

Antianarchia: interpreting political thought in Plato

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a defense of the project of seeking to interpret Plato's political thought as a valid method of interpreting Plato. It does so in two stages: in the first part, by rebutting denials of the possibility of interpreting Plato's thought at all; in the second part, by identifying one set of ideas arguably central to Plato's political thought, namely, his profound rejection of political anarchy, understood in terms of the absence of the authority of officeholders and posited both as characteristic of democracy and as the origin of tyranny. This approach to anarchy and its relationship to tyranny is, I contend, a Platonic innovation (so far as we can judge from surviving texts), and must be understood against the background of Greek writings that straightforwardly opposed the two. I aim here to show, on the one hand, that denying tout court the project of seeking to interpret Plato's political

thought is an implausibly extreme position, and, on the other, that pursuing that project can bear valuable fruit.

Keywords: Plato, Socrates, mouthpiece, politics, political theory, political philosophy, anarchy, tyranny, rule, office.

This paper outlines a defense of the project of seeking to interpret Plato's political thought as a valid method of interpreting Plato. It does so in two stages: in the first part, by rebutting denials of the possibility of interpreting *Plato's thought* at all; in the second part, by identifying one set of ideas arguably central to *Plato's political thought*, namely, his profound rejection of political anarchy, understood in terms of the absence of the authority of officeholders and posited both as characteristic of democracy and as the origin of tyranny. This approach to anarchy and its relationship to tyranny is, I contend, a Platonic innovation (so far as we can judge from surviving texts), and must be understood against the background of Greek writings that straightforwardly opposed the two. The paper is an outline in the sense that a full defense of all the issues raised in articulating both the method of interpreting Plato's political thought, and the substance of such thought, must lie beyond its limited scope.¹ I aim here to show, on the one hand, that denying *tout court* the project of seeking to interpret Plato's political thought is an implausibly extreme position, and, on the other hand, that pursuing that project can bear valuable fruit.

I. METHODS OF INTERPRETATION OF 'PLATO'S THOUGHT' – OR HIS THINKING

Prolegomenon to any project of 'interpreting Plato's political thought' is replying to those scholars who deny that we have any basis for attributing views, or even any intellectual moves that may not crystallize into dogmatic views, to 'Plato' at all. Here I do not mean those who would insist on the death, absence, or incoherence of the idea of an author (any

author) as such, but rather those who contend that Plato is an especial, even unique, case of a philosophical author to whom no philosophical views can be attributed.² I will call these the No-Attribution family of views. Proponents of such views have tended rather to term them 'authorial anonymity'³ or 'silence'. But both of these terms are I think unhelpful. As to anonymity: Plato's *authorship* of the dialogues was universally credited in antiquity (indeed, the problem for scholars is sorting out whether it was too widely credited in respect of what we now consider the *dubia* and *spuria* dialogues, as well as the letters, or epistles, transmitted with the corpus).⁴ As to silence: again in antiquity, his acts of writing were also widely credited as acts of speaking, so that he was hardly believed to have been *silent*. The real issue at stake in the debate over so-called authorial anonymity and silence, is rather the question of whether anything said or implied in the dialogues can be attributed to Plato *in propria persona*.

No-Attributionists assert that the impossibility of attributing anything in, or implied in, the dialogues to Plato, is rooted in the nature of the form in which Plato chose to write. This form is generally labeled by all parties the Platonic 'dialogues' — for most No-Attributionists focus only on the dialogues, leaving aside the question of the epistles, and their doubtful authenticity⁵ — albeit that this label requires more comments than it usually receives (I will continue to use it nevertheless). For as David Halperin observes, 'One of the most curious and seldom remarked facts about Plato's Dialogues [sic] is that many of them are not, in fact, dialogues' (1992: 93). His point may be elaborated thus: that while twenty-four of the thirty-five 'dialogues' in the Thrasyllan canon use the purely mimetic form of presenting characters' speeches directly,⁶ the other eleven are

‘mixed’ in that they are presented as narratives within which some characters’ dialogues are recounted.⁷ For present purposes, we may observe that while these variations in the dialogue form are intriguing, still, if any of the dialogues were read aloud in a group, or read aloud or silently by an individual reader, then even the purely mimetic dialogues would be subsumed in the voice of the narrating reader.⁸ In this sense, the holistic representation of each ‘dialogue’ through a single narrating voice is always a structural possibility, and may mirror the holistic authorial voice of Plato.

So the problem of attribution to Plato is really a problem of the relationship between Plato and the characters within the ‘dialogues’, including the distinctive group of characters who act as narrators. The present strategy is to rebut No-Attribution as an absolute position, in order to vindicate the possibility in principle of making attributions to Plato. Once that space is opened, any particular attribution will always be a matter of debate and contestation, as with any other interpretative move. My aim is to cast doubt on the cogency or value of denying that we can *ever* make attributions to Plato such that we can have meaningful discussions of topics like ‘Plato’s political thought’. The precise content of those attributions is a matter for further debate; the second half of this paper offers one proposal only.

A first step in rebutting No-Attributionism is to explore the nature of just what it is that might be a candidate for attribution at all. The most common candidate is ‘views’, as in Jill Gordon’s representative assertion:

He [Plato] purposely removes his own voice as a philosophical authority through devices that destabilize univocal

readings of the texts. The dialogues thus thwart claims about Plato’s philosophical *views*, thwart claims that the character, Socrates, is a mouthpiece for Plato, and even thwart claims about the historical person, Socrates. More in the manner of great poets, playwrights, and writers of fiction, Plato creates texts that, although meaningful, are not necessarily intended to contain his unmediated philosophical *view*. (Gordon 1999, 8, emphases added)

Against such a focus on ‘views’ as the only possible candidate for attribution, once we widen our consideration of the field of possible attributions, we see that it is in fact much less plausible to think that *no* attribution to Plato of any kind might justifiably be made.⁹ For attribution could potentially have many diverse kinds of content. What if instead of ‘views’ with their dogmatic overtone, one were to consider attributing ‘ideas’, or associations of ideas that one might call ‘patterns of argument’? Indeed, what if one were to give up seeking a substantive noun to attribute (views, ideas) and instead associate a verb – as in David Sedley’s lapidary characterization of the dialogues as ‘Plato thinking aloud’ (2003, 1)? If the attributions in question were patterns of thought, or even characteristic questionings or moves, rather than conclusions or dogmatic positions or ‘views’, this would surely make No-Attribution a less plausible position.

Broadening the field of candidates for attribution to Plato can also encourage us to broaden our consideration of the basis for making such. That is, a standard move of No-Attributionists is to deny any one-to-one correspondence between the views (in their parlance) expressed by a particular character within the dialogues, and the views of Plato – summed up as rejection of

treating any character as a ‘mouthpiece’ for Plato (as seen in Gordon, above; Wolfsdorf 2008, 19; and many others.) (Compare the terms of the ancient debate over whether Plato ‘dogmatized’; even those like Diogenes Laertius who identified Plato with some of his characters did not do so *simpliciter*, nor claim that the author dogmatized at all times.)¹⁰ To be sure, the idea of any character serving *in toto* and *simpliciter*, as it were, as a ‘mouthpiece for Plato’ is indeed an implausibly absolutist conception. ‘Mouthpiece’ suggests a rigid transparency giving a simple one-to-one correlation of a character’s ascribed utterance to author’s view. But such a simple and transparent correspondence to the author’s views hardly fits with the questioner role of the ‘mouthpiece’ candidate characters – Socrates, above all.

A better metaphor might consider a character like Socrates as an ‘avatar’ of the author. An avatar is generally used by a single player in a virtual reality game or world, to go on journeys that the player experiences along with the character. The avatar ‘represents’ the player and traverses pathways of exploration that the player chooses, without corresponding to the player in all attributes (being typically better looking, whereas of course Socrates was notoriously ugly) or always doing what the player would do in everyday reality. Yet it is still clear that an avatar is an avatar ‘of’ someone in particular rather than of anyone else. To be sure, the avatar conception is only one alternative to the ‘mouthpiece’ theory and would need further elaboration to explore the full dimension of its usefulness, and limits, as a conception of character-author relations in Plato. For present purposes, it serves to illustrate simply that the amply scorned ‘mouthpiece’ conception of that relationship can be rejected without thereby undercutting any possibility of attribution to Plato at all.¹¹

To continue fleshing out a rival to No-Attribution, we might begin from the questioner-respondent relationship that by and large structures the dialogues. While both parties clearly bear some responsibility for the direction that a question-answer examination takes, and the result it reaches, I would dissent from Michael Frede’s view that that there is more reason overall to attribute the argument that emerges to the respondent.¹² (Indeed, especially when an argument ends in *aporia*, it is difficult to know what argument one would be attributing to the respondent in such a case.) On the contrary, what I will call characteristic and recurrent ‘patterns of argumentative questioning’ are good mid-level candidates for potential attribution to Plato — as elements of his thought in his sense of his thinking, if not of settled dogma. For the most part, these are Socratic in the sense of being articulated as questions by him recurrently, across a wide number of dialogues, but there are importantly similar patterns of argumentative questioning to be found in dialogues not featuring Socrates as their principal questioner or speaker as well. (Of course, long stretches of a number of dialogues consist of speech acts that are not questionings, and a full theory would take account of these passages also.)¹³

I have in mind cases such as the pattern of argumentative questioning suggesting that virtue, or a specific virtue, must be a form of knowledge, or that it is better to suffer injustice than to do it. And once again, I would challenge any absolutist denial that there is any more reason to attribute to Plato such patterns than their opposites. Is it really plausible to suggest that Plato could have been less likely to think that it is better to suffer injustice than to do it, than the other way round? As my phrasing suggests, the attributions in question need not be

cast-iron or dogmatic; they are simply attributions of patterns of argumentative questioning that exhibit, or reveal, certain characteristic patterns of thinking or trains of thought. That such patterns are recurrently expressed need not imply that they are held dogmatically, fully worked out, fully non-contradictory with other trains of thinking expressed in the dialogues, and so on.¹⁴

One helpful way of characterizing distinctive patterns of thinking in Plato is to identify them in the negative. That is, however firm or conversely exploratory and open-ended were Plato's positive intellectual commitments, there are certain patterns of argument that one would never find reason in reading the dialogues to attribute to him. Lloyd Gerson makes a proposal along these lines by identifying as 'Platonism' (and, more important for our more limited purposes of focusing on the dialogues, authentically Platonic) 'the philosophical position arrived at by embracing the claims that contradict those claims explicitly rejected by Plato in the dialogues' (2005, 17). In a more recent work, he spells out these negative inferences as follows: 'The elements of UP [Ur Platonism] according to my hypothesis are antimaterialism, antimechanism, antinomialism, antirelativism, and antiskepticism' (2013, 10). While Gerson himself is committed to the view that we can find and recover these key tenets of Platonism not only from Plato's dialogues but also from later testimony and philosophical reflection in a sustained tradition, the negative approach to attribution that he outlines can be useful to our more limited project as well. Negative attributions — positions that we would never have reason to attribute to Plato, and that the dialogues through their principal speakers and through their overall course alike provide reason to challenge — can give content

to the idea of an overall authorial voice while leaving ample room for the provisional exploration of diverse positive theses or approaches within the multiplicity of the dialogues.¹⁵

Now Gerson himself observes that his summary of the central elements of Platonism includes 'no mention of politics' (2005, 36). Nor does any political dimension appear in his further account of those themes in subsequent work (Gerson 2013). My case here is again a minimal one: that we find significantly developed *political thought* in the dialogues (whether or not that amounts to a central element, though my own view is that it does). As a test case, in the second part of this paper I will argue that we have reason to attribute to Plato the pattern of thinking, characterized in the negative, that I will call *antianarchia*: a pattern of thinking about the profound dangers of anarchy in the sense of an absence of *archē* or rule within the *polis* and, insofar as the embodied soul is depicted as having parallel structural divisions as the *polis*, within the embodied soul as well.

Let me stress that this is asserted as a commitment of Plato's *political* thought, by which I mean the political relationships among, and within, embodied individuals in an era devoid of direct divine rule. This is not necessarily to postulate that *antianarchia* is a fundamental principle of the cosmos as such. There may be other ways of achieving the goodness of order — which I take to animate the value of *antianarchia* — in which rule and indeed the partition that rule presupposes are not involved. Indeed, Allan Silverman has argued that 'Plato...is committed to philosophical anarchy, the condition in which each soul rules itself. Philosophical anarchy is the ideal *nonpolitical* condition sought by reason' (2007, 63, emphasis

added). Evaluating that contention is beyond the scope of this paper. The claim here is that whether or not *antianarchia* is attributable to Plato at the most fundamental level of Platonic thought, it is nevertheless an important pattern of thinking in Platonic *political* thought.

I focus on the related terms *anarchia* (the noun) and *anarchos* (the adjective), beginning with the context of Greek texts prior and contemporaneous to Plato, on the basis of which we can seek to identify both his debts to, and his innovation in relation to, the discourse they formulate. I first identify the central role of officeholding in holding together a variety of meanings of *anarchia* and *anarchos*, and then lay out fifth- and fourth-century views in which anarchy and tyranny are typically opposed (though the classing of the ‘Thirty Tyrants’ as a year of *anarchia* in Athenian political history will require special consideration). Then, against this backdrop, we will explore the significance of Plato’s positing of *anarchia* and *anarchos* as characteristic of democracy and as the origin of tyranny in the *Republic*, with its central sense involving officeholding again proving central to his uses of these terms. The centrality of this discussion in the political thought of the *Republic* is promissory here for its exploration in other dialogues.¹⁶

II. INTERPRETING ANARCHIA IN CONTEXT AND IN PLATO’S POLITICAL THINKING

Anarchia and *anarchos* are formed as negative compounds of the noun *hē archē*, among the meanings of which, according to the Liddell, Scott, and Jones dictionary (LSJ) are ‘beginning, origin’; ‘first place or power, sovereignty’; and ‘magistracy, office’ – ideas

connected by a focus on the head or leader of a community or group who can originate its action. While the concomitant absence of such leadership can be described in general terms (LSJ begin their definition of *anarchia* with ‘lack of a leader, commander’), it is most often tied to a specific and identifiable role, the Homeric *basilees* or the military *archon* who commands a cavalry or hoplite troop – as is the case in the texts that the dictionary cites.¹⁷ However, with the evolution of specific annually elected offices in the ‘isonomic’ regimes of the seventh and sixth centuries (Farenga 2015: 102-103; Raaflaub 2015: 33), most classical usages of *archē* are better glossed by ‘official’ or ‘officeholder’ in a relatively institutionally specific framework rather than by the vaguer notion of leader.

If we take our bearings from the literal meaning of *anarchia* as an absence of office, we will find that this can be posited as brought about in one of at least four ways. *Anarchia* can in principle result from: (i) an absence of someone, or anyone, *filling* an office; (ii) an absence of any *properly constituted* office; or, (iii) an absence of *obedience* to someone, or anyone, filling an office, or specifically a properly constituted one — equating to a presence of disobedience. There is also (iv) sometimes a meaning of a more generalized sense of lawlessness and disorder — but this, I shall argue, is normally mediated through the specific mechanism of some kind of disordered relationship to office on the spectrum of (i) — (iii) above.

i) on an absence of anyone filling an office: LSJ give among their definitions of *anarchia* one simple meaning of ‘not holding office’, as well as a more specific meaning ‘at Athens, a year during which there was no archon’. The reference in the latter is to the period of the Thirty. But when we investigate that Athenian

usage, we find that it is actually a version of (ii), an absence of any *properly constituted* office. For while, as Peter Krentz notes (1982: 58), ‘we can draw up at least a partial list of the magistracies that were filled under the Thirty’, including that of the eponymous archon, who was one Pythodorus, nevertheless in the lists of archons drawn up after the restoration of the democracy, the year 404 is given thus: ‘404 ἀναρχία (Πυθόδωρος)’ (Meiggs and Lewis 1988: 291).¹⁸ Given that Pythodorus had actually been installed in office, this reflects a normative later judgment by the Athenians that that act of installation in office was not valid because the regime of the Thirty was not properly constituted or governed – a point to which we shall return in our conclusion.

ii) on an absence of any *properly constituted* office. We have already given the example of the later (implicit) denial of the status of properly constituted office to the eponymous archonship filled under the Thirty. There is a more speculative, but intriguing, example of a similar use in the fifth century, by Aeschylus in the *Seven Against Thebes*. Antigone is speaking, perhaps being made by Aeschylus to respond to Sophocles’ Creon (in *Antigone*) condemning an attitude of *anarchia* that implicitly includes Antigone.¹⁹ Here in contrast Aeschylus’ Antigone seems to claim *anarchia* as her own attitude, though in a complex move that we must unpack. The Greek is οὐδ’ αἰσχύνομαι, ἔχουσ’ ἄπιστον τήνδ’ ἀναρχίαν πόλει (ll.1029-30 according to some editions, though numbering of this section of the play is not standardized owing to doubts about its authenticity). What does this mean?

Christopher Dawson observes in the notes to his translation and commentary (1970, ad loc.) that these lines are:

Perhaps ambiguous: (a) I am not ashamed to regard this unconstitutional civic

group as unworthy of obedience; or (b) I am not ashamed to show such disobedient lawlessness toward the city.

Dawson’s (a) is intriguing, though most editors take the line of (b), e.g. the more literal Tucker (1908) ‘Nor have I any shame to shew this stubborn disobedience to the state’ (lines he numbers as 1020-21), who comments ad loc. that *exousan...anarchian* here should be understood as “‘showing disobedience” (= οὐ πειθαρχοῦσα)’ and *apiston* as ‘= οὐ πειθομένην’, with the dative of πόλει depending on the whole line. This may be the best rendering of the Greek based on parallel constructions elsewhere, notwithstanding that it is rather hard to understand why Antigone would be describing herself in such pejorative terms, at the very moment when she is endeavoring to defend her actions. But even if we accept Tucker’s reading, which is close to Dawson’s (b), we still need to make sense of Antigone’s self-description of disobedience. It may not be too farfetched to suggest that her disobedience responds to the lack of properly constituted (and utilized) office in the state. By describing her attitude as one of *anarchia*, she may be imputing it to Creon’s regime as well: where there is no (properly constituted) officeholder, here in the general sense of ruler, there can be no such thing as (meaningful) obedience.

iii) the third meaning of *anarchia*, that of disobedience – as I shall argue, normally to an officeholder in sense (i) or (ii) above – may be found in the passage of Sophocles’ *Antigone* where Creon asserts ‘that there is no evil worse than *anarchia*’ (ἀναρχίας δὲ μείζον οὐκ ἔστιν κακόν, l. 672). The Theban ruler begins these reflections by stating the crucial importance of obedience (*kluein*, l. 666, literally ‘to hear’ in the sense of ‘comply with, obey’) to anyone whom the city should ‘set up’ (l. 666) as

ruler. This is echoed at the end of his speech in ‘obedience’ in the specific sense of ‘obedience to command’ (*peitharchia*, l. 676).²⁰ As these ideas of obedience to rulers and commanders, or more broadly in this quasi-archaic context officeholders, surround his general assertion of the evil of *anarchia*, it makes sense to interpret *anarchia* once again in the specific sense of disobedience to an officeholder here.²¹

iv) on ‘lawlessness, anarchy’: while LSJ give this as a distinct meaning of *anarchia*, I will argue that in context the passages they cite (Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* (l. 883) and Thucydides (6.72)), together with others that bear this meaning, show a significant connection to the same senses involving office and officeholding (i-iii) that we have already discussed. More precisely, any sense of lawlessness attaching to *anarchia* is normally mediated through the specific mechanism of disobedience to officials.

Here is the *Agamemnon* passage (ll. 883-4), with Clytemnestra reflecting on ‘the chance that the people in clamorous revolt (*anarchia*) might overturn the Council’ (trans. Smyth 1926). What *anarchia* threatens to motivate here is that the people might disobey, indeed overturn, the Council — who are paradigmatic officeholders. Notice that the Greek makes no mention of laws or of lawlessness. Rather, what is specifically in view is disobedience to those holding office (*archē*), even if the implication is that this gives rise to a generalized disorder that one might label lawlessness.

Compare the Thucydides passage (6.72) that LSJ also cite for the ‘lawlessness’ meaning. There, Hermocrates, advising the Syracusan assembly on their response to the Athenian invasion launched in 415 BCE, observes the ironic way that a multiplicity of generals results in fomenting disobedience to command (*anarchian*) among the many. Here, the role

of military commander or general is what is specifically in question, and the fact that that role is an *office* constituted by election (*helesthai*) is stressed later in the same passage. Thus there is no specific reference to lawlessness here. Rather, once again, it is disobedience to properly constituted officials (senses ii and iii from earlier) that is in question, even if once again the implication is that this gives rise to a generalized disorder that one might label lawlessness.

A similar account can be given for the adjective *anarchos*, which is often translated ‘lawless’, for example in Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Aulis*, where Clytemnestra is pleading with Achilles: ‘I, a woman, have come, as you see, to a camp of lawless (ἄναρχον) sailor-folk’ (ll. 913-14, trans. Coleridge 1891).²² LSJ suggest a comparison for *anarchon* here with Euripides’ *Hecuba* (l. 607), where Coleridge translated ναυτική τ’ ἀναρχία more generally as the ‘unruliness of sailors’.²³ In neither passage is the context fleshed out enough for us to have strong cause to challenge the translation ‘lawless’ in favor of what might be a more precise ‘disobedient to authority’. Yet in both passages, the specific reference is to sailors, who are precisely a group who should have, and be obedient to, commanding officers. Thus I think we have reason to suggest that in Euripides too, while the result may be generalized disorder that we tend to describe in English as ‘lawlessness’, the specific mechanism at work is most likely to be disobedience to commanding officers. In this light, LSJ’s definitions of both *anarchia* and *anarchos* as involving ‘lawlessness’ are best given more specific interpretations as ‘disobedience to officeholders / leaders / commanders’, where the meaning of *archē* as office – as in our senses (i), (ii), and (iii) – is very much in play.

Let us now turn to the relationship between anarchy and tyranny before Plato. This is a

relationship of opposition: anarchy being an absence of (properly constituted, whether in the sense of legitimate or of effective or both) leaders or officials, whereas tyranny was a condition characterized by an all too present and powerful leader or official. We find this manifested in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* at line 696, in the course of Athena's establishment of the Athenian tribunal to try Orestes:

‘Neither anarchy nor tyranny (τὸ μήτ' ἄναρχον μήτε δεσποτούμενον) — this I counsel my citizenWens to support and respect, and not to drive fear wholly out of the city.’ (trans. Smyth 1926)²⁴

Notice here the positioning of anarchy and tyranny as two extremes, both of which Athens' citizens should seek to avoid in their city. We find the same clear opposition being drawn between anarchy and tyranny in Isocrates' *Panegyricus* (4.39): ‘For, finding the Hellenes living without laws and in scattered abodes, some oppressed by tyrannies, others perishing through anarchy (καὶ τοὺς μὲν ὑπὸ δυναστειῶν ὑβριζομένους τοὺς δὲ δι' ἀναρχίαν ἀπολλυμένους) [...]’ (trans. Norlin 1928). Indeed, the idea of anarchy as an absence of obedience to ruling officials, while tyranny is a kind of excrescence of ruling authority (or at least power), makes intuitive sense. Yet as we shall now see, Plato's intervention in the *Republic* serves to align anarchy and tyranny rather than to oppose them. This occurs insofar as Socrates posits anarchy – in the degenerating democratic city – as the ‘origin’ (*archē*, in its other, though related, sense) from which tyranny in the city seems to him to ‘evolve’ (563d3-4, trans. Grube / Reeve).

Following an account of each of the constitutions treated so far that is oriented around

archē and *archein*, Socrates sums up the democratic constitution thus (trans. Grube / Reeve, modified where noted):

[Soc.]: ... καὶ εἴη, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἡδεῖα πολιτεία καὶ ἄναρχος καὶ ποικίλη, ἰσότητά τινα ὁμοίως ἴσοις τε καὶ ἀνίσοις διανέμουσα.

[...] it would seem to be a pleasant constitution, one in which there is no such thing as office (*anarchos*) but there is great variety, and which distributes a sort of equality to both equals and unequals alike’ (558c2-4, modifying Grube/Reeve translation of the *anarchos* clause and what follows)²⁵

Plato here is not implying the democratic regime that he has described would lack office or officeholders. For there are manifestly (positions that look like) offices in the democratic constitution presented in *Republic VIII* (and indeed in real-life Greek democracies such as Syracuse, as we saw in Thucydides 6.72 above, as well as Athens and elsewhere): people are chosen by election or lot to fill those offices, lists of officeholders are drawn up, and so on. What there is not, however, is a widespread and ingrained attitude of obedience to rule that sustains the authority of those offices. On the contrary, in the democratic constitution, the relationship between rule and office is unstable; in the famous account that Socrates gives there to flesh out the democratic city, he says that no one is made to serve in office if they would prefer not to, while conversely, those who have been barred from office will nevertheless serve in it if they choose. And of course, this analysis of the democratic city is paralleled in the account of the democratic man, in whose genesis as a young man the lotus-eater desires call ‘insolence good breeding, anarchy freedom,

extravagance magnificence, and shamelessness courage' (560e).²⁶ An intolerance of rule characterizes democracy as a constitutional form both in the city and in the life of the representative democratic man.²⁷ The meaning of *anarchos* here must therefore be understood not as our earlier simple sense (i), a simple absence of office or officeholders, but in a combination of (ii) and (iii): to wit, disobedience which is so great as to be tantamount to a destruction of the proper constitution of office.

The characteristic of being *anarchos* already applies, in this sense, to the mature democracy. *Anarchia* then sets in full-blown in the account of the evolution of the tyrannical city out of the democratic one, which begins at 562a7-8. The democratic constitution undergoes 'change' (562c6) because of its 'insatiable desire for freedom', which makes the city as a whole (562c8 – no longer simply individuals within it) one that 'praises and honors, both in public and in private, rulers who behave like subjects and subjects who behave like rulers' (562d7-9, part of a larger passage discussed more fully in Lane, unpublished (a)). That is, the city as a whole loses its grip on the distinction between rulers and subjects (*archontas and archomenous*), which is tantamount to undermining the existence of ruling officials at all.

The result is that the spirit of freedom spreads into private households, breeding *anarchia* among the animals there (562e3-4), and more generally in the household relationships, in which fathers behave like sons and sons like fathers, resident aliens and foreign visitors are equated to citizens, and hierarchical relationships of obedience break down similarly between teachers and students, young and old, slave and free, men and women.²⁸ In each of these spheres, the established relationships of

obedience give way to disobedience, reaching the point that the recognized hierarchies and positions of authority break down altogether. While these are not 'offices' strictly speaking – a point that Plato marks by highlighting the turn to the household here – we see here the same dynamic of disobedience that is so widespread as to amount to the destruction of the very roles and positions to which expectations of obedience had previously attached.

The absence of obedience to properly constituted officials allows for the evolution of an improper one, as it were, or more precisely, for the destruction of proper positions of office altogether, supplanted by the entirely personal and arbitrary rule of the tyrant. For it is striking that nouns for 'office', prevalent in the account of each regime in Book VIII up to this point, disappear from the description of both the tyrannical city and the tyrannical man. The tyrant is described as suspecting people of 'not favoring his rule (*archein*)' (567a6), but as according only 'positions of power (*tōn sugkatastēsantōn*)' (567b1) to his henchmen – and those soon to be purged at that; other than that one phrase, those on the tyrant's side are consistently described only as those serving as his 'bodyguard (*doruphorōn*)', e.g. at 567d6, rather than in the terms for 'office' used for all of the previous regimes in Book VIII.

Noting in the conclusion to Book VIII that he and Adeimantus have by this point 'adequately described how tyranny evolves from democracy and what it's like when it has come into being' (569a6-7), Socrates makes a new beginning at the start of Book IX 'to consider the tyrannical man himself, how he evolves from a democrat, what he is like when he has come into being, and whether he is wretched or blessedly happy' (571a1-3).²⁹ Lacking the space here to consider this account in full, we must leap to the role of *anarchia* in such a man's

character (placed in the section corresponding to ‘what he is like when he has come into being’, which stretches from 573c10 – ‘But what way does he live?’ – to 576d6 where they turn to the question of happiness).

Famously, Socrates specifies that the tyrannical man is now subjected to *doxa*, opinions or beliefs, that were formerly — when he lived under the laws and his father and had a democratic constitution within him — freed only in sleep (574d5-e2, closely following Grube/Reeve). Now these *doxa* — presumably those that value the most extreme and shameful pleasures and appetites, and disregard anything but their attainment by means however unlawful or violent — ‘rule together with’ erotic love or *erōs* (574d7-8), which ‘lives like a tyrant within him, in complete anarchy and lawlessness, as his sole ruler (ἀλλὰ τυραννικῶς ἐν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἔρως ἐν πάσῃ ἀναρχία καὶ ἀνομία ζῶν, ἅτε αὐτὸς ὦν μόναρχος)’ (575a1-2, introducing comma after ‘lawlessness’ absent from Grube and Reeve, just to clarify the English sense).

Are *anarchia* and *anomia* simply functioning exegetically here? The contextual evidence for other uses of *anarchia* both outside and within Plato that we have been considering would suggest not. Instead, the idea that *erōs* can be the sole ruler (*monarchos*) of the tyrannical man while its reign is characterized by utter *anarchia* (as well as *anomia*) — is meant to point up an oxymoron: that a ruler within the soul which rules anarchically cannot really be said to rule at all. I would suggest that in light of the absence of specifically constituted offices in the tyranny (tyrannical city), the same is true at that level as well: a ruler — the tyrannical individual — who rules anarchically cannot really be said to rule at all. Thus

tyranny grows out of anarchy both within the democracy and in the innermost relationships, in household and soul, of those individuals living under a degenerating democracy and then of the tyrannical individual himself (or himself and his henchmen, as hinted at occasionally throughout this part of the text). Once again, the interplay of senses (ii) and (iii) of *anarchia* is in play: disobedience, or the absence of obedience, can become so profound as to yield an abolition of genuine rule and office altogether.

In closing we may return to the separate meaning given by LSJ for *anarchia* as applied to the absence of properly constituted officials under the Thirty. As we have seen, the restored Athenian democracy seems rapidly to have concluded that the rule of the Thirty — notwithstanding its having been replete with seeming officeholders as it was — should instead be recorded in the city’s annals as a period of ‘anarchy’. But when did the Athenians and others come to describe that ‘anarchy’ as also a ‘tyranny’? When, that is, did the ‘Thirty’ begin to be described as the ‘Thirty Tyrants’ and their rule as a ‘tyranny’?³⁰

Our earliest explicit references are in Aristotle or his school: in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*³¹ and in [Aristotle] *Athenaiōn Politeia*.³² That is to say that the earliest ‘Thirty Tyrants’ explicit locution is post-Platonic, while Xenophon’s making play with the language of tyranny put into the mouths of players of the time (*Hell.* 2.3.16, 49) is probably post-Platonic (or at least written toward the end of Plato’s life) as well.³³ None of the orators use the name even in describing the most violent and shocking aspects of the Thirty’s domination³⁴. Perhaps it was Plato whose forging of a counterintuitively close relationship between anarchy and tyranny made possible the equation between the Athenian-denoted ‘anarchy’ of the Thirty and their posthumous condemnation as ‘tyrants’?

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NOTES

1 For general orientation to methods in the history of political thought, see the essays revised and collected in Skinner 2002: Vol. I, as contrasted with Bevir 1999; for my own views on Bevir, Skinner, and method more generally, see variously Lane 2000, 2002, 2003, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b. David Wootton insightfully remarks that the 'Cambridge School' approaches taken by Skinner, John Dunn, and J.G.A. Pocock, among others, 'represent merely the application of the methods and value of professional history to the history of ideas' (1984, 12).

2 This latter group for the most part are far from sharing the general skepticism about attributions of authorial

positions expressed by the former group, populated for its part by, say, deconstructionists. On the contrary, No-Attributionist cases often revolve around contrasting the putatively special difficulties or impossibilities of attributing views to Plato with the purportedly unproblematic case of doing so for other authors. Michael Frede, for example, claims that other philosophers such as Aristotle, Cicero, and Augustine who wrote dialogues did so ‘in such a way as to make it clear which theses and which arguments they endorse, e.g. by introducing themselves as speakers in the dialogue’ – and they also wrote other forms of works that we take to be less opaque in setting out the positions with which they are taken to identify (1992, 203). But surely anyone reading Cicero’s *De Re Publica* will at least be puzzled by the standing of Scipio’s claim there that monarchy is the best form of rule, given Cicero’s known devotion to the mixed constitution of the Roman republic.

3 For ‘anonymity’, see the title of Press (ed.) 2000: *Who Speaks for Plato?: Studies in Platonic Anonymity*. For ‘silence’, see Kosman 1992, titled ‘Silence and imitation in the Platonic dialogues’. Kosman claims that such putative silence ‘in philosophical texts is of a different order, and more remarkable’ than literary authors [emphasis original]. This is a claim that needs more defense than he gives it. For example, the straightforward identification of an author with his written words is not always possible even for seemingly paradigmatic cases; Kosman’s chosen example of Aristotle as paradigmatic of an unproblematically unsilent philosophical author, for example, takes no account of the subtleties of Aristotle’s relationship to the *endoxa*. Conversely, the silence of literary authors, among the paradigms of whom for Kosman is Aristophanes, is also generative of significant debate, for example as to his putative political intentions as a dramatist (Sidwell 2009). Finally, as the epigraph to this paper should remind us, the line between ‘philosophical’ and ‘literary’ texts is far from clear; Plato has in a number of influential traditions been read as more of a literary figure than a philosophical one (Hunter 2012).

4 By contrast with the embarrassment of riches that we possess for Plato is the relative patchiness of survival of other classical Greek texts: not all the works by the ‘big three’ tragedians, no other ‘Old Comedies’ in full than those of Aristophanes, and of a large set of ancient *Sōkratikoī logoi*, only examples of those of Aeschines of Sphettos survived in any considerable bulk along with Plato’s and Xenophon’s (with fragments or reports of others). The contextualist project that I pursue in the second part of the paper, seeking to assess Plato’s debts to and transformations of patterns of thinking already extant by his time, can only attain provisional conclusions therefore.

5 Today, the authenticity of the ‘letters’ is widely doubted, although this was not the case in antiquity, it seems, before the reporting (in the *Prolegomenon to Plato’s Philosophy* ch.26) of some doubts about Letter 12 expressed by Proclus. For discussion of the Seventh Letter’s claim, perhaps the best founded, that is cautious about authenticity but positive about its value, see Brunt 1993; for outright

rejection of its authenticity, see Burnyeat - Frede 2015. James C. Klagge wisely cautions: ‘The [seventh] letter purports to represent Plato speaking in *propria persona*, but it does not follow that he is doing so’ (1992, 6).

6 The Thrasyllan canon includes thirty-five dialogues, plus the group of letters as a thirty-sixth item (I leave aside the question of the authenticity of all of the dialogues therein). This number of twenty-four is by my count, though including several dialogues the authenticity of which is either disputed or widely rejected today, and comprises *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Cratylus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, *Phaedrus*, *Alcibiades I*, *Alcibiades II*, *Hipparchus*, *Theages*, *Laches*, *Gorgias*, *Meno*, *Hippias Major*, *Hippias Minor*, *Ion*, *Clitophon*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Minos*, *Laws*, *Epinomis*. Charalabopoulos counts twenty-three but does not list them (2012, 57). *Epinomis* is the only one that consists of pure mimetic dialogue without any narration recounting other dialogue.

7 On Socrates in particular as a narrator, see Schultz 2013.

8 G.R.F. Ferrari writes in contrast that ‘The live voice that we hear is our own – the voice of the interpretive performer – not Plato’s’ (1987, 211).

9 Even Gordon prefaces her remarks above by saying, ‘In one sense, of course, it’s all Plato [...] But in another sense, he erases himself through these very devices’ (1999, 8). My point here may be put as pressing her to explain the ‘sense’ in which ‘it’s all Plato’ after all.

10 Diogenes Laertius 3.52: ‘Now where he has a firm grasp Plato expounds his own view [no Greek word corresponding to ‘view’ here] and refutes the false one, but, if the subject is obscure, he suspends judgement. His own views (τῶν αὐτῷ δοκούντων) are expounded by four persons, Socrates, Timaeus, the Athenian Stranger, the Eleatic Stranger. These strangers are not, as some hold, Plato and Parmenides, but imaginary characters without names, for, even when Socrates and Timaeus are the speakers, it is Plato’s doctrines that are laid down [‘doctrines that are laid down’ translates δογματίζει].’ While τῶν αὐτῷ δοκούντων is here, by George Hicks in the Loeb, translated as ‘his own views’, it is important to recognize that it is a broad expression, which could refer to the contents of his thinking, supposing, its seeming so to him, and so on. Later ancient authors, such as Aulus Gellius, had no qualms about attributing things written in the dialogues, including by Platonic characters, as being what Plato ‘says’ himself: see Zadorojnyi 2010, citing Gell. 14.3.4 and 13.19.2 on Plato, and comparing these locutions in 1.1.1, 17.11.6, and elsewhere).

11 Even ‘speaking for’ or ‘representing’ as a relationship is seldom as straightforward as mouthpiece absolutism would suggest. The well-known principal-agent dilemma revolves precisely around the capacity for authorized spokespersons and their principals to diverge. More generally, the problem of attributing actions from agents back to their putative (because authorizing) authors is a fundamental issue in political theory.

12 Frede 1992, albeit that he observes that an argument may be one that a respondent is trying on, or would not

have thought of or claimed to be committed to without the intervention of the questioner, and may also in the aporetic dialogues be one that he is eventually led to recognize as contradicting his original beliefs (1992, 206 and *passim*).

13 Non-question narrative structure constitutes the bulk of the *Timaeus*, *Menexenus* and *Critias*; the anomalous overall form of the *Apology*; and recurrent episodes of reported speech or other forms of short monologues, such as Socrates' report of Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*.

14 Here, my methodological concerns cut across some of the more standard divides in the literature, many of which have become so sophisticated in each competing position as almost to cease to be meaningful divides at all: such as developmentalist versus unitarian, or literary versus philosophical interpretative approaches. For the latter, one reason not to be excessively rigorist in the methodology of studying Plato is that partisans of seemingly opposed methods often agree in practice on substantive points. Compare Ruby Blondell's stance, identifying herself with the "literary" camp of Plato interpreters who endorse 'the fundamental literary-critical axiom that every detail of a text contributes to the meaning of the whole' (2002, 4), with that of M.M. McCabe, generally viewed as belonging to the 'philosophical' camp of interpreters, who nevertheless endorses the very similar 'default position that Plato wrote nothing in vain' (2008, 99).

15 I see the question of the relationship of Plato to Platonism as a different Collingwoodian question or project from the question of the interpretation of the dialogues themselves, at least in the first instance, though I recognize that this approach will be controversial for those like Gerson who see the two as really one.

16 Pace Blondell 2002, 6, who remarks on a 'paucity of cross-references in his [Plato's] dialogues', consider McCabe 2008, 110 who details the 'extraordinarily large intertextuality of other dialogues' beyond her principal examples of the *Republic* and *Timaeus*.

17 For *anarchia*: Herodotus (9.23) clearly invokes the absence of a military commander (see also e.g. Xen. *Anab.* 3.2.29); in Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women* (906), it is harder to determine whether a generalized sense of 'lord, master', or a specific sense of 'king', attaches to *anax*, the predicted presence of which – as the herald ironically assures the suppliant women – means that they need not fear a condition of *anarchia* where they are being taken. For *anarchos*: the first meaning in LSJ is similarly 'without head or chief', stretching back to Homer (*Il.* 2.703, where the sense is clearly a military commander in battle whose death does not leave his men as 'the leaderless' (*hoi anarchoi*) because the dead man's younger brother immediately assumes command). Xen. *Cyr.* 3.3.11 is not mentioned in LSJ but has a similar meaning.

18 See also Xen. *HG* 2.3.1: 'the Athenians...designate the year as without an archon (*ἀναρχίαν τὸν ἐνιαυτὸν καλοῦσιν*); at 2.3.11, Xenophon refers to the Thirty themselves establishing a 'Council and the other officials as they saw fit'. Translations from Krentz 1989.

19 Hutchinson 1985, ad loc. (l.1030: *ἀναρχίαν*), for both

this as an 'attitude' and the connection with Creon (his note in full: 'an attitude, as at *Ag.* 883 (in my opinion), and elsewhere. Creon uses the word with Antigone in mind at *S. Ant.* 672, and he describes her as *ἀπιστήσασα* at 656. We are hardly compelled to infer that this author is borrowing from Sophocles. There is, of course, no reason why he should not use Sophocles as well as his primary source').

20 He also invokes both ruling and being ruled as capacities appropriate to a good ruler (*archein...archesthai*, *Il.* 668-9), a passage that should be read alongside Aristotle's more famous invocation of 'ruling and being ruled' in *Politics* Book 3.

21 Notice that lawbreaking has been mentioned a couple of lines before, at l. 663, but separately and with its own distinct wording.

22 I have taken this citation of the Coleridge translation from Perseus. Admittedly, it is a rather old-fashioned translation; compare 'camp full of unruly sailors' instead in Morwood 1999, *ad loc.*

23 I have taken this citation of the Coleridge translation from Perseus, which reports it as reprinted in Oates O'Neill 1938. Compare again Morwood's translation (2001, *ad loc.*), 'the sailors' indiscipline'.

24 As LSJ comment, here *to...anarchon* functions grammatically as the equivalent of the noun *anarchia*, so that this usage of the adjective at least can be expected to closely track uses of the substantive.

25 This focus on rule and office in *Republic* VIII is the subject of Lane unpublished (a), from which parts of this section of the paper are adapted.

26 Contrast Johnstone 2013, who reads *anarchos* as meaning 'not ruled in a stable and enduring way' (140; see also *passim*), but does not see that the very notion of rule is dissolved in Plato's use of it here.

27 Compare Aristotle's remarks on the way that the rich can come to feel 'contempt' for the 'disorder and anarchy (*τῆς ἀταξίας καὶ ἀναρχίας*)' within democracies, with examples of Thebes, Megara, and Syracuse, at *Pol.* 1302b27-33.

28 Compare Plato, *Laws* 639a ff., which gives way to a broader discussion about the need for rulers in every form of association, and more specifically, Aristotle *Pol.* 1319b28ff. on '*anarchia*' among slaves and women and children as 'democratic' characteristics of a tyranny. While one commentator glosses this as 'independence' among the slaves, I think it can also be read as lack of obedience to authorities.

29 This is consistent with the Book VIII pattern of describing each constitution, both its nature and how it comes to be, and then the corresponding individual or man, both how he comes to be and how he lives – adding to this the final judgment about happiness promised from Book II.

30 This question goes strangely unaddressed in the literature; there is no attention to it given in the account of the rule of the Thirty in Krentz 1982, nor in the discussions of Athenian memory thereof in Loraux 2002 and Wolpert 2002.

31 Mitchell 2006: 182, cites this passage, Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, 1401a35-6: 'Again, one may quote what Poly-crates said of Thrasybulus, that he deposed thirty tyrants (τριάκοντα τυράννους)'.
 32 *Ath. Pol.* 41.2, on which that text's editor P.J. Rhodes (1981) comments *ad loc.*: 'Except in this summary, the earliest direct reference to the Thirty as tyrants is in D.S. xiv.2.i, but X. H. 2.iii.16, 49 comes close to making Critias and Theramenes describe the regime as a tyranny[...] – descriptions we may contrast, as he observes, with *Ath. Pol.* 53.1, which refers to 'the oligarchy of the Thirty'.

33 Krentz 1995: 4-5, on the dates of composition of the *Hel-lenika*: '[t]he current majority view[...] is that [...] he wrote the rest [apart from I-II.3.10, the 'continuation' of Thucydides' *History*) as a continuous whole in the 350s'.

34 Lysis, 'Against Eratosthenes' (12.35) prophesies that if the defendant, one of the Thirty, is acquitted, then he and his surviving colleagues will have become *turannoi* in the city, but this is not equivalent to naming the *Thirty* during their reign as such.