

Introduction

Ὡς θεὸς μὲν πάντα, καὶ μετὰ θεοῦ τύχη καὶ καιρὸς,
τάνθρώπινα διακυβερνῶσι σύμπαντα. Ἡμερώτερον μὴν
τρίτον συγχωρῆσαι τούτοις δεῖν ἔπεσθαι τέχνην.

As God controls all things, all human affairs are controlled
by God, assisted by chance and opportunity. Indeed, it is
more appropriate to acknowledge that God and chance must
be accompanied by a third factor, which is *technē*.¹

— Plato, *Nomoi* 4.709b–c.

Discussion of Michel Foucault's investigation of the ancient Greek concept of *technē* (τέχνη) usually centers on his later works, which focus on the so-called technology of the self, particularly the posthumously published *History of Sexuality Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure and Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982–1983*. Some Foucauldians attempt to find in these explorations a way to free the subject from domination. This is an understandable endeavor, given that Foucault hinted at the possibility of such an approach when he suggested a philosophical *technē*, allegedly discovered in Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Gorgias*. Foucault (2010) regarded this kind of philosophy »as constitution of the subject by himself« and as a craft of the soul, which should be opposed

- 1 **Note:** Translations of Plato are my own, based on the texts of the 2016 Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft edition of his complete works, with reference made to the English translations edited by John M. Cooper (1997).

to the domination relationships characterized by activities »addressed to the politician or to the rhetor« (pp. 352–54). However, perhaps because his work on the topic was incomplete, Foucault's later understanding of *techne* is odd and skeptical. For example, Socrates' statement that »τὴν [τέχνην] μὲν ἐπὶ τῇ ψυχῇ πολιτικὴν καλῶ« [Plato, *Gorgias* 464b; the craft concerning the soul I call politics] seems to be intentionally ignored in his interpretation of Plato's *Gorgias*, while he opposes the craft of the soul to the activities of politicians. In this, I am unsure whether he was simply in the process of making a detour.

In fact, Foucault began researching *techne* as early as 1970, when he shifted his focus to the relationship between power and knowledge and presented a series of lectures titled »The Will to Know« at the Collège de France. Compared to his later works, although the word *techne* occurs only three times and only in the first lecture, the understanding of the power–knowledge relationship reflected in this series, especially the final lecture, concerning Nietzsche, is significantly more in line with the concept of *techne* used by the Archaic and Classical Greeks to grasp the power that humans exert by acting according to the causality of the generation of things. Moreover, his interpretation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* in a set of lectures during 1971–1973, of which a total of seven different versions survive (cf. Foucault 2013, p. 279), elegantly grasps this concept of *techne*: Oedipal knowledge, he points out, as a *techne*, is »linked to the conquest and exercise of power« (Foucault 2013, p. 244). To understand the phenomena the ancient Greeks denoted with the word »*techne*,« it is thus appropriate to set aside Foucault's later works and return to his mid-career works concerning power and knowledge.

Following Foucault, this thesis aims to further investigate the political practices denoted by the Greek concept of »*techne*,« with a particular focus on power relationships.

As political and social ontologies, modern theories of power seek to explain the construction processes of entities such as ideas and social phenomena as contingent results of various material causes. In this respect, ancient theories of power, whether political or apolitical, can be placed beside modern ones, insofar as both are concerned with the generation of social and political phenomena. With their preference for discontinu-

ity with regard to historically determined phenomena, however, modern theories of power are liable to neglect the general basis of some of those phenomena to which they ascribe »modernity« if they do not pay sufficient attention to ancient or alien cultural practices. This thesis is primarily a historical investigation of the ancient Greek theory of power. More precisely, it seeks to understand Plato's later theory of power, formulated within the framework of political *techné* or, as Socrates calls it, the craft of the soul. As a researcher from a non-Western background, in engaging with this theory, I am motivated neither by a purely historical interest nor by a comparative cultural agenda but rather by a desire to make intelligible at least one small piece of the mechanism through which social and political phenomena, especially sovereignty, are generated.

Plato's theory of power has long been neglected, likely due to a significant difference: Modern theories of power are primarily genealogical and are usually applied to facilitate understanding of the construction processes of existing phenomena, while ancient theories of power, developed within the framework of *techné*, primarily aim to intervene in the construction process so as to produce certain entities or institutions that do not yet exist. When it comes to understanding existing phenomena, the ancient Greeks appear to have preferred mythos and metaphysics over theories of power. Plato's theory of power is developed exclusively within the framework of political *techné*, which seeks to build a just state based on concrete circumstances. This does not mean, however, that such a theory is irrelevant to those of today. While contemporary theories of power, ranging from those of Carl Schmitt and Michel Foucault to that of Giorgio Agamben, have precisely grasped the role of sovereign power in constructing social and political phenomena, they leave insufficiently intelligible the mechanism through which sovereignty is generated. Even though Plato did not have a theory of sovereignty and seems to have been averse to the personalized sovereign, especially in his later works, his thought concerning the craft of the soul nevertheless reveals a configuration in which the generation of sovereignty becomes visible. In this context, I argue that Plato's thinking on the craft of the soul makes intelligible the generation of sovereignty by highlighting the interplay among chains of causality, chance, and political practices in the form of deployed *techné*.

Chapter 1 aims to grasp a »common sense,« shared by Archaic and Classical Greek authors, of the concept of *technē*. Contemporary scholars attribute many characteristics to this idea, but by analyzing a selection of ancient texts, I will distill these into two key aspects: *ergon* (ἔργον; work) and strategy. Based on this analysis, we will see that Plato's later understanding, albeit stylized, does not deviate from the ancient common sense of *technē* that had existed since the time of Homer. Plato's later thought on *technē* is developed as part of his lifelong project of creating a just state. Building such a state is both an act that requires a continuous process and the end of this process; in this sense, building a just state is Plato's *ergon*, with the term meaning both »process of work« and »product of work.« Unlike his earlier works, which are characterized by »the will to know,« as Foucault demonstrates, and fail to build a just state in the real world, Plato's later thinking on *technē* is characterized by »the will to power.« As we will see in chapter 2, this is the power needed to create a state in concrete circumstances. This state must, in turn, have the power to continue cultivating its citizens' virtues, enabling it to approach *Callipolis*, the ideal state, as closely as possible. To achieve this goal, a strategy is needed that is based on knowledge of the causal relationships between the just state, possible human acts, and the concrete circumstances in which humans perform those acts, since nothing exists outside the chain of causality. Humans will thus never have the power to build a just state in the real world unless they understand the related causal relationships. This understanding is a kind of power-knowledge or, in Ancient Greek, *technē*.

For Plato's later thought, the key to grasping the causal relationships related to political and social phenomena is the concept of the soul. Throughout Plato's works, there appear extensive arguments regarding the soul that oppose each other to varying degrees. Of all his conceptions of the soul, those developed in the *Nomoi* (*Laws*) and the *Timaeus* are the most specific. The soul is defined as »τὴν δυναμένην αὐτὴν αὐτὴν κινεῖν κίνησιν« [Plato, *Laws* 10.896a; the motion that has power to move itself]. Knowledge of the soul is no longer considered a discovered truth but is similar to the theoretical models of modern science, which are not truth but rather artificial appearances that allow us to understand causal relationships and ultimately produce something based on that under-

standing. In this context, the generation of a state can be considered a movement. According to Plato, every movement is moved either by others or by itself: Consequently, the original movement must be something with the power to move itself. A state must, therefore, be produced by souls. In the same sense, a just state must be produced by just souls. In Plato's later thought, then, the soul is a concept of political-social ontology insofar as it is, especially in the *Nomoi*, a theoretical model designed to help us understand the generation, change, and movement of political and social phenomena. Understanding relevant causality offers *technē* a way to intervene in that causal chain or, more precisely, in the souls that are the atoms of all social phenomena. This is what makes political *technē* the craft of the soul. This craft should produce just souls whose movement ultimately renders practical the idea of the just state. Producing just souls, however, must be a real program that is continuously implemented under concrete and specific circumstances. In these circumstances, people require strategies to develop an appropriate way of making the process possible and practicable.

For the later Plato, as we will see in chapter 3, the most appropriate way to produce just souls is the *nomothetike* (νομοθετική), which I prefer to translate as »craft of normalization« because its main *ergon* is to produce an appropriate *nomos* for an individual soul. In his early works, Plato considered laws themselves useless, especially in cultivating citizens' virtues. This is an opinion he appears never to have changed, even in his final book, titled *Nomoi*, often translated as »Laws.« Although he pays more attention to statute laws in this work, it is not primarily a book about using these laws to educate citizens' souls. Indeed, although Plato often uses words with the root »*nom-*« to denote statute laws, it is incorrect to consider the *Nomoi* a book focusing on legal order as constituted by a set of such laws, since they make up only a small part of its content. Laws, for Plato, are useless unless they function as part of the *nomothetike*.

Chapter 4 will demonstrate three important instruments of the *nomothetike*: discipline (ἐπιτήδευμα), rhetoric (ῥητορική), and the *nomos*-guard (νομοφυλακή). By denying the appropriateness of monarchical elements in a human state, Plato's design of these three instruments seems to intentionally exclude the personalized sovereign, who has the right to decide

on states of exception, from the framework of the *nomothetike*. This feature has led many scholars to incorrectly ascribe to the *Nomoi* the modern ideology of »the rule of law.« In fact, as we will see, the state that Plato designs in the *Nomoi* is a police state marked by intensive intervention in individual lives. This is quite the opposite of the rule of law or, in German, the Rechtsstaat. Additionally, through Plato's *Nomoi*, we will see that the similarity between ancient theories of political *techné* and modern theories of policing is not, as Foucault claims, merely apparent. I argue, rather, that theories of policing and ancient political *techné* share the same logic, characterized by the combination of *ergon* and strategy. Furthermore, focusing on Plato's *nomothetike*, we will see that, despite the exclusion of the personalized sovereign, sovereign power never disappears from political *techné* characterized by »governmentality.« Sovereignty is not, per se, a principle inherent to a specific political system but rather an instrument used in specific cases. It is implicated in any political practice guided by rationality that aims to produce something in concrete circumstances. As Plato suggests, every event in the world results from the combination of causality, chance, and *techné*; I argue that sovereignty does not escape this rule. As long as humans are able neither to break down the causal relationships governed by divine necessity nor to control what chances are given to them, they are dominated by their own strategic thinking. If this thinking suggests that employing sovereignty in certain situations is a necessary condition of realizing their political *ergon*, they must be forced to produce sovereign power, provided that they do not abandon their *ergon*.

Chapter 5 places political *techné* among existing paradigms of sovereignty so as to make intelligible the mechanism of sovereignty's generation. I will first show how political *techné* functions as a paradigm of generation, in which sovereignty appears as an instrument for preserving order even at the cost of suspending the goals it serves. I will then place an early modern case and a contemporary one beside this paradigm, making visible the generation of sovereignty immanent to both. Sovereignty, as a borderline phenomenon, is neither created out of nothing nor produced exclusively by centralized political power. Instead, it is generated through the interplay between what is given by causality and chance and the strategic practices that tend to preserve concrete order.