God and Justice in Hesiod and Plato: Interpreting the Myth of Protagoras (*Prot.* 320d-322d)

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Resumen

El artículo examina la interconexión entre los principios fundamentales de la sociabilidad humana y el elemento de lo divino. Específicamente, que se considera en la estrecha conexión entre las nociones de dios y justicia, establecidas en los trabajos de las tradiciones pre-filosóficas y filosóficas, es decir Hesíodo y Platón. Se presta especial atención a los motivos, que pueden ser compartidos por Hesíodo y Platón en relación con los principios que subyacen en la vida social y política del hombre. La investigación comienza con una referencia a la imagen de Zeus que como garantía de justicia permite una vida comunitaria plenamente humana y ordenada (Hes. *Op.* 213-285). Sobre esta base, se plantea la cuestión de hasta qué punto Platón se basa en esa imagen y en qué medida promueve la visión de Hesíodo en sus propios escritos. La respuesta se busca a través de un análisis detallado del mito de los orígenes de la cultura en el *Protágoras* (320d-322d). Entre otros ecos de Hesíodo, el pasaje contiene la imagen clave de Zeus que proporciona a la humanidad justicia y pudor respetuoso, es decir, los principios indispensables de la vida social en las ciudades. En cuanto al problema de autoría de toda la narración, presentada por Protágoras en un escenario dialógico, el artículo defiende que la posición es platónica en sus puntos esenciales. Los argumentos a favor de esta orientación incluyen: 1) la detección de diferencias significativas en comparación con otras partes del tratamiento sofístico de la cuestión de los orígenes de la cultura (a este respecto, se examinará el fragmento del *Sisyphus*, B25 en particular); 2) resaltar elementos de la antropología y teología platónica presentes en el mito. Aquí, un punto de referencia importante son las *Leyes* de Platón, especialmente una larga exposición sobre las amenazas del ateísmo en el libro X (889a-906c), que rechaza el convencionalismo como un modelo explicativo de coexistencia política. Con un análisis textual detallado, el artículo pretende mostrar cómo Platón desarrolla y transforma la concepción de los principios de la sociabilidad humana, tanto en respuesta a sus predecesores como en contraste con la discusión contemporánea. La interpretación propuesta enfatiza el papel fundamental de Dios en la organización de los asuntos humanos, como una característica constante del tratamiento de este tema por parte de Platón, también reconocible en la estructura del mito de Protágoras.

Palabras clave: Hesíodo, Platón, Protágoras, mito, origen, cultura, dios, justicia

Abstract

The paper examines the interconnection between fundamental principles of human sociability and the element of the divine. Specifically, it focusses on the close connection between the notions of god and justice, established in the works of pre-philosophical and philosophical traditions, namely Hesiod and Plato. Special attention is paid to motives, which may be shared by Hesiod and Plato regarding principles underlying human social and political life. The examination opens with a reference to Hesiod's image of Zeus as a guarantee of justice, enabling a fully human and well-ordered communal life (Hes. *Op.* 213-285). On this basis, the question is raised to what degree Plato draws from this basic image and to what extent he prolongs Hesiod's vision in his own writings. The answer is sought in a detailed analysis of the myth of the origins of culture in Plato's *Protagoras* (*Prot.* 320d-322d). Among other Hesiodic echoes, the passage contains Zeus' key image providing humankind with justice and shame, i.e. indispensable principles of social life in the cities. Concerning the authorship problem of the whole narration, presented by Protagoras in the dialogue's dramatic setting, the paper defends the position that the story is Platonic in its essential points. Arguments in favour of this conviction include: 1) detection of significant differences in comparison with other pieces of sophistic treatment of the issue of the origins of culture (in this respect, the *Sisyphus* fragment B25 will be examined in particular), 2) highlighting elements of Platonic anthropology and theology present in the myth. Here, a significant reference point is Plato's *Laws,* especially a long exposition on threats of atheism in Book 10 (889a-906c), refusing conventionalism as an explanatory model of political co-existence. With a thorough textual analysis, the paper aims to show how Plato develops and transforms the conception of underlying principles of human sociability, both in response to his predecessors and in confrontation with ongoing contemporary discussion. The proposed interpretation emphasises god's fundamental role in the arrangement of human affairs, as a constant feature of Plato's treatment of the issue, also recognisable in the structure of Protagoras' myth.

Keywords: Hesiod, Plato, Protagoras, myth, origin, culture, god, justice

The interconnection between fundamental principles of human sociability and the element of the divine represents a significant line of thought in the tradition of Greek political reflection. I will examine in this paper some basic expressions of this conceptual line. Specifically, I will focus on the close connection between the notions of god and justice, established in Hesiod and Plato's works.

Introductory reference to Hesiod should serve as an outlook to the very roots of Greek conception of social life. On this basis, I want to explore whether and to what extent does the mental heritage of Hesiod's social vision survive in later tradition, namely in Plato's political philosophy. The field for this examination will be a detailed analysis of the myth of the origins of culture in Plato's *Protagoras* that is also the central theme of the whole paper. Important reference points associated with this analysis will be: (i) Hesiod and his image of Zeus as a guarantee of justice in the *Works and Days*, (ii) contemporary sophistic tradition, particularly the treatment of origins of culture in the *Sisyphus* fragment B25, (iii) elements of Platonic anthropology, theology and penology expressed in later dialogues, especially in the *Laws.*

Within this framework, I want to show how Plato develops his conception of principles of human sociability, both in response to his predecessors and in confrontation with ongoing contemporary discussion.

Turning first to the predecessors, we may recall the image of human life secured under Zeus' patronage in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (*Op.* 276-280):

> For the son of Cronos has ordained this law for men, that fishes and beasts and winged fowls should devour one another, for right is not in them; but to mankind he gave right (*dikên*) which proves far the best[1].

This basic image, sharply distinguishing men's orderly life, arranged according to the principle of justice and beasts' disorderly life subjected to mutual struggle, is part of a comprehensive praise of justice, highlighting the positive effects of justice in human life and warning against the negative consequences of injustice (*Op.* 213-285). Here, justice is presented as the very foundation of humanity - something, which releases man from simple animal relationships. At the same time, it is an important social factor, since it is a constitutive element of the communal life in the *polis.* Its origin is in the sphere of the divine, as the reference to Zeus as its initiator and guarantor emphasises. Zeus' presence is of utmost importance. It is absolutely essential for human life in this world that only Zeus' government over the world opened up a vital space for the life of man and human community. Coherence of the human world is ensured by the very existence of order and justice, over which Zeus holds patronage. In the poetic language, this idea is expressed by the image of the divine genealogies: one of Zeus' wives is Themis, the personification of order and law, a consort with which Zeus brings to the world Eunomiê, Dikê and Eirênê (*Theog.* 901-903). Order, law, justice and peace, are all beneficial factors of Zeus' patronage over the world, without which the human community is not conceivable. Extension of these features in the human world represents the king's figure, the *basileus.* His authority over the settlement of disputes protects human community from internal disruption, securing its peaceful coexistence (*Theog.* 81-90).

The vision of the Zeus regime's benevolent features is complemented by its negative counterpart in the final part of the myth of the races, outlining a gloomy picture of life completely deprived of social coherence (*Op.* 180-201). It offers an inverted image of life based on violence, identifying right with strength, showing no reverence and mutual respect. In an impressive poetic rendering we read (*Op.*197-201):

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[1] τόνδε γὰρ ἀνθρώποισι νόμον διέταξε Κρονίων ἰχθύσι μὲν καὶ θηρσὶ καὶ οἰωνοῖς πετεηνοῖς ἐσθέμεν ἀλλήλους, ἐπεὶ οὐ δίκη ἐστὶ μετ᾽ αὐτοῖς: ἀνθρώποισι δ᾽ ἔδωκε δίκην, ἣ πολλὸν ἀρίστη γίγνεται (cf. Evelyn-White 1914, *ad locum*).

> And then Aidôs and Nemesis, with their sweet forms wrapped in white robes, will go from the wide-pathed earth and forsake mankind to join the company of the deathless gods: and bitter sorrows will be left for mortal men, and there will be no help against evil.

In their absence, Aidôs - the feeling of reverence or shame, restraining people from doing wrong - and Nemesis - the feeling of righteous indignation and desire for revenge aroused in the face of injustice - remind the listener that they represent basic social emotions sustaining human community's coherence[2].

The vanishing of Aidôs and Nemesis and their upward movement to Olympus away from human society brings us to another image, demonstrating opposite movement - the passage of the Protagorean myth of the origins of culture in the *Protagoras* (*Prot.* 320d-322d). The myth is usually interpreted in the context of ongoing sophistic discussion about origins of religion and society; Protagoras' figure, rendering the myth in the dialogue's dramatic setting, is supposed to be its real author[3]. It is true that the fifth century witnessed the rise of accounts of human prehistory, of the development of human beings and human life in society[4]. The sophistic movement made a decisive contribution to this line of reasoning and Protagoras himself is supposed to be interested in the issue[5].

Nevertheless, I am not convinced that Protagoras' literary character is left to reproduce a more or less authentic account of the historical Protagoras. Concerning the authorship problem of the whole narration, I incline to the position that the story does not simply reproduce Protagoras' own views, but rather reflects Platonic position. Of course, rejecting Protagoras' authorship of the myth does not mean that that the story has no Protagorean flavour at all; on the contrary, it is part of Plato's mastery that Protagoras' literary character is believable and persuasive and says things, resembling what the historical Protagoras *could* say[6]. However, I do not read

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[2] In typical Hesiodic manner, Aidôs and Nemesis are presented both as divine powers and concepts representing human sociability principles. Traditional meaning of the terms is clarified by Mathew W. Dickie: «The name of the emotion experienced by those who incur the condemnation of their fellows is *aidos*. *Aidos* is also the name for feeling of inhibition which is aroused by fear of what others will say and which prevents a man from behaving in an unseemly fashion. What the man who feels *aidos* fears is that he may provoke *nemesis* "indignation", in his fellows and that they may condemn his conduct. When *nemesis* or its derivatives are used ... of a man's or god's anger, that anger is almost invariably anger aroused by untoward conduct on the part of another... It is the indignation which men feel when they observe unrighteous conduct» (DICKIE 1978, 93).

[3] This position is held by MORGAN 2000.

[4] KAHN 1981. Cf. KAHN 1997.

[5] He has been attributed a work *On the State of Things in the Beginning* (DK 80A1). Nevertheless, no more than the title has survived and we cannot infer anything concerning Protagoras' positive doctrine on this issue.

[6] According to Charles Kahn, the theory Plato assigns to Protagoras is not historically accurate, but historically plausible (KAHN 1981, 100).

the narration as a piece of sophistic evolutionary interpretation of the origins of civilisation; I will be defending the position that the story's message is Platonic in its essential points.

My first objection against the myth's evolutionary interpretation is based on the belief that the narration's mythical form should be taken seriously. Myth develops its own temporality, wherein the gradual uncovering of temporal sequences does not necessarily refer to the chronological order of events, but primarily reveals the given subject's essential features. After all, Plato himself warns his readers/listeners against literal understanding of the narration's chronology concerning the things in the beginning in the *Timaeus* (*Tim.* 34b-c):

> Now as regards the Soul, although we are essaying to describe it after the body, God did not likewise plan it to be younger than the body; for, when uniting them, He would not have permitted the elder to be ruled by the younger; but as for us men, even as we ourselves partake largely of the accidental and casual, so also do our words. God, however, constructed Soul to be older than Body and prior in birth and excellence…[7]

We can assume something similar in the *Protagoras*, where the narration structured in terms of 'before' and 'after' corresponds to the expression's mythical form and in this way allows to articulate man's nature and principles of human sociability. From this perspective, several essential features of the human race are revealed. These features define man as *homo faber, homo religiosus* and *homo politicus.* They suggest man's specific status. Men are endowed with divine gifts, separating them from the animal sphere: they master the crafts and are able to provide means of survival despite their physical weakness, they have unique relationship with the gods through worship and ritual and finally, they lead a social life through a universal share of shame and justice.

I am convinced that here we are confronted not so much with a progressive development's description from a primitive state, as with a demonstration of man's complete nature and its fundamental characteristics. In this respect, it may be instructive to compare the narration presented in the *Protagoras* with another piece of the issue's contemporary treatment - the fragment from the satyr play *Sisyphus* (DK 88 B25). There is controversy over the play's authorship attributed either to Critias or Euripides[8]. However, irrespective of whether it belongs to a line of thought developed on the platform of sophistry or drama, it represents the ongoing lively discussion about human society's origins, taking place in a variety of genres. For my purpose, it will be crucial to focus on the doctrine's key elements themselves. Considering speeches of *dramatis personae* Sisyphus and Protagoras together, significant

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[7] Lᴀᴍʙ 1925, *ad locum.*
[8] Cf. Rᴏᴡᴇ, Sᴄʜᴏꜰɪᴇʟᴅ 2007, 89. Charles Kahn, following the arguments of Dihle, Scodel, Ostwald and Yunis, defends Euripides' authorship (Kᴀʜɴ 1997, 249-250).

differences appear under closer examination that should prevent us from direct identification of the *Protagoras* myth with alleged Protagoras' theory corresponding to contemporary tradition of *Kulturentstehungslehre.* I will highlight three main points of difference:

1) The first point concerns mankind's assumed original state. The *Sisyphus* fragment conceives these origins as totally miserable: 'There was a time when the life of human beings was disordered and beastly, and life was ruled by force' (v. 1-2)[9]. These lines emphasise the violent character of mutual relations of the first people, likening their life to that of wild beasts. There is nothing like that in the Protagorean passage. From the myth's wording we can infer that from the beginning humans are definitely separated from animals and have a different lot: animals differ from humans by lack of *logos* (they are called *aloga* in *Prot.* 321c) and by natural equipment for survival[10]. Humans on the other side compensate their physical deficiency by mastering arts. This skill is available to them not until later, but already upon their appearance in the world they are equipped with the arts and crafts (*Prot.* 321c5-d4). It means that people do not invent arts themselves under the pressure of need, but have them from the very beginning as their specific way of interacting with the world[11]. With this ability, people lead a specific human life with no sign of beastlike existence. Regarding the clear distinction between animal and human life, the passage is closer to the Hesiodic image; as is also confirmed by reference to the Promethean intervention in establishing the arts[12].

2) Divinity's status and role are completely different in the *Protagoras* and *Sisyphus.* Whereas the *Protagoras* passage continuously assumes gods' permanent presence, explicitly stating that they precede human race's appearance (*Prot.* 320d1)[13], the *Sisyphus* fragment considers gods to be human invention, playing an instrumental role in the society (v. 12-16):

> ...a shrewd and clever-minded man invented for mortals a fear of the gods, so that there might be a deterrent for the wicked, even if they act or say or think anything in secret. Hence from this source the divine was introduced...

Here, gods represent an intensified external device for maintaining obedience and deterrent for the wrongdoers. The *Protagoras* draws a completely different pic-

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[9] I quote the translation from Kahn 1997, 247-248.

[10] Despite his name, Epimetheus is clever in his balanced distribution of natural abilities among different animals. Man stands apart because he has to be equipped with completely different abilities.

[11] The motive of development of arts is absent from the *Sisyphus* fragment, but appears in Aeschylus, *Prom.* 442-506; Euripides, *Suppl.* 201-213; Isocrates, *Panaeg.* 4, 28 and in detailed later elaboration in Lucretius, *De rerum nat.* V 925-1457.

[12] The Promethean motif is further used in drama, cf. Aeschylus, *Prom.* 442-506.

[13] ἦν γάρ ποτε χρόνος ὅτε θεοὶ μὲν ἦσαν, θνητὰ δὲ γένη οὐκ ἦν.

ture. It establishes an original relationship between gods and men, when claiming that man was partaker of a divine portion and literally a close kin of the gods[14]. An expression of this fundamental proximity between gods and men is worship and cult that appears to be men's primary activity (*Prot.* 322a4-6). It means that technical capabilities, especially the ability to dispose of fire, are primarily manifested in ritual behaviour[15]. Here again is emphasised man's exclusive status compared to other living creatures because he is the only one with such a privileged relationship with the gods from the very beginning. Technical skill is then not only a sign of man's unique status in relation to animals, but also of his fundamental relationship with the gods.

In this context, very close links are beginning to emerge between the classification of *homo faber* and *homo religiosus.* Gerd van Riel's observation is telling: «On the basis of the chronological distinction between the two gifts described in the myth (the theft of fire before mankind being brought to the light and the gift of social abilities afterwards), we can now conclude that this means that religion - an effect of the possession of fire - is more deeply rooted in human nature than sociality. It is more fundamental, and more "natural" than what is handed over in the second gift. So a religious attitude precedes all kinds of social behaviour and of community»[16].

At the same time, all this sounds very un-Protagorean, given that the gods' wide activity described in the myth and man's kinship with them is in sharp contrast with the notorious agnosticism concerning gods documented for the historical Protagoras: 'Concerning the gods', Protagoras wrote, "I am not able to know either that they exist or that they do not, nor can I know what they look like[17]; much impedes our knowing, the obscurity of the matter and the brevity of human life"' (DK 80 B 4)[18]. The myth's wording is far from being so moderate.

3) The *Protagoras* and *Sisyphus* accounts clearly diverge in conceiving human sociability principles. In the *Protagoras,* it is divinity's prominent role, which manifests itself in establishing principles of human social and political life. In the myth's

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[14] ἐπειδὴ δὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος θείας μετέσχε μοίρας, πρῶτον μὲν διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ συγγένειαν ζῴων μόνον θεοὺς ἐνόμισεν, καὶ ἐπεχείρει βωμούς τε ἱδρύεσθαι καὶ ἀγάλματα θεῶν.

[15] The mention of altars (*bómoi, Prot.* 322a 6) implies sacrificial practice.

[16] RIEL 2012, 161.

[17] Given that first people are able to make gods' images, their mimetic activity excludes complete agnosticism.

[18] On this issue, I cannot accept Alfredo Ferrarin's argumentation that «the invocation of the gods is instrumental: the account is directed to the origin of our race alone, and the gods are not the point of the myth (which would not be too surprising coming from Protagoras, who claimed that we cannot know them)», in FERRARIN 2000. Assuming Protagoras' authorship of the myth, Ferrarin concludes that references to the gods are not crucial. On the contrary, I suppose that based on gods' prominent role, Protagoras' authorship should be rejected. For strategies for dealing with Protagoras' agnosticism cf. MORGAN 2000, 137 n. 9.

words, these are the essence of the second divine gift - the gift of political art. Sticking to the poetic tradition, the myth ascribes this role to Zeus (*Prot.* 322c1-4):

> So Zeus, fearing that our race was in danger of utter destruction, sent Hermes to bring respect (*aidôs*) and right (*dikê*) among men, to the end that there should be regulation of cities and friendly ties to draw them together.

The principles of social coherence - specified with striking similarity to the above mentioned Hesiodic image as shame and justice—are introduced into the human world from the sphere of the divine[19]. It brings an important refinement in the concept of human sociability. Whereas the *polis* is conceived as human invention, responding to life's specific pressures (*Prot.* 322b), its political principles are not of human origin. Not man, but god is their initiator. Again, we can notice sharp contrast with the *Sisyphus* fragment supposing exclusively human activity in establishing social order (v. 5-8):

> And then I think that humans decided to establish laws to punish [wrongdoers] so that justice might rule and be master over crime and violence (*hybris*). And they punished anyone who did wrong.

Unlike the *Protagoras* account, the *Sisyphus* fragment builds a conventionalist basis for interpersonal relations. It also bases its concept on completely different social emotions. Whereas the *Protagoras* works with generally benevolent factors of shame or reverence (understood as feeling of the self and fellow-feeling)[20], mutual respect and friendly ties, the *Sisyphus* looks for social cohesion in the emotion of fear (mentioned four times in the text), representing rather violent factor for maintaining obedience and social order. The fearful atmosphere is emphasised by the introduction of the fear of the gods as a powerful instrument against secret injustice.

To sum up this brief comparison, we can say that Plato's arrangement of the myth in the *Protagoras* combines elements of contemporary debate about human culture's origins with traditional motifs of poetry and in his typical manner restructures them into a new whole[21]. The myth's tone clearly differs from human culture's developmental and conventionalist theories formulated within the sophistic movement; for that reason I am convinced that the story's message is Platonic in its core. Plato does not reproduce specifically Protagorean doctrine, which he himself does

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[19] Justice dwells in the divine world (note that it affects the relationship between Zeus and Prometheus in *Prot.* 322a3) and as such has to be introduced into the human world.

[20] Cf. THEIN 2003, 67.

[21] Hesiodic echoes can be seen in deriving principles of social coherence from the divine and maintaining the role of shame in shaping behaviour. Shift in comparison with Hesiod and the topic's philosophical deepening is mainly due to internalisation of both concepts. A detailed overview of Plato's reworking of the traditional concept of *aidôs* is offered by CAIRNS 1993 (see especially 370-392).

not accept, but rather establishes a common anthropological ground, serving as a basic starting point for further debate[22]. The myth's conclusion emphatically declares that all people share in justice, meaning that each and every human being has the ability to be part of social structures and adequate moral capacity. The question whether shame and justice are to be divided among all, Zeus definitely answers (*Prot.* 322d):

> To all... let all have their share: for cities cannot be formed if only a few have a share of these as of other arts. And make thereto a law of my ordaining, that he who cannot partake of respect and right shall die the death as a public pest'.

Hence, all people are endowed with basic susceptibility to moral requirements and have the ability to form social ties. This can be considered as a common platform on which Plato and his Protagoras agree. Actual confrontation with Protagoras' opinion starts later in the dialogue, where further implications are drawn from this basic assumption. Two decisive points of disagreement are presented: on the basis of universal share in political virtue Protagoras advocates the Athenian democratic policy and defends his sophistic educational practice. Plato considers these implications highly problematic, but in no way challenges the basic assumptions accepted in the myth. He questions democratic policy, but takes seriously the idea of universal share in justice, at least in the sense of intuitive understanding of just and unjust[23]. This intuition is often confused and needs further examination; however, it is already present as a basis for social and political relationships. Applied in non-democratic perspective, this belief resonates with the concept of justice in the *Republic*, requiring that each part of the political/psychological whole has the elementary ability of 'doing one's own' - precisely in this way each and every part shares in justice and contributes to its constitution. Similarly, both Plato and Protagoras can agree that education in virtue relies on basic susceptibility to morality, presupposing the pupil's established general attitude, which can be cultivated in the educational process. Whereas Protagoras promotes transfer of knowledge through sophistic lecturing, Plato is convinced that deeper understanding of virtue is attainable only by dialectical examination of Socratic type.

The claim that the myth in the *Protagoras* reflects Plato's views can be further supported by the evidence from other Platonic dialogues formulating similar positions. Elsewhere we find the concept of an outlaw - an individual unable to respect

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[22] G. van Riel characterises the myth's function as follows: «...it establishes the common anthropological ground on which both discussants will rely to make their own case. This does not mean that the myth reveals a factual truth (as this never seems to be the case in Platonic myth). Rather, it represents an a priori agreement that is not submitted to a dialectical discussion, but taken for granted as a basic starting point» (RIEL 2012, 163).

[23] Cf. Plato, *Alc.* 110b-111a.

basic principles of social coexistence who must be expelled from the community as a subversive pest. The penology of later dialogues like the *Politicus* or *Laws* makes this point explicit (*Leg.* 854e):

> But if any citizen is ever convicted of such an act, - that is, of committing some great and infamous wrong against gods, parents, or State - the judge shall regard him as already incurable, reckoning that, in spite of all the training and nurture he has had from infancy, he has not refrained from the worst iniquity. For him the penalty is death, the least of evils; and, moreover, by serving as an example, he will benefit others, when himself disgraced and removed from sight beyond the borders of the country[24].

Regarding principles of social life, the comprehensive plan of the *Laws* testifies that god's fundamental role in the arrangement of human affairs is a constant feature of Plato's treatment of the issue. Looking for the principle of legislation, Plato touches key theological questions. His systematic attack against theologically subversive views appears in Book X. Here, Plato strongly opposes all forms of atheism. Atheism's theoretical basis rests on the assumption 'that the greatest and most beautiful things are the work of nature and of chance, and the lesser things that of art, - for art receives from nature the great and primary products as existing, and itself molds and shapes all the smaller ones, which we commonly call artificial' (*Leg.* 889a). From this assumption, Plato's opponents infer that gods and values are products of art: 'the first statement … which these people make about the gods is that they exist by art and not by nature, - by certain legal conventions which differ from place to place, according as each tribe agreed when forming their laws. They assert, moreover, that there is one class of things beautiful by nature, and another class beautiful by convention; while as to things just, they do not exist at all by nature, but men are constantly in dispute about them and continually altering them, and whatever alteration they make at any time is at that time authoritative, though it owes its existence to art and the laws, and not in any way to nature' (*Leg.* 889e-890a).

The belief that legislation, values and religion are secondary and conventional corresponds to the mainstream sophistic thought, an example of which may be the *Sisyphus* fragment. Against all opponents who might consider Sisyphus as their spokesman, Plato defends a completely different position (*Leg.* 892b):

> Then opinion and reflection and thought and art and law will be prior to things hard and soft and heavy and light; and further, the works and actions that are great and primary will be those of art, while those that are natural, and nature itself which they wrongly call by this name - will be secondary and will derive their origin from art and reason.

These words, followed by extensive arguments in favour of the priority of the soul's activity (*Leg.* 893a nn.), reveal a concentrated effort to prove that the order of

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[24] Bury 1967-1968, *ad locos*: cf. Plato, *Leg.* 735d-e, *Pol.* 308e-309a.

the world arises from a divine plan. This plan is characterised by care and attention to human affairs[25]. These demonstrations aim to discredit any attempt to build social coherence on different basis than reason identified with the divine. Here, the idea of divine principles underlying the life in the *polis*, sketched in the *Protagoras* myth, finds its full expression.

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[25] *Leg.* 903b-c: «Let us persuade the young man by our discourse that all things are ordered systematically by Him who cares for the World—all with a view to the preservation and excellence of the Whole, whereof also each part, so far as it can, does and suffers what is proper to it. To each of these parts, down to the smallest fraction, rulers of their action and passion are appointed to bring about fulfilment even to the uttermost fraction; whereof thy portion also, O perverse man, is one, and tends therefore always in its striving towards the All, tiny though it be. But thou failest to perceive that all partial generation is for the sake of the Whole, in order that for the life of the World-all blissful existence may be secured, - it not being generated for thy sake, but thou for its sake».