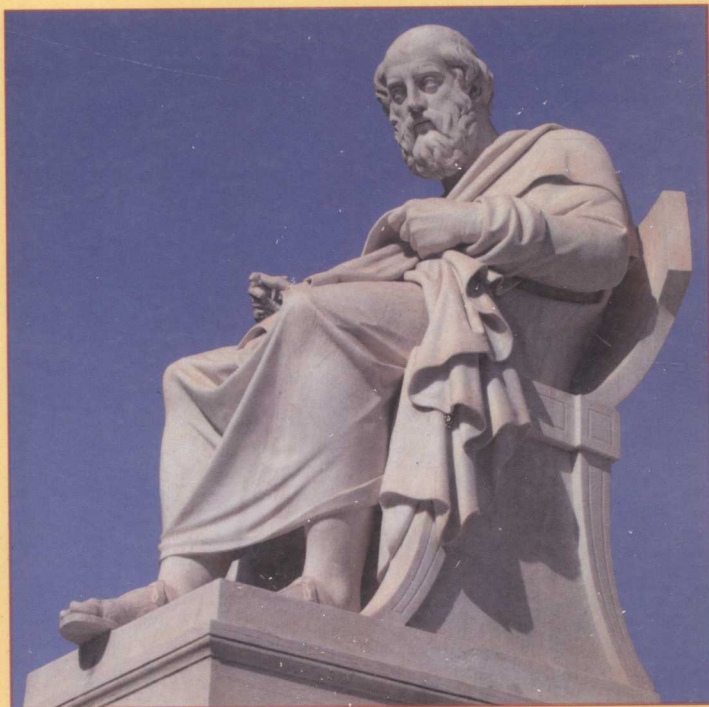


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THE LAWS OF PLATO

VOLUME 2: BOOKS VII–XII

EDITED BY
EDWIN BOURDIEU ENGLAND



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The Laws of Plato

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108060691

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2013

This edition first published 1921
This digitally printed version 2013

ISBN 978-1-108-06069-1 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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PUBLICATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

CLASSICAL SERIES

No. IV

THE LAWS OF PLATO

BOOKS VII-XII

Published by the University of Manchester at
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS (H. M. McKECHNIE, M.A., Secretary)
12 LIME GROVE, OXFORD ROAD, MANCHESTER

LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.

LONDON : 39 Paternoster Row

NEW YORK : 448-449 Fourth Avenue and Thirtieth Street

BOMBAY : 8 Hornby Road

CALCUTTA : 308 Bowbazar Street

MADRAS : 167 Mount Road

THE LAWS OF PLATO

THE TEXT EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION,
NOTES, ETC.

BY

E. B. ENGLAND, LITT.D.

LATE WARDEN OF HUME HALL AND ASSISTANT LECTURER IN CLASSICS
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

VOL. II
BOOKS VII-XII

MANCHESTER
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
12 LIME GROVE, OXFORD ROAD
LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.
LONDON, NEW YORK, BOMBAY, ETC.
1921

PUBLICATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

No. CXLIV

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ANALYSIS OF BOOK VII

788 a 1. This book deals with τροφή and παιδεία. The details of these subjects are so numerous and minute, that it is impossible to give a legal sanction to all our recommendations as to nurture and education, or to attach penalties for their infringement. It is, however, very important for the well-being of the community that the recommendations should be wise, and the general practice uniform.

c 6. It is clear that both body and soul must grow into their most perfect form. To begin with, physical growth, up to five years of age, is three times as rapid as it is afterwards; therefore during that period the need for bodily motion and bodily exercise is far more pressing than at any other time: even before birth the need must be recognized, and pregnant mothers should walk about as much as possible. Even after the children can stand, they should be carried about by nurses till they are three years old. If they walk too soon their legs will suffer. Such directions can, of course, only be observed if the masters and mistresses understand how important they are, both for their families and for the state.

790 b 8. Constant motion is good for the mind as well as for the body—especially for the very young. Witness the experience of nurses of little children, and of those who tend patients who are subject to states of frenzy. Some sort of motion is found to be a cure for the sleeplessness of the former, and of the mental excitement of the latter.

e 5. Fear is the cause of both disorders, i.e. the disturbance is *psychical* in origin. When you *shake* such sufferers, you apply an external disturbance, which overshadows, or gets the better of, the internal tremors and frenzies, and induces peace and quiet in the soul.

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791 b 4. This (mechanical) suppression of fear in the young will conduce to the growth of the virtue of courage. That is what I meant by saying it was good for the mind.

c 8. In the same way care should be taken to avoid, as much as possible, all occasion of pain and vexation to young children: the fewer the tears, the better the temper. But this does not mean that they are to be *indulged* with all the delights that we can procure for them. Complete repression, on the one hand, produces a morose and slavish disposition: on the other hand, unlimited indulgence produces irritability and makes children morbidly susceptible to all kinds of emotion. Don't be too anxious to give children "a good time"; a pleasure-loving and pleasure-seeking temperament is a snare. All through life the same principle holds: it is not good for man to make the pursuit of pleasure, or the avoidance of pain, his first object: he should deliberately prefer a *middle state* of placid content to one of ecstatic enjoyment. (He should fear one extreme as much as the other.) In no case is this more important than in that of the very young: even before their children's birth mothers should avoid either extreme alike.

793 a 9. Let me pause here to insist again on the vital importance of these admonitions and recommendations. We call such practices as we are inculcating "*unwritten laws*," "*tribal tradition*," "*the custom of the country*." It is imperative that these habits should be salutary. If they are, they form a protecting covering to the positive laws; they hold to those laws much the same relation as the clamps that bind masonry together do to the individual blocks. If these bonds are ill fitted, and get out of place, the whole fabric of society falls to pieces, and no further development is possible. Don't despise such trifles: without the trifles the great things cannot exist.

d 7. Such then must be the treatment up to the age of three. From *three* to *six* is the age of *play*; but judicious, and not humiliating punishment should check excessive indulgence of all kinds. Facilities for playing together will be given, to the children of each district, in the sacred enclosures attached to the temples. Children will invent their own games. They must at such times have their nurses with them, and nurses and all must be under the supervision of twelve staid and ancient dames chosen by the women who superintend marriage, and appointed, one to each tribe, by the Guardians of the Laws. These officials may deliver offenders to punishment without appeal, if the

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offenders are slaves or aliens: citizens may appeal from their sentence to the *δωτηνόμενοι*.

794 c 3. At *six* boys and girls are to be separated, and are to begin to learn something: boys to be sent to learn riding, shooting and slinging—not that girls are forbidden to learn these things if they like—and the use of arms in general. Here I stop to criticize a point in our usual practice, and correct a general mistake. I mean the mistake of thinking that *nature* has given any superior advantage to the right *hand* as compared with the left (though no one thinks this about the feet). Thanks to the folly of our nurses and mothers, we have grown up as good as *lame* in one hand. Nature gave both sides the same capacity, and our perverse habits have spoiled one side. When a task takes *two* hands, and when it does not matter, you may train only the right to one part, and only the left to the other; but don't do this where it *does* matter. A Scythian can shoot equally well to right and left, because either hand can do either part of the action. When a man is in battle he may often want his shield on his right side and his weapon on his left. Follow the wrestler's example, and *train* both sides both for attack and defence. Suppose a hundred-handed giant practised throwing with only one of them! What a waste of good material! All in authority ought to see to this; nurses must watch the children, at play and at meal-times, and their various instructors later; we must not spoil what nature gives us.

795 d 6. All instruction which concerns the *body* comes under the head of *γυμναστική*: all that is to benefit the *mind*, is *μουσική*. The former has two divisions: (1) *dancing*, (2) *wrestling* or *boxing* contests. Dancing again aims either (1) at the stately or mimetic, or (2) at pure agility and suppleness. In wrestling and boxing we are not to emulate the skill of the professional—only to try to turn out able-bodied soldiers. Among dances, special attention should be paid to national *armed* dances, and religious processions. Any competitions in dancing should be for places in these dances or processions.

796 a 4. We thought we had done with *μουσική* (in Bk. II), but its *educational* aspect remains to be treated.

797 a 1. To begin with, I must (digress to) make a statement which may surprise you. That is, that the children's *playground* calls for the lawgiver's close attention. If the children go on playing the same games, generation after generation, it is well with the state. New fashions in games, and all that belongs to

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them, mean mischief—mean disrespect for, and discontent with, what is old and established, and a restless craving for novelty. Such a temper is a national curse.

d 8. I call for your very particular attention when I say that I profoundly believe that in all things *change is a great evil*, unless what is changed is itself bad. You must get used, e.g., to a particular diet, before you assimilate it properly. Another diet may be just as good, but it is not so good for *you*, as the one to which you are accustomed. It is the same with the mind and character. Among people blessed with laws and customs of immemorial antiquity, mere *use* and *familiarity* beget respect for what is established. The lawgiver will greatly help to produce this blessed state of things if, instead of thinking that "child's-play" does not matter, and that novelties in it may be encouraged, he reflects that, when mercurial children become men and women, they will be discontented with the laws and customs of their state—and where will his laws be then? I don't mean that all change is *equally* disastrous. Change in dress and bodily appearance does not matter much. Not so, however, frequent alterations of opinion as to what sort of character is praiseworthy, or the reverse.

798 d 7. We said, you remember, (at 655 d 5) that musical tune and rhythm are *mimetic*—sometimes imitating good characters, and sometimes bad. It is therefore of the greatest importance that the young should acquire the taste for the better music to sing and dance to, and that no one should tickle their ears with what is bad. Like the Egyptians, we must give a sacred character and sanction to the good, and rule out every other sort from all public functions. A list of music for all special occasions must be officially prepared, and its adoption enforced by judicial penalties.

799 c 4. Even a young man, when he sees or hears what is foreign or strange, takes time to make up his mind about the course he should pursue with regard to it. Do not let *us* then be in a hurry to settle this difficult question, but leave it for the present undecided, and go on with our remaining laws and recommendations. Perhaps we may find light on it by the way.

e 10. The name *vómoi* which our ancestors have given to kinds of music, shows that they had an inkling of the truth of our demand that the disregard of official regulations as to *music* should be reckoned a crime.

800 b 4. It will be best to give examples of the procedure

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in cases of such transgression. For instance, suppose one member of a family made a blasphemous interruption in the course of a family sacrifice; would it not be a shock to his relations? Yet something like this is what is being done everywhere. When a public official is performing a public sacrifice, there follow him not one chorus, but many. They approach the altars, and cover the victims with blasphemy, wringing the hearts of the audience with doleful ditties; and the one who draws the most tears gets the prize. If people want that sort of funereal music, they should avoid festal days, import foreign-hired mourners, and dress them accordingly. This example explains the first requisite to be demanded of our music, i.e. *εὐφημία*—*it must not be impious*.

801 a 5. Secondly, the gods must be addressed in prayer.

a 8. Thirdly, what is asked for in prayer must be something *good* and not *bad* for us. Of this question poets are not the best judges; for instance, a poet might pray that the state should become *wealthy*, and we saw above that the less gold and silver the state has, the better. Ceremonial poems must therefore be approved by the proper state authority before they can be published.

e 1. Another subject of prayer is *praise*—of gods, heroes and the worthy dead—not of the living, though.

802 a 5. The list of approved songs and dances is to be prepared in the following way. *Censors* are to be chosen to select, revise, and reject, from among all existing compositions; taking poets as their assessors, but not giving them—except in a very few cases—a free hand. All poetry is the better for having to submit to rules, and does not lose thereby in real charm. Charm partly depends on familiarity; men like what they are used to, but they can only get *good* out of the *right* sort: the other does them harm.

d 8. The style of music must moreover be adapted to the *sex* of the performer—men's is martial and grand, women's reserved, and self-restrained.

803 a 1. Such a general regulating ordinance should be accompanied by detailed directions as to methods of instruction. I am not, however, giving such now. My object is like that of the shipwright when he lays the keel of a ship: he wants to fix *its general size and shape*. I am showing you the *main lines* of the character which I think will best weather the voyage of life.

b 3. After all, what *is* important? Our relations, I answer, to the Deity, and our appearance in his eyes. I have before

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called man God's plaything. If I am right, the way man *plays* must be *important*. In other words, Religion and Art, and the occupations of peace, are more important than the grim earnest of war. Do not therefore (like the Spartans) make *war* the one important thing in life, but study with me the art of *peace*. I have, as I say, only given you the *outlines* of this study: your own natural endowment of mind will enable you to supply the details.

You think all this is humiliating for human nature? You cannot think of man as in God's presence without a deep humiliation. I don't mean that I don't care for mankind really.

804 c 2. There should be three separate school-buildings in the city itself; each with its *γυμνάσιον* attached, and each with a larger exercise- and riding-ground in the suburbs. Spare no money in getting the best teachers from other cities. *Make attendance at school compulsory. The state has a right over its children which overrides the right of the parent.*

d 6. *The training of girls and boys should be identical.* Tradition and travellers' accounts alike prove that women *can* fight. Why diminish the efficiency of the state in every direction by one half? Experience proves that women *can* do the same work as men. If not the same, we must arrange another life for them. What is it to be? Shall we make them drudges like the Thracian women? Are they to be mewed up at home as house-stewards like our Athenian women? Or are we, like the Spartans, to educate boys and girls together up to a certain point, and then leave the women little or nothing to do when they are grown up?

806 d 7. When, by satisfactory domestic and economic arrangements, *leisure* has been secured, *what are we to do with it?* Is there anything which we *must* do with it? Is a man merely to lead an animal existence, and fatten like a pig? If so, he will be *eaten* like a pig, by somebody who has kept thin by using his time more strenuously. The institution of the *family* may somewhat fetter a man's highest activities, but even so there is a task for which he should strive with all his might; and that is *so to live as to develop the best that is to be got out of body, mind, and character.* This is a stupendous task, and will demand careful ordering of every hour of day and night. Sleep must be curtailed as much as possible. With dawn the children must be off to school, *always under due supervision, compulsion, and restraint*—even to the extent of corporal punishment—all under the supervision of the Supreme Minister of Education, whom the law must carefully instruct as to his important duties.

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809 b. Passing from the regions of art and physical training we come to that of the *intellect*. First come *reading and writing*; then *lyre-playing*; then mathematics—which last we saw above to have valuable practical applications in daily life. Another subject of great practical use is Astronomy.

e. The lawgiver must indicate the *extent* to which all these subjects must be studied, and the *time* to be spent on them, and the ages when they are to be begun and left off. Reading and writing come from 10 to 13; lyre-playing from 13 to 16. These subjects must be forced on the reluctant, while those who take to them naturally must not be allowed to go too far on the road to virtuosity.

810 b 4. Next comes the question, what *literature* are the children to read? We are told they ought to be "well read"; but is there not a danger here? The *sort* of book they may read with advantage is this which I am writing: *Plato's Laws*. Teachers who object to this as a type must be dismissed. So much for letters, and literature.

812 b 2. As to *Music proper*, we must trust to our musical experts of the Dionysiac Choir to say what tunes have a good moral effect, and what a bad one. Learners must be taught to play correctly, but they must not aim at complicated effects, or extraordinary proficiency. Complications will make the subject generally unpopular: besides, we have not time for them. The words and rhythm of the songs, and the means of familiarizing learners with what is good in them, we have dealt with when talking of music in general.

813 a 7. About *Dancing* too there remains something to be said here. There must be teachers of dancing, and the supervision of these will be one more task for the hard-worked Minister of Education; but he will get help here from capable citizens. He will know how important the subject is. It will be remembered that we have gymnasia, and practice-grounds for military exercises, and riding and shooting; and state teachers for these subjects—which are moreover compulsory for both sexes—for there may be occasions when women, like hen-birds, will have to fight in defence of their offspring.

814 c 6. *Wrestling* should be taught with the necessities of the battlefield in view, and only such parts of it as are serviceable for that object. So much for the Palaestra.

e 1. Of *ῥοχῆσις* proper there are two kinds: the *serious*, and the *comic*. The serious again may be divided into (a) *martial*—

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armed dances, imitating offensive and defensive attitudes, and the test of excellence in these is the degree to which they foster manly and vigorous bearing—and (*b*) *peaceful*, and the test of this kind is the question, “are its postures and attitudes those of a worthy man and a good citizen?” As for Bacchic and Satyric dances, which have some strange connexion with expiatory religious rites, they are neither peaceful nor martial; all we can say is that they are unworthy of a respectable citizen.

815d5. Of the *peaceful* dance one kind is prompted by a sense of well-being—either (*a*) because toils and dangers have been overcome, or (*b*) past blessings continue. Of these (*a*) is the more lively. The liveliness indeed varies according (1) to the height of the pleasure felt, and (2) to the power of self-restraint in the dancer. The fact is, *no one, when singing or speaking can keep his body still*. That is the origin and source of the dance. The character of the dance reveals the character of the man. There is much true significance in the name *ἐμμελεία* (“gracefulness” or “conciunty”) which is bestowed on the typical peaceful dance of the right kind. The lawgiver then must devote the same care to the choice and nationalization of dances as to those of songs and tunes. The comic and baser dances should be witnessed, as lessons in expression, and as warnings, but not danced by any self-respecting man or woman; they are for slaves and hired aliens, and no uniform kind of them must be allowed to become familiar to the spectator.

817a2. Serious dramatists are indeed worthy of honour; but they touch too closely on the great questions and interests which the lawgiver has at heart. They would conceivably be his *rivals*. He will not admit them unless he is quite sure that they can teach better lessons than he can himself.—Such then are the principles which should guide the education of the young in these artistic matters—I mean the young of the free citizens; slaves are different.

e5. There remain three subjects of liberal education: (1) Arithmetic, (2) Geometry, and (3) Astronomy. Deep study of these three is not for the multitude. All they want is a grasp of certain *necessary* truths (for there is a real necessity about these subjects, which, in a sense, is binding even upon the divine nature). Ignorance of such truths on the part of a man is a grievous blot on his character, as well as a serious inconvenience, and a bar to further study. This, however, is not the place for a detailed outline of mathematical study. All I will say is that, if the subject is not rightly studied, it had better be left alone. Children should begin, as they do in Egypt, with questions about the

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distribution of apples, and wreaths, and the like. When they grow up, they will want to apply these calculations to the necessities of life.

819 c 7. As to geometry, an extraordinary and disgraceful misconception is prevalent—I shared it myself till quite lately—i.e. that all measurements of line, surface, or body, are commensurable. The whole question of commensurability deserves far more attention than it has hitherto obtained, and should be included in school mathematics. All these directions I would submit to a subsequent revision if it were necessary.

820 e 8. In astronomy also false notions are prevalent. I have only lately become convinced that it is a complete misconception to think that the so-called “wanderers” (πλανητὰ ἄστρα) “wander,” or that the sun and moon go sometimes in one course, and sometimes in another. We are also altogether wrong in our notions of the comparative speed with which the heavenly bodies move. I will not demonstrate this now, but I have said enough to show the importance of including astronomy in our curriculum.

822 d 2. There remains the regulation of *field-sports*. Here the good citizen will attend to the expressed opinion of his guides, as well as to their express commands or prohibitions. The only really *healthy* form of sport, they will tell him, is the ordinary hunting of wild quadrupeds, with the help of horses and dogs. No night trapping; no bird-catching, except in wild country; fishing to be regulated by proper restrictions as to places and methods.

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828. The next thing we have to do is to fix the dates for the festivals of the twelve patron deities of the twelve tribes. There must be one in each month, and on these occasions choric and gymnastic competitions must be held. The infernal deities must be thus honoured in Pluto's month, the twelfth. In this connexion we must not forget to ordain monthly *military field-days*, extending over one or more days in each month in all weathers. In these the whole population must take part, and they should take the form of sham-fights, in which excellence shown by men or women should be honoured by poetical compositions by