

剑桥政治思想史原著系列（影印本）

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

# 政治家篇

## *Statesman*

Plato

柏拉图

Edited by

JULIA ANNAS

and

ROBIN WATERFIELD

中国政法大学出版社

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PLATO  
*Statesman*

# 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。

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CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE  
HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

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## Preface

It is perhaps appropriate for the *Statesman* to be the first of Plato's works to come out in the Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought; it is certainly the most neglected of Plato's political works, and the one most in need of a fresh presentation. The new translation provides a more accessible version than any hitherto available in English, and the introduction attempts to locate the dialogue in Plato's political thought, taking advantage of the enormous improvements in our understanding of this that recent discussions have produced. Few of these directly concern the *Statesman* itself, and we hope that this new translation will help to bring the work more centrally into discussions of Plato's political thought, along with the more familiar *Republic* and *Laws*.

The translation and textual notes are by Robin Waterfield, and the introduction and other notes by Julia Annas. Each of us, however, has read and commented on the other's work, and the result is the product of a harmonious collaboration that has been interesting and profitable for both of us. We hope that its fruits will introduce others to this uneven, often puzzling but seminal dialogue.

## Introduction

The *Statesman* (or *Politicus*) is central to any serious concern with Plato's political thought. It clarifies and modifies Plato's earlier positions, especially in the *Republic*, and illuminates the principles of his political thinking even while these are in the process of changing.

Plato (429–347 BC) is known and discussed widely as a political thinker, but usually on the basis of his best-known work, the *Republic*, and this is in many ways a pity. The *Republic* is a work in which political theory is mixed together with ethical theory and metaphysics, and the political strand (which is not a very large one) is hard to disentangle and open to many different kinds of interpretation. Further, the political ideas, though expressed with vigour, are very sketchy, and their relation to contemporary political reality is remote. Plato's later works, *Statesman* and *Laws*, are more properly seen as works of political theory than is the *Republic*, and studying them can both help us to understand the *Republic* better, and also put it into perspective, as being only part of a long development in Plato's thinking.

In the *Statesman*, for example, Plato defends the ideal of the ruler as possessor of a particular kind of expertise, namely expertise in the 'political skill (or art)' (*politikē technē*). This idea dominates the political aspect of the *Republic*: political problems are to be solved by imposing an ideal ruler, and the only interesting question is what the nature of that rule is to be. Yet we find that, in the *Statesman*, the *Republic*'s metaphysical backing for this idea has dropped away, and that a new and far more politically relevant



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defence emerges. Furthermore, Plato displays a new interest in the kind of compromise that the rule of the ideal expert must make, in the real world, with laws and institutions. Likewise, while the *Statesman* does not overtly challenge the *Republic's* view of the ideal ruler's need for both education and constraint in managing his subjects, we find that Plato has in fact considerably changed his view of the moral psychology of the citizen, and is moving towards a more egalitarian view of the relation of ruler to ruled.

Aristotle (384–322 BC), Plato's greatest pupil, responded to Plato in his own political theory as well as in other areas of philosophy. His own political views centre on the nature of political rule and what distinguishes it from other forms of authority, and it is clear from his writings that he reacts creatively to the *Statesman* both in fundamentals (for example, on the nature of political rule) and in details (for example, the framework for considering the various kinds of constitution, the 'theory of the mean'). Although Aristotle criticizes the *Republic*, in Book 2 of his *Politics*, his objections are somewhat mechanical, and it is unhelpful to compare Aristotle's work with the *Republic* rather than with the later dialogues, which Aristotle clearly found more useful as works of political thought.

However, stimulating as Plato's political ideas in the *Statesman* are, it is not surprising that the dialogue has been neglected by comparison with the *Republic* or even the *Laws*. To get to the political theory we have to go through lengthy passages which on first reading can strike us as a mixture of the boring and the weird. The *Statesman* is not only a discussion of political theory but an exercise in general philosophical method, deliberately presented as part of the same exercise as the one resulting in the theory of being and not-being in the *Sophist*. But Plato's presentation of this method has been criticized for its *longueurs*; he has abandoned the literary and attention-grabbing devices that are so plain in the *Republic*. Part of his message is now that philosophy (perhaps especially political theory) requires hard and often tedious work if we are to get it right rather than rushing (as in the *Republic*) to conclusions that may be exciting but may also be premature. Plato now stresses the need to work carefully and thoroughly through often unpromising-looking and trivial material if we are to be entitled to firm ethical conclusions. And the result has inspired far

fewer readers than has the *Republic*. But, for just the same reasons, anyone who wants to get beyond the superficial grasp of Plato's political thought that comes from reading only the *Republic* should pay careful attention to the *Statesman*, as well as the *Laws*.

The dialogue is devoted to the search for a definition of the *politikos* – the possessor of *politikē technē* or the skill of ruling and organizing a political community (something for which the English 'statesman' is a pallid but unavoidable equivalent). The reason for this is something that remains constant from the earliest dialogues: to understand what we are talking about when we use a given term, rather than relying on what we pick up from other people or books and do not fully understand, we need to be able to 'give an account', to say *what it is* that we are talking about. We need to be able to do this because only if we are armed with this kind of general grasp of the field can we articulate an explanation and defence of the judgements that we make on the matter. In the early dialogues this is often given the not very happy name of a search for 'definitions'. However, what Plato is doing has little to do with definitions in our sense, and is connected rather with the demand for expert knowledge of what one is talking about.

In the *Statesman* we notice an obvious difference from the earlier kind of search, where Socrates attacks the views of others in an *ad hominem* way and generally concludes that they have learned what courage or friendship (or whatever is the object of search) is not, rather than what it is. Now the dialogue represents not the process of search but the process of exposition: the main speaker is not Socrates (who would presumably have appeared too anachronistic in this role) but an anonymous visitor from Elea, and the young interlocutor is clearly a pupil who is learning, not a partner who is contributing, negatively or positively, to the philosophical investigation. Further, we try to establish what a statesman is by narrowing down the field in a process called 'division' of wider terms. This procedure, however, is supplemented by contributions of rather different kinds: a strange myth; a discussion of the nature of illustration, and a long paradigmatic illustration of weaving; an investigation of the relationships between expertise, measurement and the trio of excess, deficiency and the 'mean'; a discussion of the different types of political constitution; and finally an account

defence emerges. Furthermore, Plato displays a new interest in the kind of compromise that the rule of the ideal expert must make, in the real world, with laws and institutions. Likewise, while the *Statesman* does not overtly challenge the *Republic's* view of the ideal ruler's need for both education and constraint in managing his subjects, we find that Plato has in fact considerably changed his view of the moral psychology of the citizen, and is moving towards a more egalitarian view of the relation of ruler to ruled.

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rulers must have. The ruling class must spend long years doing mathematical studies, which accustom the mind to non-empirical thinking, and then study philosophy, and its supreme object, the Good, in an abstract and theoretical way. Plato never doubts that the abstract studies will improve the rulers' practical abilities, but just how this is supposed to happen is never made clear. The difficulty is made worse by the claim that people who have experienced these theoretical studies will see no value in returning to practical administration, and will have to be forced to do so.

The *Statesman*, by contrast, works out patiently and fully the differences and relationships between theoretical studies and practical applications, and corrects the picture put forward in the *Republic* on two fronts. The rulers themselves are not the ones who actually put their policies into practice; much effort is spent distinguishing their role from the instrumental roles of the different kinds of functionaries who do. The rulers' own knowledge is, by contrast, a theoretical one which guides and corrects actual practice. However, it is carefully distinguished from the type of theoretical knowledge which is *not* directive of practice – and the example given of this is mathematics; quietly, the whole basis for the Guardians' long years of abstract studies has been pulled out. We are therefore not surprised to find that the whole discussion and definition of expertise in ruling proceeds as though the central books of the *Republic* had never been written. Plato no longer thinks that political expertise requires a type of thinking which is mathematical in method and structure; as often in the later dialogues, he is rejoining *common sense*. He does not, however, stay there; rather, we find a quite new, and very interesting, argument to support the claims of the expert to rule, one to be discussed fully below.

The *Republic* also notoriously pushes the model of ruling as expertise in another, and more sinister direction: if ruling is really like a skill, then the people who are ruled appear to be the material for the exercise of this skill; the expert ruler would not seem to be called upon to take account of their desires and expressed preferences, since these have no standing from the viewpoint of the skill. Some of the most notorious passages in the *Republic* express exactly this view: from the point of view of rational guidance, it makes no difference if you are guided by your own reason, or by the externally imposed reason of the expert, if your own reason

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not of the statesman's nature but of one of his central political tasks, the 'weaving' of different types of people into one political fabric.

Even a casual reader is bound to be struck by the contrast between the officially organized and pedagogic nature of the discussion, and the bumpiness of the actual ride, with surprising digressions and methodological sidetracks, and a generally untidy and unfinished air to the conclusion. Scholars have divided: some think that Plato is here not in full literary control of the material, while others hold that the reader is being cued that the formally dominating structure of definition by division is not to be taken too seriously after all. Whatever the reader's conclusion about this, the *Statesman* is far less successfully unified than its official companion-piece, the *Sophist*; its different parts do in the end contribute to the understanding of a single issue, the nature of political rule, but they do so in rather diverse ways. Perhaps what we find is the result of Plato discovering that the problem of political rule is methodologically more complex and harder to expound than the nature of being and not-being.

The *Statesman* is, then, more taxing than the *Republic* to read and absorb. It is worthwhile, however, both for the light it sheds back on the *Republic* and for its interesting discussion of themes that interested Plato throughout his life.

### The ruler's expertise

No reader of the *Republic* can fail to see the crucial importance of Plato's assumption there that ruling is a kind of expertise, a skill or *technē*. This is in one way merely a natural extension of the idea, prominent in the early Socratic dialogues, that virtue is a kind of expertise over one's life as a whole. In some of these dialogues (notably the *Euthydemus*, *Lovers* and *Alcibiades*) this idea is extended, without argument, to the idea that the virtuous agent will rule over others, making them, as well as himself, virtuous. However, it is the *Republic* which pushes the idea of ruling as an expertise furthest, in two ways.

One is that, although ruling is constantly compared to practical kinds of expertise like those of the doctor and navigator, Plato makes extreme demands on the theoretical competence that the

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way they are ruled must appeal only to the human nature which is common to ruler and subjects.

This seems to be a simple and welcome point. Plato is saying that political theory should not come up with solutions which are so idealized that they have no hope of applying in the world as it is. And this is certainly what Plato's position is in the *Laws* (874e–875d) when he says that the ideal expert ruler is an unattainable ideal, since it is not in human nature to attain to expert knowledge or to remain uncorrupted by the potential for its use on other humans. When this is Plato's firm conclusion, he ceases to devote attention to the expert ruler as a solution to political problems.

But in the *Statesman* it is harder to see exactly what Plato's position is. For despite his clear application of the myth of the Golden Age, Plato continues to develop the idea that the expert ruler is the best answer to political problems, the best way to produce a state run in the interests of all. Other types of solution are, by the end of the dialogue, firmly relegated to second-best. Further, his treatment of the Golden Age myth is itself somewhat elusive. He treats the details of the traditional material in ways that are strikingly surreal, raising unavoidably the question of how seriously he is taking the idea even as a myth. And this in turn clouds the idea of just what the circumstances are which are being excluded as too ideal for relevance to actual societies.

Matters are further complicated here by the fact that the status of the myth is cloudy, too. Plato's earlier philosophical myths, in the *Phaedo*, *Gorgias* and *Republic*, are like one another in that they are recastings of traditional mythical material to serve a philosophically defensible moral and political purpose. But the *Statesman* injects a wholly new element: Plato claims that he is rationally reconstructing a story which makes sense of folk memory and folk stories. Actual Greek myths, rather than being rejected as harmful, are now regarded as fragments and shards of a larger story which is, in its outlines, true. We see here the beginnings of a much more empirical and even historical approach to political theory, one which emerges in the immense respect that Plato shows, in the *Laws*, for traditions, long-established usages and the lessons of history. But the *Statesman* myth itself wobbles between a number of genres. Which does it most resemble – the Myth of Er in the *Republic*? – the consciously

is not up to the task. Hence the Guardians' subjects are even called their 'slaves' (590c-d); that is, they have no autonomy over their lives where the Guardians' directives are concerned.

The *Statesman* in some passages appears to repeat and even to emphasize this aspect of the idea that ruling is an expertise (293a-b, 296b-297b): the opinions of the subjects simply do not matter, and the expert is entitled to use force to achieve his ends if necessary. The subjects may not like it, but they have no cause for rational complaint. Yet in an earlier passage (276d-e) it is explicitly made a mark of the rule of the true statesman (as opposed to the arbitrary exercise of force by a dictator) that his rule is consented to, and does not have to be imposed by constraint. The obvious internal conflict here has understandably exercised scholars. Resolution on this point is difficult, however. A relatively simple solution is to say that although the expert ruler, ruling in the interests of his subjects, would not (as opposed to the dictator who rules only for his own selfish ends) have to use constraint, this would be true only in ideal circumstances, with subjects who do not need constraint because there are no internal or external factors making it necessary. However, Plato has, since the *Republic*, developed worries about this idea too; the ideal ruler has become a problem and not just a solution to problems.

### How ideal is the ideal ruler?

A large chunk of the *Statesman* is devoted to the 'myth' or story of the Age of Cronus, the traditional Golden Age when, as in the myth of Genesis, humans did not have to work or give birth and, as in other parts of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, were 'shepherded' by divine figures. Part of the point of this myth is that the expert ruler we are looking for is not the divine herdsman of the Golden Age, when the shepherd of the flock was different in kind from the flock, but rather someone whose nature is distinctively human, like the humans he rules over. In the Age of Zeus - our world - just as the world itself is now not ruled by the divine will but runs independently, by the directives of its own nature, so humans are not ruled directly by divine shepherds, but run themselves independently, by the directives of human nature, and the

a fetish of the rule-book in areas where rule-following is obviously self-defeating. In a sarcastic and rather funny portrayal of what we would call bureaucratic procedures Plato gives us a new argument for the importance of the expert: he achieves the goal better than the rule-follower tied up in red tape.

The weakness of the analogy is, of course, that it appeals to our responses in the case of uncontroversial skills to establish something about an expertise whose results would be highly revisionary. As in the *Republic*, Plato makes the ruler out to be a kind of doctor: you may not *like* his remedies, but you know that they are for your own good. And the problem in the analogy remains the same: it is easier for the doctor and the patient to agree on what it takes for the patient to be healthy than for the ruler and ruled to agree on what measures the ruled should be subjected to.

But two rather interesting things happen at this point. One is that *this* argument for expertise quite patently falls far short of justifying constraint. The more we appeal to the intuitive idea that we would rather see the doctor than just renew his prescription, the less intuitive seems the idea that the doctor is therefore entitled to *force* his new prescription on us. This is another idea that Plato comes to accept later. In the *Laws* (720a–e, 857c–e) the analogy of the doctor appears yet again, and this time the point about constraint is explicitly recognized. It is only doctors to slaves who can impose their remedies; a free person is entitled to demand that the doctor explain the need for the remedy and persuade the patient to submit to it. In the *Laws* Plato has taken the point that citizens are not relevantly like slaves to their rulers, however expert; and expertise, however superior to the rule-book, is no longer taken to justify constraint.

The other point is that the *Statesman* argument for the superiority of expertise to law brings with it its own correction; the rule-book is not as good as the doctor's own personal judgement, but it is a lot better than nothing, or guesswork, or, worst of all, obedience to a charlatan. Laws are a second-best to the ideal expert; but if you lose interest in the ideal expert as a solution, laws do not look as irrelevant as the *Republic* made them out to be. The less interesting the prospect of an ideal ruler, the more pressing it becomes to turn one's attention to averting anarchy and tyranny; and in the section on the different types of constitutions we find Plato turning



fictional story of Atlantis in the *Timaeus-Critias*? – or the account of Greek prehistory in *Laws* III? The honest but uncomfortable answer is that it resembles all of them, and falls neatly into no category.

This unclarity, however, adds to the unclarity of the myth's point in the dialogue. After the *Republic*, Plato is now sure that he wants to reject over-idealized accounts of the expert ruler. But just how ideal is over-ideal? Plato has no clear answer to this difficult question, and so it is perhaps not surprising that he both clings to the thought that the truly ideal ruler would not need to use constraint, and also insists that the ideal ruler, in an unideal world, would be justified in using constraint. The source of the problems seems clearly to be that Plato is still, perhaps grimly, hanging on to the *Republic* idea that the best way to produce the best state is to install an ideal ruler, while at the same time he is developing positions that create trouble for this idea. One we have seen: political rule, to be applicable in the real world, should recognize a fundamental similarity of ruler and ruled. This is an idea which Plato takes to heart in the *Laws* and which is carried further by Aristotle. Another is increased respect for law and institutions. The *Statesman* is unstable because Plato has not yet thought through the degree of compromise that these new ideas demand.

### Expertise, laws and institutions

The *Republic*, as is familiar, demands that expert rulers, the Guardians, be given a free hand and a clean slate. Although they are supposed to proceed by means of laws and regulations, this kind of regulation is regarded as obvious and trivial once the right system of education is in place, and laws do not stand in the way of the insight of the experts. The only defence of this is the lengthy description of the education itself, with its mathematical and metaphysical underpinnings.

Shorn of these, expertise needs a new defence, and in the original and interesting passage *Statesman* 292b–300e Plato provides it. What he now appeals to is the flexibility and improvisatory ability of the expert. Laws are compared to a stupid person who will not change his behaviour when new information is available because he refuses to take it in. Attaching importance to laws is like making