the *Statesman* he is elusive about whether any genuine statesman actually exists or could exist[14], and in the *Laws* (9. 874E8-875D5) he is pessimistic about the possibility of any such figure ever arising (he indicates that the weakness of human nature would unavoidably entail features such as the ones feared by most people). Their mistrust of rulers prompts the citizens of present-day regimes to set up a council that consists either of the people all together or only of the rich and is supposed to issue laws, which then acquire supreme authority. Thus, laws have their origin in the agreement

[9] Cf. Ar. *Nu.* 228-230; 359-360; 1480; 1485; fr. 490 Kock; Eup. fr. 352 Kock.

[10] Cf. *Ap.* 18B7-C1; 19C2-5; 23D6-7; X. *Oec.* 11.3; *Smp.* 6.6.

[11] Cf. *Euthphr.* 2C3-3A5; *Ap.* 24B8-C1.

[12] Cf. *Phd.* 70C1-2; *Phdr.* 269E4-270A1; *R.* 6. 488E4-489A1; *Prm.* 135D3-6; *Tht.* 195B9-C4; *Sph.* 225D7-11.

[13] Cf. El Murr 2014: 249-250.

[14] Cf. Rowe 2005: 236.

between the members of the council; but once they have been issued, they have supreme authority. This account of the origin and use of laws corresponds to the first stage of the Visitor's thought-experiment[15].

In *Republic* 2 (358E3-359B5) Glaucon offers a different account of the origin of law: to inflict injustice is naturally good whereas to suffer it is naturally bad; people are unable to inflict injustice without suffering it; since the badness that comes from suffering injustice exceeds the goodness that derives from inflicting it, people conclude that it is profitable to create laws, which prevent them both from inflicting and from suffering injustice. Neither the account of the origin of law in the *Republic* nor that in the *Statesman* is to be taken as a serious attempt to offer a historically plausible reconstruction. Rather, both accounts are imaginary stories whose purpose is to clarify certain aspects of conceptions of law that the two dialogues are examining.

5. *Ignorant politicians who flout the laws*

After describing the disastrous consequences of a legal straight-jacket imposed on the arts, the Visitor and Young Socrates consider an even worse development (300A1-E3). Suppose that the officers who must exercise the arts by applying the written rules or the judges who must assess the officers' conduct were to take no notice of the written rules, either for their own profit or to do personal favours. Such a situation would be even worse than the one where the rules are respected. What corresponds to this in the case of politics is a regime whose rulers not only are ignorant in that they do not have the special form of knowledge that is statesmanship, but also take no notice of the written rules and customs and thereby put themselves above the law (and in this respect resemble the genuine statesman, whose knowledge puts him in a position to modify the laws he himself has issued)[16].

In passage T1, the Visitor remarked that 'one must say that they [*sc.* pre-

[15] Cf. El Murr 2014: 248-249.

[16] According to Griswold 1989: 156, the rulers of the degenerate case are ignorant not only because they do not have the special form of knowledge that is statesmanship, but also because they ignore that they are thus ignorant. As far as I can see, this is not required by argument in the relevant portion of the text: the rulers of the degenerate case could well be in bad faith in that they are aware of their own ignorance of statesmanship but consciously pretend to be competent in it.

sent-day regimes] ‹are› not genuine nor really being ‹constitutions›, but imitating this one [*sc.* the genuine constitution], those we speak of as well-governed for the better, the others for the worse' (293E3-5). The expression 'the others' implies that every present-day regime imitates the genuine constitution either for the better or for the worse: there are no intermediate cases, no present-day regimes that imitate the genuine constitution neither for the better nor for the worse. In the development of his argument (in the long and elaborate analogy of 297E8-302B4), the Visitor states that present-day regimes whose ignorant rulers put themselves above the regime's written laws and its customs and take no account of them imitate the genuine constitution 'utterly badly [παγκάκως]' (300E1). Degenerate present-day regimes of this sort probably coincide with those that imitate the genuine constitution 'for the worse'. On the other hand, the Visitor also suggests that present-day regimes whose ignorant rulers respect the laws imitate the genuine constitution 'finely [καλῶς]' (301A1). Such law-abiding present-day regimes probably coincide with those that imitate the genuine constitution 'for the better'. Thus, all present-day regimes are merely imitations of the genuine constitution, namely the regime based on statesmanship whose rulers issue laws only for pragmatic reasons and are free to modify these laws. However, among these present-day regimes whose status is merely that of imitations, those where the rulers respect the laws are superior to those where the rulers take no notice of the laws in order to promote their own interest or that of their friends (even though the rulers who take no notice of the laws share a trait with genuine statesmen). The present-day regimes whose rulers respect the laws are probably those that imitate the genuine constitution for the better; present-day regimes whose ignorant rulers take no notice of the laws are probably those that imitate the genuine constitution for the worse.

6. *How can the written rules of the genuine constitution be accessed?*

The Visitor says that present-day regimes 'must save themselves by using the written rules of this one [*sc.* the genuine constitution]' (297D6-7). At a later stage of the discussion he remarks that some present-day regimes are governed according to

T5 ΞΕ. ... τοὺς νόμους τοὺς ἐκ πείρας 300B1
πολλῆς κειμένους καί τινων συμβούλων ἕκαστα
χαριέντως συμβουλευσάντων καὶ πεισάντων θέσθαι τὸ
πλῆθος ... 300B4

VIS. … the laws that have been established on the basis of much experiment, with some advisers having cleverly[17] given advice on each subject and having persuaded the majority to pass them … (Pl. *Plt.* 300B1-4)

And:

T6 ΞΕ. νῦν δέ γε ὁπότε οὐκ ἔστι γιγνόμενος, ὡς δή 301D8
φαμεν, ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι βασιλεὺς οἷος ἐν σμήνεσιν ἐμφύεται, 301E1
τό τε σῶμα εὐθὺς καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν διαφέρων εἷς, δεῖ δὴ
συνελθόντας συγγράμματα γράφειν, ὡς ἔοικεν, μεταθέον-
τας τὰ τῆς ἀληθεστάτης πολιτείας ἴχνη. 301E4

VIS. But in the present situation, when – as we say – kings are not born in cities like those in beehives, single individuals straightaway superior in body and mind, it is necessary – so it seems – for people to come together and write down written rules, running after the traces of the truest constitution (Pl. *Plt.* 301D8-E4).

'The laws that have been established on the basis of much experiment, with some advisers having cleverly given advice on each subject and having persuaded the majority to pass them' (300B1-4 = T5) are probably laws that ordinary legislators of present-day regimes find by 'running after the traces of the truest constitution' (301E3-4 < T6).

One might wonder how the Visitor can consistently claim that some of the laws promulgated by ordinary legislators are laws delivered by the specific form of knowledge that is statesmanship. Doesn't such an identification generate an inconsistency? After all, one of the main messages of the part of the *Statesman* to which passage T7 belongs is that ordinary legislators lack knowledge[18].

However, on reflection, the inconsistency evaporates. The laws in question are probably (not concrete inscriptions or events or states of stating or judging, but) prescriptive propositions[19] that are the contents of cognitive states (e.g. of states of judging or knowing), of speech-acts (e.g. events of stating), and of concrete inscriptions. Just as one and the same proposition can be known by Tim and at the same time judged but not known by Jim

[17] Cf. LSJ *s.v.* 'χαρίεις' III 1. The adverb could also be rendered by 'in an attractive way', in which case it would be indicating that the advisers presented the laws to their respective assemblies in a convincing way.

[18] Cf. Rowe 1995a: 16-17; Rowe 1999: XV.

[19] Prescriptive propositions are not acknowledged by mainstream modern philosophical logic but were accepted by ancient Stoic logic (cf. D.L. 7.67; S.E. *M.* 8.71).

and doubted by Frank, so also one and the same law, a prescriptive proposition, can be issued by knowledgeable statesmen and also be promulgated by ordinary legislators, who have discovered it 'on the basis of much experiment' (300B1-2) and have profited of the advice of some advisers who have also persuaded the majority. In some cases, ordinary legislators, on the basis of experience and some expert advice, happen to light on laws (prescriptive propositions) which are also delivered by statesmanship. When this happens, ordinary legislators of present-day regimes do not have knowledge of these laws because only genuine statesmen have knowledge about political matters and ordinary legislators of present-day states are not genuine statesmen. Just as ignorant individuals can make true judgements without having knowledge of what they truly judge, so also ordinary legislators of present-day regimes can find some of the best possible laws, i.e. some of the laws that a genuine statesman issues, or would issue, for pragmatic reasons, and they can do this without having the statesman's knowledge[20]. The parallel between the distinction between true judgement and knowledge, on the one hand, and the distinction between the laws found by regimes 'on the basis of much experiment, with some advisers having cleverly given advice on each subject and having persuaded the majority to pass them' (300B1-4), and the laws issued by a genuine statesman for pragmatic reasons, on the other, is confirmed by 301B2-3: here the Visitor refers to the genuine king, i.e. the statesman, and the king of a normal law-abiding monarchy by means of the phrase 'the one who rules on his own according to laws with knowledge or with judgement [τὸν μετ' ἐπιστήμης ἢ δόξης κατὰ νόμους μοναρχοῦντα]'. Thus, while the laws of the genuine king are issued on the basis of knowledge, the laws of the king of a normal law-abiding monarchy are issued on the basis not of knowledge but of mere judgement.

7. *The second application of the concept of imitation: laws*

In a difficult and variously interpreted passage, the Visitor mentions again the concept of imitation:

T7 ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν μιμήματα μὲν ἂν ἑκάστων ταῦτα εἴη τῆς ἀληθείας, τὰ παρὰ τῶν εἰδότων εἰς δύναμιν εἶναι γεγραμμένα; 300C5 300C7

[20] Cf. C. Gill 1995: 296; Hirsch 1995: 186; Palumbo 1995: 180; Márquez 2012: 277; El Murr 2014: 252-253.

VIS. Wouldn't[21] then these be imitations of the truth of each and every thing, things written down so far as possible by those who know? (Pl. *Plt.* 300C5-7)

Passage T7 raises several exegetical problems. I concentrate on two.

The first exegetical problem that I intend to discuss concerns the relationship between the expressions 'παρὰ τῶν εἰδότων' (300C6) and 'γεγραμμένα' (300C6-7). One possibility is that these two expressions could be reciprocally independent ('things issuing from those who know that have been written down so far as possible'); another possibility is that the first expression could be the complement of agent for the second ('things written down so far as possible by those who know'). Since in the presence of a verb in the passive a phrase consisting of 'παρά' followed by the genitive is most naturally understood as a complement of agent[22], the second solution is more likely[23]. In this case, the words 'εἰς δύναμιν εἶναι' (a single adverbial phrase[24], 'so far as possible') at 300C6 probably modify the whole of the rest of the phrase in which they are embedded: what is described as being the case 'so far as possible' is that the things in question should have been 'written down […] by those who know'[25]. Note that the extent to which the things in question have been 'written down […] by those who know' could well be minimal.

The second exegetical problem that I want to consider concerns the occurrence of 'these' ('ταῦτα') at 300C5. One possibility is that it could refer forward, so as to create an antecedent for the explication given in the

[21] For the use of an isolated 'μέν' in rhetorical questions, cf. LSJ *s.v.* 'μέν' A I 3. The combination of 'οὐκοῦν' with an isolated 'μέν' in a rhetorical question is common in Plato: cf. *Cra.* 407C6-7; *Tht.* 210B8-9; *Sph.* 265A4-5; *Plt.* 278C3-6; etc.

[22] Cf. LSJ *s.v.* 'παρά' A II 4; Smyth 1920, 371; Pl. *Phdr.* 245C1; *R.* 4. 499D5-6.

[23] Cf. Stallbaum 1841: 289; Giorgini 2005: 325.

[24] Cf. Stallbaum 1841: 289; Campbell 1867: *Plt.* 157; Rowe 1995a: 231.

[25] Had one chosen the first alternative, i.e. treating the expressions 'παρὰ τῶν εἰδότων' (300c6) and 'γεγραμμένα' (300c6-7) as reciprocally independent, the further problem would have arisen of deciding what the adverbial phrase 'εἰς δύναμιν εἶναι' modifies: it could have modified either 'παρὰ τῶν εἰδότων' ('those issuing so far as possible from those who know that have been written down') (cf. Skemp 1952: 209; Rowe 1995c: 27; Márquez 2012: 269, 279), or 'εἰδότων' ('those issuing from those who know so far as possible that have been written down') (cf. Fowler and Lamb 1925: 155; Lane 1995: 287), or 'γεγραμμένα' ('those issuing from those who know that have been written down so far as possible') (cf. Stallbaum 1841: 289; Jowett 1892: IV 504; Taylor 1961: 324; Warrington 1961: 280; Adorno 1988: I 945; Annas and Waterfield 1995: 68). Fraccaroli 1911: 308 takes the occurrence of 'εἰς δύναμιν εἶναι' at 300C6 to modify that of 'μιμήματα' at 300C5, but this is grammatically impossible. Teisserenc 2005: 377 takes 'εἰς δύναμιν' to modify 'εἶναι', but this is also grammatically impossible.

passage's second half ('These are the things that would be imitations … – namely things written down …')[26]; alternatively, it could refer backwards, so as to pick up the occurrence of 'laws and written rules' ('νόμους καὶ συγγράμματα') at 300C1-2, in the Visitor's remark that immediately precedes the one that constitutes T7[27]. In principle, the occurrence of 'these' ('ταῦτα') at 300C5 could refer forward; but the shortly preceding occurrence of 'these' ('ταῦτα') at 300C2 (cf. also its occurrence at 300B4) speaks in favour of the second alternative, according to which it refers backwards[28].

I thus take it that the claim made in passage T7 is that all laws of present-day regimes are 'imitations of the truth of each and every thing' (300C5-6). This claim seems to be presented as an inference (cf. the occurrence of 'then', 'οὐκοῦν', at 300C5), and the reason justifying this inference is probably given in T7's second half: the reason why all laws of present-day regimes have the status of 'imitations of the truth of each and every thing' (300C5-6) is that they are 'things written down so far as possible by those who know' (300C6-7). In the context of the argument of this part of the *Statesman*, a form of 'to imitate φ' may be plausibly taken to introduce an idea that could also be conveyed by the corresponding form of 'to appear to be φ without being φ' or 'to instil the illusion of being φ'[29]. It may therefore be plausibly inferred that passage T7 is providing some justification for the view that all laws of present-day regimes appear to be the truth without being the truth. Since the truth in question is probably the specific form of knowledge that is statesmanship (cf. 300D10)[30], the thesis put forward in passage T7 is probably that all laws of present-day regimes appear to be the specific form of knowledge that is statesmanship without being such a thing. The reason why they have this appearance is that they have some link with knowledge, in particular with statesmanship: for they are 'things written down so far as possible by those who know' (300C6-7), and this is because they have been found 'with some advisers having cleverly given advice' (300B2-3)[31]: in the extended analogy developed by the Visitor in the preceding pages, the 'advisers' who have given advice are the few knowledgeable experts who together with laymen form the committees that

[26] Cf. Rowe 1995a: 16-17, 230-231; Rowe 1995c: 26-27; Rowe 1997: 278-279; Rowe 1999: XV-XVI; Rowe 2001: 71-72; El Murr 2014: 253.

[27] Cf. Jowett 1892: IV 504; Fowler and Lamb 1925: 155; Annas and Waterfield 1995: 68.

[28] Teisserenc 2005: 378 also believes that 'these' ('ταῦτα') at 300C5 should refer backwards.

[29] Cf. above, nn. 5 and 7 and the paragraphs to which they are appended.

[30] Cf. Lane 1995: 287; Palumbo 1995: 181.

[31] Cf. Campbell 1867: *Plt.* 157.

issue the laws (cf. 297E11-298E4, esp. 298D5-7, where the Visitor speaks of 'some doctors and steersmen giving their advice [συμβουλευόντων] together with laymen'). Perhaps the fact that the laws of present-day regimes 'have been established on the basis of much experiment' (300B1-2) also contributes to their appearing (without being) the specific form of knowledge that is statesmanship. So: although the laws of present-day are not the specific form of knowledge that is statesmanship, they appear to be statesmanship, and at least part of the reason why they have this appearance is that it is generally known that some of the advisers who have contributed to issuing them have the relevant form of knowledge.

It might be objected that laws cannot appear to be statesmanship because laws and statesmanship are entities that belong to different categories: laws are prescriptive propositions, statesmanship is a mental state, and a set of prescriptive propositions obviously is not a mental state and therefore cannot appear to be a mental state. The most plausible reply to this objection is that the categorial distinction between laws as prescriptive propositions and statesmanship as a mental state is not obvious to those who fall prey to the appearance, people who are not so clear about categorial distinctions. Thus, even if laws and statesmanship are entities that belong to different categories, a set of laws may well appear to be statesmanship. Moreover, in Greek, 'τέχνη' ('art') may be used for mental states as well as for sets of rules and even treatises[32]: the people to whom the laws appear to be statesmanship are perhaps thinking of the art of statesmanship as a set of rules. Also note the remark, attributed to law itself in the extended analogy of the preceding pages, that 'nothing can be wiser [σοφώτερον] than the laws' (299C5-6), a remark that echoes a formula which Thucydides (3.37, 4) puts in the mouth of Cleon, the great democratic leader of Athens[33].

8. *Law in the* Statesman

Plato's attitude to law in the *Statesman* is complex and nuanced. On the one hand, Plato has a negative attitude to law in that he maintains that laws are too simple to cater for all the complexities of human life (cf. 293E7-294C9). On the other hand, he has a positive attitude to law in that

[32] Cf. LSJ *s.v.* 'τέχνη' II, III, and VI.
[33] Cf. Teisserenc 2005: 373.

he maintains that law is indispensable in all cases – in the case of the genuine constitution as well as in that in present-day regimes (which, properly speaking, are not constitutions). For, in the genuine constitution, which is ruled by a single genuine statesman or by a small group of genuine statesmen, law is indispensable for pragmatic reasons: although the genuine statesman or statesmen would be capable to decide about each individual case without creating or following laws, laws are needed because the citizens are too many and their cases too varied for the statesman or statesmen to be in a position to decide about each individual case that could come up (just as expert gymnastics trainers are obliged to prescribe shared diets and shared exercises to groups of trainees because it is practically impossible for them to set out personalized diets and personalized exercises) (cf. 294C10-295B6). As for present-day regimes, laws are necessary because their rulers lack the genuine statesman's knowledge and are therefore not competent to decide about individual cases without laws to which to attend (cf. 297D4-E5).

Although law is necessary in all cases, there remains a difference between law in the genuine constitution and in present-day regimes. In a genuine constitution, the genuine statesman should override or modify laws when his knowledge tells him that he should (cf. 295B7-296A4). In present-day regimes, the rulers should never override or change laws because their lack of knowledge would probably lead them to disastrous modifications. Thus, law is changeable in the genuine constitution but should be unchangeable in present-day regimes. All present-day regimes imitate the genuine constitution, i.e. appear to be genuine constitutions without being such a thing: those that do respect their laws imitate the genuine constitution 'for the better' in that the amount of harm they inflict on the citizens is somehow limited; those that fail to respect their laws imitate the genuine constitution 'for the worse' in that they foster an extremely unhappy life of the state.

The laws of present-day regimes have a very tenuous link with the genuine statesman's knowledge: the link consists in the fact that alongside many laymen, some statesmen have also contributed their advice with a view to issuing these laws. This tenuous link suffices to give laws the appearance of being knowledge, in particular the specific form of knowledge that is statesmanship. Since they appear to be statesmanship without being such a thing, the laws of present-day regimes may be described as 'imitations of the truth' (300C5-6), i.e. of statesmanship. In some lucky cases, some of the laws issued by the ignorant rulers of a present-day regime are precisely those which are issued by genuine statesmen. There is no incon-

sistency here because laws are prescriptive propositions and the same prescriptive proposition can be issued both by an ignorant ruler of a present-day regime and by a genuine statesman. Even in such a case, the epistemic attitude which an ignorant ruler and the genuine statesman have to one and the same prescriptive proposition are different: only the genuine statesman has knowledge about that prescriptive proposition, the ignorant ruler only makes a judgement regarding it.

9. *Did Plato change his mind about the merits of democracy?*

Some commentators believe that the *Statesman* commits Plato to a revaluation of democracy and of the role of law with respect to the position presented in the *Republic*, where democracy was described as the last step before the catastrophy of tyranny and the rule of the state was entrusted to philosopher-kings. Some even suspect that a justification of the condemnation of Socrates by the Athenian democracy is in the offing. For, the Visitor seems first to describe the condemnation of Socrates as a consequence of the supreme authority of law in society and then to claim that respecting the laws is the best possible course of action for present-day regimes, where no genuine statesman is in a position of power[34].

However, the conclusions about the revaluation of democracy and the justification of the condemnation of Socrates cannot be safely drawn. For, the regimes where law has supreme authority are consistently described in the *Statesman* as surrogates of the only true constitution, where statesmanship is at the helm, surrogates whose widespread occurrence is due to the commonly held view that no statesman could ever be above the temptations that come with absolute power. Moreover, the various strictures which the Visitor describes as consequences of the majority's mistrust of politicians are at least in part gratuitous and belong to a caricature. In particular, even if it is granted that laws should have supreme authority, it does not follow that philosophical inquiry about ethical and political matters, and in particular about justice and the value of law, should be forbidden. Socrates' own life, as it is described in the *Crito* (especially at 50A6-54E2), shows that the absolute respect of the laws is compatible with free philosophical inquiry about ethical and political matters. A veto on philosophical inquiry is unjustified even in a state where law enjoys supreme authority.

[34] Cf. Sabine 1962: 74; Griswold 1989: 157-162; Annas and Waterfield 1995: XVIII-XX.

10. *A new classification of forms of government*

The distinction between regimes that imitate for the better and for the worse yields a total number of seven forms of government: (1) the genuine constitution, where the ruler is the authentic statesman who governs on the basis of statesmanship; (2) the monarchy based on laws that the monarch respects (kingship); (3) the monarchy based on laws that the monarch ignores to pursue his personal interest (tyranny); (4) the government of the few based on laws that the rulers respect (aristocracy); (5) the government of the few based on laws that the rulers ignore to pursue their personal interests (oligarchy); (6) the government of the many based on laws that the rulers respect (democracy); (7) the government of the many based on laws that the rulers ignore to pursue their personal interests (democracy). Earlier (at 291C9-292A4) only five types of regime had been distinguished because the two subdivisions of democracy had not been distinguished (the two inquirers had relied on linguistic usage, which has a single name, 'democracy', for both subdivisions) and the regime where statesmanship is at the helm had not yet been isolated. The noun 'democracy' is used both for the government of the many where the laws are respected and for that where the laws are ignored. Similarly, the noun 'king' is used both for the monarchic ruler who governs on the basis of the statesman's knowledge and for the monarchic ruler who relies on laws that he respects. This enables the Visitor to draw a conclusion that sounds enigmatic: 'As a result of this the five names of what are now called constitutions have become only one' (301B7-8). Some commentators find this remark so strange that they emend the text (David Robinson transposes a modified form of it to 301C7)[35]. But the text of the MSS may be defended: there is only one name of constitutions because really there is only one constitution (the others are only imitations). The name of the only constitution is 'kingship', a name it shares with one of the imitations.

The preceding considerations show that we should not wonder at the evils that afflict present-day states. Rather, we should wonder at the fact that despite their shortcomings, many present-day states survive (though some of them 'sink like ships and perish', 302A6-7). This negative evaluation of present-day states and the call for an enlightened rule echo similar remarks in the *Republic* (cf. 5. 473B4-E5).

[35] Cf. D.B. Robinson 1995: 41.

11. *The quality of life in the various regimes*

The Visitor then offers a ranking of the imitative regimes where it is harder or easier to live. All the law-abiding regimes are easier to live in than the law-flouting ones. When the regime is law-abiding, the one where it is easiest to live is the monarchy, followed by the government of the few, followed by the government of the many. By contrast, in the case of the law-flouting regimes, the ranking is reversed: the one where it is easiest to live is the government of the many, followed by the government of the few, followed by the monarchy (which amounts to tyranny).

The Visitor does not explain why democracy is 'the worst of the best and the best of the worst'. The most plausible explanation is that the fragmentation of power that is typical of it makes it weak and therefore unable to give rise to anything great either among good things or among bad ones: when a democracy is law-abiding, respect of law in it will be less efficient than in a law-abiding monarchy (kingship) or in a law-abiding government of the few (aristocracy) (in a law-abiding democracy, the harmonious operation of a large group of people is slower because the large number of offices requires a multiplication of laws and procedures); when a democracy is law-flouting, its lack of respect for the law will be of less consequence than in a law-flouting government of the few (oligarchy) or a law-flouting monarchy (tyranny) (in a law-flouting democracy, the conflicting interests of the many will to some extent cancel each other out and reduce the total damage).

12. *The third application of the concept of imitation: present-day politicians*

The Visitor and Young Socrates state that present-day politicians should be separated from the genuine statesman and may be described as sophists:

T8 ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν δὴ καὶ τοὺς κοινωνοὺς τούτων τῶν πολιτειῶν πασῶν πλὴν τῆς ἐπιστήμονος ἀφαιρετέον ὡς οὐκ ὄντας πολιτικοὺς ἀλλὰ στασιαστικούς, καὶ εἰδώλων μεγίστων προστάτας ὄντας καὶ αὐτοὺς εἶναι τοιούτους, μεγίστους δὲ ὄντας μιμητὰς καὶ γόητας μεγίστους γίγνεσθαι τῶν σοφιστῶν σοφιστάς. 303B8 303C1 C5

ΝΕ. ΣΩ. Κινδυνεύει τοῦτο εἰς τοὺς πολιτικοὺς λεγομένους περιεστράφθαι τὸ ῥῆμα ὀρθότατα. 303C7

VIS. We must therefore remove also those who participate in all these constitutions, except for the one based on knowledge, as being, not statesmen, but factious, and ‹we must say› that by being rulers of the greatest images they themselves also are such, and that by being the greatest imitators and beguilers they turn out to be the greatest sophists among sophists[36].

Y.S. This expression [*sc.* 'sophist'] may happen to have been only too correctly turned round against the so-called statesmen (Pl. *Plt.* 303B8-C7).

In passage T8 the Visitor asserts that 'we must [...] remove' (303C1) present-day politicians because they are factious. The removal in question is probably not a 'physical' removal such as exile or assassination, but a 'logical' removal: it is the setting apart of present-day politicians from genuine statesmen[37].

The description of all present-day politicians as 'factious' (303C2) is a bit surprising: do law-abiding rulers deserve it? In a passage of the *Laws* (8. 832B10-C3), the Athenian claims that tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy are not properly speaking 'constitutions' but 'factious systems' because in these regimes the rulers 'never hold power with the consent of the governed' (832C3-4). It is difficult to undersand on what grounds the Athenian can claim that a democracy fails to have the consent of the governed. Several explanations of the *Statesman*'s description of present-day politicians as factious are possible. One possibility is that Plato has been carried away partly by rhetoric and partly by his low opinion of present-day politicians in Athens, and has therefore been led to draw an invalid conclusion. Alternatively, he might be implicitly restricting his consideration to the rulers of law-flouting constitutions (i.e. tyrannies, oligarchies, and law-flouting democracies), who ignore the laws because they are driven by ambition and the desire for power and therefore give rise to factions[38]. Yet

[36] There is a minor puzzle concerning the syntax of 303C2-5: what governs the infinitives 'εἶναι' (303C3) and 'γίγνεσθαι' (303C4-5)? One possibility is to supply an understood 'ὥστε' (immediately before the 'καί' at 303C2) (cf. Fischer 1774: 187). Another is to regard the infinitives 'εἶναι' and 'γίγνεσθαι' as governed by the 'ὡς' of 303C1, which acquires a declarative sense (cf. Stallbaum 1841: 298). A further possibility is to supply an understood 'λεκτέον' (immediately after the 'καί' at 303C2) that functions as the main verb governing the following infinitives (cf. Stephanus 1578: II 303; Rowe 1995a: 236). In my translation I adopted the last solution: the words 'we must say' render the understood 'λεκτέον').

[37] Cf. Rowe 1995a: 236. For a similar 'logical' use of 'to remove' ('ἀφαιρεῖν'), cf. 262B1; D3; 263C9; 268E1; 291C6; 292D6.

[38] Cf. Rowe 1995a: 236.

another possibility is that Plato could be attributing to the Visitor the view that the lack of knowledge that characterizes all present-day politicians, i.e. their failure to master statesmanship, and the fact that the laws on which present-day regimes are based merely appear to be statesmanship inevitably bring it about that the states ruled by present-day politicians will sooner or later be torn apart by factions[39].

At the beginning of his examination of present-day politicians, the Visitor playfully described them in terms that recall the characters of a satyr play (cf. 291A8-B2)[40]. He resorts to this light-hearted description again at the end of his examination (cf. 303C8-D2). Passage T8 provides the key for understanding the joke: present-day politicians are imitators, and drama is the realm of imitation (cf. 288C2-3).

13. *The Visitor's argument*

Passage T8 contains a brief argument for the thesis that present-day politicians are the greatest of sophists. The premiss of this argument is that present-day politicians are 'rulers' (303C3) of regimes that are 'images [εἴδωλα]' (303C2) of the genuine constitution, the constitution 'based on knowledge' (303C1). Earlier (at 293E3-6 = T1 and 297C1-4 = T2) the two inquirers had agreed that present-day regimes are 'imitating [μεμιμημένας]' (293E4) the genuine constitution and are 'imitations [μιμήματα]' (297C2) of it. It may be plausibly assumed that the nouns 'image' ('εἴδωλον') and 'imitation' ('μίμημα') are mere stylistic variants: this assumption is confirmed by other occurrences of the two nouns in the *Statesman* (at 306D2 and D3), by how they are used in the *Sophist*[41], and by how the names of the corresponding crafts, 'εἰδωλοποιικήʼ and 'μιμητικήʼ, are used in the *Sophist*[42]. In view of this, the earlier agreement that present-day regimes, which are of course the regimes of which present-day politicians are rulers, are 'imitations [μιμήματα]' (297C2) of the genuine constitution amounts to an endorsement of the premiss of T8's argument, that present-day politicians are 'rulers' (303C3) of regimes that are 'images [εἴδωλα]' (303C2) of the genuine constitution. 'By being rulers of the greatest images' (303C2-3), present-day

[39] Cf. Márquez 2012: 295.
[40] On this comparison, cf. El Murr 2014: 221-223.
[41] Cf. 234B6 with C5; Bondeson 1972: 1.
[42] Cf. 235B8-9; 235C3; 235D1-2; 236C6-7; 265B1-2; Kamlah 1963: 28.

politicians are themselves 'such' (303C3), namely 'the greatest images', and are therefore 'the greatest imitators' (303C4). Since to be a sophist is to be an imitator, present-day politicians are 'the greatest sophists among sophists' (303C4-5). The images of which present-day politicians are 'rulers' (303C3), namely present-day regimes, are 'the greatest' because of their importance[43]. The argument is qualified throughout by the adjective 'greatest' because of the importance of the images, i.e. regimes, of which present-day politicians are rulers. It vindicates the correctness of the earlier description of the present-day politician as 'the greatest beguiler of all the sophists and the most expert in their art' (291C3-4).

The inference from the claim that present-day politicians are 'rulers of the greatest images' to the claim that they are themselves 'such', namely 'the greatest images', is probably based on the thought that since they are rulers of regimes that are images of the genuine constitution, present-day politicians are themselves images of the ruler of the genuine constitution, namely of the genuine statesman[44]. This matches an earlier remark by the Visitor to the effect that present-day politicians 'pretend to be statesmen and convince many [*sc.* that they are statesmen], but are not [*sc.* statesmen] in any way at all' (292D6-8, cf. 293C7-8)[45]. Since they are images, or imitations, of the genuine statesman, present-day politicians may be described as imitating the genuine statesman[46], and therefore as imitators of him (they are like mimes, who imitate by appearing to be people or things that they are not)[47].

14. *The* Sophist *on sophists, images, and falsehood*

The *Statesman*'s description of the present-day politician as 'the greatest beguiler of all the sophists and the most expert in their art' (291C3-4) involves a cross-reference to the *Sophist*, where the sophist was described as 'a beguiler and an imitator' (235A8, cf. 235A1; 241B6-7). Since the way

[43] For the use of 'great' ('μέγας') to express importance, cf. LSJ *s.v.* 'μέγας' A II 4.

[44] In the *Apology* (20C6-7) Socrates narrates that he came to the view that present-day politicians seem (to many and to themselves) to be wise without being wise. Although he does not use the concept of imitation, recall the connection between 'to imitate φ' and 'to appear to be φ without being φ' (cf. above, n. 5 and text thereto).

[45] Cf. Palumbo 1995: 178-179.

[46] Recall that in T1 the verb 'to imitate' ('μιμεῖσθαι', 293E4) describes the imitations, not their authors.

[47] Cf. *R.* 3. 393C5-6; *Sph.* 267A1-B3.

in which the themes of images, imitation, and appearance are developed in the *Sophist* is likely to shed some light on T8's argument for the thesis that present-day politicians are the greatest sophists, I shall examine the *Sophist*'s treatment of these themes.

In the *Sophist*, the Visitor and Theaetetus try to define the sophist by using the method of division. After practicing the method by applying it to an easier case that serves as a model, that of the angler (218C5-221C5), they direct it to the sophist and obtain six accounts of him (221C6-231B9): the sophist is (1) a hunter of rich and prominent young men (221C6-223B7, 231D2-4), (2) a seller of speeches and learning who buys his goods and operates in more than one city (223C1-224D3, 231D5-7), (3) a seller of speeches and learning who buys his goods and operates within a single city (224D4-E5, 231D8-10), (4) a seller of speeches and learning who produces his goods himself and operates within a single city (224D4-E5, 231D10-12)[48], (5) a verbal fighter (224E6-226A5, 231D12-E3), and (6) an educator who by means of refutation purifies the soul from its pretence of knowledge (226A6-231B9, 231E4-7). Faced with these six accounts, Theaetetus confesses: 'I am puzzled [ἀπορῶ]' (231B9). He reports that his puzzlement is due to 'the fact that the sophist has appeared in many ways' (231B9-C1). So, a new attempt is deemed necessary. The novel approach will eventually lead to a seventh account of the sophist, which is presented in the last part of the dialogue and is deemed successful[49].

15. *Appearance is of the essence*

In their comments on the first six accounts (231B9-232A7), the Visitor and Theaetetus remark several times that a sophist *appears* to have certain competences (the concept of appearance is expressed by the verbs 'φαίνεσθαι' and 'ἀναφαίνεσθαι': cf. 231B9-C1; D2; D9; 232A1-2). These remarks provide the starting point for a fresh discussion of the sophist (232B1-236D4), a discussion that aims to provide some background for the new account of him. This new account turns upon the concepts of appearing

[48] In the summary at 231D10-12 the requirement that the seller of speeches and learning who produces his goods himself should operate within a single city is dropped.

[49] Most commentators hold that the first six accounts are not successful. But there is disagreement about the seventh: some commentators (e.g. Cornford 1935: 187; Pellegrin 1991: 410; Notomi 1999: 296; M.L. Gill 2010: 184; Rickless 2010: 289, 293) maintain that it ranks as successful, others (e.g. Ryle 1966: 139; Brown 2010: 152-153, 160-163) that it also fails.

and seeming: the *essence* of the sophist is exactly his *appearing* (φαίνεσθαι) or *seeming* (δοκεῖν) to have skills and knowledges which he in fact lacks[50] (the verbs 'φαίνεσθαι' and 'δοκεῖν' are used as equivalent variants)[51]. In this respect the first six accounts, despite their failure, pave the way for the seventh, successful account.

In the discussion that prefaces their fresh attempt to define the sophist, the two inquirers hark back especially to the division leading to the fifth of the sophist's six accounts, that according to which the sophist is a verbal fighter. A sophist is a disputer (ἀντιλογικός) (232B6-7). He also teaches others to be disputers (232B8-10)[52]. He claims to do this about all subjects: he claims to make his pupils disputers about divine things hidden from common eyes, perceptible objects both in the heavens and on earth, problems of being and becoming, issues of law and politics, and questions concerning the crafts (232B11-E5). In the discussion's next step (232E6-233D2) the idea of apparent knowledge is introduced. Nobody knows everything. Sophists therefore do not know all the subjects about which they claim to teach others to become disputers. On the other hand, they bring the young to judge that 'they are the wisest of all about all things' (233B2). The reason why they do this is that 'if they did not dispute correctly nor appear [ἐφαίνοντο] to them [*sc.* to the young] to do so, and if while appearing [φαινόμενοι] to do so they did not all the more seem [ἐδόκουν] to be wise in virtue of their controversies, then […] one would hardly be willing to become a pupil of these people by giving them money' (233B3-7). Hence sophists 'appear [φαίνονται] […] to be wise about all things […] while not being so' (233C6-9). It's 'because he is an imitator of the wise man' (268C1), in Greek 'σοφός', that the sophist has a name derived from his, in Greek 'σοφιστής'[53]. It is worth pointing out that the Visitor's claim that sophists 'appear […] to be wise about all things' (233C6) is confirmed by independent evidence: in striking contrast with Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the sophists did feign universal knowledge[54].

[50] Cf. Bluck 1963: 58; Pippin 1979: 190-191; Ledesma 2009: 237-238; Rickless 2010: 296-297; Long 2013: 128-129.

[51] Cf. 216C4-5 with C7, D1, and D2; 233B3-4 with 235A2; 233B4; 233C1 with C6; 236E1; 267C5 with C8; Vernant 1975: 128; Notomi 1999: 168; Barnouw 2002: 31.

[52] Cf. *Prt.* 312D5-7.

[53] Cf. Zadro 1961: 95; Notomi 1999: 119-121.

[54] Cf. *Euthd.* 271C5-7; 293E5-295A9; 295E4-296D4; *Prt.* 315C5-7; 315E7-316A1; *Grg.* 447C5-8; 462A8-10; *Men.* 70B5-C3; *Hp.Mi.* 363C7-D4; 368B2-E1; *Dissoi Logoi* 8. 1-13; Apelt 1897: 102-103; Cornford 1935: 191-192; Wolff 1991: 24-25; Cordero 1993: 225; Napolitano Valditara 2007: 163, 198.

16. *The sophist's imitation*

How do the sophists carry out their imitation? How do they achieve the goal of appearing to be wise about all things? The Visitor appeals to an analogy with a model (παράδειγμα, 233D3) that focuses on a graphic imitator, viz. a painter. A painter produces painted imitations (paintings) of everything and can conceal from 'those young children who are silly' (234B8) and are viewing his imitations 'from far away' (234B8) that he is cheating them into judging that he can actually produce whatever he wants (i.e. that he is a sort of god). Analogously, a verbal imitator, viz. a sophist, produces 'spoken images [εἴδωλα λεγόμενα]' (234C5-6) (statements) and can lead 'the youths who are still far from the truth about things' (234C3-4) to 'judge [δοκεῖν] that truths are being stated [ἀληθῆ λέγεσθαι] and the speaker is therefore the wisest of all about all things [τὸν λέγοντα δὴ σοφώτατον πάντων ἅπαντ' εἶναι]' (234C6-7, cf. 233B1-2). The way in which the analogy is set up suggests that just as the painter can delude the silly children into thinking that his painted imitations are what they imitate, namely people, animals, fruits, or whatever (while concealing from them that they are being deluded), so also the sophist can delude the inexperienced youths into thinking that the spoken imitations (statements) he utters are what they imitate, namely truths (while concealing from them that they are being deluded) (recall[55] that in this part of the *Sophist* the nouns 'image' and 'imitation', 'εἴδωλον' and 'μίμημα', are mere stylistic variants). Mark that the delusion caused by the verbal imitator is one whereby the inexperienced youths judge that 'truths are being stated' (234C6, cf. *R.* 2. 382D2-3): it is because they are led to judge that the sophist's statements about any subject are truths that the youths judge him to be wise about all things (producing true statements about a certain subject is an indication of 'wisdom' about that subject)[56].

Some of the ideas involved in the analogy return elsewhere in Plato's dialogues. The idea that an imitative artist produces everything returns in *Republic* 10: cf. 596B12-E11[57]; 598B6-D6. The idea that imitations can deceive their viewers or hearers to take them to be what they imitate may be found in various points of the dialogues: cf. *Sph.* 264D5-7; *R.* 3. 393A3-B2;

[55] Cf. above, n. 41 and text thereto.

[56] Cf. Notomi 1999: 134; Palumbo 2013: 273.

[57] When, a 596D1, the imitative artist who produces everything is described as a 'sophist', the expression is used in the traditional sense of 'expert' or 'master craftsman' but also alludes to the category represented by Protagoras etc.: cf. Notomi 2011: 315.

7. 523B5-6; 10. 598C1-4; 598D1-5; 600E7-601A2. In the *Gorgias* Socrates describes rhetoric in a way that recalls what the present *Sophist* passage says about the sophist's art: rhetoric does not know about the matters it deals with but 'has discovered some device of persuasion so as to appear to those who do not know that it knows more than those who do know' (459B8-C2).

One of the roles of the Visitor's analogy is to bring to the forefront the art of producing and the art of producing imitations, under which the sophist's art will eventually be subsumed (in the first five definitions it had been subsumed under the other main species of the genus art, i.e. the art of acquisition) (cf. 219A8-C1; 265A4-B1)[58]. It should not escape notice that the move is not justified by an argument nor by anything that came before: we had reached the result that the sophists' art enables them to 'appear […] to be wise about all things […] while not being so' (233C6-8); we were given an example of another art that endows its possessors a with an apparent capacity concerning all things, namely the art of producing imitations, an art whose masters appear to produce everything; now we are introduced to the idea that the way in which sophists manage to appear to be wise about all things relies on the production of imitations – specifically, spoken imitations of true statements about anything.

The inference in passage T8 recalls the one that justifies the description of the sophist as someone who appears to have universal knowledge[59]. The reason why the sophist appears to have universal knowledge is that he produces imitations of true statements in all areas. In the case of present-day politicians as well as in that of sophists, the individual's pretence to be what he is not is based on his bearing a certain relation (ruling in the case of present-day politicians, uttering in the case of sophists) to entities (regimes or statements) that are imitations of those (constitutions or true statements) to which the character whom the individual pretends to be (a statesman or an omniscient sage) bears that same relation (ruling or uttering).

17. *The Visitor's argument in passage T8*

Is the argument offered by the Visitor in T8 valid? A valid argument acceptably close to the Visitor's is the following:

[58] Cf. Notomi 2011: 321.
[59] Cf. Long 2013: 128.

[1] Every present-day politician rules over at least one regime that appears to be a constitution but is not a constitution, and every present-day politician rules only over regimes that appear to be constitutions but are not constitutions.
[2] Whoever rules over at least one regime that appears to be a constitution appears to be a statesman.
[3] Whoever rules only over regimes that are not constitutions is not a statesman.
[4] Every present-day politician rules over at least one regime that appears to be a constitution.
[5] Every present-day politician rules only over regimes that are not constitutions.
[6] Every present-day politician appears to be a statesman.
[7] Every present-day politician is not a statesman.
[8] Every present-day politician appears to be a statesman but is not a statesman.

Propositions [1]-[3] are the argument's premisses, [4]-[7] are intermediate steps, and [8] is the conclusion. Proposition [1] is a reasonable paraphrase of the claim that present-day politicians rule over regimes that are images of, or imitate, constitutions, i.e. regimes that appear to be constitutions but are not constitutions (I am assuming that forms of 'to imitate φ' introduce an idea that could be properly expressed by the corresponding forms of 'to appear to be φ without being φ' or 'to instil the illusion of being φ')[60]. Proposition [3] is a tacit assumption and is uncontroversial (at least if one ignores the case of private individuals who give competent advice to 'professional' statesmen, cf. 259A6-9). Propositions [4] and [5] follow from [1] by first-order logic. Similarly, proposition [6] follows from [4] and [2] by first-order logic. Again, proposition [7] follows from [5] and [3] by first-order logic. The conclusion [8], which follows from [6] and [7] by first-order logic, is a paraphrase of the claim that present-day politicians are images of, or imitate, statesmen.

I have not yet discussed proposition [2], which is a tacit assumption. It is controversial. Whatever plausibility it has derives from the claim that whoever rules over at least one regime that appears to be a constitution appears to rule over at least one constitution, namely to be a statesman (ruling over at least one constitution and being a statesman are treated as equivalent in the present context). This claim is objectionable: for, a certain regime could appear to be a constitution without anyone who as a matter of fact rules over it appearing to rule over it or to rule over a constitution (the actual rulers of a regime that appears to be a constitution could well be hidden). The claim can only be defended by making two assump-

[60] Cf. above, n. 5 and text thereto.

tions: first, that if a regime appears to be a constitution, then the activity of ruling of the ruler or rulers is evident to the subjects to whom the appearing pertains; secondly, that appearance is closed under conjunction (i.e. that if both it appears to *a* that *p* and it appears to *a* that *q*, then it appears to *a* that both *p* and *q*).

The argument is valid. Its soundness is questionable. The premiss that puts its soundness in question is [2]. As I pointed out, it is far from clear that [2] is true. If one avoids assuming [2] as a premiss, what remains is an invalid argument. Of course, every invalid argument can be transformed into a valid one by adding a 'tacit' premiss.

18. *The roles of imitation*

In the final part of the *Statesman*, the concept of imitation is applied to entities of three types: to present-day politicians, who are described as imitations of the statesman (cf. 303C3 < T8, where present-day politicians are said to be images – recall[61] that 'image' and 'imitation' are mere stylistic variants)[62]; to present-day regimes, which are described as imitations of the genuine constitution (cf. 293E3-6 = T1; 297C1-4 = T2); and to laws, which are described as imitations of statesmanship (cf. 300C5-7 = T7). Some of these applications of the concept of imitation are explicitly connected. In particular, the first application of the concept of imitation is explicitly connected to the second. For, the Visitor offers an argument (cf. 303B8-C5 < T8) to show that present-day politicians are imitations of the statesman because the regimes over which they rule are imitations of the genuine constitution, over which the statesman rules[63]. Thus, the first application of the concept of imitation is explained by appealing to the second.

It is tempting to assume that a similar connection obtains between the second application of the concept of imitation and the third, i.e. that the second application of the concept of imitation is explained by appealing to the third. In other words, it is tempting to assume that the application of the concept of imitation to present-day regimes is explained by appealing to its application to laws, namely to assume that present-day regimes are

[61] Cf. above, text to n. 41.

[62] Cf. also 301B1 and 301C3, where monarchic rulers are said to 'imitate' the genuine statesman and to be 'imitations' of him.

[63] I examined this argument earlier: cf. above, section to n. 41 and section to n. 60.

imitations of the genuine constitution because the laws on which they all rely (even though some of them take no account of these laws) are imitations of statesmanship, on which the genuine constitution relies. Although the text does not explicitly affirm this, there are some hints that the Visitor could be reasoning along such lines. For, on the two occasions when he asserts that present-day regimes are imitations of the genuine constitution (at 293E3-6 = T1 and 297C1-4 = T2), the Visitor adds that some of these regimes imitate the genuine constitution for the better and others for the worse, and he then goes on to specify that the difference between imitating for the better and for the worse has to do with whether the regimes respect the laws or take no account of them: this suggests that the fact that present-day regimes are imitations of the genuine constitution is intimately linked to their reliance on laws.

Earlier[64] I argued that the reason why the Visitor treats present-day regimes as imitations of the genuine constitution is that they appear to be constitutions without being constitutions, and I pointed out that their appearing to be constitutions is revealed by their being ordinarily called 'constitutions'. If the last paragraph's tempting assumption is correct, then a more thorough explanation of why the Visitor treats present-day regimes as imitations of the genuine constitution may be put forward: just as the reason why present-day politicians are imitations of the statesman is that present-day politicians bear a certain relation (i.e. ruling) to objects (i.e. present-day regimes) that are imitations of an object (i.e. the genuine constitution) to which the statesman bears that relation (for the statesman rules over the genuine constitution), so also the reason why present-day regimes are imitations of the genuine constitution is that present-day regimes bear a certain relation (i.e. reliance) to objects (i.e. laws) that are imitations of an object (i.e. statesmanship) to which the genuine constitution bears that relation (for the genuine constitution relies on statesmanship).

If these considerations are on the right track, then the applications of the concept of imitation in the *Statesman* are, so to speak, 'boxed' in one another: present-day politicians imitate the statesman because they rule over objects (present-day regimes) that imitate the genuine constitution (over which the statesman rules), and these objects imitate the genuine constitution because they rely on further objects (laws) that imitate statesmanship (on which the genuine constitution relies). The first application of the concept of imitation is then explained by appealing to the second,

[64] Cf. above, paragraph to n. 7.

which is in turn explained by appealing to the third. According to this picture, the application of the concept of imitation to laws is the most fundamental and ultimately explains its other two applications.

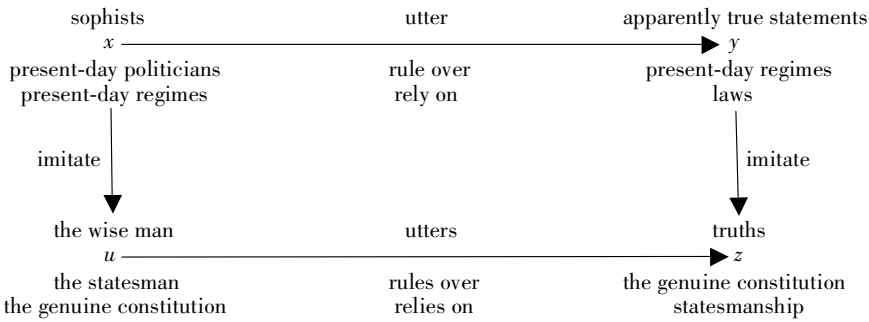
However, the tempting assumption about a connection between the second and the third application of the concept of imitation must remain a speculative suggestion. For, the evidence in its support is scarce. Moreover, at least one alternative possible account of the connection between the second and the third application of the concept of imitation should be mentioned: it cannot be excluded that while the present-day regimes that imitate the genuine constitution *for the better* imitate it because they rely on laws that in turn are imitations of statesmanship, on which the genuine constitution relies, the present-day regimes that imitate the genuine constitution *for the worse* imitate it because their ignorant rulers put themselves above the law like the rulers of the genuine constitution, namely genuine statesmen. In this case, Plato would be offering two different explanations of why present-day regimes imitate the genuine constitution: the imitation of present-day regimes that imitate for the better would be different with respect to the imitation of present-day regimes that imitate for the worse. The remarks of the Visitor at 301A10-B3 and at 301B10-C4 seem to go in this direction: in the first passage the Visitor speaks of the king who 'rules according to laws, imitating the one who has knowledge' (301A10-B1); in the second he speaks of the tyrant who 'acts neither according to laws nor according to customs' (301B10) but 'pretends to act like the one who has knowledge, saying that one must do what is best outside the written rules' (301C1-2). To be sure, these two passages speak of rulers who are imitating the genuine statesman, not of regimes that are imitating the genuine constitution; but what the two passages say about rulers imitating the genuine statesman easily translates into claims about regimes imitating the genuine constitution, and it suggests different explanations of what it is for a regime to imitate the genuine constitution for the better and what it is for it to perform such an imitation for the worse.

19. *The parallel structure of three arguments about imitations*

In the *Sophist*, the Visitor claims that sophists appear to be wise because they utter spoken imitations (statements) that can delude inexperienced youths into thinking that they are what they imitate, namely true statements. He also asserts (at 233C8) that sophists really are not wise,

and he describes them as imitators of the wise man (at 268c1). Given that in this theoretical context forms of 'to imitate φ' introduce an idea that could also be conveyed by the corresponding forms of 'to appear to be φ without being φ' or 'to instil the illusion of being φ'[65], the thesis of the Visitor may be plausibly taken to be that sophists imitate the wise man without being wise because they utter false but apparently true statements, namely statements that imitate true statements.

If the last section's tempting assumption about the connection between the second and the third application of the concept of imitation is correct, we obtain parallel explanations of three applications of the concept of imitation, the first to sophists, the second to present-day politicians, and the third to present-day regimes. The parallel explanations are illustrated by the following schema:



The relations pictured by three of the arrows in the schema (the *x*-*y* arrow, the *y*-*z* arrow, and the *u*-*z* arrow) explain the relation pictured by the remaining arrow (the *x*-*u* arrow). In general, *x*s imitate *u* because they bear a certain relation to *y*s, which imitate *z* or *z*s, to which *u* bears the same relation. By plugging in the expressions above the horizontal arrows, we obtain: sophists imitate the wise man because they utter apparently true statements, which imitate truths, which the wise man utters. By plugging in the expressions on the first line under the horizontal arrows, we obtain: present-day politicians imitate the statesman because they rule over present-day regimes, which imitate the genuine constitution, over which the statesman rules. By plugging in the expressions on the second line under the horizontal arrows, we obtain: present-day regimes imitate the genuine

[65] Cf. above, nn. 5 and 7 and the paragraphs to which they are appended.

constitution because they rely on laws, which imitate statesmanship, on which the genuine constitution relies.

Earlier[66] I questioned the soundness of the argument for the claim that present-day politicians imitate the statesman (i.e. appear to be statesmen but are not statesmen). Similar doubts may be raised about the two parallel arguments, the one for the claim that sophists imitate the wise man and the one for the claim that present-day regimes imitate the genuine constitution.

20. *Imitation in Plato's late philosophy*

The concept of imitation plays many roles throughout Plato's reflections. In the dialogues of the middle period (*Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, *Phaedrus*) Plato puts it to work in order to explain the relation of participation of perceptible particulars to forms. However, in the late critical dialogues, this role is (to say the least) less prominent. This tendency is particularly clear in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, whose cosmological sections, despite their obvious echoes of the *Timaeus*, do not present the forms as paradigms of which perceptible particulars are imitations. The *Sophist* and the *Statesman* find other, more mundane but nevertheless important roles for the concept of imitation, which they employ to explain the nature of sophists, present-day politicians, present-day states, and laws. Thus, the concept of imitation remains a fundamental tool in Plato's philosophical machinery.

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[66] Cf. above, section to n. 60.

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Abstract

In the Statesman *Plato identifies the art of the statesman with a highly specialized branch of knowledge. It is this knowledge that must have the highest authority in the state: all other forms of organized society are merely imitations of the society based on the statesman's knowledge, which is the only genuine constitution. The concept of imitation is applied not only to describe the relationship between the genuine constitution and other types of organized society, but also to the relationship between the statesman and everyday politicians and to the relationship between the statesman's knowledge and law. It turns out that these three applications of the concept of imitation are reciprocally connected. Plato explicitly argues that everday politicians are imitations of the genuine statesman* because *everyday societies are imitations of the genuine constitution. This study explores the possibility that everyday societies could be imitations of the genuine constitution* because *law is an imitation of the statesman's knowledge.*

Keywords: knowledge; statesmanship; politician; constitution; imitation; law; sophistry.

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