In this lecture I will not attempt to give an account of the entire *Statesman* nor will I directly address its place in the trilogy. Either of these would be too large a project to undertake in one evening. Rather I will focus on the "great story," which is, I believe, the key to the dialogue. After giving a summary of the story I will argue that its two parts correspond to the two parts of the dialogue before and after the story is presented. Dialectic, as the Stranger sees it, must combine the approaches that correspond to the two parts of the dialogue, and dialectic, he later says, is that for which the whole conversation is pursued. I will end with some reflections on the Stranger's sense of dialectic and its implications for the trial of Socrates that is the dramatic sequel to the *Statesman.*

I. The Stranger's "Great Story"

The Stranger offers his story when his effort to distinguish statesmanship by making cuts in the body of the sciences or "knowledges" (*episteme)* reaches an impasse: he and his interlocutor, a young man (coincidentally, if you can believe that) named Socrates, have in fact defined the statesman but they find themselves unable to answer the challenges others will make to the claim that the statesman alone fulfills the task he is assigned. Here is the definition: statesmanship is "...the grazing science (*episteme*) of non-mixing becoming" "assigned to the two-footed herd" (267c) . The phrase 'non-mixing' means that there is no cross-species reproduction. Young Socrates is evidently satisfied with this definition of the statesman: he indicates no desire to continue the inquiry beyond the series of cuts in the first part of the dialogue. While it may be disconcerting to readers to think that humans form herds and that we are comparable to pigs or chickens, that difficulty motivates neither young Socrates nor the Stranger. The Stranger, in fact, seems to delight in pointing out that

our insistence on our dignity arises from pretense and inflated pride. For example, he corrects the one cut young Socrates makes, between animal herdsmanship and human herdsmanship, on these grounds (263b).The problem the Stranger sees with the definition is that merchants, farmers, trainers, physicians and other artisans claim that it is they who provide care for humans as herd-animals. Since their claims are not altogether without grounds he finds that he must take up a new approach to the problem of locating the statesman. The "great story" the Stranger tells young Socrates takes up almost as much space as the previous account and sets their discussion on a new course. It highlights the need humans have for a statesman who practices exclusively his peculiar art and not an amalgam of others. In the disorderly world we find ourselves inhabiting now that divine governance is absent, the need for the statesman's art turns out to be urgent. The Stranger calls the epoch characterized by this need "the age of Zeus."

Statesmanship is an art humans must develop once divine power releases us to the decline that is natural or "fitting" to material beings. The "great story" is a kind of origin myth. It serves to shape young Socrates' understanding of his and our own age by indicating that in relation to which we fall short. The age of Chronos may serve then as a fabricated memory which provides a model of the end of statesmanly rule. Furthermore, it provides, I believe, the key to the progress and returns that punctuate the dialogue–just as the revolution of the cosmos is reversed, going 'back' in one age and 'forward' in the next, throughout the dialogue the Stranger repeatedly asserts the need to "go back" seven times. The story also presents an image to illustrate the Stranger's conviction that one can come to learn something true and as yet unknown.

Before the story proper, the Stranger refers to the strife between Atreus and Thyestes for the rule of Thebes, leading young Socrates, who thinks the story will illuminate conflicting claims to rule, to expect a story about the golden lamb Thyestes stole after Zeus gave it to Atreus to indicate that he should be the authoritative ruler (268e). The Stranger corrects young Socrates here as he has done earlier in the dialogue. This is instead to be a cosmic myth about the reversal of motion of the heavens. In the story young Socrates has heard, Zeus responds to the theft by causing an unnatural motion of the heavens to signal his determination that Atreus should be king and not his brother Thyestes. The Stranger's story, by contrast, begins in a time before Zeus himself had authority, and it implies an impious criticism: Zeus does very little if any good for man, either directly or by choosing the best human governors. Young Socrates has heard many stories, including some about the rule of Chronos and others about the generation of earth-born men. He has never heard an account that unites all these stories; the Stranger's big myth unites them in order to set apart the human herdsman's rule. At the same time he pretends that he is merely reporting the unified account.

Here is a more detailed summary of the story, its context, and the two ages it differentiates:

The myth, as I have indicated, describes two alternating times – the time of Chronos and the time of Zeus, and it situates human life as we know it in the time of Zeus. Perfect harmony reigns in the time of Chronos (272b). Without artful guidance, nothing but trouble and disharmony would reign in our time. The harmonious times must give way to times like ours because the cosmos involves matter and material things become corrupt, for it

"...befits (*prosakontos*) only the most divine of all things" to be always the same and in the same state (269d). It is apparently "fitting" in some sense for human beings along with other material substances to deteriorate. The deterioration is described as an unwinding, as of a spring. Young Socrates is encouraged to think that the divine work of rewinding the cosmos will eventually reverse time and restore harmony. The cosmos will then reacquire life and receive "a repaired immortality" (270a), only to lose it again.

The creatures that live in the age of Chronos differ from us in crucial respects. Time goes "backward" for these beings: they get forever "younger" rather than aging. For those of us over fifty or so, this feature of the mythical harmonious time seems attractive. Lovers of peace will appreciate that no conflicts need arise, for there are no unmet needs. But as the account proceeds, this period looks stranger and less appealing. To young Socrates' dismay, there is no sexual generation (271b) and maybe no sexual differences; man-shaped beings pop up full-grown out of the earth. Temperate conditions and abundant food permit the gods to treat men like sheep. The Stranger confidently asserts that "....they used to dwell mostly out of doors, naked and without bedding....." (272b). When he follows this description with the question whether men in our time or the former time were happier, young Socrates, a man who had no objection earlier to the term "herd" for a human community – is so skeptical (272b) that he avoids pronouncing on the matter. Since young Socrates won't answer, the Stranger claims that if they "made full use of all [their] advantages for the purpose of philosophy," the earth-born men would be happier by "a thousand fold" (272c). The hypothetical is crucial: if the motivation to see things as they are were present, the leisure in the era before Zeus would be conducive to contemplation, but it is difficult to conceive what would provoke the earth-born creatures to utter

meaningful speech. Their almost plant-like nature makes searching conversation implausible. Do they even have consciousness? The argument in the *Sophist* indicates that without speech there can be no pursuit of wisdom (259e-260a). (Cf. definition of thinking as: "[a] speech which the soul by itself goes through before itself about whatever it is examining" *Theaetetus* 189e.) Moreover, it seems likely that knowledge of the beings that compose the orderly Chronian cosmos would be as readily available and unambiguous as the food that grows without tending. With no cause for controversy there would be no duplicity, and since every individual that exists would be organized with its own kind (271b), error would be rare. If the earth-born speak, speech would be more likely to arise out of a desire to express the beauty and harmony of the cosmos than in pursuit of elusive wisdom. Perhaps they would sing, like the angels in Dante's *Paradiso.* Happy or not, one must wonder whether any of the beings ruled by the gods are what we would call "human." The so-called humans who live in the age of Chronos seem unlike contemporary humans in every way but their shape, and even there the similarity is limited. According to the myth, after all, they spring fully formed from the earth (272a) and they gradually get "younger" until they fall as seeds into the earth. The Stranger acknowledges that at some point "the earthly kind" will be simply "spent" (272e).

Were it not for the alternation of this harmonious age with an age in which time goes "forward," it is hard to know whether the cosmos in the divinely ruled age would even include beings of mature human form. The aged at least could have come from nowhere but the previous disorderly age. But not many individuals bridge the two ages, for each transition from age to age is characterized by tremendous upheaval. At the start of our own age, and others like it, "a fated and inborn desire" took over and the gods, apparently

accepting the inevitable, suddenly "let go" (272e), precipitating a reversal of the direction of the entire cosmos. And yet as the cosmos unravels – the upheaval is no less than catastrophic – amid the gradual deterioration some human-like beings must remain, for we are told they need protection from the now- savage animals (274c). Their needs provide the occasion for the development of arts and thus for the discovery of statesmanship. The gods will again reverse the direction of the motion of the cosmos, but only when it is about to sink into "limitless" dissimilarity (273d).

Fortunately, the destruction that marks the end of the age of Chronos does not entirely eliminate the effects of divine governance. While the helmsman retreats to an overlook point some kind of self-rule is established because the cosmos, corporeal but not merely matter, "remembers" somehow the "teaching" of the craftsman and father. At first the evils that its debased nature brings forth are small, but over time evils grow as the memories of goodness fade. It seems reasonable to infer that learning, 'recollection' as it is called in the *Meno,* becomes more and more difficult. When the god, distressed at the "*aporia*" of the (former) cosmos and fearing lest it "plunge into the boundless sea of unlikeness," (273d) judges his help is again indispensable, he takes over once more to restore order. Somehow he restores even the deathlessness of the whole. When he finishes this account the Stranger announces that "we" have now reached "the end-point (*telos)* of everything we were saying" (273e). The return of divine governance seems to be the desired end. But humans cannot wait to be rescued by the gods. The Stranger now calls the story an account (*logos*) and says it will make the statesman visible. The reader can see along with young Socrates that the visibility of the statesman is desirable and worth working towards, because in ages like our own each human community, even humanity in general, is at risk.

As the story comes to a close it becomes clear that left on their own, humans of the current age live in a disorderly mass where animals, and no doubt other humans, threaten our lives. Under these circumstances it is a necessity that we invent arts to protect and care for ourselves. Gods (Prometheus, Hephaestus and Athena are named) give gifts to facilitate this work, but the art of statesmanship is unambiguously left to human invention. Ours is an age of *aporia* (274 c-d). Humans lack reliable natural means to improve their lives and the gifts the gods have given are insufficient. The development of arts in general, especially statesmanship, is the only way for men and women to deal with the most serious problems that beset them. According to the cycles described in the story, the disorderliness will increase before the god is provoked to seize control and turn the whole cosmos back again lest all order and intelligibility be lost. Perhaps the various kinds of beings persist but by that time they will be so intermixed that it is impossible to sort them out without a kind of divine centrifuge. Bodily corruption renders ineffectual the invisible things, the memory of the good in particular, or perhaps corruption actually destroys memory even if the good it tries to retain cannot be destroyed. The "bodiless things," the Stranger says later, are shown clearly by reasoning alone (286a). The Stranger can imagine Chronian humans reasoning, talking, and perhaps contemplating to no particular end. But ordinary humans in the time of Zeus reason most of all to avoid being swallowed up in corporeality, dissimilarity, and death. The arts, including the attempt to secure definitive knowledge (*episteme),* are our attempt to maintain the uneasy unity of body and soul that makes us problematic and viable beings.

The "great story" the Stranger tells is an origin myth in some ways like *Genesis:* it explains the current state and sufferings of humanity as the consequence of a decline from an earlier

state of perfection. Just as readers of *Genesis* may doubt that it would be preferable for them to live unsullied within the Garden of Eden rather than as free if rather sinful beings, young Socrates doubts that divine rule guarantees happiness to its peaceful and contented subjects. Yet it is clear in both cases that with greater freedom comes greater suffering. In response to the suffering, humans, aware that they lack knowledge of how best to rule themselves, must submit to the rule of one of their own kind. Although the statesman's expertise separates him not only from his subjects but from ordinary politicians, all regimes imitate his, according to the Stranger (293e). Statesmanship provides a standard by which he distinguishes better from worse in human affairs. Indeed, statesmanship is characterized by the ability to make such evaluations.

The upheaval and consequent "fall" from divine guidance that the great story recounts has many effects. It leads to the sun rising in the east and setting in the west, to seasonal changes and limited resources. It leads to sexual reproduction and aging. At the same time it robs the world of evident intelligibility. To recognize things as they are now requires effort because they are not neatly divided, with divine support for the distinctive character of each kind of being. To speak intelligently about the world we in the age of Zeus need to do much more than to look around and simply name what we see; we must seek the invisible, the "bodiless things" that give recognizable character to material beings. Moreover, we must seek out absent responses to felt need. The two ages, the age of Chronos and that of Zeus, correspond very roughly to the pre-myth part of the dialogue and what follows it. To be sure, the Elean Stranger's method in the part of the dialogue that precedes the story is far from being so simple as to look around and name things. As in the *Sophist*, a supposed whole like all art or science in general is presumed to contain what is

sought, and it is divided "down the middle" until the object is found. The method deliberately excludes evaluative judgment. In the age of Chronos, by contrast, everything that is would be good and for that reason alone evaluative distinctions would be out of place. The resemblance between the image of the Chronion cosmos and the Stranger's assumptions when he applies his method becomes clearer if one considers that the method assumes what is sought to be given and accessible by neat two-part separation. The Stranger must simply divide correctly and appropriately name the parts. The story indicates, however, that before divine intervention returns the cosmos to its orderly state, intelligibility remains elusive. Intellectual discipline may not suffice to enable us to name and classify correctly what we try to identify. Oddly, then, if there is ever a time and place in which the Stranger's cutting method offers an appropriate path of inquiry, the myth suggests that it is in the divinely-ruled and orderly cosmos when time runs in reverse. During this epoch the different spirit leaders (*daimonia)* for different kinds of beings assure their distinctness from one another (271d).

Immediate precision about the human things belongs then not merely to gods but to a mythical pre-historical (and, I suspect, sub-human) stage of existence where everything is in its proper place. In this context precise speech about all parts of the cosmos is like counting. Each unit or kind would require no distinguishing character other than its number, or rather its place in the mathematically structured whole. This is the world of ambitious scientists' and the early Pythagoreans' dreams. The dialectician Socrates seeks in the *Phaedrus* would face no challenges here; the skilled butcher would be out of work (cf.255e). Visible joints, both physiological and intelligible, offer themselves to the knife in a way that allows for neat cuts: they are well-defined and easy to articulate. But where

there is no ambiguity and the lines between different beings are already drawn there would likely be not much to say about them. Some kinds of things are good to eat (i.e. vegetables) and some to rest one's head on, perhaps. If all beings are like the so-called "humans" of this age in that they spring forth already complete in their being, there would be no occasion to recognize nascent beings striving to be fully what they are. The apparent look of any one thing would be identical to its nature or character, to its form *(eidos)*.

In the age of Zeus, our age, knowledge is manifestly more difficult to attain than in the age I have been describing. Not only are there nascent living beings that can best be understood in light of the mature form they strive to develop - and this form is not always obvious: think of caterpillars and butterflies - but inorganic materials are intermixed and difficult to identify. Some resist classification and demand that we revise our system to include them. The process of revision appears endless and may be so necessarily, for the objects of inquiry themselves undergo change. Similarly, modern science, in some ways akin to the Stranger's methodological approach to knowledge, explains a great deal, to be sure. It falls short especially when the questions that arise concern goals and their worthiness. It fails to address the difficult task for human inquirers of taking account of their own character, including the desire to know. It is insufficient to say, along with the Chronian beings, that what is must be good.

The two mythical epochs seem to correspond, if perhaps crudely, not only to the Stranger's pre- and post- myth approaches to statesmanship in the dialogue but also to the distinction between pre-Socratic confidence that nature lends itself to direct examination and the disillusion with natural philosophy that led to Socrates' 'second sailing' which he describes

in the *Phaedo*. The course of the dialogue in the *Statesman* reflects something like the Socratic turn by radically revising the method of precise scientific cutting with which it begins (the Stranger still uses the method) and at the same time using the myth to move toward another kind of thinking that includes the development of arts. Later (292b-e), the Stranger and young Socrates revive the claim that the true statesman must possess a science, and precision comes to have a new meaning. Rather than "cutting down the middle while abstracting from preferences and distinctions of merit," as the Stranger insisted in the pre-myth part of the dialogue, the statesman exemplifies what it means to seek the mean as the fitting, and his art cannot be understood independently of this mean.*

II. Images, Error and Ends (The Story as the Key to the Dialogue)

It is risky to attempt to demythologize a myth or a story, to glean its meaning in rational terms from its poetic presentation. One risk is that its real meaning is not simply a rational teaching but rather lies in the effect it has on the reader's soul. As I have indicated above, one of the effects the Stranger hopes the story will have on young Socrates is to bring home to him how urgently humans need one who possesses the statesman's art to guide them. Young Socrates demonstrates his acceptance of the need for a statesman when he endorses the new definition of statesmanship as "the art of voluntary ruling over voluntary herd-animals" (276e). (This is the second definition the Stranger offers of the statesman in the dialogue. The first, you may remember, was: the part of the grazing science of 'non-mixing becoming' assigned to the two-footed herd of humans (267c).) Young Socrates expects others to submit voluntarily too. The end of the story seems intended to arouse even in readers both fear of violent death by savage attack and gratitude for the arts that

minimize the danger. Not only must the statesman protect the men and women of a particular community from violent destruction but he alone, according to the Stranger, knows how to improve them, to make them "better from worse." There is a potential problem here: to submit voluntarily requires that one recognize that one cannot successfully rule oneself. But those who need most to be governed tend to be most recalcitrant. The problem yields to a paradoxical claim, namely that those who wholly lack the art of rule and therefore urgently need the statesman may indeed recognize him if he appears. If the age of Chronos is taken as the image of the end of human rule, the story will enable young Socrates and the reader to do more: they will be able to recognize the end of government in its general character and even to become devoted to that end. The great story then illustrates the possibility that an image can illuminate a true standard so well that even those who cannot attain it themselves can recognize and admire others who see it more clearly. But the problem of the most recalcitrant humans, of course, remains.

Immediately after presenting his story the Stranger uses it to critique the first part of the dialogue. He is open now about having a purpose in telling the story and designing it accordingly. It will make visible the one fitting ruler of human beings, he says (275b). He goes on: the cuts of the first part of the dialogue involved a very great error that the myth enables him to expose and a smaller one as well. Before they can make further progress in identifying the statesman the two participants in the dialogue must acknowledge their earlier neglect of the fact that the herdsman they defined in the first part must be divine. The statesman (or herdsman) they described and his herd differ in almost every respect. This makes sense only if the statesman ruled in a time when perfect harmony prevailed among his undistinguished charges, and this time could be none other than the age of

Chronos, when "humans" were born from the earth, like plants. The herdsman then was more than a herdsman: he was either in charge of the winding of the cosmos as a whole or he was a *daimon* subordinate to the demiurge who governed the whole cosmos. Assuming he was the human herdsman was the Stranger's and young Socrates' first error. The statesman of the current age, by contrast, is surely human and he governs men and women in an age of troubles and potential conflict. But how will he govern? We know only that the science of statesmanship the Stranger and young Socrates seek is not to be found in an array of established sciences by means of a simple method suited only to homogeneous materials. It must be sought in varied responses to heterogeneous threats to humanity.

The problem we now face corresponds to the second error: in the early part of the dialogue the Stranger and young Socrates gave no account of *how* the statesman would rule. The problem is that he must achieve an end that is not anywhere yet visible. The latter part of the dialogue addresses in two ways the difficulty of how a solution is recognizable before it is achieved and how a good can be sought before it is known: 1) through the paradigm of the art of weaving (which later becomes the model for statesmanship); and 2) by discussing the difference between the arithmetical mean and the mean as the fitting. I will discuss each in its turn. These apparent digressions enable the Stranger to describe the art of statesmanship, which he does not claim to possess, as a kind of weaving art which produces citizens. This presumably corrects the second error.

The discussion of weaving (1) is lengthy, perhaps unnecessarily so, and I will not recount it here in detail. Even the Stranger raises the question whether it could have been approached more efficiently (283b). Suffice it to say that weaving adapts natural materials

– the Stranger limits his account to sheep's wool - through a complex process that includes separating different kinds of wool and combining the most appropriate materials in a well-defined manner to produce cloth that is desirable both for its warmth and its beauty. In the analogy between weaving woolen cloaks and forming a city, the Stranger compares the potentially courageous and moderate people who compose the city to the warp and the woof respectively. Alone, neither is virtuous despite their tendencies toward particular virtues. Both, according to the Stranger, would lead the city into slavery if they had their way – the courageous by their belligerence will not accept appropriate boundaries to their ambition, while the moderate through their excessive love of peace (307e, 308a) will abandon the city's defense. The potentially moderate have an *eros* for peace (307e), the Stranger says. (This is, by the way, the only mention of *eros* in the dialogue.)

Despite the Stranger's criticism of his own 'very great' error, the defense of the statesman as a weaver brings back some of the character of the divine herdsman who has supposedly abandoned humanity in the age of Zeus. Men and women who live under his rule take on some of the character of sheep. Even their mates must be determined by statesmanship. Furthermore, the statesman's eugenic plan includes eliminating inappropriate "material" for the city: "whoever is incapable of sharing in a manly and moderate character and everything else that pertains to virtue" (308e), i.e., humans who are so reckless and godless that they could never be citizens, are simply thrown out. Those whose submissiveness is in excess of the proper degree for citizenship become slaves. The 'proper degree' must then be discernible, just like the distinguishing characteristics of usable wool. The Stranger claims that there can be no virtuous human individual outside the city or beyond the influence of the statesman. It is almost as though the statesman brings the human as we

know it into being. Surely citizens are formed and not already present prior to the statesman's art. He must possess the sort of understanding that would allow him to read the 'great story' actively, as a key to combining the two different ages of man. The statesman's art of combining or weaving citizens illustrates in turn how the non-identical units of the world Zeus fails to rule can be made intelligible if not fully and definitively known. In other words, it is an image of dialectic. This helps to explain why the dialogue has so little to say about practical politics. I will have more to say later on the role of dialectic in the dialogue.

The Stranger uses the lengthy discussion of weaving to raise the question how to measure the appropriate length of an account and by analogy any measurable quantity (2). Together the story and the weaving paradigm allow him to articulate the standard that governs the rest of the inquiry. He now distinguishes between the use of the words "greater" and "lesser" to refer simply to relative size –" the greater is greater than nothing other than the lesser"(283e) – and the evaluation of good and bad according to whether some coming-into-being achieves, exceeds or falls short of the mean or the fitting. The mean or the "fitting" came up first in the dialogue in the context of the evaluation of the myth (277b) where the Stranger critiques its "amazing bulk", but the mean becomes a focus for the conversation later, in the heart of the dialogue (283b- 287b). Not only did the Stranger go into detail about the art of weaving for the sake of the mean that comes into focus here, but now he reveals that they are not pursuing even the art of the statesman for its own sake. There can be no art without the mean, but however important arts are to good human life - young Socrates is sure they are indispensable (299e) – everything the Stranger and young Socrates do together is for the sake of "becoming more dialectical

about all things" (285d). The account, the Stranger says, "...urges us ...first to honor the pursuit itself of being able to divide by forms and ... to take seriously an account, even if it be told at great length, when it makes the listener more capable of discovery" (286e; cf. *Sophist* 253d). He criticizes those who acknowledge the importance of measure in everything that becomes while they fail to cut according to forms (*eide).* The implication is that to measure every kind of thing by the same tool or standard is the error most in need of correction. He does not allude here to the method of cutting but the reader may well think of it as an example, if not of a measure, of a method indiscriminately applied. The two pursue the account of the art of the statesman in an effort to show that each kind and each speech must be measured by the standard that is most fitting. Only the statesman, not the farmer, the physician, the general or the jurist, knows what is fitting for humans in a collective. The possibility of statesmanship seems to require that there be a form of the human and that the statesman, and he alone, recognizes it. But can it be that the form of the human excludes so many beings shaped like men and women, or that to be human is to be part of a governable herd? Just rule in actual cities is difficult if not impossible to attain partly because humanity is diverse.

Young Socrates receives at least a preliminary education in dialectic through the dialogue. At the same time the Stranger intends to make him, like the statesman's citizens, both manly and moderate. The Stranger chides him to develop greater moderation (*sophrosune*).; he does not force him into submission. In fact, even while criticizing young Socrates' pride he praises him for his manliness (262a). In contrast with the statesman, the Stranger announces the standard young Socrates must use to evaluate what he is learning. A speech merits blame or praise, the Stranger says, depending on how well it instructs its

participants in the activity of discerning kinds and judging each according to its own measure. The activity of discerning kinds and of allocating praise and blame are intimately interwoven, indeed inseparable. Here the Stranger seems to abandon completely the original "value-free" standard the cutting method embodied. He asserts unambiguously that dialectic cannot be divorced from the characteristic tendency of humans to distinguish better from worse, high from low. But how do those of us who lack the art of statesmanship make such distinctions appropriately? For statesmanship, understood as the art of evaluating and reforming humans, turns out to be the standard by which all laws and regimes must be measured, and all fall short. Most people evaluate regimes entirely by the wrong standards – voluntary versus involuntary submission, wealth or poverty in the rulers, whether they are few or many. As we have seen, the Stranger indicates that virtue, or at least the proper combination of moderation and manliness, appears only in the well-ruled city, the statesman's web.

The Stranger never explicitly claims to possess the knowledge that statesmanship entails. He acknowledges that perhaps everything we do is for the sake of determining how to make our lives less difficult, and implies that the choice among regimes contributes in an important way to the difficulty we experience. Therefore the two discuss which actual regimes are better and which are worse (302b). Nonetheless, all political leaders except the true statesman are sophists (303c), according to the Stranger. His account (in the second dialogue of the trilogy) began with an inquiry into sophistry. The best regime is known to us and to young Socrates, then, through its contrast with the lack of statesmanship in existing cities. Political leaders in actual regimes are here dubbed, disparagingly, 'sophists,'

even "sophists of sophists," in the Stranger's words (291c). They claim, at least implicitly, to know what they do not. In most cases they are not even aware that their claim to rule is mere pretense. In the *Sophist,* of course, philosophy is contrasted with sophistry; here it is statesmanship that corrects sophistic pretense. To begin to think like the statesman, it seems one must accept first that there is a genuine art of statesmanship and that all regimes we are familiar with lack that art. The relation between philosophical inquiry or dialectic and statesmanship, however, is still unclear.

III. The Dialogue as a (Woven) Whole

Throughout the dialogue young Socrates develops a greater appreciation of the problem that statesmanship addresses. While he begins the discussion quite willing to cooperate - perhaps with the sort of willingness that comes from the awareness of general competence (he is a successful young student) - he displays no sense of urgency. He responds well to the Stranger's criticism of false pride in human superiority and he doesn't resist being told a kind of fairy tale or engaging in the lengthy discussion that follows it. In the end, though, while he continues to display respectful submission to the Stranger's authority, something else is at work. After courageously challenging the Stranger on the grounds that citizens ought to submit voluntarily, he has found himself unable to maintain that the ruled must be persuaded and not compelled by the statesman. Young Socrates has developed precisely the sort of virtue the statesman requires and cultivates in citizens: having become aware that he does not know the art of statesmanship he apparently recognizes that he cannot reliably govern himself. He is proud enough to think that if he cannot govern himself, neither can most other men. Because he has followed the argument enough to see that

there must be a knowledge of the good for humans and that the one who possesses it is the statesman, young Socrates has become moderate (*sophron).* But his natural cooperativeness has been transformed by means very different from the way statesmanship transforms peace-loving potential citizens into moderate (*sophron*) ones. The members of the city the statesman governs seem, in the Stranger's account, more herd-like than we or young Socrates are pleased to be, more like sheep. Not only their potential virtues, moderation and courage, but they themselves are woven together through arranged marriages to produce a modified sort of being. The Stranger evidently means to indicate that unruly humans in the age of Zeus are only potentially human, and become so only in a city governed by statesmanship

In the *Republic,* Socrates indicates that the best ruler is a philosopher who must turn away from contemplation of things as they are to focus on the proper rule and education of citizens, including potential philosopher kings. In the *Statesman,* by contrast, the Stranger never discusses how actual citizens may become like their governor. While he suggests that conventional justice must be corrected by statesmanship he fails to indicate that only one who has emerged from the cave of the city to see true being may competently rule. The statesman then is not the philosopher-king of the *Republic.* Indeed justice, the main criterion for the city in speech, is not a central theme for the Elean Stranger. Instead, the Stranger attributes to the statesman extraordinary knowledge of how to rule each individual, which he must generalize into laws superior to those of any other lawgiver. The laws of the statesman must be enforced with a kind of religious rigidity that sounds approaches fanaticism. There will be no room for Socratic inquiry anywhere in the city the statesman weaves.

We have seen that in response to the great story young Socrates at first embraces the definition of statesmanship that emphasized voluntary rule over voluntary subjects. When the Stranger withdraws the criterion of voluntary submission and substitutes the expertise of the statesman young Socrates balks, but only until the Stranger reminds him that anything difficult is unlikely to be accessible to the many. The statesman possesses knowledge of the whole of the city and of all that pertains to the virtue of humans as citizens. He is not a philosopher for he already knows and does not therefore seek wisdom. Is he a genuine, discoverable being? Is there a knowledge (*episteme)* of the human that is separable from the striving for knowledge of the whole? If there is, does that knowledge justify compelling involuntary subjects to submit? Or is the Stranger still telling a tale?

It makes sense to be distrustful of any surface teaching of the *Statesman,* for it is a dialogue peculiarly characterized by error. It nearly begins with (the elder) Socrates humiliating Theodorus, young Socrates' and Theaetetus' teacher, by pointing out that he mistakenly assumes that to illuminate the character of any of the three - sophist, statesman and philosopher – is of equal worth. The mistake is characteristic of a mathematician and warns the reader that the Stranger and young Socrates may be vulnerable to this sort of oversimplification. Non-arithmetical units are not likely to be equal to one another. The first indication that the danger is pressing is very early in the dialogue where the Stranger claims there is no real difference between a statesman and the head of a household or even a slave owner. Even if the head of a household proved to be capable of ruling a city full of men and women, it would not follow that the difference between ruling slaves and ruling free men is reducible to a difference of scale.

As the dialogue proceeds the Stranger frequently corrects the account as it has emerged so far; he says they must repeatedly "go back" and make a correction. I have already mentioned the first such instance. It is after young Socrates responds to the Stranger's invitation to make the next cut by distinguishing between the rule of humans and the rule of all other animals (263b). The Stranger uses the occasion to challenge young Socrates' pride in being human. The second return is when he recollects the cuts that compose the first definition of the statesman (267a). The third and most obvious, perhaps, is when the Stranger re-introduces the question of who the statesman is after his myth or "great story" (275d). You may remember that the Stranger offers the story in response to the need to formulate an account of the statesman that will discriminate his work from that of other human caregivers. The Stranger acknowledges here that he is already part of a community before he offers the story. He is not a detached observer, merely locating statesmanship in an array of available sciences. He is in fact a kind of weaver of discourse, alternating going forward with a thread he is working with and then going back to pick up a new one as it is needed or as he becomes aware that it is not yet part of the woven stuff of his speech. The goal of statesmanship which the story was to 'make visible' must appear somehow in the weaving of the dialogue.

In the age of self-government the appropriate goals for human activity are obscure, and the great story reflects this fact. Associating the human collective with a barnyard full of pigs or chickens does not show the way. Rigorous discipline may be necessary to correct for blindness and prejudices that prevent us from acknowledging similarities between us and these animals, but humility and discipline do not suffice to make visible the proper goal. It is not hard for most of us (young Socrates, seems to be an exception) to see that the first

definition of the statesman is inadequate. The statesman, who made a joke of our similarity to pigs near the end of the first section, must somehow address the aspirations of men and women who will not laugh away their determination to escape the sty.

Experience shows that even when the need for expert guidance is pressing the desire to distinguish oneself renders people recalcitrant to the claims of statesmanship. Fear ameliorates the difficulty, and the myth the Stranger presents ends by playing on our and young Socrates' fears. But death at the hands of a hungry and savage challenger is not the typical threat to members of an already established society, and recalcitrance is not always without reason. The Stranger devotes a substantial portion of the account of statesmanship in the latter third of the dialogue to comparing the statesman to a physician whom we applaud for curing diseased patients even against their will and sometimes by violent means. Even more disconcerting than the prospect of a doctor force-feeding us medicines and performing surgery without our assent, in order to form a healthy city, as we have seen, the statesman must exclude certain human "material" just as a weaver must discard damaged or inferior wool. Among the candidates for citizenship that remain, some men and women are potentially courageous and some potentially moderate, but as we have seen the Stranger is clear that none is already virtuous. Both would risk enslaving the city. If independence from other cities is essential for happiness and virtue, then submission to the statesman's guidance is essential. The Stranger argues further that the expertise of a statesman enables him to promote the right opinions ("divine bonds") and the right marriages ("human bonds") so that the natural tendencies to vice and slavishness are thwarted. Good characters may develop within the political web the statesman alone

knows how to weave. One may well wonder whether the web is the only source of good character.

Young Socrates' pride, which led the Stranger to chastise him earlier, allows the Stranger to capture him in the web of discourse and recruit him as a defender of the statesman. The young man does not want to be duped into supporting self-interested imitators of the statesman who do not know what he knows. He does aspire to virtue and to the possession of expertise in an art - in his case mathematics. In addition, he knows that practitioners of an art who attain expert status are rare (292e). Even good chess players are not more common than one in a thousand, he avers. Young Socrates' recognition of the exclusivity of the statesman's knowledge leads him to forget that if human virtue is unachievable without statesmanship and all actual rulers are sophists, he cannot even make sense of his own and the Stranger's progress. In the interest of preserving the arts, he runs the risk of abandoning self-knowledge and submitting to tyrannical rule.

The art of weaving speech adequate to the question at hand requires that the Stranger seek knowledge of the characteristic looks of things as they appear in the age of Chronos without losing sight of the problematic character of everything that matters in the age of Zeus. If the Stranger's approach is exemplary, thinking well demands that we in effect straddle the two ages, combining in one consciousness two attitudes: the openness to things as they are that the Stranger attributes to Chronian humans along with the artful response to problems that the age of Zeus promotes. Science, at least the sort of science that includes statesmanship, requires that we be able to see beyond what is simply given to

the form that makes the given phenomena intelligible. But the question whether there is in fact a single form for the human, even as a collective being or a citizen, still remains.

The use I am making of the two ages of history distinguished in the Stranger's origin myth presumes that in thinking we are not simply restricted to our own time and place. Rather, thought allows us to combine what time separates – whether it be the birth, maturity and death of an organism or the imperfect character of contemporary life and the perfection from which it falls short. Reasoning in accord with forms (looks or *eide*) understood as completed specimens towards which particular individuals direct their striving gives us this power. The mean as a middle between equal portions (*merei*), by contrast, does little to illuminate the genuine form of a thing. To seek the mean as the fitting for that type of individual is to seek its true form. The Stranger does not possess the knowledge of statesmanship; he is simply sure enough to assert that there is such a thing. Not to recognize and much less to secure good government, but to defend the ability to think dialectically is his stated aim. Perhaps he overstates his defense of the absent statesman: is it plausible that there is a complete knowledge of humans that is independent of the knowledge of the whole of being? Can philosophy and statesmanship be divided as the Stranger claims (in the *Sophist*) he can show?

IV Conclusion: The Problem of Socrates

The larger context of the trilogy is the elder Socrates' imminent trial, apology and execution. Many of you will remember the end of the *Theaetetus,* where Socrates alludes to his duty to respond officially to Meletus' indictment the morning after the discussion which

he intends to continue nonetheless (*Theaetetus* 210 c-d). The Elean Stranger comes close to taunting Socrates about the upcoming trial. In his account of the statesman he includes an explicit reference to a figure that cannot fail to remind the reader (and the listening Socrates) of him.

> If it is evident that someone is seeking, contrary to the writings, an art of piloting ...or...the truth of medicine ...and he is sophistically devising anything whatsoever about things of this sort, ...he must be named... a talker about highfalutin things, a kind of garrulous sophist, and ...on the grounds that he is corrupting different people younger than himself and encouraging them to engage in piloting and medicine not in conformity with laws, but to rule with their own authority...anyone who wants can and is permitted to draw up an indictment and haul him before a...court of justice.

The Stranger goes on to suggest that if the talker is convicted no punishment is too harsh, for "[h]e must in no way be wiser than the laws" (299 b-d). Under the rule of inferior laws, no annoying talker who challenges prevailing authority and the ways of the city will be tolerated. But the statesman's laws too must be rigidly upheld, modified only by his superior judgment of particulars. It is likely that Socrates' trial would proceed no differently in the well-woven city than it does in Athens, for his way of life must involve examining the wisdom even of the statesman, to see whether that wisdom is genuine. Unless the statesman is open to philosophy, to the pursuit of the truth, he would do everything he could to stamp out the influence of Socrates on his followers. In the *Phaedo* Socrates calls his turn to the kind of questions we see him discuss in the Platonic dialogues his "second sailing." The Elean Stranger goes so far as to use the same term here for the unyielding enforcement of the statesman's laws. It is second best, but given that the first-best personal rule of the statesman is unachievable it must be the norm.

If there is a knowledge that merits the name of statesmanship, and if the statesman alone knows the good for humans, it makes sense to insist that his art must be given free reign. If by contrast we claim that there is no statesmanship, and hence no statesman, we human beings are left to wander aimlessly in pursuit of the good. As readers we are left with the problem of how to discern the true form of imperfect and therefore more or less deformed beings, that is, of ourselves, and how to achieve that form.

On two occasions I know of in the Platonic dialogues Socrates presents himself as a sort of statesman: in the *Gorgias* he claims to be the only one who practices true statesmanship (or at least one of very few 521d), for he speaks with a view to what is best rather than to what is most pleasant. In the *Apology,* while he avoids the term "statesman", he describes political judgments he made in the past that merit the label. These had to do with hindering bad government rather than with promoting good. He also claims to be useful to the citizens as a gadfly who provokes them to seek the best life for themselves. In the *Apology* Socratic statesmanship, if that is the proper term, focuses on individuals who must become aware of their own yearnings and prejudices in order to begin to seek the good available to them. In general, the Platonic dialogues hold out no assurance that there is a single coherent or comprehensive good for man; rather there are many goods (love, friendship, courage, justice, etc.) and each is problematic. If there is such a thing as human virtue it must include the particular virtues, but it is not clear that they form an unequivocal whole.

The Elean Stranger avoids these difficulties, but he does not escape them. He never directly addresses the question whether there is one complete virtue for human beings. He does not

discuss what virtue the statesman possesses that distinguishes him from the moderate and courageous products of his govei nment. Moreover, unlike in the *Republic,* where Socrates acknowledges the beauty of the many-colored regime of democracy, all inferior regimes here are branded as sophistic and rendered indistinguishable from one another. There seems to be no path from inferior to superior regimes or from the inferior character of an individual to virtue. And yet the fact that we can perceive at times the mean in the sense of the fitting, a faculty upon which the very possibility of the statesman depends, seems to offer precisely the path to perfection when no perfect being is already before our eyes.

In the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* the Stranger takes on something like Socrates' role as interlocutor, but he abandons Socratic inquiry even as he imitates it. He already knows the end of his discourse: his defense of statesmanship must contrast it with the activity of both the sophist and the philosopher. Despite the threefold distinction, there is no discussion of the philosopher. Rather, the ghost of the Stranger's method of two-fold division continues to haunt his search. He continues to divide into two each of the matters he takes up. The Stranger has forgotten to look beyond the now apparent division between sophist and statesman to see the often misconstrued activity of the philosopher. For the philosopher, Socrates says in the *Sophist,* appears sometimes as a sophist, sometimes as a statesman and sometimes as a madman (216d). The Stranger imitates Socratic dialectic while stifling the wonder that motivates it. Is he a sophist, a statesman or a philosopher? Is he mad?

The Stranger closes the dialogue with this formulation of the results of the statesman's rule:

> ...manly and moderate human beings [are] woven together by direct intermixture whenever the royal art brings together their life into a common one by unanimity and friendship and completes the best and most magnanimous of all webs...and by wrapping everyone else in the cities in it, slaves and free,[the statesman] holds them together by this plaiting, and to the extent that it's suitable for a city to become happy, by omitting nothing that ...belongs to this, [he]rules and supervises. (311 b-c)

It seems appropriate to ask to what degree it *is* suitable, or even possible, for a city to become happy. But the Stranger ends the *Statesman* dogmatically. Those readers who are not persuaded by the Stranger's praise of statesmanship as he presents it must look beyond the dialogue. We are prepared both for Socrates' *Apology* and for its failure to save him from the harsh judgment of the city he considers worthy of his aid.

Lacking both a definitive account of the complete or perfect human being and the guidance of a true statesman, young Socrates has learned two potentially conflicting facts about himself: that he hates slavery and that he would submit to one whose knowledge merits deference. Perhaps he can rule himself if he takes the Stranger's story as a guide, looking at times toward the perfect age of Chronos and at others toward the "boundless sea of dissimilarity" toward which modern life tends. Perhaps a knowledge that merits the name statesmanship will rescue us from this boundless sea. But like young Socrates, we find ourselves in the middle between utter ignorance and full knowledge, where at least the experience of getting further along, acquiring greater clarity than we had before, is available to us. That clarity is primarily about what we do not know and have not achieved. Such clarity is *aporetic*. It confronts humans with their beast-like and their god-like character at once. As the example of the elder Socrates shows, it alone provides for the release from tyranny.