剑桥政治思想史原著系列（影印本）

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

理想国

The Republic

Plato 柏拉图

Edited by
G. R. F. FERRARI
Translated by
TOM GRIFFITH

中国政法大学出版社

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剑桥政治思想史原著系列

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在政治理论领域，“剑桥政治思想史原著系列”作为主要的学生教科丛书，如今已牢固确立了其地位。本丛书旨在使学生能够获得从古希腊到20世纪初期西方政治思想史方面所有最为重要的原著。它囊括了所有著名的经典原著，但与此同时，它又扩展了传统的评价尺度，以便能够纳入范围广泛、不那么出名的作品。而在此之前，这些作品中有许多从未有过现代英文版本可资利用。只要可能，所选原著都会以完整而不删节的形式出版，其中的译作则是专门为本丛书的目的而安排。每一本书都有一个评论性的导言，加上历史年表、生平梗概、进一步阅读指南，以及必要的词汇表和原文注解。本丛书的最终目的是，为西方政治思想的整个发展脉络提供一个清晰的轮廓。

本丛书已出版著作的书目，请查阅书末。

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Translator's preface

If you tell people you are translating Plato's *Republic*, the question they almost invariably ask is 'Why? Surely there are plenty of translations already.' The answer is fairly simple. For whatever reason, Plato chose to put his philosophical thoughts in dialogue form, and I believe that when he did so, he intended these dialogues to sound like conversations. Maybe not straightforward, everyday conversations, but conversations nonetheless. And it is still true, though things have improved in recent years, that there are many translations of Plato where you cannot read a complete page without coming across something which no English-speaking person would ever say, or ever have said. So in balancing the conflicting demands of the translator, I have tried to give the highest priority, with only a few exceptions, to the requirement that what I wrote should sound like a conversation. The danger in this, since I am not a professional Plato scholar, was that in trying to make it sound conversational I might commit myself to an interpretation which ran counter to the agreed and accepted views of those who were scholars. That being so, I have been exceptionally fortunate to have had John Ferrari as my academic minder. I would never have undertaken the project without his encouragement and guarantee of help and support. And once embarked on it, I found him ready and willing to give up huge amounts of his time to the task of vetting my early drafts – a laborious task which involved reading the whole text against the Greek, flagging the hundreds (literally) of passages where he did not agree with what I had written, explaining in precise detail why he disagreed, and (bless him) suggesting an alternative in each and every instance. His influence is strongest in those passages where the translation of key terms has been the subject of much critical discussion, but

there is no part of the translation which has not benefited immeasurably from his comments, advice and suggestions, and it should be seen, to a very considerable extent, as a joint effort rather than mine alone. It has been an enormous labour for him, and I am greatly in his debt for performing it.

TOM GRIFFITH

Editor's preface

The thought of translating Plato's *Republic* is not unlikely to cross the mind of any Platonist. Whenever it crossed mine, I dismissed it firmly. Too many scholarly ghosts hovered about its text, too many pitfalls lurked on every page, and the impossibility of satisfying all of the readers all of the time was only too easy to anticipate. Then I discovered Tom Griffith's remarkable translation of Plato's *Symposium*, and saw that there could after all be a role for me in producing a new translation of the *Republic*, a technical, advisory role, and that the effort would be repaid many times over. I have had the privilege of exceptionally close editorial collaboration with Tom as his translation took shape, and he co-operated with unfailing intelligence, patience and tact. For all my relentless editing of details, the translation remains essentially his. I have contributed the introduction, notes, and other ancillary material – all of which have benefited from Tom's scrutiny.

JOHN FERRARI

Introduction

Plato's Republic *is the first great work of Western political philosophy, and has retained its grip on the imagination of political thinkers for over two thousand years. It was also very much the product of particular historical circumstances. In this introduction we will consider the political instability of the Greek world in the late fifth and early fourth centuries* BC *and investigate the cultural factors most likely to have influenced Plato when he came to write the* Republic, *bearing in mind that he was not only a pre-eminent philosopher but also a literary writer, an educator, and, not least, an Athenian aristocrat (pp. xi–xxii). We will then assess the* Republic*'s position within political philosophy (pp. xxii–xxv), and present the essentials of its argument (pp. xxv–xxxi). We begin with a harrowing episode from Athenian history – an episode in which Plato's family played a major role.*

The Thirty

Plato's mother's cousin was a tyrant. In the course of a single convulsive year, from summer to summer, 404–403 BC, Critias son of Callaeschrus made himself leader of a thirty-man junta imposed on Athens by a foreign power, disarmed the populace, ordered the murder of hundreds of prominent persons – some for their money, some to settle old scores, others because they were rivals – and died fighting the band of exiles that soon after restored the city to democracy. The discussion narrated in Plato's *Republic* takes place in the home of a family that was to come to grief at the hands of the Thirty. Polemarchus, according to the tale his brother Lysias survived to tell, was one of those murdered for their money. Lysias

himself went on to fund the democratic resistance and supply it from the family's arms business. The resistance was based in the Piraeus, the port-district of Athens, a magnet not only for successful immigrant families such as that of Lysias and Polemarchus, whose home was there, but also for the lower ranks of society, who manned and serviced the Athenian navy. The label 'men of the Piraeus' came to identify those who fought for the democracy. The decisive battle – the conflict in which Critias lost his life – took place by the temple of Bendis, the goddess whose inaugural festival gave Socrates, the leader of the discussion at Polemarchus' house, a reason to come to the Piraeus in the first place. Another who lost his life there was Charmides, an associate of the Thirty with special responsibility for the Piraeus. He was Plato's uncle. Not Plato's only, but uncle too of Glaucon and Adeimantus, for Plato gives a major role in the discussion to his own two brothers, and puts them on the best of terms with a family whom their kinsmen will ruin. Socrates was for his part to incur the hostility of the returning democrats because he counted the likes of Critias and Charmides among his philosophic companions.

It is difficult to know what to make of Plato's *mise-en-scène*, and tempting to turn to an autobiographical passage of his *Seventh Letter* (324c–326b), which purports to describe his own dealings with the Thirty. Letters from celebrities were a favourite production of fiction writers and outright forgers in antiquity, and none of the Platonic letters is above suspicion – although scholars these days are inclined to regard the seventh as authentic. But let it stand to Plato only as Plato's *Apology of Socrates* stands to the actual speech of defence that Socrates delivered when on trial for his life; still it would remain the most important interpretation of Plato's political motives to survive from antiquity. Plato speaks of being invited by his relatives and by others he knew in the junta to throw himself in with their enterprise, and of how this excited an idealistic youth – he was in his early twenties – with hopes of a better society and zeal for the power to bring it about. Disenchantment came swiftly. An incident involving Socrates is chosen to serve as an emblem for the regime's immorality: its attempt to co-opt him into the vindictive arrest of a citizen that it had designated a public enemy, and his courageous refusal to do so.

The revived democracy, however, turned out to have as little regard for Socrates' independent character as had its despotic predecessor, and prosecuted him for subverting traditional religious belief – a very serious charge, tantamount to treachery, and a favourite to employ against intellectuals. The resulting execution of his philosophic mentor came as Plato

was once again considering, although more cautiously than before, an entry into politics; and once again he was brought up short. As age sharpened his awareness of the barriers to good government, he tells us in this open letter, he came eventually to understand that no form of government in any existing state was satisfactory, and was driven to declare that there would be no end to the general wretchedness until philosophers, who see justice in all its complexity, were given political power, or until existing rulers learned true philosophy.

Faction

It is a good story, and a poignant preface to the life of a politically engaged philosopher who came to adulthood in the Greek world of the early fourth century BC – a world of small civic communities, independent of each other and jealous of the status conferred by citizenship, yet willing to strike alliances with other cities for self-protection and the discomfiture of their enemies, willing even to accept the hegemony of those cities that sought to extend their power by offering protection, but with all sides aware how readily allegiance grounded only in self-interest can shift. Attempts made during the fourth century to unite the Greek world in 'panhellenic' resistance against Persia went hand in hand with the nostalgic claim that that world had once possessed a sense of its common good, a century earlier, when it had repelled the Persian invader. But if it had ever possessed such a sense, its behaviour belied this now. The common good was rather an ideal for each civic community to espouse within its own boundaries. Indeed, it was by looking to this ideal that the Greeks maintained resistance to the Persian king on a conceptual level even as some of them struck deals with his agents. Throughout the Persian empire, they told themselves, there lived only one free man, its king, whose subjects were his slaves; but Greek cities – those that were not themselves in the hands of tyrants – were self-governing republics, no matter whether oligarchic or democratic, however closely held the privileges of their ruling classes, however restricted their roster of full citizens. For whether political freedom belonged to few or to many, it belonged also to the republic itself.

That such was the ideal is only confirmed by the tendency of Greek political theorists to take a jaundiced view of political reality, and see it as driven by the resentment, avarice and ambition of interest groups. Not only was the common good forgotten in the hurly-burly of factionalism

within individual cities – that is, in the arena where that good was thought to find its natural home – but the factionalism fed off the absence of a common good outside that arena, in the network of relations between Greek cities. Thucydides' *History* (3.82) explains how war between Athens and Sparta at fifth century's end afforded factions in lesser cities a pretext to summon external powers to their aid – Athens if the faction sought democracy, Sparta if it sought oligarchy. In such times, powerful allies were to be had for the asking. The general pattern did not cease with the war of which Thucydides wrote, but persisted and ramified well into the fourth century even as the power blocs became less well defined – Sparta declining, Athens reviving, and Thebes becoming prominent. It was characteristic of the political discourse of the time to polarise the troubles into an antagonism between oligarchy and democracy, and this in turn into an antagonism between rich and poor.

Such an analysis was not wholly accurate, as Plato knew. Some oligarchies and democracies were more oligarchic or democratic than others; the dichotomy did not in any case exhaust the range of political systems; in many places there existed what the Greeks too called a middle class. However frequent the calls for cancelling debts and redistributing land, the prize contested was political at least as much as economic. Democratic Athens had its disparities of wealth – indeed, the rich were relied upon to fund public services – but political power and legal entitlement extended to all adult male Athenians. Everywhere struggle would typically begin as a division within the elite: between those who would and those who would not strike political bargains with the populace. Despite these caveats, it is understandable that a concerned observer in the fourth century would think the world trapped on a factional see-saw. A reader of the *Seventh Letter* can well believe that Plato, who saw the man he declared the most virtuous of his time suffer first under Critias and his oligarchy and again under democracy, would finally cry: a plague o' both your houses.

So it is at first sight surprising when Callipolis, the ideal city conceived in the *Republic*, turns out not only to conform to the constitution that Critias sought to impose on Athens, but to push it further than perhaps even Critias could have imagined.

A Spartan utopia?

The foreign power that supported Critias' coup was Sparta. For a well-born Athenian such as Critias to be a lover of Spartan ways was nothing

unusual. His varied writings, of which we have only fragments, included laudatory descriptions of the Spartan system, and he was followed in this practice by another of the gentlemen among Socrates' companions, Xenophon, whose *Spartan Constitution* survives entire. Athenians with oligarchic sympathies or elitist attitudes were often accused of acting like Spartans, and some went so far as to dress and wear their hair in the Spartan fashion. But none went so far as Critias, who seems to have wanted to remake all Athens in the image of Sparta.

The contrasts between the Athenian and Spartan systems were stark in a number of ways. In social geography: while Athens was at pains to distribute the privileges of citizenhood uniformly through the district under its direct control, the Spartan region had a core of citizens surrounded by non-citizen subordinates in the villages and countryside. In their economy: whereas Athenians of all social ranks could engage in a full range of commercial, agricultural and other activities likely to produce wealth, the small and tight-knit group of full Spartan citizens lived off the agricultural surplus produced by a large body of public serfs, and were expected to hold themselves aloof from money-making pursuits. In their military organisation: Spartiates (Spartan citizens) were full-time warriors, who messed together even when not on campaign, and identified themselves by the privilege of bearing arms that non-citizens were issued only at need; most soldiers and sailors who fought for Athens, by contrast, were called up at times of campaign from the body of regular citizens. In their degree of openness: Athens encouraged foreigners to settle (as the statesman Pericles encouraged Polemarchus' father Cephalus to emigrate from Sicily), naturalised religious cults (as with the cult of Thracian Bendis), and welcomed artistic variety and experiment; Sparta was far more cautious on all these fronts.

Seen against this background, the actions of the Thirty reflect the values of their sponsors. They drew up a list of some 3,000 supporters – about the number of Spartiates at the time – disarmed the rest, and banned them from living within the city limits. They made particular targets of immigrants. The relation they began to establish with the 3,000 was analogous to that between the conservative *gerousia* or senate of Sparta and the collective body of Spartiates. They did all this, we are told, in the cause of purging the city of unjust men and inclining it to virtue and justice. For the fame of Sparta depended not on its actions abroad or its glamour at home but on a distinctive way of life. Sparta was nothing without the lengthy, rigorous and uniform education towards virtue

that it imposed on the Spartiate youth, with the aim of producing well-disciplined men and indeed women of honour, bearers of an austere and martial culture that smothered internal faction and gave the place its reputation for *eunomia*, law and order.

If the rule of Critias was too brief and too harried for us to be sure of its ultimate direction, there can be no doubt that a contemporary reader would have detected more than a whiff of Sparta in his cousin's Callipolis. It too is a city distinguished by the way of life of its military elite, the guardians, who devote themselves entirely to the tasks of defence and policing, and have their material needs provided by a subordinate class of farmers and artisans. The city stands or falls by the upbringing and education of its guardians, a notably austere and conservative process of inculcating discipline and shaping good character. Women among the guardians share the men's way of life to an unusual degree. And in a remarkable passage at the end of Book 7, it is suggested that the quick and easy way to bring all this about would be for those in power to ban everyone over the age of ten from living within the city limits, so as to educate the children in isolation from their parents.

But what would the contemporary reader have made of this quasi-Sparta, this post-Critian coup, when he discovered that the rulers of Callipolis were to be no mere senate of worthies, but philosophers, intellectuals risen from the guardian ranks and educated in mathematics and disputation? Such subjects formed no part of Spartan education; Sparta was a notoriously unbookish place, whose fighters prided themselves on avoiding fancy talk. And would the counts laid against 'timocracy', the first of the unjust societies considered in Book 8, have reinforced this reader's puzzlement, or dispelled it? The timocratic society values militarism and puts the man of honour above all others; its failings are those of a contemporary Sparta, untempered by the intellectual virtues.

For all that the institutions of Callipolis draw inspiration from historical revolutions and familiar societies, in the end they transcend anything known to the Greek world. The discussion sets itself the task of discovering a just city, but finds that it cannot stop short of utopia. How seriously Plato took this utopian vision has long been a controversial issue. The main line of debate divides those who see Callipolis as an ideal whose function is to motivate efforts at personal, not civic, perfection, from those who see it as a guide for future progress on the political, not just the individual level. A different school of thought has denied that Plato intended Callipolis even to seem desirable, let alone practicable. The

question whether the *Republic* is a work primarily of moral or of political philosophy will be addressed in later sections (pp. xxii–xxix). While we are still tracing the work's historical context, let us consider instead the utopian ideas current in Plato's day. Here the fantastic and serious elements are more readily distinguishable than in the *Republic*.

The fantastic we find most clearly in the comedies of Aristophanes – in the Cloud-cuckoo-land of *Birds*, the city in the sky where dreams of absolute power come true; in the means to panhellenic peace and salvation proposed in *Lysistrata*, when the women bring their warring husbands to terms by going on a sex-strike; in the women's rule that comes about in *Women at the Assembly* (or *Ecclesiazusae*), in which the women of Athens, disguised as men, first vote themselves into power, then achieve social concord by equalising distribution of the two great objects of social desire: women and wealth. Equal distribution of property was first proposed, we are told, by a serious utopian theorist, a certain Phaleas of Chalcedon. Less shadowy is Hippodamus of Miletus – a likely model for the Aristophanic geometer and town-planner Meton who offers to lay out the 'streets' of Cloud-cuckoo-land on a radiating pattern. Hippodamus' theories were those of the social engineer and the architect, and sometimes of both together, as in his proposal to divide land according to the occupations and needs of the various classes in the city. He argued for a strict division of the citizenry into three functional groups, although his were farmers, artisans and warriors rather than the producers, warriors and philosopher-kings of the *Republic*. In town-planning his name was associated with the strictly regular geometric line, and some of his layouts were actually built – among them that for the Piraeus, where he lived and worked. In general, the modern reader should bear in mind the ease with which cities in the Greek world could be rebuilt, relocated, or started from scratch. Although Socrates in the *Republic* makes it clear that he is using a metaphor when he calls himself and his discussion partners the founders of Callipolis, starting a new township would not have been regarded as pie-in-the-sky. There is a story that Plato himself was asked to write the laws for one such city, Megalopolis in Arcadia, but refused on the grounds that the new citizens were unwilling to accept equality of possessions.

Yet the town-planner's vision of utopia, the detailed topographic fantasy that became a fixture of utopian writing in Plato's immediate aftermath and marks out the canon from Thomas More's *Utopia* to William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, is notably absent from the *Republic*.

Plato reserves this motif for the twin dialogues *Timaeus* and *Critias*, in which a character Critias who is either the familiar tyrant or an ancestor meant to remind us of him takes a social system purporting to be that of Callipolis and projects it backwards in time onto a primeval Athens. He then tells the tale of its struggle with the now vanished island city of Atlantis, whose glittering palaces and concentric network of canals he lovingly describes. The kinds of writing with which the *Republic* invites comparison have less of Shangri-La about them and are more overtly political.

The philosopher and the king

One of these genres we have encountered already, exemplified by Critias' and Xenophon's writings on the constitution of Sparta. Their manner of contributing to the lively contemporary debate on the relative merits of different constitutions was to offer a partisan, idealised description of just one. Alternatively, a single constitution might be selected for criticism, not praise – as with the *Athenian Constitution* that survives from the late fifth century by an unknown author often called 'The Old Oligarch'. The traditional title of the *Republic* conceals an allusion to such works as these. For if *Politeia* can in Greek name a kind of community that governs itself and has no truck with tyranny – '*Republic*' is not an outright misnomer – it is also the normal Greek word for 'constitution'. It was not, then, a *Spartan Constitution* or an *Athenian Constitution* that Plato wrote, but simply a *Constitution*.

When judging constitutions against each other, fourth-century theorists often grouped them into three broad types, complicating the earlier antithesis of oligarchy and democracy by the addition of monarchy. The figure of the king became an important focus for reflection on the powers of men – not only the power of the ruler over those he rules, but the power of a human being to live successfully. The concentration of authority in a single individual fused the moral with the political, made the king's actions on the political plane an expression of his personal virtue and an exercise in self-development. This at least was the theme of a second kind of writing that bears comparison with the *Republic*. It is represented for us by works such as Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*, a romanticised biography of the Persian king, in which the difficult relation between republican and imperial politics is filtered through the virtues of that princely paragon. Here too belong the Cyprian orations of Isocrates (*To Nicocles*; *Nicocles, or the Cyprians*; and *Evagoras*), which contain his opinions on the