

# The Platonism of Lycurgus

Robert F. Renehan

THERE IS still extant well-attested, though generally neglected, ancient testimony to the effect that the Athenian orator Lycurgus was a student of Plato's.<sup>1</sup> I suggest that this ancient testimony is indeed correct and that in Lycurgus' sole surviving oration, the speech *Contra Leocratem*, there are certain curious agreements with the writings of Plato which are best explained on the assumption that Lycurgus was familiar with and influenced by Plato, in particular by his *Laws*.

I begin by listing the relevant *testimonia*:

(1) Diog.Laert. 3.46: μαθηταὶ δ' αὐτοῦ [*sc.* Πλάτωνος] . . . καὶ Ὑπερίδην τὸν ῥήτορα Χαμαιλέων (fr.37 Koepke) φησὶ καὶ Λυκούργον.

(2) [Plut.] *X Orat.* 841B: ἀκροατῆς δὲ γενόμενος Πλάτωνος τοῦ φιλοσόφου, τὰ πρῶτα ἐφιλοσόφησεν· εἶτα καὶ Ἴσοκράτους τοῦ ῥήτορος γνώριμος γενόμενος ἐπολιτεύσατο ἐπιφανῶς κτλ.

(3) [Plut.] *X Orat.* 848D: [Ὑπερίδης] . . . ἀκροατῆς δὲ Πλάτωνος γενόμενος τοῦ φιλοσόφου ἅμα Λυκούργῳ καὶ Ἴσοκράτους τοῦ ῥήτορος . . .

(4) Olympiod. in Pl. *Gorg.* 515c (p.197,24–25 Norvin): . . . ὁ δὲ Δημοσθένης καὶ ὁ Λυκούργος μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ [*sc.* Πλάτωνος].

(5) *ibid.* p.198,1–4: καὶ πάλιν ὁ Φιλίσκος τὸν βίον γράφων τοῦ Λυκούργου φησὶν· ὅτι μέγας γέγονε Λυκούργος καὶ πολλὰ κατώρθωσεν, ἃ οὐκ ἔστι δυνατὸν κατορθῶσαι τὸν μὴ ἀκροασάμενον τῶν λόγων Πλάτωνος.

<sup>1</sup> A few scholars have taken passing notice of this information. In particular, Félix Durrbach in the introduction to his Budé ed. of Lycurgus (Paris 1932) pp. xii–xiii suggests that Lycurgus' admiration of Spartan institutions and the "austérité toute spartiate" of his private life were strengthened under Plato's tutelage. He goes on to say "[Lycurgue] se pénétra aussi, auprès de Platon, de ce principe qu'il ne cesse de proclamer avec une opiniâtreté farouche dans le discours contre Léocrate, du sacrifice total de l'individu à l'État." Glenn R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City, A Historical Interpretation of the Laws* (Princeton 1960) pp. 9, 194, 215, also calls attention to the fact that Lycurgus had been one of Plato's pupils; see especially p.194: ". . . It is fair to suppose that something of Lycurgus' ideas, as well as his integrity and public spirit, are due not merely to his aristocratic descent but also to his studies with Plato." (Morrow, however, may be directly dependent on Durrbach in this judgement: at least he refers to Durrbach's introduction in a footnote on this same page.) Werner Jaeger, *Paideia*, trans. G. Highet, III (New York 1944) 250, offers a tantalizing *obiter*

Let us examine now the *Contra Leocratem*. The circumstance of this oration was as follows. Leocrates was an Athenian citizen who, on hearing the news of the defeat of the Athenians at Chaeronea in 338, gathered together many of his possessions—including his family *penates*—and fled from Athens to Rhodes with his mistress. Eight years later he returned to Athens, whereupon Lycurgus branded his flight from Athens at a time of serious crisis treasonous; technically, it seems that Leocrates had violated no specific law by his defection. Nevertheless, Lycurgus formally prosecuted him for treason and demanded the death-penalty. The extant oration *Contra Leocratem* is the speech which Lycurgus made on this occasion. Leocrates was acquitted by one vote. It is important for the reader to bear in mind the chronological relationship between Plato's *Laws* and the *Contra Leocratem*: Plato died in 347 B.C., and Diogenes Laertius (3.37) preserves the tradition that Philip of Opus edited the *Laws*, presumably after Plato's death (ἐνιοί τε φασι ὅτι Φίλιππος ὁ Ὀπούντιος τοὺς Νόμους αὐτοῦ μετέγραψεν ὄντας ἐν κηρῶ). The *Contra Leocratem* was delivered in 330 B.C. At the very most sixteen or seventeen years separate the first appearance of these two works; both were composed in Athens. If Lycurgus was in fact a student of Plato's—and there is absolutely no reason to doubt this statement (compare below)—it is surely probable that he would have some acquaintance with Plato's last and longest work, especially since its subject is the theory and practice of legislation and Lycurgus, as we shall see, was not only a distinguished practical legislator but also a student of legislative theory.

First we may note some passages<sup>2</sup> from the *Contra Leocratem* which reveal a generalizing or theorizing tendency on the part of Lycurgus. I do not suggest for a moment that the following excerpts are demonstrably Platonic, but only wish to point out that Lycurgus has a penchant for abstract theory. Such a tendency has a rather curious—not to say naïve—ring in a practical speech demanding the death of a

---

*dictum*: "Still, the same spirit that permeates *The Laws* was dominating Athens ten years after its publication, at the time of the Lycurgan reforms." It is not clear to me whether he intends here to suggest a direct dependence of Lycurgus on Plato's *Laws*. In his special study of Tyrtaeus (see *infra*), a paper in which both Plato's *Laws* and Lycurgus are discussed, Jaeger gives no hint that he sees any direct connection between them.

<sup>2</sup> Passages from Lycurgus are quoted in the translation of J. O. Burtt, from *Minor Attic Orators* II (LCL, Cambridge [Mass.] 1954); those quoted later from the *Laws* are in the translation of R. G. Bury, *Plato, Laws* (LCL, London 1926).

fellow-citizen; it can best be explained on the assumption that Lycurgus has been exposed to theoretical, that is to say, philosophical studies.

§§ 3–4. For the things which in the main uphold our democracy and preserve the city's prosperity are three in number: first the system of law, second the vote of the jury, and third the method of prosecution by which the crimes are handed over to them. The law exists to lay down what must not be done, the accuser to report those liable to penalties under the law, and the jurymen to punish all whom these two agencies have brought to his attention. And thus both law and jury's vote are powerless without an accuser who will hand transgressors over to them.

§ 10. I assure you, gentlemen, that if you condemn this man you will do more than merely punish him; you will be giving all younger men an incentive to right conduct. For there are two influences at work in the education of the young: the punishments suffered by wrongdoers and the reward available to the virtuous. With these alternatives before their eyes they are deterred by fear from the one and attracted by the desire for honour to the other.

§ 79. There is a further point which you should notice, gentlemen. The power which keeps our democracy together is the oath. For there are three things of which the state is built up: the archon, the jurymen and the private citizen.

Some of the language in these excerpts may possibly be Platonic. Thus, for example, with ἡ τῶν νόμων τάξις in § 4 compare *Laws* 925B κατὰ τὴν τάξιν τοῦ νόμου (similar phrases are common in Plato; see Fr. Ast, *Lexicon Platonicum* II [Berlin 1908] s.v. τάξις). However, none of this language, so far as I can see, can be demonstrated to be specifically Platonic and the matter ought not be pressed. (Indeed, the pronounced balance of these excerpts is clearly derived from Isocrates, with whom Lycurgus also studied.) I call attention now to some passages which reveal Lycurgus' interest in legislative theory:

§ 9. The reason why the penalty for such offences, gentlemen, has never been recorded is not that the legislators of the past were neglectful; it is that such things had not happened hitherto and were not expected to happen in the future. It is therefore most essential that you should be not merely judges of this present case but lawmakers besides. For where a crime has been defined by some law, it is easy, with that as a standard, to punish the offender. But where different offences are not specifically included in the law, being covered by a single designation, and where a man has committed crimes worse than these and is equally chargeable with them all, your verdict must be left as a precedent (παράδειγμα) for your successors.

§§ 64–66. But it is easy, gentlemen, to ascertain the truth by referring to the

attitude of the early lawgivers. It was not their way, when prescribing the death penalty for the thief who stole a hundred talents, to approve a punishment less severe for one who took ten drachmas. Again with sacrilege: for a great offence they inflicted death, and for a small one too they had no milder punishment. They did not differentiate between him who killed a slave and him who killed a free man, by fining one and outlawing the other. For all breaches of the law alike, however small, they fixed upon the death penalty, making no special allowances, in their assessment of the magnitude of crimes, for the individual circumstances of each. On one point only they insisted: was the crime such that, if it became more widespread, it would do serious harm to society?

§ 102. Laws are too brief to give instruction: they merely state the things that must be done (*οὐ διδάσκουσιν ἀλλ' ἐπιτάττουςιν*); but poets, depicting life itself, select the noblest actions and so through argument and demonstration convert men's hearts (*τοὺς ἀνθρώπους συμπείθουσιν*).

For the notion of the incompleteness of legislation (§ 9), one may compare such passages as *Laws* 770B and 875D–876E. The *παράδειγμα* motif in this same section is common in Plato; note especially *Laws* 862E–863A: “The lawgiver will realise that in all such cases not only is it better for the sinners themselves to live no longer, but also that they will prove of a double benefit to others by quitting life—since they will both serve as a warning (*παράδειγμα*) to the rest not to act unjustly, and also rid the State of wicked men,—and thus he will of necessity inflict death as the chastisement for their sins, in cases of this kind, and of this kind only.” (Of course in § 9 the *κρίσις* which Lycurgus asks the jurymen to leave behind as a *παράδειγμα* is *θάνατος*.)

The third excerpt given above (§ 102) may at first glance seem to contradict Plato's familiar—and often misunderstood—banishment of the poets. First of all, it is obvious that Lycurgus could have been considerably influenced by Plato without agreeing with him in all particulars. Aristotle is the best illustration of that. Secondly, Plato did not banish all poetry; see especially *Laws* 801A–802E. In fact, the two poetic passages which Lycurgus goes on to quote next, *Iliad* 15.494–99 and Tyrtæus fr.6–7 D., are Spartan passages which Plato would have approved. What is striking about § 102 is the distinction which Lycurgus makes between the laws which “do not teach but command” (*ἐπιτάττουςιν*) and the poets who “persuade” (*συμπείθουσιν*). In the *Laws* Plato develops an elaborate theory of *προοίμια*, ‘preludes’ to laws, which are designed to persuade the citizens of the rationality

of obeying the laws; these preludes are explicitly contrasted, as being “truly persuasive” (ὄντως . . . πειστικόν), with the laws proper which are classified as “despotic commands” (τυραννικὸν ἐπίταγμα). For this theory in detail see *Laws* 718bff, especially 722c, 722e–723a. Furthermore, Plato, just as Lycurgus, is aware of the inadequacies of brevity in laws: see *Laws* 721e. Lycurgus’ ‘persuade/command’ dichotomy could easily go back to Plato. Finally, I call attention to a sentence from § 10 of Lycurgus’ speech: διὸ δεῖ, ὦ ἄνδρες, προσέχειν τούτῳ τῷ ἀγῶνι καὶ μηδὲν περὶ πλείονος ποιήσασθαι τοῦ δικαίου. “One must . . . prize nothing more highly than τὸ δίκαιον.” A general statement and very possibly coincidence, to be sure; yet it remains true that one would look long and hard to find a more Platonic thought than that.

I come now to some more particular agreements (not necessarily philosophical) between Plato’s *Laws* and Lycurgus’ *Contra Leocratem*. Each of the following agreements, taken by itself, can be explained by coincidence, especially since we are dealing in part with commonplaces. The number of parallels taken in the aggregate, however, may be explained with greater probability as Lycurgus’ direct dependence on Plato. On the negative side, we must keep in mind that, apart from a few minor fragments, only a single oration of Lycurgus has survived, a practical courtroom speech which by its nature would not lend itself to high philosophic content. This consideration lends greater weight to the relatively small number of agreements. It would not have been surprising to find none. On the positive side, the explicit ancient testimony that Lycurgus was a student of Plato’s is *prima facie* evidence which should make us hesitant to dismiss as mere coincidence apparent parallels between the two.

- (1) § 47. Those men encountered the enemy on the borders of Boeotia, to fight for the freedom of Greece. They neither rested their hopes of safety on city walls nor surrendered their lands for the foe to devastate. Believing that their own courage was a surer protection than battlements of stone (τῶν λιθίνων περιβόλων), they held it a disgrace to see the land that reared them wasted.

That the real defence of a city was its men (ἄνδρες) or their bravery (ἀνδρεία) was a τόπος; as general parallels to this passage one may compare Alcaeus fr.112.10 L.–P. (= fr.35.10 D.) ἄνδρες γὰρ πόλιος πύργος

ἀρείος, and Aeschylus, *Persae* 349 ἀνδρῶν γὰρ ὄντων ἔρκος ἐστὶν ἀσφαλές. In this passage, however, Lycurgus does not merely use a metaphor (πύργος, ἔρκος); he explicitly contrasts the bravery of the Athenians with actual walls. This same contrast occurs in *Laws* 778D: “As to walls, Megillus, I would agree with your Sparta in letting the walls lie sleeping in the ground, and not wake them up, and that for the following reasons. It is a fine saying of the poet, and often repeated, that walls should be made of bronze and iron rather than of earth. . .”

I know of only one other close parallel to these two passages; Plutarch in his *Life of Lycurgus* ch.19 quotes a saying of this famous Spartan: “. . . καὶ πάλιν περὶ τῶν τειχῶν· ‘οὐκ ἂν εἴη ἀτείχιστος πόλις ἅτις ἀνδρείοις καὶ οὐ πλινθίνοις ἐστεφάνωται’.” Plato and Lycurgus (the orator), whatever their relationship to each other, both ultimately go back to this Spartan tradition.

(2) §§ 131–32. . . . ἀλλὰ μόνος οὗτος τῶν πάντων ἀνθρώπων καὶ τὰ τῆς φύσεως οἰκεῖα καὶ ἀναγκαῖα προδέδωκεν, ἃ καὶ τοῖς ἀλόγοις ζώοις μέγιστα καὶ σπουδαιότατα διείληπται· τὰ γοῦν πετεινά, ἃ μάλιστα πέφυκε πρὸς τάχος, ἔστιν ἰδεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς αὐτῶν νεοττιᾶς ἐθέλοντα ἀποθνήσκειν· ὅθεν καὶ τῶν ποιητῶν τινες εἰρήκασιν·

οὐδ’ ἀγρία γὰρ ὄρνις, ἣν πλάσῃ δόμον,  
ἄλλην νεοσσοῦς ἠξίωσεν ἐντεκεῖν.

(The author of these verses is unknown). This same comparison to birds defending their young is found in *Laws* 814B: “. . . πολλή που κακία πολιτείας οὕτως αἰσχροῦς τὰς γυναῖκας εἶναι τεθραμμένας, ὡς μηδ’ ὥσπερ ὄρνιθας περὶ τέκνων μαχομένας πρὸς ὄτιοῦν τῶν ἰσχυροτάτων θηρίων ἐθέλειν ἀποθνήσκειν τε καὶ πάντας κινδύνους κινδυνεύειν, ἀλλ’ . . . δόξαν τοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένους καταχεῖν ὡς πάντων δειλότατον φύσει θηρίων ἐστίν. Note especially the similarity of the letterspaced words.

(3) § 8. What punishment would suit a man who left his country and refused to guard the temples of his fathers, who abandoned the graves of his ancestors and surrendered the whole country into the hands of the enemy? The greatest and final penalty, death, though the maximum punishment allowed by law, is too small for the crimes of Leocrates.

§ 134. Consider: he is hated and expelled by those without a reason to resent him; what treatment should he get from

you who have had the utmost provocation? Should it not be the extreme penalty? Indeed, gentlemen, if there were any punishment worse than death, Leocrates of all the traitors that have ever been would most deserve to undergo it.

References to punishments (real and hypothetical) more severe than the death penalty are common in the *Laws*: “. . . whether such a person ought to be put to death, or ought to suffer some other punishment still more severe, or possibly a little less severe . . .” (878E); “. . . so that if ‘to die a hundred deaths’ were possible for any one man, that a parricide or a matricide, who did the deed in rage, should undergo a hundred deaths would be a fate most just” (869B); “For him the penalty is death, the least of evils; and, moreover, by serving as an example, he will benefit others . . .” (854E); “. . . commits sins that deserve not one death only or two . . .” (908E); “Death is not a most severe penalty; and the punishments we are told of in Hades for such offences, although more severe than death . . .” (881A).

(4) § 94. It is my belief, gentlemen, that the guidance of the gods presides over all human affairs and more especially, as is to be expected, over our duty towards our parents, towards the dead and towards the gods themselves. For in our dealings with those to whom we owe our being (*παρ’ ὧν . . . τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ ζῆν εὐλίφραμεν*), at whose hands we have enjoyed the greatest benefits, it is the utmost sacrilege that we should fail, not merely to do our duty, but even to dedicate our lives to their service.

This same call for piety towards (1) gods, (2) ancestors, and (3) parents recurs in a solemn passage of the *Laws* too long to be reproduced here (716D–718A); at *Laws* 869B–C Plato expressly states that a man must submit even to death at the hands of his parents: “Since every law will forbid the man to kill father or mother, *the very authors of his existence* (*τοὺς εἰς φῶς τὴν ἐκείνου φύσιν ἀγαγόντας*), even for the sake of saving his own life, and will ordain that he must suffer and endure everything rather than commit such an act.”

(5) Lycurgus, *Contra Leocratem* 84–87, is our chief source for the story of the self-immolation ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως of Codrus, king of Athens. Is it coincidence that Plato traced his ancestry back to Codrus? See Diogenes Laertius 3.1.

- (6) § 136. ἡγοῦμαι δ' ἔγωγε καὶ τὸν πατέρα αὐτῶ τὸν τετελευτηκότα,  
εἴ τις ἄρ' ἐστὶν αἰσθητικὸς τοῖς ἐκεῖ περὶ τῶν ἐνθάδε γιγνομένων,  
ἀπάντων ἂν χαλεπώτατον γενέσθαι δικαστήν . . .

The words εἴ τις ἄρ' ἐστὶν αἰσθητικὸς τοῖς ἐκεῖ are immediately reminiscent of the famous passage at the end of the *Apology* (40c–41c), where Socrates expresses a similar uncertainty. Note especially καὶ εἴτε δὴ μηδεμία αἰσθητικὸς ἐστὶν . . . (40c) and τά τε γὰρ ἄλλα εὐδαιμονέστεροί εἰσιν οἱ ἐκεῖ τῶν ἐνθάδε, καὶ ἤδη τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἀθάνατοί εἰσιν, εἴπερ γε τὰ λεγόμενα ἀληθῆ (41c). This kind of language, however, seems to have become a τόπος; it recurs at the end of Hyperides' *Epitaphios* (43): εἰ δ' ἐστὶν αἰσθητικὸς ἐν "Αἴδου . . . Still, Hyperides is also said to have studied with Plato.

(7) I have reserved for last what seems to me to be the most significant complex of agreements between Lycurgus and Plato's *Laws*. Werner Jaeger<sup>3</sup> made a careful analysis of Tyrtaeus fr.9 D. (οὗτ' ἂν μνησαίμην οὗτ' ἐν λόγῳ ἄνδρα τιθείην κτλ.) and traced the influence of Tyrtaeus' cultural values on later Greek thought. Of martial ἀρετή Jaeger observes, "Das ganze Altertum sieht darin mit Plato etwas spezifisch Spartanisches, ein Ideal, das Tyrtaios im Kriege geschmiedet hat und das seither Staat und Erziehung Spartas beherrscht, während das übrige Hellas in der Entwicklung fortschreitet."<sup>4</sup> Jaeger goes on to point out the position which Tyrtaeus occupies in Plato's *Laws*: "Wenn wir jetzt von den dichterischen Auseinandersetzungen mit dem tyrtäischen Gedicht zu dessen Nachwirkung in der Prosa der attischen Zeit kommen, ist vor allem Plato zu nennen. In den 'Gesetzen' (I 629Aff.) führt er die Elegie als klassische Urkunde des spartanischen Staatsgeistes an. . . Tyrtaios' Areteideal ist für Plato eine notwendige, aber die unterste Stufe im dialektischen Aufbau des Reiches der menschlichen ἀρετή, denn der Krieg ist ihm nicht der Zweck des Staates noch der Erziehung. . ."<sup>5</sup> Jaeger also refers to *Laws* 660Eff, where Plato further transforms Tyrtaeus' poem, and calls attention for the first time to a clear reference to the poem in the *Republic*: "Es ist noch nicht beachtet worden, dass auch schon in

<sup>3</sup> W. Jaeger, "Tyrtaios über die wahre ἀρετή," first published in *SBBerl* 23 (1932) 537–68; repr. in Jaeger's *Scripta Minora* II (Rome 1960) 75–114; English transl. *Five Essays* (Montreal 1966) 103–42. In the following footnotes, I shall give page references to all three publications in the order here given.

<sup>4</sup> Jaeger, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) p.550=p.92=p.120.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* (*supra* n.3) p.561=pp.105–06=p.133.



Platos *Politeia*, dort wo er vom Lebens- und Areteideal der Krieger spricht, ein deutlicher Hinweis auf das tyrtaische Gedicht sich findet (465D–466A). Plato vergleicht die Ehre, die seinem Kriegerstande innerhalb des besten Staates erwiesen werden wird, mit der Ehre der Olympioniken und will sie grösser als diese, denn auch die Bedeutung der Krieger für den Staat sei grösser als die der Sieger im olympischen Wettkampf.”<sup>6</sup> (Another unnoticed passage, which clearly has been inspired ultimately by Tyrtaeus fr.9 D., is *Laws* 689C–D). Jaeger’s further discussion deserves attention, but these few quotations will give some indication of the significance which Tyrtaeus had for Plato.

Among the most important remains of Tyrtaeus are fragments 6–7 D., thirty-two elegiac verses which modern scholars often (probably erroneously) break into two separate poems. Our sole source for these verses is Lycurgus, *Contra Leocratem* 107, where he quotes them as a single poem. Furthermore, our oldest source for the life of Tyrtaeus is *Laws* 629A, where Plato simply states that Tyrtaeus was an Athenian by birth: *προσθησώμεθα γοῦν Τυρταῖον, τὸν φύσει μὲν Ἀθηναῖον, τῶνδε δὲ πολίτην γενόμενον* . . . The next oldest source is Lycurgus, who gives more details, but agrees with Plato that Tyrtaeus was an Athenian (some other traditions made him a Spartan or a Milesian):

§ 106. τίς γὰρ οὐκ οἶδε τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὅτι Τυρταῖον στρατηγὸν ἔλαβον παρὰ τῆς πόλεως, μεθ’ οὗ καὶ τῶν πολεμίων ἐκράτησαν, καὶ τὴν περὶ τοὺς νέους ἐπιμέλειαν συνετάξαντο, οὐ μόνον εἰς τὸν παρόντα κίνδυνον, ἀλλ’ εἰς ἅπαντα τὸν αἰῶνα βουλευσάμενοι καλῶς; κατέλιπεν γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐλεγεία ποιήσας, ὧν ἀκούοντες παιδεύονται πρὸς ἀνδρείαν.

There are several other points of contact with Tyrtaeus in the *Contra Leocratem*. Jaeger<sup>7</sup> in discussing the imitation of Tyrtaeus in Lysias’ *Epitaphios* § 25, where the phrase *ὑπὲρ δὲ τῆς ἀρετῆς οὐ φιλοψυχῆσαντες* occurs, points out that the word *φιλοψυχεῖν* is here borrowed from Tyrtaeus fr.7.18 D. (*μὴ δὲ φιλοψυχεῖτ’ ἀνδράσι μαρνάμενοι*). According to Jaeger, this verb appears only in contexts directly influenced by Tyrtaeus. I am reluctant to accept this as an absolute rule ([Demades] § 38 offers a clear exception to it); nevertheless, there is a

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* (*supra* n.3) p.562=p.106=p.134.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* (*supra* n.3) pp. 565–66=p.110=p.138.

degree of truth in it. The verb is found in the *Contra Leocratem* § 130 (an occurrence which Jaeger missed): ἢ τίς παρὰ τὸ συμφέρον τῆς πόλεως φιλοψυχῆσει κτλ. Here we may confidently assert that the verb is directly inspired by Tyrtaeus, since, as we have seen, the poem of Tyrtaeus in which this word appears has recently been quoted in full by Lycurgus (*supra*, § 107). Furthermore, in this section Lycurgus is pointing out the evil that awaits the coward who betrays his πατρίς, precisely as Tyrtaeus does in fr.6 D.

Finally, the famous opening verses of Tyrtaeus fr.9 D. glorify pre-eminence in martial ἀρετή in specific contrast to pre-eminence in athletic skills. Xenophanes' well-known elegy (fr.2 D. = fr. 2 D.-K.), magnifying his own σοφίη above other ἀρεταί, is directly modelled on this poem of Tyrtaeus', as Jaeger has demonstrated.<sup>8</sup> Jaeger observes that both poems have in mind the great athletic games: "... denn dass Tyrtaios mit der Geschwindigkeit, die schneller läuft als Boreas, mit der παλαιμοσύνη—die bei Xenophanes ebenso heisst und nach deren Vorbild er das Wort πυκτοσύνη bildet—und mit der Grösse und Kraft der Kyklopen die bekannten Kampfarten in Olympia meint, ist auch ohne des Xenophanes Interpretation klar, wenn man die Bedeutung Olympias im 7. Jahrhundert für den Peloponnes bedenkt."<sup>9</sup> Now, it has apparently gone unnoticed that in the *Contra Leocratem* Lycurgus has been inspired by Tyrtaeus fr.9 D., the very poem which Plato cites and analyzes in some detail in the *Laws*:

§ 51. εὐρήσετε δὲ παρὰ μὲν τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς ἀθλητὰς ἀνακειμένους, παρ' ὑμῖν δὲ στρατηγούς ἀγαθοὺς καὶ τοὺς τὸν τύραννον ἀποκτείναντας; καὶ τοιούτους μὲν ἄνδρας οὐδ' ἐξ ἀπάσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ὀλίγους εὐρεῖν ῥάδιον, τοὺς δὲ τοὺς στεφανίτας ἀγῶνας νενικηκότας εὐπετώως πολλαχόθεν ἔστι γεγονότας ἰδεῖν.

The contrast between ἀθληταί and στρατηγοὶ ἀγαθοί, in the light of what has been said above, surely goes back to Tyrtaeus (*via* Plato, in my view).<sup>10</sup> If there be any doubt, see § 49 immediately preceding,

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* (*supra* n.3) pp.557–58 = pp.100–02 = pp.128–30.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* (*supra* n.3) pp.557–58 = p.101 = p.129.

<sup>10</sup> It is perhaps significant that in several passages (*Paneg.* 1–2, *Or.* 15.180ff, *Ep.* 8.5) Isocrates refers to physical skill and athletes. In each instance he contrasts them with *intellectual ability* (φρόνησις, εὖ φρονεῖν etc.), thus agreeing in general with Xenophanes. Lycurgus, in contrasting athletes and *military men*, agrees rather with Tyrtaeus and Plato (see esp. *Resp.* 465D3 οἱ ὀλυμπιονῆκαι for a clear indication that Plato connected Tyrtaeus' poem with the athletic games).

where we read τὰ γὰρ ἀθλα τοῦ πολέμου τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐστὶν ἐλευθερία καὶ ἀρετή. This language seems clearly reminiscent of Tyrtaeus fr.9 D., where, discussing military bravery, he mentions in v.10 the ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς . . . ἐν πολέμῳ and then continues in vv.13–14:

ἦδ' ἀρετή, τόδ' ἄθλον ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἄριστον  
κάλλιστόν τε φέρειν γίγνεται ἀνδρὶ νέῳ.

Compare also *Contra Leocratem* 46: . . . τὸν ἔπαινον, ὃς μόνος ἀθλον τῶν κινδύνων τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐστὶ.

Such are the agreements between Plato and Lycurgus. Some of these parallels may well turn out to be coincidences. Nevertheless, the number and nature of the agreements suggest to me that Lycurgus was very probably a serious and careful student of Plato's; note especially how at times he seems to agree with Plato in small details. It is of course not possible to say to what extent Lycurgus was a Platonist or how orthodox he was. Nor can we say whether Plato's oral teaching or his written works were the primary influence. We can say that in the broad sense at least he had the Platonic spirit: this shows up in his concern for legislation, his admiration of Spartan ἀρετή and his scrupulous justice. I return now to a precious piece of evidence, which has never, to my knowledge, been properly examined and evaluated, the statement made by Olympiodorus in his commentary to Plato's *Gorgias* p.198.1–4 Norvin: καὶ πάλιν ὁ Φιλίσκος τὸν βίον γράφων τοῦ Λυκούργου φησὶν· ὅτι μέγας γέγονε Λυκούργος καὶ πολλὰ κατώρθωσε, ἃ οὐκ ἔστι δυνατόν κατορθῶσαι τὸν μὴ ἀκροατάμενον τῶν λόγων Πλάτωνος. This man, Philiscus of Miletus, was a student of Isocrates, as was Lycurgus.<sup>11</sup> He was an exact contemporary of Lycurgus. This piece of information preserved by Olympiodorus, therefore, is no late and apocryphal invention; it must be regarded as contemporary testimony of a witness who was in a position to know. There is no reason to question Philiscus' veracity; he had no motive, so far as we know, to lie about the facts. His comment reads like a passing remark, not a controversial piece of special pleading. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, we ought to accept Philiscus' statement. What does he say? He says that Lycurgus πολλὰ κατώρθωσε "carried out successfully many things." In the light of what we know of Lycurgus, it is clear that this must refer to his political career,

<sup>11</sup> For Philiscus see *RE* 19 (1938) s.v. PHILISKOS 9, col. 2384–87. *OCD* (1949) s.v. PHILISCUS (1) gives "c. 400–325 B.C." as his dates. Lycurgus died probably in 324 B.C.

including his activity as a legislator.<sup>12</sup> Philiscus goes on to say that Lycurgus carried out successfully many things “which one who had not heard the λόγοι of Plato could not bring to a successful completion.” Philiscus has couched his statement in general language, no doubt merely for reasons of style; the sentence is surely to be interpreted quite specifically: “Lycurgus carried out successfully many things which *he* could not have done if *he* had not heard the λόγοι of Plato.” This statement clearly yields the information that Lycurgus studied with Plato and that he gave practical application to his philosophical principles in his own public career. George Grote’s summary account of this public career is still worth quoting: “Thus Lykurgus continued to be the real acting minister of finance, for three successive Panathenaic intervals of four years each, or for an uninterrupted period of twelve years. He superintended not merely the entire collection, but also the entire disbursement of the public revenue, rendering strict periodical account, yet with a financial authority greater than had belonged to any statesman since Perikles. He improved the gymnasia and stadia of the city,—multiplied the donatives and sacred furniture in the temples,—enlarged, or constructed anew, docks and arsenals,—provided a considerable stock of arms and equipments, military as well as naval,—and maintained four hundred triremes in a seaworthy condition, for the protection of Athenian commerce. In these extensive functions he was never superseded, though Alexander at one time sent to require the surrender of his person, which was refused by the Athenian people. The main cause of his first hold upon the public mind was his known and indisputable pecuniary probity, wherein he was the parallel of Phokion.”<sup>13</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn is of some importance. Less than ten years after Plato’s death, one of his students became in effect the chief minister of finance in Athens (*τῆς κοινῆς προσόδου ταμίαις τῆ πόλει*); his

<sup>12</sup> This no doubt includes in part his public speeches; it surely does not refer exclusively to them. For this use of *κατορθοῦν* compare Pl. *Μενο* 99c–d: . . . οἱ πολιτικοὶ ἄνδρες . . . τὰς πόλεις ὀρθοῦσιν . . . οἷτινες νοῦν μὴ ἔχοντες πολλὰ καὶ μεγάλα κατορθοῦσιν ὧν πράττουσι καὶ λέγουσι . . . ὅταν κατορθῶσι λέγοντες πολλὰ καὶ μεγάλα πράγματα . . . For Lycurgus’ legislative activity compare the famous decree in honor of Lycurgus preserved by [Plut.] *X orat.* 852b: καὶ Λυκούργος αὐτὸς πολιτευόμενος νόμους τε πολλοὺς καὶ καλοὺς ἔθηκε τῆ πατρίδι.

<sup>13</sup> G. Grote, *History of Greece* X (London 1906) 217. For a fuller and more recent account of Lycurgus’ political activities the reader should consult G. Busolt/H. Swoboda, *Griechische Staatskunde*<sup>3</sup> II (Munich 1926) 1147–49.

contemporaries and modern scholars agree that for twelve years he was in this capacity a model of excellence and honesty. The decree passed in his honor in the archonship of Anaxicrates (307/306 B.C.) states that he was often crowned by the city because he was thought to have managed all the monies entrusted to him justly (. . . δόξα δὲ ἅπαντα ταῦτα δικαίως διωκηθέναι πολλάκις ἐστεφανώθη ὑπὸ τῆς πόλεως) and goes on to resolve that he be praised ἀρετῆς ἔνεκα καὶ δικαιοσύνης.<sup>14</sup> Thus it appears that in Plato's native city not long after his death one of his associates was given the opportunity to put his Platonism into practice in the field of *Realpolitik*. The results of this experiment were such that Plato might well be pleased with them.

BOSTON COLLEGE  
 April, 1970

<sup>14</sup> The decree is partially preserved in *IG II<sup>2</sup> 457*=Dittenberger, *SIG<sup>3</sup> I 326*; a complete text (though of course altered in parts in transmission) in [Plut.] *X orat.* 851F–852E.