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Morality, Deviance, and Regulation: Pragmatist Motifs in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*

Abstract

Envisioning morality, deviance, and regulation as enduring features of human group life, and using symbolic interaction (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969; Prus 1996; Prus and Grills 2003) as a conceptual device for traversing the corridors of time, this paper asks what we may learn about deviance and morality as humanly engaged realms of community life by examining Plato's (420-348 BCE) *Republic* and *Laws*.

Focusing on the articulation of two model communities, with *Republic* primarily under the guidance of a set of philosopher-kings and *Laws* more comprehensively under the rule of a constitution, Plato considers a wide array of matters pertinent to the study of morality, deviance, and regulation.

Thus, whereas many social scientists have dismissed Plato's texts as the works of a "utopian idealist" and/or an "ancient philosopher," *Republic* and *Laws* have much to offer to those who approach the study of human knowing and acting in more distinctively pragmatist sociological terms.

Indeed, because these two volumes address so many basic features of community life (including morality, religion, politics, poetics, and education) in extended detail, they represent particularly valuable transhistorical and transcultural comparison points for contemporary analysis.

Although the products of a somewhat unique period in Western civilization (i.e., the classical Greek era, circa 700-300 BCE), Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* are very much studies of social order. Plato's speakers, in each case, clearly have notions of the moral order that they wish to promote, but, to their sociological credit, they also embark on more distinctively analytic considerations of the broader processes and problematics of humanly engaged life worlds.

Still, given the practical restraints of a single paper and the extended relevance of Plato's texts for the topics at hand, readers are cautioned that the present statement focuses primarily on those materials from *Republic* that most directly address deviance and regulation and mainly the first six books of *Laws*.

Employing Prus and Grills (2003) depictions of deviance as a series of generic social processes as a contemporary reference point, the paper concludes with a consideration of the relevance and contributions of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* for the study of morality, deviance, and regulation as fundamental features of human group life.

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Although people often try to explain morality, deviance and regulation as matters unto themselves, this is an extremely myopic and counterproductive mode of scholarship. Before one can adequately understand deviance, crime, and the like, as well as regulatory agendas and associated treatment programs, it is necessary to understand the nature of human group life. This is because matters of morality, deviance, and regulation not only take place within the context of community life but also exist as meaningful essences only within the broader, interconnected realms of human knowing and acting.

It may seem odd to some readers, as well, that a contemporary consideration of morality, deviance, and regulation would take us back to the classical Greek era (circa 700-300 BCE). However, it is to be appreciated that contemporary notions of morality, deviance, and regulation are not the sudden and dramatic inventions of the more immediate present, but instead are the products of much more enduring realms of human interchange. Nor, likewise are sociological explanations of crime and deviance, that is explanations based on the nature of human group life, limited to the scholarship of the last century or so (i.e., following Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and other commonly recognized progenitors of the sociological tradition). Not only do important aspects of these conceptualizations clearly predate the classical Greek era (e.g., Egyptian, Babylonian), but they also seem destined to be relevant as long as there are people.

Because (a) virtually all realms of contemporary Western thought and activity are rooted in classical Greek thought and practices, and (b) Plato's texts have assumed a particularly central role in the ways that people have conveyed and sustained these notions to the present time, it is most instructive to see what Plato has to say on these matters. Still, because (c) scholarship has not been developed (as in sustained, expanded) in more encompassing, linear terms, and (d) much has been lost inadvertently as well as through censorship, ignorance, and diversionary intrigues, it is important to examine Plato's materials on morality and community life in more focused ways.

Plato cannot be expected to anticipate all the fluxes, flows, and disjunctures of Western social thought that would take place over the next 2,500 years. However, and more consequentially, Plato is attentive to the matter of locating morality (including socialization, relationships, activities, and regulation) within the broader context of ongoing community life.

Accordingly, deviance, crime, regulation, and such are to be understood not just with respect to people's notions of education, religion, poetics (fictionalized entertainment), and governing practices, but also mindfully of the ways in which people, as agents, take these matters into account as they participate in ongoing community life.

Although Plato does not provide us with specific ethnographic instances and, instead, seems primarily intent on establishing the foundations of a model state in both *Republic* and *Laws*, his speakers, more or less continuously, discuss fairly prototypic instances of human lived experience and assess their options and the viability of people pursuing particular lines of regulatory activity.

If one uses more conventional, Chicago-style interactionist ethnography as a reference point, it appears that Plato would not qualify as an ethnographer. However, when one asks about an “ethnography of philosophy,” Plato and (his student) Aristotle (384-322 BCE) would have few peers. In addition to establishing philosophy as a field of academic endeavor in the western world and developing the central texts within Western social thought, Plato and Aristotle also provide a great deal of historical and time-situated material that address the ways in which people more generally engage (i.e., learn about, make sense of, and practice) philosophy within the context of ongoing community life. I am not making the case that Plato should be defined as an ethnographer. However, because his texts address matters of human knowing and acting in notable detail, they represent invaluable historical comparison points for considering notions of morality, deviance, and regulation in more sustained terms.

Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* in Context

Not only are *Republic* and *Laws* the most extensive of Plato's extant texts, but also constitute those of Plato's texts that deal most comprehensively with the affairs of the state. It is instructive, thus, to put these texts in perspective, if only in the briefest of terms.

First, whereas (a) some of Plato's best known texts (e.g., *Timaeus*, *Phaedo*) have a pronounced theological quality amidst a broader philosophic base, (b) others address virtue in more central terms (e.g., *Crito*, *Socrates Defense or Apology*), and (c) many of his other texts represent sustained instances of dialectic engagement in which relativist, skepticist viewpoints are invoked as Plato's speakers engage the matters of human knowing and acting in a wide array of fields (e.g. *Cratylus* on language; *Laches* on courage; *Theaetetus* on knowing), (d) *Republic* and *Laws* have a more distinctive humanly engaged, pragmatist quality within a yet broader, multifaceted (theological, virtuous, and dialectic) consideration of community life.

Second, Plato's texts are not equally well known, nor have they been equally well received. Thus, although *Timaeus* has long been given a prominent presence in Christian theological circles (in large part because of Augustine, 354-430 CE) and *Republic* appears to have inspired a series of utopian texts and other treatises on political science following its reappearance after the crusades, and Plato's *Symposium* (on love) and *Socrates' Defense* have attracted much attention in philosophic arenas, many of Plato's other texts (e.g., *Laws*, *Sophist*, *Phaedrus*) are considerably less well-known and still others remain even more obscure.

Third, the fates of Plato's texts have reflected the transitions and disjunctures of social thought over the intervening centuries. Quite directly, scholarship has not developed in a systematic, coherent, and cumulative manner (see Prus 2004 for a more extended statement). Thus, Plato's texts, like those of Aristotle, not only have been subject to highly selective usage, but they also have been disregarded, denounced, and destroyed by people with little regard for scholarship as well as those intent on pursuing other educational agendas.²

Relatedly, despite their focus on human group life as something “in the making,” the American pragmatists (Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and

² Still, given the generalized emphasis on religion in Judaic-Christian and Islamic communities, Plato (who writes as a theologian at times) has been much better received than Aristotle (who with some exceptions, generally is more apt to be defined as an irreligious, pagan philosopher).

George Herbert Mead) also have given little sustained attention to the foundational pragmatist features of classical Greek thought. Deriving central conceptual inspiration from the American pragmatists, the symbolic interactionists similarly have failed to acknowledge their indebtedness to classical Greek scholarship (see Prus 2003a, 2004, 2007a, 2008a).

Although the present project is somewhat unique because of its historical or ethnohistorical quality, it is very much informed by Chicago-style symbolic interactionism. Further, whereas the immediate paper focuses on Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, this statement is part of a much larger venture that traces the development of pragmatist social thought from the classical Greek era to the present time.³ While it is Aristotle who lays the foundation of pragmatist social thought in particularly direct and sustained terms (e.g., especially see *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Rhetoric*), Aristotle has learned much from Plato. Still, there is much that can be gleaned more directly from Plato's texts.

Another caveat regarding Plato's texts may be noted. Thus, whereas one finds a number of tensions in Aristotle's works (e.g., moralism, objectivism, and pragmatism), that require some "sorting out" of emphases, Aristotle writes more directly for himself and is intensively concerned about providing highly coherent, focused, and enabling statements on the (pluralist) nature of human knowing and acting. Plato also generates a great deal of insight into the nature of human knowing and acting. However, in addition to the various objectivist and pragmatist motifs that one finds in his works, Plato at times also writes as a theologian, an idealist, and a skeptical dialectician.

Further, because Plato never speaks directly for himself, but presents ideas through others engaged in dialogical interchange, Plato's own positions on things have remained unclear. In presenting material from *Republic* and *Laws*, thus, I typically will refer to the viewpoints that Plato's speakers adopt in developing these texts.

Before proceeding further, it also should be noted that although Plato addresses matters pertaining to morality, deviance, and regulation in a number of his other texts, *Republic* and *Laws* are highly complex and detailed statements on their own. Indeed, virtually the entire text of *Laws* addresses the study of morality, deviance, and regulation. However, because Plato's coverage of these matters is so extended, the first six books of *Laws* will be given primary attention here.

Plato and the Social Science Venture

Lacking sustained familiarity with Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, most social scientists seem inclined to dismiss these works as denoting "utopian agendas" formulated by an "archaic, idealist philosopher." Definitions of these sorts not only are unwarranted, but, even more unfortunately, centrally obscure the genuine and considerable contributions that Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* can make to the study of human knowing and acting. Not only has Plato developed these texts in remarkably astute conceptual terms, but *Republic* and *Laws* also provide some highly consequential reference points for developing transhistorical comparative analyses of human group life.

³ For some published materials developed within this broader "Greek project," see Prus 2003a, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2007d, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Prus and Burk 2010; Prus and Camara 2010; Puddephatt and Prus 2007.

Whereas Plato seems intensely concerned about establishing model communities in *Republic* and *Laws*, he provides much more than a sense of direction and detailed agendas for doing so.⁴ Thus, to his sociological advantage, Plato considers people's involvements in and experiences with deviance and morality, justice and government, education and scholarship, poetics and recreation, and religion and philosophy as fields of activity that are developmentally interfused in sets of community-based processes. He also acknowledges the fuller range of human interchange (as in cooperation, conflict, compromise, loyalty, deception, and collectively achieved events) that constitute community life in the making.

Consequently, deviance, crime, regulation, and such not only are to be understood with respect to people's notions of education, religion, poetics (fictionalized entertainment), and governing practices, but wrongdoing and regulation also are to be approached mindfully of the ways in which people, as agents, take these matters into account as they participate in community life.

Moreover, explicitly engaging sensations, emotions, habits, speech, thought, activity, interchange, knowledge, technology, institutions, and other collectively-achieved matters, Plato is notably more attentive to "the realities of community life" than are a great many contemporary social scientists. Indeed, in trying to reduce human group life to abstract, effectively dehumanized, sets of variables and mathematical formulations, a great many social scientists end up with products (i.e., research and analyses) of a highly artificial quality (for critiques of these latter emphases, see Durkheim 1961 [1902-1903], 1977 [1904-1905], 1915 [1912], 1983 [1913-1914];⁵ Blumer 1969; Prus 1996, 1999; Puddephatt and Prus 2007; Grills and Prus 2008).

Still, Plato's texts also need to be approached with caution. Thus, rather than endorsing, defending, or challenging the particular moral standpoints that Plato's speakers assume at times, the emphasis is on indicating things that we might learn about human group life by examining Plato's texts in more sustained pragmatist terms. This means attending more thoroughly and precisely to his analysis of "what is" rather than "what should be" with respect to human knowing and acting.

The overarching objective, relatedly, is to contribute to an understanding of human group life in all of its enacted dimensions (processual, conceptual, and substantive) without promoting or endorsing, or being constrained or otherwise subverted by any particular moral viewpoint. Indeed, insofar as there is a moral agenda that characterizes the present approach, it is that of emphasizing an open,

⁴ Importantly, as well, whereas Plato explicitly acknowledges most of the ideal features of the model communities he addresses in *Republic* and *Laws*, Plato also attends, in highly detailed manners, to the processes, contingencies, and problematics of the moral order in ways that other utopists generally do not. Thus, while imitating Plato in various respects, a number of other authors also have promoted versions of utopian and other idealized states to be pursued. Among the better known instances are Augustine (354-430 CE) *City of God* [1984], Thomas More (1478-1530) *Utopia*, and Francis Bacon (1561-1626) *Atlantis*. Still others, such as Karl Marx (1818-1883) and John Dewey (1859-1952) who also promise idealized states, have left much less adequately articulated visions of their agendas. Things can be learned from these and other "utopists" and, like Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, their texts also connote reference points of sorts. However, although written centuries after Plato, almost all of these later formulations have a more exuberant, adolescent-like quality where these and related statements (e.g., Marx, Dewey) also are not more notably void of content when compared with Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*. Relatedly, even John Dewey, one of the primary progenitors of American pragmatism, with its associated emphasis on human knowing and acting, only marginally uses pragmatist social theory to inform his moralist (utopian) visions of society.

⁵ In contrast to his earlier and best known works (1947 [1893], 1958 [1895], 1951 [1897]), Durkheim's later works (1961 [1902-1903], 1977 [1904-1905], 1915 [1912], 1983 [1913-1914]) have a more pronounced pragmatist sociological quality (see Prus 2009a, 2011b).

sustained, pluralist study of human knowing and acting that is grounded in the actualities of human lived experience.⁶

In what follows, more particular attention will be given to the ways that Plato approaches morality, deviance, and regulation in *Republic* and (especially) *Laws*. Still, since morality, deviance, and regulation do not exist by themselves, but achieve a reality or essence only within the context of ongoing community life – a matter that Plato astutely recognizes, readers are cautioned that it will be necessary to engage aspects of religion, government, philosophy, and poetics, amongst other aspects of community life, in addressing morality, deviance, and regulation.

I will try to focus the discussion as much as feasibly possible, but to examine deviance and regulation without attending to these other realms of activity would be somewhat like trying to make sense of the human mind, or the human community even more broadly, apart from activity, interaction, speech, thought, sensory experiences, emotionality, knowing, learning, memory, developmental culture, or the settings in which people do things. To dispense with any of these matters would result in research and analysis of a distinctively artificial quality.

Nevertheless, this is essentially what is done in most contemporary quantitative analyses of crime, deviance, regulation, and other aspects of community life. Insofar as these studies depict some distributions of situations and outcomes as well as general trends across populations, materials of these sorts can have considerable value for developing certain aspects of policy and practice.

However, it should be openly and directly acknowledged that, the data on which these analyses are built are notably removed from the instances in which human group life is actually accomplished. Consequently, those developing projects of these sorts can do little more than “learnedly speculate” from a distance on the ways that people actually enter into and produce these aspects of human group life.

Ironically, although he may have written 2,500 years ago, Plato provides a great many highly instructive and enduring insights into the ways that living, acting, and interacting humans engage morality, deviance and regulation.

Still, because so few people have more than a superficial familiarity with Plato's *Republic* or *Laws*, it is important to establish what Plato actually says – that is, the issues he addresses and the ways in which he does so.

Thus, whereas his materials are developed primarily around considerations of Greek life up to his own time, Plato is attentive to a much broader set of human perspectives, issues, and practices in both *Republic* and *Laws*. Although writing as a philosopher more than a historian or ethnographer, Plato should be recognized as someone who is attentive to the processual flow of human group life as well as the nature of human lived experience. Further, in more characteristically anthropological terms, Plato also invokes cross-cultural comparisons of Greek and non-Greek life-worlds in the broader Mediterranean arena – presumably, somewhat informed by the ethnographies of Herodotus (485-425 BCE) *The Histories* and Thucydides (460-400 BCE) *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, amongst other sources available in Plato's time.

Further, whereas some may be inclined to dismiss classical Greek scholarship as archaic or antiquated, arguing that it is inappropriate to considerations of the present (i.e., invoking the longstanding chant that “new times demand new theory”),

⁶ Unless there is a sustained attempt to develop theory that is informed by an attentiveness to the things that people actually do and the ways that they do things, it is easy to slip into positions of (a) solipsism or totalizing relativism (in which, knowing loses all meaning) on the one hand and (b) abstract, dehumanized variable analysis on the other (see Prus 1996, 1999, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d; Prus and Grills 2003).

those who carefully examine Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* will find that these texts are filled with insights and comparison points that considerably enrich one's understanding of the present. Indeed, those who because of ignorance, arrogance, or instructed disregard dismiss the works of Plato, Aristotle, and Thucydides, amongst other Greek and interim Latin scholars, may be seen to lack memory (and the associated resources within) with which to more adequately understand the present.

Since things do not have inherent meanings but can only be understood in comparison with or in reference to other things, those who lack knowledge of the past are apt to have a particularly myopic sense of the present. Thus, as Durkheim (1977 [1904-1905]) pointedly observes, those who attend primarily to the present tend to confuse novelty with more enduring patterns as well as superficiality with quality. They also are more inclined to endorse things that have shown themselves to be intellectual follies in the past. Like people experiencing amnesia, we cannot expect scholars who have only superficial and fragmented notions of the past to have a particularly adequate appreciation of the present or, relatedly, much capacity to anticipate the future.

In this regard, Durkheim's (1977 [1904-1905]) observation, that it is not sufficient to be aware of only the things that happened in the preceding three or four centuries, but that one has to go back to classical Greek scholarship, has great merit. Although the Greeks were not the first serious scholars of record, it is in classical Greek scholarship, which the essential foundations of Western social thought are rooted. Moreover, Greek social thought not only provides the departure point of the contemporary social sciences and humanities, but also has maintained a central orientational quality in virtually every realm of present day scholarship.

Without denying the advances that have been made over the past 2,500 years, especially in the physical sciences and associated technologies, it is to be appreciated that scholarship has not developed in a systematic, coherent, continuous fashion. Further, because Greek scholarship has been selectively reconfigured, ignored, denounced, and willfully destroyed by people with other interests, there still is much to be learned from this literature. As well, because these texts are so richly detailed, some of these also represent exceptionally valuable "ethnohistorical documents" for the purposes of comparative analyses of a more distinctively pragmatist, sociological sort.

Given the objectives of the present paper, the material following is necessarily compacted. Because it is Plato's texts that are of central relevance here, I have tried to distinguish my commentary from more straightforward synoptic representations of his work. Further, while focusing primarily on morality, deviance, and regulation in this paper, I have endeavored to maintain the overall flow of the more immediately relevant parts of Plato's texts, providing "chapter and verse" references so that people might more readily locate specific materials for further consideration. Relatedly, attention will be given first to Plato's (earlier) *Republic* and then to *Laws*.

Deviance and Regulation in *Republic*⁷

Although one finds a much more extended consideration of morality, deviance and regulation in Plato's lesser-known *Laws*, Plato's *Republic* also provides some

⁷ In developing this statement, I have built extensively on Benjamin Jowett's translation of Plato's *Republic* found in *The Dialogues of Plato* (1937).

exceedingly important insights into deviance and regulation as well as related aspects of community life.

Whereas virtually all of *Republic* revolves around “the art of governing well” (as in just, wise, and otherwise virtuous manners) and all instances of injustice are seen as requiring correction, the material following focuses more specifically on (a) some concerns about and consequences of justice and injustice, (b) people’s attentiveness to divinity as a regulatory device, (c) the corruptive tendencies of poets, (d) the undesirability of litigation, (e) the dangers of dialectic analysis, and (f) tyranny as a social process.

Attending to Justice and the Utility of Injustice

In assuming the role of the principal narrator and speaker in Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates (I:331-342) not only emphasizes justice as the centralizing feature of a viable state, but also considers some of the realms in which justice may be invoked as well as some of the parameters of justice as a humanly engaged process.

Thus, while notions of justice are deemed useful, if not essential, in formulating and maintaining friendship, contracts, and other arrangements of community living, Plato’s speakers also directly acknowledge the problematic features of justice. Consequently, they attend to the ambiguity of the terms justice and injustice. Likewise, they note that while justice presumes knowledge and wisdom, by no means is justice synonymous with knowledge or wisdom. Similarly, by no means is justice a simple function of the particular circumstances in which the involved parties find themselves.

In the process, the speakers explicitly consider the point that rather than envisioning justice as a virtue unto itself, it is not uncommon for people to define justice as the rules, practices, and decisions that are established by those who are stronger (i.e., that “might is right”) and/or currently occupy positions as rulers (*Republic*, I:338-342).⁸ Relatedly, the speakers ask whether rulers are to be seen as infallible or are open to a range of errors in their governing practices.

While acknowledging that rulers may be expected to act in the best interests of the constituency, one speaker, Thasymachus (*Republic*, I:343-345), explicitly emphasizes the advantages that may accrue to the unjust and, by comparison, stresses the losses incurred by those who maintain just standpoints in their dealings with others. In this respect, he observes, those acting as criminals and tyrants may very well end up being the most successful and happiest of all, whereas those acting justly end up in miserable conditions and matching states of mind.

The dialogue (*Republic*, I:345-347) then shifts to those who not only seek to truly rule with justice but who also approach governing as an art and thereby seek perfection in their activities. In developing this viewpoint, Socrates (I:347) observes that there are three major incentives for people to assume leadership roles – money, honor, and the penalty for refusing to rule. After pointing out that good people have

⁸ Readers may recognize that the notion that “the ideas of the ruling class will be the ruling ideas” connotes Marx’s rhetorical rephrasing of a much earlier consideration of the more generic relationships of resources (and position) to influence work (also see Prus 1999). Interestingly, whereas Marx has some familiarity with classical Greek thought, it appears that his teleological claim that society is oriented towards communism is essentially a rhetorical device or that he did not know classical Greek scholarship (especially Plato’s *Republic* and Aristotle’s *Politics*) very well. Plato and Aristotle would have found Marx’s conceptualization to be intellectually preposterous (i.e., fictional and denoting a rhetorical tactic rather than an authentic claim).

no desire to assume roles as rulers and certainly are not motivated by concerns with money or public honors, Socrates says that the primary motivation of good people to assume leadership positions would be that of avoiding the penalty of being ruled by those who are inferior to oneself.

After other comments on the natural goodness of rulers, Socrates (I:348-349) reengages Thasymachus saying that he (Socrates) cannot support the claims that (a) justice is essentially a product of strength and position or (b) that it is wise to be unjust in dealing with others. In the ensuing exchange, Thasymachus stresses the point that, in real life, injustice paradoxically becomes a virtue and justice, in turn, becomes a vice. Further, Thasymachus adds, the unjust person may benefit not only from advantages that may be gained over the just but from advantages that can be achieved over other unjust people as well.

Working to dissuade Thasymachus and others who might adopt standpoints of this sort, Socrates (I:349-352) emphasizes the overarching wisdom of rulers adopting a just approach in their dealings with others. In addition to envisioning justice as virtue and emphasizing the art of governing, Socrates insists that injustice, be this in reference to states or individuals, has a destructive quality. Not only does injustice generate resentment and hatred from many sectors of the community, but it also, more fundamentally, makes all manners of cooperative activity problematic. For reasons of these sorts, unjust people not only become the enemies of others, but also, in these regards, become enemies unto themselves.

Further, Socrates (I:352) points out, even among groups of thieves and other criminals, there must be some elements of justice or trust if these people are to cooperate with one another. Socrates concludes this set of interchanges by arguing that some sense of justice is fundamental to the governing and continuity of all human groups.

Using this as a point of departure, Socrates (I:353-354) next makes the case that because people value the things they do, those pursuing justice also can expect to achieve greater happiness than those acting unjustly. However, then taking issue with his own position and his claims to this point, Socrates flatly observes that he has not defined what justice is and failing to have done so, is in no position to comment on justice and happiness or other related matters. It will be necessary to establish the parameters of justice more precisely.

However, before Socrates can provide a fuller account of the art of governing well through the creation of a model state (beginning in *Republic*, II:369), Socrates is challenged by two brothers, Glaucon and Adiemantus. They are not satisfied with the rationale that Socrates has provided in response to Thasymachus or, relatedly, Thasymachus' apparent willingness to succumb to Socrates' line of argumentation.

What follows is a highly instructive consideration of the differences between (a) providing a moral frame for action and (b) the matters of believing and enacting the prescriptions and proscriptions implied therein. Also of note are (c) the justifications that people may invoke when knowingly engaging in unjust practices as well as (d) other procedures people may pursue in attempting to avert culpability for particular instances of wrongdoing in which they were involved.

In pursuing Thasymachus' earlier position, Glaucon (II:358-362) says that he has never encountered a totally convincing argument for the superiority of justice over injustice. Thus, whereas people frequently (a) praise justice and (b) are quick to define instances of injustice as evil, they also (c) fully realize that those who act unjustly and are able to avoid penalty or censure are greatly advantaged over others. Accordingly, Glaucon states, those who act justly actually do so involuntarily. They do not act justly because they believe that virtuous or just activity is in their best

interests, but because they lack the capacities, opportunities, or courage to act unjustly.

Indeed, Glaucon insists, those who act unjustly and get away with it are typically praised for their successes. Conversely, just people, who, for one reason or another, are thought unjust by others in the community, will be treated in the most severe matters. Much more importantly, thus, than “being just” is “appearing to be just.” By maintaining these appearances, unjust people are able to achieve much greater success than by acting justly.⁹ At this point, Adiemantus enters the conversation, more directly addressing the relationship of “worldly justice” with “people's conceptions of divinity.”

Divinity, Regulation, and Injustice

Acknowledging his agreement with Glaucon's claims, Adiemantus (II:362-367) says that there is yet more to this matter. Parents and teachers, he observes, are forever admonishing children to be just, telling them that they will gain wide ranges of material benefits and social successes as a result of their good deeds.

Moreover, parents and teachers commonly reinforce this viewpoint by telling their charges that the gods also will be pleased with their virtuous behaviors. Indeed, these earthly instructors insist, that even more than people, the gods can be expected to reward the meritorious as well as punish the unjust. These advantages, young people are informed, will be even more evident and important in the (divine) life hereafter.

At the same time, Adiemantus stresses, people tell one another that virtue often requires considerable effort and sacrifice, whereas vice is thought easier and much more enjoyable. There also is the clear, popular recognition that dishonesty is more profitable than honesty and that those who are profitable will be happier, more influential, and more highly esteemed. By contrast, the less successful, just people can expect to be scorned for their comparative inadequacies and left to their own misery.

As well, Adiemantus observes, religious representatives are quite willing to go to the homes of the wealthy and help them become absolved from any wrongdoing by making token sacrifices, participating in minor ceremonies, and hosting feasts. The poets, including the highly revered Hesiod and Homer amongst others, also state that sins can be forgiven for those willing to make minor sacrifices and partake in associated amusements, praises, and services.

Further, when the younger people in the community witness activities and practices of these sorts among those who are highly esteemed in the community, the lessons are even more compelling. Ultimately, appearances are much more consequential than truth and those who learn “the art of concealment” are greatly advantaged over those who relate to others more exclusively in just terms.

Continuing, Adiemantus says that there still remains the idea that the gods cannot be deceived, as can others in the community. Still, he adds, if people adopt the viewpoints that there are no gods or that the gods exist, but do not care what

⁹ Although Plato's discussion of the advantages of impression management is much less extensively articulated than Erving Goffman's (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, it is still fairly substantial and pointed. Moreover, those familiar with rhetorical tradition (see Plato's *Phaedrus* and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*) will recognize of that the classical Greek scholars were highly attentive to impression management and addressed this in great detail (Prus 2008a).

people do, then promised threats of religious sanctions also would fail to serve as a deterrent.

Nevertheless, he notes, even those who are mindful of the gods can still take refuge in the works of the poets. If the poets can be believed, then people not only may achieve redemption for their sins through various, minor acts of bribery, but also, following the examples of the gods provided by the poets, would actually wish to engage in a variety of deceptive and other seemingly unjust practices.

Given all of these things, Adiemantus says, one may wonder why anyone who is more astute and/or successful would truly honor justice. Indeed, he says, how could successful individuals keep from recognizing justice as a fiction and refrain from laughing even as they encourage justice on the part of others.

In concluding his statement, Adiemantus assures Socrates that the position he has just articulated is shared by a great many people in the community, some of whom would have stated these matters in even more pronounced terms than he has done. Still, defining himself as a more conscientious individual, Adiemantus not only asks Socrates to address and defend the concept of justice in highly convincing terms, but also to consider the relationship of justice and injustice as well as the ways these matters are dealt with, openly and implicitly, by both the gods and people (i.e., in both religious and secular terms).

After acknowledging the thoughtful commentaries of Glaucon and Adiemantus, Socrates (II:368) says that he will address the matters of justice and injustice on both an individual and a state level. However, because the state is greater than the individual, he says that it is fitting to locate individual thought and action within the context of the community.

Amidst a much more extended commentary on the creation of the state and its components (omitted here, but more directly beginning on II:369), Socrates (II:377-383) explicitly addresses the corrupting influences of the poets Hesiod and Homer.

The Corruptive Potential of Poetics

While admitting that fiction can be useful in the educational process more generally, Socrates says that Homer (circa 700 BCE), Hesiod (circa 700 BCE), and those building on these earlier sources, are to be censored because of their lies and especially the false representations they make of the gods. Stating that their accounts of the gods are untrue, Socrates insists that God is to be represented as he truly is and, thus, as the source only of good. Even the punishment God inflicts on the unjust is only for the purpose of achieving a greater good. Likewise, he says, God not only is unchanging, but also is incapable of making false representation.¹⁰

Continuing along these lines, Socrates (III:386-389) also chastises the poets for the ways they have portrayed people. Not only have the poets frequently allowed unjust people to triumph over their more just counterparts, but the poets also have encouraged people to engage in various vices and thus, adopt undesirable characters. He is concerned about the effects that these highly distorted representations have on people and the ways that those exposed to these materials subsequently envision and engage important aspects of community life.

¹⁰ Notably, here, Socrates speaks of God in more overarching terms, as the primary generator of all things. Although Plato's speakers make occasional references to the Olympian gods, they do not subscribe to these notions of divinity (which they associate with the poets Homer and Hesiod). Instead, Socrates and Plato's other speakers generally follow the theology associated with Pythagoras (580-500 BCE).

Socrates does not propose to dispense entirely with fiction (and considers fiction to be particularly useful in childhood education), but says that it is only in “lying for the public good” that the state itself may escape impunity from condemnation for intentional misrepresentation.

Next, stressing the importance of temperance or self-regulation of the youth for the broader moral order of the community, Socrates (III:389-392) elaborates on, as well as condemns, the ways in which the poets have encouraged drinking and other improper behavior as well as anger, injustice, dishonesty and other undesirable qualities.

Socrates (III:393-403) subsequently provides an instructive account of poetics as “an art of expression” as well as a related consideration of harmony and music before addressing yet other features of community life. He then embarks on a brief discussion of medicine and litigation. Given the emphasis of the present paper, it is appropriate to make reference to litigation.

The Undesirability of Litigation

While recommending that people generally be informed on matters of medicine and law, Socrates (III:405) explicitly encourages people to avoid formal litigation, stating that this is an undesirable practice whether one goes to court in the capacity of plaintive or defendant. Then, describing those who become caught up in the intrigues of litigation as more despicable, Socrates says that it is those who endeavor to use the law as an instrument with which to achieve the advantage for gains or a mechanism for avoiding culpability that are especially reprehensible.

Dialectics and Wrongdoing

Given Plato's extended use of dialectic interchange in developing his texts as well as Socrates' apparent insistence on value of dialectic reasoning for better approximating human conceptions of the truth, it may seem odd that Plato references dialectic reasoning among the things that could be considered undesirable in *Republic*. However, both in more general terms and mindful of contemporary scholarly intrigues with relativism and totalizing skepticism (as in postmodernism – Prus 1996), it is worth noting that Plato does not exempt academics from the moral ethos of the community.

For Socrates, dialectics represents a particularly consequential and sophisticated component of the education of the philosopher. In dialectic reasoning, the emphasis is on arriving at the conceptual essence of the particular matters under consideration by means of a thoroughgoing, comparative analysis of the similarities and differences of these and related things from all conceivable angles. Still, despite the great regard that Socrates has for dialectics as the essential tool for achieving truth in all spheres of human knowing,¹¹ Socrates (VI:532-540) also explicitly comments on the potential evil of dialectics.

Thus, Socrates (VI:53-539) says that the great danger of dialectics is that it provides a potent intellectual mechanism for dispensing with the foundations of all morality (and all knowing). This tendency towards totalizing skepticism, he says, is

¹¹ In part, Socrates' extensive reliance on reasoning practices reflects a fundamental skepticism of sensate phenomena for providing a genuine (viable) source of human knowing. Although Socrates does not sustain this position in *Republic*, this emphasis on pure reasoning, nevertheless, has served to idealize and characterize the philosophic venture from his own time to the present.

particularly alluring to younger people. Accordingly, they not only are more ready to use dialectic reasoning as the justification for violating all manners of virtue and morality, but also frequently do so with great intellectual intensity.

For this reason, Socrates says, after completing their education (and spending the last five years and engaging in sustained dialectic analysis) students of philosophy would be required to spend the next 15 years as office holders of a more common sort (e.g., military, business, more routine political offices), whereby they acquire a greater stock of knowledge about human lived experience, before presuming that they are fit to teach philosophy to others.

Tyranny as a Social Process

Before leaving *Republic*, it also is instructive to consider Plato's depiction of tyranny, or more precisely, the social processes by which people assume roles as tyrants. Whereas Plato is skeptical of all of the major forms of government (kinship, aristocracy, and democracy) because of the tendencies of each to become corrupted and/or ineffectual in various ways, it is instructive to acknowledge Plato's consideration of the processes by which people become involved in the role of the tyrant. To outline the processes in highly succinct terms, tyranny is seen to rise from the relative states of anarchy generated by the heightened quest for freedom, individualism, and personal prosperity fostered by democracy.

Although highly prized at times, democracy as Plato observes (*Republic*, VIII:563-569) is acutely vulnerable to its own emphasis on freedom. Thus, Plato argues that the unrestrained insistence on equality associated with democracy fosters a widespread and corrosive disregard not only of civic morality, but also of meaningful relationships more generally (as indicated in the following, highly clipped extract):

Say then, my friend, in what manner does tyranny arise? – that it has a democratic origin is evident...

I was going to observe, that the insatiable desire of this [the demand for freedom – RP] introduces the change and democracy, which occasions a demand for tyranny...

I mean that the father grows accustomed to descend to the level of his sons and to fear them, and the son is on a level with his father, he having no respect or reverence for either of his parents; and this is his freedom, and the metic [foreign resident, possibly a freed slave – RP] is equal with the citizen and the citizen with the metic, and the stranger is quite as good as either... (p. 562)

In such a state of society the master fears and flatters his scholars, and the scholars despise their masters and tutors; and the young man is on a level with the old, and is ready to compete with him in word or deed; and old men condescend to the young and are full of pleasantry and gaiety; they are loath to be thought morose and authoritative, and therefore adopt the manners of the young... (p. 563)

... see how sensitive the citizens become; they chafe impatiently at the least touch of authority and at length, as you know, they cease to care for the laws, written or unwritten; they will have no one over them. (Plato, *Republic*, VIII:562-563; Jowett trans.)

Continuing, Socrates says that insofar as those who contribute little or nothing to the community are given status equal to those who do more, democracy provides

the basis in which the drones of society may achieve numerical superiority over the more responsible members of the community.

Still, in their quests for yet more freedom and financial advantages and their disregard of others and the community at large, people in democratic states become susceptible to those who promise yet greater liberty and more personalized wealth. Thus, they are vulnerable to the emotional appeals of the demagogues, but even well-intentioned public benefactors may assume primary roles in the transition from a democratic government to one that becomes highly tyrannical in quality.

People are often identified as tyrants when they are thought to impose control over others, especially in seemingly unilateral and undesired manners. However, as Plato so clearly observes, it is most inappropriate to assume that this state of affairs arises wholly or even primarily through the intentions, charisma, genius, or efforts of the particular individuals who assume positions of impositional control:

The people always have some champion whom they set over them and nurse into greatness...

This and no other is the root from which a tyrant springs; when he first appears above ground he is a protector... (p. 565)

Then comes the famous request for a body-guard, which is the device of all of those who have got thus far in their tyrannical career – "let not the people's friend," as they say, "be lost to them."...

The people readily assent; all their fears are for him – they have none for themselves...

At first, in the early days of his power, he is full of smiles, and he salutes everyone whom he meets; – he to be called a tyrant, who is making promises in public and also in private! Liberating debtors, and distributing land to the people and his followers, and wanting to be so kind and good to every one!... (Plato, *Republic*, VIII:565-566; Jowett trans.)

Addressing the process further (VIII:566-569), the speakers observe that the leader commonly gains prestige by attacking those with property as well as participating in other external ventures. However, he ultimately ends up increasingly taxing people for his programs and thus encounters dissatisfaction in various sectors.

As well, having developed a passion for power and now experiencing greater challenges to his authority, the tyrant endeavors to dispense with his enemies, including those he merely suspects might be enemies. This process tends to perpetuate itself as long as there are those who will, or those he fears might, oppose his practices and position. Effectively ridding the state of its bravest and most committed people in this way, the tyrant becomes increasingly dependent on the more self-serving and mercenary minded people in his midst and envisions strangers as more trustworthy than his own people.

Likening the tyrant unto a child whom the parents have badly spoiled, Plato says that the tyrant now becomes a monster over whom the very people who raised and encouraged his prominence in earlier stages have lost control. Thus, like parents in this situation, the people who had supported the tyrant now find themselves subject to the slavery of their earlier desires and activities.

Republic in Perspective

Because Plato has given us so much material pertaining to deviance in *Republic*, it is useful to do some stocktaking before engaging *Laws* in more direct terms. First,

Plato not only is highly cognizant of (a) the ambiguity of the concepts of “justice” and “injustice” but he also is mindful of (b) “the discrepancies between what people publicly profess and what they actually believe” as well as (c) “the disparities between people’s overt activities and those which they conceal.”

Plato also recognizes the uneven and mixed nature of people's viewpoints on attentiveness to, and involvements in religious frameworks. He is mindful of the ways in which people define and manage wrongdoing within religious contexts. Thus, whereas Plato considers (a) the ways that religion is invoked, he also is attentive to the ways that (b) religion may be used as a deterrent to deviance, and (c) people use religion in the service of their own wrongdoing.

Likewise, Plato fully realizes that people's senses of deviance, morality, and religion, as well as education and politics, are imbued with fiction and that none of these fields of activity can be comprehended apart from the realms of poetic endeavor in which they are cognitively and behaviorally interlinked. Hence, he indicates ways that fictional materials enter into and jeopardize justice as well as complicate other aspects of community well-being. Accordingly, he condemns poets for their mischievous, often disruptive, distortions as well as their more generally inauthentic representations of things.

Not even dialectic reasoning (and associated philosophic discourse) is exempted from Plato's consideration of people's involvements in wrongdoing. Thus, whereas Plato stresses the centrality of dialectic analysis for more informed human knowing, he also emphasizes the dangers of dialectic extremism (i.e., totalizing skepticism) and the associated disregard of morality.

Still, it is Plato's attentiveness to social process in his analysis of the vulnerabilities of unrestrained democracy to the emergence of tyranny that perhaps most strikingly attests to the potency of Plato's depictions of community life.

Thus, whereas many people may desire or aspire to roles as rulers, dictators, power barons, leaders, and the like in the development and maintenance of governments or positions of dominance in other group settings, Plato emphasizes that people typically only assume roles of these sorts amidst the willingness, desires, encouragements, assistance, and devotion of others in the setting.

It is worth observing that although Plato characterizes tyrants as despicable, self-serving and unjust rulers, he does not resort to psychological or other pathological explanations as motivating features, nor does he subscribe to simplistic notions of domination and conspiracy. Instead, Plato observes that tyranny arises within the context of a complex social process in which members of the broader community assume an assortment of interconnected roles as agents (tacticians and targets).

Thus, Plato observes that many tyrants earlier had been noted for their benign intentions and were elevated (often unexpectedly) into prominence because of the activities of their supporters and other associates who enthusiastically insisted that these individuals assume leadership roles. Nevertheless, whenever people attain positions of prominence, they typically face the task of dealing with detractors, contenders, and other resistances.

Their supporters often play consequential, if not particularly central, roles in protecting leaders and disposing of people and things thought to threaten their leaders. However, the leaders also are apt to find themselves dealing with other problems on their own. And, as leaders become more intent on maintaining positions of power, they not only become increasingly sensitive to all challenges, questions, and hesitations, but they also tend to become more distrusting of the more capable

people in their midst because of the threats these people are thought to represent.¹² When this happens, with leaders becoming more singularly focused on maintaining their positions, seemingly oblivious to all matters but their own passions, desires, and fears, the stage is set for more extended and encompassing instances of tyranny.

Hence, whereas Plato's analysis of tyranny as a social process may seem highly prophetic when presented relative to Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Joseph Stalin, and Saddam Hussein in the 20th century, the process clearly is a much more enduring and widespread phenomena.

Still, for sociologists attentive to symbolic interactionism, Plato's account of the emergence of tyranny is highly consistent with the broader "deviance making process" (Prus and Grills 2003) and provides further evidence of the more humanly enacted and generic features of political life (Klapp 1964; Prus 1999, 2005).

Encountering Plato's *Laws*¹³

Although *Republic* provides some notably valuable insights into the matters of deviance and morality, Plato's much less known *Laws* has even more sustained relevance to those attending to the study of wrongdoing and regulation. Indeed, because Plato's *Laws* so thoroughly addresses the fields of deviance and morality, it is almost impossible to provide a viable synopsis of this text within the confines of a single paper.

While some might be tempted to reorganize the material Plato develops in *Laws*, I have intentionally retained the overall flow of his text. Not only does this provide a greater sense of the interlinkages of deviance and regulation with other aspects of community life (especially religion, poetics, education, and government), but this also allows readers to more readily consult his text to gain a more comprehensive appreciation of his materials (also see Prus 2009a, 2011a).

Whereas Plato's *Republic* provides a particularly instructive base for comprehending related matters in *Laws*, there are some noteworthy differences in the two texts. Thus, while both *Republic* and *Laws* are intended as statements on which to model governing arrangements within the city-state, the emphasis in *Republic* is on developing "philosopher-kings" or guardians who would rule in wise, just, courageous, and other virtuous manners. In *Republic*, thus, there is great optimism that scholarship, particularly a highly rigorous training in philosophy, would provide the base for ensuring a viable state of affairs. In *Laws*, by contrast, the emphasis is more entirely on the necessity of establishing a detailed constitution that would ensure the population of a wise and just "structured leadership" amidst a shifting array of human administrators. Thus, while *Republic* is subject to the benign rule of philosopher-kings, *Laws* incorporates explicit constitutional mechanisms for "regulating the regulators."

As well, whereas philosophy is given extended consideration in *Republic*, Plato deals with education in much more general, fundamental terms in *Laws*. The composition of the speakers in *Laws* is notably different than that in *Republic*. Although Socrates assumes a central role in *Republic* amidst a set of Athenian

¹² In addition to the sense of paranoia that develops in the absence of trust (Lemert 1962), it also appears that, like "gamblers trying to break even at the race track" (Lesieur 1977), those who become preoccupied with the "quest for control" tend to become so absorbed by, or encapsulated within, their immediate challenges that they lose perspective on other matters.

¹³ In developing this statement, I have relied extensively on Benjamin Jowett's translation of Plato's *Laws* found in *The Dialogues of Plato* (1937).

participants, *Laws* is developed around a series of interchanges involving a Spartan, a Cretan, and an Athenian, each of whom provides perspectives on morality, wrongdoing, regulation, and other features of community life mindful of the more distinctive modes of their home governments.

Still, one finds a great many continuities in *Republic* and *Laws*. In both texts, Plato is notably attentive to the matters of human knowing and acting as well as the interlinkages of deviance and regulation with other developmentally engaged features of human group life (most notably politics, religion, poetics, and education).

[Athenian Stranger:] Tell me Strangers, is a God or some man supposed to be the author of your laws? (Plato, *Laws* I:624; Jowett trans.)

In responding to a question that introduces Plato's *Laws*, Cleinias, a Cretan, says that indeed his laws, like those of the Lacedaemons (Spartans), were inspired by a god (named Zeus and Apollo in these cases, respectively). While acknowledging these claims, the Athenian asks if the two strangers in his midst might provide accounts of their government and laws.

Thus, in an inquiry that is infused with aspects of religion, Plato begins a comparative analysis of governing practices that has great relevance to the more enduring study of deviance and regulation. Relatedly, although some might wish to dispense with religion when engaging the study of deviance and regulation, these fields of activity have not been developed or maintained in exclusive terms. As a consequence, sharper divisions can only be achieved by artificially imposing boundaries on human knowing and acting. Given his sociological sense of continuity and coherence, Plato maintains a developmental unity of community endeavor that many contemporary social scientists fail to achieve.

In explaining his state's position, Cleinias (*Laws*, I:625-630) says that the Cretan constitution was devised with the view that "war is the natural state of humans" – not only war between states, but also between the villages, families, and even individuals within families.¹⁴ Relatedly, the emphasis is on victory with defeat considered the worst possible outcome. Still, despite "all being at war with all," it is recognized that the rule of the better classes is desired over those who are inferior.

The Athenian interjects the viewpoint that what is considered "superior" and "inferior" may well reflect the outcomes of any contest; a point that the Cretan acknowledges "paradoxically is the case."

As the dialogue unfolds, the focus shifts more directly to the Spartans whose constitution it is immediately noted also presumes the viewpoint that "all are at war with all" and that courage is a paramount virtue. Notably, as well, whereas victory involving outsiders is considered essential, it is civil strife with its more immediate, intimate set of opponents that is seen to most truly test people's courage and related aspects of character.

In the ensuing interchanges, the speakers grapple with the seeming contradictions that the Cretan and Spartan positions entail. Eventually, however, they decide that the primary virtue in the Cretan constitution is "courageous loyalty in the face of danger." Although the speakers recognize that this notion of justice need not

¹⁴ Those familiar with Thomas Hobbes' (1588-1679) *Leviathan* (1994 [1668]) may recognize Plato's *Laws* as the primary source of Hobbes' ideas of government. Also, in contrast to many European Renaissance and post-Renaissance scholars who evidently (I have learned) did not know classical Greek texts in much detail, Hobbes had an exceptional familiarity with at least some of the works of Plato, Aristotle, and Thucydides, amongst others.

be shared by other city-states, it is this emphasis that represents the perfection of justice in both Sparta and Crete.

After observing that Cretan legislation has been highly successful in maintaining the integrity of the state and happiness of its citizens, the Athenian (I:631) outlines two sets of goods or desirables around which all constitutions should be focused. The first, more basic set of elements includes health, beauty, strength, and wealth. The second or more virtuous set of goods is defined by wisdom, temperance or self-regulation, justice and courage. Still, it is this latter set of goods that are to inform the ways that leaders attend to the first, more common set of human matters.

Rather than leave things at this more general level, the speakers (I:632) develop the position that the lawgiver is to develop legislation designed to regulate all features of people's relationships with others as well as all aspects of their activities and circumstances more generally. However, it is not enough to simply have legislation. It will be necessary to appoint a set of guardians. It is their responsibility not only to ensure that the laws will be maintained, but also that the regulators themselves will act in ways that attend to the virtues of wisdom, temperance, justice, and courage.

Following a depiction of the way that courage (I:633) is achieved in Sparta, the speakers address the desirability of having laws directed against the love of pleasure as well as against the fear of pain (I:634). Still more consequential is the idea that the youth are to achieve an intense commitment to the laws of the state; they are to be encouraged to accept these without question. Nevertheless, consideration of the problematic features of the laws may be permitted when older people discuss these in the absence of younger people.

While mindful of the thoroughgoing military (all being at war with all) emphases of Sparta and Crete, the speakers (I:636-641) next to embark on the consideration of temperance or self-regulation.¹⁵

The ensuing commentary on people's drinking practices may be seen as rather marginal to the creation of a constitutional government, but Plato uses this material to develop a more important statement on temperance. Reasoning that the development of self control is essential for a viable state as well as virtuous citizens, Plato uses people's involvements in drinking as a prototypic illustration of the importance of temperance or self-regulation in all serious and recreational aspects of community life.

Focusing primarily on excessive drinking in festive (especially banquet) settings, the speakers not only acknowledge variations in their own viewpoints on drinking, but also are mindful of the differences in acceptable drinking practices of people in other Greek and non-Greek states.

Relatedly, the discussion turns to people's behaviors at feasts and the importance of the host conducting himself in a sober, congenial, and considerate fashion, using the occasion to foster harmony on the part of those assembled within rather than allowing for disruptions and longer-term ill-feelings.

Then, introducing considerations of (a) education more generally and (b) the necessity of sustained practice to achieve competence in any activity one might pursue, the speakers agree that the primary objective of education is to enable people to become more perfect citizens.

¹⁵ Readers may appreciate that temperance or self-regulation represents a missing element in contemporary social theory in both sociology and psychology. It is implicitly signified at times, but it is essentially ignored, even by the interactionists.

Saying that it is tempting to envision people as the playthings or “puppets of the gods,” the Athenian (I:644-645) pointedly observes that people frequently find themselves in the situation of pulling the cords of reason against the strings of the affectations (dispositions, habits, desires) they more naturally experience.

It is in this context that people's experiences with sobriety and intoxication may be seen as central to the development of temperance or self-management. Thus, the speakers observe that as people drink not only do their passions for pleasure intensify, but so also do they lose their capacities for reason (and the related matters of memory, perception, and judgment). These things make them vulnerable to more reckless ventures.

Still, whereas drinking may be seen as injurious to one's body as well as one's mind, the speakers (I:646-650) suggest that this activity may still be useful in other ways. Hence, drinking may be seen to provide a testing ground – in which, after becoming intoxicated and engaged in shameless pleasure, the participants may be instructed in ways to approach these situations and, subsequently, more effectively manage these tendencies.

Observing that people who drink are prone to exaggerated senses of self worth and the brazen disregard of fear, as well as a heightened disrespect for the law, drinking at festive occasions provides a mechanism which may be astutely used by others to train people's characters without some of the greater dangers, risks, and losses of self and others that equally characterize the learning of temperance in other settings (as in business, war, or politics). Relatedly, the speakers note those who take the time to study people's behaviors in drinking situations and work with the participants, helping them to overcome their limitations in these settings, may be seen as participating in the broader practice of politics.

The speakers subsequently give some attention to (a) childhood education with an emphasis on young people attending to the law (II:653-657), (b) the relativity of pleasurable entertainment as this is defined by different audiences (II:658-659), (c) a discussion of pleasure and endorsements of a virtuous life (II:659-665), (d) a brief commentary on the age of drinking (II:666), and (e) an analytic consideration of the criteria for assessing the viability of “imitations” or other representations of things (II:667-670).

The speakers (II:671-674) then reengage the topic of drinking, expressing concern about the problems of regulating an intoxicated collection of people. For this reason, drinking practices are to be carefully circumscribed by legislation. Thus, whereas drinking may serve as a means of fostering temperance, it is important that drinking not be used as a form of amusement only. Further, other pleasures are to be approached in a like manner, wherein people maintain control over themselves (i.e., their involvements, activities, circumstances).

Viewed thusly, temperance is not so much a virtue in itself (since self control could be used in pursuing all manners of objectives), but represents the centralized means of achieving and maintaining other virtuous states. That is, people who are unable to manage themselves cannot be expected to be virtuous in other, more sustained ways.

In Book III the speakers (III:676-679) ask about the origins of government, observing that over the course of human history there must have been thousands of cities that came into existence and subsequently perished – and along with them, a wide variety of governments would have been implemented, continued for a time, and subsequently dissipated. Further, the speakers observe that more substantial changes in governing practices do not just suddenly emerge, but only take shape gradually.

Conversing thusly, the speakers (III:680-681) recognize that the earliest peoples would have lacked conceptions of governments, laws, constitutions, and the like, as well as the advantages of written text. They reason that the earliest peoples would have lived by the habits and customs of their ancestors, probably under a lordship of some sort. Likewise, the speakers contend it would be the adults who would set the moral order for their children, teaching them to follow their own practices.

However, as people met and assembled with those from other groups, with each group rather inevitably preferring their own customs to those of the others, some arbitration processes likely would have taken place. It is here, in the ensuing interchanges, that one may see the beginnings of legislation.

Still, the speakers (III:682-683) indicate that these processes would have been far from smooth or sudden. Amongst other things, they suspect that any emergent legislation would have been importantly facilitated by reference to religious authorities. As well, the speakers suggest that wherever smaller kingdoms cooperated with one another to assist one another in dealing with natural or human obstacles, there would have been a further tendency to develop rules of a more overarching sort.

Focusing on the three Dorian kingdoms as a case in point, the speakers (III:684-688) also acknowledge the more fundamental pressures placed on legislators to develop laws that do not jeopardize the vested interests of the involved parties. As a result, even in the midst of cooperation, harmony remains a precarious quality and is vulnerable to people's desires for their own successes as well as their inclinations to pursue matters in ways that are more familiar and/or more entirely in line with what they define as their own interests. For this reason, the speakers stress it is most important that legislation be guided by wisdom of a more mature or virtuous, worldly sort (as opposed to a more immediate, self-centered or youthful set of emphases).

Continuing along these lines (with the Athenian leading most of the discussion in *Laws*, but doing so in consultation and agreement with the Cretan and the Spartan), the speakers (III:689) insist on the importance of all who occupy any position of authority attending to the basic moral order of community life.

Spelling their concerns out in more concrete terms, the speakers (III:690) assert the following priorities as fundamental to sound governing practices (and more reliable obedience).¹⁶ Thus, in the ordering of just claims, one is to recognize the authority of: parents over children; the noble over the ignoble; the elderly over the younger; masters over slaves; stronger over weaker; wiser over ignorant; and winners over losers. Defining this set of principles as fundamental to all stable governing practices, the speakers contend that people who do not act mindfully of these maxims can expect to encounter difficulties as rulers regardless of the particular communities at hand.

Still, the speakers have another concern and this revolves around the concentration of power. Although this is especially a problem when rulers do not respect the moral order of the community, difficulties can arise whenever one person assumes more totalizing control of the governing process. It is here, the Athenian says, that the Spartans have been so wise in establishing a council of 28 elders who have the capacity to offset the individual tendencies of the king in the most fundamental matters of state.

¹⁶ To their sociological credit, the three speakers in *Laws* are attentive throughout to the interdependencies of leaders and followers. See Prus (1999, 2003b) for some contemporary considerations of "power as intersubjective accomplishment."

In the text that more immediately follows, the speakers (III:695-699) discuss political practices in Athens and Persia. In the process, they (III:690) state that viable legislation should stress, in a clearly descending order, the development of (a) human virtues, (b) goods for the body, and (c) wealth and property on the part of its citizens.

Commenting on the excessive liberty of the Athenians, the speakers (III:700-701) adopt the viewpoint that the openness of education was not the problem, but rather it was the heightened expressivity of music and associated poetic license that resulted in people developing conceits about artistic expression. Views of these latter sorts subsequently fostered a generalized disregard of morality which, in turn, was accompanied by ensuing lawlessness and disobedience. Thus, while stressing freedom, harmony, and wisdom as central to well governed states, the speakers are distinctly concerned about the results of excessive freedom and expressivity.

At this point in the dialogue, Cleinas (III:702-703) informs the others that Crete is planning to establish a new colony and that they would be extremely eager to put into practice a state of the sort they have just been discussing. Accordingly, he asks that they continue to lay out the terms of this model city-state.

Engaging the task of developing a model city-state with a greater sense of purpose, the speakers (IV:704-708) first consider location and geographical terrain as well as neighboring states, resources for a self-sufficient colony, and the composition of the colonists (e.g., races and cultural backgrounds).

Subsequently, the speakers (IV:709) acknowledge three sources of causation commonly invoked to account for human affairs. Thus, whereas some claim that “chance” is the major determinant of human affairs, others insist that “God” is the primary cause, and a third set of people contend that “people are able to do things because of the techniques” they have developed.

Attending primarily to the last viewpoint, the speakers (IV:710-711) explicitly begin to approach the construction of their model city-state in much the same way that artists might engage one of their works.

To establish a more immediate, functioning government, the speakers say that it will be necessary to have a tyrant as governor; that other kinds of governing processes are too cumbersome to implement at the outset. Still, they insist on someone who is young, courageous, and noble as well someone who possesses a good memory, is quick to learn, and who, in addition to these other virtues, possesses temperance of a more distinctively preservative sort.

Still, something more is required and this is the close council of an astute legislator wherein the tyrant and the legislator work together to establish a viable constitution. By creating a situation in which “the Leader rules,” the speakers thus view tyranny as the quickest and most effective means of generating a viable, working government. The difficulty, however, is to ensure that they find someone who has the capacity to balance control with wisdom.¹⁷ If this can be done, however, then the best laws and best constitution may be implemented. However, the ideal to which they collectively and openly strive in developing their model city-state is the existing Lacedaemonian (Spartan) government, which they observe, in various ways, assumes the qualities of a tyranny, a democracy, and an oligarchy.

¹⁷ Readers may note some parallels with the philosopher-king that Plato discusses in *Republic*, but the leader that speakers have in mind here is defined as a somewhat rougher, less philosophically refined individual who, nevertheless, can readily assume the role of an effective guardian.

Then, after noting that all cities should be named after their gods, the speakers (IV:713) propose to call the perfect state the City of God.¹⁸ Stating that they (IV:714) must do all that they can as humans to imitate a more divine form of government and regulate the entire city by recourse to law or *nomos*, which they define as the distribution or ordering of the mind, the speakers set out to define the central principles of law.

The speakers subsequently take direct and concerted issue with those who say that justice reflects the interests of the stronger and that the governing party makes whatever laws have authority in any state. From this viewpoint, they observe, all legislation becomes a contest for power and the ruling class lives in perpetual fear of uprisings from those who feel they have been wronged. Thus, the speakers (IV:714-715) insist that leadership should not be accorded to the richest and strongest but to those who are most loyal to the constitution of the state. The laws of the state are to be above the rulers and the rulers of the state are to be servants or ministers of the law.

Then, reflecting on the on the omnipotence of God for “all that is,” the speakers (IV:716) takes explicit issue with Protagoras (“Man is the measure of all things...”) stating that “God is to be recognized as the measure of all things” and that they, the speakers (IV:717-718), intend to use this divine source as the base for their notions of community morality. Thus, they assume the objective of promoting virtue both on the part of all citizens and in their construction of the law.¹⁹

Continuing, the speakers (IV:719) next state that in contrast to the poets, who may express whatever ideas occur to them, legislators must be consistent in the standpoints they present and ensure, as well, that no two or more aspects of the law contradict one another. As well, wherever possible, the speakers (IV:720-724) insist that legislation be promoted through persuasion as well as command.

Thus, regardless of whether the laws are to be expressed in the briefest form possible or in more sustained detail, it is important to promote an understanding of the legislation as well as a sense of goodwill towards the law. This way, people not only would be better able to appreciate the reasoning behind particular laws, but also would be more favorably disposed to honoring it. Notably, in encouraging young people to honor the law, the speakers stress respect for divinity as well as their parents.

Still, more is involved and the Athenian proposes that the three planners subsequently consider (a) all things that relate to people's minds and bodies as well as (b) all manners of occupation and recreation. This way they, themselves, might better anticipate the nature of the education that would be appropriate in the setting.

After observing that next to the divine aspects of one's soul (*psyche* in Greek), the speakers (V:727-728) state that it is essential that people attend to their minds – to assume the task of developing excellence of people's minds in more distinctively human terms. While envisioning people as capable of knowing all manners of things, the Athenian delineates a number of ways that people commonly dishonor their psyches or otherwise fail to achieve excellence of mind.

¹⁸ It seems likely that Augustine, who held Plato in exceedingly high regard, was inspired by Plato in developing his own text *City of God* (1984).

¹⁹ Those familiar with Aristotle's works will recognize that Aristotle breaks from the Socratic emphasis on religion that Plato often appears to adopt. Thus, and much more consistent with the position of Protagoras here, Aristotle takes the viewpoint that all human knowing, acting, and cultural productions are the results of human endeavor. Hence, whereas he is willing to ascribe the term God to “the first mover,” Aristotle makes no claims about people having spiritual souls or modes of divine contact or inspiration. Also see Prus (2003a, 2004, 2007a, 2009a).

These include (a) the tendency to praise oneself; (b) the willingness to excuse one's own behavioral shortcomings by blaming others and otherwise try to avoid accountability for one's acts; (c) engaging in self-indulgent pursuits; (d) failing to persevere at tasks; (e) yielding to all of life's distractions; (f) preferring beauty to virtue; and (g) willingly pursuing or accepting dishonest advantages over others.

The great danger in dishonoring one's self in the aforementioned ways is that one becomes more like those who more routinely engage in wrongdoing. When this happens, the twofold result is that of (a) leaving and/or being rejected by good people on the one hand while (b) becoming more attached to and more like bad people.

[Readers may note the striking parallels of Plato's observations here with "labeling theory" (Lemert 1951, 1967; Prus and Grills 2003) wherein people acquiring images and reputations as deviants not only encounter exclusionary reactions from more conventional people, but also tend to become more firmly entrenched in deviant life worlds. Clearly, the notion of deviance or wrongdoing as in an emergent social process is a much more enduring observation than is commonly supposed.]

Continuing thusly, the Athenian also insists on the importance of people taking care of their physical bodies by being mindful of the excesses of various kinds. Thus, there is the encouragement to engage all things pertaining to the body in moderation.

Mindful of these matters, the Athenian (V:729) declares that the most important thing parents can bequeath to their children is not financial wealth and worldly goods, but instead the spirit of reverence and temperance. And, instruction in these latter elements is apt to be considerably more effective when accompanied by example than tutelage alone. Central to the matters of respect and self-regulation, thus, is a greater emphasis on others over oneself as well as corresponding emphasis on the law rather than oneself.

Still, while stressing the importance of people developing virtuous life-styles, the Athenian is well aware that this is a problematic matter at best. Thus, he (V:731) not only recognizes the evil that people may do, but also develops a sharp distinction between those who are "curable" and those for whom there is no realistic hope of reformation.

Stating that "no one would choose to do evil on a voluntary basis" (a claim that will later create problems for the speakers (see Book IX and their considerations of homicide and physiological injury),²⁰ the Athenian suggests that those wrongdoers who can be reformed should be pitied for their failings and forgiven. However, those who are incurable of wrongdoing should be treated in the most severe matters with the full wrath of the community behind these actions.

Then defining selfishness as the greatest of personal evils, the Athenian (V:732) says that honorable people stand above their own interests. However, this requires self-control, along with a more balanced, comparative sense of pleasure and pain. Recognizing that people's experiences of pleasure and pain are highly variable, the Athenian stresses the importance of encouraging people to pursue the noble life and of trying to imbue people's senses of pride and pleasure with virtue.

Elaborating further, the Athenian (V:733-734) defines the most pleasant and noble lives as those characterized by temperance, wisdom, courage, and good health. He contrasts these in turn, with the lack of self-control, foolishness, cowardice, and disease.

²⁰ Plato and Aristotle differ on this point. Whereas Plato shifts positions on this matter across and sometimes within the same texts, Aristotle (e.g., *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Rhetoric*) consistently insists that people's involvements in wrongdoing are to be approached in precisely the same manner as their other activities. Thus, like Chicago-style interactionists, Aristotle does not accept the idea that one needs one theory for the deviants and deviance and another for other people and their activities.

Then, following a brief commentary on the necessity of setting up offices as an enabling feature of the constitution (these offices help provide administrators with the authority to uphold the law among the general populace), the Athenian (V:735-736) also considers the task of dealing with people who are troublesome in some way.

Whereas those deemed “incurably evil” may be exiled or sentenced to death and those who are intensely discontent with the existing government may be sent off to establish their own colony, the Athenian notes that citizens of their model city-state are not likely to face some of these problems at the outset and, thus, the speakers may turn their attention to other matters. Subsequently, more immediate attention is given to distribution of property and population controls (V:736-739), the ownership of property (V:739-744), and city planning (V:745-747).

In Book VI, the speakers (VI:751-770) give extended attention to the appointment of the magistrates or guardians and associated office holders. Thus, the speakers deal with the types and numbers of managers to be required, their fields of responsibility, the means of appointing these administrators, the qualities considered desirable for these office holders, and the development of laws intended to provide guidance for each office.

As well, the speakers consider incumbent powers within these offices, their relationships to other supervisors, and the ways that office holders and the citizens at large deal with cases that they consider troublesome. [Although forgoing a great deal of the detail that the Athenian provides (in what he still describes as a superficial outline) of the offices of their proposed city-state, I have tried to capture the more fundamental features of the proposal the speakers consider.]

In discussing the appointment of the magistrates, the speakers (VI:751-755) observe that this is a matter that is much too important to be left to chance. They are concerned that the colonists likely would not have very good educations overall and, as a result, would be inclined to make mistakes in appointing these essential office holders. These errors in judgment not only could nullify important aspects of their legal agenda, but also could have disastrous effects on the community and the constitution.

While elaborating on the nature of their procedures, the Athenian proposes that they establish a collectivity of 37 guardians of the law. The guardians are to be at least 50 years of age, possess virtuous characters in all respects, and may serve until they are 70. In turn, the guardians are to propose a list of generals for approval by a vote. The generals, likewise, would develop a list of brigadiers for people to consider. Moreover, the Athenian (VI:756) plans for a council of 360 people to represent the four classes (90 from each) of the community. Notably, the Athenian intends to make voting compulsory, with those in higher classes to be penalized considerably more heavily for any failure to vote.

In describing this arrangement, the Athenian says that the state will be something between a monarchy and a democracy.

Then, commenting on the nature of equality, the Athenian says that it is necessary to recognize two different equalities. The first, more simplistic sense of equality reflects the simplistic comparisons that one might associate with proportions, measurements of weights, and the like. The second notion of equality, and one that is deemed most essential for justice, is that people be rewarded in proportion to their contributions.

While emphasizing the point that when this second sense of equality is not respected, justice will be eroded, the Athenian says it still may be necessary to invoke the first notion of equality in order to avoid popular discontent. Likewise, it may be necessary to rely on lots (draws of chance) on occasion. Still, even though

they may be compelled to invoke the first notion of equality more than desired, he stresses that they should rely on chance as little as possible.

In what follows (VI:758-766), the speakers observe that three major sets of supervisors are to be appointed to oversee the day-to-day regulation of the city-state. These include (a) priests and priestesses, (b) wardens of the country, and (c) wardens of the city and the agora (central setting for assembly, interchange).

Stipulating that the priests and priestesses are to be at least 60 years of age, with those from among the eligible candidates to be selected by drawing lots (i.e., pure chance) so that God's preferences might prevail (who could dispute such an arrangement), the Athenian also proposes that no one hold these offices for longer than a year.

Still, the holy ones are to be assisted (in translating signs and other messages from the gods) by a set of appointed interpreters that represent the broader community. As well, there are to be treasurers of the temples to oversee the property and care of these facilities.

Then, after asserting that everything is to be protected, the Athenian (VI:760-763) first establishes a set of agendas for the wardens of the country. In addition to fortifying defenses from external threats, the wardens of the country also are to increase accessibility of land to the resident population, as well as protect and develop resources and facilities for the state at large. Working on intensive two-year terms of service, these people also are to be intimately familiar with the territory and are to act justly in dealing with the people in their territories. Likewise, they are encouraged to envision themselves as "servants of the state."

The wardens of the city (VI:763-764) and wardens of the agora, in rather parallel terms, are charged with the care of the roads, public utilities, and building practices as well as the care and maintenance of the agora. Further, they have a responsibility to control, as well as the capacity to fine, those who misbehave in these areas.

Three other sets of directors also are to be appointed (VI:764-765) to oversee gymnastics, music, and education. Here, as well, the Athenian has an elaborate plan that not only pertains to the screening and appointment of these office holders, but also arranging for instruction for those in their care as well as the judges of the competitions that fall under their jurisdictions.

Still, the Athenian (VI:765-766) asserts that of all the great offices of the state, it is the Ministry of Education that is the most consequential. Whereas people may be regarded as tame animals, they still require instruction and discipline to become truly civilized. Otherwise, those who are insufficiently or inadequately educated may act like the most savage of the animals. It is for this reason that the supervision and care of the young, during their formative years, is so critical (more detailed considerations of the processes and problematics of education are provided in Book VII of *Laws*). The minister of education is to be elected by the magistrates and would occupy that office for five years before being replaced by another incumbent.

Then, observing that a city without courts of law would cease to have integrity as a city, the Athenian (VI:766-768) considers a system for dealing with disputes within the community.

After encouraging people to resolve their disputes informally, the Athenian proposes that those failing to do so should establish a more informal court or council of friends and neighbors to help resolve the issue. If this fails, the next line of action would be to take things to a regular court, with the possibility of taking a case to a third and final court of appeal.

The Athenian also proposes two other courts; one for cases involving private wrongdoing (i.e., claims of a personal sort) and the other for cases against the public good. He also encourages all members of the community to be involved in both the public as well as the more private, individual cases.

Then, after acknowledging the notably limited nature of their discussion of office holders, the Athenian (VI:786-771) also observes that they can expect laws to change over time. Thus, despite their best intentions and the practice of articulating their laws in careful, precise terms, they anticipate that some errors will be made and that legislators will learn from these experiences. Indeed, he suggests, adjustments of these sorts will be necessary for an improvement of the state. However, the existing laws would only be changed through the central involvements of the guardians. As both “guardians of the law” and “legislators of the law to be,” these people are to devote their lives to virtue.

Then, after providing a (seemingly diversionary) religious, mathematical justification for the number 5040, as an orientational concept for the community, the Athenian (VI:771-785) embarks on a more sustained consideration of marriage-related practices, processes, and contingencies, all of which also are to fall under the purview of their legislation.

The second half of Book VI (772-785) deals with marriage-related legislation. Although focusing primarily on matters pertaining to marriage, these laws and practices also address aspects of family property and life routines. [Essentially prescriptive and proscriptive in thrust, these materials lack more sustained philosophic considerations of human knowing and acting. Still, they provide a sense of the ways in which people may attempt to regulate morality in what is often assumed to be a more intimate, relaxed area of community life. While some of these notions may seem extreme, it may be acknowledged that somewhat parallel restrictions may be invoked in religious settings and other moral contexts.]

The Athenian (VI:771-773) begins by proposing a series of religious assemblies and associated events that not only provide occasions to honor the gods, but also represent opportunities for people from all parts of the city-state to become acquainted with one another. Notably, this includes dancing games in which the youth of the community become more familiar with one another so that they will have knowledge of the fuller appearances and temperaments of others when making a more viable selection for marriage.

Noting that men are to marry between the ages of 25 and 35 and women somewhat younger (16 to 20), the Athenian emphasizes that the man should be mindful, first and foremost, of what is best for the state rather than himself in selecting a wife. In this regard, the rich are encouraged to marry the poor, the quick minded to settle with the slow minded, those who are quick to anger should match up with those are more complacent and so forth so that the community maintains a greater overall consistency. Still, the speakers recognize the limitations of being too insistent on matters of personal attraction.

As well, the Athenian (VI:774) states that men who remain unmarried after 35 years of age not only are to be fined, proportionate to the class in which they belong to, but they also are to lose all honors that would be appropriate to someone of their ages and positions in the community. Effectively they are to be treated as social outcasts for failure to assume their marital responsibilities.

After stipulating that marriage festivals are to be fairly modest events, the Athenian (VI:775) clearly discourages drunkenness within the marriage. Next, the Athenian (VI:776) says that when people marry they are to establish homes separate

from those of their families – a house that the man (VI:778) would have had built prior to the marriage.

In the midst of this broader commentary, the Athenian (VI:776-777) also considers the property accompanying the couple, but dwells most particularly on people's relationships with their slaves.

While observing the topic of slavery has been the subject of wide ranges of viewpoints and debates among the Hellenes more generally, the Athenian says that citizens who have slaves are clearly advantaged over those who do not. Still, the task is one of getting the best and most loyal slaves possible. Moreover, he notes that people often adopt two opposing standpoints in dealing with their slaves. Thus, whereas some define slaves as corrupt and completely untrustworthy and tend to treat them severely, he also observes that others define and treat their slaves in quite opposite ways.

In trying to develop policy for their state, the Athenian proposes (a) that people try to obtain slaves with more diverse backgrounds in order to deter these individuals from developing natural affinities with one another and conspiring among themselves against their masters. He also stresses (b) that slaves be treated justly, if not even more justly than the way citizens treat one another, in all possible respects. As well, he proposes that (c) slaves be punished rather than verbally admonished when they have done wrong, thereby more consistently reaffirming their places in the slave-owner relationship. Somewhat relatedly, he suggests that (d) people maintain more consistent control by providing direct commands, maintaining interpersonal distance, and avoiding jests in dealing with their slaves. This way, the Athenian says, life will be considerably more agreeable to both the slaves and their owners.

After a short discussion of city planning and walled defenses of the city, the speakers (VI:779-781) discuss dining arrangements of married males and females. After noting that the men are accustomed to communal dining tables and the women are not, they consider similar practices for women but decide that it would be inappropriate to propose something that is likely to encounter extended resistance on the part of the women.

Then, following a brief commentary (VI:782-783) on the (cross-cultural) diversity of people's practices in making sacrifices in religious ceremonies, noting that these range from the use of humans as items of sacrifice to people who abstain from all animal-based food, the topic then turns to the human desires for food, drink, and sex. Mindful of both the variability of people's relationships and the desirability of procreation, the Athenian (VI:783-784) subsequently proposes that they select a set of women to serve as overseers of marital matters. These women would assemble on regular occasions and share information that they have gleaned about others in the community that might in some way relate to people's marriages and associated behaviors. [Although not so entirely different from many instances of gossip to which people may be more routinely subjected, this seems one of the more invasive modes of regulation that one finds in *Laws*.]

Relatedly, those who do not produce children in the first 10 years of marriage may, after consulting with the women overseers and families, divorce for their mutual benefit (the subsequent status of these people is left undefined).

People who have other, dispute related problems in their marriages might receive counseling of sorts, admonishments, and other threats from the women overseers. Those of whom these women considered incorrigible may be written up and taken to court. Unsuccessful defendants would lose all privileges of citizenship.

The Athenian also proposes that these considerations would apply to married people as long as they have a family (i.e., offspring living with them).

This material on marital relations serves as a prelude to subsequent discussions of child rearing practices and people's involvements in the educational process in Book VII.²¹

Books VII-XII in *Laws*

There is much more material of relevance to morality, deviance, and regulation in Plato's *Laws* than can be considered here. What follows most immediately, thus, is a brief overview of the contents of Books VII-XII.

Book VII considers the objectives, procedures, and problematics of educating the young in ways that contribute to the well-being of the state as well as people's more individualized characters, virtues, and accomplishments. Book VIII more diversely addresses religious festivals, military exercises, laws pertaining to marriage, and legislation pertinent to marketplace trade and occupations more generally.

Focusing on cases involving death and physical injury, Book IX deals with the matters of agency, culpability, exemptions, and sanctions. Attending to the interconnections of religion, morality, and deviance, Book X is developed mindfully of the ways that people do things and how these might be regulated in both preventative and remedial terms.

Book XI attends to a variety of legal matters, including property, people's wills, and family-related settlements, as well as slander, witnesses, and advocacy roles. The concluding segment, Book XII, considers an assortment of topics pertaining to property, military matters, relations with other states, and the matter of "governing the governors."

Whereas Plato's speakers have a great deal more to say about morality, deviance, and regulation in books VII–XII, I have selected four topics for our more immediate consideration. These pertain to (a) culpability and agency in cases involving death and injury (wounding); (b) religion and wrongdoing; (c) regulating the regulators; and (d) the taking of religious oaths. Although best comprehended mindfully of materials presented in Books I–VI, this latter set of topics provides some additional insight into Plato's *Laws* and his related considerations of deviance and regulation.

²¹ Focusing primarily on "the education of the young," Book VII has more relevance for the study of the deviance and regulation than is commonly supposed. Thus, whereas contemporary social scientists have given relatively little attention to the early development of people's characters, habits, and viewpoints, Plato's speakers will argue for the necessity of attending more directly to the nature of people's childhood experiences for comprehending people's subsequent participation in community life.

Still, it should be acknowledged that whereas Plato's speakers engage education of the young in a more concerted manner in Book VII, education is seen as a pervasive and enduring concern that not only pertains to morality, deviance, and regulation, but also has important implications for the sheer continuity of the community.

Further, while the speakers are intent on maximizing certain moral objectives (and virtues) in the city-state they are proposing, they also seem aware of the precarious nature of their venture at every point in their discussion. In the process, thus, they provide a great deal of insight into the highly variable ways in which people engage the matters of human knowing and acting.

Culpability and Agency

In Book IX, Plato's speakers address a broad array of criminal court cases (yet other lawsuits are considered in Book XI). To this end, they identify particular categories of crime, stipulate punishment, and indicate how offenders are to be judged and by whom.

While it is instructive to attend to the particular crimes the speakers identify and the related specifics of punishment and judgment practices for appreciating their notions of morality more specifically, I will focus somewhat more directly on (a) the rationale the speakers provide for developing their definitions of crime, regulation, and associated procedures and (b) their explanations of people's involvements in wrongdoing and people's general receptivity to regulatory endeavors.

After introducing their overall agenda for dealing with lawsuits, the speakers (IX:853) observe that it is embarrassing to have to legislate against crime in a state that is well regulated and in which virtue is so clearly emphasized. Nevertheless, some wrongdoing seems inevitable. If they were dealing with divine offspring, such things would not be required. However, as human legislators dealing with other human offspring, it seems impossible to avoid legislation on wrongdoing. Thus, the law is necessary for dealing with those whose unjust tendencies cannot be subdued in other ways.

Still, in developing legislation, the three speakers intend to approach the law variously as a means of (a) anticipating problems and (b) deterring (by informing as well as threatening people) unjust acts on the part of those who may be so inclined, as well as (c) punishing those who actually violate the law.

The first law that the Athenian (IX:853-856) proposes is a prohibition against robbing the temples. Although it seems most unlikely that any citizen would engage in such reprehensible activity, there are apt to be others, such as their servants or the servants of strangers, who might do such things. No offense of this nature is to be tolerated and the Athenian outlines an elaborate procedure for the trial and the associated determination of guilt. Non-citizens found guilty of offenses against the temples are to be branded, beaten, and exiled, but any citizen found guilty of these offenses is to be put to death.

The second major law pertains to activities that threaten the well-being of the state. Thus, people who try to destroy or overthrow the government, or otherwise plot against it are to be punished with death. Relatedly, any magistrate who fails to act against someone behaving in this matter will be considered nearly as bad as the original offender. Also, highly culpable are other people who know about these threats to the state, but who fail to inform the authorities.

The court proceedings in these cases would parallel those invoked to deal with the temple robbers. Likewise, when the majority of the citizens present find the person guilty, the punishment is to be the death of the offender. Still, the speakers observe that, except in rare cases, the children of these and the other wrongdoers are not to be punished.

The third major category of law pertains to theft. After proposing the basic rule that the thief is to provide restitution that is double the value of the things stolen, the speakers (IX:857) quickly acknowledge that theft is not of one quality. Thus, theft varies relative to the nature of the targets (sacred or secular) involved, the objects and the value of the items stolen, the circumstances, and so forth.

More importantly, however, their attentiveness to the complexities associated with judgments in the case of theft, provides an occasion for the speakers (IX:858-859) to reconsider their larger venture.

Hence, they say that, like those collecting materials for other analyses, they too will be learning about legislation more generally. Accordingly, they will be consulting the constitutions generated by other legislators as well as taking into account the works of poets and other authors in their broader quest to implement rules and practices of the most honorable and just sort.

Still, as the dialogue unfolds, the speakers (IX:860) ask if the just and the honorable are synonymous in their emphasis or whether these concepts may be diametrically opposed at times. Then, referencing their earlier observation that people would not voluntarily do evil, the speakers ask if people can be justly punished for things they did not voluntarily do?

Recognizing that they are caught up in a series of contradictions, the speakers suggest that they need to consider the distinctions between voluntary and involuntary crimes.

Noting that all states and all legislators differentiate between voluntary and involuntary actions and have legislated accordingly, the speakers (IX:861) say that before proposing specific penalties for people's offenses they, as legislators, are obliged to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary actions. If they cannot do this adequately, they must find other means of achieving justice.

In discussing this matter further, the Athenian (IX:862) suggests that rather than defining things as "voluntary" and "involuntary" (given [a] their earlier claim that no one would voluntarily choose to do evil and [b] the problematics of more directly defining voluntary behavior) they would do better to focus on "injury" and "intent." Thus, whenever injury has occurred, the general practice will be to (a) admonish the perpetrators for the act, to insist that these people not do such a thing again – at least not voluntarily; (b) require that the perpetrators pay for the costs of injury and associated damages; and (c) encourage the reformation of the perpetrators.

Still, if certain offenders are considered "incurable," they are to be put to death. In this latter event, the Athenian points to the "double good" that is achieved. Not only will these individuals never cause others harm again, but their punishment also may serve as a lesson to others.

At this point, the speakers (IX:863-864) reengage the matters of voluntary and involuntary actions with respect to justice. The Athenian says that there are three states of mind that contribute to people's involvements in crime: passion, pleasure, and ignorance.

Although he only briefly addresses each, passions (e.g., anger, fear) are defined as intense, non-rational states of mind that people experience, but may only be partially able to control (i.e., introduce elements of involuntary conduct).

By contrast, pleasure is more focused and is apt to be deliberately pursued by means of persuasion as well as deceit. For this reason, crimes motivated by pleasure are seen as more despicable than those motivated by passion.

While ignorance may be of a simple, uninformed sort, the Athenian also describes (and more severely condemns) a conceited or haughty form of ignorance in which the ignorant person scorns more informed viewpoints.

Saying that these three states of mind may pull people in different directions in individual cases, all may have the effect of motivating people to engage in unjust activities. As a result, those who lack greater degrees of temperance or self-regulation are more susceptible to all of these dispositions.

Still, speaking more generally, the Athenian adds that it is important to distinguish between violent activities of a more open, and immediate, passionate sort and those of a more reprehensible type that are pursued with deceit and premeditation.

Then, noting that some people also may injure others as a consequence of states of madness, infirmity of mind, and such, the Athenian proposes that these people pay for the injury they have done, but, with the exception of highly serious injuries, be exempt from other penalties.

Recognizing that they have begun to speak of homicide, the Athenian (IX:865) suggests that they establish a set of laws pertaining to homicide. Observing that there are many different types of homicide, he begins by suggesting that those who involuntarily kill others in the course of athletic contests and public games (as in military exercises), as well as well-intentioned physicians, are to be exempt from blame.

However, others who, directly or indirectly, take the lives of others will be held culpable. Penalties would depend on the nature of the parties involved and their relationships with one another.

Then, attending to the structuring of the three speakers' own societies, the Athenian (IX:865-869) subsequently stipulates an array of sanctions to be applied to those who involuntarily take the life of another by reference to their statuses as slaves, strangers, and citizens. In like manner, he deals with involuntary death involving parents and children, siblings, and spouses. Still, he also differentiates more immediate instances of passionate homicide (seen as more involuntarily) from those involving premeditation, stating that the penalties are to be more severe in the latter cases.

Continuing thusly, the Athenian states that those committing homicide in civil war or in self-defense should be exempt from penalty, unless a slave is involved in the killing of a freeman. Still, in cases of involuntary homicide more generally, the Athenian proposes that the agents of another's death generally be required to undergo a "purification process," the conditions of which also vary according to people's circumstances.

The Athenian (IX:869-870) then turns to crimes committed voluntarily and with premeditation, wherein he suggests that the three major motivations are (a) greed or the never satisfied lusting for more in the way of material goods; (b) ambition and associated jealousies; and (c) cowardly fear, wherein people will stop at nothing to avoid responsibility for unjust behaviors.

After referencing the notion that people will be punished in life hereafter, the Athenian says that those who truly believe in this would have no need for a law but that there are others who do not take divinity seriously.

Subsequently, the Athenian (IX:871-873) considers the treatment of those guilty of homicide and the associated duties of the kinspeople of the deceased in the process. Likewise, he acknowledges the roles of those who plan homicides in concert with others or who induce others to take the life of a third party, indicating that these "background agents" are not to be exempted from guilt.

Extending the framework even further, those committing suicide subsequently are denigrated for their cowardly weaknesses and are to be buried in more destitute areas, away from other family members.

The Athenian (IX:874) also gives some attention to justifiable homicide, wherein people killing burglars, defending women and children, and saving their parents or other innocent family members from attack are to be held guiltless for any resulting deaths of the initial perpetrators.

After homicides, the Athenian (IX:874) observes that the next most serious matters are (physiological) injuries. The plan is to distinguish involuntary and voluntary deeds of violence that result in injury in ways that parallel their consideration of homicides.

Then, stating that no single person is able to know what is best for society, nor, if knowing, is always able and willing to do what is best for the society, the Athenian (IX:875) says that both the public and private good is better insured when the state maintains priority over the individual. Relatedly, he adds, laws are necessary because of people's selfish tendencies.

With this preamble in mind, the Athenian (IX:875-876) points out that those developing penalties pertaining to the injury of others have many things to consider. This includes not only the agent and the victim, but also the nature of the injury and loss, the circumstances leading up to the offense, the actual events, and so forth.

The problem is more complicated still, however, in that there is also the matter of how much discretion should be left to the judges of individual courts and how much should be decided in advance by the legislators. Recognizing that courts may vary greatly in quality, the Athenian proposes that they, themselves, establish more consistent parameters of justice.

Noting that some injuries have arisen in cases of attempted homicide, the Athenian (IX:877) says that the perpetrators involved in these crimes should be treated as murderers and subject the same penalties. Likewise, if children intentionally wound their parents or slaves deliberately injure their masters, these people also are to be put to death. Spouses who injure the other in attempted homicide are to be banished from the country forever.

When passion is involved, resulting in injuries that are the products of motivations that fall somewhat between involuntary and voluntary tendencies, the Athenian (IX:878-879) proposes penalties that are less severe than in other instances of attempted homicide. Still, these penalties are to be more substantial than those associated with unintentional injuries.

When injuries are unintentional, people are to be compensated by the perpetrators, but no other penalties are likely to be imposed for what may be seen as "chance events."

Then, noting that elderly persons are to be protected from younger people and citizens are to be protected from strangers, the Athenian (IX:879-880) proposes specific legislation to deal with cases of these sorts.

After stating that laws are to inform people of the ways of maintaining civil relations of others as well as provide a mechanism for dealing with those who are not so easily instructed, the Athenian (IX:880-881) says that criminals who do not respect religious proscriptions or the laws of the state are to be put to death.

Subsequently, the Athenian says that if any man is seen to strike one of his parents, witnesses who defend the parent from the attack can expect to be notably acknowledged for this intervention (especially when someone from a lower class intervenes on behalf of the parent). Conversely, those who merely witness the event, but do not defend the endangered parent, can expect to be severely punished. A similar law (IX:882) is to hold with respect to a slave striking a free man or women (in parallel circumstances) who mistreat other women.

Religion and Wrongdoing

Taken from Book X, the following materials consider the ways that people may locate their misdeeds within the context of religion. Whereas religion may be seen as a deterrent to wrongdoing, Plato's speakers are well aware that the matter is much more complex than this idea suggests.

Thus, in the process of trying to find ways of employing religion to encourage morality more generally, the speakers consider the uneven and problematic linkages of religion and wrongdoing. In the process they provide valuable insights both on the problems of encouraging young people to accept more virtuous life-styles and the ways that people might “use religion in the service of their wrongdoing.”

Noting that young people not only are particularly apt to engage in excesses, but also tend to be insolent in disposition, the Athenian (*Laws*, X:884-885) reiterates the speakers' viewpoint, that the worst crimes are those against religion. Still, he adds, before deciding on punishment, one should ascertain the more particular religious frameworks to which particular offenders subscribe.

He contends that no one would act in such offensive manners unless they (a) do not believe the gods exist; (b) do not believe that the gods, if they exist, care about people; or (c) believe the gods exist, but also think that the gods easily can be pacified.

Continuing, the Athenian (*Laws*, X:885) states that, when confronted with crimes against religion, the offenders are apt to defend their activities. Thus, they may insist that they should be understood before being punished and that they require proofs, variously, that gods exist, that the gods care, and that they are not easily appeased.

In developing a response, the Cretan (*Laws*, X:886) first states that the ordering of the universe constitutes a proof of divine existence, as also does the fact that all manners of Greeks and Barbarians believe in the gods.

Despite his own agreement with the Cretan, the Athenian cautions him that these claims will not be adequate in themselves. Indeed, the Athenian says, the poets and philosophers have greatly complicated matters. While the poets have introduced all sorts of dubious tales about the gods, their genealogies, and their behaviors, some philosophers have claimed that the heavenly bodies are no more than chunks of earth and stone and that these material essences have no regard for humans. Likewise, the Athenian observes, these (material) philosophers argue that religion is entirely fictional in essence.

Recognizing the limitations of merely legislating on the premise that the gods exist, the Athenian (*Laws*, X:887) suggests that they find some ways of persuading others that the gods do exist, that they care, and that they are genuinely attentive to justice.

Observing that there always are some people who have doubts despite their upbringing and their awareness that others believe, the Athenian (*Laws*, X:888-890) proposes that they consider the position of the philosophers who deny any divine intervention; who say the universe is the product of nature and chance alone or that all humanly known things are the products of nature, chance, and human endeavor. Summarizing the positions of these philosophers, the Athenian states:

[Athenian:] In the first place, my dear friend, these people would say that the Gods exist not by nature, but by art, and by the laws of states, which are different in different places, according to the agreement of those who make them; and that the honourable is one thing by nature and another thing by law, and that the principles of justice have no existence at all in nature, but that mankind are always disputing about them and altering them; and that the alterations which are made by art and by law have no basis in nature, but are of authority for the moment and at the time at which they are made. These, my friends, are the sayings of wise men, poets and prose writers, which find a way into the minds of youth. They are told by them that the highest right is might, and in this way the young fall into

impieties, under the idea that the Gods are not such as the law bids them imagine; and hence arise factions, these philosophers inviting them to lead a true life according to nature, that is, to live in real dominion over others, and not in legal subjection to them...

[Athenian:] ... what should the lawgiver do when this evil is of long standing? ... Should he not rather, when he is making laws for men, at the same time infuse the spirit of persuasion into his words, and mitigate the severity of them as far as he can?

[Cleinius:] Why, Stranger, if such persuasion be at all possible, then a legislator who has anything in him ought never to weary of persuading men; he ought to leave nothing unsaid in support of the ancient opinion that there are Gods, and of all those other truths which you were just now mentioning; he ought to support the law and also art, and acknowledge that both alike exist by nature, and no less than nature, if they are the creations of mind in accordance with right reason, as you appear to me to maintain, and I am disposed to agree with you in thinking. (Plato, *Laws*, X:889-890; Jowett trans.)

Mindful of the long-standing nature of religious skepticism, the speakers stress the importance of using the laws to persuade rather than threaten the citizenry. However, they (*Laws*, X:891) also observe that, once instituted, the laws can help maintain the very viewpoints they reference. Still, in the absence of other defenders of religion and virtue, the speakers envision their duty as legislators to encourage honorable viewpoints wherever possible.

Then, embarking on what will be a more sustained argument for the existence of the gods, the Athenian (*Laws*, X:891-899) develops the position that the soul (as a living, spiritual essence) must precede the material features of the universe. He contends that the physical (material) philosophers (who reduce everything to fire, water, earth, and air) are in error, because they neglect the spiritual, divine essence that must precede the existence of all other matter. It is only the soul that alone is capable of moving itself; of initiating change from within. Likewise, the Athenian states, it is the soul that has given motion to all other things.

Continuing this line of argument, the Athenian posits that since the soul inhabits all things that move, the soul is the cause of evil as well as good, and the unjust as well as the just. Presumably, however, the world is governed by the better aspects of the soul, or by the better soul (assuming that there are good and evil souls). Proceeding in this manner, the Athenian proposes that somewhat different souls or spiritual essences may be involved in sustaining all heavenly objects.

Hinging his position on the argument that "the soul must be the origin of all things," the Athenian (*Laws*, X:899) concludes he has said enough on the existence of the gods. He now turns attention to those who believe that the gods exist, but do *not* believe that they care about the condition and affairs of humans.

In an attempt to convince people that the gods do care, the Athenian (*Laws*, X:900) begins by asserting that the gods are good and possess virtues, as in courage, honor, and responsibility. Likewise, the Athenian (*Laws*, X:901-903) notes that the gods know all things that people do and that these divine souls have the power to do all manners of things both great and small.

Further, the Athenian stresses, it is important for people to remember that they were created as part of a larger creation rather than to presume that the larger creation was developed for particular individuals within. Indeed, the Athenian (*Laws*, X:904-905) explains, people are assigned to places that best enable them to contribute to the larger order of destiny. Relatedly, those who are more virtuous will

be rewarded while those who act in evil manners also will be punished accordingly. However, he adds, because people are unable to see the larger scheme of things, they may not understand the more exacting nature of divine justice.

Having arrived at this point, the Athenian (*Laws*, X:905-906) next takes issue with those who think the gods easily can be placated or appeased with respect to human wrongdoing. Emphasizing that the gods are people's greatest allies in the conflict between good and evil, he says that it is absurd to assume that the gods are so fickle or greedy that they can be bribed into instances of dishonor or injustice. Indeed, the Athenian asserts, as people's principal guardians, the gods would act in people's best interests.

Then, describing himself as zealous in his opposition to evil people, the Athenian (*Laws*, X:907-909) proposes imprisonment for impious persons. The nonbelievers who maintain a tolerance and respect for the religious viewpoints and practices of others may avoid imprisonment, but those who are more openly critical of the religious practices of others and subject believers to ridicule are to be placed in a reformatory for a five year term. Second time offenders would be sentenced to death. Other nonbelievers who commit offenses against divinity or humanity are seen as incorrigible and are to be sentenced to life imprisonment.

Next, noting that gods and temples are not easily instituted and sustained, the Athenian proposes that citizens also are to be forbidden from establishing personal temples as well as practicing sacrifices and other religious rituals in private settings (*Laws*, X:909-910).

Regulating the Regulators

Within a broader set of concluding discourses in Book XII, the Athenian (XII:945-948) directly addresses the matter of assessing the magistrates or guardians. To deal with this task, he proposes that each citizen should annually, and within the context of a religious ceremony, select three people not less than 50 years of age whom he deems the best in every respect. The three people obtaining the most votes (the Athenian provides a much more elaborate set of procedures), along with some assistants that they choose would have the (individual and collective) responsibility of assessing the magistrates and posting judgment of each of the guardians in writing in the agora.

Magistrates who thusly are accused of wrongdoing could challenge the assessors before another set of judges. However, if found guilty of misdeeds, the magistrates would be punished more severely than the original assessor's sentence had stipulated. Nonetheless, as the Athenian observes, a punishment of death cannot be doubled.

Still, more is involved in regulating the regulators and the Athenian (XII:947) thus considers procedures for "assessing the assessors" (i.e., those who assess the magistrates). First, however, the Athenian observes that those who had been selected as assessors not only would be given every possible civil honor, but they also would be recognized as the high priests and would assume prominent roles in all religious ceremonies. Likewise, the Athenian details elaborate plans for the funeral procession and burial of the assessors.

Nevertheless, the assessors also are to be subject to scrutiny, and if they are found undeserving all honors would be removed. Relatedly, any citizen who considers it appropriate may charge one of the assessors in a court composed of the guardians and a select set of judges. If found guilty, the assessor would be

disciplined. However, if the assessor were found innocent, the person bringing charges against the assessor could be sanctioned.

Taking Oaths

[I introduced this material on oaths to further stress the skepticism that Plato's speakers express about virtuous conduct on the part of the people with whom they would be dealing.]

After referencing Rhadamanthus, whom the Athenian says, (a) knew that all of the people in his time firmly believed in the gods and defined the gods as the source of all justice, and (b) therefore could quickly settle cases based exclusively on the oaths that people took to the gods to tell the truth, the Athenian (XII:948) says that (c) this is no longer the case.

Noting that (a) some people do not believe in the gods and that (b) others think the gods have no particular concern about people's activities, and (c) still others think that they can avoid all manners of punishment by making token sacrifices and/or offering other praises to the gods, the Athenian says that the oaths people take to the gods have no practical value and should be eliminated from courtroom testimonial. Instead of people generating false impressions of honesty and or perjuring themselves with the gods, he proposes that the parties involved should provide judges with signed written statements describing their positions.

Still, in the interest of promoting a more general sense of justice, the Athenian (XII:949) proposes that judges take an oath before rendering their decisions not only in courtroom contexts, but also in other settings (as in dance contests, music competitions, and equestrian events).

Laws in Perspective

Because Plato deals with so many matters pertaining to morality, deviance, and regulation in *Laws*, it is possible to highlight only some of these issues at this point. Perhaps most central for our purposes, though, is the realization that Plato's speakers approach morality, wrongdoing, and regulation as a set of interrelated community processes that cannot be understood apart from people's lived experience.

Whereas Plato's speakers also deal with "multiple levels of regulation" it becomes apparent that regulation is very much dependent on people doing things. Plato's speakers, thus, attend extensively to agent-based enterprise. Rather than subscribe to artificial (contemporary) distinctions between "macro" and "micro" analyses, Plato approaches morality, deviance, and regulation in much more unified or integrated terms and focuses attention on the interrelated matters of people knowing, planning, acting, coordinating, and adjusting their activities as these are developed in the flows, realms, and instances of human group life.

At the same time, Plato is quite aware that people do not participate in community life in equal ways (as in class, occupation, gender). Thus, he considers the differing ways that the people enter into the moral order of the community. Still, he insists that a just notion of equality requires that people be rewarded relative to the different levels (and amounts) of contributions they make to the community. Indeed, Plato identifies this (participatory) notion of equality as a fundamental principle of a just moral order.

While Plato has a clear emphasis on “preserving the state,” he also strives for a more virtuous community context. The worthwhile state in both *Republic* and *Laws*, thus, is one in which justice is given priority. As well, because it is the state that provides the foundational mechanism for all meaningful human relations and individual virtue, the community is much more important than the particular individuals within. Likewise, because human knowing and acting are enabled by others, people are to be understood as participants within the developmental flows of ongoing community life (rather than in a more purely individualistic sense).

In contrast to *Republic*, wherein the emphasis is on the wise and judicious rule of philosopher-kings, Plato's *Laws* with its emphasis on a constitutional government is much more skeptical about the matters of morality, wrongdoing, and regulation. Attending to the practical limitations of the laws, the legislators, and the office holders as regulators, Plato's speakers in *Laws* also are mindful of the ways in which religion, education, politics, and poetics may be used in the service of the constitution as well as the ways that people may use these matters to serve their own interests.

Thus, although Plato's speakers acknowledge the interrelatedness and interdependence of leaders and followers in both *Republic* and *Laws*, the speakers in *Laws* give more sustained attention to people's tendencies to act in self interested ways, to pursue objectives other than those that would foster justice or otherwise serve the state.

While mindful of people's biological essences and the emotional dispositions and other habits that humans develop from early childhood onward (especially Book VII), Plato's speakers also are aware of people's capacities for deliberative agency. Consequently, for instance, although Plato's speakers make reference to the gods at various points and insist on the importance of people developing and maintaining a religious emphasis, his speakers also are highly cognizant of the doubts and discrepancies with which people work in this area. Consequently, they stress humanly formulated and enforced laws, along with the development (instruction, learning, and enactment) of judgment, temperance, and other virtuous features of agency.

Although highly attentive to the importance of people developing temperance, Plato's speakers also envision self-regulation as an ongoing internal struggle. Whereas those who lack self-control are seen to be of little value to the state and others, as well as themselves, the speakers in *Laws* are cognizant not only of the learned qualities of virtue (including self regulation), but also of the importance of the continued institutionalized and direct interpersonal support of virtuous behavior in all sectors of community life.

Accordingly, even in the midst of a more sustained emphasis on temperance and other virtuous qualities, it is difficult to miss the extended array of managers or supervisors that Plato's speakers deem necessary to maintain a viable set of civil, just relations among the populace.

Plato is often dismissed as an idealist, but his speakers in *Laws* are clearly skeptical of people's tendencies to (a) honor the state-related concerns with justice, religious prescriptions and sanctions, as well as (b) respect interpersonal relations and (c) attend to their personal (self-regulation) well-being even in the context of a strong, pervasive “community consciousness.”

Conclusion

Although Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* provide the primary focus for the present paper, it is instructive to compare these texts with Prus and Grills (2003) *The Deviant Mystique*. Assuming a symbolic interactionist approach to the study of deviance, Prus and Grills (P&G) provide a detailed research agenda for examining "the deviance-making process."

Denoting a contemporary framework for considering the processes and problematics of morality, wrongdoing, and regulation that Plato addresses in developing *Republic* and *Laws*, P&G's text also serves as a reference point that allows one to more readily locate gaps in present day notions of morality, deviance and regulation as well as identify ways in which Plato's works might better inform current conceptions of human group life.

Still, since Prus and Grills' *The Deviant Mystique* can be discussed only in highly cursory terms in the present statement (see the Appendix at the end for an outline of this text), readers are cautioned that the ensuing analysis inevitably will be very general and sketchy. Thus, what follows can only be suggestive of the potential that these two sets of materials offer for more sustained comparative analyses.

Focusing primarily on people's involvements in matters of deviance and regulation, Prus and Grills, like Plato, approach morality, deviance, and regulation deviance as thoroughly embedded community essences. Rather than reporting on the frequencies of particular types of deviance and morality, P&G establish a framework for examining instances of deviance and regulation wherever these may take place.

Adopting the interactionist viewpoint that nothing is inherently deviant or virtuous, but that notions of deviance instead reflect the definitions of those designating particular matters in moral terms, Prus and Grills further insist on the necessity of locating the deviance-making process within the broader set of people's theaters of operation that constitute community life.

Like Plato, and unlike those who artificially reduce matters of morality, deviance, and regulation to abstracted, dehumanized sets of factors, structures, or forces that are statistically linked to occurrences of certain kinds of behaviors or outcomes,²² P&G stress the importance of examining deviance not only in processual terms, but also in terms that acknowledge the ways in which all members of the community may enter into the deviance-making process.

Mindful of their broader emphases on the ways that people participate in community life, Prus and Grills consider the ways that people *develop*, promote, and resist definitions of situations (as in thoughts, words, activities, appearances, outcomes) as troublesome or deviant in some way. They also attend to the ways in which people identify others as deviants of sorts and how those so identified deal with (resist, accept, negotiate) these designations.

Examining these processes in highly generic or transcultural terms, P&G deal with these matters in more explicit and extended conceptual detail than does Plato. Nevertheless, Plato provides a great many illustrations of these processes in *Republic* and *Laws*. These instances and the related insights he provides are particularly valuable because of their transcultural and transhistorical comparative qualities.

Prus and Grills also direct attention to the ways in which people become involved in deviance as well as sustain these activities both in conjunction with others and on their own. Here again, P&G are more specific in addressing these processes than is

²² For more extended considerations of the problematics of variable related research and analysis, see Blumer (1969) and Grills and Prus (2008).

Plato. P&G also are particularly attentive to ways that researchers could study people's involvements in subcultures. Although he particularly emphasizes legislators and regulators rather than those involved in wrongdoing, Plato still addresses matters of these latter sorts in *Republic* and *Laws*. Thus, his texts offer valuable comparison points in this area of study as well.

Further, whereas Prus and Grills provide an extended set of resources (concepts, literature, subprocesses) for studying people's involvements in deviant life-worlds as well as their participation in more solitary instances of deviance, Plato's materials draw attention to some other aspects of the involvement process that have been largely overlooked in sociological analyses of people's participation in deviance.

Most notably, this includes an attentiveness to the habits and the emotional states that people develop as they do things. Habits and emotional states are important because people take these with them into situations both as inclinations to act in particular ways and as resistances to other lines of activity. Likewise, the concept of temperance or self-regulation warrants scholarly attention as an ongoing set of struggles that people experience as they work their way through particular situations.²³

Prus and Grills also examine people's attempts to regulate deviance both in informal manners and through formal control agencies. Mindful of the objective of providing an ethnographic research agenda for studying deviance and regulation, P&G give explicit attention to the ways that researchers may study people's activities as "control agents" as well as the ways in which the "targets of control" experience treatments of various kinds and how those involved in deviance engage the disinvolvement process.

While lacking the conceptual detail that P&G provide in addressing this latter set of activities, Plato's discussions of regulatory activities, as humanly engaged realms of knowing and acting, suggest sets of "humanly engaged contact points" between aspects of morality, deviance, and regulation and people's involvements in education, religion, poetics and the like that may be productively examined through ethnographic research of the sort P&G discuss.

Although Plato and Prus and Grills developed their texts at very different points in the history of Western social thought and have pursued different agendas in developing their materials, the two sets of works are much more complementary than might seem on the surface. Thus, although P&G's *The Deviant Mystique* is more singularly focused on deviance and regulation and has a pronounced pluralist quality and Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* are intended as more encompassing models for communities in which justice (notably interfused with religious motifs) provides the

²³ Rather than relegate these matters to psychology (wherein researchers remain essentially wedded to abstract, dehumanized sets of factors), it is much more instructive to deal with these aspects of human knowing and acting in sustained ethnographic inquiry. This way, researchers may probe more extensively into people's tensions, struggles, activities, assessments, and adjustments as they deal with "what they think or are told they should do" and any inclinations and/or resistances that they experience prior to, during, and after having acted in certain ways.

Relatedly, it is essential that social scientists overcome the simplistic idea that "attitudes cause behavior." Not only do those adopting viewpoints of these sorts fail to recognize that people may hold multiple, often conflicting, attitudes towards all manners of things (including activities and objectives), but (as the interactionists stress) people also face the task of selecting and developing lines of action within particular situations.

As well, people often develop their activities mindfully of, if not also through more direct interchanges with, others. These other people as well, not only have habits, emotionalities, and viewpoints of various, possibly mixed, sorts, but, likewise, also are faced with the task of making choices within specific situations (and interactional contexts).

centralizing emphasis of community life, the two sets of materials share many analytic features.

Perhaps most centrally, Plato and Prus and Grills not only focus on (a) morality, deviance, and regulation as community essences in a fundamental and irreducible sense, but, like Plato, P&G also stress (b) the importance of the emergent, processual nature of human group life and the ways that people (c) enter into the process as agents as well as (d) sustain and reshape the settings in which they do things.

Relatedly, Plato and P&G not only envision (e) people as adopting multiple viewpoints on morality, deviance, and regulation, but they also emphasize the importance of (f) activity, (g) reflectivity, (h) relationships and identities, (i) persuasive endeavor, and (j) the full range of human interchange (as in cooperation, conflict, negotiation, deception, loyalty, instruction, and playfulness).

Building extensively on Chicago-style interactionism, Prus and Grills bring a powerful set of resources (pragmatist theory, concepts, and the ethnographic literature) to the study of morality, deviance, and regulation. They also detail an extended set of processes for inquiry into the deviance-making process. Furthermore, as Chicago-style ethnographers, they offer a definite methodology for pursuing the study of human group life that clearly is not evident in Plato's texts.

Likewise, although Plato clearly thinks in generic conceptual terms and more or less continuously invokes comparative analysis in developing his texts, P&G specifically emphasize the importance of developing "generic social processes" – as transsituational (transcontextual and transhistorical) reference points that people may use in pursuing comparative analyses with respect to all manners of human behavior and relations.

Although each of these interactionist emphases can substantially enable the study of morality, deviance, and regulation, by no means are Plato's contributions to the contemporary social sciences obsolete, redundant, or inconsequential. Thus, in addition to the many advantages noted to this point, Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* have yet more to offer to students of the human condition.

A great many scholars have dealt with topics that Plato introduces in *Republic* and *Laws* over the intervening centuries. However, seldom have they approached these matters mindfully of the pragmatist framework that Plato so broadly and effectively has used to capture the essential features of human group life.

Indeed, because Plato insightfully attends to so many humanly engaged features of community life in *Republic* and *Laws*, these two texts represent particularly valuable conceptual microcosms through which readers may gain a highly instructive sense of the more comprehensive set of social processes that characterize human knowing and acting.

As suggested in the comparison of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* with Prus and Grills *The Deviant Mystique*, the issue is not whether the older or the newer is better. Instead, the task is to achieve a better understanding of community life by (a) examining human group life in process terms, as "something in the making;" (b) invoking comparative analysis in order to achieve a fuller appreciation of what has been learned across sets of transcontextual and transhistorical contexts;²⁴ and (c) striving for conceptual articulations of what may be known with greater levels of

²⁴ As well, because of the foundational relevance of Plato's works for Western social thought more generally, *Republic* and *Laws* provide mediums through which sociologists may more readily communicate with scholars on a broader interdisciplinary as well as a more extended international basis.

confidence as well as the sorts of things that might be more productively examined in future inquiry (also see Prus 2004, 2007c, 2007d).

Thus, although it is most important to study the ways that people do things in "the here and now," inquiries of a more contemporary sort are most instructive when envisioned in a historical context and subjected to more sustained comparative analyses of both a transcontextual and a transhistorical sort. In this respect, Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* represent particularly important pieces of the broader sociological puzzle.

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Appendix

The Deviant Mystique: Involvements, Subcultural Realities, and Regulation

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