

Analyses of Plato's relationship with Xenophanes usually focus on the latter's criticism of the treacherous and adulterous gods of Homer and Hesiod, which is seen as a forerunner of Plato's more developed critique of the poets and mythological poetry in the *Republic* (e.g. Leshner, 1992). This paper will focus on a different and less studied connection: that between Xenophanes' elegy on proper symptotic behavior (Fr. 1 West=Ath. 462c) and the wide-ranging discussion in *Laws* 1-2 of government, education, poetry and correct symptotic protocols (all of which turn out, unsurprisingly, to be intimately linked). I shall argue that the themes of Xenophanes' elegy are a clear but unacknowledged presence in the discussions of *Laws* 1-2.

The opening of the *Laws* pits two types of symptotic elegy against each other as representative of constitutional values: Tyrtaean elegy (representing the privileging of warfare, 629a-630d) and the elegy of Theognis, which switches the focus from martial excellence to more generalized civic ethics. The Athenian Stranger points out that peaceful coexistence is preferable to a state of perpetual warfare, an approach that he in turn connects to Theognis and his ethic of loyalty and group solidarity within the city (630a-d). Here the Athenian Stranger has appropriated the strategy of symptotic poetry that dismisses or downgrades a problematic or rival genre and has done so in a way that sets up the primacy of philosophical issues. An important model here is Xenophanes' account of a proper symposium (Fr. 1 West). Xenophanes' elegy depreciates accounts of titanomachies, centauromachies, gigantomachies, and *stasis* at a drinking party; one should rather celebrate the gods with "propitious stories and pure accounts" (14) and "praise the man who brings to light good things when he has drunk as he has memory and a striving for virtue" (19-20) (for the problematic text here see Leshner 1992: 13 and Bowra 1938: 361-62). Xenophanes thus takes on the role of the ruler of the drinking party recommended by the Athenian Stranger at 640c4. Several elements of the elegy are developed in the *Laws*: the depreciation of *stasis* and battles, the rejection of ethically harmful poetic inventions, the privileging of a criterion of the "useful" (*chrêston* in Xenophanes 1.23 corresponding to *ôphelia* in, e.g. *Laws* 667c1; cf. the reference to mature symposiasts as leaders in *êthôn chrêstôn* at 670e1). Both Xenophanes and Plato, then, develop the theme of the social utility of poetry (cf. Pratt 1993: 136-140). Yet even more significant is Plato's discussion of these topics in the context of the symposium as a forum for the transmission of civic values. Tecusan's (1990) exploration of Plato's rehabilitation of the symposium in *Laws* 1-2 focused on the mixing of pleasure and wisdom that was to occur there, positing a more developed realization in Plato's later works of the importance of the irrational. This is a valuable analysis but it does not do enough justice to the role of Archaic symptotic poetry as a tool for constitutional exploration. It is no accident that the championing of civic loyalty over *stasis* is set up as a competition between Tyrtaeus and Theognis, and that the entire discussion of poetry and its educational value is linked to the institution of the "choir of Dionysus," made up of mature and experience citizens who will be encouraged to drink in order to sing songs that benefit the city. Plato has appropriated not only the substance of Xenophanes' didactic elegy, but also the idea that a crucial forum for the formation of civic ethics is the symposium and its associated poetic genres. This appropriation is part of a larger movement discernable in the *Laws*, whereby the poetic strategies of praise and blame are generalized from the poetic realm to constitute the fundamental dynamic of civic interaction.