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SOME STEPS TOWARDS PLATO'S ECOPOLITICS IN THE *LAWS*

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In recent years there has been a notable growing interest in and new readings of Plato's last and probably partly posthumous dialogue, the *Laws*.[1] Besides being a juridical treatise or a dialogue on the philosophy of law and political science, this longest work in the Platonic corpus offers broad perspectives on various topics, many of them already treated in the *Republic*. However, the political, educational, cultural, and theological ideas presented in the *Laws* are often combined with Plato's late metaphysics of divine cosmology comparable with that of in the *Timaeus*. Most famously, Book Ten includes the argument of the priority of the "psychical" over the "physical", i.e., that soul (*psychê*) is seen as prior to the natural world or 'nature' (*physis*) both ontologically and chronologically (10,888e–892c, 896c–897a).[2] In this connection it is stated that the cosmos as a whole has a superlatively *natural* existence due to its soul (10,892c).[3] While *physis* in

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* Previous versions of this paper, though thematically quite different, were presented at two conferences (Conference of the International Association of Environmental Philosophy, Philadelphia in 2011 and the Symposium "Greening the Gods" in Cambridge, England, in 2014). I thank all the commentators as well as the inspiring reading group of the *Laws* directed by Dr Mika Perälä at the University of Helsinki 2012–13. I am also grateful to the anonymous reader appointed by the editorial board of *Arctos*.

[1] See, for instance, A. Peponi (ed.), *Performance and Culture in Plato's Laws*, Cambridge 2013; C. Bobonich (ed.), *Plato's Laws. A critical guide*. Cambridge 2010 and the extensive, three-volume commentary by K. Schöpsdau, *Nomoi (Gesetze)*, I–III, Göttingen 1994–2011. For earlier research, see T. Saunders – L. Brisson, *Bibliography on Plato's Laws*, Sankt Augustin 2000.

[2] See R. Mayhew, *Plato: Laws 10*, Oxford 2008, 130, 134–5 and R. Kamtekar's article in Bobonich (ed.) (above n. 1), 130–1.

[3] *Lg.* 10,892b–c: Φύσιν βούλονται λέγειν γένεσιν τὴν περὶ τὰ πρῶτα· εἰ δὲ φανήσεται ψυχὴ

this discussion is understood first and foremost as a metaphysical or theological principle, the *Laws* with its practical approaches – a foundation for a new Cretan colony called Magnesia – certainly contains references to man's relationship with his physical environment. Some of the agricultural laws (νόμοι γεωργικοί) of this new city-state take note of environmental protection of the countryside to such an extent that they nearly – as Glenn R. Morrow observes – manage to safeguard its natural resources and sustainability.[4] As Eberhard Klingerberg's study demonstrates, in some cases Plato's νόμοι γεωργικοί have their equivalent in the operative Greek legislation.[5]

The primary interest of this study is to examine the possibility of speaking about the "ecopolitics" of the *Laws*.[6] Plato has a special place in Greek ecological thinking due to the famous description in the *Critias* of the effects of erosion on the Attic landscape (*Crit.* 111a–c). It is quite unique in Greek literature – and in the Platonic corpus for that matter.[7] However, to what extent can we speak of Plato's concerns for sustainability in the *Laws* along the lines of the modern discourse of ecology? That is, does the sustainability of the environment of the Magnesian city-state in the *Laws* in fact mean nothing more than the (anthropocentric) safeguarding of the food supply and the health of its people? Moreover, if Plato's

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πρῶτον, οὐ πῦρ οὐδὲ ἀήρ, ψυχὴ δ' ἐν πρώτοις γεγενημένη, σχεδὸν ὀρθότατα λέγοιτ' ἂν εἶναι διαφερόντως φύσει. ταῦτ' ἔσθ' οὕτως ἔχοντα, ἂν ψυχήν τις ἐπιδείξῃ πρεσβυτέραν οὖσαν σώματος, ἄλλως δὲ οὐδαμῶς. "By 'nature' they mean the generation [or source] of the first things; but if soul turns out to be first, not fire or air, and soul is among the first things to have come into being, then it may well be most correct to say that *it* especially is by nature. This is how things are if someone demonstrates that soul is older than body, but not otherwise." Translated by R. Mayhew (above n. 2), 20. All other translations of the *Laws* in this article are R. G. Bury's (Loeb) with slight modifications.

4 G. R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City*, Princeton (NJ) 1960, 188.

5 E. Klingenberg, *Platons NOMOI ΓΕΩΡΓΙΚΟΙ und das positive griechische Recht*, Berlin 1976. See also C. Bruun's paper on Greek water legislation in Ö. Wikander (ed.), *Handbook of Ancient Water Technology*, Leiden 2000, 557–73.

6 Ecopolitics is "the political policy that is motivated by concerns for the natural environment"; cf. *Oxford English Dictionary*, *s.v.* For ecological aspects in Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias*, see the articles of T. A. Mahoney, M. R. Adams and O. Goldin in L. Westra – T. M. Robinson (eds.), *The Greeks and the Environment*, Oxford 1997; on the failure of the Athenians to maintain ecological sustainability, see J. Donald Hughes, *An Environmental History of the World*, London 2001, 59–66; for general works on environmental issues in Greek antiquity, see the bibliography in L. Thommen, *An Environmental History of Ancient Greece and Rome*, Cambridge 2009, 158–9.

7 See Goldin in Westra – Robinson (eds.) (above n. 6), 75–7.

"ecology", as Timothy A. Mahoney argues on the part of the *Timaeus*,[8] contains cosmological and theological sophistication alien to modern ecological thinking (the idea of the divine, self-sufficient cosmos), how is this compatible with the idea of the sustainable relationship with our physical environment?

In the following, I will start with the physical setting both of the dialogue itself and of the new city-state. After that, I will briefly turn to the physical education and physical performances of Magnesian citizens, in which there has lately been considerable research interest,[9] ending, via the agricultural laws, with the acquisition of practical knowledge of the Magnesian environment. My method is to extract and use two philosophical images of the *Laws* – the ascent to the mountains and the spinning top or lathe – that help map the background of Plato's "ecopolitical" thinking in the *Laws*.

Trekking towards the mountains

The setting of the *Laws* is, of course, extraordinary, even exotic, for a Platonic dialogue. The discussion of the partakers, the unnamed Athenian, the Cretan Cleinias, and the (quite taciturn) Spartan Megillus occurs while they are walking in the countryside in Crete.[10] It is said to be the longest day of the year, "the time when the God turns summer towards winter" (3,683c), that is, the summer solstice.[11] The journey has started at dawn from the city of Cnossus and the discussants are heading in the sultry weather "to the cave and temple of Zeus" (1,625b),[12] which has been interpreted to be the so-called Idaean cave dedicated to Zeus in the

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[8] Mahoney in Westra – Robinson (eds.) (above n. 6) compares Plato's ecology to the so-called "deep ecology".

[9] See Kurke's and Kowalzig's articles in Peponi (ed.) (above n. 1) and Kamtekar in Bobonich (ed.) (above n. 1).

[10] On the setting of the *Laws*, see Schöpsdau (above n. 1), 102–5. All other dialogues are set in Athens or its near surroundings. The stage of the *Phaedrus* is the suburb outside the city walls, beside the river Ilissus; in the *Republic*, Socrates reports the discussion conducted in Piraeus. There are many references to the advanced age of the interlocutors, see, for instance, 1,625b.

[11] The summer solstice is an important point of time for the new polity; cf. 6,768c–d, 12,946a (the naming of three examiners of the laws).

[12] Travelling to a cave may evoke (for us at least) the philosophical image of the cave in the *Republic* (7,514a–517e) in which going *towards* the cave in clear sunshine equates to returning from the intelligible to the sensible realm, which accords with the practical approaches of the *Laws* in general.

mountain Ida.[13] King Minos, the mythical Cretan lawgiver, is mentioned with a reference to Homer at the very beginning. Minos is said to have received instruction from his father Zeus on how to make and maintain good laws (1,624b, cf. *Od*. 19,178–179).[14] The obvious suggestion is that these three men are imitating Minos by paying a visit, making a pilgrimage, to the sacred cave of Zeus.

Archaeological evidence shows that the Idaean cave had been a centre of worship already during the Minoan civilization and flourished in classical times and even later. There was surely a path or paths – or possibly even a route – from Cnossus to the Idaean cave.[15] Mount Ida, which is nowadays called Psiloriti ('high mountain'), is the highest mountain in Crete (c. 2460 metres) and is situated about 30 kilometres southwest of Cnossus. The walk to the cave (at c. 1500 metres) from the plain is a rocky ascent with many upland meadows. According to Morrow, the estimated walking-time along the possible pilgrimage route or mere path – depending of course, which possible way one then chose – from Cnossus to the Idaean cave was a maximum of 10–13 hours.[16] However, walking from Cnossus to Mount Ida was not a one-day hike – not at least for old men in hot weather.

The three men are thus travelling from *polis* to countryside, from the civilized world towards the wilderness and also upwards, from the plains country towards mountains. In Greek thought, the wilderness, especially the top of the mountains, were thought to be places to sojourn for the gods.[17] Crete for its part was venerated as having the oldest constitution and legislation in the Greek world (cf. *Lg*. 4,708a). In all, the discussants are as if seeking the inspiration and legitimation to their philosophy of law not only from the mythical example of Minos and from actual examples of the ancient and present polities of Crete, Sparta and Athens – the civilized world – but also from the countryside and untamed nature.

However, although the image of these old or middle-aged men discussing while hiking or trekking towards a mountainous wilderness is appealing, the ref-

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[13] Morrow and others are of the opinion that it is not the so-called Dictaean Cave, which was supposed to be the birthplace of Zeus and is situated east of Cnossus. Morrow (above n. 4), 27. Schöpsdau 1994 (above n. 1), 155–6.

[14] See also the pseudo-Platonic *Minos* 319e.

[15] On the roads between cities and sacred places, see M. Dillon, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece*, London 1997, 34–7, 139; on the Idaean cave, J. A. Sakellaris, *Kernos* 1 (1988) 207–14.

[16] Morrow (above n. 4), 27 n. 45. See also Schöpsdau I (above n. 1), 155.

[17] See, e.g., Alcman frg 47 (*apud* Athen. 11,498) and J. M. Rist in Westra – Robinson (eds.) (above n. 6), 20.

erences to the actual journey are concentrated only in the first third of the *Laws* (1,625b, 1,632e, 3,685a–b, 4,722c–d). Moreover, the natural environment, the landscape, is not described extensively – there is only a brief reference to the pine-tree forests (for which Crete was famous)[18] alongside the road, in the shade of which they could rest on their strenuous journey in the hot sunshine (1,625b). Cleinias even points to a certain pine-tree forest with meadows, which he knows to be an ideal resting place (1,625b–c). Furthermore, when this *locus amoenus* has been reached, it is also the last reference to the actual journey. The Athenian summarizes their morning hike as follows: "It was little more than dawn when we began talking about laws and now it is high noon, and here we are in this entrancing resting-place (παγκάλη ἀνάπαυλα); all the time we have been talking of nothing but laws [...]" (4,722c–d). This is reminiscent, of course, of the setting of the *Phaedrus* – first walking, then sitting in a shady place to continue and complete the discussion. However, the description and response to the physical environment are still more expressive in the *Phaedrus* (cf. 229a and 242a) than in the *Laws*.[19]

From then on, there are still some nature similes or analogies that are reminiscent of travelling through the countryside: the analogy of the crossroads (7,799c, 799e) and an impressive analogy of going over a flooding river supporting oneself with a "safe cable" (πεῖσμα) (10,892d–e, 10,893b)[20] both representing aporia situations in argument making. Comparing the progress of a discussion or a speech to a journey was of course a popular metaphor in Plato's works (cf., for instance, *Resp*. 7,533a; *Phil*. 16b) and elsewhere in Greek literature.[21] At the very end of the dialogue, Cleinias mentions that the god is now guiding their future "journey" (12,968b), that is, their task of actual legislation for the new city-state and, especially, of creating the nocturnal council, the highest governing body.

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[18] Schöpsdau I (above n. 1), 156. Schöpsdau, among many others, questions whether Plato himself has travelled the road from Cnossus to Mount Ida.

[19] Mary Louise Gill notes that "all Socrates' senses are stimulated by his surroundings", *apud* P. Ryan, *Plato's Phaedrus*, Norman (OK) 2012, xvi. See also Schöpsdau I (above n. 1), 103.

[20] Another nature analogy is the lake in Book Five: the heterogeneous citizens of the polity – coming from many different cities all over Crete – are compared to different kinds of springs flowing into the same lake or reservoir (λίμνη) (5,736b).

[21] For other metaphorical uses of the word 'journey' and its like in the *Laws*, cf. 3,683a, 4,707d, 7,799c–e, 9,857c (Cleinias deliberately "collides" with the Athenian, who was going "full steam ahead").

In all, it seems that the old men walked only from dawn till midday until they reached the shady *locus amoenus* in which they continue to philosophize in a reposing position. Although they did not reach their ultimate destination, the cave of Zeus, Book Ten and its emphasis on theological matters, the law of *asebeia* and the proof of the existence of the gods who take care of mankind, along with Cleianias' above-mentioned later reference to the god guiding their future journey (12,968b), can be viewed as a symbolic approach or anticipation of that religiously emphatic cave. The discussants did not reach the cave of the supreme god in practice, but in thought, with their theological subject matter.[22]

Cleinias reveals his appointed task as a legislator for the new Cretan colony at the end of the Book Three (3,702b–c).[23] From then on, the discussion revolves around the concern of the new polity and drawing up a legal code for it although the range of subject matter oscillates between the actual laws and more abstract topics. With the reference to the resting-place (4,722c–d), the Athenian emphasizes that all their former, quite abstract discussion has been only a prelude or preamble (προοίμιον) to laws just as there are preludes for the *nomos*-songs.[24] In what follows, *prooimion* becomes a central concept, a method of persuading citizens to obey the laws, but the Athenian's words can be taken rhetorically as well: the first four Books of the *Laws* function as a means for us readers to "obey" the *Laws* – as a long *captatio benevolentiae*.

The philosophical image of the setting of the *Laws* is a journey, a strenuous trekking upwards in hot, glaring sunshine. It was a well-known poetic image composed by Hesiod, which the Athenian even cites: the path to virtue is a sweaty, steep and rocky ascent (4,718e–719a).[25] The setting of the dialogue, the mountainous Cretan landscape, functions as not only a mythic (Minos) but a moral (path to virtue) setting for the endeavour of the discussants. In general, the mountainous environment seems to have a pregnant meaning especially in the first part of the *Laws*: in the discussion of the past (the life after the flood, Book Three) and of the future (the new city-state Magnesia, Book Four).

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[22] In the rest of the *Laws*, there is no reference that the discussants are continuing their journey to the cave after their midday rest. However, if we imagine that they do, they will reach the cave or its vicinity by sunset, before night. What could be a more convenient topic of discussion at midnight at the cave of the supreme god than the *nocturnal* council?

[23] The name Magnesia does not appear until 8,848d.

[24] The obvious pun with the word νόμος ('law' and '*nomos*-song') comes only in 7,800a.

[25] Hes. *Op*. 287–292. Plato also cites the passage in *Prot*. 340d and *Resp.* 364d.

The effects of the physical environment on human customs

Living in the demanding mountainous environment is suggested to be ethically more satisfying than a life lived on the fertile plain, in the level country. In Book Three, the Athenian gives a depiction of the life after the great flood,[26] when only those living on the tops of the mountains survived: the herdsmen, shepherds, and the animals pasturing or living on the mountains (3,677b, 677e).[27] There is the familiar connection between simple, frugal, self-sufficient life (before full-scale agriculture) and virtuousness comparable with the famous "city of pigs", Socrates' vegetarian utopia, mentioned in the *Republic* (2,369a–b). The frugality of these early mountaineers is combined with the physical effort that their simple life demands. It is seen as a promoter of a virtuous life because it teaches self-restraint (3,679b–c; cf. also 5,737d, 8,831c). These early nomadic people are said to have the noblest character because they are brave and temperate. Furthermore, due to their goodness of heart or simplicity (εὐήθεια), they needed no justification for the statements made about gods according to which they ordered their lives (3,679a–d). Thus, they need no laws and there were no non-believers among them. The cohesion of these small societies was great: the Athenian compares them to flocks of birds (3,680d–e).[28] But this kind of polity or non-polity – like the city of pigs of the *Republic* – is not steady and durable if the population grows.

Already at the very beginning of the *Laws*, Cleinias suggests that some Cretan customs are a consequence of their rugged country, their being completely different from those in the level (and fertile) country of Thessaly (1,625d, 2,625d). The concept that geography determines the disposition of people is for the first time most clearly explicated in the Hippocratic treatise *Airs, Waters, Places*, which circulated around the time of the writing of the *Laws* and affected most probably, or via the *Laws*, Aristotle's influential notions on the issue in *Politics* (VII 7, 1327b18–31). The treatise suggests that plains country with a mild and favourable climate best supplies the flora and fauna, but "courage, endurance,

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[26] On ecologically disastrous floods, see also *Tim.* 23b and *Crit*. 111a.

[27] There was only scanty sustenance just after the deluge but a little later on there was no lack of food (3,677e; 3,679a).

[28] In their discussion of the emergence of the societies after the flood, the Athenian alludes to Homer's description of the life of the Cyclops, self-supporting nomads living in the caves of mountains who needed no laws (3,680b).

industry, and high spirit, could not arise in such conditions (ἐν τοιαύτῃ φύσει)" (Hippoc. *Aer*. 12; see also 24).[29]

The Athenian is, of course, against these kinds of materialistic assumptions, although he agrees that the terrain has a great impact on its inhabitants. The physical environment may in the long run modify human temperament and determine some customs, but not, of course, the laws, because true laws are seen as divine, immanent order (4,714a).[30] The discussion draws the conclusion that this divine order, which also prevails in human beings, easily gets distorted – "slackens" – especially in those whose rational part is not strong (5,728a–b).[31] Therefore, written, codified laws and other regulations are needed as well as an ordered daily life.

The effect of the geography on human cultural habits is discussed more extensively in the context of the future city-state for which the interlocutors are laying a foundation "in words" (3,702e). Cleinias does not give its precise geographical situation: the new settlement is to be located about eighty stadia, that is, c. 15 kilometres, from the coast (4,704b). However, the situation, geography and climate of that area are mentioned as being optimal (4,704b–705c). The vegetation is not highly productive because the environment is rocky, but it is all-productive (πάμφορος) (4,705b) supplying all that is needed. The distance from the coast is said not to promote foreign merchandise and the import of foreign luxury goods.[32] The countryside of the new Cretan city-state of Magnesia is mountainous, that is, a demanding environment resulting in a frugal, but self-supporting life-style (5,737d). Thus the geographical position of the new colony is seen to have an effect on the occupations of its people and in that way even on the morality of its citizens.[33]

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[29] Translated by W. H. S. Jones (LCL 147, Hippocrates Vol. I.). On the Greek ideas of the impact of environment on human character and behaviour, see Thommen (above n. 6), 29–30 and Hughes (above n. 6), 60–1.

[30] Instead of immanent order, Terence Irwin speaks about "internal law", Irwin in Bobonich (ed.) (above n. 1), 98–9. The Greek environmental laws concerning cleanliness and order may have had a religious origin. See Bruun (above n. 5), 573.

[31] The verb χαλᾶσθαι 'slacken' occurs only in 2,653c–d. See Kowalzig and Kurke in Peponi (ed.) (above n. 2), 185 and 131.

[32] See Patricia Fagan's account of the effect of the Magnesian landscape in G. Recco – E. Sanday (eds.), *Plato's Laws. Force and Truth in Politic*s, Bloomington (IN) 2012, 106–8.

[33] The description of the geography of ancient Athens and Atlantis in the *Critias* is, however, much more extensive than that of Magnesia in the *Laws*.

The Magnesian economy is based only on agriculture. However, although all routine and hard manual work would of course be left to slaves and servants, the average citizens were probably meant to be self-sustaining farmers – reminiscent of the independent hoplite-farmers of ancient Athens, as Thanassis Samaras has suggested.[34] Despite this industrious life-style, one aspect of everyday life in Magnesia would be frequent seasonal festivals with their choral performances. These performances bear in themselves another philosophical image of the *Laws* along with the ascending towards the mountains, namely the image of spinning tops – that is, circular instead of vertical movement.

Socialization by daily physical exercises and circular motion

The discussants of the *Laws* reflect several times the manner of their discussion. The Athenian describes it as being circular and repetitive, circling in the same place (ταὐτὸν περιφερόμενος, 2,659d; cf. also 3,701c and 4,723d–e),[35] which truly acknowledges the fluctuating manner of argumentation of this dialogue.[36]

Circular motion as such plays a central role in Plato's metaphysics and cosmology of course. It is the perfect movement, the movement of the gods (*Lg*. 4,716a) as well as the movement of the rational part of our soul, which is compared to the movement around some fixed midpoint both in the *Laws* (10,893d, 10,898a) and in the *Republic* (4,436e). The image of a spinning top (στρόβιλος) from the passage of the *Republic* is probably also in mind in the first above-mentioned passage of the *Laws* (10,893d), although in the second case the image

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[34] *CP* 107 (2012) 1–20, especially pp. 7–9 and 15. According to Samaras, the citizens will themselves be engaged more or less in agricultural labour, not as manual labourers, but as the supervisors of the work – they have of course slaves and servants – but probably even the members of the richest class were supposed to work on their farms to a greater extent than the gentleman-farmer Isomachus in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*.

[35] The Athenian notes that he should rein in his discourse and once again repeat the original question (3,701c, cf. also 7,812b). At the end of Book Four (4,723d–e), Cleinias suggests that they begin afresh and the Athenian should make a decent "prelude" for the subject matter of how much one ought to concern oneself with one's soul, body and property. There are several references to story-telling as a depiction of their talk (3,699e, 4,713a; cf. also 2,663e and 3,677a). See also 6,768e and 7,811c–d (their discussion is like a poem).

[36] On the characterization of the discussion in the *Laws,* see, for instance, R. F. Stalley, *An Introduction to Plato's Laws*, Oxford 1983, 4.

refers to a lathe (*Lg.* 10,898a).[37] In any case, it is a question of an axial rotation: the object is both moving in a circle around its centre, always in the same direction, and remaining at the same point (*Resp.* 4,436e). The movement is not irregular and wandering like the movement of a soul dominated by the irrational part (*Lg.* 10,898b–c). In *Timaeus*, soul is said to rotate itself and thus imitate the Difference and the Same, the Becoming and the Being (*Tim*. 37a, 47b) while the movement of the (divine) celestial bodies is compared to that of choral performance (χορεία) (*Tim*. 40c).[38] The circular orbits of the heavenly bodies should be observed and applied to the movement of our thought (*Tim*. 47b). All in all, the circular motion of the soul refers to the desirable harmony of the soul, which imitates the regularity of the cosmos.[39]

In the *Laws*, the soul's movements are equated with mental activities like the power of will, observation, fear, love and other cognitive and emotive qualities (10,896d). Furthermore, the movement of soul is prior to that of body – as is argued in Book Ten (cf. especially 10,897a) – which means that soul's movements have an effect on the movements of the body. However, besides the fact that the education program of the *Laws* speaks strongly on behalf of physical education, it also suggests the idea that the movement of body can have an effect on the soul, namely, on the harmony or regularity of the movement of the soul. One example is that constant regular movement, especially swinging of the body, is said to have a tranquillizing effect on the soul (7,789d–e, 790d, 791a).

Choral performances (χορεία, χορός, ὄρχησις)[40] were often circular dances.[41] Dancing in chorus – making ordered (also circular) rhythmic movements together with other dancers – is supposed (but not explicitly stated) to promote fellow-feeling and fellowship (φιλία, φιλοφροσύνη) among the citizens by form-

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[37] See Mayhew (above n. 2), 27, 140 and Schöpsdau III (above n. 1), 84, 422.

[38] See also the pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis* 982e.

[39] See Kamtekar in Bobonich (ed.) (above n. 1), 130–1. The priority of the soul's motion may be understood as pointing to its intentionality and the rationally ordered soul is as such highly goal-oriented that it is fixedly in the one direction.

[40] *Lg.* 2,672e–673d, 7,814e; cf. also 7,789c–790e. All these words refer here (in the *Laws*) to choral dance, but the original or general meaning of *choreia* and *choros* was circular, round dance while *orchêsis*, which gave name to the orchestra, refers to pantomime dance – dance as *mimesis* (LSJ).

[41] See Kowalzig in Peponi (ed.) (above n. 1), 197, on the cyclic *choreia* and *choreia* as procession.

ing the same rhythmic unity (1,628c, 1,640b–d, 2,671e–673a).[42] The emphasis on choral performances in the *Laws* also involves the idea of gods as the original instructors of mankind in their feasts and as fellow-performers (συγχορευταί, 2,653e).[43] The importance of choral performances is expressed by considering it to be *the* education: an uneducated man (ἀπαίδευτος) is without choir-training (ἀχόρευτος) (2,654a, 2,672e). Within the ordered cosmos and ordered city-state an uneducated man strikes a disharmony. Χορεία is defined as the combination of the order of motion and order of voice, "rhythm" and "harmony" (2,665a). These elements affect the non-rational part, which is occupied by desires and appetites and bodily affections, by managing and regulating its unordered movement so that the rational part is able to operate with less interference and fewer disturbances (7,802a–d, 7,814e–816d). Moreover, during the choral performances, all gestures that express good character are beautiful (2,655b) and the performer who is imitating these gestures and movements solidifies the same characteristics within himself.[44]

The Athenian equates dance with joy by giving an etymology χορός > χαρά (2,665a)[45] and urges that "we should live out our lives playing at certain pastimes – sacrificing, singing, dancing" (7,803e). Later on, the Athenian even suggests that every day should be a feast, a sacrifice to some divinity (8,828b). The structuring effect of the festivals and their rites on the everyday life of the Magnesian citizens was to be considerable.[46] Later on, it becomes clear that participating in some public ceremonies would be obligatory for the Magnesians; a refusal would lead to a penalty, although not a severe one (12,949c–d).

Although the daily life of the Magnesians will not be just "sacrificing, singing and dancing", the daily rituals emphasize the importance of the connection between humans and the gods. Some of the famous non-anthropocentric statements of the *Laws* can be viewed in this context: human beings are said to be gods' puppets and playthings (παίγνια, θαῦμα) (1,644d–645b, 7,803c–804b) and property of gods (10,902c). Furthermore, we are said to be only a tiny part of

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[42] Kowalzig and Kurke in Peponi (ed.) (above n. 1), 192–3 and 138. The utility of dance for military training, see 12,942d.

[43] Kurke in Peponi (ed.) (above n. 1), 129. Kamtekar in Bobonich (ed.) (above n. 1), 143–8.

[44] On the benefit of *choreia* and physical education, see Kamtekar in Bobonich (ed.) (above n. 1), 146, Calame and Kowalzig in Peponi (ed.) (above n. 1), 96–100 and 192–3.

[45] Cf. 7,792d about calm cheerfulness and gentle disposition (ἵλεως) as the most favourable state of soul.

[46] Kowalzig in Peponi (ed.) (above n. 1), 192–3.

the whole (πάνσμικρος) and generated for the sake of the whole: the cosmos did not come to be or exist for the sake of us, but we are born for the sake of it (10,903c).[47] Human affairs in general are "unworthy of earnest effort" (7,803b; cf. also 8,828d, 11,923a–b) and the measure (μέτρον) of all things is not human beings, but the god (4,716c).

Although a modern environmentalist would gladly embrace these holistic statements (we are seen as only tiny parts of a large interconnected system), they have almost nothing to do with man's relationship with his *physical* environment. However, the context is the cosmos understood as a living being:[48] the self-sufficient, self-moving, perfect cosmos.[49] The Magnesian polity also had to be self-sufficient and self-supporting. Therefore, it is not altogether irrelevant what man does with his natural environment, his *Umwelt*.

The circular spatial imaginary and the Magnesian city-state

The circular spatial imaginary prevails also in the description of the new city-state. Magnesia is meant to consist of a city and its surrounding countryside (χώρα); the *polis* is situated at the centre of it (5,745b).[50] The *chôra* will produce all that is necessary for daily life.[51] The families or households were basically self-support-

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[47] Furthermore, the greatest evil a human being can commit is stated to happen through her excessive love of self (διὰ τὴν σφόδρα ἑαυτοῦ φιλίαν) (5,731e). 'Self-love' in this context means, however, that man values what is his own more than what is true. One of the consequences is that one must follow and obey those who are better than himself – there are thus natural rulers and ruled. Cf. 6,757b–c on "true" equality.

[48] Although human beings are like a tiny part of an enormous divine organism, an essential part like any other part, we are also a special and specially cared for part (cf. 7,804b and 10,905a).

[49] In the *Timaeus*, the self-sufficiency is so all-inclusive that the cosmos is said even to use its own waste (φθίσις) as nourishment (*Tim.* 32d–34b). *Tim.* 33c: ἀπῄει τε γὰρ οὐδὲν οὐδὲ προσῄειν αὐτῷ ποθεν — οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦν — αὐτὸ γὰρ ἑαυτῷ τροφὴν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φθίσιν παρέχον. "Waste" (*phthisis*) can also mean "that which perishes".

[50] See the picture in Schöpsdau II (above n. 1), 338. The Magnesian land distributions have two parts, one close to the city, including most probably a townhouse, and one further away, constituting a working farm (*Lg.* 5,745c). The colonists are not just anyone but will be drawn from different Cretan cities consisting of a total of 5040 families (5,737e), each of which has their share of land. Aristotle's critique of the number of families, see *Pol.* II 6,1265a.

[51] Mine industry and foreign trade are supposed to lead to immoderateness, which for its part is in contrast to the ideal of the frugal and industrious, physical, lifestyle. Also, internal trade

ing, selling their surplus in local agorae and contributing to the common meals (συσσίτια). The agricultural laws (νόμοι γεωργικοί) regulate the selling of these goods in the agora as well as the partial control of agricultural production: farming, husbandry (shepherding and bee-keeping), and harvesting (7,842b–848c).[52] The most elaborate legislation is formulated for the regulation of water supplies, which is said to be based on ancient water regulation (6,844a).[53] The reason for this concentration on water supplies is stated to be that water can more easily be polluted than land or air.[54] The pollution of water (διαφθορὰ ὕδατος) can happen, for instance, by malicious poisoning of one's neighbour's water.[55]

For administrative purposes, the *chôra* is marked out into twelve equal portions, which are assigned to different Magnesian tribes (φυλή), twelve in number (6,760b).[56] Each twelfth part is consecrated to gods and divinities. In all, the land is said to belong to "all gods" (τῆς γῆς ἱερᾶς οὔσης τῶν πάντων θεῶν) (5,741c). Notwithstanding the private ownership of the land, the owners are advised to care for the land as common property: "tend the land [...] more diligently than a mother tends her children, inasmuch as it, being a goddess, is mistress over its mortal population, and should observe the same attitude also towards the local gods and

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is minimal and the financial management is simple (no usury, no big loans). See K. R. Moore, *Plato, Politics and a Practical Utopia*, London 2013, 28–9.

52 The organization of the food supply (βίου κατασκευή) is not described minutely. The agricultural laws pay more attention to the penal aspects of the law and to the possible conflicts between neighbouring farmers than to the actual farming. There are laws concerning boundary-marks, wrongs done to one's neighbours – for example, if burning on one's own land damages the land of one's neighbours – and wrongs done while fruit harvesting. Furthermore, there are laws on hunting, which is to be only a noble pastime. Fishing and fowling are thought to be not quite fitting food supplies (7,823a–824c). A curious notion is that young men are not encouraged to practice fishing (7,823d). Fishing is allowed for "fishermen", but not in sacred lakes and rivers. There are restrictions on hunting too (hunting in the night with nets and snares). Fowling is forbidden on fields and sacred glebes.

53 For inscriptions concerning the Greek water supply, see Klingenberg (above n. 5), 63–132 and Bruun (above n. 5), 557–73.

54 *Lg.* 8,845d–e: οὔτε γὰρ γῆν οὔτε ἥλιον οὔτε πνεύματα, τοῖς ὕδασι σύντροφα τῶν ἐκ γῆς ἀναβλαστανόντων, ῥᾴδιον φθείρειν φαρμακεύσεσιν ἢ ἀποτροπαῖς ἢ καὶ κλοπαῖς, περὶ δὲ τὴν ὕδατος φύσιν ἐστὶν τὰ τοιαῦτα σύμπαντα δυνατὰ γίγνεσθαι· διὸ δὴ βοηθοῦ δεῖται νόμου. Cf. also 7,842b–848c.

55 See Klingenberg (above n. 5), 108–16 on the historical context of this detail.

56 Stalley (above n. 35), 103.

daemons" (5,740a–b).[57] The divine ownership is in accordance with the above-mentioned non-anthropocentrism of the *Laws*. However, a good relationship with the gods may presuppose a good, "motherly" care of land and thus a more or less balanced relationship with the environment – which for its part would guarantee the productivity of the *chôra* and the food supply of its citizen.

The task of "guarding" (φυλάττειν) the *chôra* is given to the office-holders called ἀγρονόμοι and phrourarchs (φρούραργχοι), who "keep guard" (φρουρεῖν) over the borders of the polity as well (6,760b–763c).[58] Every Magnesian *phylê* selects five chief country guardians, so that their number is sixty (12 × 5 = 60) and they hold office for two years. Each of these guardians – or each group of five – has as his/their assistants 12 men aged 25–30, who are called φρουροί, guards, their number thus being either over a hundred (12 × 12 = 144) or over seven hundred (60 × 12 = 720).[59] For these youngish men this two-year service seems to be a kind of military or national service including guarding the borders and reminiscent of the Spartan κρυπτεία (6,763b, cf. also 1,633c).[60] The lifestyle of the country guardians and their assistants is ascetic and self-supporting. Their food is simple (ταπεινός) and uncooked (ἄπυρος) and the assistant guardians "had to be their own servants" (6,762e–763b; cf. also 6,777d and 1,633c). This resembles of the lifestyle of the guardian class in the *Republic* (3,416d–417a), which is likened to living in a war camp (3,416e).[61]

Some of the assistant guardians of the *chôra* are later to be selected and educated to function in other magistral duties, even in the highest ones.[62] The dif-

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[57] *Lg.* 5,740a–b: τῆς χώρας θεραπεύειν αὐτὴν δεῖ μειζόνως ἢ μητέρα παῖδας, τῷ καὶ δέσποιναν θεὸν αὐτὴν οὖσαν θνητῶν ὄντων γεγονέναι, ταὐτὰ δ' ἔχειν διανοήματα καὶ περὶ τοὺς ἐγχωρίους θεούς τε ἅμα καὶ δαίμονας. Compare with Xen. *Oec.* 5,12: Socrates states that earth (γῆ) is a god and teaches justice, and the better it is tended, the more it gives back, the more it produces. See also Hughes (above n. 6), 62–3.

[58] Aristotle mentions that the names of the magistrates in the countryside are called in some states οἱ ὑλωροί, in others οἱ ἀγρόνομοι καὶ φυλακτήρια (*Pol.* VII 12, 1331b15–24). However, only the first one (ὑλωρός) is known to be in use in Thessaly. Morrow (above n. 4), 186 n. 80.

[59] Morrow (above n. 4), 186 n. 81 notes that 720 would require a population of 40,000 citizens.

[60] Athenian *ephebeia*, which was probably established in the time of the writing of the *Laws* or slightly later. Moore (above n. 49), 25.

[61] There are also monthly athletic contests that mimic warfare, which happen throughout the whole *chôra* (*Lg*. 8,830e) as well as running contests that culminate in a race where a runner in armour runs 60 or 100 stadia (about 11 or 18 kilometres), the latter dressed as an archer and running "over hills and varied country" (8,833c).

[62] Cf. *Lg*. 12,964e–965a where the assistant guardians are said to be the eyes of the polity and

ference from the education of the guardian class of the *Republic* is that the Athenian emphasizes the experience, the practical contact with the *chôra*: the assistant guardians should gain knowledge of all parts of the countryside (ἔμπειροι τῆς χώρας γένεσθαι), and not only in one season, but should also learn the seasonal changes in other districts rotating in order from one district to the next (6,760e).[63] They are also encouraged to hunt in order to have an accurate knowledge of the *chôra* (6,763b). Thus, each of these groups of the twelve assistant guardians guards each portion of the countryside in rotation for a month. The space orientation here is that the *polis* is in the centre and the *chôra* surrounds it and the guardians circle the centre in their rotation – in their first year in an easterly direction, and in the second, westward. This recalls the image of a spinning top/lathe discussed before: the guardians are both moving in a circle around the centre of the *chôra* (that is, *polis*) and still remaining at the same *chôra*. Furthermore, the movement of these men is dictated by the seasons: the seasons determine their movement just as they determine the seasonal festivals with their obligatory choral performances and, therefore, the daily life of the Magnesians.

The guardians also contribute to the modification of the *chôra*. They are responsible for fortification by making channels, digging moats and building crosswalks, getting the help of the people of each district. They are thus not only protecting the *chôra* and the whole polity from the enemy, but also help its inhabitants, "friends" (6,761d). It is especially pointed out that the guardians and their assistants should always choose the times when these people and their animals are free from their agricultural labour (so as not to disturb the farming) (6,761a).[64] Although the empirical knowledge of the environment that the guardians acquire is certainly useful in the interest of military defence, there is also concern about the general well-being of the people living in the *chôra*. The guardians build recreational places, like *gymnasia*, for "those whose bodies are worn with the toils of husbandry" (6,761d).[65] There are quite detailed directions for caring for the water supply of the *chôra*, in particular what pertains to the rainwater and spring-water

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"selected as the most intelligent and nimble in every part of their soul".

[63] *Lg*. 6,760e: περιελθόντος δὲ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ, τῷ δευτέρῳ ἔτει, ἵνα ὡς πλεῖστοι τῶν φρουρῶν μὴ μόνον ἔμπειροι τῆς χώρας γίγνωνται κατὰ μίαν ὥραν τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ, πρὸς τῇ χώρᾳ δὲ ἅμα καὶ τῆς ὥρας ἑκάστης περὶ ἕκαστον τὸν τόπον τὸ γιγνόμενον ὡς πλεῖστοι καταμάθωσιν.

[64] The Athenian refers here to the peasants and even their domestic animals as friends (φίλοι). A "friend" is not only the opposite of enemy. The expression reflects the importance of cohesion and fellowship in the Magnesian polity.

[65] *Lg*. 6,761d: ἐπ' ὀνήσει καμνόντων τε νόσοις καὶ πόνοις τετρυμένα γεωργικοῖς.

(6,761a–c). Furthermore, the Athenian depicts how the assistant guardians should beautify or embellish (κοσμεῖν) the *chôra* by means of plantations especially around shrines and temples.[66] Thus they help to create cultural landscapes and sustain holy places with protected natural surroundings.[67]

Concluding Remarks

The journey to the cave of the supreme god planned by the three discussants in the *Laws* is a spatial philosophical image. Just as the ideal polity depicted in this dialogue is only the polity in words and not yet in practice, the discussants seem to reach only the middle of their planned journey. When they reach their resting place, they cease to be "peripatetic" philosophers, who both walk and talk. This seems to contradict the emphasis on the idea that moving one's body may also "move" one's mind or thoughts presented elsewhere in the *Laws* (7,790c–791a). However, these men are advanced in years and of the four song choruses presented in Book Two, theirs is the last one, not confined to singing and dancing, to moving one's body, but extending to telling edifying stories (μυθόλογοι, 2,664d). The Athenian later suggests that their present discussion, which includes telling "stories", would be most adequate reading for young people (7,811d). The meandering, repetitive and circular character of their discussion may, however, be difficult to follow. It recalls a mountainous journey, which is a circular ascent, the serpentine mountainous road leading in its semi-spiral approach towards the top.

Circular motion plays an important part in the *Laws* as an ideal motion of the soul, as the actual motion of heavenly, divine bodies, as the motion of choral performances, and as the yearly rotation of the country guardians in the countryside, *chôra*, around the *polis*. The emphasis on the daily physical, especially choral, performances of the citizens is connected with the concept of the ordered cosmos, which for its part points to the non-anthropocentricism of the *Laws*.

In the *Laws*, to sustain one's physical environment, the *chôra*, is to sustain it for the well-being of the body (for food supply and for the health of the citizen body). However, a healthy, well-nurtured body is able to regulate with its movements the irrational part of the soul and the well-ordered irrational part is an es-

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[66] *Lg*. 6,761c–d: "by using water pipes they shall beautify the sacred groves at all seasons of the year".

[67] Embellishment seems to reflect the biophilic idea that a natural or natural-seeming environment may have recreational and healing effects on humans.

sential support for the divine part of the soul, its rationality. The other way round, to maintain a sustainable relationship with one's physical environment – which secures self-sufficiency and continuity of one's physical well-being – can probably be realized only by well-ordered, rational souls. Beyond practical reasons, self-sufficiency and continuity reflect the idea of the self-moving and the around-its-own-centre-moving rational part of the soul. In addition to this, the "land ethics" of the *Laws* includes respect for the physical world because the *chôra* in general (and sacred places especially) belongs to the gods. The good care of land is thus linked with its divine ownership. Furthermore, the education of selected men includes practical knowledge of the environment and not just from a military point of view as military service. Some of the young assistant guardians of the *chôra* may even proceed to the highest positions, perhaps even become members of the nocturnal council. The place of the council is said to be situated ἐν ἀκροπόλει τῆς χώρας (12,969c). "Acropolis" in this phrase refers both to the high status of the council[68] and to the actual spatial situation.[69] The nocturnal council, which the Athenian, the Cretan and the Spartan are going to establish at the very end of the *Laws*, is the highest place on the entire psychical and physical *chôra* – the end of their "mountainous" journey.

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[68] See Schöpsdau III (above n. 1), 606 (references to *Resp*. 560b and *Tim*. 70a).

[69] In its vicinity is the σωφρονιστήριον, the place where the righteous non-believers are being re-educated as believers by the members of the nocturnal council (10,908a). See also 5,745b.