The Development of Plato’s Political Theory

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to be read on its own with students, and of special interest to those studying ancient literary theory. Now it is available in a fine addition to Aris & Phillips' series of classical texts. Burnet's Oxford text is reprinted with a minimal new apparatus, and H. has provided facing translation, introduction and commentary. One minor irritation resulting from the use of a reprinted text is that paragraph divisions in text and translation do not always coincide (e.g. 94-5).

H. has written on Aristotle's Poetics and on tragedy as interpreted by Plato and Aristotle. His introduction here has helpful things to say on the structure of book 10 as a whole and on the way Plato's treatment challenges us to find some justification of the arts not in purely representative terms. The commentary does a good job of pointing out weaknesses and unspoken assumptions in Plato's arguments.

Since antiquity the question has arisen whether the Myth of Er should be interpreted literally, choices being made by souls before their return to human bodies, or as an allegory of choices made in this which bring inexorable consequences (cf. W. Theiler, 'Tacitus und die antike Schicksalslehre', in Phylllobolia für P. von der Mühll [Basel 1946] at 67ff.). H. rightly rules out for Plato himself an interpretation of the myth as pure allegory excluding all reference to an afterlife (22). But complications can be introduced into the interpretation of the myth as myth if the two levels of interpretation are not kept separate.

We are told at 618b2-4 that while the circumstances of a life are included in the choice, virtue is not; but that is because choosing a particular sort of life will necessarily lead one to have a certain type of soul. It is because the effect on the soul is not immediately obvious that understanding is needed (618c6); but if there is some scope for moral choice after birth, the crucial significance of the pre-natal choice on the mythical level is weakened. (617e2-4 would conflict with this if a strong contrast is seen between δύναμις and ἀρετή, but that does not seem necessary. In mythical terms, it is because of its soul enters its next body that honouring virtue is important.) However, H. interprets 618c5-6 as an assertion that we carry on making moral choices throughout our earthly lives. If the myth is interpreted as an allegory that is true; indeed Plato's use of both ἀρετή and πράσινος φυλή can be seen as inviting an allegorical interpretation. But on the mythical level the passage clearly refers to the need for care each time a soul chooses a fresh life on earth.

H. 175 suggests (on 615b6) that the souls experience a mixture of rewards and punishments on their 1,000-year journey, citing Phaedo 113d in support of this interpretation. But that passage, unlike Republic 10, distinguishes three classes of souls—those neither good nor bad, who are sent to the Acherusian lake, the bad who are thrown into Tartarus temporarily or permanently, and the good who go up to the true surface of the earth or even higher. However logical the recognition of a middle class may be, it obscures the simple polarization of the Republic myth. H.'s suggestion (185) that at 618b3-4 what is crucial is not the choice of a particular type of life, but the motives for choosing that particular type of life, also introduces complication not in the text; is the thought that there can, for example, be both virtuous and wicked farmers really in Plato's mind in a passage that refers to extreme types of life and natural endowment?

In the translation 'he said' and 'I said' are omitted, except in the myth, and the dialogue is presented in dramatic form. Plato himself later expressed a preference for this (Theaetetus 143bc). More questionable is the use of 'categories' to translate ἔργον at 595b1, where the reference is to the parts of the soul and/or the types of character explained in terms of these (so H. 106). It is perhaps more successful at 596a6 (the positing of a single ἔργον wherever there is a common name) and 597b2 (the carpenter doesn't produce the category of bed).

Consistency in translation is desirable in itself, as H.'s desire (109) to get away from the theory-laden 'Form' and 'Idea', but one wonders whether consistency has been taken too far here. Indeed ἔργον is translated, with explanatory notes, by 'kind' at 597b14, and by 'type' at 597c8. At 605c1 'pandering' is perhaps rather strong for χρειάζεσθαι, in the Gorgias, to which reference is rightly made, that has more often been reserved as a translation for κοινός.

The tyrant's eating of his children at 619c1-2 is a paradigm of a case where the agent is a victim of an enemy's trickery. Plato makes it clear that the eating is itself part of the destiny chosen: H.'s translation, 'the destiny contained in the life meant that he would eat his own children', risks obscuring this; indeed a note on the syntax would not have been unhelpful.

On the last line of 117, I wondered whether 'b) was a misprint for 'a)... At 160 'Gignon' should be 'Gigon'.

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This book is most welcome, for it balances very expertly the duty of providing an introduction to Plato's political writings for those proposing to study them for the first time with the duty of making some contribution to the continuing debate about their significance. The American and Canadian illustrations have their value and show how Klosko freely admits that the Republic and the American Declaration of Independence cannot be reconciled. The fierceness of the Popper controversy is abated here. K. accepts that saevus indignatio at evil twentieth-century developments lay beneath the attack, and is best not perpetuated. We have an eristic discussion on 134-7 of The open society and its enemies where Popper's case is reported and then questioned. One reason for this conciliatory approach is that K. agrees with Popper
on an important judgement. He agrees that Socrates confined himself to moral questioning, avoiding metaphysics and inviting argument on the basis that whoever chose to enter into discussion with him was capable of doing so—that it was in fact a process of διδάσκειν και δέχεσθαι λόγουν. K. does not charge Plato with bad faith or regard him as betraying Socrates, but he makes a sharp distinction between the Socratic situation and the political scheme unfolded in the Republic.

It has to be conceded that from the time he wrote the Gorgias onwards, Plato accepted that politically the Socratic approach lacked social responsibility and that the unique self-control Socrates could exercise is not inborn in most men in most communities. The unwillingness of Callicles to submit to further elenchus makes the claim of Socrates at 521d πράττειν τα πολιτικά μόνος των υόν wildly paradoxical and, if taken quite literally, unsustainable. Nevertheless, Plato still has admiration for Socrates and devotion to him—after all, the Apologia Socratis must belong to the later 390s—and he would be delighted to frame a society in which Socrates could be a πολιτής even if not a πολιτικός. The Symposium and the Meno both attest a continued appreciation of Socrates by Plato, and we have in Republic ii the clear picture of the man who is wholly good but seems evil, and we learn what society does to him. At best he survives sheltering behind a wall from a storm of hail and dust. Even as late as Plato’s work as Politicus 299b we have an echo of the unjust trial of the expert by the non-expert. In the Sophistes also we find the enigmatic sixth kind of sophist of noble lineage to whom some interpreters attach Socratic features, though this is not universally agreed. (See G. B. Kerferd, CQ iv [1954], 84, challenged by R. S. Black in his unfinished commentary on the Sophistes edited by G. C. Neal [Manchester 1971], 46–52.) Therefore we must accept K.’s view that Plato has to look elsewhere for a plan to rescue political life from faction-fighting and false values, but we must not speak of any outright abandonment of Socrates.

It is generally agreed that Plato turned to Pythagoreanism, especially in the decade after the death of Socrates, for guidance in defining τὸ δίκαιον by showing it embodied in a community—for though this is said in the Republic to be done so as to read smaller letters in the individual with the larger letters of the community to aid us, the final passage on τὸ δίκαιον in the fourth book shows that the community was Plato’s real concern (Republic iv 447c). K. makes a little too much of what Cicero says in de republica i 10 about the ‘obscurity and ponderous learning’ of Pythagoras, but we have Aristotle’s judgement to support the view that Plato followed Pythagorean thinking. On the political side, a strong attraction must have been the achievement of Archytas, a pure mathematician elected seven times, against normal constitutional practice, as στρατηγὸς at Tarentum. Here was proof that a philosopher could be politically in control of a contemporary community. Plato knew of Pythagoreans who had failed in many places to achieve or maintain such political control, but Tarentum was clearly there to show that failure was not inevitable.

K. lays special stress on the significance of Plato’s enlarged psychological theory which leaves behind the simple Socratic ethic. He has taken a particular interest in what is sometimes called the ‘hedonistic calculus’ passage in the Protagoras and suggests that Socrates found himself unable to accept that a man can be so overcome by passion that he chooses what he knows to be morally inferior at the moment of choice. But if this ἀκρασία, as it was later to be called, is something manifestly occurring in human experience, Plato realizes that a wider psychological analysis is required to cover this evidence. It is indeed possible that concern about this difficulty contributed to the psychological theory actually presented in the Republic, but one may still wonder whether the newly described ‘part’ of the soul called θυμωνεῖδες more probably arose from the fact that Plato needed a psychic counterpart to a class in society which must be part of its functioning—a counterpart to the ‘auxiliaries’ to his guardians. The soldier class is not very prominent in the Republic because the guardian class is all-important. There is indeed a very practical and contemporary discussion in Book v of the right rules of warfare with Greeks and non-Greeks and the strong insistence that there will not be two armies in one πόλις as in other Greek communities and so a large force will not be needed, but there is little on recruitment, barracks and relation of the soldiery to the rest of society, the one necessary point being that soldiers must support guardians as θυμωνεῖδες must support λογιστικού (Republic v 468–471). Elsewhere in the Republic the θυμωνεῖδες and those in whom it dominates are dealt with in the due sequence of treating of the three classes, but with little special concern. The most interesting psychological account is in the eighth book where we are told of the decline from the ideal state into ‘timarchy’ in the story of how, in a particular family, values change and notions of pride, social status and ‘macho’ values generally come to dominate (Republic viii 547d–550c). Presumably Plato thinks that this kind of decline into a rather Spartan outlook can be controlled so long as soldiers are loyal and obedient to the guardians. All these considerations suggest that while Plato felt the need to move away from the Socratic point of view about moral strength, the account he gives of the ‘part’ of the soul involved in special measure in the soldier-class (though present in all citizens) was used by him as a significant part of man individually and civically but not as requiring special attention. It is recognized at ix 581d as having its own pleasures which can be realized along with the pleasures of the other parts, but only if the pleasures of the rational element are agreed to be the purest and most real.

The traditional view that the Republic is our main evidence for Plato’s political theory and that the Statesman and the Laws are not ‘basic’ in the same way is not entirely left behind in this book. In this respect K. rightly claims that he is covering Ernest Barker’s ground almost a century later. Cornford and Guthrie are his main guides, though
Grube’s work has had an influence on him also. He recognizes that the study of these themes was not completed with Guthrie’s work. He makes respectful acknowledgement of Julia Annas’s *Introduction*. But in essence we are once again on old familiar tracks. I find the journey satisfying once more as we thread our way through the detailed questions—triptite soul, education, the communal living of the guardians and the allegory of the Cave. There is no room to discuss them all: let it be simply said that there are interesting comments on them all and their relevance is made clear by apt illustrations from twentieth-century life. K. must be a brilliant lecturer to a class: I can only pay respectful tribute and pass on.

We reach a fundamental question in discussing Plato’s political philosophy when we reach the question of the liberty of the individual citizen (pp. 154–55).

As K. says, we must realize that ‘the individual’ in the eighteenth or nineteenth century sense is not to be found in the community of the πόλις as Plato knew it and wished to perpetuate it. Plato had a unique and paradoxical understanding of what freedom is, and it was impossible for J. S. Mill or Grote or the American Founding Fathers to see it as he did or accept his version as desirable. Of course Plato can speak of the freedom seen in the states called ‘democratic’ in his own day. He found them a ‘supermarket of constitutions’ (*Republic* 557d) where you take your pick and keep to one lifestyle just as long as you feel inclined. But he does also use ἐλευθερία in his own sense on occasion. Thus he speaks of the guardian class having no time to be caught up in a trade or profession because they have to be δημιουργοὶ τῆς ἐλευθερίας τῆς πόλεως, manufacturers of the city’s liberty. He believes that what they manufacture really is liberty. But it is liberty in a very esoteric and paradoxical sense. The phrase in the Book of Common Prayer ‘Whose service is perfect freedom’ offers not an exact parallel, but a hint of the way Plato feels about it—tends towards some of the Stoic paradoxes about freedom. When the ideal state degenerates into timarchy the first change is that the third-class citizens who have been free men, friends, and have ministered to the guardians’ physical needs, are enslaved (probably on Spartan lines) and the mutual support of guardian and citizen is brutally ended. Plato sees this as a calamity for both parties, but especially for the citizens, who lose real and not only external secession from their protection by the guardian (viii 547c). Plato simply denies that a citizen has a birthright to the kind of freedom which K. defines by quoting Isaiah Berlin ‘To be free to choose and not to be chosen for is an inalienable ingredient in what makes human beings human’.

For Plato, then, there is no respite (and no excuse for seeking respite) from the work of ‘molding souls’ as K. terms it. The whole educational programme is involved. It is involved, after all, in any community that makes a specific plan to bring up its youth, and needful discipline and constraint are necessary parts of it, but for Plato it is vitally important. He has left us two programmes, one in the *Republic* and one in the *Laws*: they have the common feature of building on the basic natures and habits of the children of the community, and in the case of the *Laws* they go back to the ante-natal clinic; but it is all seen as ‘molding souls’. K. deals judiciously with the parts of the programme that are usually found unsatisfactory. Why must we be so determined not to tell stories about gods changing shape or temperament and yet deceive guardians and non-guardians alike by telling a story of different metals found in the souls of the newly-born? The answer seems to be that there are different characters inbred from birth and bound to unfold, and it is vitally important to recognize and select the future guardians. As in the case of the guardians in their supposedly free marriage-alliances, it is necessary to achieve what nature prescribes without inducing jealousy or recrimination. The need for hearty uncomplaining social ties is a need that must be met if an objectively sound society based ultimately on the Form of the Good is to be achieved. Social harmony is to be promoted at all costs. Some will always find the cost too high. K. has a good discussion on the possibility of realizing Plato’s *Republic* scheme in an actual Greek society and his own estimate of that possibility (173 ff.). It is here that the story of Sicily becomes relevant and the account is reasonably well attested outside the corpus Platonicum, that Plato did indeed influence his Academy pupils in such a way that they could, if called upon to help, offer political advice to contemporary states in constitutional problems. The insistence in the *Politics* that the philosophic ‘adviser’ to a ruler must be allowed to be the possessor of πολιτική τεχνή and carry temporal authority by his expertise seems to mirror the basis on which such action could be and was taken. But it seems most likely that help with routine problems rather than steering drastic political reform was what these political ‘advisers’ actually gave, as Aristotle did in *Atarneus*. To carry conviction, however, and to induce such invitations, a thorough political study of society which the *Republic* provides would be a basic weapon in the armoury. K. is somewhat ‘conservative’ in his judgement on questions of authenticity within the corpus, but it is unwise to detach *Epistles* VII and VIII from the *sitz im leben* of 360–347 BC, even if we are tempted by Harold Tarrant’s daring thesis in *Phronesis* xxviii, 75 that Thrasyllus found them lying about in the Academy library still unedited. Even if one could suspend disbelief, the story explains the possible late insertion of the philosophic passage better than it does the implied lateness of the autobiographic passage. Naturally, K. uses VII and VIII freely.

To return to the *Republic* and realizability, we have to bring out a point which is perhaps crucial. Can we see the inter-relation of the classes coming successfully about in the way in which Plato says it ought to exist? We have our small elite, assuming that the ‘metals’ in the soul are rightly sorted. This should make a basic consensus possible—the view that the guardians must rule with the auxiliaries’ assistance and the good will of all. σωφρόνισσα is said explicitly to belong to all in their capacity as
citizens as well as in each of them individually. It is this civic σωφροσυνή which establishes the whole society and perpetuates it. This comes very close to a doctrine of the consent of the governed, for this consent is a willing consent and a warm consent which is truly reciprocal between the classes, and therefore it ought to have as good a chance as any system to remain stable.

There will always be challenges of the society envisaged here, and questions whether such 'guardianship' is practicable and whether it ought to be practised if it is. Some will also see it as the acme of spiritual domination by a caste, which is as anti-human, and as bad as brutal and crude treatment would be. The jury is out, and different judges have come up from time to time with different verdicts. Perhaps a basic difficulty in realization rests in the inability of all outside the guardian class to rise eventually to the vision of the Good. They should have all the light they can absorb—this is said powerfully at ix 509d—but is less than the full vision which would give content to, and sustain, the kind of consent Plato wants. The δέμας φυγής in these men cannot be turned towards the sun for full enlightenment. Here Plato's politics to some extent narrow what he says elsewhere. The πεπλαγωγός of the Beautiful seems attainable to all who climb the ladder to vision. The Form of Beauty in the Phaedrus seeks to break through to man's clouded vision. Man for Plato is man, though a lion and a many-headed monster lurk under his skin. But all these optimistic statements fall short of a guarantee that the community established in the Republic could function in stability and in real felicity.

When we come to the Politics, it is clear that we are in a new situation. The guardian class is no more. We are engaged in definition of a τέχνη—the 'art' called πολιτιτική. We must first discover it, then decipher it in detail as in the case of the sophist we had eventually tracked our quarly to his lair. All this is strange to us, as is also the warning that the art may not be practised by the actual ruler exercising political control but by a philosopher-adviser who possesses the art and whose advice must therefore be followed.

A series of attempts at the definition of πολιτιτική is made, but does not satisfy. Then the Elatic Stranger, who now leads the discussion taking the place formally assigned hitherto in the dialogues to Socrates, takes us through a long and quite remarkable myth. After completing all its details, he gives the rather unexciting result as far as the hunt for statesmanship is concerned. The statesman does not nurture his human herd like a superior being. The era of the 'divine shepherd' is over and our statesman must be himself of human kind, 'looking after' and concerned for his fellow citizens. Then comes a further point that had not been noted thus far. Tendence and care is of two kinds—forcible care and care of willing people by persuasion. The statesman is distinguished from the tyrant because he uses such persuasion. K. finds a serious contradiction here with what is later said about the right and even the duty of the true πολιτιτικός to practise the political analogue of cauterity and amputation on the body politic as he tends it. There is, of course, a contradiction, but one which brings out the particular place of the Politics in Plato's political thinking. The firm insistence on free consent of the governed and the dismissal of tyrannical constraint shows that Plato still kept his Republic ideal; but the purpose of the dialogue is to pursue to its full length the implication of regarding politics as a τέχνη with an expert practitioner. This doctrine was Socratic in its early stages. A sustained and eloquent defence is made of the right of the expert to be bound by no rule from outside when he performs his scientific duty, and so to be above the law. Young Socrates, the respondent in the dialogue, calls this 'a hard saying' and after all the arguments the Elatic Stranger concludes that it is better to turn to the 'second best' constitutions because truly independent and incorruptible statesman are too rare. Nevertheless, the pattern is worked out in outline of the true statesman who can organize it. It is in parallel with weaving, but the process is practised on the citizens' lives and not a material like wool. The statesman arranges marriages and balances characters, imposing what he calls 'bonds' between them. He is assisted by a judiciary, a military force, orators who seem to be 'official spokesmen', and an array of lesser functionaries. We come to wonder, in the end, whether the guardians of the Republic are so ruthless in their benevolent disposition as this royal weaver turns out to be.

Aristotle rightly sees the Laws as presenting a different polity from that of the Republic and calling for a separate critique. His actual criticisms of both are less than satisfactory, but the separation in approach and purpose must always be kept in mind. K. looks back rather too often, but in the main gives a distinct criticism, though one which inevitably leaves undiscovered many very important topics which he could hardly have brought within the compass of this essay. He does, however, give sufficient help for those who are approaching the Laws for the first time. The claim that Law has the exalted place of reason—that it is τὸ ὧν Βιοσφέρεται—is duly signalled as the basic assertion Plato desires to make. (Laws iv 71.4).

K. adds an 'afterword', some notes as additional reading, and a good bibliography and index to help the student. In the list of further reading on the Laws mention is made of Glenn Morrow's outstanding work Plato's Cretan city. Perhaps it deserved a very honourable mention in the text also. In the main, however, K. has served Plato and his present-day readers very well.

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'Political biography' euphemizes methodologically questionable utterances when evidence fails