Lutz presents a new reading of Plato's *Laws*, arguing that the dialogue portrays an encounter between political philosophy and those who believe in divine law. According to Lutz, whose background is in Political Science, the *Laws* is “first and foremost an inquiry into divine law”, something which “leading interpretations of the dialogue fail to appreciate” (p. 3). Lutz thus reads the *Laws* in terms of what Leo Strauss called the “theological-political problem” (p. 5): the dispute between philosophy or rationality and divine revelation, both of which claim to offer the final answer to what is right and good. The *Laws* stages a reconciliation between the two, in showing how a political philosopher can “provide divine law with a guidance that divine law needs in order to accomplish its goals” (p. 7).

The book opens with a Chapter on the (pseudo-Platonic) *Minos*. Lutz argues that the *Minos* is an investigation into how “we come to believe in [law]”—whether through reason or through divination (p. 31, cf. p. 20). Since the end of the *Minos* leaves it open whether Zeus used reason or not to teach Minos how to make laws, Socrates “will need to examine those who have been educated by [divine] laws and believe in their authority” (p. 32). This is accomplished in the opening books of the *Laws*. According to Lutz, the Athenian’s examination of Cleinias shows him that he relies on reason and “knowledge of divine law ‘written in his [Cleinias’] heart’” (p. 43) in order to realize that divine law ought to aim at virtue as a whole. Cleinias and Megillus therefore become open to “the possibility that a political philosopher is able to discern and illuminate divine law” (p. 50). From Book III onwards, the Athenian will try “to show that human reason can establish a code of divine law” (p. 89).

But according to Lutz’ own interpretation, the moral education laid down in the laws *fails* to realize the assumed goal of divine law, which is virtue as a
whole. Chapter Four, concentrating on the virtue of courage, and Chapter Five, focusing on the virtue of moderation, each argue that the moral education under the law teaches the citizens to respectively endure fear and suppress erotic love, thereby sacrificing “the very foundation and core of practical reasoning” (p. 132). Chapter Six, concentrating on the virtue of justice, argues that the laws fall short of apportioning to the just citizens all that those believe they deserve, most importantly happiness. The different virtues “undermine” (pp. 130, 167) one another, which causes “instability” in the laws (p. 164). In this way the Athenian aims to show that the goals of divine law cannot be accomplished without “the rational guidance that political philosophy can supply” (p. 179). Chapter Seven argues that the philosophical Nocturnal Council must “interpret and apply the laws in ways that minimize the differences in the virtues that they teach” (p. 177).

Lutz’ point of departure is commendable: he develops an overall reading of the Laws as a coherent composition, providing a possible answer to the question of why Plato has structured his work in this way. Yet in his eagerness to conclude that the Laws demonstrates the indispensability of the political philosopher for the interpretation of divine law, Lutz’ interpretations of the Greek are not always as unbiased as one would have wished. Here, I will discuss two of Lutz’ interpretations that are crucial for his overall thesis, but are not supported by the Greek text. Subsequently, I will exemplify my objections about Lutz’ mode of exposition by citing four examples of his renderings of the Greek text.

The first general concern is Lutz’ use of the Minos. The Minos is generally acknowledged to be spurious, an issue about which Lutz remains tacit.1 The preparatory function that the author ascribes to the Minos is therefore hardly self-evident. Moreover, Lutz’ contention that the Minos centres on the question of by what sort of faculty citizens “believe in” law, by reason or revelation, rests on several misunderstandings of the opening pages of the Minos. First, the question at issue in 313e8-314b6 is not whether there is a special “legal faculty” (reason or revelation) by which we believe in law, but whether νόμος is a form of ‘learning’ (αἴσθησις, δήλωσις) or ‘discovery’ (εὕρεσις). Second, the μαντικὴ τέχνη is an analogy for εὕρεσις, not an additional possibility. Third, the Minos is not concerned with citizens’ “belief in” law but with the lawgiver, and presents an inquiry into his competence.

1 See, for example, p. 10. The Minos is listed among the spurious texts in Zeller, E. 51922. Philosophie der Griechen, II.1 (Leipzig), 483. Despite its title, Dalfen, J., 2009. Platon. Minos. Übersetzung und Kommentar (Göttingen) assumes that the Minos is not authentic. See for discussion of the evidence ibid., 27-67. Lutz at some points assumes that the Athenian Stranger is Socrates, at others that the Athenian speaks for Plato.