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THE EARLY VERSION OF PLATO'S *REPUBLIC**

HOLGER THESLEFF

The theory of the 'Proto-Republic' is an uncomfortable one. Those who have seen it mentioned tend to dismiss it offhand, chiefly because it does not fit in with their views of Plato's development, and certainly because so very few specialists have endorsed it. And were not Hirmer (1897) and Adam (1902, followed by Usher 1973 and many others) able to refute definitely the notion that Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* might refer to Plato, rather than vice versa?

No, they were not. The theory has been revived recently.¹ The following is an attempt to restate my position regarding the issue of Plato's early Utopia, by adding a few more arguments and by developing some of the consequences of the theory for our understanding of Plato's public relations and his early philosophy. As I see it, the question demands an extensive (and 'philological') treatment and probing from as many angles as possible. It is largely a matter of circumstantial evidence.

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The main arguments for the existence of an early Platonic Utopia are the following.

(i) Although the *Republic*, as we have it in our manuscripts, forms a

* Variants of this paper were read in 1994 in Columbia SC ('The Rosamond Kent Sprague Lecture' II), Chicago, New York, and Athens, and in 1995 at a conference in Gammel Vraa (Denmark). I am particularly indebted to the friendly help and criticism from Ian Mueller, Debra Nails, Jerry Press, Rosamond Sprague, and two anonymous referees.

¹ Cf. Debra Nails, *Agora, Academy, and the Conduct of Philosophy* (Philosophical Studies Series 63), 1995, 116–122, developing the theses of H. Thesleff, *Studies in Platonic Chronology* (Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 70), 1982, and id., *Platonic Chronology*, *Phronesis* 34 (1989) 10–15.

monumental, pedimentally composed unity,² it is not likely to have been a monolith from the start. The dialogue is usually taken as typical of Plato's 'Middle Period', and so the commonly accepted date of composition is 'about 375 B.C.'. As a matter of fact, however, this conventional view is a loose compromise among a wide variety of considerations. There are no unambiguous clues to the dating. The different blocks of the work may well originate in different periods and contexts, and the final editing probably took place rather late, after Plato's Sicilian adventures were over.³ It is quite possible, indeed feasible considering the structure of the work, that the Utopia (Kallipolis) belongs to its earliest layers.

(ii) Aulus Gellius, a usually well-informed author, reports that Xenophon was said to have opposed the ideas of Plato's Republic, having read the "approximately two books which had first reached the public".⁴ Hence, Gellius continues, Xenophon put forward a different view of a good government in the Cyropaedia, which occasioned Plato to remark (Laws III 694c) that Cyrus was not educated at all. Gellius' source probably had in mind the opening section of the Cyropaedia and Book VIII, which present a theory of the Best State in a Persian setting, with some apparent reminiscences of Plato's Utopia.⁵ The date of the Cyropaedia is usually put rather late because of the references in the epilogue (VIII 8); but if this is a postscript, the bulk of the text may well, like the Anabasis, have been written in Skillous in the 380s when Xenophon cannot possibly have seen the final Republic.

What is really intriguing here, is the mention in Gellius of 'approximately two books'. This is irrelevant to his basic story which concerns the relations of Plato and Xenophon. Gellius is quoting an unnamed author who

² Contrary to earlier attempts to analyze the Republic into parts, it has been customary in recent years to underline its structural unity. For the 'pedimental' composition, see H. Thesleff in G.A. Press (ed.), *Plato's Dialogues, New Studies & Interpretations*, 1993, 27 f., with context.

³ This is one of the theses of Thesleff 1982; see further below.

⁴ NA XIV 3.3, note *duobus fere libris, qui primi in vulgus exierant*. Cf. below, Aristotle.

⁵ Especially I 1.1, deficiencies of all Greek constitutions, cf. Plato, Seventh Letter 326ab (below); I 2.15, schools of justice; VIII 1–2: loyalty aiming at common εὐδαιμονία, Guardians, σχολή, training for ἀρετή and justice, respect for women (1.27 f.), strict specialization of the crafts (2.5–6). Xenophon does not appear to know Isocrates' Busiris (below) which may have been published earlier.

obviously did not mean the beginning of the Republic (as Gellius knew it), from Book I to somewhere about the end of Book II or the opening of Book III, since these sections could not have provoked what we read in the *Cyropaedia*. Very probably Gellius' source was well-informed enough to know, or to assume, that Xenophon had been using an earlier, shorter version of Plato's political Utopia, a text which he perhaps had not seen but which he presumed to be of 'about' two papyrus scrolls in length, like the Peripatetic epitome we happen to know of (below, p. 159).

(iii) In the opening of Plato's *Timaeus* (17c–19b), we read what purports to be a constricted but complete summary of the λόγοι περὶ πολιτείας that Socrates had presented to the same audience the day before. The summary covers the essentials of the political proposals of Books II–III and V of the Republic:

Timaeus	Republic
17cd The specialization of the trades in the Best State and the need of specialized soldiers as Guardians	II 369b–374d
17d–18a The mild and violent, spirited and philosophic nature required for Guardians	II 374d–376c
18a The education (τροφή) of the Guardians will consist of γυμναστική, μουσική, and μαθήματα proper for them [no details given but note 19de on μίμησις and poetry]	II 376c–III 412b, VII 521c–531c (cf. VI 502c–506b)
18b The Guardians would have no private property but live modestly on common public funds, devoting themselves to ἀρετή and σχολή	III 416d–417b (and more loosely V 461e–466d), cf. II 374b–e
18c Equality of women and men	V 451d–457c
18cd The strange proposal of community of women and children	V 457c–458e, 461de
18de Eugenics: the secret manipulation of sexual unions	V 459a–460b, cf. III 415bc
19a Good offspring to be reared, bad offspring to be sent to their proper class	V 460c–461c, cf. III 415bc

The summary begins where Socrates in our text of the Republic takes over, after the speeches of Plato's brothers (II 368c), and it ends before the discussion of philosophy and philosophic man begins (V 472a). There is in *Timaeus* no reference to the issues of Book IV (happiness as a balance of

virtues in the state and the soul) or to the detailed criticism of myth in Books II and III (377d–398b), though note the hint 19de; and the education of the (yet undifferentiated) Philosopher-Guardians is only mentioned in passing (18a), though μαθήματα are included (elaborated in Republic VII 521c ff., cf. VI 502c–506b). The main distinction is that between the Guardians of society and the rest.

The framing of the summary involves some obvious fiction and deliberate mystification. It is particularly interesting that the summary only deals with a specific part of our Republic and, moreover, that it does not correspond exactly even to this part, although it is explicitly said to be complete. "This is all that was said yesterday", we are assured (19ab), before Socrates goes on to say that he would now like to see the Ideal City in action (which leads first to the Atlantis story). The mock-pedantic and pointed restriction to what we know as parts of the Republic, put in a different context, must have some significance. Why could Plato not just refer to the ideas of 'Socrates' as presented in the Republic? On the other hand, if Plato had wanted to operate with pure fiction, it would have been easy for him to create a summary of a previous discussion which would have fitted his present theme much better than the summary given in the Timaeus actually does.

We shall never know all the implications of this mystification. But by reason of what we seem to know, it is difficult to avoid the assumption that Plato makes Socrates refer to an existing version of his Utopia, without such later accretions as readers of the Timaeus presumably knew of: oral or written additions that would too readily associate with Plato's activities in the Academy and in Syracuse. He simply made a reference to his early Utopia of equality and communism among the leading class, a Utopia which included little or no explicit discussion of philosophical issues. Such a static Utopia, projected into prehistory, gave him somehow a suitable starting point for the dynamics of the Atlantis story, the Egyptian fabulations (cf. Isocrates, below), and indeed the cosmic background of all this, rooted as it is in constant κίνησις.⁶ In other words, I presume Plato is here playing with the 'approximately two books' known to the source of Gellius.

The fiction of the lecture having been given 'the day before' to the same company (though one is now missing due to ἀσθένεια, like Plato is in

⁶ Movement is typical of both soul and body of the Cosmos.

the *Phaedo*) may imply that the earlier version had not been published in the manner of the more widely known dialogues and, consequently, that it did not have a fixed literary setting. It is also important to note that the language of the relevant portions of the present *Republic* II–III and V has features of Plato's 'late style':⁷ so if the utopian part of this dialogue represents an earlier layer, it has not come to us in its original shape. This original shape need not even have been dialogic (below).

(iv) The existence of an early version of Plato's Utopia is partially confirmed by Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* (about 392 B.C.). To sceptics it should be remarked at the outset that those who deny that Aristophanes might have had Plato in mind probably have not considered all the parallels found – or the existing indications that Plato had a distinct political philosophy before 388 B.C., long before the *Republic* received its final shape, or the fact that a comic parody is likely to exaggerate and disfigure to the point of sheer nonsense, or how Plato would react on an earlier parody of his views. Plato's own sense of humour may well account for the comic tones and allusions in *Republic* V and elsewhere in the dialogue, even if he had himself set the ball rolling and Aristophanes had already made him the subject of public mockery.⁸

The most conspicuous parallels with our text of the *Republic* are the following:

Ecclesiazusae	Republic
1–240 Opening arguments of Praxagora for the need of reform and rule of women, ending in statement: εὐδαιμονοῦντες τὸν βίον διάξετε	(Εὐδαιμονία given as background motivation for the utopia, IV 419a ff., V 465d ff., 473c)
441–442 Women are both intellectual and productive	Cf. esp. V 454d–456a (VII 540c)
556–568 No social injustice	Cf. III 416d–417b (V 462bc)
571–582 Chorus introducing Praxagora's proposals by addressing her: "Collect your philosophic knowledge (πυκνὴν φρένα, φιλόσοφον φροντίδα ἐπιστα-	Cf. Socrates' reluctance in Book V to present his proposal of community of

⁷ References in Thesleff 1982, 137.

⁸ And he knows that mockery subsides with time, V 452b–e. The reflections of comedy in the *Republic* have been often noted, and hence some critics tend to interpret the entire Utopia as satire. More commonly, Plato is said to play ironically with ideas originally advanced by Aristophanes.

μένην) for the benefit of your sisters (φίλαι); for the thoughts of your revolutionary speech (καινή γλώττης ἐπίνοια) will bring much happiness, joy, and help to the life of our citizens. It is time to show what you can. For our city needs some clever innovation (σοφοῦ τινος ἐξευρήματος). Go on with what has never been done or said before...”

Praxagora:

583–585 I know my advice is good (χρηστὰ διδάξω) and for the women’s part revolutionary (καινοτομεῖν).

589 Try to understand my thought (ἐπίστασθαι τὴν ἐπίνοιαν)

590–604 All property shall be common

605–608 There will be plenty of everything

609–610 Old laws not needed

613–615 Free love, community of women

615–618 External beauty not decisive

635–645 Fathers will not recognize their offspring

651–652 Slaves as farmers

656–672 No quarrels and lawsuits

678–680 Recital of epic poetry to make children courageous

673–688 (cf. 715) Common meals; the city will become like one single home (μίαν οἴκησιν, εἰς ἓν ἅπαντα)

women and children, under the supervision of philosophers

Cf. above

V passim

Cf. II 372ab

Cf. V 462a

V 451d–461c

Cf. V 474de

V 457d, 461c–e, 463c

(Note σχολή of Guardians, II 374b–e and passim; cf. Timaeus 18b; cf. further III 415a, e, V 466b: farmers the lowest class)

III 405bc, V 464d–465d

Cf. V 468cd (and II/III)

III 416de, V 462a–464d

It is a new (583 ff.) ‘philosophic’ theory of communism and community of women and children that is the chief target of Aristophanes’ parody. He makes his heroine Praxagora present her communistic manifesto (571–688) together with a plan for women’s takeover. The latter follows by Aristophanic logic from the deplorable political conditions in Athens (171 ff.), from the need of justice for all, and from the notion of the equality of the sexes. But the points of contact with the relevant sections of the Republic

(II–III and V) are unmistakable.⁹ Note especially the emphasis on the 'philosophic' nature of the proposal (571 ff., 589).

Specific questions are the possible indirect reflection of Pythagorean ideas in this context, and Antisthenes' role here. The figuring of Antisthenes and other Socratics in Aristophanes' scenery cannot be excluded, and the idea of philosophizing women has a Pythagorean flavour.¹⁰ The main target, however, of the parody is likely to be Plato. When Praxagora first addresses her public, in the disguise of a pale young man (427 ff.), she is acting a young, effeminate, intellectual revolutionary. Here she probably represents Plato (aged thirty-five or less). She represents a philosopher (not a 'sophist'). In fact, verse 571 gives the only occurrence of the word φιλόσοφος or its derivatives in the entire Aristophanic Corpus, including the *Clouds* and all the fragments: and we know that Plato, apparently more emphatically than the other Socratics, made a special point of φιλοσοφία. And there is an additional indication, surely not popular among Platonists, of the presence of Plato in the *Ecclesiazusae*: he seems to figure here, indirectly in the shape of a 'pervert', in the hint at the risks of free love resulting in a kiss by Aristyllos the fellator (647).¹¹

(v) It is fairly generally agreed that Isocrates in his *Essay XI*, the

⁹ Nails 1995, 117–121, discusses several of the points and sums up the arguments for the priority of Plato. It is not necessary to repeat them here.

¹⁰ For Antisthenes, see my notes 1989, 11 f. and below. The Ps.-Pythagorean 'Four Speeches' (*Iambl. VP* 37–57, p. 178–183 Thesleff) give a relatively early reflection of Pythagorean social ethics, but they do not have very much in common with Plato's *Utopia* (cf. below). Possibly Plato also referred to the three Graiae who share everything ('Speech' IV 55), cf. *Ecclesiazusae* 446–451, 877 ff. (Isocrates, *Busiris* 29, suggests a knowledge of the 'Speeches'); cf. further the pointed διασπᾶν, *Republic* V 462b, 464c, *Ecclesiazusae* 1076, and 'Speech' II 49. At any rate, note the explicit statement in Aristotle, *Politics* II 1266a34 (cf. 1274b9): before Plato, nobody had put forth the idea of community of women and children (though Phaleas had proposed community of property); and it is pronouncedly a καὶνὴ ἐπίνοια, according to Aristophanes 573 f.

¹¹ *Etym. Magn.* s.v. (referring in fact to Aristophanes; cf. also Eusthathios; Edmonds *FAC* I 717n, 719) explains Aristyllos as hypocoristic for Aristokles, and this is said by some sources to have been Plato's original name (*DL* III 4, 43). The reference in *Ecclesiazusae* 647 is to an effeminate young man, and καλαμίνθη 648 is perfume (not in the first place ordure), cf. Usher ad l. But in the nonsensical context of *Plutus* 311 ff., Aristyllos can be taken to "follow still his mother" (i.e. to preach feminism?), though he has been punished (in *Ecclesiazusae*?); note here μινθώσομεν (perversity is probably implied), and note also the tone of the hypocoristic name form. Plato's homosexual inclinations, as well as Aristophanes' populist attitude to 'perverts', is well known.

Busiris, includes Plato (typically unnamed) among the "well-known philosophers" who have used the Egyptian institutions (allegedly founded by King Busiris) as their model when speaking about the organization of society and constitutions.¹² The institutions referred to are the strict specialization of trades and the division of society into three main classes, priests, soldiers and workers; the ascetic communal life of the two first for the benefit and happiness of all (also imitated but misused, according to Isocrates, by the military cast in Sparta); and the special training and *σχολή* reserved for the intellectuals (the priests in Isocrates' account). It is the intellectuals as a class who are the leaders (not the King). The point of Isocrates is to characterize the mythic King Busiris as a benefactor of mankind, against the rhetor and anti-intellectualist Polykrates who, in a recent speech and following Greek traditions, had made him rather a criminal. A 'report' or even a criticism of the contents of Plato's Republic is not intended by Isocrates' fiction, and so it is understandable that nothing is said about the community of women and children. However, we can detect some close parallels with the summary in Timaeus (cf. below, p. 171). There is nothing in particular in Isocrates' text that would suggest his use of the full version of the Republic. Rather, it reads as a projection of suitably selected parts of Plato's Utopia upon a vague picture of Egyptian society.¹³

The date of Busiris is open to dispute. It is often dated by the Republic, i.e. 'soon after 375 B.C.'; but Eucken (1983) who finds difficulties with the chronology, admits that Isocrates might have seen the Republic "im Stadium der Abfassung". In fact a date in the 380s is plausible.¹⁴ In that

¹² XI 16–23. It may be relevant that Isocrates writes *λέγειν ἐπιχειροῦντας* which suggests recent attempts; Pythagoras (mentioned later, 28–29) is not meant in the first place.

¹³ Pace Eucken, see the next note. The Proto-Republic is likely to have contained some criticism of poetry (cf. Busiris 38–40, Timaeus 18a προσήκει), but Isocrates added his own comments on Egyptian medicine (22) and religion (24–29, with an ironical note on Pythagoras). I have argued elsewhere (in a paper read to the Nordic 'Platonselskabet', 1997) that Isocrates did not know more of Egyptian society than what Herodotus reports, and that he identified the Egyptian 'priests' with the philosophers of Plato's Utopia, attributing to the former such Platonic notions as fitted Herodotus' picture. In this essay, Isocrates still avoided a confrontation with Plato (whether he or somebody else, perhaps Plato himself, was the first to assert that Plato had drawn on Egyptian models). In attacking Polykrates, Isocrates saw an ally in Plato whose Utopia probably had referred to the detractors of philosophy (cf. e.g. Republic III 407c).

¹⁴ C. Eucken, *Isokrates (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 19)* 1983,

case it must be the Proto-Republic that Isocrates has in mind. And perhaps Plato, in his usual playful manner, is answering Isocrates (much later) by putting his Utopia into a 'true' Egyptian context, and by making Socrates enumerate in the *Timaeus* (with a pedantry more typical of Isocrates than of Plato) the issues of 'yesterday's speech'.¹⁵

*

Thus we may take it as a fairly well grounded hypothesis that Aristophanes in 392 B.C. knew, and expected some in his audience to know, of a recent communistic and 'feministic' political manifesto by young Plato. The contents of this proposal corresponded to the summary in the *Timaeus*, and so it presumably represented the 'approximately two books' of Gellius, and the ideas to which Isocrates refers.¹⁶

It is quite possible, in my view rather probable, that Plato had originally presented his manifesto at an informal gathering, as a speech in his own name – not in the name of Socrates, though later the distinction between the two was naturally blurred. There is nothing to suggest that young Plato wrote only dialogues; on the contrary, the *Apology*, *Menexenus* and the extensive use of speeches in some dialogues point to an early familiarity with rhetoric. If the Proto-Republic was a speech, it is even more understandable that Plato's ideas were soon abroad, and copies may have been immediately taken (cf. 'Lysias' in *Phaedrus*) whether he wanted it or not.¹⁷

180 f., does not accept the Proto-Republic theory. Note, however, that the formal addressee of the *Busiris*, Polykrates, had left Athens for Cyprus about 390 B.C., and we do not hear from him later. The ultimate purpose of Isocrates is to defend 'philosophy' against the (certainly recent) attacks by Polykrates and his Athenian sponsors (notably Anytos). The praise of Egypt, also but inconsistently undertaken by Polykrates, is understandable from the fact that both Cyprus and Athens were allies of Egypt (King Akoris) in the 380s; the renewed contacts between Athens and Egypt after 363 B.C. (King Tachos) are obviously irrelevant here. The note on the behaviour of the Spartans, *Busiris* 19–20, also points to the 380s. And *Busiris* fits in with Isocrates' earlier interests in fictitious culture and myth, also reflected in *Helen* (X), rather than with his engagement in contemporary politics, beginning with the *Panegyricus* (IV) of 380 B.C.

¹⁵ Isocrates' using Plato's *Apology* extensively in his *Antidosis* (XV) of 354 B.C., is a good example of the slow movements in the 'dialogue' between Plato and Isocrates.

¹⁶ For some further references and considerations, see Nails 1995, 114 ff.

¹⁷ The anecdote in *Themistios* (23.296cd) about the protreptic effect of the *Republic* on Plato's woman pupil Axiothea, rather applies to the Proto-Republic if it is not just a redoubling of the story about the *Gorgias* and the Corinthian farmer (*ibid.*, cf. Alice Swift

*

I shall discuss below the additional information given by the Seventh Letter. First, however, it is fair to ask what other reflections there are, in 4th century sources, of Plato's Utopia or, in general, of his Republic.

The intra-Academic discussion of Plato's political theories is not easily traced until we come to the *Timaeus*, *Politicus*, and *Laws*. The somewhat ambiguous evidence of the *Apology*, *Gorgias*, *Menexenus* and *Theaetetus* will be considered below. A βασιλική τέχνη is unexpectedly and humorously introduced at the centre of the *Euthydemus* (291b), possibly with allusion to Isocrates.¹⁸ Young men dreaming of power occur in several dialogues, including *Alcibiades I* and *Theages*. It looks, however, as if Plato were avoiding the theme of the Utopia in his written dialogues until it suddenly turns up in the *Timaeus*. Certainly this does not mean that *Timaeus* was written immediately after the *Republic*.

The opening of *Parmenides* seems to allude to *Republic I*, but I am not so sure¹⁹ that the criticism of the theory of Forms applies to the *Republic* version of it. Even the *Politicus* does not demonstrably take account of a published version of the *Republic*: the myth of metals occurs at 269b ff. (271a ff.), but the treatment of, say, βασιλική τέχνη (259c ff., 277e ff.) and μίμησις has a slightly different basis (note 301c, 303a), and the attitude to legislation (293e ff.) corresponds to that of the *Laws* without reference to the Utopia. The various kinds of government (291c ff.) are dealt with in a manner very different from the *Republic*. Strictly speaking, the *Laws* does not presuppose the existence of a written *Republic*, either; but it is oriented to Plato's Utopian City in very many ways, most explicitly in the chapter on ideal communism which suits gods, not men (V 739b ff.). At any rate, the existence of the *Republic* as a written text soon after Plato's death cannot be doubted.

Several of Plato's younger associates took up the theory and practice of law-giving, but as far as we know only Aristotle took up the theme of the

Riginos, *Platonica* (Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 3), 1976, 183 f.) which probably derives from Aristotle.

¹⁸ Since Isocrates the 'semi-politician' (305de) is very probably alluded to at the end of the dialogue, one might think of the Cyprian essays (below). Cf. also 289d λογοποιοί: Antisthenes is not likely to be meant here.

¹⁹ Pace Thesleff 1982, 159 and many others. The frame story of *Republic I* occurs in several variants, cf. below, n. 26.

communistic Utopia.²⁰ In his *Politics*, Aristotle criticizes Plato's utopian proposals extensively, comparing them to the *Laws* and, somewhat unfairly, presenting both as Plato's political teachings without taking account of his philosophical motivations. He has seen a written version of the *Republic*, though obviously it was not a favourite text with him.²¹ For his criticism, he may have used the epitome of Plato's *Πολιτεία* in two (!) books which belonged to his and Theophrastus' library (DL V 22, 43).²²

Among the pupils of Aristotle, notably Theophrastus, Dikaiarchos and Aristoxenos studied the theory of constitutions in the footsteps of their master but, as far as we can see, with no direct reference to Plato. We are now in the vicinity of Zeno the Stoic to whom we shall return presently.

But what about the early extra-Academic discussion of the *Republic*? After all, should we not expect the early *Utopia* and the monumental final work to have left more marks in contemporary debate, than those we have seen so far? A scrutiny of our sources gives a meagre result which is, however, not without some interest.

Disregarding Xenophon, the only 'minor Socratic' of relevance here is Antisthenes.²³ He wrote several essays or dialogues about social ethics and

²⁰ For Aristotle, see the next note. Some Ps.-Platonic Letters (notably VIII) refer to law-giving, and several of Plato's pupils wrote on political theory and laws, apparently developing themes of the Platonic *Laws*. Xenokrates also wrote on Kingship (for Alexander the Great). The only philosopher known to have written a commentary or tract on Plato's *Republic*, apart from Aristotle and before the late Hellenistic period, is Klearchos of Soloi, a pupil of Aristotle (cf. H. Dörrie & M. Baltus, *Der Platonismus*, III, 1993, 44 f., 202 ff.); but his main interests were the Line and the Nuptial Number.

²¹ In Book II of the *Politics*, Aristotle almost entirely avoids the philosophical aspects of the *Republic*, though occasional echoes of Books VIII–IX of the latter suggest that he knows the final version (and note τὸ κομψόν II 1265a12). Elsewhere, he rarely refers to this work (cf. Bonitz' Index). The most interesting quotations, apart from the discussion in the *Politics*, are two passages in *EN* (I 1095a31, V 1132a20 ff.) alluding to the Divided Line, and a passage in the *Rhetorics* (III 1406b32 ff.) where three examples of Platonic similes are given, from *Republic* V, VI, and X.

²² Was this a text of the Proto-*Republic* which the source of Gellius had in mind? No wonder antiquity knew several incipits for the *Republic* (cf. Thesleff 1982, 85 and below, n. 26). Theophrastus also wrote 'On the Best Constitution', in addition to works on kingship and laws, but he certainly did not develop Plato's utopian ideas any more than Aristotle did. – For Klearchos, see n. 20, for Aristoxenos n. 30.

²³ See G. Giannantoni's extensive collection of material and references in his *Socraticorum Reliquiae* (with some additions in *SSR*); cf. above, n. 10. Several of the titles attributed to Antisthenes (and also Aischines, Simon, and Simmias) suggest themes

also kingdom, βασιλεία. Without going into the vexed details of reconstruction and chronology, it can be safely stated that Antisthenes' mythic heroes, Herakles and Cyrus the Great, stand very far from Plato's Philosopher-King, and also that his Proto-Cynic ideals of ἐγκράτεια, ἀυτάρκεια, τὰ ἀυτοῦ πράττειν, σωφροσύνη, and δικαιοσύνη, may at most have given impulses to his younger contemporary Plato's conception of the Best City and the Best Man. Antisthenes seems to have known the tradition about the Four Speeches of Pythagoras with their emphasis on the internal harmony and loyalty of a Pythagorean city and the active role of women. Antisthenes 'the dog' may figure in a playful context in the Republic (II 376ab), and his Laconism may be reflected in certain traits of Plato's version of the Guardians of the Best City.²⁴ Plato, however, was no admirer of Spartan brutality. And, again, the education and particularly the μαθήματα of the philosophers, so essential to Plato, meant little or nothing to Antisthenes. On the other hand, there is no direct trace of an Antisthenean polemic against Plato's political theory, either. Although Plato put more emphasis on φιλοσοφία than Antisthenes was inclined to do, perhaps the fact is that his Proto-Republic was basically so close to Antisthenes' own idea of the Just City that the latter found no reason to laugh, with Aristophanes, at the politics of young Σάθων. This might explain the character of the allusions to Antisthenes in the Ecclesiazusae. Probably Antisthenes never saw the final Republic.

Later, however, Plato's Utopia provoked a sarcastically exaggerated answer from Diogenes of Sinope, the Cynic. The role of Diogenes as an intermediate link between the Πολιτεία of Plato and Zeno the Stoic has been very seldom noted. To be sure, the authenticity of the fragments of Diogenes' Πολιτεία in the recently restored and reinterpreted Herculaneum papyri is under debate.²⁵ Assuming that the papyrus reports at least an

found in the Republic, but except for myths there is nothing to point to utopian contents. Possibly it was Antisthenes who first introduced the idea of an Ideal King into philosophy (cf. DL VI 15); the idea was elaborated in different ways by Xenophon, Isocrates, Plato and his pupils, and the Stoics.

²⁴ Cf. above, n. 10. For Antisthenes 'the dog', cf. Eubulos Fr. 85 KA.

²⁵ For the earlier discussion, see J. Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World*, 1975, 95. R.G. Andria's and T. Dorandi's text of Philodemus' account is printed in Giannantoni's *Socr. Rel.* (II, 1983, 466–468, cf. III 1985, 416 f., 487–494) and then in SSR. Dorandi (following Höistad 1948) defends the authenticity of Diogenes' Politeia in: Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé & R. Goulet (eds.), *Le Cynisme ancien*, Paris 1993, 57–68. I am inclined to

authentic tradition about what Diogenes had said, if not the original wording, and whatever backing Diogenes had found in Antisthenes, it would seem that one of his sources of inspiration was Plato. Partly like Zeno after him, Diogenes appears to have argued for radical communism, equality of the sexes, free love, and community of children; and he accepted incest, masturbation in public, cannibalism, and total anarchy in the name of concord, peace, and love. This Arch-Cynic Utopia meant an extremist radicalization of some of Plato's ideas, but at the same time a pointed rejection of his basic premisses: the notion of a city state with stable institutions, the division into classes and trades, and above all, the education and social responsibility of the Leaders, the philosophers. We cannot of course determine the degree of ironically sarcastic thoughtplay in Diogenes' proposals; at least Zeno seems to have found serious logic in them. More humorously than Zeno, and probably inspired by Diogenes, Krates the Cynic (DL VI 85) wrote a satirical poem about his bag, Πήρη, as representing a chaotic cosmopolitan paradise, the only πόλις needed. There is no evidence that the Cynics had ever bothered to read anything by Plato. Presumably Diogenes took a stand on the ideas orally disseminated about the early Utopia.

Xenophon rather clearly alludes to some Platonic dialogues, and the *Republic* is sometimes automatically counted among these. However, apart from the Proto-*Republic* story related by Gellius, and except some possible reminiscences of Book I, the alleged traces of the *Republic* in Xenophon's works disappear on closer scrutiny.²⁶

take the Πολιτεία to be a Hellenistic 'reconstruction' of authentic traditions, presumably on the basis of Zeno's account. Cf. the platonizing 'reconstructions' of early Pythagorean ideas in the Hellenistic Pseudo-Pythagorean texts (ed. Thesleff 1965). But the question requires further scrutiny.

²⁶ *Republic* I is, at any rate, to be distinguished from the Proto-*Republic*, and there are several indications of the existence of an earlier version of it as a separate dialogue (pace C. Kahn, CQ 43 (1993) 131–142) before it became incorporated with the final work. The opening of Xenophon's *Symposium* seems to allude to the former, and reminiscences of it seem to occur in *Memorabilia* IV 4 (cf. also the openings of Plato's *Symposium* and *Parmenides*), unless a common source (Antisthenes?) lies behind all this. Elsewhere Xenophon does not operate with ideas reminiscent of the *Republic*, hardly even in the women chapter of his *Spartan Constitution* (I 3–10, and certainly not in the last chapter on Kings, XV). The discussion of political leadership in *Memorabilia* III 6–7 is closer to Alcibiades I (or Theages), though Socrates' partners are Glaukon and Charmides respectively. The βασιλική τέχνη at IV 2.11 suggests the *Euthydemus*, though the

Plato's relations with Isocrates is another much-discussed issue. Like Antisthenes, Isocrates was some ten years Plato's senior. He was Plato's only serious rival as an educator of an intellectual élite. And he insisted on calling his educational programme φιλοσοφία, which must have irritated Plato ever since Isocrates had begun his regular teaching in Athens in the late 390s. 'Right philosophy' meant something different to Plato (below). It is well known that Isocrates and Plato allude to each other in various connections, though most of the details are controversial; the references are seldom (and never on Isocrates' part) explicitly clear, and Plato maintains an ironical distance. However, the controversies between the two have probably been very much exaggerated by later critics. It seems that Isocrates in addition to Plato's early Utopia refers at least to the Gorgias and Phaedrus, and in his old age he was well acquainted with Plato's Apology. Naturally it was rhetoric, not dialectic, that interested him. At the time when he wrote the Busiris, he saw in Plato an ally against the detractors of 'philosophy'.²⁷ And when Plato had founded the Academy, the two operated on very different levels. If, however, Isocrates had known the final Republic, he might be expected to have referred to it in his three 'Cyprian Essays' from about 370 B.C., Ad Nicoclem (II), Nicocles (III), and Euagoras (IX), which all deal with the best constitution and the education of the King. Indeed, it is usually taken for granted that Isocrates has the Republic in view here. I find this extremely unlikely and all the supposed allusions easy to explain otherwise.²⁸ I am prepared to infer that Isocrates,

partner of Socrates is Euthydemus, son of Diokles, not the erist. The remarks on the decline of Athens at III 5.13–17 and on the misery of tyrants at IV 2.38 f. are commonplaces; cf. the theme of the Hiero (where, at 10.1–8, the φύλακες occur as a kind of Secret Service in the manner of Laws VI 758a ff. rather than of the Republic). A passage on μίμησις in art, Memorabilia III 10, surely need not be a loan from the text of our Republic. And when, in IV 6, Xenophon makes an evident attempt to turn 'philosophical', τὸ ἀγαθόν is defined as τὸ ὠφέλιμον (8) and καλόν as χρήσιμον (9), and the presentation of the 'hypothetical method' (13–14) has nothing in common with Republic VI. In fact, as has been often noted, Xenophon often appears to represent an earlier 'Socratic' position than Plato.

²⁷ Cf. above, n. 14. Isocrates is even prepared to allow for μαθήματα in education (23) which he otherwise rather rejects (see especially Antidosis 261 ff.).

²⁸ The most comprehensive discussions of the relations of Isocrates and Plato are by Ries (1959) and Eucken (1983, above n. 14). Though Eucken often corrects Ries, he is still too ready to see marks of a 'dialogue' or even polemics between Isocrates and his contemporaries. He is probably right in inferring (5 ff., 251 f., 269) that Isocrates' first

at this stage, knew only the Proto-Republic which did not consider Kingship at all, but regarded the philosophers as a class. The specific issues of Plato's Utopia such as communism were of course totally irrelevant in this Cyprian context. As a matter of fact, there are no clear allusions to the Republic complex in any of Isocrates' writings from the 370s, 360s, or even the 350s. This may have some bearing on the dating of the final Republic. Only in his open letter to Philip II, written in 346 when Isocrates was ninety and Plato was dead, he may be thinking of the Republic when declaring that empty eulogies of a King (such as others have written) are as useless as are the Νόμοι and Πολιτεῖαι written by the sophists.²⁹

But there had certainly been other sophists around who 'wrote' Πολιτεῖαι: Hippodamos, Phaleas, and perhaps Protagoras among them.³⁰ In Plato's Protagoras, the sophist presents the growth of human society where the τέχνηαι have an essential function (especially 322b–e); though most critics think that Plato had not 'yet' conceived Republic II, I would insist that the opposite might as well be true. At any rate we are far from Plato's Utopia here. Again, of a more 'pythagorizing' type is the Pseud-Epicharmean Πολιτεία in trochaic tetrameters said to have been written by the

pamphlet against rival schools, *Adversus Sophistas* (XIII) of about 390 B.C., considers the Socratics as a group where Antisthenes stands out but where Plato as yet plays no distinct part; indeed, Isocrates had no specific reasons to refer to Plato in this context (cf. XIII 9–10) even if he knew the Proto-Republic. The same seems to me to apply to the Helen (X) where the opening criticism hardly includes Plato in particular. Occasional echoes of Gorgias and Phaedrus seem to occur later, and Plato's Apology is clearly being used in the Apodosis (XV, a late work), without a trace of criticism. – The alleged parallels of the Cyprian Essays with the Republic (cf. Eucken 1983, 216–268), such as μετέχειν τῶν ἰδεῶν in connection with ἀρεταί (III 29–30), may suggest a vague acquaintance with Academic terminology, but nothing more. It is typical of this line of arguing that Isocrates' praise of τυραννίς as τὸ κάλλιστον τῶν ὄντων (IX 40, Eucken 268) is considered as polemic against Plato's metaphysical Form of the Good and his negative view of the tyrant.

²⁹ V 12. Isocrates' use of the word σοφιστής is sometimes very imprecise, e.g. XV 268. Allusions to Plato's Laws seem to occur in the Panathenaicus (XII) of 339 B.C., cf. Eucken 1983: 42 ff. and elsewhere.

³⁰ Aristoxenos, who himself wrote on constitutions, is reported (DL III 37, Fr. 67 We.) to have found the essentials of the Republic (i.e. the Utopia?) in Protagoras' Ἀντιλογικά; possibly Aristoxenos saw traces of radical ideas which he interpreted in his slanderous manner, anti-Platonically. But there was a dialogue attributed to Kriton, named Πρωταγόρας ἢ Πολιτικός (DL II 121).

musician Chrysogonos (mid-4th century):³¹ in the two brief fragments we have, it is emphasized that mathematics and θεῖος λόγος direct a good life and good τέχναι. Somewhat similarly (though not without some allusive play) Socrates asserts towards the end of Protagoras (356e) that σωτηρία τοῦ βίου depends on μετρητική; cf. also the 'nuptial number' in Republic VIII (546a–547a). Such pythagorizing sophistry, however, has no direct bearing on Plato's Utopia, nor have the other remains of sophistic literature that we know of.³²

The fragments of Middle Comedy might also be expected to shed some light on the possible discussion of the Republic. We have more than 20 fragments, many of them from Alexis, in which Plato and his Academy are mentioned or certainly alluded to. Hellenistic critics (and detractors) have evidently been looking for such references, so the material is likely to cover the ground fairly well. Probably or possibly the Phaedrus, Gorgias, Phaedo and Symposium were known.³³ It is therefore noteworthy that the comedians do not seem to make fun of Plato's monumental Republic, after Aristophanes had used the Utopia for his own ends in his Ecclesiazusae. Amphis (Fr. 8 KA) and Alexis (41–42) wrote plays called Γυναικοκρατία, but they seem to link up with Aristophanes, not (at least not directly) with Plato: presumably the later examiners of comedy would have notified it if Plato had figured here (since Plato was known to be a target of Middle Comedy). However, there was a saying, Πλάτωνος ἀγαθόν, denoting something entirely obscure or unattainable. The saying is found e.g. in Amphis (6) and Alexis (98), both mid-4th century comedians, and somewhat later in Philippides (6). Does this indicate, as many critics have thought, that Book VI of the Republic was known to the Athenian public? Hardly. It is more natural to assume that the saying originated in rumours about Academic discussions, and especially in Plato's notorious lecture 'On the

³¹ Vors. 23 B 56–57 DK; cf. Epinomis 977e–978a. On the whole, the Pseud-Epicharmea seem to be influenced by Academic thought rather than vice versa.

³² Cf. G.B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement*, 1981, 139, 162.

³³ For Phaedrus, cf. Alexis Fr. 20 KA, 247–248, Eubulos 20, Philemon 126, Philyllios 20, Timokles 6, Timotheos 2 (but the 'winged Eros' of course occurs in art too); Gorgias, Antiphanes 198, Philetairos 17; Phaedo, Kratinos J:r 10, Theopompos 16 (or an allusion to 'On the Good?'); Symposium, Alexis 247–248, Anaxandrides 62, Strattis 27–33. Further possible allusions include the Laws (VI 761c) in Antiphanes 298. Unfortunately Plato's βιβλίον ἐμβρόντητον which is "like pepper" (Ophelion 3) cannot be identified.

Good'.³⁴ Plato's Sun, Line, or Cave did not become slogans, nor indeed did Plato the feminist or Plato the 'Ομηρομούστιξ. Perhaps we ought to accept as a fact that Plato's dialogues were not so widely read and discussed by his contemporaries, as is often believed.

But the silence of our sources in the case of Plato's *Republic* may have a particular bearing on the question of his public relations.

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It has appeared so far that the signs we have, from the first half of the 4th century, of Plato's Utopia being known and discussed outside the Academy – Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, Isocrates' *Busiris*, the source used by Gellius, probably Plato's *Timaeus*, and Diogenes of Sinope – all point to an early version of the *Republic*. Indeed, there are no clear indications of the existence of the final work before, say, 350 B.C.

In the light of these facts, the picture of Plato's early activities which is given in the opening part of the Seventh Letter is quite interesting. It is of little consequence if these are or are not Plato's *ipsissima verba* (I think they are), since the writer is obviously well informed and expects his readers to know various specific circumstances; and his point is to defend Plato's and Dion's intentions and undertakings in Syracuse, and to state the fact that there is no easy short-cut to philosophy – taking for granted that Plato had a philosophy of his own already in the 390s. The description of the events before the first voyage to Sicily (in 388 B.C.) amounts to the statement (327a) that Plato began to instruct Dion out of his well-grounded conviction that only *true* philosophy will reform human life and society. This philosophical education brought Dion into conflict with Italian and Sicilian practice (327b), which contributes to explaining the unfortunate happenings after the death of Dionysius I (in 367 B.C.).

The review of events between ca. 407 and 388 B.C. (324b–326e) has a very reliable ring, and the omissions may be intentional. Plato's political hopes and frustrations, the shock he felt at the trial and death of Socrates, and his 'dizziness' looking from outside at the shortcomings of all existing types of government, are presented in a vivid, personal, and convincing manner. And as in *Gorgias* (512e ff.), but unlike the basic conception in the final *Republic*, Plato's viewpoint is principally Athenian.

³⁴ For K. Gaiser's interpretation (1980) of 'On the Good' and arguments for regarding it as a deliberate challenge of the Athenian public, see Thesleff 1993, 39 f. More remote allusions to Plato's ἀγαθόν seem to occur in Klearchos 3 KA and Philemon 74.

In that situation (i.e. in the late 390s), says Plato, he came to the conviction that only a "marvellous arrangement of luck" could change things: "And I felt compelled to declare, while recommending right philosophy, that it is by this that one is enabled to discern all political and individual justice; so evil will not cease from the classes of mankind until the class of those who are right and true philosophers attain political leadership, or else the class of those who hold power in the cities becomes by some divine dispensation really philosophic" (326ab, R.G. Bury's translation).

It is usually thought that the Letter simply refers to the famous passage in Book V (473d) of our Republic, at the end of the chapter on women, equality and the Just State, with the sole difference that the Letter speaks of the philosophers as a class, whereas Socrates in the Republic speaks of Philosopher-Kings (introduced just before, at 473b). Though the Letter appears to echo some of the wording in Republic V, it is more natural to infer that the Letter actually reports what was said in Plato's early Utopia. A theory of Philosopher-Guardians as a class (γένος), the élite of the Guardians of the Ideal City, would better suit Plato's thought before he met Dion, than a theory of Philosopher-Kings: and indeed, what we read in our Republic up to that crucial passage,³⁵ as in Timaeus, and in Aristophanes and Isocrates, is a theory of the former kind. The Letter (note 326d) also implies that Plato's deliberations about the degeneration of constitutions (i.e. what we read in Books VIII–IX of our Republic) were caused by his experiences in the West.

Moreover, the curious formulation "I was forced" or "compelled to declare" (326a5) suits the reluctance of a young moralist presenting a very odd theory, as well as it may appear to suit the reluctance of old Socrates at Republic V 472a–474b. But the latter passage is rather clearly written post festum: Plato knows, and expects his readers to know, the surge of doubt and laughter that the proposal has already awakened. After all, the λέγειν ἠναγκάσθην and its context in the Letter suggest an oral declaration by Plato in a situation of political and moral frustration, more naturally than it

³⁵ At Republic III 414b the φύλακες παντελεῖς (in plural) are distinguished from the ἐπίκουροι, but Kings come in at V 473b (ένός – δυοῖν – ὅτι ὀλιγίστων). In the Letter, the emphasis on Plato's theoretical (σκοπῶν 325e, περιμένειν 326a) engagement in politics, is surely meant as a contrast to the eventual πράττειν that he admits he recommended to Dion (327a).

applies to the fictitious situation in which Socrates speaks, though indeed under some pressure (cf. notably 472a, 473c).

What, then, does the ὀρθὴ φιλοσοφία involve which the Letter says Plato had been "recommending" or "praising"? The Letter seems to state that Plato felt bound to put forth his thesis of the philosophers' rule, at the time and as the consequence of his arguing for right philosophy as the only way to a right conception of justice.³⁶ On a superficial reading, and assuming that the writer of the Letter expresses himself confusedly besides being confused about chronology, one might take the 'recommendation' of right philosophy to refer to the subsequent central books of the *Republic* (end of V to VII). Up to the crucial passage 473cd, no such recommendation or praise has occurred in the latter.³⁷ However, why not trust the Letter?

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Those who are prepared to take a critical distance from the traditional view of Plato's philosophical development³⁸ will find a particular challenge in the question what Plato meant by philosophy in the 390s.

Let us assume (as I am sure we have to) that Plato did *not* begin his philosophic career as a writer of short, playfully aporetic dialogues in the so-called Socratic manner, trying to define what virtue is. Let us assume that the developmentalist picture of Plato gradually abandoning Socratic openness, betraying his Socratic legacy, and becoming a metaphysician and

³⁶ In the Letter (326a6), the present participle ἐπαινῶν points to a situation (caused by the political development in Athens) where arguments about the nature of philosophy necessitated arguments about the derivation from philosophy of a theory of justice. For the use of this verb in debates, cf. *Republic* II 358d. Plato seems to be referring to a more general discussion in early fourth-century Athens about the status of philosophy, a discussion where Plato had reason to profile himself, not only in relation to people like Polykrates, Thrasymachos, or 'Kallikles', but also perhaps against the loose conception of φιλοσοφία as advocated by Isocrates (but cf. above, n. 13).

³⁷ The only contexts where philosophy is mentioned in our text of the *Republic*, before the rather unexpected pronouncement at V 473cd, are the discussion of the double 'dog-like' nature of Philosopher-Guardians in Books II (374e–376c) and III (410c–412a, *Timaeus* 17d–18a), a remark on the detraction of philosophy (III 407c), and a remark in passing on philosophical women (V 456a). The introduction of the Form of Justice at V 472c (with 'αὐτό terminology') includes no 'praise'. In the final work, the ἀληθινὴ φιλοσοφία is only gradually introduced (cf. VI 487a ff., VII 521bc).

³⁸ The problems of Platonic chronology are now in a flux: see e.g. Thesleff 1982 and 1989, J.A. Howland, *Re-reading Plato*, Phoenix 45 (1991) 189–214, Nails 1995 and G.A. Press, *The State of the Question in the Study of Plato*, *SJPh* 34 (1996) 511 f.

totalitarian only after his experiences in the West, is *totally misleading*. Let us assume that the 'Socratic' dialogues, as we have them, were composed after the founding of the Academy, and that they have other purposes than to depict accurately the ways Socrates reasoned.³⁹ Let us assume, instead, that Plato began as an intensely committed moralist with 'metaphysical' inclinations, however deep his admiration was of the Socratic method.

The Apology (though also an apology of the Socratics and of Plato himself) of course focuses on what Plato thought the historical Socrates has said (or meant) in 399, and here φιλοσοφία implies mainly a Socratic examination of the opinion of others to reach the truth and to abandon the untrue (cf. 23d, 28e, 29cd); this is an essential aspect of what Plato later called 'dialectic' (below). But even here the social responsibility of the philosopher's criticism is emphasized, and an occasional hint of the need of a theory of the State is given (36c). More specifically, the issue of τὸ δίκαιον is introduced in what we know as Book I of the Republic. Whenever this book (the 'Thrasymachus') may have taken definite shape,⁴⁰ it is likely to illustrate the 'dialectic' moves around the definition of justice which occurred in the Socratic circle: witness the Clitopho and several of the writings of Antisthenes. Plato's early fascination by geometry is intimated by Theaetetus 147c–148c where the 'Younger Socrates' appears to stand for young Plato.⁴¹ Moreover, the Gorgias certainly has its roots in the 390s, though it probably (like the Theaetetus) received its present form later.⁴² Here the question of right and wrong is one of the basic themes, and the conflict between philosophy and political rhetoric is envisaged, partly, in rhetorical terms; but some metaphysical aspects are also to be observed, notably in the very pregnant statement 507c–508c. Gorgias probably illustrates what Plato meant by 'right philosophy' at the time of his presentation of the Utopia: a fearless 'dialectic' search into the ontological (cosmic, metaphysical) foundations of ethics, perhaps with an ironical sideglance at Isocrates' non-committal conception of 'philosophy', but with its pathos directed against influential anti-intellectualists such as Anytos (cf.

³⁹ This is one of the basic theses of Thesleff 1982.

⁴⁰ For the 'separatist' view and a very tentative dating, cf. Thesleff 1982, 107–110, 137 f.; 1989, 11 n. 36, 14 f.; above, n. 26.

⁴¹ See Tuija Jatakari, *Der jüngere Sokrates*, *Arctos* 24 (1990) 29–45.

⁴² References in Thesleff 1989, 7 n. 28.

the *Apology*, also *Meno*). The *Phaedo*, where the importance of ὀρθὴ φιλοσοφία and its metaphysical dimension is made explicit,⁴³ hardly reflects as such Plato's early thought; but the account of Socrates' search for metaphysical standards (96a–100a) rather naturally applies to young Plato, not to the historical Socrates. We may safely assume that Plato's own philosophy had begun to take shape in the 390s.

To Plato, dialectic seems always to mean philosopher-conducted dialogic pushes and moves, preferably in the form of questioning and answering.⁴⁴ The *Republic* does not offer much illustration of strict dialectic (after Book I); but Plato presumably regarded a philosopher's thesis put forward in a context of criticism and controversy – or a push from hypotheses towards ἀνυπόθετα (*Republic* VI 510b, 511b) – as 'dialectic' to all intents and purposes. If the Utopia of the final *Republic* is such a move (explicitly provoked as it is by Thrasymachos and Plato's brothers), the early Utopia may well have been 'dialectic' in the same sense (though we do not know exactly who provoked it). However, there is more of philosophy in it.

At a first glance, the Utopia of the Proto-*Republic* does not look particularly philosophic. Does Aristophanes call it a 'philosophical' scheme simply because it was set forth by a philosopher, as Isocrates also seems to imply? Or did Plato himself present it as 'philosophy'? The latter does make better sense, as we shall see.

It is true that the Spartan institutions provided some parallels or even models for Plato. But his Spartan sympathies were ambivalent.⁴⁵ Strict equality and loyalty on the top level of society among the ὅμοιοι (*pares*, 'peers') is a very ancient idea found all over the world, and it must have been known as a traditional ideal in Athens too. Slogans such as 'justice for all', ἰσονομία, or ὁμόνοια belonged to the political debate of classical

⁴³ E.g. 64a ff., 68c ff., 78b ff., 84b. The 'School of Tübingen' tends to emphasize the esoteric traits in Plato's 'right philosophy' more than I am prepared to do for this early stage.

⁴⁴ I have argued this in a contribution to G.A. Press (ed.), *Who Speaks for Plato?* (forthcoming).

⁴⁵ See E.N. Tigerstedt, *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity I* (Stockholm Studies in History of Literature 9), 1965, 244 ff., who however slightly overrates Plato's Spartan sympathies. Plato certainly agreed with Isocrates in despising Spartan brutality. In *Protagoras* 342c–343b we find ironical play with Spartan anti-intellectualism.

Athens. Community of property had been proposed by Phaleas. Plato, however, went much farther than any Greeks had ever gone in theory or practice. The Proto-Republic is even less likely to have been intended as a political pamphlet or blueprint than the final Republic was, however revolutionary its thoughts may have looked. Plato cannot have been so naïve, even as a young man, as to believe in its implementation as such. And the Proto-Republic referred to classes only, not to a Philosopher-King or anybody else who might start a coup d'état: who was supposed to do something for the implementation? 'Socrates', the only true politician (Gorgias 521d)? Or those who follow up Socrates' mission (Apology 39cd)? No, the Utopia sounds like pure theory. And it was not just a radicalization of current ideas for improvement of society, whether playful or not. It is in fact arguable that Plato's early Utopia, seen in the light of the Seventh Letter (and also the Ecclesiastusae), was what the Utopia purports to be in the final Republic: a theory of ideal justice that arose from a moral indignation at all kinds of selfishness and brutality, from a dissatisfaction with all existing forms of government, and from a search for a philosophic framework for true social ethics. The Utopia tells us what the Ideal City *ought* to be *if* it is constructed in accordance with what Plato regarded as fundamental philosophical premisses. It is only from this perspective that the radicalism of its solutions become really understandable.

In the final work, the foundations of Plato's theory of the Ideal City appear as ethical, psychological and educational considerations (especially in Book IV and from the latter part of Book VII onwards) and as glimpses of certain rather complicated metaphysical truths at the important centre, from the latter part of Book V to the first part of Book VII, with τὸ ἀγαθόν, the μέγιστον μάθημα as the pivot (VI 505a). The Ideal City is a manifestation of the Good and other ideal qualities such as the cardinal virtues, unity, sameness, and stability; and the philosopher-leaders' methods of reaching the appropriate knowledge of these ideal qualities is a prerequisite for the establishment of the Ideal City.⁴⁶ These methods are described as μαθήματα culminating in 'dialectic' (VII 531c ff.). But the same conception would seem to work in the early Utopia, though with far less elaboration of detail. The pointedly ethical excellence of the ruling class is based on the

⁴⁶ The application of the theory of the tripartite soul to the theory of society implies that a clear distinction is made between the two classes of Guardians.

selection of suitable individuals⁴⁷ and on philosophy. The details of this philosophy remain rather unspecified in our sources. It is said to imply leniency towards 'natural friends' (Timaeus 17d, cf. Ecclesiastusae)⁴⁸ and complete devotion to ἀρετή (Timaeus 18b, Busiris 21, 23), φρόνησις (Busiris 21, cf. Ecclesiastusae), ascetic responsibility and σχολή from other tasks (Timaeus 18b, Busiris 21); and Isocrates states (Busiris 22), almost certainly by inference from Plato, that the philosophy of the ruling class includes νομοθετήσαι and τὴν φύσιν τῶν ὄντων ζητῆσαι. The education of the future Guardians is essential (Timaeus 18a, Busiris 23 and 38–43, also Gellius). We may take it that the early Utopia reserved γυμναστική (for obvious reasons substituted by medicine in Busiris), μουσική and relevant μαθήματα (ἀστρολογία, λογισμός, γεωμετρία according to Isocrates) for the training of all Guardians before the differentiation of the Soldiers from the Leaders (cf. Republic III 414ab; Isocrates 15–16 makes King Busiris separate the three main classes, priests, soldiers and labourers, from the start). Furthermore, admitting that Plato's early Utopia is likely to have taken for granted a search into the φύσις τῶν ὄντων and μαθήματα as parts of the philosophical pursuits of the Guardians, the very prominent principles of unity, specialization and balance between unequals (in particular the ὁμόνοια and mutual understanding between the rulers and the ruled) can in fact be explained as rooted in Plato's philosophical ontology: Unity, Sameness and Stability versus Plurality, Difference and Change can be taken as covertly basic ideas in the early Utopia.

I would see here an early reflection of what I have elsewhere called Plato's 'two-level model'.⁴⁹ This is not the place to elaborate the details. A few points have to be emphasized, however. I am careful to note that the model cannot, at any stage, have been a fixed or systematically formulated doctrine. It was rather an intuitive 'vision' of a two-level universe, a frame for thinking and understanding the nature of things, a vision that had taken shape in Plato's mind not long after the death of Socrates, if not before. It can be naturally derived from Presocratic thought, Socrates' search for

⁴⁷ Their character is a matter of φύσις not strictly inherited, since there is a certain social mobility (Timaeus 19a); the new genealogical myth, the myth of metals (III 414a–d), is a ψεῦδος for soothing and persuading, whether it belonged to the early Utopia or not.

⁴⁸ Cf. the Isocratic ideal of humanity; also Busiris 20, and Ecclesiastusae.

⁴⁹ Cf. Thesleff 1989, 14 n. 45; 1993, 20–22; and elsewhere.

unchanging definitions, and mathematical truths.⁵⁰ Its constituents are pairs of contrast, such as one/many, same/different, stability/change, invisible/visible, divine/human, intellect/senses, truth/appearance, where the contrasts are not felt to be polar opposites, but where the first term is conceived as better, more important, leading, and in all respects primary in relation to the second, both main levels yet being necessary parts of a 'harmoniously' constructed whole (as are the *συστοιχίαι* in Pythagorean metaphysics).⁵¹ Such a two-level vision can actually be traced as a background in all Platonic dialogues. As I see it, the theory of Forms, the *μέγιστα γένη* of the late dialogues, and the pythagorizing First Principles of the *ἄγραφα δόματα*, are due to secondary elaborations of this model.

This is what Plato's 'right philosophy' very probably comprised. And if applied to the problem of the Best State (and its cosmic paradigm) and to justice in human society and the individual, Plato's model would rather naturally produce something like the basic pattern we seem to have in the Proto-Republic: the upper level of society manifesting unity, stability and theoretical knowledge, the lower level representing plurality and practical skill, everybody specializing and yet feeling bound together and acting for the benefit of the whole. The theory of the ascetic, altruistic Philosopher-Guardians as a united and 'communistic' ruling class, contrasted to the variety of the lower classes, can be best explained against the background of this model.⁵²

We need not feel shocked at the totalitarianism of such a theory, never applied and not really applicable to real life. Indeed, it bears the stamp of the youthfulness of its author.

⁵⁰ For the early (!) death of Theaitetos and Plato's early geometrical interests, see my notes in *Arctos* 24, 1990, 147–159, and above.

⁵¹ Aristotle *Met. A* 986ab, *EN* 1096b, 1106b29, etc.

⁵² In addition to the all-pervading notions of Unity, Stability and Knowledge (on the upper level of society), note e.g. the double nature of the Philosopher-Guardians (yet undifferentiated from Soldiers, *Republic II* 374e ff., etc.): a philosopher (i.e. a dialectician) is able to recognize and reject. What is known and *φίλον* is of the class of the 'same'; and philosophy is always about *τὰ ἀντά*, as Socrates remarks in a pregnant context in *Gorgias* (482ab, misunderstood by ordinary Athenians, cf. *Gorgias* 490e, *Symposium* 221e; Xenophon, *Memorabilia IV* 4.6). The fact that there is no sign of political or social utopianism in the *Apology* or *Gorgias* (or indeed in any dialogue 'before' the *Republic* and *Timaeus*) obviously is no argument against the early date of the *Utopia*: Plato had reasons for avoiding this theme.

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Thus I find it reasonable to assume that the Utopia was a manifestation of experimental dialectic, part of Plato's arguing for 'right philosophy' in the mid-390s. But the Utopia was no success. It aroused more laughter and scepticism than real understanding. Plato laid the sketch of his Best City aside, and avoided the theme for a long time. The Apology and the first version of the Gorgias perhaps took shape in this atmosphere of attack and disdain from many quarters. If (as seems very plausible) Plato travelled to the West in 388, after the death of his friend Theaetetus,⁵³ in the hope of learning more about Pythagorean institutions and philosophy, he came back enriched by rather different experiences. Above all, he had met Dion.

Now he definitely turned his back on Athenian politics: the Menexenus (its date in or soon after 387 is firm) reads as a funeral oration to Athenian chauvinism. With some grim irony, the speaker is Aspasia, and at the end there is a promise of more fine political λόγοι from her; but, to be sure, her role was soon taken over by another woman, Diotima. Does the 'feminism' of the Utopia figure in the background?

The Academy was being founded, in fact extra muros to keep a distance from the city. The activities of the Academy, the schooling and training of philosophers, and the writing of dialogues, absorbed Plato's time for the next twenty years. Issues of political theory were certainly ventilated, and the idea of a real Philosopher-King may have entered Plato's mind.⁵⁴ But it was not until the unexpected death of Dionysius I of Syracuse in 367, that the remote possibility of the implementation of at least a Second Best City seemed to present itself. Plato was summoned to assist Dion.

The character and design of the final Republic, its different layers, and the internal tensions in it,⁵⁵ are best explained by the hypothesis of an early

⁵³ Cf. Thesleff 1982, 27 ff., and above, n. 50.

⁵⁴ Antisthenes seems to have introduced the idea of a Philosopher-King (cf. above, n. 23), but the King remains in a mythic disguise (cf. Isocrates' Busiris and Xenophon's Cyropaedia); in his Cyprian essays, Isocrates applies the idea to contemporary politics. For Plato, it was Dion who symbolized something of the kind: cf. Republic VI 499b–d, 502a, Phaedrus 252c–e (Philebus 30cd, 33b). This gives a terminus post quem for Republic V 473b. The teachability of the ἀρετή of political leaders as a class is 'debated' e.g. in Meno (89b ff., 91a ff.); in Alcibiades I it applies to a single leader.

⁵⁵ For the tensions in the Republic interpreted as part of an overall design, see e.g. the widely different approaches of C.D.E. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings*, 1988, and P.W. Rose, *Sons of the Gods, Children of Earth*, 1992. Some other recent critics tend to place the

Proto-Republic, followed by a long public silence on the issue. This silence may account for the lack of traditions about Plato's political and educational views being subject to further public criticism or mockery: it was the Proto-Republic that, perhaps against Plato's wish, continued to awaken occasional interest. If I am right, the complex thought-play of the Utopia and its philosophic basis remained in the background of Plato's mind throughout his life, and its partial implementation became a source of frustration and re-thinking. Perhaps it was this interference by practice that eventually – at certain inspired and/or desperate moments after 360 – motivated the composition of the Republic as we have it: a monument of a Theory of man and society at their Best, a theory never tested nor really testable, and a monument never meant to be 'published' outside the Academy.⁵⁶

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final Republic into the context of Plato's later 'cosmopolitan' thought, without arguing for specific dates, e.g. A. Laks, *Legislation and Demiurgy*, *ClAnt* 9 (1990) 209–229; K. Trampedach, *Platon, die Akademie und die zeitgenössische Politik* (Hermes Einzelschriften 66), 1994. If the theory of the Proto-Republic is accepted, the successive accumulation of the blocks of the final work, and the possible re-writing of large portions of the text, require renewed scrutiny from a post-developmental point of view. It is worth considering, for instance, how the theory of the tripartite soul was applied here (cf. above, n. 46); how Books IV and VIII–IX became connected; how the different versions of the theory of Forms took shape in Books V, VI and X; and how Plato's Sicilian experiences became reflected in the work (note the fact that Dion reached the age of fifty about 358 B.C.; cf. VII 540a, often taken to refer to Plato's own age). See the preliminary observations, some of them very hypothetical, in Thesleff 1982, 137–140, 184–186.

⁵⁶ It is almost always taken for granted that the Republic was meant for immediate publication. But was there a public for a work of this scope and of such refinement of thought, style, and composition? It is true that large portions read as if intended for a general audience, but then much would remain un-understandable, and the overall design would require the constant presence of well-informed commentators (an arrangement more natural for the shorter dialogues). The posthumous and more exoteric Laws became at any rate oriented towards this monument. What 'protreptic' and 'publication' might have meant, concretely, in Plato's environment is the underlying theme in many recent studies. The question is certainly worth detailed scrutiny.