

THE SOPHIST IN PLATO'S *STATESMAN*

THE SOPHIST IN PLATO'S *STATESMAN*: AN ARGUMENT FOR THE TYRANT AS THE
FALSE IMITATOR OF THE STATESMAN

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LAY ABSTRACT:

The use of the term “sophist” in Plato’s *Statesman* has been understood to apply to all rulers who are not statesmen. Instead, I argue that only the tyrant in the *Statesman* is a sophist. I base this argument on the final definition of the sophist in Plato’s *Sophist* and the discussion of imitation in the *Sophist*.

I use my narrower interpretation of the term “sophist” in the *Statesman* to argue that Plato’s purpose in the discussion of laws and regimes in the *Statesman* is to protect the city from the tyrant as a sophist. This requires that the people of the city recognize their own ignorance and completely forbid any type of political leadership that would make the city vulnerable to a false statesman.

This argument is important as it shows that part of Plato’s solution to the problem of tyranny is self-awareness of our lack of political knowledge.

ABSTRACT:

The use of the term “sophist” in Plato’s *Statesman* has been understood to apply to all rulers who are not statesmen. They do not have the statesman’s expert knowledge but they all imitate the statesman. This seems to be consistent with the idea that a sophist is a false imitator.

I argue against this interpretation and instead insist that only the tyrant in the *Statesman* is a sophist. I base this argument on the final definition of the sophist in Plato’s *Sophist* and the discussion of imitation in the *Sophist*. The tyrant is an important figure in the *Statesman*, even though he is only mentioned briefly. He is the ruler who pretends to be a statesman so that he can rule with the statesman’s power which is above the law.

I use my narrower interpretation of the term “sophist” in the *Statesman* to argue that Plato’s purpose in the discussion of laws and regimes in the *Statesman* is to protect the city from the tyrant as a sophist. This requires that the people of the city recognize their own ignorance and completely forbid any type of political leadership that would make the city vulnerable to the false statesman. Instead, they imitate the statesman by their complete obedience to the law.

The idea of complete obedience to the law, without any room for modification or change, is not politically appealing. However, it is important that part of Plato’s solution to the problem of tyranny is self-awareness of our lack of political knowledge.

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DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

In this thesis I show why the discussion of sophistry in Plato's *Statesman* has been misunderstood and offer a solution to the problem. I argue that the sophist in the *Statesman* is the tyrant by showing how the tyrant is connected to Plato's *Sophist*. Based on the content of the *Sophist*, I argue that the discussion of the sophist and the tyrant is important for understanding part of the political theory of the *Statesman*.

Introduction

In the *Statesman*, Plato's Eleatic Visitor argues that the statesman's constitution is defined by the statesman's expert knowledge of what is best for the city (293d9-e2). There are many in the city who claim to have a share in the statesman's expertise, so much of the text is concerned with defining the statesman and separating him from his competitors. In the statesman's city, there are experts who think that their craft is a part of statesmanship. Distinguishing them from the statesman requires showing how their expertise is subservient to the statesman's expertise. My thesis will focus on a section of the *Statesman* where the statesman is distinguished from other types of rulers, which requires a different approach. Rulers who are not true statesmen have the role in the city that requires a statesman's knowledge. Yet they do not have this knowledge. Instead, they imitate the statesman. The lawful rulers imitate the statesman's constitution by strictly obeying the laws. The lawless rulers think that they have the statesman's knowledge and they therefore ignore the laws, bringing destruction to their cities. I treat the lawful rulers and some of the lawless rulers as sincere imitators since they believe that they have the statesman's knowledge

However, some of the lawless rulers are sophists who are insincere and pretend to be the statesman despite knowing otherwise. The discussion of rulers and their constitutions begins because the visitor realizes that there is a group that imitates the statesman's knowledge. He calls these people "the greatest magicians of the sophists" (291c3). The visitor then goes on to explain the rule and constitution of the statesman, as well as the nature of rulers and constitutions without a statesman. These include rule by a lawful king, aristocracy, democracy, tyranny, oligarchy, and lawless democracy. At the end of this lengthy discussion of rulers and constitutions, the visitor states that all of the rulers who are not statesmen should be divided

away from the statesman like men from a god (303b4-5). In the next passage, he states that those who imitate the statesman in other constitutions should be considered the greatest of sophists (303b8-c5). In general, these comments regarding the sophists have been read as referring to all rulers who are not statesmen. It seems that they are all pretending to be statesmen because they rule without knowledge. Calling these non-statesmen “sophists” therefore seems appropriate. The visitor does not seem to pick and choose which rulers are sophists. Instead, he seems to put *all* rulers who do not have the statesman’s knowledge in the same pile, and to call them *all* sophists. The name of “sophist” is a negative term that marks their deception and lack of expertise.

However, the conclusion that all non-statesmen rulers are sophists is complicated for two reasons. First, the immediately preceding discussion develops a strong distinction within the class of rulers who are not true statesmen, between those who are lawful and those who are lawless. Rulers who do not claim to have knowledge beyond the law, such as the lawful king, are not making false claims to the statesman’s knowledge. Second, the *Statesman* is a continuation of a discussion began in the *Sophist* that ends with a specific definition of a sophist. In the *Sophist*, a sophist is an imitator who pretends to have knowledge even though he knows, or suspects, that he is ignorant. However, most of the imperfect rulers distinguished in the *Statesman* fail to fit the definition of the sophist in the *Sophist*. In fact, I will argue, the only kind of imperfect ruler who conforms to the account of the sophist in the *Sophist* is the tyrant.

Main Claim

In this thesis I argue that the only ruler who is a sophist in the *Statesman* is the tyrant. My argument is based largely on the definition of “sophist” in the *Sophist*. I will argue that, when the final definition of the sophist in the *Sophist* is compared with the rulers described in the

Statesman, only the tyrant fits the definition. If there was no instance of correlation between the definition of the sophist in the *Sophist* and the use of the term in the *Statesman*, then it would be appropriate to assume that the visitor is using the term “sophist” in two different ways. Asserting that all rulers are sophists would make the use of “sophist” in the *Statesman* very different from the definition in the *Sophist*. The radical difference in the meaning of the term “sophist” between the two texts would be surprising considering how closely related the texts are to each other. In particular, they have the same cast of characters, are connected by narrative and by dramatic setting, and are almost universally agreed to have been written together late in Plato’s career.

I will make the claim in this thesis that there is an instance of correlation between the sophist in the *Sophist* and the tyrant in the *Statesman*. I will explore how strong the correlation is, and whether the other rulers are excluded from being sophists in the way that I claim. If my argument is successful, then the term “sophist” is used in the same way between the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. The *Statesman*’s tyrant would then be an example of a sophist. This argument creates a stronger unity between the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. It also provides a better basis for understanding the role of imitation and the danger of tyranny that the visitor discusses in the *Statesman*. Or so I will argue.

Thesis Structure

This thesis has four chapters. I begin with a discussion of how the sophist has been discussed in the literature on the *Statesman*. In my second chapter, I present some of the arguments regarding sophistry and imitation from the *Sophist*. My third chapter argues that the sophist in the *Statesman* is the tyrant. My fourth chapter highlights some advantages of my interpretation.

Chapter One presents the arguments for the standard account, on which the term “sophist” is used in the *Statesman* to refer to all rulers. I will focus on arguments presented by Kenneth Dorter and Christopher J. Rowe. I will discuss some of the issues that arise from their interpretations of the sophist in the *Statesman*. I will then sketch in outline my argument for a narrow interpretation of the sophist in the *Statesman*. My argument will be that a narrow interpretation is able to form a stronger link between the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* in regards to the sophist. It also provides a greater consistency between the discussion of constitutions and the accusation of sophistry, since it does not conflate all rulers into the same type.

Chapter Two focuses on the discussion of the sophist in the *Sophist*. The chapter begins with the dramatic context of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. In the introduction to the *Sophist*, Socrates asks the visitor to describe the differences between the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher. Socrates states that they are difficult to tell apart and are often confused with each other. These problems provide the context for both the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. Because of the focus on the sophist as an imitator in the *Statesman*, I analyze the arguments regarding imitation and sophistry in the *Sophist*. I focus on the final definition of the sophist, which, I argue, is the same definition that should apply to the *Statesman*. The final definition states that the sophist is an imitator who pretends to have knowledge while he only has ignorance. What sets him apart from others who confuse opinions or beliefs with knowledge is his suspicion that he does not have knowledge. The visitor describes him as “insincere,” because he has some understanding of his own falsehood. This definition forms the foundation for discussing the sophist in the *Statesman*.

In Chapter Three I analyze the discussion of sophistry, constitutions, and rulers in the *Statesman* (291d1-303d2). The sophist is the imitator of the statesman, so I focus on explaining

why the sophist's imitation is different from the imitation of other constitutions. The visitor claims that all constitutions that are not the statesman's constitution are imitations, as only the statesman has knowledge of what is good for the city. The statesman's constitution is adaptable and fluid because it is based on his knowledge of what is best for the city at any particular time. Ideally, the statesman would directly rule in each situation. When this is not possible, he uses laws to rule in his absence. Despite the statesman's relaxed relationship with law, other constitutions imitate the statesman's constitution through their lawfulness. The various second-best constitutions follow their laws without exception and do not allow any changes in those laws to take place. Lawless constitutions, by contrast, imitate the statesman badly. Their rulers may claim that they have the statesman's knowledge so that they can act outside the law. The worst city to live in is ruled by the lawless tyrant, who is a single ruler, just like the statesman or the law-abiding king. The tyrant pretends to have the statesman's knowledge of what is good so that he can rule without obligation to follow the law. In this chapter, I argue that the tyrant, and *only* the tyrant, is a sophist who imitates the statesman. Other rulers of lawless regimes may claim the statesman's knowledge, but only the tyrant deliberately creates the false appearance of the statesman. To defend my view, I focus on showing how imitation through law by the second-best regimes is primarily a defense against the rise of the tyrant. Lawfulness is not meant to imitate the statesman's constitution directly, but rather to prevent the destruction of the city by the worst kind of sophist, the would-be tyrant.

In my fourth chapter I highlight the advantages of my narrow interpretation for understanding the sophist in the *Statesman*. First, my interpretation shows a point of consistency between the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* that is anchored in the original premise of both texts: describing the differences between the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher. A substantial

reason for Socrates' and the visitor's focus on these people is shown by the visitor's efforts to protect the city from the sophist as tyrant. Second, I argue that passages in the *Gorgias* fit well with my claim that the sophist can be understood as a malicious politician who creates an illusion of knowledge that fools the people of the city. In particular, this text has some arguments regarding these topics which I use to suggest a stronger link between the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. My argument is that the *Gorgias* shows a similar, narrow usage of a political "sophist." This means that my narrower interpretation is compatible with another account of the sophist in a political context. Finally, I argue that the discussion of law, rulers, and sophists in the *Statesman* is not primarily concerned with preparing the city for the arrival of the statesman, as is often supposed. Instead, I argue that this section provides very little information on how a statesman would emerge or be recognized. Instead, most of the section in the *Statesman* is concerned with equipping the city with tools to protect it from the false statesman and for recognizing his false imitator. If I am right that this aspect of the *Statesman* is not unrealistic, overly idealist, and implausible, as might be supposed, then it may be pragmatic and potentially politically relevant.

Chapter One: Statement of the Problem

Introduction

Most scholars who have written on Plato's *Statesman* have supposed that in this dialogue the visitor uses the term "sophist" to apply to all rulers who are not true statesmen or to all lawless rulers.¹ This is understandable since this is what the visitor seems to say in an important passage:

VISITOR: So then we must also remove those who participate in all these constitutions, except for the one based on knowledge, as being, not statesmen, but experts in faction; we must say that, as presiding over insubstantial images, on the largest scale, they are themselves of the same sort, and that as the greatest imitators and magicians they turn out to be the greatest sophists among the sophists.

YOUNG SOCRATES: This term "sophist" looks as if it has been only too correctly turned around against the so-called experts in statesmanship.

(303b8-c7)²

However, despite what seems self-evident in this passage, I think that this standard view is mistaken. Instead, I will argue that the "greatest sophists" are tyrants and not any of the other

¹ Melissa Lane, *Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 160; C.J. Rowe in "The Treatment of Non-ideal Constitutions in Plato's *Politicus*: Further Considerations," *Political Inquiry* 28 (2006):110; Kenneth Dorter in *Form and Good in Plato's Eleatic Dialogues: The Parmenides, Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994): 218; Stanley Rosen in *Plato's Statesman: The Web of Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995): 149; Seth Bernardete *The Being of the Beautiful: Plato's Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984): III.138. Rowe's and Dorter's arguments are discussed in detail in this chapter. I have not encountered any deviations from this reading. The reasons for this reading are not homogenous, though, as I attempt to show in my analysis of Rowe and Dorter. References to sophists in the *Statesman* have been largely neglected, and surprisingly so, given that they at least initially seem inconsistent with what is said about sophists in the (closely related) dialogue the *Sophist*, as well as with some aspects of the *Statesman* itself. This is a bit surprising considering how differently the sophist is treated between the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* according to the standard view. The apparent differences are passed over, which may demonstrate a general belief that the visitor is not consistent between the two texts and therefore is not questioned by readers in this regard. My argument focuses on showing that the references to sophists are important and can be reconciled with the *Sophist*.

² Plato, *Statesman*, trans. C.J. Rowe (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1999). Line numbers here and throughout are those of the *Oxford Classical Texts* edition of the cited works.

rulers discussed in the *Statesman*. To set out the arguments for the standard view, I will examine two scholars who have written on the depiction of the sophist in the *Statesman*. Most scholars do not discuss the references to sophists in the *Statesman* beyond stating that “sophist,” in this context, applies to all rulers who are not statesmen. I choose to analyze Kenneth Dorter’s and Christopher J. Rowe’s arguments because they present the most detailed reasoning in support of their position. I will emphasize how they both believe that the above passage and the surrounding discussion of law speak to the intentions of the visitor’s wider argument. Once I have presented Dorter’s and Rowe’s arguments for the standard view, I will address some of the problems that arise from the standard account of the sophist in the *Statesman* and the *Sophist*. In my discussion I will also sometimes refer to the standard reading of “sophist” in the *Statesman* as the “broad” reading, because the term “sophist” is used in a general way to mark out all non-statesmen. In contrast, I name my own view the “narrow interpretation.”

In this chapter, I will focus on showing that on the standard interpretation, the visitor’s claims about sophists in the passage quoted above seem inconsistent with what he says about sophists in the *Sophist*, and also with ideas he had expressed earlier in the *Statesman*. I will argue for a narrow reading that relieves the tension and eliminates the conflicts between these passages, and therefore should be preferred for that reason. Chapter Two will describe the visitor’s argument in the *Sophist* with an emphasis on the final definition of the sophist. Chapters Three and Four will show that the discussion of sophists in the *Statesman* is an important part of the visitor’s argument for why the city should protect itself from the imitators of the statesman.³

³ In *Method and Politics* (1998), Melissa Lane discusses some of the reasons why the *Statesman* has not been a popular political text (page 6). One of her points is that the visitor’s city is flawed since it is searching for a statesman without being able to distinguish the true statesman from the false imitator. The visitor’s city is naïve and vulnerable. Without a proper method for developing or recognizing a genuine statesman, the text is politically useless. In response, I will argue in this thesis that the visitor’s discussion of sophists arises from the importance of defending the city from the statesman’s false imitators.

SECTION ONE: Arguments for the Standard View of “Sophist” in the *Statesman*

1.1.1 Dorter

In *Form and Good in Plato's Eleatic Dialogues*, Kenneth Dorter argues that the discussion of sophistry in the *Statesman* completes the separation of the sophist from the statesman which Plato had left incomplete at the end of the *Sophist*.⁴ The trajectory for his argument begins in his book with his discussion of the *Sophist* and ends with his presentation of the *Statesman*. The *Sophist*, which, as Dorter notes, is commonly considered the prequel to the *Statesman*, begins with Socrates asking the visitor whether the sophist, statesman, and philosopher are the same or different from each other. The visitor's project, therefore, is to show that they are three distinct things, despite their conflation in common opinion (216a-217c).⁵ Dorter's argument regarding the sophist in the *Statesman* is founded on his reading of the last division in the *Sophist*, which involves the division of production (266d-268d). On the one hand, gods and humans produce originals, and on the other hand, they produce imitations. Some imitations are likenesses which are similar to the original, while other imitations are appearances which seem like the original but are distortions. Sophists create an appearance of the wise man through imitation. However, the sophist's imitation is based on belief and ignorance rather than knowledge. Many imitations are based on belief rather than knowledge, but most belief-mimics sincerely believe that they have knowledge. What makes the sophist different is that he is “suspicious and fearful that he doesn't know the things that he pretends in front of others to know” (268a4-5). The sophist is therefore modest, while the others are conceited. Dorter sees this portrayal of the sophist as charitable on the part of Plato, but problematic. If the goal of the *Sophist* is to separate the sophist from the philosopher, then this division has clouded their

⁴ Kenneth Dorter, *Form and Good*, 170.

⁵ Plato, *Sophist*, trans. Nicholas White (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1993).

difference.⁶ The philosopher resides in the place between wisdom and ignorance (*Symposium* 203e-204b). But now the sophist is also found there, because he suspects that he does not have knowledge. The philosopher and the sophist therefore seem to have the same definition, because of their ironic relationship with belief and opinion.⁷ The definition of the sophist in the *Sophist* is therefore too broad to complete the task of distinguishing between the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher.⁸

According to Dorter, this problem is resolved in the *Statesman*. The separation of all other rulers from the true statesman “provides a convincing criterion for distinguishing between the genuine knower and the sophist.”⁹ The visitor has solved the problem of separating the sophist from the philosopher and the statesman by shifting the criterion for sophistry from appearances to images in general. In the *Sophist*, the sophist created appearances. Appearances seem to be the same as the original, but are actually distortions if the original is seen correctly. Only likenesses imitate the original correctly. In the *Statesman*, this distinction is dissolved. Anything that is not the original is associated with sophistry. All rulers are creating an image of the statesman’s knowledge. Some do it well, like the lawful king, while others do it poorly, like the tyrant. All rulers are defined by their relationship to knowledge; they are statesmen because they have knowledge, or they are sophists because they create images that imitate knowledge. For Dorter, the knowledge of the statesman is defined as knowledge of the good. The “science of

⁶Dorter, *Form and Good*, 169. The details and importance of this context are discussed in Chapter Two.

⁷ Instead of translating the sophist’s belief-mimicry as “insincere” (Nicholas White’s translation), Dorter translates it as “ironic” (εἰρωνικόν). However, he considers irony as modesty, rather than deception which White emphasizes. The sophist’s irony is based on his recognition of the limits of his understanding. Dorter argues that this is similar to Socratic irony, which is based on knowing that one does not know. Socratic irony could also be understood as deceptive but Dorter insists on a positive rather than negative interpretation of irony. The sophist is set apart from the simplicity (ἀπλοῦν) of those who believe that they have knowledge when they only have opinions (Dorter 168). See Figure 1 on page 24, step 8. In Chapter 2 I will analyze the final division of the *Sophist* where this occurs. I interpret it as insincere and insist that it is an important part of the definition of the sophist. This is one of the factors that I give importance to in arguing that not all rulers are sophists.

⁸Dorter, *Form and Good*, 170.

⁹Ibid., 218.

the mean” knows what is good in all situations.¹⁰ In contrast, the images created by the statesman’s imitators are static and inflexible.¹¹ The statesman’s imitators do not have knowledge of the mean, and therefore can only present inadequate images. This is what makes them sophists.

On Dorter’s interpretation, knowledge of the good is what separates the statesman from the sophist in the *Statesman*. This criterion is not invoked in the *Sophist*, since the statesman needed to be introduced for this distinction to make sense.¹² Once the nature of the statesman’s knowledge is presented, the imitation of his knowledge is understood to be sophistry.

Like me, Dorter seeks to understand the discussion of the sophist in the *Statesman* by connecting it to the earlier discussion of the sophist in the *Sophist*. However, there are several problems with his interpretation. Most important is the loss of the sophist’s irony. While the division of images into likenesses and appearances is abandoned in the *Statesman*, it is not clear why the sophist’s relationship with knowledge is changed. Rulers of lawful regimes strictly obey their laws at all times. They do not try to act above the law, as rulers in lawless regimes do, and are therefore fully constrained by their lawfulness. This does not appear to be ironic, and is not insincere. The rulers of lawless constitutions are ignorant of their ignorance (302a8-b3) in the same way as the simple people from the *Sophist* (268a1-6). The only ruler who approaches the irony, or insincerity, of the sophist as depicted in the *Sophist* is the tyrant. He is also ignorant, but he is able to imitate the statesman to the point of persuading the city that he has the statesman’s knowledge (301b10-c4). It is imaginable that there are historical tyrants who do not have this awareness of their ignorance. However, the tyrant is only briefly described. His main trait is that

¹⁰Dorter, *Form and Good*, 220.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 219.

¹²*Ibid.*, 218.

he is pretending to be the statesman (301c1). This is useful for the visitor's purposes and can help to explain how a tyrant gains power by appealing to a political ideal.

In addition, the criticism that the definition of the sophist in the *Sophist* is too broad also seems to apply to Dorter's reading of the sophist in the *Statesman*. If all who are without knowledge are sophists, as Dorter claims, then it seems this should include the philosopher, based on Dorter's own argument regarding the *Sophist*. The philosopher is between knowledge (or wisdom) and ignorance. In this case, the philosopher is now a sophist. But this does not seem too concerning for Dorter, as his interpretation of the *Sophist* has made the term sophist so general that it does not have any bite of criticism left. Dorter's interpretation therefore has problems because he defines the term "sophist" so broadly that it loses its customary negative connotation.

1.1.2 Rowe

C.J. Rowe's interpretation of the 303b10-c4 passage in the *Statesman* underwent changes between his translation with commentary in 1995 and his paper "The Treatment of Non-Ideal Constitutions in Plato's *Politicus*: Further Considerations" in 2006. In the 1995 commentary, Rowe states that the accusations of sophistry in the *Statesman* are directed towards the lawless regimes.¹³ In order to understand his interpretation, it will be useful to begin with the visitor's classification of political regimes. The visitor begins the discussion of law by first dividing types of regimes: monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, tyranny, and oligarchy (291d-292a). He rejects the common criteria for defining such regimes along lines of wealth and consent. Rather, the first measure of a regime is whether its ruler has knowledge. Only the statesman has expert knowledge in kingship, and so his is the only regime ruled by knowledge. The regimes that are not ruled by knowledge have two criteria according to which they are divided: number of rulers

¹³ Plato, *Statesman*, trans. C.J. Rowe (Warminster: Aris and Philips Ltd., 1995).

and lawfulness. The lawful monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy have their lawless counterparts in tyranny, oligarchy, and lawless democracy. The lawful regimes are defined by a complete rejection of changes to law.

In his 1995 commentary, Rowe thought that interpreting the lawful rulers as “experts in faction” seems contrary to their rigid refusal to bend any law for any reason. Instead, Rowe saw the accusation against the lawless constitutions as an accusation against all “existing politicians.”¹⁴ This would mean that the description of the lawful regime does not apply to any state that has existed. The accusation of sophistry is directed against all existing rulers because of their lawlessness, and does not include the lawful constitutions.

In contrast, in his 2006 article Rowe argues that the phrase “all these constitutions” is not ambiguous: “The negative judgment on all ‘participants in all these [non-ideal] constitutions’ is further, and unmistakably, stressed in the following lines [of the text].”¹⁵ Here, Rowe is interested in the absolute separation of all constitutions from the statesman’s. A key reason for this change hinges on Rowe’s defense of his heterodox translation of 300c5-7.¹⁶ The orthodox translation has been that laws, which are written by people who know “so far as possible,” are “imitations of the truth.”¹⁷ This would mean that laws in general approximate the truth, or are based on partial knowledge of the good.¹⁸ While this argument is attractive as it makes the

¹⁴ Plato, *Statesman*, trans. Rowe (1995), commentary pg. 236.

¹⁵ Rowe, “Non-Ideal Constitutions,” pg. 110. I believe that the “following lines” referred to are Young Socrates’ comment that is quoted above

¹⁶ Rowe’s translation (300c5-7, Hackett, 1997): “Well, imitations of the truth of each and every thing would be these, wouldn’t they – the things issuing from those who know which have been written down so far as they can be?”

Alternative translation (attached as footnote 65 in Hackett, 1997): “Well, wouldn’t those laws – written with the advice of people who know so far as is possible – be imitations of the truth on each subject?”

The orthodox translation assumes that the visitor is endorsing laws *per se*. This is based on referring *tauta* back to 303c1-2: *nomous kai sungrammata* (“Non-ideal Constitutions” pg. 105). Rowe instead argues that *tauta* refers forward to *ta para tôn eidotôn eis dunamin einai gegrammena*.

¹⁷ Rowe, “Non-ideal Constitutions,” 105, 106.

¹⁸ The orthodox argument is used as the basis for the idea that the *Statesman* is a transitional text between Plato’s utopianism and pragmatism (Julia Annas, introduction to Waterfield’s translation of the *Statesman* (New York:

second-best constitution quite good, Rowe argues instead that only the statesman's laws are imitations of the truth. The second-best constitutions are only second-best because they prevent the decline into lawlessness. Their laws are not inherently good. Instead, they can be damaging since they do not allow research or development of expertise in politics. Rowe includes the accusation of sophistry at 303c-d as part of his defense of his translation. If the second-best constitutions are sophistical, then it seems unlikely that their laws are approximating the good.

At first I had understood 300c5-7 to be defending the orthodox translation. This seemed to be a piece of an argument that made the second-best constitution more salient. After all, the description of the lawful city at 298a-299e is bleak and confusing. Why would the second-best constitution destroy expertise and enslave the citizens to traditions and laws that have not been tested for their soundness? The visitor's argument would be much easier to accept if the laws that the city is committed to are based on the rational understanding of experts, even if they are not statesmen. Yet, no matter how much easier the orthodox translation makes it to accept the second-best constitution, Rowe's translation is persuasive. It is more consistent with the visitor's story of the second-best constitution and his arguments for the wide gap that separates the statesman's constitutions from all others. Rowe's argument for his translation emphasizes the ignorance of the rulers in the city that does not have a statesman. This seems evident in the visitor's statements regarding the survival of cities: "do we wonder then, Socrates, at all the evils that turn out to occur in such constitutions... when a foundation of this sort underlies them, one of carrying out their functions according to written rules and customs without knowledge"

Cambridge University Press, 1995): ix). Christopher Gill uses this interpretation to argue that laws are built around an approximate knowledge of what is good. This means that when the statesman appears he will be recognized because he is a natural extension of good laws ("Rethinking Constitutionalism in *Statesman* 291-303" in *Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the IIIrd Symposium Platonicum*, ed. by C.J. Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995): 298).

(301e6-302a1).¹⁹ Where Rowe goes wrong, in his comments regarding 303c-d, is that he sees it as a continuation of the separation of the statesman's constitutions from the non-ideal constitutions at 303b. It is one thing to say that all constitutions other than that of the statesman are not based on knowledge. It is another thing to say that those who participate in any of these constitutions are experts in faction, great imitators, and great sophists. Rowe's argument in his 1995 commentary recognizes how inconsistent this is with the descriptions of non-ideal constitutions that preceded this passage. Yet his argument in his 2006 article is viewing this passage through the narrower lens of his argument against the orthodox view that the second-best constitutions are statesmanlike. For Rowe, it seems that reading 303c-d in a narrower manner leaves open the possibility that the lawful constitutions are based on knowledge. However, I will argue in Chapter Three that both the lawful and lawless constitutions are based on imitation without knowledge. The account of imitation in the *Sophist*, as discussed in my second chapter, allows for a type of imitation that is without knowledge but is based on sincere belief. It is the imitator who is insincere, who suspects he is without knowledge, that the visitor names a sophist. Since the visitor's argument in the *Sophist* allows for imitation without knowledge, this allows for Rowe's argument to stand without requiring that all non-statesman be called sophists.

While Rowe's translation seems consistent with the discussion of knowledge in the *Statesman*, as well as with the *Sophist*, this does not necessarily mean that the accusation of sophistry at 303b8-c6 applies to all rulers who are not statesmen. When the discussion of non-ideal constitutions concludes in 303a-b, the visitor has completed a ranking of constitutions from most to least livable. Despite the diversity of regimes, the visitor still states at 303b4 that the statesman's constitutions should be separated from the others "like a god from men." As Rowe

¹⁹ I interpret this quote as referring to the people who are writing constitutions in d8-e4 in the absence of a statesman. They are lawful in the sense that they are carrying out their function according to law. Their ignorance is inescapable and their constitutions are not founded on knowledge.

argues, a vast difference lies between the non-ideal constitutions and the ideal constitution. Yet the group of non-ideal constitutions is not homogenous. The lawful king at 301a10-b3 is able to share the title that belongs to the statesman because of his obedience to law. The difference between the types of constitutions and rulers is an important theme from 291c-303d and should not be ignored by a dismissal of non-ideal constitutions when there is so much that the visitor has to say about them.

Rowe seems correct when he argues that according to the visitor all constitutions except the statesman's are based on ignorance. Plato in general seems to hold that knowledge does not come in degrees.²⁰ Instead, people are ignorant and only have access to belief and opinion. Some are able to recognize their lack of knowledge, but most assume that belief and opinion are knowledge. Only someone truly extraordinary, like the gods or the statesman, can have knowledge. As Dorter emphasized, the philosopher and the sophist both recognize the difference between knowledge and opinion. Both also recognize their lack of knowledge and dependence on opinion. While the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* do not explain how the philosopher functions within their epistemic framework(s), the sophist is defined by his deceptive appearance of knowledge and his awareness of his own ignorance. The main problem with Rowe's argument is that he depends on the standard view that all non-statesmen rulers are sophists to defend his argument regarding knowledge. This is not necessary however, as it neglects his own earlier, more subtle reading. Like Dorter, Rowe conflates the imitation of knowledge with sophistry. Yet this conflation does not exist in the *Sophist* and is not argued for in the *Statesman*. Rowe's framework for understanding the relationship between knowledge and non-ideal constitutions can stand without relying on the standard view of the sophist in the *Statesman*.

²⁰ *Republic V* and the *Theaetetus* deal thoroughly with this problem.

1.1.3 Problems with the Standard View

The standard view of how the term “sophist” is used in the *Statesman* has several general flaws that have been brought up in my discussion of Dorter and Rowe. The standard view accepts that the references to sophists in the *Statesman* apply to all rulers who are not statesmen. Rowe’s 1995 commentary had a more narrow interpretation, on which “sophist” meant any ruler in a lawless regime. There are three main points that bring into question the standard view and support my interpretation that “sophist” in the *Statesman* only refers to the tyrant.

First, the standard view does not adequately connect the discussion of the sophist in the *Sophist* to the *Statesman*, despite the shared use of an important definition. Both texts are premised on the visitor’s aim to provide separate definitions of the sophist, statesman and philosopher. At the point where the statesman and the sophist are placed in direct opposition to each other, there should be a focus on understanding how the two texts are interacting. An interpretation that can show continuity in the use of the term “sophist” across both texts is preferable to interpretations, like Dorter’s, that assume a radical shift in how the term is used.

Second, the visitor spends a great deal of time discussing the different types of constitutions and rulers. He is concerned with their imitation of the statesman, which he works out through a detailed analysis of knowledge and law. Right before the passage in question, he had completed his discussion of the hierarchy of the different types of regimes. Interpreting the main passage in question as if he were conflating all rulers to a negative and deceptive type is problematic. It assumes that the visitor sees lawful constitutions as failures on the same scale as lawless constitutions. It also undermines the importance of the second-best constitution. Since the visitor regards the statesman as rare and unlikely to appear, his description of the second-best constitution is important because it is his argument for how law can substitute for the statesman’s

knowledge. The discussion of lawful constitutions, and their fall into lawlessness, is an exercise in political theory in its own right. When the standard view assumes that the visitor is dismissing all constitutions that are not the statesman's, the importance of these passages seems diminished.

Third, by reducing all rulers to sophists, the standard view overlooks the importance that the visitor places on preventing deceptive imitations of the statesman. The lawful constitution is explicitly designed to protect the city from false statesmen. The visitor gives a detailed account of the nature of the statesman's knowledge. But he spends almost no time discussing how the statesman can be recognized. The visitor's city therefore seems poised and waiting for a statesman that its citizens cannot recognize on their own. The people of the city will have to trust the statesman before knowing that he is a genuine statesman. This would place the city in great danger. When the standard view conflates all of the constitutions as forms of sophistry, it loses sight of the visitor's efforts to defend the city from the false statesman. In fact, the lawful city has numerous safeguards for making sure that a false statesman is recognized. These safeguards include preventing changes to laws and outlawing political expertise above the law. By assuming that the visitor's account of lawful constitutions is ultimately undermined at 303c-d, his previous statement that the people of the city will be able to recognize the statesman (301d4-6) seems naïve and irrelevant. In Chapter Three I will argue that, when these endorsements of the statesman by the visitor are set beside the careful descriptions of imitation and deception in both the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, the visitor's statements have a more subtle context. My argument for a narrow interpretation of "sophist" in the *Statesman* is more charitable to the visitor's argument, as it argues that his project is more consistent and accounts for more variability. In Chapter Four I argue that this charitable interpretation makes the *Statesman* more politically interesting on its own and in relation to Plato's other political texts.

SECTION TWO: Argument for a “Narrow” Interpretation of “Sophist” in the *Statesman*

I have argued that the standard account leads to problems with reconciling what the visitor says about sophists in the *Statesman* with what he had said about sophists in the *Sophist*. In this section, I will suggest some ways that the *Sophist* can be used to resolve these problems. I also explain why I believe the text allows room for my narrow interpretation, despite its apparent conflict with the content of *Statesman* 303b10-c8.

1.2.1. The *Sophist* and the *Statesman*

The standard account is motivated primarily by the reference to “all constitutions” at 303b8. My argument for why this does not mean “all rulers” is presented at the end of Chapter Three. In brief, I argue that 303b5 concludes the discussion of the different types of regimes. This is the section where the visitor presents his hierarchy of regimes. Then, at 303b10, he concludes the discussion of the sophists that was begun back at 291a-c. This return to the opening statements is also made clear by the references to sophists as well as to centaurs and satyrs (303c9) which set up the discussion of the statesman’s imitators (291a8-b4). This does not preclude the standard interpretation, on which all rulers are sophists. However, it does provide the textual space for it to be otherwise. If 303b8-d2 is read as a direct continuation of 303b3-5, then, despite the strangeness of the visitor’s accusations, it would be problematic to say that “those who participate in all these constitutions” does not refer to all rulers in non-ideal constitutions. However, if the visitor is referring back to 291a-c, then he can be describing those who participate in all these constitutions as false imitators of the statesman. This possibility does not prove my point. However, I will argue in this thesis that there are several reasons for preferring my interpretation. My closer analysis of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* in the following chapters will show why only the tyrant, and not the other rulers, should be called a

sophist. This may seem to read too much into the visitor's statement. After all, Plato could have written this more clearly or had the visitor comment when the tyrant was introduced that he was the sole sophist among the rulers. However, the broader reading also reads something into the text. The standard view does not read something into the passage in question, but rather into the discussion of law and, I would argue, into the argument in the *Sophist*.

The intrusion of the broad reading involves justifying how the passage relates to what has been said earlier, especially regarding the lawful constitutions. Rowe's ambivalence in his 1995 translation points to the strangeness of calling the lawful rulers sophists. This strangeness is also noted by Robin Waterfield in his 1995 Cambridge translation. He states, in a footnote on the passage: "this dismissal of all rulers other than the ideal expert as shams, illusionists and sophists harks back to the *Republic* in its tone, and is surprising after the tone of realism in the previous section."²¹ For Dorter, this passage is not a sharp turn in the text, as he already had a broad reading of the sophist from the *Sophist*. However, it does require that Dorter's definition of the sophist in the *Statesman* broaden even further to include those who do not have an ironic relationship to their opinions. For Dorter, the *Sophist's* definition of the sophist is dissolved within the *Statesman's* division of the knower from the image-maker. On all of these interpretations, the broad reading requires a move that bundles the lawful and lawless regimes together, despite their meticulous separation until that point. It also requires that the final definition of the sophist in the *Sophist* be ignored or modified. Rowe and Waterfield see the visitor's jump in argument as a sharp rebuke of all regimes other than that of the statesman, despite previous distinctions between the lawful and lawless. Dorter explains it as a general statement that separates everyone, regardless of irony, from the statesman and knowledge of the good, with the result that almost everyone becomes a "sophist."

²¹ Plato, *Statesman*, trans. Waterfield (1995) footnote 71, pg. 73.

1.2.2 Defense of my Narrow Interpretation

My narrower reading does not modify the relationship between the lawful and lawless regimes, and it retains the key ideas contained in the final division in the *Sophist*. The final division in the *Sophist* interprets the sophist as an imitator who deliberately creates his imitation of knowledge alongside his suspicion of his own ignorance. In other words, his imitation is a deliberate deception. The sophist may have the philosopher's irony that Dorter suggests, but he does not use it to reveal, but rather conceals, his ignorance. He uses opinion to appear to be as he is not, for his own purposes.

In preserving the distinction between regimes in the *Statesman*, and also the definition of the sophist from the *Sophist*, I am able to show that the claim in the *Statesman* is more specific than it first appears to be. The term “sophist” in the *Statesman* only applies to the tyrant who pretends to be the statesman. Rather than rotating and changing the relationships of lawful to lawless constitutions, or changing the sense of “sophist” between the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, I look for the route that gives the most credit possible to the earlier arguments. This does not mean that the lawful regimes become genuine constitutions, or that image-making only belongs to the worst of the lawless regimes. Rather, all constitutions except the statesman's remain imitations. I am in agreement with Rowe's insistence that all regimes other than those ruled by a true statesman are without knowledge. This makes the most sense of why there is a single statesman with knowledge and not many statesmen with partial knowledge. This creates a great distance between all existing regimes and that of the statesman. However, it is consistent with many of the arguments in the text which I discuss in Chapter Three.

I will argue in the following chapters that both the sophist in the *Sophist* and the tyrant in the *Statesman* create the appearance that defines them. Their appearance caters to public opinion,

which is the source of their authority. The *Sophist* has provided a way of categorizing ignorance that allows for all constitutions to be based on ignorance, while also maintaining a more specific sense of sophistry as deliberate deception. The category of sincere people (“simple” people, in Dorter’s translation) seems as if it could describe people in lawful as well as the lawless regimes. The lawful king, for example, is considered a king based on opinion rather than knowledge (301a10-b3). This does not mean that the king himself, or those who believe he is a king, understand the distinction. What makes him a lawful king is his adherence to laws, not his self-awareness or understanding of his imitation. The bad steersmen and sailors who sink their cities are also sincere: “[they] have acquired the greatest ignorance about the greatest things - although they have no understanding at all about what belongs to the art of statesmanship, they think they have completely acquired this sort of expert knowledge, most clearly of them all” (302a8-b3). The insincere person is just as ignorant as the sincere person, but stands in a different relationship to his ignorance. The sophist, in the *Statesman* as in the *Sophist*, is the insincere person who pretends to have knowledge in front of others without believing that he has the knowledge he pretends to have.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented two versions of the standard account regarding the sophist in the *Statesman*, by Dorter and Rowe. I have argued that their interpretations are too broad, that the broader interpretations fail to account for the final division in the *Sophist*, and they do not incorporate the divisions between types of regimes in the *Statesman*. By contrast, my narrower interpretation, which has been introduced in this chapter and will be defended in the following chapters, emphasizes the final division of the *Sophist* and the wider discussion regarding the division of the sophist, statesman, and philosopher. I also rely on the account of

imitation from the *Sophist* to understand the way that rulers imitate the statesman. By arguing that the sophist in the *Statesman* is the tyrant, I will differentiate between the imitation of the statesman's constitution by other constitutions and the imitation of the statesman performed by the false statesman. In Chapter Two, I will describe the argument regarding imitation in the *Sophist* and the final division of the sophist in that work. This will provide the basis for analyzing how the *Statesman*'s sophist should be understood.

Chapter 2: The Sophist in the *Statesman*

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the account of sophistry in the *Sophist*. The purpose of this chapter is to lay the groundwork for understanding the discussion of the sophist in the *Statesman*. In particular, I will ultimately argue that the Visitor is concerned with the sophist in the *Statesman* because he wishes to distinguish the true statesman from his most dangerous imitator: the tyrant. In the *Sophist*, the sophist is defined by a particular relationship to knowledge, which I will argue is continued in the *Statesman* in the instance of the tyrant. This argument is part of my defense of my narrow interpretation of the term “sophist” in the *Statesman*. My argument rejects the interpretation of “sophist” on which the term denotes any ruler who is not a statesman. I will defend this reading of the *Statesman* by first presenting the way that the *Sophist* and *Statesman* are related by the question of recognizing and separating the sophist from the statesman. To make this point, I will examine the introductions of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. I will then present a detailed account of the way that imitation is described in the *Sophist*. I will argue that the sophist in the *Sophist* is part of a group of people who imitate knowledge while only having ignorance. The sophist is divided away from the other imitators by his insincerity, since he suspects that he is without knowledge. In the *Sophist* he imitates the wise man, while in the *Statesman* he is the imitator of the statesman. Yet the sophist in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* is a false imitator who understands that he does not have knowledge.

Section One: Recognition in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*

In order to understand the relationship between the sophist and the statesman in the *Statesman*, it is helpful to begin by looking at the introduction of the *Sophist*. The dramatic setting of the *Sophist* is usually understood, based on textual evidence, to precede that of the

Statesman.²² This is based on the continuation of the same interlocutors and audience members. Socrates, Theodorus, and Young Socrates listen to the visitor and Theaetetus in the *Sophist*. In the *Statesman*, Socrates, Theodorus, and Theaetetus listen to the visitor and Young Socrates. The conversation at the beginning of the *Statesman* implies that the discussion in the *Statesman* directly follows the *Sophist* on the same afternoon. The main differences between the two dialogues include the discussion topics, some methodology, and the interlocutors; in the *Sophist* the visitor speaks with Theaetetus whereas in the *Statesman* he speaks with Young Socrates.²³

The discussion of sophistry and statesmanship begins in the *Sophist* with the question of recognition and identity (216a1-217b3). Socrates compares recognizing a philosopher to recognizing a god in disguise among humans. However, it is not their divinity that makes philosophers difficult to see. Rather, “the genuine philosophers... - by contrast to the fake ones - take on all sorts of different appearances just because of other people’s ignorance” (216c4-6). People waver on the value of the philosopher: is he worthless or invaluable (216c6-8)? Because of their ignorance, people also confuse philosophers with madmen, sophists, and statesmen (216c8-d5). This mass of confusion is further complicated by the genuine philosopher’s competition with false philosophers. The question of recognition is therefore based on problems in understanding what the philosopher is, what his value is, and whether he really is a philosopher at all.

Socrates then asks the Visitor from Elea to decide and prove whether the sophist, statesman, and philosopher are a single thing, two things, or three things (217a6-8). The visitor chooses the latter: they are three different things. Therefore, recognition is the question that

²² This is noted in Nicholas White’s introduction to the *Sophist*, as well as C.J. Rowe’s introduction to the *Statesman*.

²³ For discussion of the relationship between the two texts (and other associated texts) see Kenneth Dorter’s *Form and Good in Plato’s Eleatic Dialogues* (1994) and Seth Benardete’s *The Being of the Beautiful* (1984).

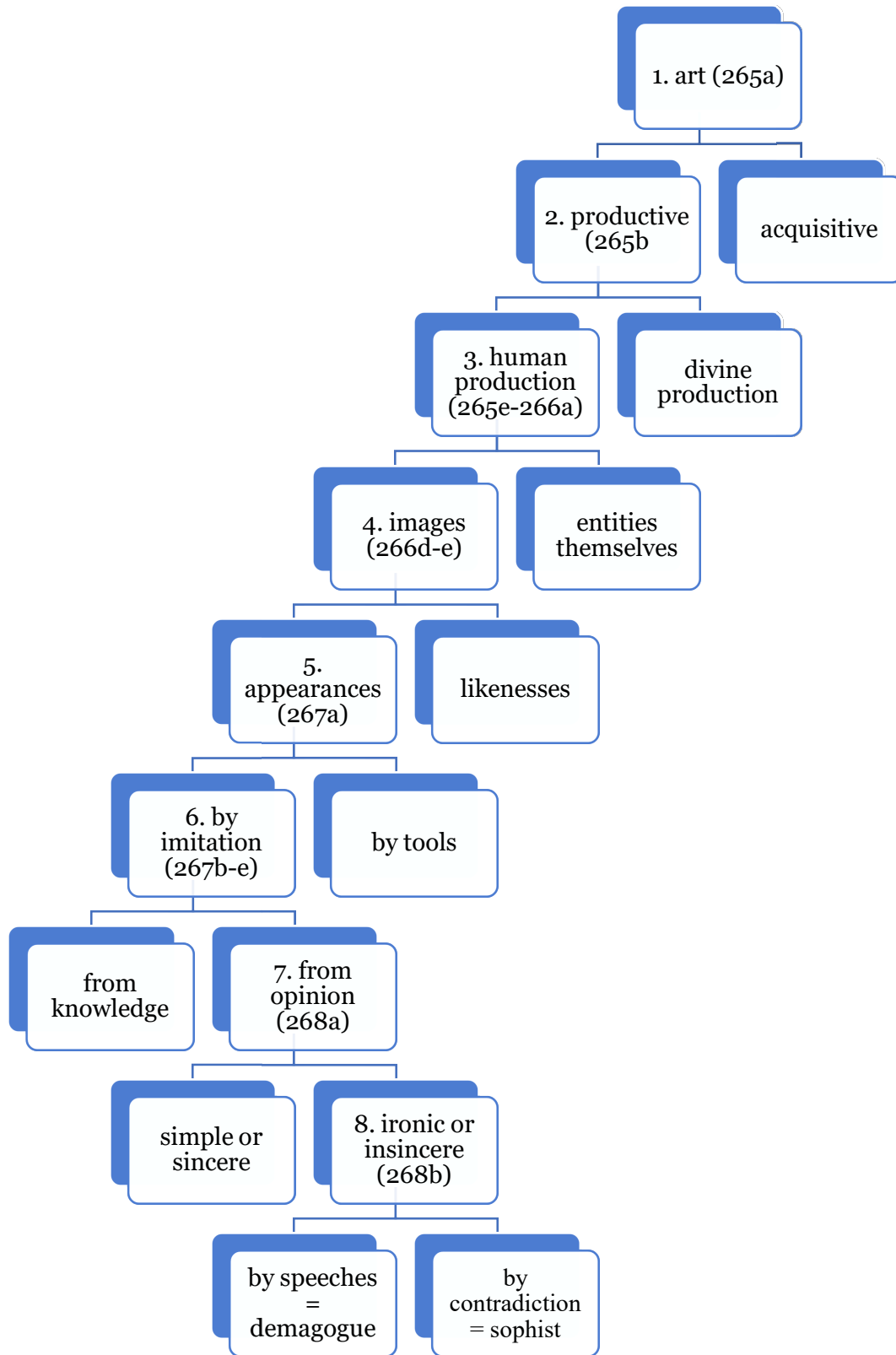
motivates the discussions in both the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. The introduction of the *Sophist* is important for understanding that the tension between the sophist and the statesman is caused by a similarity between these two kinds of people, one that leads to errors and confusion.

The problem of identifying the sophist, statesman, and philosopher is brought up again at the beginning of the *Statesman* (257a4-5). Socrates thanks Theodorus and says he owes a debt for being introduced to Theaetetus and the visitor. Theodorus states that Socrates will owe him a debt of gratitude three times as great when the statesman and philosopher speeches are done. This is amusing to Socrates, who states that Theodorus has made an error in reducing quantity to quality (257b2-4). Theodorus is mistaken to have said that the speeches for the sophist, statesman, and philosopher are of equal worth. Socrates does not specify which speech is of the greatest value, but he states that the following speeches will “differ in value by more than can be expressed in terms of mathematical proportion” from the earlier speech (257b3-4).

Although the distinction between the statesman and the philosopher is not worked out in the *Statesman*, the discussion of value points to the vast difference that Socrates believes exists between the sophist and the statesman, despite the difficulty in recognizing them separately.²⁴ This exchange with Theodorus also shows that the problem of recognizing the sophist and the statesman persists into the *Statesman*, despite the division that seemed to separate them at the end of the *Sophist* (268b5-c2). If Theodorus is confused about the quality distinction between the sophist and the statesman, then he may still be confused about their basic difference. The visitor still needs to see how the sophist is distinguished from the statesman in the *Statesman* if his audience is to be able to recognize the one from the other.

²⁴Theodorus is a complicated character (in the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*) as he is both passive to Socrates yet persuaded by popular opinion. His acceptance of this difference in value may be Plato pointing to a general attitude of distrust for the sophist or a demonstration of Theodorus’ malleability.

Figure One: Last Division in the *Sophist* (265a-268b)²⁵



²⁵ Based on Figure 9 in Kenneth Dorter's *Form and Good* (1994), page 166.

Section Two: Imitation in the *Sophist*

The final definition or “name” of the sophist given by the visitor at the end of the *Sophist* is convoluted:

“Imitation (μιμητικόν) of the contrary-speech-producing, insincere (εἰρωνικοῦ) and unknowing sort, of the appearance-making (φανταστικοῦ) kind of copy-making (εἰδωλοποιικῆς), and the word-juggling part of production that’s marked off as human and not divine. Anyone who says that the sophist is of this “blood and family” will be saying, it seems, the complete truth” (268c8-d4).²⁶

This name is the product of the final division in the *Sophist*, which began with the division of expertise in production. Figure one, on page 27, shows the visitor’s divisions at 265a-268b. In this section, I will first provide some background to the final division, paying special attention to the way that imitation and deception are discussed. The final definition of the sophist will then be analyzed. In the next section of this chapter, I will highlight and examine the conclusions reached in the *Sophist* that are relevant to this thesis’ arguments concerning the *Statesman*.

Between 221c and 231b in the *Sophist*, the visitor and Theaetetus attempt to define the expertise of the sophist. They consider six definitions of the sophist. They include: hunter of young rich men (221c-223b), wholesaler of learning about the soul (223b-224d), retailer of learning about the soul (224d-e), and then seller of his own learning about the soul (224d-e), money-making debater (224e-226a), and refuter of beliefs in one’s own wisdom (226a-231b). This array of definitions causes the visitor to step back to look at what overarching expertise allows all of these definitions to belong to the sophist. He concludes that the sophist’s eagerness for controversy, demonstrated in his debating and refuting, means that he appears to have expert

²⁶ Plato, *Sophist*, trans. Nicholas P. White (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993).

knowledge in all things (232a1-3). This includes the gods, nature, metaphysics, and “laws and all kinds of political issues” (232b1-d4).²⁷ Theaetetus agrees that expertise in politics is the most important for sophists, because “if they didn’t promise that, practically no one would bother to discuss anything with them” (232d3-4). This means that the sophist is defined by his ability to engage in controversy about any topic, but especially about politics. Theaetetus’ comment also points to the fact that people’s engagement with the sophist is based on a belief in the sophist’s knowledge. If people did not assume that the sophist had knowledge, he would be ignored.

One of the key components of the sophist’s apparent expertise in everything is his appearance to others. In the introduction to the *Sophist*, Socrates says that the philosopher has many appearances to those who are “ignorant” (ἄγνοιαν, 216c5). Appearance is important again as a source of confusion for people observing the sophist. He appears to have expert knowledge in everything, even though it is not possible for one person to know everything (233a3-4). This means that “something is wrong in how he appears... if somebody takes him to be an expert at many things, then that observer can’t be seeing clearly...” (232a3-5). When the visitor defines the sophist, he needs to account for what the sophist is in a way that accounts for how he appears.

For the visitor, the sophist is able to appear as an expert in all things because he is a pretender, a cheat, an imitator, and a magician (234c2-8, 235a1-b4). The sophist creates illusions by making distortions: the sophist’s students believe that “large things appear small and easy things appear hard” (234d6-7). The exact nature of distortion is worked out further through the distinction of likeness-making from appearance-making at 235c8-236c7. A likeness is an imitation that mimics the thing it resembles in size, shape, and color. An example would be a sculpture that makes a proportioned copy of the person. On the other hand, an appearance is an

²⁷ The idea that this is a general opinion arises from Theaetetus’ responses.

imitation that uses distortions in perception to have the copy appear identical while being entirely different. Large sculptures are used as the example; for a large statue to appear proportionate from the ground, the top part is widened. The craftsmen “say goodbye to truth and produce in their images the proportions that seem to be beautiful instead of the real ones” (236a4-6). An appearance is something that “appears to be like a beautiful thing, but only because it’s seen from a viewpoint that’s not beautiful, and would seem unlike the thing it claims to be like if you came to be able to see such large things adequately” (236b4-7). The sophist is an appearance maker who creates the appearance of truth using distortions. Appearances are not necessarily malicious - a painting or sculptor is not deceitful - they are simply products that imitate something else without being identical. However, when it comes to questions of truth, justice, and wisdom, these deceptions are especially problematic.

Between 238a and 264d, the visitor examines the way that falsehood is able to exist. This examination consists in modifying the Parmenidean argument that only Being can exist. Part way through, the visitor defines false belief and false speech. A false belief is “believing that *those which are not* are in a way” and also believing that “that *those which completely are* in no way are” (240 e1-2, emphasis by White). False speech is the same, as it is “saying that *those which are* are not, and that *those which are not* are” (240e10-241a1). Once the possibility of false speech and false belief is established at 264d, the visitor returns to the method of division to give the final definition of the sophist. To begin, he restates his claim that the sophist is an expert in imitation (265a10). Imitation is then classified as a kind of productive expertise (265a4-b2). Between 265b4-e6, the first division of productive expertise occurs. Production “causes things to come to be that previously were not” (265b9-10) through the actions of either a god or a human. This means that the natural world and mortal beings are produced by the gods, while humans

produce things by “compounding” the things that are produced by the gods (265e4). The next division occurs for both gods and humans: on the one hand there is the production of originals, while on the other hand there is the production of copies (265e5-266d9). Theaetetus is confused by the idea of gods producing copies, and the visitor explains that these are copies that occur in nature and in dreams. Copies found in nature include shadows, reflections, and optical illusions (266b9-c4). The copies created by humans include things like drawing a picture of a house - there is the actual house and the copy (266c6-7). The visitor calls this a “double production,” which is shared by gods and humans (266d5-6).

Once human copy-making is distinguished from divine copy-making, the difference between likeness-making and appearance-making is reintroduced from 235d4 to 236c8. Likeness-making creates copies that are proportional to the original, whereas appearance-making uses distortions to create copies that appear like the original. Distortions are used to create large sculptures by artists and to create the illusion of truth by sophists. The sophist has already been linked to this type of falsity in appearance-making, so appearance-making is chosen for the next division (266d9-267a1). Appearance-making is divided between appearances made with tools, like the large sculpture, and appearances made by “one’s own self as the tool” (267a3-4). Appearances made with one’s self are labeled “imitating” by the visitor. They involve using one’s own “body or voice to make something similar to [another person’s] body or voice” (267a6-8). Now that imitation has been found in the division, the visitor begins to divide it to find the type of imitation unique to the sophist.

The first division of imitation is between those who imitate with knowledge of what they imitate and those who do not. An example of knowledgeable imitation would be a friend of Theaetetus mimicking his behaviour (267b7-9). The friend knows Theaetetus well and can be

trusted to perform an accurate imitation, even if it isn't very skilled. The visitor names this "informed mimicry" (ἱστορικὴν τινα μίμησιν) and leaves it to the side (267e2). Those who imitate without knowledge are imitating based on their beliefs about what they are imitating (267c2-6). The visitor uses the example of people who imitate justice and virtue with beliefs about what they are, rather than knowledge: "Don't many people who are ignorant of it, but have some beliefs about it, try hard to cause what they believe it is to appear to be present in them. And don't they imitate it in their words and actions as much as they can?" (267c3-5). While these imitators do not have knowledge of the virtues they imitate, they are trying to make it appear as though they have these virtues. (267c8-9). Because of their dependence on belief, this division is called "belief-mimicry" (δόξης μίμησιν) and is the next step in the route to the sophist.

The branch of belief-mimicry is divided between sincere (ἀπλοῦν μιμητήν) and insincere imitation (εἰρωνικὸν μιμητήν). The sincerity of the belief-mimics is based on their own confidence in their beliefs. If they are convinced that their belief is knowledge, then they are sincere. If they are not convinced by their beliefs, but continue in their imitation of those beliefs, then they are insincere (267e10-268a8). The insincere belief-mimic "has been around a lot of discussions, and so by temperament he's suspicious and fearful that he doesn't know the things that he pretends in front of others to know" (268a2-4). The insincere belief-mimic's self-awareness of his ignorance, and his desire to have his imitations appear true, show him to be deceptive rather than mistaken. According to this division, imitations can be based on knowledge or belief. If they are based on belief, they can be insincere or sincere. Both types of belief-imitations are false, but only the insincere belief-mimic has the awareness of his falsehood. It is this insincerity that sets the sophist's imitations apart as malicious. However, the sophist is not

the only insincere belief-imitator; the demagogue also shares this title. The distinction between them is in how they perform their imitations. The demagogue “can maintain his insincerity in long speeches to a crowd,” while the sophist “uses short speeches in private conversation to force the person talking with him to contradict himself” (268b1-5). The visitor asks Theaetetus to decide on what names should be given to the insincere belief-mimics. Should the insincere public-speaker be called a statesman or a demagogue? Should the insincere private arguer be called a wise man or a sophist? Theaetetus chooses the names of demagogue and sophist (268b9-c4). This question posed by the visitor gives more information about the nature of the deception involved. The demagogue and the sophist are not attempting to be seen as deceivers. Rather, they are using deception to succeed in appearing as statesmen or as wise men. Their success is not based on convincing themselves, but rather on convincing their audience despite their own self-doubt. The distinction of the demagogue and sophist from the statesman and the wise man is therefore not based on their appearance to their audience, but rather on their knowledge, belief, imitation, and sincerity.

An important aspect of the identity of the sophist is the audience’s perception of what is true and what is false. In the introduction of the *Sophist*, the confusion between the sophist, statesman, and philosopher is caused by people’s ignorance. If people have beliefs about these things that are not based on knowledge, then it seems that they could be categorized with the sincere belief-mimics in the final division. They are sincere, as they are convinced that their beliefs are knowledge. They do not recognize that they are ignorant because they believe that their beliefs, and the appearances consistent with their beliefs, are true. Therefore, when something appears that is consistent with their beliefs, they believe that it is the genuine thing. For the sophist to succeed he does not have to know how a wise man truly appears; he only

needs to know what people believe the wise man would look like. Once he is seen as a wise man, his deception succeeds. The same principle holds for the demagogue: he needs to know the beliefs people hold about the appearance of the statesman and then perform that appearance.

The introduction of the demagogue at the end of the sophist is strange since the *Sophist* is premised on distinguishing the sophist from the statesman and the philosopher. In addition, the sophist is distinguished not from the statesman but rather from the wise man. The sophist's distinction from the wise man could suggest that he is the imitator of the philosopher rather than the statesman. This may seem to suggest that the visitor is not focused on separating the sophist from the statesman, but rather from the philosopher. I will argue in Chapter Three that this is not true, based on the efforts by the visitor to distinguish the sophist from the statesman in the *Statesman*. In addition the demagogue-statesman and sophist-wise man distinctions are based on the way these people appear to those who do not have knowledge. This means that the description of the demagogue as one who “maintains his insincerity in speeches to large crowds” shows that it is believed that a statesman would make speeches to large crowds (268b1-3). This does not mean that this is the visitor's definition of the statesman. The same point holds for the wise man when he is understood merely as someone who “uses short speeches in private conversation to force the person talking with him to contradict himself” (268b3-5). The imitator of the wise man is able to hold onto the title of sophist because of the association of his methods with wisdom. The sophist is, for his audience, a wise man (268c1). The people who are persuaded by these imitations do not think that they are confused about the sophist and the statesman. They seem to be clearly defined and are not in competition with each other. This belief is first questioned in the introduction to the *Sophist* and is dismantled in the *Statesman*.

Conclusion

My main contention in this chapter has been that there is a specific type of imitation that is unique to the sophist, as defined in the *Sophist*. The sophist's imitation is an insincere belief-mimicry that makes the sophist appear to have knowledge and wisdom. Not all imitations are malicious or deceptive, but the sophist's imitation should be understood in this way. He understands, or suspects, that he is without knowledge and yet he creates an appearance of knowledge. This appearance is accepted by his audience because it is consistent with their beliefs about how knowledge appears. The sophist therefore creates a false image of knowledge while maintaining a system of beliefs about knowledge that he suspects is false.

This chapter has described the specific nature of the sophist's imitation. I showed in Chapter One that there is a tendency to interpret the use of "sophist" in the *Statesman* to refer to all rulers. I will now use the definition of the sophist in the *Sophist* to show why the term "sophist" should only be applied to the tyrant in the *Statesman*. If I am right about this, then the Visitor's use of the term "sophist" in the *Statesman* is both narrower and more consistent with his use of the same term in the *Sophist* than has often been supposed.

Chapter 3: The Sophist in the *Statesman*

Introduction

In the *Statesman*, the section from 291a10-303d2 presents the visitor's argument for how to distinguish the sophist from the statesman.²⁸ The section I am focusing on, 303b8-c7, has sometimes been interpreted as claiming that any ruler is a sophist if they rule without the statesman's knowledge. The visitor's argument is then aimed at separating the statesman from all other rulers. Some arguments for this position were discussed in Chapter One. In this chapter, I will argue for a narrower reading of the term "sophist" in this section of the *Statesman*. The term "sophist" is first introduced in the *Statesman* to describe an imitator of the statesman who is "the greatest magician of all the sophists, and the most versed in their expertise" (291c3-4). In this chapter, I interpret "their expertise" as a reference to the final definition of the sophist in the *Sophist*. If this is correct then the sophist in the *Statesman* should share recognizable traits with the sophist in the *Sophist*. Based on the analysis of the sophist in the *Sophist* in Chapter Two, this would mean that the *Statesman's* sophist imitates knowledge while being ignorant. It also means that he is suspicious that he is ignorant but deliberately deceives his audience. He creates an image of knowledge that appears to be genuine by using words to persuade. I will argue in this chapter that the only ruler who fits this description of the sophist in the *Statesman* is the tyrant.

The sophist in the *Statesman* is dangerous to the city because the statesman does not have to rule according to law or gain the consent of the people (293c5-d2). He is also able to "purge the city...by putting some people to death or exiling them" as long as his actions are based on his

²⁸ Citations are based on C.J. Rowe's 1999 translation for Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Exceptions will be noted with a footnote. Rowe's first translation was for Warminster, England; Aris and Phillips Ltd. in 1995. This translation was edited for Hackett's *Complete Works of Plato* (1997) which was edited by John Cooper. There were significant modifications between the Aris and Phillips translation and the Hackett translation. The 1998 and 1999 translations are the same. I chose to use Rowe's 1999 Hackett translation as it contains his most recent annotations.

expert knowledge (293d4-e5). The statesman's false imitator, the tyrant, is able to access this political power for his own gain. The tyrant "pretends to act like the person with expert knowledge, saying that after all one must do what is contrary to what has been written down if it is *best*" (301b10-c2). The tyrant specifically claims to have the statesman's knowledge of what is best for the city.

In setting up my argument, I will begin by examining the earlier parts of the *Statesman* relevant for my discussion. These include the visitor's account of due measure, which shows that the statesman's knowledge is of what is good for the city in a temporal context. This definition of knowledge sets up the tension that exists between the statesman's expertise and law. I will then examine some of the discussion regarding public servants and priests who claim the statesman's expertise. In Sections Three and Four I will discuss the main passage in question. This will include a description of the statesman's constitution and of the constitutions that imitate the statesman's. Part of my aim will be to show that there are two types of imitations: imitation of the statesman's constitution as a basis for lawfulness, and imitation of the statesman's knowledge by the tyrant. By separating these types of imitation, I am able to show why the visitor's insistence on lawfulness is an attempt to protect the city from the tyrant. I will argue that the *Statesman* does not dismiss all politicians other than the true statesman as sophists, as has often been supposed. Rather, the *Statesman* identifies the tyrant as the false imitator of the statesman who is the sophist among the rulers. Constitutions and laws offer the only safeguard against the tyrant who is able to appear as the statesman.

Section One: The Context of the *Statesman*

As noted in Chapter Two, the introduction to the *Statesman* begins with Theodorus and Socrates having an exchange about the value of the conversations with the visitor from Elea

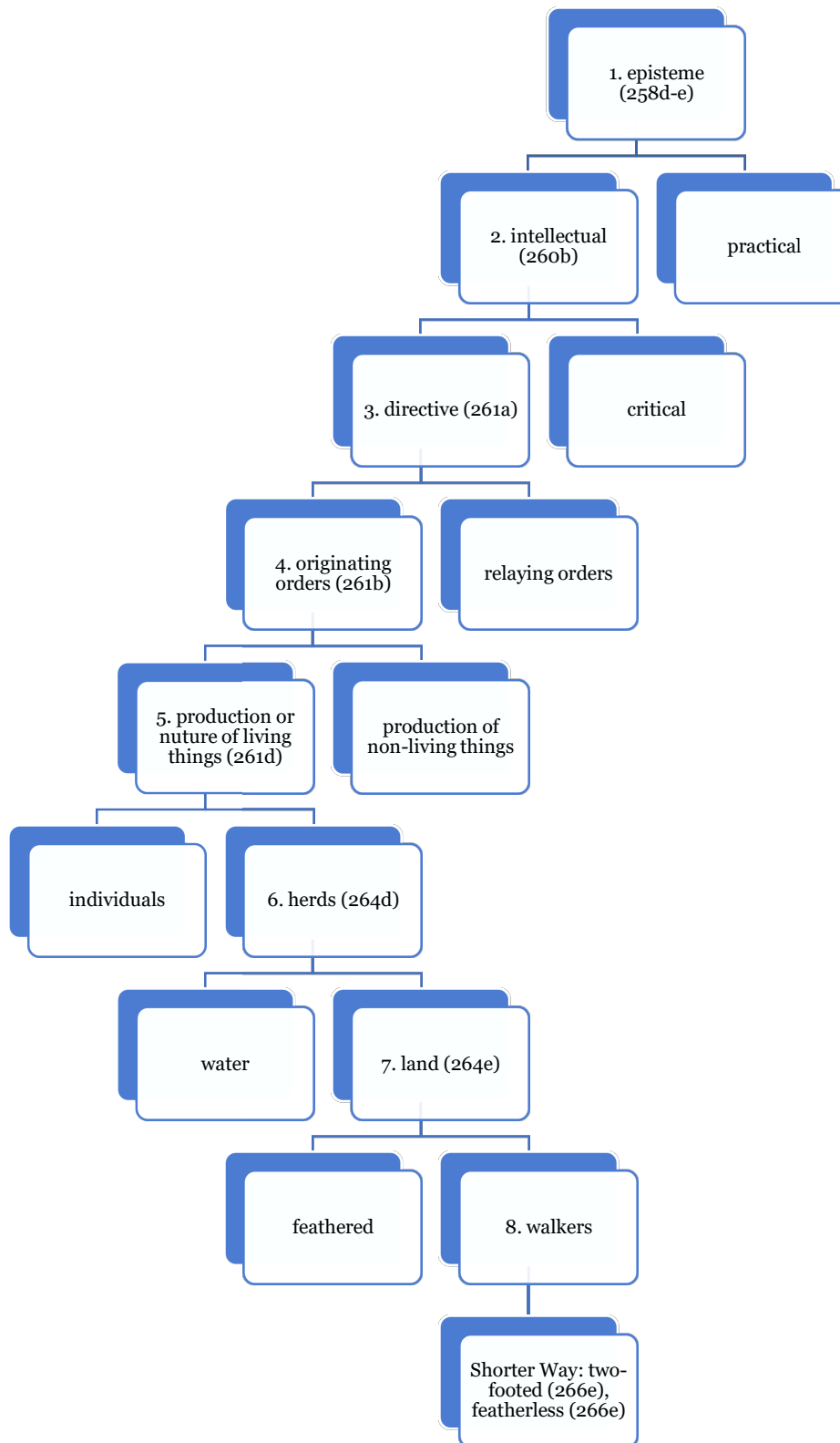
(257a1-b8). The visitor chooses Theaetetus' friend Young Socrates as his next interlocutor, and the subject of the statesman is chosen, rather than that of the philosopher (258b1-3). From the beginning, what sort of knowledge the statesman has is the central question (258b5). The statesman's knowledge is introduced as theoretical rather than practical, and is contrasted with the usual view that he would have a practical role in ruling the city (259a1-b8).²⁹ Because his knowledge is theoretical, he can have knowledge without needing to exercise political power. This is compared with someone who has medical knowledge and is able to advise a doctor, even though he is not practicing medicine. This advisor would be called a doctor even though his participation is theoretical rather than practical (259a1-4). The person who has expert knowledge of kingship, whether he is a private citizen or a ruler, is therefore an expert in kingship. This expert is also called a statesman (259a6-b2, c1-4).

Knowledge is divided by the visitor and Young Socrates to identify the statesman as a herder of humans, who is guided by a self-directing theoretical knowledge (267a8-c4).³⁰ These initial divisions are illustrated in divisions one, two, and three in Figure Two on page 39. However, problems arise from the concluding definition, as there are many kinds of people who care for the herd of humans who live in the city: the “merchants, farmers, millers, and bakers... gymnastics trainers... and doctors” all care for the human herd (267e8-268a4).

²⁹ The statesman's knowledge is a theoretical expertise that directs practical knowledge (259c7-d2). When the visitor begins discussing the statesman as a ruler/director in the city (analogous to the weaver) he describes the art of statesmanship as practical (289d1). In the first instance, the visitor makes the point that the source of the statesman's action is his mind, not his body. Practical knowledge in this instance refers to physical action. But, when he is compared to the weaver, the focus is on the physical product that the statesman is producing through his direction of the other arts in the city. These differences are not the focus of this paper. I emphasize the theoretical aspect because of my interest in the possibility of the statesman not ruling even though he has expert knowledge. This is part of my argument that the sophist can either rule as a tyrant or be a private citizen.

³⁰ See Figure 2 on page 36.

Figure Two: First Attempt to Define the Statesman (258d-266b)³¹



³¹ Based on Figure 10 in Kenneth Dorter's *Form and Good* (1994), page 182.

From this first definition a crowd of experts emerge, all of whom claim to share in the statesman's directive knowledge. The visitor therefore states that they still need to divide the statesman from the other experts in the city:

Then our fears a little earlier were right, when we suspected that we should prove in fact to be describing some kingly figure, but not yet accurately to have finished the statesman off, until we remove those who crowd around him, pretending to share his herding function with him, and having separated him from them, we reveal him on his own, uncontaminated with anyone else? (268c5-10).

This removal of competitors continues until the separation of generals, rhetoricians, and judges at 305e6. Throughout this process, different aspects of the statesman's knowledge and of the functioning of the city are examined.

While it takes the rest of the text to discern the nature of the statesman's knowledge independent of others in the city, the visitor describes the art of due measure at 283c-286b. Many arts use due measure, but the statesman uses it to direct all of the arts of the city. The statesman's expertise in guiding the arts of the city is based on his understanding of what is best for the city. The visitor says that all arts, including the statesman's, rely on "preserving measure" so that they can guard against excess and deficiency (284a8). Knowledge of the due measure for the city means knowing "what is fitting, the right moment, what is as it ought to be - everything that removes itself from the extremes to the middle" (284e5-8). The statesman may be the expert of due measure in the city, but the experts in other crafts and those in politics are willing to claim this expertise as well. I find this argument useful for understanding the visitor's argument for why the statesman's direct rule is preferable to rule by law. Law is static; it cannot adjust to the

changes that happen over time. The statesman is able to respond to the uniqueness of each situation and modify laws when they are no longer beneficial.

Section Two: The Division of Crafts Subordinate to the Statesman

At 287b, the visitor and Young Socrates begin to focus on the types of crafts that compete with statesmanship in the city. The stranger observes that those who have power over others in some capacity are inclined to claim the statesman's knowledge. Slaves and labourers have no power over others and so claim no kingly arts (289d10-e2, 290a4-6). Merchants start to make such claims, though only in the realm of "commercial matters" (290a3). These claims become stronger as the visitor moves through the city ranks: heralds, authors of public messages, and public officials (290b1-4). Young Socrates agrees that they are subordinates because they themselves do not rule in the city (290b5-6). Heralds and their scribes present decrees, while public employees interpret laws.

The classes of seers and priests are set apart from these subordinate public servants. The visitor describes the seers as interpreters of divine messages for humans (290c3-6). The priests, however, perform sacrifices and ask for favours from the gods (290c8-d3). The subordination of seers and priests because they do not direct the affairs of the city is agreed to by Young Socrates; they are not the directive experts of the city (290d2-3).

Because of the importance of the priests' role, it has often been seen as one that belongs to the king (290d5-e8). This is true for ancient Egypt, where a new ruler who did not come from the class of priests would have to be initiated into priesthood. In Athens as well, the most important sacrifices were performed by the King Archon (290e6-8).³² The visitor never actually says whether or not these king-priests are proper kings. Instead, he shifts his focus: he will "look

³² The King Archon was the head of the chief magistrates. He was chosen by lot (see Rowe footnote 52 in Hackett 1998 and 1999 editions).

both at these king-priests by lot, and their subordinates, and also a certain other very large crowd of people that has just become visible to us, now that the previous ones have been separated out” (291a1-4). This is a sudden transition because the king-priest and his subordinates are not discussed again in the *Statesman*. It is not clear, then, whether the subordinate role of the priest also applies to the king-priest. However, a new way of understanding the king is presented in the following passages. The king is no longer defined by the source of his authority, but rather by his knowledge and his relationship to law.

At 291a, the visitor changes the course of his discussion of subordinate experts upon sighting a strange and difficult to recognize group: the sophists.³³ The visitor’s surprise at finding them is reasonable, as he had just finished his discussion of them with Theaetetus in the *Sophist*. The sophists he sees in the *Statesman* seem similar to the sophist found in the *Sophist*; the members of the group are changeable, shape-shifting, and difficult to recognize (291a8-b4). The visitor compares them with centaurs and satyrs that “quickly exchange their shapes and capacity for action for each other’s” (291b2-4). These figures are brought up again by the visitor at 303c8-d2 when his argument concludes. This sophist is part of a “chorus of those concerned with the affairs of the city” (291d7-c1). When Young Socrates asks what chorus it is, the visitor replies:

That of the greatest magician of all the sophists, and the most versed in their expertise. Although removing him from among those who really are in possession of the art of statesmanship and kingship is a very difficult thing to do, remove him we must if we are going to see plainly what we are looking for (291c3-6).

³³ Rowe, Aris and Phillips (1995) commentary pg. 218 for 291a1-4: “the addition [of the sophists] also neatly marks the fact that we have now reached the end of the previous division of the class of subordinates, and are passing on to those that have them [subordinates], whether they are qualified to do so or not.”

This sophist is called the “greatest magician” of the sophists. The word ‘magician’ alludes to *Sophist* 235b5, where the visitor accuses the sophist of being a cheat, imitator, and magician. This suggests that, while the *Statesman’s* sophist is especially skillful at his expertise, the nature of his expertise remains the same as in the *Sophist*. The sophist is still an expert in “imitation of the contrary-speech-producing, insincere and unknowing sort, of the appearance-making kind of copy-making and word juggling part of production” (268c8-d2). While the scale of the sophist’s imitation has changed from imitating the wise man to imitating the statesman, this does not mean that the nature of the sophist, or of the sophist’s imitation, has changed.³⁴ By using the term “sophist” to describe the statesman’s false imitator, the visitor is showing that the difference in scale does not mean a difference in quality. As I will argue, the methods and motivations of the *Sophist’s* sophist remain in place for the *Statesman’s* sophist, despite the change in what they are imitating.

Section Three: The Statesman’s Constitution 291c-297c

3.3.1 The Statesman’s Political Knowledge 291c-293e

The search for the *Statesman’s* sophist begins with a discussion of the different ways in which governments are usually described: monarchy, tyranny, aristocracy, oligarchy, and democracy (291d1-292a3). These types of governments are popularly understood to be distinguished based on whether they are ruled by few or many, by wealthy or poor, or with consent or by force (292a5-8). For the visitor, these divisions are not the criteria of correctness of constitutions (292c5-9). Therefore, the correct distinctions between different constitutions should

³⁴ It is worth noting that the demagogue is not spoken of here or at any point in the *Statesman*. At the end of the *Sophist*, the demagogue was the imitator of the statesman who was divided away from the sophist because he spoke in long speeches to crowds (268b). This appears to suggest that the demagogue and sophist are separated by their involvement in public or in private affairs. However, this does not account for Theaetetus’ comment (232d1-5) that the sophist is only taken seriously if he is seen as an expert in politics. It is possible that the sophist’s method of speaking remains the same in the *Statesman* - short and argumentative. The method of long speeches by the demagogue makes sense in the context of a democracy. However, if the tyrant is a sophist, then the need to persuade crowds in speeches would not be a major part of his role. Rather, his persuasion would be through decrees and laws.

be based not on the characteristics of number, wealth, or consent, but rather on the standard of knowledge. The visitor therefore shifts his focus to discuss what a government would look like that is defined by the statesman's knowledge, rather than by the popular criteria. Once the statesman's constitution is described, the visitor will focus on finding those "who pretend to be possessors of the art of statesmanship, and persuade many people they are, but in fact are not at all" (292d6-7). The statesman's constitution is therefore presented with the goal of providing a model by which other constitutions can be tested against the statesman's knowledge.

3.3.2 The Statesman and the Law 293e-297c

Young Socrates and the visitor had already agreed that the statesman is defined by his knowledge, rather than by whether he rules or not (259a, 292e9-10). The statesman's expertise is also rare, which means that there will not be many genuine statesmen in a city. Instead, if there are any statesmen in a city at all, there may be only one or two (292e3). To explain the nature of the statesman's rule, the visitor begins with the way that people generally relate to an expert. Doctors are trusted to "act for our bodies' good, making them better than they were, and so preserve what is in their care" (293b7-c1). This remains true whether they act with or without our consent, whether they cause us pain or not, whether they follow written rules or not, and whether they are rich or poor (293a9-c3). The doctor's ability to care for our bodies in the best way possible is the only criterion that applies to his expertise. The visitor extends this same principle to the statesman. The statesman's constitution is based on whether statesmen "act to preserve [the city] on the basis of expert knowledge and what is just, making it better than it was so far as they can" (293d6-9). As in the case of the doctor, the application of the statesman's expertise does not require consent, does not rely on written laws, and can cause pain to the city if it is in the city's best interest (293d4-e5).

Young Socrates is taken aback by the statesman's ability to rule without law and asks the visitor to explain (293e6-7). The visitor's argument regarding law and the statesman is built around the comparison of law with the statesman's knowledge. Law is static and cannot adjust to the particulars of each situation (294b). Rather than assuming that laws always specify what is best for each situation, the visitor compares law to fitness guidelines that are meant to be generally beneficial for most people. These guidelines are useful for the personal trainer, as he is not obligated to adjust for each individual trainee. He is also not required to be present for all training sessions (294d3-e6). This is how law works for the statesman - he is able to draw up guidelines so that he is not required to deal with each dispute. He can also leave the city. When he returns, he is able to adjust the laws based on changes that have happened since he was gone (295c7-e2). The statesman is also able to change laws he wrote before, and can act contrary to the laws he has created if it is best for the city (295e4-296a2).

The statesman's behavior is not consistent with the usual understanding that, when laws are improved, the people of the city need to be persuaded to accept the changes to their laws. The visitor argues that, because the statesman's actions are based on knowledge of what is best, it does not matter if he persuades the city to agree to his actions or whether he acts with force (296b1-d6). The criterion of correctness is not the statesman's lawfulness or his approval from the public, but whether his actions are truly beneficial. The city's constitution is therefore based on the statesman's knowledge. This constitution is also the only correct constitution, despite the fact that the laws are changeable. For the visitor, the rule of the statesman is the correct constitution because it is able to make the city better than it was:

And there is no mistake is there, for wise rulers, whatever they do, provided that they watch for one great thing, that by always distributing to those in the city what is most

just, as judged by the intelligent application of their expertise, they are able both to preserve them and so far as they can to bring it about that they are better than they were? (297a5-b3).

Whether the statesman rules with or without laws, with or without consent, with or without pain, with or without wealth, the correct constitution is based on the statesman's knowledge.

Section Four: Imperfect Constitutions (297c-303d)

3.4.1 Law as Imitation of the Statesman

Once the ideal constitution of the statesman's rule has been described, the visitor turns to the question of other constitutions. He has already declared that all other constitutions are imitations of the best constitution: "All the others that we generally say are constitutions we must say are not genuine, and not really constitutions at all, but imitations of this one; those we say are "law-abiding" have imitated it for the better, the others for the worse" (293e2-5). The point that all constitutions, except the statesman's, are imitations is re-introduced at 297c. At this point, Young Socrates asks for clarification about constitutions as imitations (297c5-6). The first distinction that the visitor turns to concerns the constitution's relationship with written laws. The statesman's constitution is able to function without laws. When laws are drafted, he is free to change them, as they are an imperfect form of rule compared to his direct rule. In contrast to the statesman's constitution, the imitative constitutions are at their best when they do not change their laws. The lawful city has to exclusively obey its laws, even when doing so is not "the most correct thing to do" (297d7). The statesman applies his knowledge directly, and may or may not choose to use written laws. However, other cities that want to imitate the statesman's constitution should follow their laws strictly, rather than trying to imitate the statesman's method of rule. To

make the lawful city as good as it can be, the citizens and rulers should be completely subject to the laws at all times.

Instead of being a convenient tool that can be aside by the statesman, the laws in a lawful city cannot be changed. A law-breaker should be met with death “and all the worst punishments” (297e1-3). The best kind of imitation of the statesman’s constitution is therefore entirely unlike the statesman’s constitution. In the ideal city the statesman is above the law and uses it as he sees fit. In the second-best city law is fixed and supreme. The imitative constitutions cannot imitate the statesman’s constitution directly, because they do not have access to his knowledge. Instead, their imitation of the statesman’s constitution consists in their aiming towards what is good and best for the city. Without an understanding of what is truly best for the city, their second-best option is to make lawfulness itself their way of approximating what is best. Without knowledge, the rule of law is best.

3.4.2 Lawful Constitutions

The visitor provides a story to explain how a lawful city relates to knowledge (297e-299e). He uses the example of the statesman’s “likenesses,” the steersman and the doctor (297e11-13).³⁵ If it was believed that steersmen or doctors were capable of causing harm and of robbing the people that they serve, then the city would act to bring those crafts under the control of the city (298a-e).³⁶ Laws governing steersmen and doctors would be created based on input from experts, as well as from other craftspeople or laypeople from the city (298c). These laws

³⁵ In the *Sophist*, a likeness is a copy that exactly imitates the original. In this context, that does not make much sense. First, the steersman and doctor are experts in their own right who are not attempting to rule like a statesman. Second, they are not exact copies but rather similar in kind. The object of their expertise (a ship or a human body) may have similarities to a city. But their objects are not to scale, as would be required by a likeness in the *Sophist*.

³⁶ The city’s decision is based on a belief about the doctor and steersman. This means that their actions do not require knowledge. It also points to one of the basic problems addressed in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. The doctor or steersman who behaved in this way would not be a proper doctor or steersman. But since people using these titles could behave in this way, the beliefs about their actions are applied to both the genuine and imitative experts.

would be followed without exception and any exploration into their effectiveness or alternatives would be forbidden (299b). Anyone pursuing knowledge in this way would not be called an expert, but rather a “star-gazer, some babbling sophist” who should be tried for corrupting the youth by teaching against the law (299b5). If he is found guilty, he should be punished. Only the law is the source of knowledge, as “there must be nothing wiser than the laws... since it is possible for anyone who wishes to understand things that are written down and things established as ancestral customs” (299c5-d1). Everyone who has access to these laws is therefore a type of expert in the fields of medicine and steersmanship.

Young Socrates finds this scenario absurd. It would make expertise impossible, as it places the source of the knowledge in non-experts and then forbids inquiry into ways of making the laws better (299e7-300a2). The visitor then moves on to the worse, lawless alternative, but he does not work out how this story applies to the statesman’s expertise. If, as it seems, this absurd method of making laws is intended to reflect how the imitative constitution is formed, then it is worth asking how it might apply to the problem of political expertise. In Athens, doctors and steersmen were not subject to the types of laws the visitor describes. However, the expert they are like, the statesman, could be subject to the law in this way.³⁷ Such laws would create specific parameters for what expertise in politics consists in and how it is to function in the city. Anyone who investigates or practices politics outside of these parameters is to be treated as a criminal. Checks and balances against the rise of exploitive oligarchs or tyrants would be examples of these types of law. These laws would be made because people in the city believe that statesmen are capable of harming and robbing their citizens for their own gain.³⁸ They then create laws

³⁷ This section has similarities to the trial of Socrates. The scrutiny of office-holders after their one-year term of office has expired, described at 299a, was the practice in democratic Athens

³⁸ See 301c-d where the statesman is believed to be capable of just this type of crime. This would not occur in the case of the true statesman. However, the statesman does have an imitator who uses his name and so the

based on the opinions of those who are experts in political matters and those who are not. Since the law has the final word on political expertise, anyone with access to those laws has all possible knowledge of political expertise. In a lawful, second best city, these laws could not be changed or modified, no matter the circumstance.³⁹ As Young Socrates realizes, political expertise is destroyed by these laws. The law has built in a safeguard so that any change is impossible. The lawful city is therefore without political expertise and will not allow political expertise to be practiced. While Young Socrates balks at these limitations being placed on medicine or steersmanship, the visitor's point is that the lawful city is necessarily without political expertise. In the same way that the first example would prevent doctors or steersmen from harming the people they care for, this type of constitution is built with the intention of keeping the city safe from politicians who would harm the citizens and the city.

While Young Socrates thinks that drafting laws in this way is absurd, the visitor points to a worse option for those living in the city. If a person in power who was given responsibility to rule in accordance with these laws were to turn against the law, then the lives of those in this city would be much worse than the lives of those living in a city without political expertise:

What then if this person were to take no notice of what is written down, in order either to profit in some way or to do some personal favor, and were to take it upon himself to do

misidentification is not based on misunderstanding a true statesman. Instead, it would be a reaction to the statesman's imitator.

³⁹ In my discussion, I choose to take the visitor's description of this constitution as the second-best seriously. It seems to be extreme, but the visitor does not offer a more balanced approach (involving consensus, modifications, or improvements) to the lawful city. I am neutral on the question of whether the visitor, or Plato, thought that this was in fact a second-best city. The descriptions of the different types of constitutions and rulers are very skeletal and do not deal with historical variances or psychological motivations of rulers. I therefore see this section as a tool for demonstrating the difference between the statesman's constitution and other constitutions, with a focus on deterring the statesman's imitator. It does not provide a good overview of why certain rulers rise or why regimes change. Instead, the political advice focuses on the recognition of the statesman's expertise. The story of the city that outlaws inquiry is a detailed and drawn out part of the discussion and so I take it to represent a central aspect of the visitor's project in this section.

different things, contrary to these, when he possesses no knowledge? Would this not be an evil still greater than the previous one (300a4-7)?

This worst-case scenario shows that, while living under laws built on opinion and without knowledge is not ideal, it is far worse to live in a city where laws are ignored and the constitution does not ensure that those in power have the expertise of the statesman. Therefore, when laws are made, they need to prevent someone in a position of power from exercising that power contrary to the law and without political expertise for their own benefit. The emphasis on excluding exceptions to the laws, as well as the focus on drafting laws that do not allow for modification or experiment, shows that the second-best constitution is not built to imitate the statesman's adaptability, but rather to prevent the non-statesmen who holds public office from using their power to benefit themselves personally rather than the city. The second-best constitution is therefore entirely dissimilar to the statesman's constitution. The statesman rules by expertise and uses laws as an imperfect, temporary solution. The second-best constitution is built around law and is successful when it allows only law to rule. The criterion for successful imperfect constitutions is their lawfulness - not how good or useful their laws are.

3.4.3 Good and Bad Imitative Constitutions

The visitor then returns to the question of regimes and rulers. The statesman rules with expert knowledge and his constitution is therefore genuine. The things that the statesman says which are written down are "imitations of the truth" in the most direct sense (300c4-6).⁴⁰ The statesman can ignore the law for the sake of what is best and is able to act contrary to things he has said at earlier times (300c8-d3). By contrast, a city or ruler that is without expert knowledge

⁴⁰ The interpretation of this passage is contested. As I discussed in Chapter One, the orthodox view is that these laws are made by non-statesmen who are imitating the statesman's constitution. However, I choose to accept Rowe's interpretation that this is referring to the laws that the statesman writes down. This maintains the distance between the statesman's constitution and other constitutions. It also prevents the second-best constitution from being based on knowledge which I believe is an important aspect of the visitor's argument.

should not seek to imitate the ruling method of the statesman; the non-expert could only imitate this badly (300d9-10). Instead, the best course of action for the city ruled by the rich or the many is to have only the rule of law:

The requirement, then, as it seems for all constitutions of this sort, if they are going to *imitate well* that true constitution of one man ruling with expertise, so far as they can, is that they must never - given that they have their laws - do anything contrary to what is written and ancestral customs (301a1-4, emphasis added).

The lawful, non-statesman king also rules by law rather than knowledge (301a9-b4). The main criteria separating types of regimes are therefore how many rulers are in power and whether they are law-abiding. If the rich rule lawfully they are an aristocracy. If the rich rule lawlessly they are an oligarchy (301a5-7). Democracy is also divided into lawful and lawless, though they keep the same name. A lawful single ruler is a king. He is not an expert statesman, but he “imitates the person with expert knowledge... on the basis of opinion, according to laws” (301a10-b3). The lawful king would forbid any considerations of himself or others acting against the laws. He would not claim any expertise other than what is contained in the law.

The lawless king is introduced as the tyrant. Like the king, he rules alone. While it seems that his regime will simply be defined by lawlessness, like the oligarchy or the lawless democracy, he is also described as a ruler whose lawlessness is justified to the people by his deceitful imitation of the statesman:

And what of when some ruler acts neither according to laws nor according to customs, but *pretends* to act like the person with expert knowledge, saying that after all *one must do what is contrary to what has been written down if it is best*, and there is some desire or

other combined with *ignorance* controlling this imitation? Surely in those circumstances we must call every such person a tyrant? (301b10-c4, emphasis added)

The parallels with the sophist of the *Sophist* are numerous: the tyrant deliberately presents himself as someone that he is not, he understands that this is a deception, and he is without the knowledge he imitates. This section of the *Statesman*, which explores imitative constitutions and the definition of the law-abiding king, has shown that imitation as such is not necessarily bad. Some imitations are better and some are worse. Therefore, the problem with the tyrant is not simply that he imitates the statesman. Rather, the problem is with his deliberately deceitful claim to possess the statesman's expert knowledge, when in fact all he possesses is ignorance. Regardless, ruling a city grants him the greatest power he can have for accessing the things he desires. The tyrant therefore uses the appearance of political expertise for his personal gain. The sophist was motivated by the desire to appear wise despite his ignorance. In a similar way, the tyrant desires to appear as an expert in political knowledge, despite the fact that he is not.

The tyrant aims at assuming the guise of the statesman because the statesman is above the law. He understands that the basis for the statesman acting in this way is his knowledge, and so the tyrant claims knowledge of what is best for the city. Once others have come to believe that he knows what is best, he is able to act with the autonomy that should only be given to the genuine statesman. The tyrant's power comes from his ability to appear as the statesman would, based on the beliefs of the people. This is similar to the sophist in the *Sophist*. This would mean understanding what is contained in the idea of the "statesman" and then performing the actions or words needed. His gravitation towards acting above the law shows that this aspect of the

statesman is recognized as statesman-like. The people being persuaded by this tyrant therefore have an idea of the genuine statesman and his style of ruling.

When the origin of laws was discussed at 298a, the visitor used the example of cities that decided to create laws because they feared the abuse of the doctors or steersmen. I have argued that the point of this fictional scenario is that the laws in strictly lawful cities arise from fear of abuse by the statesman. This point is reiterated in relation to the tyrant at 301c-d. All of the types of imitative constitutions are defined by their relationship to law. Laws emerged because:

People found themselves unable to put up with the idea of that single individual of ours as monarch, and refused to believe that there would ever come to be anyone who deserved to rule in such a way, so as to be willing and able to rule with virtue and expert knowledge, distributing what is just and right correctly to all (301c8-d4).

Instead, the people feared that an absolute monarch “mutilates, kills and generally maltreats whichever of us he wishes” in the same way that they feared the doctors and steersmen in the earlier story (301d2-3). The visitor agrees that the worst kinds of rulers do exist, and are often at fault for the destruction of their cities:

Yet many [cities] from time to time sink like ships, and perish, and have perished, and will perish in the future through the depravity of their steersmen and sailors, who have acquired the greatest ignorance about the greatest things - although they have no understanding at all about what belongs to the art of statesmanship, they think they have completely acquired this sort of expert knowledge, most clearly of all (302a5-b3).

For the people who live in a city, the statesman functions both as a standard of politics and as a potential source of disaster. The understanding of the people in the city is important, as they are aware of the idea of the statesman and seek what is best. There is a general

understanding that the statesman's constitution is the best constitution; this is evidenced in the tyrant's manipulation. The city's written laws are "chasing after the traces of the truest constitution," which means that there are beliefs about the statesman's constitution which influence the writing of, and obedience to, the city's laws (301e4). While no actual city's laws are built on a foundation of knowledge, the pursuit of lawfulness is an act of imitating the statesman (301e10). If the city cannot have the best laws, or a system that ensures that rulers have the required expertise, it can at least still be lawful. This is the source of the visitor's insistence that lawfulness is the second-best way for the city to function. Based on the visitor's descriptions of imitation, lawfulness is pursued out of a desire to approximate the statesman's constitution. Nevertheless, the problem of the statesman is based on a belief that what is best for the city can be known, even if the people in the city cannot have that knowledge.

If people were to build a truly lawful city, based on their desire to imitate the statesman, they would have the understanding that they do not and cannot access the statesman's knowledge. Rowe's insistence that the visitor thinks that no lawful city has existed seems correct since profound self-awareness is required to understand one's own lack of knowledge and the impossibility of gaining the statesman's knowledge.⁴¹ This is a frustrating problem since the lawful city is so entirely different from the statesman's city. If one's ideal is a city where law is only a tool of the wisest king, then it is difficult to choose in its stead a city where claims to knowledge are shunned and only tradition is allowed. There is also the added problem that a city built on this self-awareness would not necessarily be pleasant. The visitor insists that such cities should only look to pre-existing laws and customs for their constitution. While it is realistic to assume that organizing a city would require some flexibility, the visitor's example of the second best constitution leaves no room for deliberation about what is best or what will be best in the

⁴¹ Rowe's *Statesman* commentary (Aris and Phillips, 1995): 236 (comment on 303b9-c5).

future. This restriction applies to constitutional laws, and does not address day to day policy decisions such as taxes, spending, and diplomacy. Whether these kinds of law would be able to change or not is not made clear and does not seem to be a concern.

The beliefs and opinions of the people in the city regarding the statesman do not only include the pursuit of lawfulness. Just as the statesman inspires the creation of constitutions in a positive sense, he is also a negative source of inspiration. Cities are aware of the danger posed by a statesman. The idea of the ideal ruler has within it the idea of a ruler who is above the law. It also includes the belief that an absolute monarch may cause harm. People who do not have knowledge may believe that a statesman will behave like a tyrant.

Law and constitutions therefore arise from this dual belief about the statesman. The genuine statesman is imitated, and the false statesman is feared. The lawful city pursues what is best through its second-best constitution. Its law also guards against what is worst for the city. However, to the people in the city, both the best and the worst have the same name. The visitor's original intention at 291c of separating the sophist from the statesman becomes clearer once the tyrant is described. The *Sophist* and the *Statesman* are both premised on the idea that it is difficult to recognize the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher, and to distinguish them from each other. The visitor's argument has shown that the foundation of the city's law is based on this misunderstanding. For the visitor, the proper naming of the false statesman is important, as it reveals the nature of the deception involved. The tyrant is the false imitator of the statesman. He is not a type of statesman – rather, he belongs to the “blood and family” of sophists (*Sophist* 268d2-3). He inhabits a different category than the statesman, despite appearing to be a statesman. His ambiguity and ability to appear as he is not is then explainable based on the argument in the *Sophist* regarding imitation. Once the false imitator of the statesman is

recognized as a sophist, the division of the genuine statesman from the false statesman protects the city more fully from the false statesman. If the idea of a good statesman and a bad statesman can coexist as the motivation for law-making, this means that the false statesman is able to take advantage of this ambiguity. In contrast, when the nature of the statesman's constitution is understood, and the people of the city recognize their inability to have knowledge, then the city will be able to insist on lawfulness above all.⁴² While this may seem to preclude the possibility that a genuine statesman would ever rule, because of the protections against the false statesman, the visitor remains optimistic that the genuine statesman will be recognized (301d4-6). While this seems to leave a door open for the tyrant, it may be that this optimism is based on the idea of a city that is both lawful and aware of its limitations. With this understanding in place, the people in the city may be able to separate the genuine from the false statesman.

3.4.4 The Final Division of the Sophist from the Statesman

In arguing for my narrow interpretation of “sophist” in the *Statesman*, I do not wish to challenge the translation of 303b8-c7. Rather, I want to shift the emphasis to the end of the visitor's statement to show a strong correlation with the opening argument at 291c. I will argue that 303b8-c7 is a conclusion to 291c, rather than a continuation of 303b8-c7.

The immediate context for 303b8-c7 is that the visitor has just rank-ordered the six non-ideal constitutions based on how livable life is under them. The discussion ends with the difference between the two democracies:

For this reason, if all the types of constitutions are law-abiding, it [democracy – JC] turns out to be the worst of them, but if all are contrary to law, the best; and if all are uncontrolled, living in a democracy takes the prize, but if they are ordered, life in it is

⁴² The people of the city would then be aware that they do not have the statesman's knowledge. This is similar to the *Apology* where Socrates states that he came to understand that his “wisdom” came from not believing that he knows what he does not know (*Apology*, 20d4-23b9, trans. G.M.A Grube (2000), Hackett Publishing Company).

least livable, and in first place and best by far will be the life in the first [lawful monarchy – JC], except for the seventh [statesman’s constitution – JC]. For of all of them, *that* one we must separate out from the other constitutions, like a god from men (303a7-b5).

The end of this section clearly marks out the statesman’s constitution from all others while maintaining a strong sense of hierarchy between the different types of regimes. On the one side is the statesman’s constitution that cannot be compared with any other type of constitution. On the other side are the variations of lawful and lawless constitutions. They are not the same except in their lack of the statesman’s knowledge. The following passage, which is the focus of this thesis, has been interpreted as a re-iteration of the final sentence above:

VISITOR: So then we must also remove those who participate in all these constitutions, except for the one based on knowledge, as being, not statesmen, but experts in faction; we must say that, as presiding over insubstantial images, on the largest scale, they are themselves of the same sort, and that as the greatest imitators and magicians they turn out to be the greatest sophists among the sophists.

YOUNG SOCRATES: This term “sophist” looks as if it has been only too correctly turned around against the so-called experts in statesmanship.

VISITOR: So: this is our play [deed, action, drama – JC], as it were - as we said just now that there was some band of centaurs and satyrs in view, one that we had to set apart from the expertise of the statesman; and now it has been set apart, as we have seen, with great difficulty. (303b8-d2)

The visitor begins by speaking of “those who participate in all these constitutions.” This seems to mean all of the rulers from each of the constitutions that were separated from the statesman at 303b3-5. My first point against this reading is that, based on the reference to

sophistry that follows, the people he is referring to should not be the rulers he was just discussing above, but the people in the passage at 291a-c, where the discussion of constitutions began. At 291b6-c1 the visitor says that he had trouble recognizing the chorus of those concerned with the affairs of the city. They include the “centaurs and satyrs” that are again in view at 303c9. This chorus is made up of the people who claim the statesman’s knowledge, such as merchants and priests. This group includes the “greatest magician of all the sophists,” who needs to be removed from those who truly possess the art of statesmanship. If the arguments that follow 291c are parenthesized until 303b8, then “those who participate in all these constitutions” can be the sophists from 291c, rather than the rulers of all constitutions.

The broad reading of this passage as a continuation of the argument that ended at 303b5 is understandable as there seems to be a repetition that is emphasizing the separation of the statesman’s constitution from all others. But the significant change in tone and the return of the use of “sophist” means that it is more appropriate to refer it back to 291c. The discussion of constitutions was required to divide the false imitator of the statesman from the genuine statesman. This was complicated by the role that imitation and opinion play in the establishment of different types of constitutions. By 303a7-b5, the distance between the statesman’s constitution and all other constitutions has been made clear. The difference between the types of constitutions has also been made clear. Because this is understood, 303b8-c7 concludes the discussion as a whole that began at 291c. Describing and understanding all of the constitutions was needed to separate the statesman from his false imitator.

While I have addressed how I think the passage in question should be interpreted, I also want to make clear why the rulers in other regimes are not sophists. I also want to explain how the tyrant can be the only ruler who is a sophist without being the only type of sophist.

Young Socrates' reply to the visitor refers to the "so-called experts in statesmanship" (303c6-7). This means that he understands that the visitor is referring to those who make claims to statesmanship. As Rowe argued in his 1995 commentary, the statements regarding "experts in faction" and "greatest sophist" do not apply to the lawful regimes at all.⁴³ While all lawful constitutions imitate the statesman's constitution, they do not do it by imitating the rule of the statesman himself. Rather, their relationship to law and knowledge is structured in almost an entirely opposite manner. Lawful regimes also preclude faction (στασιαστικός), since the law is not able to be challenged. Divisions in the city would be treated as infractions of the law and would result in extreme penalties (299c7). This is based on the understanding that a faction requires differences of opinion, which the lawful city forbids. While the rulers of lawless regimes claim to be experts in statesmanship (302b2), only the tyrant imitates the statesman. Lawless rulers who are not tyrants are not described as deceptive but only as ignorant. Oligarchs and lawless democrats may function as destructive "steersmen and sailors," but this does not mean that they are sophists. If it is generally believed that a genuine statesman would rule alone, as Young Socrates agrees, then his false imitator would have to aspire to rule alone as well.⁴⁴ The tyrant's deception is rooted in his ability to appear to be how the statesman is believed to be. Young Socrates, as well as the people of the city, expects that the statesman's expert knowledge

⁴³ Rowe, in the *Statesman* Commentary (1995), states that the lawful regimes "seem immediately to have been forgotten, and we go back to the earlier and harsher treatment of existing politicians as a group - they are all, [the visitor] suggests, partisan, leaders of factions, a description which actually seems to fit oligarchs and democrats better than the rest" (for 303b9-c5, page 236). I agree that the lawful regimes have been forgotten. However, the fact that the visitor is discussing imitators of the statesman also means that this description cannot apply to oligarchs or democrats. They are not able to imitate the statesman because they are more than one in number.

⁴⁴ 291e1-293a4: the rarity of such knowledge means that only one or two people in the city will have expert political knowledge (just like experts in games). 297b12-c5: democracies cannot be based on political expertise as they are ruled by many and experts are few. 300e5-301a3: the best imitations of the statesman are performed by a single ruler. 301a9-b10: the lawful king, as a single ruler, shares the statesman's name. 301c9-d8: laws are adopted by the city because of the fear of a "single individual" being given too much power and turning it against the people in the city.

will be held by only one or two people, since expertise is not common. In addition, there is no discussion of deception in the descriptions of the oligarchy or lawless democracy.

However, just because the sophist participates in all the constitutions does not mean that the rulers of all the constitutions are sophists. Whether the sophist rules or not is not of primary importance, in the same way as for the statesman (259a-b). It is the nature of what the sophist is imitating - the statesman's knowledge of what is best for the city - that makes him the greatest magician of the sophists. Sophists can imitate other types of knowledge, such as knowledge of personal morality or civic virtue. In the *Sophist*, the sophist claims to be an expert in all things (232e1-3). But it is the sophist who imitates the statesman's knowledge that is most dangerous for the city.

Young Socrates' response that the term "sophist" has been "too correctly turned round against the so-called experts in statesmanship" (303c6-7) marks the final division of the sophist from the statesman.⁴⁵ The name of sophist has been "turned around" so that the false "statesman" is now correctly named a "sophist." The greatest sophist has then been turned from the genuine to the false, from the knowledgeable to the ignorant.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed the arguments in the *Statesman* that relate to the sophist. On the basis of these passages, I have argued that the sophist in the *Statesman* is a tyrant. I have examined the lengthy arguments that begin in response to the appearance of the "greatest sophist" and end with his final division from the statesman. I have focused on showing how the

⁴⁵ Rowe, in the *Statesman* commentary (1995, Aris and Phillips), sees this remark by Young Socrates as a reference to the fact that contemporary politicians would use the insult of "sophist" to undermine their opponents. He supports this with reference to *Protagoras* 316c, *Meno* 91c-92c, *Apology* 19e-20c, and *Gorgias* 519e-520b (for 303c6-7, page 236). This interpretation plays into his comments in the previous footnote that the visitor's accusations are aimed at contemporary politicians. While this may be true, the comment could also be read in the context of the *Sophist*. The definition of the sophist included someone who deceives others by pretending to have knowledge when he only has ignorance.

twists and turns of the discussion of law are centered on an effort to protect the city from the statesman's false imitator. The *Statesman's* tyrant, as a sophist, imitates the statesman's knowledge of what is best so he can gain the statesman's privilege to rule above the law.

The ideal constitution occurs when the statesman is able to rule the city based on his knowledge. He can rule the city directly or use law as a tool of convenience. Without the statesman, the city has to rely on a different type of constitution. The people of the city want to imitate the statesman's constitution because of their desire for what is best. But without knowledge they have to rely on law for their second-best constitution. Law, and the extreme form of lawfulness that the visitor recommends, is problematic as it excludes expertise. However, allowing people to claim that they have expert knowledge can lead to lawlessness. The most dangerous of these lawless rulers is the tyrant. He claims to be not only an expert, but also a statesman who knows what is best and therefore should be given the right to rule above the law. This imitation is of the statesman himself and not simply his knowledge, which is the basis for my claim that he is the sophist who inspired the discussion of law and constitutions.

I have also argued that the term "sophist" in the *Statesman* does not apply to all rulers who are not statesman. It is not correct to say that it applies to lawless regimes in general, as the statesman can only be imitated by a single ruler. The term "sophist" should only apply to the tyrant, who imitates the statesman. This does not mean that the tyrant is the only sophist. Instead, my claim is that when the term "sophist" is used in the *Statesman* to name the ruler who imitates the statesman, it refers exclusively to the tyrant. Other sophists can still function in the city; a sophist who imitates the wise man as a private teacher could be consistent with the final division in the *Sophist*. But of the rulers described in the *Statesman* only the tyrant fulfills the definition of "sophist" from both the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*.

My argument for this conclusion is based on the visitor's goal of distinguishing the sophist from the statesman. By understanding the *Statesman's* sophist as the tyrant, the source of the visitor's concern with their separation, and his motivation for protecting the city through law, is made clear. 'Sophist' and 'statesman' are not two independent terms that Socrates associates with the philosopher. Rather, understanding their difference can protect the people of the city from a dangerous imitator. In the next chapter, I will examine some of the ways that my argument brings a greater harmony between the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. I will also look at how the sophist is discussed in the *Gorgias* as an imitator of legislation. Finally, I will conclude by arguing that the discussion of the sophist in the *Statesman* is important for understanding how the statesman can be recognized. I will argue that the visitor's division of the sophist from the statesman has important implications for politics in general.

Chapter 4: Advantages of Proposed Narrow Interpretation of “Sophist” in the *Statesman*

Introduction

In this chapter I will continue the discussion of why it is best to interpret the sophist in the *Statesman* as the tyrant. First, I will argue that this interpretation allows for greater harmony between the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. Both texts benefit from a stronger connection that is centered on their relationship to knowledge and its imitation. Next, I will examine how my interpretation of “sophist” relates to the *Gorgias*. The *Gorgias*’ discussion of sophistry is important as it gives a supplementary argument for why calling a politician a sophist has a narrow meaning. Finally, in the last section I will explain why understanding the *Statesman*’s sophist as a tyrant shows greater charity to Plato’s political project in the *Statesman*.

Section One: Harmony between the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*

The *Sophist* and the *Statesman* are widely accepted as texts that are meant to be read together; the *Statesman* follows the *Sophist* and is a continuation of the discussion that began in the *Sophist*. However, on the common view, the use of the term ‘sophist’ in the *Statesman* is not closely related to the final definition in the *Sophist*. The claim that the sophist is a deceitful speaker who argues with people in private is not compatible with the claim that all rulers except the statesman are sophists. By defending a narrow reading of sophist in the *Statesman* that is compatible with the *Sophist*, my argument contributes to a stronger connection between the two texts. I also show that arguments regarding imitation and knowledge which start in the *Sophist* are continued and refined in new ways in the *Statesman*. The *Statesman*’s discussion of law leans on points discussed in the *Sophist* regarding how images can appear to be like the original without being the original, how distortions can appear to be genuine to those who have not seen the original, and how images can be manipulated by those who do not have knowledge. These

are important points for both the lawful and lawless regimes. They are also important for understanding how knowledge and politics intersect in the city.

In my arguments regarding the discussion of law and constitutions, I have emphasized how the discussion of imitation in the *Sophist* contributes to understanding the *Statesman*. Because of the discussion of different types of imitation in the *Sophist*, it is possible to differentiate between the types of imitation that occur in constitutions and rulers. The imitations of the lawless rulers and the tyrant are made much clearer when the final division in the *Sophist* is applied. The rulers of the oligarchies and lawless democracies are sincere belief-mimics who are convinced that they know something that they have never seen. The tyrant who pretends to be the statesman belongs to the category of insincere belief-mimics, since he deliberately poses as the statesman in his pursuit of lawless rule. This definition of the insincere belief-mimic that is found in the *Sophist* is one of the central buttresses for my argument. But imitation itself is not a problem – it is necessary without the statesman. The *Sophist* leaves this possibility open in its discussion of likeness-making and imitation with knowledge. This is not so easy to reconcile with the *Statesman* despite the visitor's recommendation of imitation of the statesman's constitution by the lawful rulers. Part of the problem is that the second-best constitutions look nothing like the statesman's constitution. This difficulty marks one of the most interesting problems that the visitor is addressing in this section: the ideal of knowledge should not lead to the imitation of knowledge. The second best to genuine knowledge is instead a self-restraint that only seems possible through self-awareness. The process of creating the lawful city is an active rejecting of the belief that we can approximate the statesman's knowledge. Asking the people and rulers of the city to give up all power to rule and to accept the rule of tradition alone seems absurd unless there is an underlying understanding of why this is second-best. Self-awareness

will reveal the state of ignorance that belongs to the people of the city without the statesman. Aspiring to be the best possible city without a statesman requires two very difficult and counter-intuitive actions. First, the people of the city must relinquish all rights to claim knowledge. Second, they have to accept traditions in place of knowledge. This seems overly conservative but it is somewhat sensible, since traditions have preserved the city until that point and may help to preserve it in the future. Most importantly, the rejection of claims to knowledge and the acceptance of rule by tradition can protect the city against false claims to knowledge. These false claims mark the decline of the city into lawlessness and confusion about the nature of political knowledge. Once the lines of knowledge and expertise are blurred, the false imitator of the statesman is able to manipulate the city as he wishes.

The common view overlooks how the *Sophist* contributes to the discussion of the statesman and the sophist in the *Statesman*, so the visitor's argument seems naïve and irrelevant to actual politics. His statement at 301d4-6 seems to ignore the prevalence of human error and greed at 301c7-d4. The visitor's approach also ignores the possibility of human knowledge that is not at the level of the statesman. If he is not willing to recognize these human realities, then he does not have much to contribute to how we organize our political systems. In contrast, my interpretation is able to draw out more subtle and cautious aspects of the visitor's argument. If the visitor is almost entirely skeptical about the possibility of a statesman emerging, and is instead arguing that cities should abandon the imitation of knowledge, then the challenges faced in accepting the visitor's account of politics are very different. Instead of wondering whether we are willing to take the chance of believing that the statesman could emerge, we are instead challenged to consider to what extent we are willing to accept, and act on, our lack of knowledge. There are many reasons that could be brought forward for why allowing expertise to

guide and change our political systems is beneficial; the understanding of the past was flawed because of prejudice, the world has changed in significant ways that make it necessary to “catch up,” we cannot trust the people of the past to have our best interests in mind or to be able to anticipate what is best for future generations. The problem with these allowances for change, for the visitor, is that the rejection of tradition is based on a belief that we have knowledge. We believe we know what is inclusive, what will account for change, and what is best for us and for the future. The visitor points to a major flaw with these beliefs: we do not have a good basis for claiming that we have more knowledge than the people who came before us. Yet letting go of the belief that we at least have some type of knowledge, or an approximation of knowledge, seems impossible. This type of self-awareness seems to preclude action and growth, which are essential to politics as we understand it. However, the visitor’s argument does not need to lead to a dead end. Socrates, as the messenger of self-awareness to Athens, offers interesting ways of thinking through how self-awareness can influence politics. I will discuss this more in the next section regarding the *Gorgias*, and in the following section where I argue for a charitable reading of Plato in the *Statesman*. By viewing the visitor’s argument as continuous between the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, a political and epistemic problem emerges that makes the strangeness of Socrates’ initial question to the visitor more bewildering and more interesting. Separating the sophist from the statesman requires examining imitation and belief, and in the process it requires examining our trust in political knowledge.

Section Two: Consistency with the *Gorgias*: Sophistry as Imitation of Legislation (463a-466a)

In the *Gorgias*, Socrates argues against the idea that oratory is a political art. In this section, I will focus on parts of the discussion with Polus and Callicles that are relevant to my interpretation of the *Statesman*.⁴⁶

Sophistry is discussed in the *Gorgias* as an imitation of the political art that is similar to oratory. Socrates explains their relationship with politics to Gorgias and Polus at 463a-466a. Sophistry and oratory are both concerned with the art of politics, but they are not based on knowledge and therefore cannot be crafts. Instead, they are based on a knack. A knack is something that “a mind given to making hunches takes to, a mind that’s bold and naturally clever at dealing with people” (463a5-8). Socrates calls the sophist’s and orator’s knack “flattery” (463b1). Flattery appears to be a craft, and, in the case of oratory, sophistry, pastry making, and cosmetics, creates images of specific crafts (463b-d).

To show the association of the flattering knacks with the crafts they imitate, Socrates divides the genuine crafts being imitated into two groups. First, there are the crafts that serve the body: medicine and gymnastics. Medicine and gymnastics “provide care with a view to what is best” for the body (c2-5). Their partner crafts for the soul are justice and legislation. What medicine is to the body, justice is to the soul. What gymnastics is to the body, legislation is to the soul.

The flattering knacks imitate these four crafts and share the same relationships to each other as the crafts do. For the body, there are pastry making, which competes with medicine, and cosmetics, which competes with gymnastics. In the case of the soul, oratory competes with justice and sophistry competes with legislation. For all four kinds of flattery, the competition is

⁴⁶ Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987).

to appear as the genuine craft. The genuine crafts are obligated to do what is best for the body or the soul. This means that they can be unpleasant and seem harmful. The flattering knack instead “guesses at what is pleasant with no consideration for what is best” (465a1-2). The flatterers therefore claim to know what is best based on what is most pleasant.

Socrates repeatedly states that the flattering knacks are without knowledge. This is their main distinction from the crafts. Flattery “takes notice” of the genuine crafts and “by guessing - divides itself into four, masks itself with each of the parts, and then pretends to be the characters of the masks” (464c6-d1). The imitation of the genuine crafts is therefore based on a guess - not only of the nature of the crafts, but also of their appearance. The flatterers succeed when they are seen to be genuine and can potentially overthrow the role of the genuine crafts.

The nature of sophistry is not explored in this section in great detail, other than to say that it is often confused with oratory. Sophists and orators are confused about their own role and, in turn, confuse others. Yet there are some things to be gained from this section that are relevant to my discussion of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. First, there is Socrates’ comparison of sophistry to the related, body-centered flattery of cosmetics; what cosmetics is to the body, he claims, sophistry is to the soul. Second, there is the nature of the genuine craft that sophistry imitates: legislation. The legislative craft is also not explored in detail in the *Gorgias*, but some of its traits can be seen in its relationship with gymnastics and justice.

Cosmetics attempts to replace gymnastics by causing the body to appear healthy without requiring the rigour of exercise. Socrates is impatient with cosmetics:

Cosmetics is... a mischievous, deceptive, disgraceful and illiberal thing, one that perpetrates deception by means of shaping and coloring, smoothing out and dressing up,

so as to make people assume an alien beauty and neglect their own, which comes through gymnastics (465b2-6).

This passage has aspects that are comparable with the final division in the *Sophist*. In the *Sophist*, sculpture is the main example of image-making that is used by the visitor. The division of image-making into likeness-making and appearance-making is explained using two types of sculptures. A sculpture with the same proportions as the original is a likeness, while a sculpture that uses other proportions while seeming to be like the original is an appearance. Cosmetics create the appearance of fitness in the same way that a large sculpture in the *Sophist* appears well proportioned from a distance: “those craftsmen say good-bye to truth, and produce in their images the proportions that seem to be beautiful rather than the real ones” (236a4-6). The insincerity of the sophist and his willingness to cheat, imitate, and play games with his listeners (234b1-235a), is echoed in the description of the cosmetic artist from the *Gorgias*. The people convinced to abandon their own beauty in the *Gorgias* are similar to the students of the sophist in the *Sophist*. These students are convinced that they can gain wisdom and knowledge “cheaply and quickly” from the sophist (234a5). The description of cosmetics as the physical analogue of sophistry in the *Gorgias* has a lot in common with the account of sophistry in the *Sophist*. This indirectly shows that, while Socrates says very little about sophistry in this passage of the *Gorgias*, he is working with a concept of sophistry that is similar to the concept in the *Sophist*.

In the *Gorgias*, legislation (νομοθετική, 464b8) is the genuine craft that sophistry imitates. The labeling of sophistry as an imitation of a political craft emphasizes sophistry’s association with politics, which seemed in question at the end of the *Sophist*. However, in the *Statesman*, the statesman is an expert in legislation: “Now in a certain sense it is clear that the art of the legislator (νομοθετική) belongs to that of the king” (294a7). While legislation is not a

necessary aspect of statesmanship in the *Statesman*, since the statesman’s rule can replace law, it is a kind of knowledge that can only belong to genuine statesmen. The sophist in the *Gorgias* is therefore imitating the knowledge of the statesman as described in the *Statesman*.

Without conflating the *Gorgias* and the *Statesman*, it is worth noting that in both texts the sophist attempts to “put on the mask” of the genuine legislator. When the sophist and the orator are confused with each other, as they often are, according to Socrates, this juxtaposition can seem odd. However, it is not so strange when the connection between oratory and justice is explained. Polus, the young man who inspired this particular discussion, sees orators as “having the greatest power in the city” because “they put to death anyone they want, and confiscate the property and banish from their cities anyone they see fit” (466b4-5, b11-c2). Orators therefore have a tyrannical power that they “mask” with justice to justify their actions (464c6-d1). The sophist, on the other hand, puts on the “mask” of the legislator, who decides what actions are legal and which are illegal in the city. What is right and what is wrong is defined by what seems beautiful and pleasant to the city, rather than by what is best. By creating the illusion of law, the sophist draws the city away from the “gymnastics” of genuine law. Genuine law may cause discomfort and pain, but it will bring about what is best for the city. The confusion between the sophist and the orator is therefore understandable; one creates a system of values based on pleasure, while the other uses these values to do what seems most pleasurable. This is important for the argument regarding the sophist in the *Statesman*, as it reinforces the idea that the sophist imitates political knowledge – specifically, the knowledge of legislation which is the expertise of the statesman. The sophist in the *Statesman* is therefore not simply a ruler who is not a statesman. Rather, he is an imitator who guesses; who puts on the mask of the statesman, and who thereby deceives the city.

Section Three: Recognizing the Statesman

In the *Statesman*, the visitor emphasizes that all constitutions other than the ideal constitution are imitations. Some are better to live in than others based on their lawfulness. However, the false imitator - I argue that this is the tyrant - is the greatest danger to the city since he risks taking the power of the statesman without possessing the statesman's knowledge. This was the beginning point for the discussion of law and constitutions at 291b-c. The danger of the statesman's false imitator also inspires the strange discussion of the exclusion of expertise from law at 298a-300a. So, while there is an explicit connection between imitation of the statesman and law, there is also a second and malicious type of imitation at work in the visitor's account of law. Law, as the imitation of the statesman's constitution, is a defense against the would-be tyrant's imitation of the statesman's knowledge.

A point of issue with the *Statesman* is that there is no clear criterion given for how the city can distinguish the false imitator of the statesman from the genuine statesman.⁴⁷ Most poignant is the distinction between tyranny and statesmanship at 301c8-d8. The visitor describes the terrors of the false statesman that the city seeks to avoid, and then blandly states that the genuine statesman would be recognized (301d4-6). This is especially troubling since 293d-e describes similar actions taken by the statesman for the good of the city. The visitor does not explain how the city would be able to distinguish the statesman from the tyrant, other than saying that the statesman's knowledge is of what is best for the city. The city's ability to avoid the tyrant and embrace the statesman is therefore based on the ability of its people to recognize genuine knowledge. However, they are ignorant, which was shown in their reliance on law. The way in which the city will correctly identify the statesman is not described, but seems simply to be assumed by the visitor. The visitor's vagueness opens up the possibility of the false statesman

⁴⁷ Melissa Lane, *Method and Politics*, pg. 6.

(i.e. the tyrant), just as it was being closed. Is the genuine statesman recognized through the knowledge of the people? If the way in which the statesman is recognized is left vague, then this allows the tyrant room to maneuver because he can manipulate opinion to appear as knowledge. The visitor seems to be careless and more interested in building his statesman than in protecting the city.

However, the vagueness of the visitor's statements could be read in another way. The off-handedness of this statement that the city will recognize the statesman could be read as indifference to whether the statesman emerges or not. It is true that the visitor has not given the city many tools to recognize the statesman - but he has given it tools for imitating the genuine statesman (through law) to protect from the false statesman (the sophist, the tyrant). The visitor seems to be skeptical about the nature of the city and its ability to succeed without a statesman. Yet there is an underlying strength in the city's nature that he thinks can be reinforced with lawfulness (301e-302b). Perhaps not all cities have to collapse from lawlessness, even if they all eventually fall. In the long-term survival of the city, failing to recognize a true statesman because of the rigidity of its laws does not seem to be a catastrophe. The dangers a city is exposed to in searching for a statesman, or in believing that a statesman will emerge, are far too large compared to the small chance of landing upon their true statesman.⁴⁸ Instead, the idea of the statesman is used as a foundation for strict constitutionalism. It is important for the people in the city to recognize the limitations of their knowledge and to prevent any who would claim a right to unconditional power from gaining that power. The visitor does not think that people in the city have access to knowledge. Therefore, they should not be trusted to be able to recognize the

⁴⁸ In *Method and Politics*, Lane states that "it is incumbent on actual cities to recognize that the statesman could arise, and to recognize that if he should, he should be granted the unconditional authority due to his knowledge" (139). It is consistent with the *Statesman* to say that the text is concerned with recognizing the statesman. This does not mean that the text makes the statesman necessary, especially as a ruler. Rule by the statesman is best, but the second-best constitution is desirable when the people in the city are without knowledge.

statesman's impostor. There may be a chance that a statesman emerges, but this would be extraordinary and does not guarantee that he would rule. Seeking and finding statesmen should otherwise be avoided, as it makes the city vulnerable.

The complete ignorance of the people in the city makes the idea that the statesman is best imitated in lawfulness useful for protecting the city from its greatest enemy, the false statesman. Conversely, the visitor could be very sincere in his comments regarding the ease of recognizing the statesman. I would argue that the bulk of his discussion of non-ideal constitutions is about avoiding the false statesman because of the emphasis on lawfulness and lawlessness. If this is true, then it seems that his main concern in the discussion of non-ideal constitutions is not with equipping the city with the tools for recognizing the statesman. This may be because the arrival of the statesman would represent such a dramatic shift from opinion to knowledge that the nature of the true statesman could not be contested.

The purpose of this section of the *Statesman* is therefore not primarily to prepare the people of the city for the arrival of their genuine statesman. Rather, Young Socrates has now learned why most rulers are not statesmen. In most cases, the act of ruling is an imitation of statesmanship that is performed without knowledge. Some rulers will be called kings, like the statesman, through the tradition of the title. Some will claim to be a statesman out of ignorance. And some will use the art of sophistry to appear as genuine statesmen, even though they know they are not. The statesman's false imitator will have several recognizable characteristics. First, he claims to be a statesman so that he can rule like the statesman. He does so despite understanding he does not have the statesman's knowledge. Second, his actions are not aimed at what is best for the city. Third, he depends on the approval of the city to succeed in his

appearance.⁴⁹ All of these characteristics, including the need for approval, are opposed to the qualities of the true statesman. Understanding the nature of the false statesman therefore equips the city with a way of speaking about and recognizing the false statesman. The use of this account of the statesman’s imitator is apparent in the comparison of the false doctor and genuine doctor. In modern times, the false doctor has been popularly named the “snake oil salesman.” This name immediately conjures the idea of someone claiming medical expertise for the purpose of harming and robbing their patients. Giving these false doctors their own name makes it easier to distinguish them. This is better than continuing to call them doctors, and creates a negative idea that repulses people. No one wants to be tricked by the snake oil salesman. This does not guarantee that people will know, by sight, who is false and who is a genuine doctor. However, they will at least have an understanding that they are two different things, and that one will be deceptive and the other will be helpful. The deceptive one is not genuine, the helpful one is genuine. If medical expertise was exceedingly rare, then it is plausible that all “doctors” would be treated as false imitators. This may prevent the success of a genuine doctor, but it would at least create a barrier against the poison and exploitation of the false doctors. For the city, the possibility of the false imitation of the statesman requires constant questioning and vigilance by the people of the city. There can be instances of short-term success from the false statesman, if he is allowed to rule. But the dangers of the false imitator can be avoided altogether if the best imitation of the statesman is lawfulness.

⁴⁹ This interpretation is counter to Bernardete’s insistence that tyranny is based on the rule of violence (*Being and the Beautiful* (1984), III, 132.). The category of consent/violence for defining regimes was already dropped at 291e-292a along with wealth/poverty. The number of rulers and lawful/lawless remain in use for the discussion though being bracketed in comparison with knowledge as the criteria for defining constitutions. The use of consent/violence and wealth/poverty for defining constitutions remains on the side of popular opinion and historical anecdote, not precise analysis. In a way, this marginalization provides an opportunity for the tyrant, as defined by the visitor, since the sophist-tyrant rules by persuasion, which may or may not include violence. It also seems possible that a tyrant could rule without relying on sophistry or trying to claim the title of statesman.

The common view regarding the definition of the sophist in the *Statesman* is part of a larger assumption regarding Plato's political aim in this text. Lane points to the naiveté of assuming that the statesman could be recognized by the people of the city. Annas, in her argument that the *Statesman* is a transition text between the *Republic* and the *Laws*, sees a partially formed pragmatism that still lacks a connection to political reality.⁵⁰ Plato's belief in a perfect ruler, even one enmeshed in temporality, is still too ideal and lacks the maturity of the *Laws*. My argument in this thesis is aimed at showing that if the discussion of law and sophistry is interpreted alongside the *Sophist* then some of the naiveté and immaturity fall away.⁵¹ When the focus is on the traits and epistemic requirements for the statesman, it seems absurd to think that he could be recognized by a common person. But when the focus is shifted to how the discussion of recognition and imitation provides a framework for protecting the city from false imitations of knowledge, then a different problem is faced by the people of the city. Are they willing to acknowledge their ignorance and take the steps the visitor insists are necessary to protect from lawlessness? Are they willing to accept the second-best constitution and reject claims that a better way is possible? Whether or not the second-best constitution is desirable or practical, this section of the *Statesman* does raise interesting and important questions. This section also demonstrates some of the key reasons why philosophy is important in the real world. Beliefs and opinions are easily assumed to be knowledge. When that assumed knowledge of what is best is applied to a community, real consequences emerge. In such instances, a framework based on the intellectual modesty that the visitor is promoting could make it easier to admit mistakes and make adjustments. Recognizing our mutual ignorance could also be a useful

⁵⁰ Julia Annas, Introduction to *Statesman*, translated by Robin Waterfield (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), xii-xiii, xv-xvi, xix.

⁵¹ I am not arguing that my narrow interpretation of this section of the text accounts for all of the strangeness of the *Statesman*. The weaving of the people's temperaments in a eugenics program at the end of the *Statesman* is another problematic section when trying to reconcile the text with political life.

way to work through ideological differences. Plato's presentation of political knowledge in the *Statesman* therefore has more to offer for modern politics than just the ideal of the statesman.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented support for my narrow interpretation, on which the sophist in the *Statesman* is the tyrant. My attention to the *Gorgias* shows that the sophist who participates in politics has distinctive qualities that prevent all rulers from being defined as sophists. This is not because all rulers are, objectively, not sophists. Rather, it is because calling a ruler a sophist (in the context of the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and, I have now argued, the *Gorgias*) means that they fulfill certain requirements in their relation to knowledge and imitation. This argument is more charitable to Plato's visitor, and to Plato himself. By strengthening the link between the two texts in regard to the sophist, I hope to have shown greater continuity in his approach than has often been supposed. More importantly, the narrow interpretation shows that Plato's argument creates a sustainable political model that accounts for the difficulty in acquiring knowledge. The attempt by the people to imitate the statesman in their constitution assumes that the people in the city recognize the problem of knowledge and aim at what is best. The people of the city are motivated by their desire for the good life. Only the statesman is able to bring this about in an authentic way, but self-awareness offers an alternative that can protect them from the worst life, namely, life under the rule of an imitator of the true statesman, the greatest sophist: a tyrant.

Thesis Conclusion

The *Sophist* and the *Statesman* are two closely connected texts that are concerned with the difference between the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher. In this thesis I have focused on how the sophist is discussed in both texts. The standard interpretation has understood “sophist” to have two different meanings in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. This is largely due to the fact that the *Sophist*’s sophist is a hired teacher who argues in private, while the *Statesman*’s sophist competes with the statesman as a ruler in the city. The term “sophist” in the *Statesman* seems to apply to any ruler who is not a statesman; this is entirely different than a private teacher of arguments. However, in this thesis I have argued that the definition of the sophist in the *Sophist* is used for the sophist in the *Statesman*. Also, I have argued that the definition from the *Sophist* shows that only the tyrant in the *Statesman* is a sophist. This narrower application of the term “sophist” in the *Statesman* is based on the fact that only the tyrant creates a false imitation of the statesman.

To defend these claims I began with a discussion of the *Sophist* where I focused on the theme of imitation as well as the final definition of the sophist. Two types of imitation are described, and the sophist participates in appearance-making which distorts the original that it is copying even though it appears the same as the original. People who do not have knowledge may try to mimic other people or virtues, but their imitations will always be appearances. The sophist is one such mimic. However, most people believe that their appearance is genuine and that they have knowledge of the thing they are mimicking. The sophist is different than most because he is not convinced that he has knowledge of the thing that he mimics. Instead, he is suspicious of his own mimicry and pretends to be the person, or to have the virtues, that he is mimicking.

In the *Statesman*, imitation is also important for understanding rulers who are not statesmen. The statesman has expert knowledge of what is good for the city. He is able to rule above the law since he knows what is best at different times and in different circumstances whereas the law is static. According to the visitor, all rulers imitate the statesman. Some do it well, through laws, and others do it poorly, by ruling lawlessly. Of the ones who rule lawlessly, the tyrant is the one who imitates the statesman's rule most directly. He claims to have the statesman's knowledge and uses this claim to persuade the city to allow him to rule above the law. He is pretending to be the statesman. The other lawless rulers claim to have the statesman's knowledge, but none of them are pretending to be a statesman. They are convinced that they have the statesman's knowledge but they do not rule alone. To mimic the person of the statesman, the ruler must rule alone.⁵² The lawful king and the statesman share the same name even though the king rules by law and the statesman rules by knowledge. The tyrant, as the third single ruler, appears to be like the statesman because he rules alone and pretends to have knowledge.

My narrow interpretation addresses one important criticism of the *Statesman*: that the visitor believes a statesman will be recognized by the people in the city but he does not account for human error and deception. Giving absolute power above the law to someone who seems to be a statesman is dangerous. After all, the visitor claims that the statesman is able to act with the same force and violence that belongs to tyrants because he knows what is best. I argue against this interpretation by insisting that the visitor provides two safeguards against the false statesman. First, he argues that a city without a statesman should recognize that the people of the city are without expert knowledge. Once this is recognized, he insists that all cities should be completely ruled by law without allowing for any ruler or citizen to attempt to change or rule

⁵² See footnote 44 on page 59.

above the law. Otherwise, the city risks the slide into lawlessness and could allow a tyrant to take power who appears to have the statesman's knowledge. By recognizing their lack of political knowledge, and becoming fully committed to following the law, the people of the city can prevent both their own self-deception of their own knowledge and the deception of the tyrant as a sophist.

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