

# HARMONY, ORDER, AND UNITY IN PLATO'S *LAWS*

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ABSTRACT. In Book X of Plato's *Laws*, the motions of the body are contrasted with the changes of the soul. The latter are categorically different from the former. The soul is oriented in time while the body is oriented in space. Despite their differences, soul and body work in unison. When the senses are informed by λόγος, order is perceived and enacted. The coordination of soul and body is most evident in music and dance. A choral dance is a composition in which body and soul and their analogues, space and time, are unified. A city is an analogous composition. The relation between body and soul parallels the relation between a city on the one hand, and its laws, beliefs, and customs on the other. For these reasons, the highest order of a city is its religious order. The religious life of a city integrates time and space as well as soul and body. Religion serves as a binding power that harmonizes the city and its people.

KEYWORDS: soul, body, time, space, music, religion.

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## 1. Introduction

In Plato's *Laws*, an unnamed Athenian and his two interlocutors describe an imaginary city, Magnesia. Their aim is to articulate the requirements that a virtuous city must have. For the most part, the dialogue concerns the nature of the laws, customs, and government of Magnesia. However, there are important metaphysical digressions in the *Laws* as well. In his response to atheism, the Athenian explains the nature of the soul and its priority over the body. The motions of the body are contrasted with the changes of the soul. The latter are categorically different from the former.

Using Book X of the *Laws* as a starting point, Section 2 discusses the nature of the soul's changes. In contrast to the body, the soul is oriented in time, not space.

For example, the soul may dwell on the past or look to the future. Memory, fear, grief, wish, deliberation — all of these are changes of the soul. Each change orients the soul in time. In other words, the changes of the soul presuppose a temporal order.

Section 3 discusses the nature of the body's changes. Just as the soul is oriented in time, the body is oriented in space. More specifically, the situation of a body is defined by its position and location. The changes of the body presuppose an ordering of spatial relations, just as the changes of the soul presuppose a temporal order.

Despite their differences, soul and body work in unison. Section 4 presents the argument that their conjunction is actualized through *λόγος*. When the senses are informed by *λόγος*, order is perceived and enacted through both the soul and the body. Their coordination is most evident in music and dance — rhythm and harmony join soul and body into a well-ordered composition.

Section 5 applies the above findings to the theme of the *Laws*, the virtuous city. The relation between body and soul parallels the relation between a city on the one hand, and its laws, beliefs, and customs on the other. The highest order of a city is its religious order. The religious life of a city integrates time and space as well as soul and body — religion serves as a binding power that harmonizes the city and its people.

## 2. The Soul

In Book X of the *Laws*, the Athenian, while arguing against atheism, names the motions of the soul:

... ἄγει μὲν δὴ ψυχὴ πάντα τὰ κατ' οὐρανὸν καὶ γῆν καὶ θάλατταν ταῖς αὐτῆς κινήσεσιν, αἶς ὀνόματά [897a] ἔστιν βούλεσθαι, σκοπεῖσθαι, ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, βουλευέσθαι, δοξάζειν ὀρθῶς ἐψευσμένως, χαίρουσαν λυπουμένην, θαρροῦσαν φοβουμένην, μισοῦσαν στέργουσαν, καὶ πάσαις ὅσαι τούτων συγγενεῖς ἢ πρωτουργοὶ κινήσεις τὰς δευτερουργοὺς αὐτῶν παραλαμβάνουσαι κινήσεις σωμάτων ἄγουσι πάντα εἰς αὔξησιν καὶ φθίσιν καὶ διάκρισιν καὶ σύγκρισιν καὶ τούτοις ἐπομένως θερμότητος ψύξεις, βαρύτητος κουφότητος, σκληρὸν καὶ μαλακόν, λευκὸν καὶ μέλαν, ἀσθηρὸν [897b] καὶ γλυκύ, καὶ πάσιν οἷς ψυχὴ χρωμένη ...

... Soul then drives all things in heaven, on earth, and in the sea through its motions — which are named wish, inquiry, care, deliberation, belief true and false, joy and grief,

courage and fear, hate and love — and through all the motions that are akin to these or primary ...<sup>1</sup> (896e-897b)

The context of this passage, in keeping with the dialogue as a whole, alludes to two kinds of soul: human and divine. The gods govern the cosmos in a manner that is reasonable and virtuous. The human soul is a likeness of the divine soul: it also controls that which is physical, but its control is limited and it is susceptible to unreason (ἄνοια; 897b) and disorder — its beliefs may be false, and its wishes may be misguided.

The list of names of the motions of the soul is incomplete given that all motions akin (συγγενής; 897a) to these are implicitly included. As indicated below, there are other motions of the soul mentioned by the Athenian. Nonetheless, all of the motions have a common feature: the soul is oriented in time, not in space. For example, wish, the first motion named above, is inherently forward-looking — when the soul wishes, it is oriented toward the future; i.e., it looks to a point in time when it achieves that which it desires.

Arguably, the other changes mentioned above derive from wish. For example, one loves what one wishes for; one grieves if a wish is unfulfilled, one has beliefs about what to wish for and the means by which a wish can be fulfilled. But regardless of whether wish plays a central role in the changes of the soul, all of the motions named by the Athenian are determined by time, not space. For example, belief rests on the conclusions of the past while deliberation reflects the future. Similarly, grief concerns the past while fear concerns the future.

The claim that the soul's changes are essentially temporal is supported by the following remarks in Book X:

ΑΘ. Μεμνήμεθά γε μὴν ὁμολογήσαντες ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν ὡς, εἰ ψυχὴ φανείη πρεσβύτερα σώματος οὕσα, καὶ τὰ ψυχῆς τῶν τοῦ σώματος ἔσοιτο πρεσβύτερα.

ΚΛ. Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.

ΑΘ. Τρόποι δὲ καὶ ἦθη καὶ βουλήσεις καὶ λογισμοὶ καὶ [896d] δόξαι ἀληθεῖς ἐπιμέλειαί τε καὶ μνήμαι πρότερα μήκους σωμάτων καὶ πλάτους καὶ βάθους καὶ ῥώμης εἶη γεγονότα ἄν, εἴπερ καὶ ψυχὴ σώματος.

ΚΛ. Ἀνάγκη.

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<sup>1</sup> Here and below, passages from the *Laws* have been translated after Thomas L. Pangle, with modifications. In addition, Stephanus page numbers refer to the *Laws*, unless otherwise indicated.

Athenian: Now we of course remember what we agreed to earlier, that if soul should be evidently older than body, then the things pertaining to soul would be older than the things pertaining to the body.

Kleinias: By all means.

Athenian: Moods, then, and dispositions, wishes, reasonings, true beliefs, considerations, and memories would have come into being prior to bodily length, breadth, depth and strength — if, indeed, soul came into being prior to body.

Kleinias: Necessarily. (896c-d)

In the above passage the Athenian emphasizes that the changes<sup>2</sup> of the soul are not the same as the changes of the body. Apart from metaphors, reason (λογισμός) does not have spatial extension, nor does belief (δόξα) or memory (μνήμη). One cannot measure their length, breadth, or depth. In this way, the soul, not unlike a geometric point, is radically different from objects that have spatial extension. The soul's dimensionality is temporal, not spatial. For example, one need not be in a particular place to grieve (λυπέω; 897a). One who grieves for his beloved, for example, cannot escape his grief by moving to another place and leaving his sorrow behind. In other words, the absence that underlies grief may be “everywhere” — distinctions of time, but not place, apply. Similarly, grief is not “in” the soul — it makes just as much sense to say that a soul is subsumed by grief, or that grief is a burden that weighs one down. These are metaphors or verbal images of grief. In reality, while grieving the soul dwells on the past — i.e., it is oriented toward that which is not present.

The above observations, though they align with common sense, are not set in stone. Moreover, they appear to contradict several passages in the *Laws* that indicate that the soul is in fact *inside* the body. For example, in Book XII, the Athenian states that we can think of a lifeless body as “a soulless altar of the chthonic ones...” (“ἄψυχον χθονίων βωμόν”; 959d). Given the context, the body is imagined to be a shell or habitat within which resides the soul; upon death, the soul travels to the underworld (959c). Similarly, the soul may be imagined as a ghostly homunculus that is entombed within the body.<sup>3</sup> The soul is freed from the body when the body dies; like a released prisoner, it then resides in another place.

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek word for *motion*, κίνησις, also means *change* — see H. Liddell, R. Scott, H. Jones (1968) s.v. “κίνησις.” For this reason, both *motion* and *change* are used to translate κίνησις.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Phaedrus* 250c: “...καθαροὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀσήμαντοι τούτου ὃ νῦν δὴ σῶμα περιφέροντες ὀνομάζομεν, ὁστρέου τρόπον δεδεσμευμένοι.” Here, the soul is described as “not entombed” (ἀσήμαντος) when it is free of the body; when it is not free, it is imprisoned or bound (δεσμεύω) as if it were an oyster in its shell.

Describing ancient Greek depictions of the soul, Emily Vermeule writes:

When the *psyche* was corporeally conceived, it was a miniature replica of the individual, endowed with wings to account for its swift daimonic flight, retaining some powers of memory and emotion. The *psyche* often flutters near the head from which it extracts its future qualities, or perches upon it as on the lovely lekythos by the Achilles Painter ... weeping and protesting with formal mourning gesture ...<sup>4</sup>

Hence, the soul is imagined as if it were another body. Under these and similar interpretations, the soul and body alike are extended in space — each has a particular place, and the motions within the soul are also motions within the body, given that the former is contained by the latter.

In summary, we see that on the one hand, the soul is described as if it were located and extended in space — it inhabits the body as a person might inhabit a house. On the other hand, we are told that the soul is not extended in space — as stated above, its changes are prior to length, breadth, and depth, and it is oriented in time, not space.

The source of the contradiction is threefold. First, in the *Laws* as well as other Platonic dialogues, images appear in the guise of factual statements. For example, a misinterpretation of the Athenian's remarks may lead one to believe that the underworld is real — this would be a misreading of metaphors and poetic language. Just as the divided line in the *Republic* (509d-513e) and the image of the lathe in the *Laws* (898a-b) are used to visualize that which is immaterial and non-spatial, spatial terms are used as metaphors<sup>5</sup> to describe the soul and the changes it undergoes upon the death of the body.

Second, throughout the *Laws* the Athenian is primarily interested in determining the legal and ethical basis of a virtuous city. While metaphysical issues clearly play a role in the dialogue, they are ancillary to the central task at hand. The discussion of the metaphysics of the soul and the nature of motion is introduced as a digression.<sup>6</sup> When describing the soul, the Athenian uses images and metaphors to communicate in a manner that is colloquial and readily understood by his interlocutors, Kleinias and Megillus.

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<sup>4</sup> E. Vermeule (1981) 9.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Emerson's observation in Chapter 4 of *Nature*: "Parts of speech are metaphors, because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind" (p. 24).

<sup>6</sup> In Book X, for example, Kleinias states that they must "go outside the realm of legislation" ("νομοθεσίας ἐκτὸς οἴηση βάλειν") to discuss the nature of the soul and its relation to the body (891d).

Finally, commonly-used prepositions such as *ἐν* have both spatial and non-spatial connotations; the former often conceal the latter. For example, in Book II of the *Laws*, the Athenian states: “Λέγω τοίνυν τῶν παίδων παιδικὴν εἶναι πρώτην αἴσθησιν ἡδονὴν καὶ λύπην, καὶ ἐν οἷς ἀρετὴ ψυχῆ καὶ κακία παραγίγνεται πρῶτον” (“Well, I say that the first elementary sensation in children is the sensation of pleasure and pain, and that it is in these that virtue and vice first come into being in the soul”; 653a). Here, the expression *ἐν οἷς* (“in these”) does not indicate a spatial relation. Instead, the expression is an instrumental dative — in English it is equivalent to *by means of these* or *through these*.<sup>7</sup> Pleasure and pain are not containers “in which” ἀρετή (virtue) appears. Similarly, ἀρετή is not contained by anything,<sup>8</sup> and nothing is contained by the soul — as stated above, the soul has neither length, breadth, nor depth (896d). For these reasons, a closer translation of the Athenian’s words would be: “... it is through these that virtue and vice first come to be present to the soul.”

In short, the soul is extended in space only in our imaginations. In reality, it is categorically different from the body. The soul, unlike the body, is oriented in time. In other words, the soul’s orientation is determined by a temporal order — i.e., an ordering of the relations between past, present, and future. This ordering is the basis of the soul’s “direction.” A wish, for example, is forward-looking and hence future-oriented; grief looks to the past; joy may be present. Hence, a temporal order provides a framework in which the soul is situated.

Given the above, one may argue that the body is also oriented in time. After all, the body changes, and every change implies the flow of time. Nonetheless, the body is oriented in space — i.e., the changes of the body, unlike those of the soul, are determined by position and location. The argument in support of these claims will be presented below.

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<sup>7</sup>In addition to connoting spatial relations, the word *ἐν* can also refer to a state or condition. For example, one can be *engaged in philosophy* (*Phaedrus* 59a; see also *Republic* 489b). This is comparable to English expressions such as *I am in business* or *I am in love*. The word *ἐν* can also indicate *instrument, means* or *manner*; e.g., in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates states: “Ὡς οὐδὲν ἄλλο μανθάνων διετέλεσας ἢ τὰ στοιχεῖα ἐν τε τῇ ὄψει διαγιγνώσκειν πειρώμενος καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀκοῇ αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ ἕκαστον” (206a) — one senses *with* or *by means of* the eyes and ears but not *in* them.

<sup>8</sup>If we claim that ἀρετή can be in a soul, as if it could be localized and contained, then we have the contradiction of the first part of the *Parmenides*: ἀρετή would be like a sail that covers the world, divided into separate parts, and therefore many and not one (131b).

### 3. The Body

As explained above, the soul is oriented not in space, but in time. The converse is true of the body. In Book X of the *Laws*, while describing the motions of physical objects, the Athenian states the following to Kleinias:

Μῶν οὖν οὐκ ἐν χώρᾳ τινὶ τὰ τε ἐστῶτα ἔστηκεν καὶ τὰ κινούμενα κινεῖται; — Πῶς γὰρ οὔ;  
— Καὶ τὰ μὲν γε ἐν μιᾷ ἔδρᾳ που τοῦτο ἂν δρῶη, τὰ δὲ ἐν πλείοσιν.

“And then isn’t it in a certain place that the standing things stand and the things in motion move?” — “How could it be otherwise?” — “And some, at least, would presumably do this in one location, but some in many.” (893c)

Here, the word ἐν clearly indicates a spatial relation. That which moves or is at rest is *in* a particular place. One may interpret this claim to include the soul as well as the body. However, when the Athenian also states that the things he is describing can perish (φθίω; 893e), he is implicitly ruling out the soul — as will be indicated below, the soul does not perish. When he describes motions in space, the Athenian is describing the changes of that which is corporeal and capable of destruction. These motions apply to the body and other physical objects, but not the soul. This point is reiterated when the Athenian states that the “changes of soulless bodies” (“ἀψύχου μεταβολή”) — i.e., physical objects — are inferior (δεύτερος) to the changes of the soul (896b).

Everything that appears to the organs of sense is proximal and immediate. The body does not sense the past or the future. What is sensed through the body are appearances in the present moment. The senses — including the sense of one’s own body — place one in a particular location. Eyesight, for example, establishes a point of view — like a geometric point, a point of view defines a relative position. Similarly, touch establishes a point of contact. By these and similar means the senses orient and position the body in space. In addition, the senses always imply a *now* — there is no temporal extension beyond the present moment. Memory can revive that which was sensed in the past, but memory is the soul’s work; similarly, one may believe that tomorrow it will rain, but belief is also a motion of the soul (see Section 2). It is only when rain is present — i.e., *here* and *now*, *proximal* and *immediate* — that it is felt by means of the body.

In reference to the motion of physical objects, the Athenian states:

Τὰ δὲ γε κινούμενα ἐν πολλοῖς φαίνη μοι λέγειν ὅσα φορᾶ κινεῖται μεταβαίνοντα εἰς ἕτερον αἰεὶ τόπον, καὶ τοτὲ μὲν ἔστιν ὅτε βᾶσιν ἐνὸς κεκτημένα [893e] τινὸς κέντρον, τοτὲ δὲ πλείονα τῷ περικυλινδεῖσθαι. (893d-e)

And in speaking of things that move in many locations, at least, you appear to me to refer to whatever moves in a course by which it always changes to another place: sometimes they possess one axis of support and sometimes more, because they revolve.

The key word above is *τόπος* — *place, position, region*.<sup>9</sup> The body changes by changing place or position — i.e., its changes are inherently changes in space. These changes are measurable in terms of length, breadth, and depth (see Section 2). In addition, the word *τόπος* can mean *place or part of the body*.<sup>10</sup> The parts of the body — each of which is a physical object in itself — change in size and position as the body develops; one need only compare the body in the womb with the body of an adult. The changes are definable in terms of spatial relations — the differences lie in the relative size, location, and orientation of the parts.

The changes of the body may be contrasted with a motion of the soul, such as a wish. For example, the protagonists of the *Laws* wish to visit the cave and shrine of Zeus (625a-b); their bodies change location as they move along the road, but their wish does not change with them. Instead, it guides them. Their wish remains a constant throughout their journey. Thus, the concepts by which we understand the body — length, breadth, and depth; interior and exterior; location; distance; arrangement of parts in space — are not applicable to the soul and its changes, apart from images and metaphors.

Although the body is oriented in space, it is not divorced from time. All changing objects must be “in” time. It is undeniable that the word *μεταβαίνω* (893d) — *pass over, transition, change* — implies time. In this sense, the body resembles (*ἰνδάλλομαι*; 959b) the soul: they both change. But the body, unlike the soul, is not *oriented* in time. Time is the foundation of all change, but the question at hand is: What is the primary aspect of physical change? The body's changes are spatial. They may be contrasted with the changes of the soul. For example, if we say ‘Socrates is in prison,’ we are referring to his body and its location. If, on the other hand, we say ‘Socrates believes,’ we are not referring to any particular place. The latter statement tells us nothing about *where* Socrates is. If Socrates “drops” his belief, he does so metaphorically. In this case, we may ask: When and for what reason did he drop his belief? It would be absurd to say that Socrates, when he was in prison, dropped his belief, and he can pick it up again if he returns to prison. Beliefs may come and go, but they do so in time, not in space.

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<sup>9</sup> H. Liddell, R. Scott, H. Jones (1968) s.v. “τόπος.”

<sup>10</sup> H. Liddell, R. Scott, H. Jones (1968) s.v. “τόπος.”

<sup>11</sup> H. Liddell, R. Scott, H. Jones (1968) s.v. “μεταβαίνω.”

As stated in Section 2, both time and space are ordered. The cardinal directions, for example, determine the orientation of the body. Similarly, that which is wide is always greater than that which is narrow precisely because space is ordered. Anatomy, athletics, dance — all of these presuppose an ordering of spatial relations — e.g., left and right, above and below, front and back, interior and exterior. This ordering is ubiquitous; hence, it is usually unstated and unnoticed.

If, as argued above, the soul and the body are oriented in different ways, how can they work in unison? The body is the soul's "other," yet at the same time it is the soul's intimate collaborator. What is the principle by which they harmonize? In the following section it will be argued that *λόγος* provides the key to answering this question.

#### 4. The Co-operation of Soul and Body

If the body is oriented in space while the soul is oriented in time, how are they so intimately connected? How precisely does an organ of sense (e.g., the skin) unite with the soul? The skin is a surface, the soul is not — how does pressure on a surface translate into a feeling? These questions are not answered in the *Laws*.<sup>12</sup> But the Athenian does tell us how the soul and the body work in unison. In Book II he states:

Εἴπομεν, εἰ μεμνήμεθα, κατ' ἀρχὰς τῶν λόγων, ὡς ἡ φύσις ἀπάντων τῶν νέων διάπυρος οὔσα ἡσυχίαν οὐχ οἷα τε ἄγειν οὔτε κατὰ τὸ σῶμα οὔτε κατὰ τὴν φωνὴν εἶη, φθέγγοιτο δ' αἰεὶ ἀτάκτως καὶ πηδῶ, τάξεως δ' αἴσθησιν τούτων ἀμφοτέρων, τῶν ἄλλων μὲν ζῴων οὐδὲν ἐφάπτοιτο, ἡ δὲ ἀνθρώπου φύσις ἔχει μόνη τοῦτο· τῇ δὲ τῆς κινήσεως [665a] τάξει ῥυθμὸς ὄνομα εἶη, τῇ δὲ αὖ τῆς φωνῆς, τοῦ τε ὀξέος ἅμα καὶ βαρέος συγκεραννυμένων, ἀρμονία ὄνομα προσαγορεύοιτο, χορεία δὲ τὸ συναμφοτέρον κληθεῖη.

We said, if we remember, at the beginning of our discussion, that the nature of all young things is fiery, and unable to remain calm either in body or in voice, but is always crying and leaping in a disorderly way. We said that none of the other animals attains sense of order in either of these, but that human nature alone has this. The name for order in movement is *rhythm*, and for order in voice, the mixture of acute and grave, the name is *harmony*; the two things together are called a *chorus*. (664e-665a)

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<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that the difficulty may lie not in how we reason about the soul, but in how we reason about space; in the *Timaeus*, it is stated that our reasoning about space is counterfeit (*νόθος*; 52a-b).

Unlike animals, humans are capable of a “sense of order” (“τάξεως δ’ αἴσθησιν”). The motions of animals, like those of children, tend to be disorderly (ἀτάκτως). However, children are capable of ordered motion, even before their minds are shaped by λόγος (653a-b). But through λόγος one can develop and refine a sense of order; λόγος is a prerequisite for being fully aware of that which is good and virtuous (653b-c). For these reasons, λόγος is the foundation of education in a virtuous city.

The ability to sense order in what is seen, heard and felt is a manifestation of the meeting of body and soul; both time and space converge into a single, unified order that is sensed by means of λόγος. For example, choral dance (χορεία) is an ordered motion of the human body that plays a central role in the life of a virtuous city (654d-e, 657a-b). This is true of Magnesia and it is true of the historical cities of ancient Greece. In his commentary on the *Laws*, Glenn Morrow describes the importance of dance in ancient times:

Music and the dance formed a part of all the great religious festivals, both local and Panhellenic; at most of them musical contests were featured side by side with the athletic ones, and victories in them were almost equally coveted and honored. They were an essential feature of marriage and funeral ceremonies, and of the rites of seed time, harvest, and vintage. Every occupation seems to have had its distinctive songs ... For Hesiod the Muses danced on Helicon ... and Plato's vision of the gods as fellow choristers with their worshipers was a commonplace to the poets and the sculptors.<sup>13</sup>

Dance was ingrained in the culture and daily life of ancient Greece. It tempered whatever disorder might have plagued a community. Dance orders each movement of the body and it incorporates the dancer into an ordered whole — i.e., a musical composition. The orientation and position of the body are aligned with rhythm and melody. With dance, gesture and rhythm, body and soul are unified. In his commentary on Book II of the *Laws*, Ficino writes:

You will also note that no creature apart from man has the sense of rhythm and harmony and that rhythm is order in time and movement, while harmony is order in the very tempering of the notes by means of high and low. What we often call harmony is properly called *concentus* [*symphony, concord, agreement*] in Latin. What we call rhythm we can conveniently call number, provided that you understand this to mean number in time and movement.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>G. Morrow (1993) 302-3.

<sup>14</sup>M. Ficino (2009) 85 (translated by Arthur Farndell).

Thus, according to Ficino's interpretation, music constitutes two orders: the order of "time and movement," which is rhythm, and the order of "high and low," which is harmony. The latter is analogous to a spatial ordering. A tone's defining characteristic is its position on the tonal scale. A "high" note is high not because of an ordering in time, but because of the way it strikes the sense of hearing at any given moment. To use a modern analogy, the vertical axis in sheet music represents "high" and "low" — a static relationship — while the horizontal axis represents the passage of time. The former is analogous to space.

The coordination of time and space is most evident in a choral dance: harmony in the broadest sense joins opposing elements into an ordered whole. In a dance, there is agreement not only between high and low and fast and slow, but also between the orientation of the body and the orientation of the soul. For example, the body of a dancer may represent a motion of the soul such as grief or love — it may even do so without moving. This is made evident in Morrow's description of dance in ancient Greece:

... for the Greeks a dance was not merely a rhythmic pattern of steps, but an ordered movement of the whole body — head, arms, hands, torso, as well as legs and feet. Even the movement might sometimes disappear; a posture, or an arrested gesture, if seen and understood as a phase of a larger pattern, formed a "figure" of the dance, such as the gesture of the veil, or the postures of mourning or farewell or adoration so beautifully preserved for us in Greek vase painting and sculpture ... the dance is not merely an exercise of bodily agility, but the introduction of pleasing and significant form into all the movements of a man's body, and thence into all that he does.<sup>15</sup>

Given the above, even a motionless body is significant in a dance. Movement may sometimes "disappear" — time appears to stop. An arrested gesture or a frozen posture can be woven into the larger pattern of rhythm and melody. Movement and the absence of movement are bound into a composition that harmonizes the temporal and the timeless. A single gesture or posture, when "seen and understood," may reflect a larger pattern that transcends the usual ordering of time and space.

But what precisely is the "understanding" that allows one to recognize patterns in dance and music? Passages in the *Laws* indicate that λόγος — often translated as *reason* — underwrites the sense of order and the discernment of structure in music. In his summary of education as described in Book II (653a-654d), Shorey states:

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<sup>15</sup> G. Morrow (1993) 306.

When reason [λόγος] arrives, the harmony of feeling with reason is virtue. By education we now mean the training of youth in pleasure and pain to like and dislike the right things ... No young creature can be quiet. But man alone has a sense of rhythm and order in his movements. Hence music and dancing. The well-educated man will sing and dance rightly or beautifully. But what is right and beautiful? All control of education will be worthless unless our hunt discovers this.<sup>16</sup>

Shorey is correct to point out the human capacity to align feeling with λόγος. But we should not assume that for Plato, λόγος is equivalent to reason. When one witnesses beauty (κάλλος) in a dance, must one know the reason why it is beautiful? No. Reasoning may be absent while λόγος is present. The word λόγος spans a range of meanings — λόγος is not only *reason* or *discourse*, it is also *reflection*.<sup>17</sup> The ground of a beautiful dance — i.e., the basis on which a dance is beautiful — is κάλλος itself. This reality or ground is not discerned by the ordinary senses. It is through λόγος in unison with the senses that one recognizes κάλλος. In some cases, λόγος may deduce the existence of the ground; alternatively, it may reflect the ground, thereby discerning a reality that would otherwise remain obscure, if not concealed. In the latter case, λόγος serves as a form of discernment. In short, λόγος may at times manifest itself as reason — Plato's dialogues are replete with examples of this — but reasoning is not its only modality.

Given the above, dance can be a representation (μίμημα) or a likeness (ὁμοιότης) of κάλλος (668b-c). Similarly, a sculptor can represent κάλλος with stone, a painter with paint, and a singer with the voice. Thus, κάλλος may appear — i.e., it may be sensed in a here and now, as if it were present — by means of these media. One may say that a beautiful dance “translates” κάλλος into a sensible form — but the translation is understood only by means of λόγος and a sense of order.

Sensible media, however, cannot fully capture the reality of that which is represented. A representation is inferior to its original. A dance may be an instance of κάλλος, but it is not κάλλος itself. Just as the soul is prior to the body (896d; see Section 2), a reality such as κάλλος precedes the medium through which it appears — it is the soul that recognizes and acts upon this precedence by means of λόγος and its concomitant, the capacity to sense order. Hence, the development of the ability to sense κάλλος is fulfilled through λόγος. Book VII of the *Laws* states:

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<sup>16</sup> P. Shorey (1933) 363.

<sup>17</sup> H. Liddell, R. Scott, H. Jones (1968) s.v. “λόγος.” For example, see *Republic* 529d: “ἃ δὴ λόγῳ μὲν καὶ διανοίᾳ ληπτὰ” (“these [true motions] are apprehended by reflection and thought”).

ΑΘ. Ἐφραμεν, οἶμαι, τοὺς τοῦ Διονύσου τοὺς ἑξηκοντούτας ᾧδοὺς διαφερόντως εὐαισθήτους δεῖν γεγονέναι περὶ [812c] τε τοὺς ῥυθμούς καὶ τὰς τῶν ἀρμονιῶν συστάσεις, ἵνα τὴν τῶν μελῶν μίμησιν τὴν εὖ καὶ τὴν κακῶς μεμιμημένην, ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὅταν ψυχὴ γίγνηται, τὰ τε τῆς ἀγαθῆς ὁμοιώματα καὶ τὰ τῆς ἐναντίας ἐκλέξασθαι δυνατὸς ὢν τις, τὰ μὲν ἀποβάλλῃ, τὰ δὲ προφέρων εἰς μέσον ὑμνῆ καὶ ἐπάδῃ ταῖς τῶν νέων ψυχαῖς, προκαλούμενος ἐκάστους εἰς ἀρετῆς ἔπεσθαι κτήσιν συνακολουθοῦντας διὰ τῶν μιμήσεων.

Athenian: We asserted, I believe, that the sixty-year-old Dionysian singers had to become especially sensitive [εὐαισθήτους] to rhythms and the schemes of the harmonies, in order that there would be someone who could pick out, as regards the imitation in songs that makes the soul feel passions (whether the imitation be well done or badly done), the resemblances to the good and the resemblances to the opposite. The one he was to cast away, while the other he was to produce in their midst, singing to and enchanting the souls of the young and calling upon each of them to join in pursuing the acquisition of virtue, by means of the imitations. (812b-c)

The goal of education in a virtuous city is to instill the ability to sense well (‘εὐαισθήτους’). In combination with λόγος, this ability gives one the power to discern right from wrong and good from evil. For these reasons, λόγος is essential for representing and recognizing ἀρετή (virtue) as well as κάλλος. As will be explained below, ἀρετή is the foundation of a virtuous city.

In general, cooperation between λόγος and the senses occurs in all walks of life. Belief itself is an integration of λόγος with the senses. In the *Sophist*, the Eleatic Stranger states that appearance (φαίνω) is a commingling of sense and belief (“σύμμιξις αἰσθήσεως καὶ δόξης”; 264b). In turn, belief is a consequence of λόγος (*Sophist* 264b). Given that appearances are ubiquitous, λόγος is intimately connected with the senses. What appears to us is determined by the organs and objects of sense on the one hand, and by λόγος and belief on the other. For example, that which is seen as useless by one who is wicked may be seen as valuable by one who is wise. The latter can discern a moral order, the former cannot. To use a mathematical example, in the *Meno*, Socrates is able to see the solution to the geometry problem because he can “see” the diagonal and its relations to the double square (85a-b) — it is λόγος that allows him to recognize the solution. The correct ordering of points, lines, and figures appears to him through the drawing in the sand precisely because he reflects on the drawing by means of λόγος.

In short, the glue which binds body and soul together is λόγος in concert with the senses. In an individual, space and time harmonize by means of λόγος and a sense of order. The following section explains how order is actualized in a virtuous city by similar means.

## 5. Conclusion

In the *Laws*, a choral dance — itself a composition — is considered to be a part of a larger composition, the city itself. By means of λόγος and a sense of order, one can recognize the latter as well as the former. For example, one who walks into a sacred area (ἱερός) while knowing that the place is situated in the center of the city (745b-c) discerns the spatial ordering of the city. Similarly, one who participates in a religious festival while knowing its role in the city's liturgical calendar discerns the temporal ordering of the city. It is by means of λόγος that the activities and architecture of the city are experienced not as isolated phenomena, but as parts of an ordered whole.

In Book I, the Athenian describes what a lawgiver must do after the city's constitution has been written:

... ὁ θεὸς τοὺς νόμους ἅπασιν τούτοις φύλακας ἐπιστήσει, τοὺς μὲν διὰ φρονήσεως, τοὺς δὲ δι' ἀληθοῦς δόξης ἰόντας, ὅπως πάντα ταῦτα συνδήσας ὁ νοῦς ἐπόμενα σωφροσύνη καὶ δικαιοσύνη ἀποφήνη, ἀλλὰ μὴ πλούτῳ μηδὲ [632d] φιλοτιμίᾳ.

... the one who frames the laws will set up guards — some grounded in prudence, others in true belief — so that intelligence will bind together all these things [i.e., laws and regulations] and may declare that they follow moderation and justice but not wealth or love of honor. (632c-d)

The word συνδέω means *bind, connect, or unite*,<sup>18</sup> given the above, the many laws of a city are bound into an ordered whole by means of νόος. Since νόος is *reason, sense, or intellect*,<sup>19</sup> it shares a deep affinity with λόγος — they are both faculties of the soul. Thus, by means of the soul, an ordering in which moderation and justice are placed above wealth and love of honor is established. This ordering is not relative to time or place. All virtuous cities, regardless of their location and their place in history, must uphold this ordering. Hence, the above ordering, like all moral orders, transcends that which is temporal and spatial. Nonetheless, like κάλλος, it can be represented and actualized in a city.

An analogous ordering is seen at 743e in Book V, where the Athenian presents the following hierarchy of values:

1. Soul (ψυχή)
2. Body (σῶμα)

<sup>18</sup> H. Liddell, R. Scott, H. Jones (1968) s.v. “συνδέω.”

<sup>19</sup> H. Liddell, R. Scott, H. Jones (1968) s.v. “νόος.”

## 3. Money (χρήμα)

Given that the soul is immaterial and immortal (713e-714a), it is closest in affinity to the divine. Therefore, it heads the list. The body is secondary, but nonetheless important — it is a means by which the soul may sense and express κάλλος and ἀρετή (see Section 4). In turn, money and property are necessary for the survival of the body, just as the land of a city is necessary to feed its populace, but they rank lowest in the order of values shown above.

Although the secular functions of a city are essential, they are quasi-orders — they are inferior manifestations of order. The arrangement of a craftsman’s tools in his workshop and the ordering of tasks in a day are proximal and short-term; in and of themselves, they are ancillary to the higher orders — the orders of ἀρετή, κάλλος, and, more generally, that which is not bound by time and space.

Money, property, work, and the body are subsumed under higher orders which go unrecognized in a corrupt state. The following ranking of values, which may occur in a vice-ridden city, is an ordering that is a source of *disorder* in the long term:

1. Money (χρήμα)
2. Body (σῶμα)
3. Soul (ψυχή)

The laws of a virtuous city must preserve the ordering of soul, body, and money that is shown in the first ranking. The needs of the soul take precedence over the desires and requirements of the body.<sup>20</sup> However, immediate pleasures all too often upset the relation between soul and body. When the correct order of values is inverted, reason and calculation serve as instruments for obtaining money and satisfying bodily appetites; when corruption sets in, the soul becomes a servant of the body, not vice versa.

Appetite for physical pleasure is a pervasive threat; e.g., sexual desire is “a great power” (“μέγιστον δυναμένην”; 840e) that must be held in check. Similarly, lust for wealth (“ἔρωτος πλούτου”) leads to selfishness and a misuse of time (831c). Therefore, fear (φόβος) — a movement of the soul (see Section 2) — is instrumental in a virtuous city (647a-c; 699c-d; 783a). One must learn to recognize and fear the disorder that comes when a city idolizes the body.

The city as a whole, insofar as it is virtuous, counters the temptations of vice and disorder. For the individual, the soul must come first. Similarly, for the city, the

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<sup>20</sup> See *Phaedrus* 247d-e: the soul requires its own kind of nourishment.

divine and the supernatural take precedence (713c-714a). The latter are united with the former — i.e., the religious order is observed in the day-to-day life of the city. Each individual is a member of a community that is both corporeal and incorporeal. The gods and spirits are among us: they support us (906a-b), they protect us (877a), and they are an integral part of the city (771d, 803c-d).

The religious and moral orders harmonize space and time, body and soul. More specifically, when a city is virtuous, religion binds the temporal and spatial orders into a composition. Festivals, weddings and funerals, the rhythms of choral dances: these reflect the religious order in time. The architecture of temples, the geometry of the city and its sacred enclosures (ἱερός; 758e): these reflect the religious order in space.<sup>21</sup> When these two orders are joined (συνδέω) into a system by means of the city's laws and customs (632c-d), ἀρετή is actualized as a sensible presence to those who can discern it.

The virtuous city itself is a medium that represents ἀρετή, just as a beautiful dance is a medium that represents κάλλος (668a-b). The parts of a virtuous city that are sensible — the land, the temples, the festivals, the dances, the weddings — represent and preserve κάλλος and ἀρετή. Through these media, the city becomes a sensible order that joins human and divine, natural and supernatural, body and soul.<sup>22</sup> But this is possible only by means of λόγος. As explained in Section 3, it is the immediate — the here and now — that appears to one through the body and the organs of sense. Without λόγος, the senses present a series of isolated phenomena. Each sensation appears to occupy a moment of time that is divorced from the past and the future. Even the present is not fully present. Harmony is nonexistent. This fracturing of sensation leads to disorder, and disorder ultimately leads to chaos and ruin (691c-d).

Education is crucial for establishing harmony in the city and the individual alike. More specifically, education instills a sense of order by means of λόγος (see Section 4). As λόγος develops and informs the senses, that which is sensed is joined into a web of meaningful phenomena — one sees that seemingly isolated appearances are in fact parts of a pattern. What would have been dismissed as a

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<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting that the *Laws* as a whole is presented as an integration of the temporal and the spatial, each of which is subsumed under a religious order. The protagonists travel along a road on their pilgrimage to the cave and shrine of Zeus; space and time are symbolized by the road and the wish that compels them to visit the shrine.

<sup>22</sup> In his summary of Book II, G. Morrow (1993, 302) writes: "The gods are companions at the festival ... and companions in the dance ... the pleasure of the festival renews and confirms the sentiments acquired in childhood, linking the citizens to one another in common loyalty to the ideas expressed in these dances and songs (654a)." Thus, dance and music join the human with the divine as well as the present with the past.

chance occurrence or a figment of the imagination is recognized as the intervention of a higher order. The dialogue *Crito* provides a pertinent example: the beautiful woman in white who appears to Socrates while he is in prison is discerned as a vision (ἐνύπνιον) through which the future is foretold (44a-b) — she bridges time and space. Those who do not recognize the supernatural order would dismiss her as a mere dream image, a passing phenomenon with no significance. They would not understand that gods and spirits concern themselves with human affairs.

For the reasons given above, atheism leads to ruin. In the absence of religious belief, life itself may be felt as a passing phenomenon, without order or meaning. The higher orders and the larger patterns are neither seen nor felt — λόγος becomes a tool for satisfying the body; κάλλος is equated with fleeting pleasures; ἀρετή is confused with money and power. In short, life is reduced to

... a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.<sup>23</sup>

The secular order is, in reality, a poorly-sensed higher order; one's blindness to the latter distorts and eviscerates that which is seen, heard, and felt. Modern-day cities that are planned on the basis of statistical analyses and computational simulations are pale shadows of what Plato had envisioned.

We conclude with these words from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*:

... human kind  
Cannot bear very much reality.<sup>24</sup>

At their highest intensities, κάλλος and ἀρετή may overwhelm the senses. This is indicated in Book VII of the *Republic*: after leaving the cave, one cannot look directly at the sun. One must adjust to the light — in the beginning, one must look only at shadows and reflections (515e-516a). Perhaps this is the purpose of time: it allows the soul to learn at an orderly pace. Over the years, one gradually discovers that life is not a mere shadow of reality.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> W. Shakespeare (1972) 1259; *Macbeth* 5.5.26-28.

<sup>24</sup> T.S. Eliot (1943) 4.

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