

POLITEIA AND PAIDEIA

«Reminiscences» of Western Political Thought in a reading of Plato's *Politeia*¹

I. Influence or Dialogue?

1. On Influence

We all know that the *Politeia* (or *The Republic*, as it is frequently translated) is a classic that constitutes a foundation of western philosophical thought. And not merely of the political thought. It is simultaneously (and that simultaneity has been pointed out since Rousseau, and recalled for us by Jaeger²) a founding text of pedagogic thought.

Many readings have been proposed of the *Politeia*. We propose here a brief reflection of the intertextual type³, not upon the theme or main themes of this work, but more precisely in search of aspects that also seem to have acquired a posterity (or at any rate a universality that allows for the detection of coincidences). It is not merely that Plato's great utopian ideas have found an echo in later authors, as one the most important of western politico-philosophical canons. It is also that some topics and arguments that appear through this richly magnificent dialogue seem to have had a future.

In fact, beyond the major theme of the *Politeia* (the elaboration of a myth of the ideal city as an answer to the problem of Justice), in the dialogues that emerge more or less incidentally, Plato's reader can be surprised and delighted with the coincidences (let us call them just that for the time being) suggestive of ideas yet to be fully developed in the *great conversation* of western philosophy, and more specifically political philosophy. Very few of those who came after him did not imbibe something from Plato, and with him enter upon that conversation, possibly in the heaven of essences, but also in the proximity of

1. We would like to thank Prof. Daniela de Carvalho and Prof. John Stirling Wilks, both my colleagues at the Interdisciplinary Juridical Institute, Law Faculty, University of Porto, for their accurate reading of the first draft of this article. All faults are obviously my own.

2. W. JAEGER, *Paideia, Die Formung des Griechischen Menschen*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1936 (port. tr. A. M. Parreira), *Paideia. A Formação do Homem Grego*, Lisboa, Aster, 1979, p. 703.

3. Cf. J. KRISTEVA, *Semeiotike. Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, Paris, Seuil, 1978.



our libraries. Even authors not directly interested in philosophy or politics turned to him and compared their ideas and observations with his.

It will not be beneath us to demonstrate Plato's influence by a brief statistical survey. Let us begin by consulting the encyclopaedic work *Great Books of the Western World*, a collection founded by Mortimer Adler, and related to the prestigious *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which gathers some of the most relevant writings of our civilization. If it was necessary to prove Plato's legacy as a fountainhead of classics both antique and modern, this collection would show the magnitude of his later reception (not mentioning what has yet to be proved, detected, or confessed). From this first sample, we get the following data: Plato is present in the works of Aristophanes, Aristotle, Galen, Nicomachus, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Plotinus, Plutarch, Tacitus, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Chaucer, Calvin, Hobbes, Rabelais, Erasmus, Montaigne, Gilbert, Galileo, Harvey, Cervantes, Francis Bacon, Descartes, Milton, Pascal, Racine, Newton, Locke, Swift, Voltaire, Diderot, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Gibbon, Kant, in «The Federalist Papers», in John Stuart Mill, Boswell, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Tocqueville, Melville, Marx, Dostoyevsky, William James, Freud, Bergson, Dewey, Whitehead, Russell, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Barth, Einstein, Hardy, Heisenberg, Waddington, Tawny, Frazer, Weber, Huizinga, Lévi-Strauss, Shaw, Proust, Mann, Joyce and Brecht. Conversely, we can verify Plato's absence in political philosophers (to exclude for the moment poets, literary artists, scientists and the like) such as Machiavelli, Spinoza, Hume, and the political economist Keynes. It is in fact a testimony to an overwhelming presence; and this «absence» in two great political philosophers like Machiavelli and Spinoza, if completely true, is easily explicable by the fact that both were highly original and use few explicit quotations. But, at all events, we can say that in the works of each of them, there exist Plato-like questions.

What is more, a bibliography of Plato's commentators, even those still in fashion, could never be adequately surveyed by a single researcher, or in the space of a single life. Significantly, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on Plato and Platonism concludes with a list of references that is hardly impressive given the geometric progression of studies (reported by, for example, Ricardo La Cierva⁴): R. D. MCKIRAHAN, Jr., *Plato and Socrates: A comprehensive Bibliography, 1958-1973* (1978): contains 4.600 un-annotated entries⁵.

4. R. DE LA CIERVA, *Como ampliar mi Cultura*, Madrid, Temas de Hoy, 1988, p. 15, gives us an example of the bibliographic increase in a very specialized area: certain alterations of sleep. In 1958, there were 327 published works. In 1984, a computer presented the figure of 17.000. How many would there be today?

5. *Brit. Enc.*, vol. 25, p. 907.

But why limit ourselves to the references? The *Magazine Littéraire* reported recently an international «popularity contest» of modern philosophers. Although Marx in fact won, Plato came very high in the list, with whole institutions lobbying for him.

But the continuing presence of Plato in our times and culture obliges us to add a methodological note in evaluating the sense and status of such a presence. Is it a question, as some would have it, of analyzing the «influence» of the author on posterity, even though our present notions of posterity would confine us to limits, given the enormous scope there is for a ‘future presence’ of this philosopher? We do not think this is the way. And by much less is it a question merely of imitation, even though we accept that social and cultural relations are largely imitative, as the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde made explicit⁶. But such social imitation is only very remotely close to the platonic *mimesis*, by which posterity is assumed to be possible in the domain of poetics, though not only in this domain⁷.

More than direct influence, which implies a power of the subject over the induced object, Harold Bloom held that the opposite process more often occurs, motivated by a desire (even anxiety)⁸ to seek out a kind of legitimacy in illustrious antecedents. That is to say, the more the supposed object selects his own influences, the more the latter projects a power over the former. But the question does not stop here. The problem of influence is usually placed in opposition to the category of «originality». Therefore, there would be «original» authors who influenced their epigones, who were by this definition themselves subject to influence. Also the idea of originality in the human and social sciences seems today to have fallen into disrepute⁹: the concept of originality is apparently a recent idea, belonging to the Enlightenment¹⁰ (from time to time we are reminded that medieval cathedrals do not, apparently, have a signature).

It should be added that the simultaneous presence of a trait or an argument in several authors must doubtless be interpreted in the context of what is known concerning similar occurrences in other civilizations or cultures, such as in

6. G. TARDE, *Les Lois de l'imitation*, Paris, 1890, republished with a “Présentation” by Bruno Karsenti, Paris, Kimé, 1993.

7. For the imitation of the eternal objects, cf. PLATO, *Politeia*, 500 c-d.

8. H. BLOOM, *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1973.

9. That is, for example, one of the starting points of TEIXEIRA, A. BRAZ, *Sentido e Valor do Direito. Introdução à Filosofia Jurídica*, 2nd ed., Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, 2000.

10. R. MORTIER, *L'Originalité. Une nouvelle catégorie esthétique au siècle des Lumières*, Genève, Droz, 1982.

different mythologies, as Georges Dumézil would have us do. For this historian of religions, there are four hypotheses to explain such affinities: «*En principe, les concordances entre deux sociétés historiquement séparées (je dis deux pour simplifier) peuvent s'expliquer de quatre manières: soit par le hasard, soit par une nécessité naturelle, soit par l'emprunt direct ou indirect, soit par une parente génétique, celle-ci pouvant être ou bien filiation d'une des parties à l'autre, ou bien fraternité sur un même niveau, héritage des deux à partir d'une même société antérieure*»¹¹. This logic allows us to apply to theories what is actually happening in cases of coincidence between two authors, *mutatis mutandis*.

Consequently, we are far from wishing, on one hand, to deny or reduce to a minimum the intellectual posterity that, somehow or other, claims for itself a platonic legacy, or a re-reading of Plato, even if only in the field of political philosophy. On the other hand, we are equally reluctant to commit ourselves to an explicit paradigm such as «Plato's influence».

We will therefore confine ourselves to observing, on the one hand, a phenomenon of *universality* (actually, of relative universality, limited after all to a great presence in western politico-philosophical thought) concerning some themes that Plato develops (assuming such themes are his own, and not borrowed from others— a subject that we do not intend to develop here). And, concomitantly, we should emphasize the coincidence that this same universality denotes. There are themes, problems and arguments that inevitably recur amongst the participating voices in the continuing philosophical debate as it has progressed down through the ages: that is an observation in fact, for which a marked methodological-epistemological justification is not required. In this sense, and allowing for the general polysemy of discourse, we could perhaps talk about the presence of Plato in future authors, or the possibility of an intertextual dialogue with them.

2. On Dialogue

Rather than speaking in terms of «originality» and «Plato's influence» on other authors, we prefer the notion of intertextuality or «quotation» (in the sense in which the latter is used in the plastic arts, especially in the history and criticism of painting – but also in intertextual studies). Put briefly, we would sooner frame the problem as one of «Plato's presence» in the course of the flow of European thought and its derivative branches.

11. G. DUMEZIL, *Mythes et Dieux des Indo-Européens*, texts collected and presented by Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, Paris, Flammarion, 1992, p. 20.

This presence, by its repetitive character (which is what defines a work as a classic), even if not always evident through explicit quotation (or perhaps because of that – since what is not explicit is a sign of internalisation), suggests the repetition of the commonplace and of the classical canon. As we have known since Marx, and Karl Jaspers has made explicit, the choice of questions, like the choice of themes to be discussed, predicates the answers. The questions «speak» the answers – as Jaspers put it. Thus this continuum of questions, though of various tones, shapes a pattern of response, which is to say, an educational pattern. Generation after generation repeatedly persists in the same way, perhaps without noticing that they do so. This nescience, that tradition is being repeated, occurs above all because the theme in question ceases to be attributed to the author. Notice that we do not speak of the «original» author, because we have no means of verifying originality, but refer merely to the author – a source of many works, or a primordial source, since after all there are transmitters who are intermediate sources.

Posterity's selection of themes, problems, topics, especially when these are detached from the author (not the allegory of the cave¹², not the myth of the ring of Gyges¹³, for example, which are usually presented under the shade of platonic authorship), is made on the grounds of the intrinsic worth of the message – without any concessions to the argument of authority. In this way, the «educational» value of what is selected seems all the greater.

Seminal themes that are found in Plato continue to be taught as part of whatever still remains of a classical political education. But they co-exist alongside an increasing forgetfulness of the originals, and are frequently replaced by extracts known to many, or mere summaries edited by commentators. This results in a paradoxical situation, that we and many others face when teaching Plato's *Politeia*.

To read *The Republic* as a primary introduction in a curriculum of political philosophy would be without any doubt very reasonable. It is doubtful that any work prior to this could compete in depth, variety of themes, and problematic scope. It has, moreover, an almost dramatic unity and tension, always more capable of attracting the attention of students than expositions more ponderous and dogmatic.

However... we end up by having to recognise that this sequence in the curriculum of political thought, though logical, appears less pleasant and enriching than an almost symmetrical one. The latter, against all pedagogic expectations, terminates in the study of Plato, after some previous knowledge

12. PLATO, *Politeia*, 514 a – 517 a.

13. PLATO, *Politeia*, 359 b ff.

on other great authors. Called upon to curtail my courses in Law by excluding all but one philosophical work, to be undertaken in the final year, I forced myself to choose between the *Antigone* of Sophocles (a work that would normally keep me busy for some years), and the *Politeia*. I decided some years ago for the latter. The message of the *Antigone* was with no doubts very elevated. But in spite of the multiplicity of interpretations surrounding the figure of Justice, not to mention the thousand and one glosses and new versions of this work¹⁴, in the end I preferred the work of philosophy as being richer and more complex in comparison to the tragedy. I made this choice, despite the fact that many of my students become acquainted with Plato only in their fifth and graduating year.

I must confess that I had not read the *Politeia* all through for some years. When I did so, I almost recovered that dawning moment of revelation that comes with a first reading. Once a week throughout the semester, we read one of the ten books of *The Politeia*. Joined together, in that climate of *Paideia*, it was then that I discovered the rare pleasures of being in the presence – if only for that moment – of what I can only call «originality».

Several topics, revisited by various authors down through the centuries, now appear to have their roots in this work. We get a clear sensation that, over and above the main argument, that is, the blueprint for a «utopia», beyond even the work's avowed intentions and most urgent arguments, Plato has also given us a book of profound political wisdom. Given that politics is chiefly an «art»¹⁵, it is this wisdom that counts above all – even though the technological cretinism¹⁶ in which we live glorifies other rationalities and other proposals. Such wisdom is a dimension, or a style, that better inspires the art of politics.

In our academic readings, sitting round the table and declaiming in loud voices, trying to revive the theatre that is implicit in the form of the work, we would sometimes pause for discussion. At these moments we would comment on historical, contextual or future questions, clarify themes or deeper philosophical points, and rehearse parallels with present-day events. Chiefly what came to our minds, however, were reminders of later books, steeped in the same source of inspiration.

14. In the field of drama, as well as Sophocles' classic, very important in our opinion, are the *Antigones* of António Sérgio and Jean Anouilh. Critically, by all, G. STEINER, *Antigones*, Portuguese translation, Miguel Serras Pereira, *Antígonas*, Lisboa, Relógio D'Água, 1995; J. GARCÍA-HUIDOBRO, *Antígona: el descubrimiento del límite, Naturaleza y Política*, Valparaíso, EDEVAL, 1997; S. TZITZIS, *La Philosophie Pénale*, Paris, P.U.F., 1996, p. 69 and following; P. F. da CUNHA, *O Século de Antígona*, Coimbra, Almedina, 2003.

15. Cf., C. ZUCKERT, The Stranger's Political Science v. Socrate's Political Art, *Journal of the International Plato Society*, 5, <http://www.nd.edu/~plato/plato5issue/Zuckert.pdf>.

16. J. DUVIGNAUD, *Sociologia*, (port. tr.), Porto, Paisagem, 1971.

In what follows we intend to point out some of those reminiscences, that together seem to us to shape a contribution to a political – philosophical syllabus, sourced in Plato but obviously not confined to him. It seems likely that, in identifying the dozen or so authors that predominate in the discussion of recurrent problems, we will then have arrived at another dimension to the canon, in addition to the more usual authorial perspective: a dimension consisting of great ideas. I do not mean by this merely an «idea of ideas», such as Adler's *Syntopicon*, a herculean compendium of some hundred classical concepts, but rather a perspective grounded in the concrete ideas, arguments and political topics, as in the cases we now intend to analyze.

II. *Topics and Arguments. Reminiscences of the Future in a Reading of «Politeia»*

Let us now order these random thoughts by more precise articulation. We were faced with a difficult selection. We all know that, when Thrasymachus states that Justice is merely what is useful or convenient to the strongest¹⁷, we will recognise not only an original proposition, but a dogma antecedent both to him and to Plato who gives him a voice. It is not only the manifesto of all dictators, but also of all positivist jurists (however involuntarily and unconsciously they may sometimes adopt it). But it is not this kind of «transversal» that we want to analyse, because there are many of them and to quote them is hardly practicable.

We must look for more obviously telling points.

Significantly, there is a passage in Saint Augustine that normally confuses students. Read outside the context, it is not infrequently attributed to some anarchist. We will start there, aware that our ear for local tone is necessarily imperfect, and that experts frequently make mistakes in dating. We recall an acute observation of Umberto Eco, in defending *The Name of the Rose* against its critics: «In any case there was a fact that amused me immensely: sometimes a critic or a reader wrote or stated that one of my characters said very modern things; well, in all these cases, and precisely in these cases, I had used textual quotations of the fourteen»¹⁸.

The reader may be similarly astonished by the quotation that follows from Augustine of Hippo. Imagine his further astonishment when he sees that that quotation itself seems to be an echo (and the prudence of this formulation should be emphasised) of Plato himself.

17. PLATO, *Politeia*, 338 c.

18. U. ECO, *Postille a Il Nome della Rosa*, Fabbri, Bompiani, Sonzogno, (port. tr. Maria Luísa Rodrigues de Freitas), *Porquê «O Nome da Rosa» ?*, Lisboa, Difel, w/d., p. 63.

Let us go to the point. An entire chapter of Augustine is entitled: «Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms? The band itself is made up of men; it is ruled by the authority of a prince, it is knit together by the pact of confederacy; the booty is divided by the law agreed on. If, by the admittance of abandoned men, this evil increases to such a degree that it holds places, fixes abodes, takes possession of cities, and subdues peoples, it assumes the more plainly the name of a kingdom, because the reality is now manifestly conferred on it, not by the removal of covetousness, but by the addition of impunity»¹⁹.

And after a general theorization, the author continues, with a specific story, which makes a rather impressive point: «Indeed, that was an apt and true reply which was given to Alexander the Great by a pirate who had been seized. For when that king had asked the man what he meant by keeping hostile possession of the sea, he answered with bold pride, «What thou meanest by seizing the whole earth; but because I do it with a petty ship, I am called a robber, whilst thou who dost it with a great fleet art styled emperor»²⁰.

The history, having been attributed to Alexander the Great, would point, in the best case, to a common source prior to both Augustine and Plato. In what follows is a passage in *The Republic*, which, whilst it does not tell the fable, nevertheless expounds its *moral*. Significantly, he writes about tyranny: «(...) that is to say, tyranny, which by fraud and force takes away the property of others, not little by little but wholesale; comprehending in one, things sacred as well as profane, private and public; for which acts of wrong, if he were detected perpetrating any one of them singly, he would be punished and incur great disgrace – they who do such wrong in particular cases are called robbers of temples, and man-stealers and burglars and swindlers and thieves. But when a man besides taking away the money of the citizens has made slaves of them, then, instead of these names of reproach, he is termed happy and blessed, nor only by the citizens but by all who hear of his having achieved the consummation of injustice»²¹.

The same passage reminds us of different moments of Voltaire's work. On one hand, a note in his *Philosophical Dictionary* reads: «*On bannissait, il n'y a pas bien longtemps, du ressort de la juridiction, un petit voleur, un petit faussaire, un coupable de voie de fait. Le résultat était qu'il devenait grand voleur, grand faussaire, et meurtrier dans une autre juridiction. (...)*»²². But

19. St AUGUSTINE, *The City of God*, IV, 4 (tr. Marcus Dods, ed. *Great Books of Western World*, vol. 16).

20. IDEM, *Ibid.*

21. PLATO, *Politeia*, 344 a-c (tr. Benjamin Jovett, ed. *The Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 6).

22. VOLTAIRE, «Banissement», *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, Paris, 1765⁵.

above all there are two striking points in the *Idées Républicaines*: «III. Un peuple est ainsi subjugué ou par un compatriote habile, qui a profité de son imbécillité et de ses divisions, ou par un voleur appelé conquérant, qui est venu avec d'autres voleurs s'emparer de ses terres, qui a tué ceux qui ont résisté, et qui a fait ses esclaves des lâches auxquels il a laissé la vie. IV. Ce voleur, qui méritait la roue, s'est fait quelquefois dresser des autels. Le peuple asservi a vu dans les enfants du voleur une race de dieux; ils ont regardé l'examen de leur autorité comme un blasphème, et le moindre effort pour la liberté comme un sacrilège». We might recall other moments, in this author, like the article on «torture» in the same *Dictionary*, etc.

When Voltaire refers to the appropriation of other people's belongings, we cannot fail to be reminded of Machiavelli's *Prince*: «Perché le iniurie si debbono fare tutte insieme, acciò che, assaporandosi meno, offendino meno: e benefizii si debbono fare a poco a poco, acciò che si assaporino meglio»²³.

We shall now return to the *Politeia*. And, since we are in that murky frontier between the powerful and the bandits, let us remember that, even there, justice is apparently so important that it needs to be upheld.

Plato asks, through the mouth of Socrates: «(...) and would you have the goodness also to inform me, whether you think that a state, or an army, or a band of robbers and thieves, or any other gang of evildoers could act at all if they injured one another?»²⁴

This thought resonates in a reading of Cicero's *On Duties*, in a passage that for a Portuguese is a relative outrage, deriving as it does from Roman imperialist ethnocentricity: «(...) things are in such a way that even those who live on their felonies and crimes, can not live without a little of justice; because, whoever steals or subtracts from the product of a robbery - even if it is the chief pirate who does not deal in equal shares - that person risks being killed or abandoned by his companions. On the contrary, it is said that there are among thieves, laws with which they comply and respect; it was thanks to his fairness in the redistribution of sack that Bardylis of Iliria, told by Theopompus, acquired great wealth; and even more so in the case of Viriato of Lusitania, who made even our army and generals bend; it was the praetor C. Lelius, nicknamed *The wise*, who broke him and made him weak; he repressed his insolence to the point that made the war easy for his successors. If justice has sufficient strength to maintain and increase the fortunes of those who dedicate themselves to pillage, what strength will it have in an organised State, with laws and courts?»²⁵

23. N. MACHIAVELLI, *Il Principe*, VIII, 8.

24. PLATO, *Politeia*, 351c.

25. CICERO, *De Officiis*, II, X, 40.

Obviously this can be mere coincidence. However, this is precisely the point we desire to raise.

Put briefly, it is a commonplace that justice is found between extremes²⁶ – an idea developed by Aristotle, not only in relation to Justice, but informing his entire theory of virtues (which equate to a kind of balance between the opposed vices of excess)²⁷. We notice that Glaucon places Justice as a middle term, rather curiously between the greatest good, which would be to avoid punishment for unjust acts, and the greatest evil, that is, not having the means to reciprocate an injustice. There is, obviously, an important difference between the kind of middle term denoted here and that of Aristotle, because one cannot consider the platonic extremes as true «vices». This is certainly the case with the latter instance, which simply amounts to a privation of the means to reply to an offence. But we shall not labour this point. We shall not even pause to consider the legacy of Gyges' ring²⁸, through the Enlightenment to the *Invisible Man*... and more recent works²⁹... In the same way, all utopian thought concerning the foundation of an ideal (mythic) city³⁰ is synthesised in the enthusiastic command: «Let us go! – go ahead – Let us lay by thought the foundations of a City»³¹. But Plato in several passages will go on to establish the theoretical basis of the utopian genre, recognising the inevitable refractions of the real and the difficulties of action, whilst always exalting the utopian endeavour.³²

I happened on one occasion to notice, in an academic book, the expression *suum cuique* attributed to Saint Augustine. I couldn't help smiling, because a juridical background enabled me to recognise it in Ulpianus (*justitia est constans et perpetua voluntas suum cuique tribuere*), from where one would go to the *Digest*. But at the time, I did not think of Plato. Obviously, I had already read the *Republic*, but my philosophical juridical studies helped call attention to

26. PLATO, *Politeia*, 358e – 359b.

27. Cf. the brief reference by J. MARIAS, *Historia de la Filosofía*, pp. 87-88 and the syntheses by A. MACINTYRE, *A Short History of Ethics*, Routledge, 1993⁹, pp. 63 ff., W. JAEGER, *Aristóteles*, (Spanish tr. José Gaos), México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1984², pp. 262 ff., Sir D. ROSS, *Aristotle*, London, Methuen & Co., 1983, (port. transl. by Luís Filipe) Bragança, S. S. TEIXEIRA, *Aristóteles*, Lisboa, Dom Quixote, 1987, p. 198 and following, W. C. K. GUTHRIE, *History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. VI., *Aristotle: an Encounter*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983/1990, p. 357 ff.

28. PLATO, *Politeia*, 359d and following.

29. *To see the invisible man*, «The Twilight Zone» series, Sup. Prod. James Crocker, Prod.: Harvey Frend.

30. R. MUCCHIELLI, *Le Mythe de la cité idéale*, Brionne, Gérard Monfort, 1960 (Paris, P.U.F., 1980).

31. PLATO, *Politeia*, 369c.

32. PLATO, *Politeia*, 472d and following.

the fact that already in the *Politeia* there is an interrogatory formula of great importance, that leads, in the course of the dialogue, to something very similar. The starting point is, no doubt, the moment of agreement with Cephalus, at the very beginning in Book I. Here the question is raised as to which two things will always be considered just: the first being to speak the truth, the second being to adopt the kind of conduct that results in restitution, retribution, or the payment of debts³³. In short, the matter concerns concrete forms of the general *suum cuique*³⁴ – beginning a known discussion³⁵ to which is usually prefixed the question: «And what is that which justice gives, and to whom?»³⁶

On this same point, a new subject occurs to mind, this time in a well-known passage of the *Summa Theologiae* by Thomas Aquinas, another crucial work of jurist-political thought. Here, the Ulpianus' formula is applied to the definition of Justice, considered in its expressly correct form, and with the proviso that it is «well understood»³⁷. The same example of the restitution of a deposit of arms by someone who in the meantime goes crazy (or becomes seditious, as the «angelic doctor» adds) emerges as a case, for both Plato and Saint Thomas, in which restitution should not be made to the legitimate owner³⁸.

Let us return to *suum cuique*. There is still another parallel passage, in which the topic in question concerns painting: «Sir, you would not surely have us beautify the eyes to such a degree that they are no longer eyes; consider rather whether, *by giving this and the other features their due proportion*, we make the whole beautiful.»³⁹. However, it seems that the question in Plato, that of attributing to each thing its due colour or proportion, is somewhat remote from the juridical *suum cuique*. After all, this is not very far from the conception of justice, in Plato, which is not so much that of an attribution (dynamic) like the *constans et perpetua voluntas* of the Romans, but rather the static adhesion of each one to his place; namely, that the shoemaker does not go beyond the making of the buckle or the slipper (at least, in the matter of shoes...). This proverb, still in use today, was, as we know, coined by Pliny⁴⁰ – *sutor ne supra crepidam* – in allusion to the mythic painter Apeles. Specifically it applied to the shoemaker who, after (legitimately) giving his opinion about the shoes, then

33. The various translations consulted, in several languages significantly do not agree upon this subject, which is a technical philosophico-juridical matter of some subtlety.

34. PLATO, *Politeia*, 331c.

35. That continues further until at least PLATO, *Politeia*, 336a.

36. PLATO, *Politeia*, 332d.

37. St. T. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae, q. 57, art. 1.

38. PLATO, *Politeia*, 331c; St THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae, q. 57, art. 2, *ad primum*, *in fine*.

39. PLATO, *Politeia*, 420d (our emphasis).

40. PLINY, *Natural History*, 35-36.

discoursed about what he did not know, i.e. everything else in the haiting field. Plato expressly states that «And the division of labour which required the carpenter and the shoemaker and the rest of the citizens to be doing each his own business and not another's, was a shadow of justice, and for that reason it was of use?»⁴¹

Passing to more specifically juridical questions, the pages that Plato dedicates to the legal relations between «private» persons *hoc sensu* (obviously not to be confused with those of our modern *summa divisio* between private law and public law) contain much wisdom. Plato and Paul of Tarsus share a certain vision of the «public» for law.⁴² Plato states that «it is not worth while dictating precepts to good men, because they will easily discover for themselves the majority of laws that require to be formulated in such cases»⁴³. And let us recall Saint Paul's First Epistle to Timothy «*Scimus autem quia bona est lex, si quis ea legitime utatur, sciens hoc quia iusto lex non est posita, sed iniustis et non subiectis (...)*»⁴⁴.

When an author like Plato identifies some of the causes of a crucial problem, and this same problem persists, aggravating over the centuries, it is natural that other people traverse the same intellectual routes. This is what occurs in the case of legislation inflation, brought about by the interference of law in areas that should not be open to it, and in the vain conviction of successive improvements. Plato uses an expressive image to characterise this attempt to correct by means of the law: «(...) not knowing that they are in reality cutting off the heads of a hydra»⁴⁵.

This theoretical construction presupposes, as a matter of fact quite correctly, that, as we quoted above, the laws «are discovered», not invented. This reminds us of an idea of law that that would much later appear in Montesquieu's work: the notion that the most basic laws, even juridical laws, are natural. From this it follows that things belonging to the order of nature are found by discovery, not by inventions. Similarly, *De L'Esprit des Lois* begins: «*Les lois, dans la signification la plus étendue, sont les rapports nécessaires qui dérivent de la nature des choses*»⁴⁶. It goes on to make clear that, in this sense, all things, all beings, have their laws – divinity, the material world, the intelligences superior to men, the animals and also, of course, humankind.

41. PLATO, *Politeia*, 443c.

42. On the legal - political thought of Paul, see, v.g., DÍAS-RODELAS, Juan Miguel – *Pablo y la Ley*, Navarra, Editorial Verbo Divino, 1994; NARDONI, Enrique, «Justicia en las Cartas Paulinas», *Los que buscan la Justicia. Un estudio de la justicia en el mundo bíblico*, Pamplona, Verbo Divino, 1997.

43. PLATO, *Politeia*, 425d-e.

44. St PAUL, *Tim.*, I, 8-9.

45. PLATO, *Politeia*, 426 e.

46. MONTESQUIEU, *De l'Esprit des lois*, I, 1.

Other execrable topics throughout the times, such as the «community of children and women»⁴⁷, or, in another formulation, the «abolition of the family», could lead us into the vast jumble of dialogues from the difficulties articulated by Aristotle⁴⁸. These themes would receive an ambiguous echo even from the Marxists, and a somewhat ironical one at that. Marx and Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto*, argue, after a long defence, that: «the Communists have no need to introduce community of women; it has existed almost from time immemorial»⁴⁹. But, as we know today, the problem does not stop there.

In contrast, some points about equality between men and women (in spite of all the limitations – namely about feminine *incapacity*⁵⁰ - and its interpretations) would by today's standards be regarded as relatively more benign, but again, it would be difficult to list the number of interlocutors to be considered. But the platonic reasoning, as it occurs in the following passage, is unimpeachable: «Let us further suppose the birth and education of our women to be subjected to similar or nearly similar regulations; then we shall see whether the result accords with our design»⁵¹. Everything begins, after all, in education, and after that with work – although, as happens so many times in times of crisis and scarcity (such as in the two world wars which produced great social change), the latter not infrequently determines the former. But education continues to be the great agent of equality (as of freedom).

Pages abound in the many books on good governance⁵² serving as the *mirrors of princes*. But the references are multiple and scattered, and besides, this is a literary genre not greatly productive of classics – always excepting the small but great work of the Florentine secretary. In the same way, the criticisms of false philosophers (and the invasion of philosophy⁵³ – and we could also include education – by the badly prepared and opportunistic) also have their presence in many later writings, such as, among the Portuguese, those of Frei Amador de Arrais. But we shall not detain ourselves, pursuing only the more obvious reminiscences, concerning matters more directly public.

A crucial point, but one that would take up an entire book, is the delimitation

47. PLATO, *Politeia*, IV, 423 ; V, 457, 462.

48. ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, II, 1 *in fine*, and 2, 1260 a.

49. K. MARX/F. ENGELS, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Ch. II, (tr. Samuel Moore), ed. *The Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 50, p. 427.

50. PLATO, *Politeia*, 455d-e.

51. PLATO, *Politeia*, 451c.

52. PLATO, *Politeia*, 484b and following, coming to a high point at 487 a, and interesting further discussions.

53. PLATO, *Politeia*, 487c and following, 495c-d, 496a.

and succession of forms of government. We are apt to refer all such questions to Aristotle but they already exist in Plato, and are in truth even older than that. In contrast to the symmetry of the three pure regimes degenerating into corruption, in the version of the Stagirite⁵⁴, Plato had taught before this that there exist four regimes, all imperfect, succeeding by cycles: of timocracy to oligarchy, from oligarchy to democracy and from democracy reverting again to timocracy. Aristotle does not adopt this division, and Plato himself would change the typology in later works⁵⁵. The typologies are really forms for organising and explaining the realities: they are not themselves the realities.

In Aristotle's exposition concerning the forms of government, many echoes of Plato appear throughout the whole text of *The Politics*. But this would be a subject for one (or several) autonomous volumes, being a common place of whatever theory is proposed concerning the «platonism» of Aristotle⁵⁶. Permit us, though, to underline a crucial point about democracy, which in both Plato and Aristotle is characterised as fundamentally a state or condition of Freedom⁵⁷. It is as a matter of fact a universal legacy ... The rhetoric of freedom pulses in the same way throughout the funeral oration of Pericles, as reported by Thucydides⁵⁸ in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*. However, if Pericles praises above all the consistency of the democratic constitution of Athens, in Plato we can detect some criticism of the inconsequential character of the indivisible or scattered spirit of democratic man, or «lover of equality»⁵⁹. Plato, of course, is not an adept of democracy, largely because he sees the weaknesses that permit its descent into tyranny.... Freedom is at once a principle of democracy, but also for Plato, a cause of its perdition⁶⁰. What is not to say –

54. ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, III, 7 (1279 a-b).

55. An objective and recent synthesis can be consulted, for example, in Nelson Nery COSTA, *Ciência Política*, with a preface by Paulo Bonavides, 2nd ed., Rio de Janeiro, Forense, 2005, p. 33 and following.

56. Completely opposed positions are the classic work of W. JAEGER, *Aristoteles. Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung*, Berlin, 1923, Spanish transl. by José Gaos, *Aristóteles*, 2nd pub., México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1984, Ingemar DUERING, *Aristóteles. Darstellung und Interpretationen seines Denkens*, Heidelberg, 1966. The most extreme and surprising position is that of J. ZÜRCHER, *Aristoteles Werke und Geist*, 1952, who, as we know, is prone to consider Aristotle a simple and total platonist, which implies the attribution of many of his works to Theophrastus. For our political interpretation of Aristotle, v. P. F. da CUNHA, *Aristóteles, Filosofia do Homem: Ética e Política*, in «Revista Internacional d'Humanitas», VIII, nº 8, 2005; *Idem*, «Aristóteles, a Invenção do Jurídico» in *Repensar a Política*, Coimbra, Almedina, 2005, pp. 123-152.

57. PLATO, *Politeia*, 557b; ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, VI, 2 (1317 a, and ff.).

58. THUCYDIDES, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, II, 35 and ff.

59. PLATO, *Politeia*, 561e.

60. *Ibid.*, 562b-c.

quite the opposite – that the author of *The Politeia* prefers tyranny? We believe that it is mainly the problem of decadence or corruption that preoccupies the author.

And since we have to finish, we shall finish with the question of decadence, joining Plato to Heidegger. Let us begin with the latter: Heidegger⁶¹ outlines the obscure tale of the *darkening of the world*: «the exile of gods, the destruction of the earth, the herding of mankind, the supremacy of mediocrity». The descriptions of the exile of the gods and the disenchantment of the world follow, not infrequently, the inspiration of the philosophical poet Hölderlin⁶². And what is the solution? In Heidegger, the synthesis is passed to the great *media*, and is contained in the title of a final interview: «*Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten*»⁶³. In a similar way – and we remark the formal element of coincidence – Plato states: «(...) if, however, it is sown, it acquires roots and grows in infertile ground, the result will be precisely the opposite of virtuous, unless some god come to the rescue»⁶⁴. Obviously, this reveals a coincidence in the translation, which in turn makes us think of an «influence» of the formula of Heidegger himself in the translation of Plato.

And this is precisely the point at which we hoped to arrive. We do not just read our texts with the hindsight of our knowledge of the classics but we also read (and sometimes translate) the classics in the light of our own ideas and formulas. Everything combines to close in a circle of *Paideia*, which we hope will never be cut by the witches of technocracy or any other barbarism, however it claims to be civilised.

Paulo FERREIRA DA CUNHA
(Porto)

61. M. HEIDEGGER, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, I.

62. Namely in IDEM, *Holzwege*, Frankfurt, Vittorio Klostermann, 1949.

63. IDEM, *Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten*, *Der Spiegel*, 31.V.1976.

64. PLATO, *Politeia*, 492a.

ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ

Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η

Στὸ παρὸν ἄρθρο προτείνω ὅτι μπορούμε νὰ θεωρήσουμε τὴν *Πολιτεία* τοῦ Πλάτωνος ὡς τὴν πηγὴ τῶν κλασσικῶν «πηγῶν» τὴν πολιτικῆς καὶ νομικῆς φιλοσοφίας. Τοιοῦτοτρόπως, μπορούμε νὰ θεωρήσουμε τὴν *Πολιτεία* ὡς *Παιδεία*, ὅχι ὑπὸ τὴν παραδοσιακὴ ἔννοια τοῦ ὅρου – τ.ε. ὑπὸ τὴν ἔννοια τῶν μορφωτικῶν ιδεῶν ἢ τῆς πλατωνικῆς παιδαγωγίας – ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ τὴν ἔννοια τῆς συμβολῆς αὐτοῦ τοῦ συγκεκριμένου διαλόγου στὴν μεγάλη συζήτηση, ἡ ὁποία ἐκκινεῖ τὸν πολιτικὸ πολιτισμὸ τῆς Δύσης, ἐπὶ τῇ βάσει τῆς ἠθικο-νομικῆς κληρονομιάς τῶν Ἑλλήνων. Ἡ πλατωνικὴ *Πολιτεία* ἐμφανίζεται ὡς ἀρωγὸς στὴν διασάφηση τῆς Παιδείας διαχρονικὰ μέσω τῆς ἐμβριθοῦς ἐνασχόλησης μὲ τὸ κείμενο καθ' αὐτό. Ἀνακαλύπτουμε στοιχεῖα πού, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον, ἀποδίδονται στὸν Ἀριστοτέλη, ὅπως καὶ στοιχεῖα διακειμενικῆς συνάφειας μὲ ποικίλους συγγραφεῖς: τὸν Αὐγουστῖνο – κυρίως – ἀλλὰ ἐπίσης τὸν Κικέρωνα καὶ τὸν Οὐλπιανό. Ὑπάρχουν χωρία πού μᾶς παραπέμπουν ἀκόμα καὶ στὸν Μοντεσκιέ ἢ τὸν Βολταῖρο. Μοιάζει πῶς ὅλα, ἢ σχεδὸν ὅλα, βρίσκονται ἤδη ἐκεῖ. Ὅπως ἔλεγε ὁ Alfred de Musset, ἤρθαμε πολὺ ἀργὰ σ' ἓναν ἤδη πολὺ γερασμένο κόσμον. Εἶναι φυσικὸ ὅτι ὅλοι αὐτοὶ οἱ κοινοὶ τόποι εἶναι ἤδη καταχωρισμένοι. Ποιὸς μπορεῖ νὰ ἰσχυριστεῖ ὅτι γνωρίζει τὰ πάντα γύρω ἀπὸ ἓναν συγγραφέα μόνο μέσω τῆς βιβλιογραφίας τῆς ἀναφερόμενης σ' αὐτόν; Σὲ κάθε περίπτωσι τὸ ἄρθρο αὐτό, ἐφορμώντας ἀπὸ τὴ «συναναστροφή» καὶ θαυμασμό μου γιὰ τὸ συγκεκριμένο βιβλίον, ἀποτίει ἓνα φόρον τιμῆς στὸν ἐλληνικὸ κλασσικὸ πολιτικόν. Ἡ *Πολιτεία* εἶναι καὶ ἡ *Παιδεία* μας ἐπίσης.

Paulo FERREIRA DA CUNHA
(μτφρ. Δούκας ΚΑΠΑΝΤΑΗΣ)

