

RADICAL PLATONISM: PLATO'S OPEN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this research is to highlight the revolutionary and radical impact of Platonic philosophy on political reality. Plato introduces a political model which does not end in dogmatism, authoritarianism and totalitarianism, but is aporetic and subversive even of itself, i.e., deeply philosophical. The only element of the Platonic proposal that can give political definitions is political science, which is personified in the collective political part of philosophers-governors. However, political definitions or institutions are not dogmatic in nature, but dialectical, in the sense that they are always subject to rational criticism and refutation. Also, groundbreaking proposals such as the abolition of nepotism and private property for political governors, social mobility, equality between women and men in terms of education and assuming political positions, the marginalization of slavery, the mixture of liberalism and socialism, etc. compose a strongly revolutionary political manifesto, which can be called radical Platonism. Our methodological approach concerns both the clarification of basic Platonic concepts and the concepts introduced by Alain Badiou in relation to the political and its reinvention in relation to Plato. Thus, we follow the dynamics that develop between the two philosophers and the meta-interpretation of their positions that will yield the logic of radical Platonism into today's political situation.

KEYWORDS: political philosophy, political science, radical Platonism, nepotism, rational criticism, slavery, social mobility, dialectic, equality, revolution, totalitarianism.

The purpose of this study is to negotiate the issue of whether Plato is a "harsh" idealist philosopher who considers every socio-political movement to be hetero-determined by invisible extra-human forces or whether he ultimately proposes a civil society where man as a political factor autonomously and decisively defines its parameters based on human individual and political happiness¹. The severe criticism of Popper's line² on Plato's positions as an enemy of the open society has distorted – almost provocatively and irresponsibly – the real Platonic proposals and

¹ Morrison 2001.

² Popper 1962.

their prominent progressive character, so that many modern researchers perceive Plato's political philosophy as a kind of absolutism³ or theocracy⁴. We will conclude that Platonic political philosophy brings man to the political forefront and makes him the unnegotiable center of every political activity and decision about his future. Man becomes master of himself and absolutely responsible for the fate of political society. We will also attempt to highlight Plato's political conceptions that constitute an extremely progressive character of state organization and exercise of political governance, not only for that era –where they would certainly have resonated unrealistically and revolutionary–, but also in modern times so-called era of modernity, where radical Platonism seems like a complete break with the prevailing socio-political structures.

The decisive challenge of the current political definitions

In the early Platonic dialogues, Plato – through Socrates – applies a deconstructive method, he attempts to deconstruct every current concept that determines the socio-political process. This method is in fact common with the method of questioning of the sophists, who harshly criticize every existing truth. Plato does exactly the same thing, before any attempt to find the truth, any false ideological norms⁵ must first be fundamentally overturned. This process is for the Platonic Socrates the most important of all, because if this does not happen, the worst of all diseases occurs, i.e., thinking that one knows, while in fact he knows nothing⁶. The worst

³ Cf. Taylor 1986. In defense of Plato against Popper's attack cf. Ronald B. Levinson (1953).

⁴ Cf. Bluck 1955.

⁵ Cf. Kraut 1986.

⁶ Plat, *Apol.* 21c-e: διασκοπῶν οὖν τοῦτον ὀνόματι γὰρ οὐδὲν δέομαι λέγειν, ἦν δέ τις τῶν πολιτικῶν πρὸς ὃν ἐγὼ σκοπῶν τοιοῦτόν τι ἔπαθον, ὧ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, καὶ διαλεγόμενος αὐτῷ ἔδοξε μοι οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος δοκεῖν μὲν εἶναι σοφὸς ἄλλοις τε πολλοῖς ἀνθρώποις καὶ μάλιστα ἑαυτῷ, εἶναι δ' οὐκ ἄπειτα ἐπειρώ μὴν αὐτῷ δεικνύναι ὅτι οἶοιτο μὲν εἶναι σοφός, εἶη δ' οὐκ. ἐντεῦθεν οὖν τούτῳ τε ἀπηχθόμην καὶ πολλοῖς τῶν παρόντων· πρὸς ἑμαυτὸν δ' οὖν ἀπιὼν ἐλογιζόμην ὅτι τούτου μὲν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐγὼ σοφώτερός εἰμι· κινδυνεύει μὲν γὰρ ἡμῶν οὐδέτερος οὐδὲν καλὸν κάγαθὸν εἰδέναι, ἀλλ' οὗτος μὲν οἶεταί τι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς, ἐγὼ δέ, ὥσπερ οὖν οὐκ οἶδα, οὐδὲ οἶομαι· ἔοικα γοῦν τούτου γε σμικρῷ τινι αὐτῷ τούτῳ σοφώτερος εἶναι, ὅτι ἂν μὴ οἶδα οὐδὲ οἶομαι εἰδέναι. ἐντεῦθεν ἐπ' ἄλλον ἦα τῶν ἐκείνου δοκούντων σοφωτέρων εἶναι καὶ μοι ταῦτά ταῦτα ἔδοξε, καὶ ἐνταῦθα κάκεινῳ καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς ἀπηχθόμην. "Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of being wise [sophos] and observed to him—his name I need not mention; he was a politician whom I selected for examination—and the result was as follows: When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really sophos, although he was thought sophos by many, and more sophos still by himself; and I went and tried to explain to him that he

enemy of truth is not a false judgment about it, but a false ideology that is engraved in the human mind and makes him firmly believe that what he thinks he knows well is the only truth. But while the deconstructive method of the Sophists⁷ had no goal, except to lead to the consolidation of an absolute relativism, nihilism or historicism, where only force or, above all, persuasive fraud can impose any truth, Socrates wanted to establish a scientific way of approaching truth⁸ through the preliminary demolition of ideology. It is noteworthy that all these concepts that are put into question, such as, for example, the concepts of justice, virtue, law or friendship, have political and not cosmological or other characteristics. Moreover, Socrates is the one who brought philosophy down from heaven to earth, because he turned philosophical interest to man and prompted him to ask himself what is

thought himself sophos, but was not really sophos; and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So, I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good [agathos], I am better off than he is—for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows. I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to be slightly more sophos than him. Then I went to another, who had still higher philosophical pretensions [dealing with sophia], and my conclusion was exactly the same. I made another enemy of him, and of many others besides him”. Transl. Benjamin Jowett.

⁷ Arist. *Soph. El.* 183a-b: Προειλόμεθα μὲν οὖν εὐρεῖν δυνάμιν τινα συλλογιστικὴν περὶ τοῦ προβληθέντος ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων ὡς ἐνδοξοτάτων· τοῦτο γὰρ ἔργον ἐστὶ τῆς διαλεκτικῆς καθ’ αὐτὴν καὶ τῆς πειραστικῆς. ἐπεὶ δὲ προκατασκευαστέον πρὸς αὐτὴν διὰ τὴν τῆς σοφιστικῆς γειτνίασιν, ὥστ’ οὐ μόνον πείραν δύνασθαι λαβεῖν διαλεκτικῶς ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς εἰδῶς, διὰ τοῦτο οὐ μόνον τὸ λεχθὲν ἔργον ὑπεθέμεθα τῆς πραγματείας, τὸ λόγον δύνασθαι λαβεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅπως λόγον ὑπέχοντες φυλάξομεν τὴν θέσιν ὡς δι’ ἐνδοξοτάτων ὁμοτρόπως. τὴν δ’ αἰτίαν εἰρήκαμεν τούτου, ἐπεὶ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο Σωκράτης ἡρώτα ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἀπεκρίνετο· ὡμολόγει γὰρ οὐκ εἰδέναι. “Our programme was, then, to discover some faculty of reasoning about any theme put before us from the most generally accepted premisses that there are. For that is the essential task of the art of discussion (dialectic) and of examination (peirastic). Inasmuch, however, as it is annexed to it, on account of the near presence of the art of sophistry (sophistic), not only to be able to conduct an examination dialectically but also with a show of knowledge, we therefore proposed for our treatise not only the aforesaid aim of being able to exact an account of any view, but also the aim of ensuring that in standing up to an argument we shall defend our thesis in the same manner by means of views as generally held as possible. The reason of this we have explained; for this, too, was why Socrates used to ask questions and not to answer them; for he used to confess that he did not know”. Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations*, Transl. W. A. Pickard-Cambridge.

⁸ Renaud François, “Dialectic as True Rhetoric in Plato’s *Gorgias*” in Mouzala 2023, 37-56.

good or bad, what is just and what is unjust, what is beautiful and what is ugly, therefore he is the founder of moral and political philosophy⁹. Furthermore, this method of questioning also has class characteristics, because those who suffer from the disease of false ideology, that is, double ignorance, are mainly people of high social strata who have received a counterfeit education and play a political role. This counterfeit double ignorance as a dominant ideology is not easily eradicated from someone's mind, it is deeply tied to their political behavior. On the contrary, the more socially and politically insignificant someone is, such as a slave or a needy citizen, the greater the preconditions they have to negate their ignorance and enter the path of truth. This is precisely where the Socratic paradox "one thing I know is that I know nothing"¹⁰ comes into play, that is, in order to reach knowledge, one must first eliminate from within himself every false ideological element that keeps him chained to ignorance. Consequently, the goal of deconstructing the dominant ideology for key concepts that define the human condition is primarily political, because all these terms in their false essence are animated by the state ideology of maintaining political institutions. The annulment of current definitions always has a political background, in the sense that any common definition of ethics or politics is inextricably linked to the dominant political ideology. The beginning of every revolution is through the questioning of the terms, which are objectified by the primary political matrix of the state, therefore every revolution, even epistemological or scientific, has a political background and context.

The non-absoluteness of knowledge: dialectic

The first stage of Platonic dialectic has to do with the formulation of a question about a structural definition of a concept, e.g., "what is justice?" and the rendering of a common definition¹¹, with which the majority of humans or better of citizens would agree. In the second dialectic stage, Socrates' interlocutor, after targeted questions that he receives from the philosopher, reaches the rejection of the definition he had given, admitting in fact that he suffered from double ignorance, that is, that he thought he knew the truth, while essentially, he knew nothing. In the third stage of dialectic, Socrates together with his interlocutor try to arrive at a right

⁹ Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes*, V, 10: *Socrates autem primus philosophiam devocavit e caelo et in urbibus conlocavit et in domus etiam introduxit et coegit de vita et moribus rebusque bonis et malis quaerere*. Cf. Strauss 1950, 166.

¹⁰ Plato, *Apol.* 21c-e.

¹¹ Cf. Roachnik 1986.

definition of the investigated concept, which will not be subject to further questioning¹². But this definition is not completely absolute¹³, it is an approximate definition, which is why the result of the early Platonic dialogues is aporetic¹⁴, in the sense that they define a concept but not with absolute certainty. But even in the later Platonic dialogues, Plato's answer regarding the absolute of knowledge is just as aporetic, and in fact he poses the problem on a completely political level. He says that if a wise legislator in the capacity of a political scientist defined the politically right through the creation of state institutions and, at some point, was forced to leave the city either because of a trip or because of his emigration to the other world, because of his death, then the rigid law he left as a legacy would have to be in force and in fact the penalty for any violation of it would be death¹⁵. Political science would automatically transform into a dominant state ideology with a true substance in the beginning, but, as soon as political conditions would be differentiated under the inescapable movement, change and material decay of human things, the hitherto true state ideology would transform into false, as it would not respond to the existing conditions. So, if a philosopher or political scientist were to question the law as a form of correct political definition and propose a different political truth, the dominant ideology would consider him an enemy of the state and would condemn him to death as a chatty Sophist and corrupter of citizens¹⁶.

¹² Cf. Anna Pavani, "On Plato's Late Dialectic: The Methods of Collection and Division", in Mouzala 2023, 189-210.

¹³ Cf. Ferber Rafael, "Socrates' "Flight into the Logoi": A Non-Standard Interpretation of the Founding Document of Plato's Dialectic" in Mouzala 2023, 57-82.

¹⁴ Cf. Plat. *Theaet.* 149a: ποιῶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπορεῖν.

¹⁵ Plat. *Polit.* 297e: Τὸ παρὰ τοὺς νόμους μηδὲν μηδένα τολμᾶν ποιεῖν τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει, τὸν τολμῶντα δὲ θανάτῳ ζημιουῖσθαι καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἐσχάτοις. "That none of the citizens dare to do anything against the laws and that anyone who dares should be punished with death and the ultimate punishments".

¹⁶ Plat. *Polit.* 299b: Καὶ τοίνυν ἔτι δεῖσθαι θέσθαι νόμον ἐπὶ πᾶσι τούτοις, ἂν τις κυβερνητικὴν καὶ τὸ ναυτικὸν ἢ τὸ ὑγιεινὸν καὶ ἰατρικὴς ἀλήθειαν περὶ πνεύματά τε καὶ θερμὰ καὶ ψυχρὰ ζητῶν φαίνεται παρὰ τὰ γράμματα καὶ σοφισζόμενος ὁτιοῦν περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, πρῶτον μὲν μήτε ἰατρικὸν αὐτὸν μήτε κυβερνητικὸν ὀνομάζειν ἀλλὰ μετεωρολόγον, ἀδολέσχην τινὰ σοφιστήν, εἴθ' ὥς διαφθείροντα ἄλλους νεωτέρους καὶ ἀναπείθοντα ἐπιτίθεσθαι κυβερνητικὴν καὶ ἰατρικὴν μὴ κατὰ νόμους, ἀλλ' αὐτοκράτορας ἄρχειν τῶν πλοίων καὶ τῶν νοσούντων, γραψάμενον εἰσάγειν τὸν βουλόμενον οἷς ἔξεστιν εἰς δὴ τι δικαστήριον· ἂν δὲ παρὰ τοὺς νόμους καὶ τὰ γεγραμμένα δόξῃ πείθειν εἴτε νέους εἴτε πρεσβύτας "It will therefore be necessary to enact a law among all of them, that if anyone is found to be seeking the truth of government or navigation or hygiene or medicine or the art about the winds, about hot and cold things, contrary to the written rules, and by thinking anything about them, first of all he should not be called a doctor or a captain, but a meteorologist, some chatty sophist; and then, on the charge of corrupting other young men and trying to

But can the Platonic perspective of philosophy be reconciled with the rigidity of the dominant ideology that reproduces state institutions? Plato's answer is negative, life without further research and questioning is unlivable¹⁷. Therefore, political philosophy is a continuous revolutionary and radical act, which constantly questions the dominant ideology and state institutions. Political philosophy has as its goal human individual and political happiness, while the dominant ideology the preservation of the state and the fulfillment of the selfish goals of the ruling class.

The idea of revolution

In *Gorgias*, Plato expresses the concept of the dominant ideology as a kind of magical ode, (incantation, spell), a magical song that hypnotizes the best of human natures and keeps them bound within an artificial equality. The state is not interested in the improvement of human, but in his subordination to the selfish goals of the ruling class. The ruling class, through ideology, dominates the political majority and establishes a fabricated concept of equality and freedom that serves the purposes of the state. The best of humans, that is, humans who can integrate their nature, are kept ideologically “tamed”, like wild lions in cages, but as soon as they understand the illusion of institutions, they will suddenly break the bonds and rebel against their previous masters and change the political order. Plato sees no other way to change the ideological status quo than a revolutionary movement that will establish the right political order¹⁸. This revolution, of course, is not governed by class motives, but by a replacement of falsehood by truth, an expulsion of

persuade them to engage in government and medicine not according to the laws, but to govern ships and the sick with absolute authority, someone who can make a written complaint should bring him before the court; and if it is found that he is trying to persuade either young or old people contrary to the laws and the written rules, the ultimate punishments should be inflicted on him”.

¹⁷ Plat. *Polit.* 2993e: Δῆλον ὅτι πᾶσαι τε αἱ τέχναι παντελῶς ἂν ἀπόλοιτο ἡμῖν, καὶ οὐδ' εἰς αὖθις γένοιτ' ἂν ποτε διὰ τὸν ἀποκωλύοντα τοῦτον ζητεῖν νόμον· ὥστε ὁ βίος, ὦν καὶ νῦν χαλεπός, εἰς τὸν χρόνον ἐκεῖνον ἀβίωτος γίγνοιτ' ἂν τὸ παράπαν. “It is obvious that all the arts would be completely destroyed and would not be reborn because of this law that hinders research; thus life, which is already difficult, would then become completely unlivable”. Plat. *Apol.* 38a: ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ.

¹⁸ Plat. *Gorg.* 483e-484b: ἀλλ' οἶμαι οὗτοι κατὰ φύσιν τὴν τοῦ δικαίου ταῦτα πράττουσιν, καὶ ναὶ μὰ Δία κατὰ νόμον γε τὸν τῆς φύσεως, οὐ μέντοι ἴσως κατὰ τοῦτον ὃν ἡμεῖς τιθέμεθα· πλάττοντες τοὺς βελτίστους καὶ ἔρρωμενεστάτους ἡμῶν αὐτῶν, ἐκ νέων λαμβάνοντες, ὥσπερ λέοντας, κατεπάρδοντες τε καὶ γοητεύοντες καταδουλούμεθα λέγοντες ὡς τὸ ἴσον χρὴ ἔχειν καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ δίκαιον. ἐὰν δέ γε οἶμαι φύσιν ἱκανὴν γένηται ἔχων ἀνὴρ, πάντα ταῦτα ἀποσεισάμενος καὶ διαρρήξας καὶ διαφυγὼν, καταπατήσας τὰ ἡμέτερα γράμματα καὶ μαγγανεύματα καὶ ἐπωδὰς καὶ νόμους τοὺς

false ideology from real political science. The important thing here is that Platonic philosophy does not accept and does not reproduce existing political models, but desires a radical change of the political landscape under completely new conditions, based not on the interest of the sovereign, but of the entire political community. Natural right is not compatible with any existing political constitution, but derives from the right order of human nature and the eudemonic perspective of the civil society. While in the *Republic* the ideal city is created as a rational abstraction¹⁹, in the *Gorgias* Plato proposes actual revolution as the only path to change.

παρὰ φύσιν ἅπαντας, ἐπαναστάς ἀνεφάνη δεσπότης ἡμέτερος ὁ δοῦλος, καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἐξέλαμψεν τὸ τῆς φύσεως δίκαιον. “But of course, I believe that they act in this way according to the nature of justice and yes, by Zeus, they act according to the law of nature and certainly not following this conventional law which we establish, shaping the best and worthiest among us, after we capture them from childhood, just like lions, we tame them with magical chants and methodologies of domination with the ultimate goal of their complete submission to the system, propagandizing to them that it is appropriate for them to be possessed by equality and that this is what beauty and justice consist of. But if, I think, there were a worthy man with natural superiority, after breaking and crushing all these bonds and escaping and after trampling on our own conventional institutions and methods and ideologies and all the unnatural laws, he would suddenly rebel and appear with the power that his natural superiority ensures him, our former slave would be our master and fulfilling this prospect, natural right would radiate with all its brilliance”.

¹⁹ Plat. *Resp.* 592a-b: Μανθάνω, ἔφη· ἐν γὰρ νῦν διήλθομεν οἰκίζοντες πόλει λέγεις, τῇ ἐν λόγοις κειμένῃ, ἐπεὶ γῆς γε οὐδαμοῦ οἶμαι αὐτὴν εἶναι. Ἄλλ’ ἢν δ’ ἐγώ, ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσως παράδειγμα ἀνάκειται τῷ βουλομένῳ ὁρᾶν καὶ ὁρῶντι ἑαυτὸν κατοικίζειν. διαφέρει δὲ οὐδὲν εἴτε που ἔστιν εἴτε ἔσται· τὰ γὰρ ταύτης μόνης ἂν πράξειεν, ἄλλης δὲ οὐδεμιᾶς. “I understand; you mean the city that we founded and which exists only in words, for I do not believe that it is to be found in any part of the earth. But perhaps there is a paradigm of it in heaven, for him who wants to see it and with it as a rule to found his state; besides, it does not matter whether it exists or will ever exist; for our wise man will only interfere in the politics of such a city and of no other”. Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1316a. Aristotle attributes an inappropriate treatment of the political issue to the Platonic Socrates. He believes that Socrates deliberately avoids determining whether tyranny will change or not, for what reason and to what constitution it will change. As the reason for Socrates' silence, Aristotle perceives the difficulty of deciding due to the vagueness of the specific political issue. According to Socratic argumentation, tyranny must change to the first and best constitution, since only in this way would a continuous and perfect cycle (theory of *anacyclosis* of constitutions) arise. But historical evidence demonstrates the groundlessness of Socratic observations: often tyranny reverts to tyranny again and democracy turns into oligarchy and vice versa – and only the study of the Peloponnesian War highlights similar political changes. Aristotle's aphoristic attitude towards Socrates is removed if the ideal Platonic state is understood as a logical and not as a historical hypothesis. There has never been a historically excellent state to justify a subsequent historically

In fact, this rupture with the current political condition is not achieved by peaceful means or through persuasive propaganda, but by force: the previously enslaved realize the ideological deception they are suffering and violently break the bonds of subjugation by imposing their power on the human condition. While the previous condition favors only those who reproduce the dominant ideology of the institutions, the Platonic political revolution favors every political part that has the natural value of participating in decision-making. Political science is undoubtedly a difficult acquisition, but open to every political part without class distinctions.

The rejection of nepotism and political aristocracy

Part of this non-negotiable political declaration is the abolition of any power relationship with characteristics of nepotism or aristocracy. The selection of the rulers is made by the political base through an educational process and evaluation²⁰ and not through family inheritance or aristocratic plutocracy. All political parties are subjected to a common public educational program for all, far from any family or class influence, where after careful evaluation those who can develop the dialectical art and the political science inherent to it are selected. This proposal of Plato was groundbreaking for that time, where even in the direct democracy of Athens, family and class ties structurally determined power relations²¹. In every Greek city-state there were powerful clans that determined political developments, whether they belonged to the aristocratic or the democratic ideological arc. However, Plato, although he himself was the offspring of an aristocratic family and had been irreparably hurt by the Athenian democracy due to the death sentence of his teacher Socrates, at no point in his work does he accept family or class criteria in the selection of rulers²². The patrimonial is not necessarily something correct, it can be governed by a false ideology that leads inexorably to double ignorance. The purpose

observed political cycle. The *anacyclosis* of constitutions exists only when there is an excellent constitution that gradually deteriorates. In the version where the political rightness of an ideal constitution is absent as a historical beginning, a political defectiveness and mutation from one constitution to another is observed without any determining-mechanistic necessity of political transformation.

²⁰ Gill 1985.

²¹ For this issue cf. Ober 1989.

²² Plato, *Resp.*, 464d-e: *Τί δέ; δίκαι τε καὶ ἐγκλήματα πρὸς ἀλλήλους οὐκ οἰχθήσεται ἐξ αὐτῶν ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν διὰ τὸ μηδὲν ἴδιον ἐκτῆσθαι πλὴν τὸ σῶμα, τὰ δ' ἄλλα κοινά; ὅθεν δὴ ὑπάρχει τούτοις ἀστασιάστοις εἶναι, ὅσα γε διὰ χρημάτων ἢ παίδων καὶ συγγενῶν κτήσιν ἄνθρωποι στασιάζουσιν;* “And what more? Will not lawsuits and complaints between them also disappear, since no one will have anything special except his body and everything else in common? And the

of philosophy is to question every opinion and to restore it by scientific truth. The patrimonial opinion personified by the nobles may contain elements of truth, but these elements are unproven and confused with ideological constructs. If no one can justify the cause and purpose of his actions, he cannot participate in political science and therefore in political governance.

Social mobility

Evidence of the abolition of any family or class support is the measure of social mobility for each part of the political society. When a child is unable to cope with the educational processes after the age of eighteen, he returns back to the lower class of producers²³, even if he belongs to the class of guards. Conversely, any child who manages to pass the educational stages rises to the highest class of philosopher-governors, even if he belongs to the lower class of producers. Also, every political factor is constantly judged and evaluated during the performance of his work, so if he falls into mistakes, he immediately loses his position²⁴. From this perspective, Plato does not allow any class consolidation in his planned society, where each member of the political society is defined by the role he plays within it and not by the characteristics of material power. It is a dynamic social reality where all parts of the political organization are in constant movement and evaluation with the field of political governance completely open²⁵. Political recognition and devaluing are completely open to everyone. Upward or downward mobility in Plato is essentially horizontal social mobility, because the role of each political part is equally important for the maintenance and happiness of the entire political organization. Whether there is an upward or downward course in the social ladder, the individual as part of the city performs a political role that is very important for the maintenance and happiness of the whole²⁶.

Governors without private property?

The main political measure to avoid any class deviation is the abolition of private property and family for political governors. The social ranks of philosopher-politicians and guards-assistants are not entitled to any form of private property and

result of this will be that discords will disappear among them, at least those that arise from property disputes or outbursts of women or children or from other family reasons?"

²³ Cf. Andrew 1989.

²⁴ Plato, *Resp.* 415b-c, 423c-b.

²⁵ Lee 1981.

²⁶ Plato, *Resp.* 433a: τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν καὶ μὴ πολυπραγμονεῖν δικαιοσύνη ἐστὶ.

credit trust²⁷. They live in public buildings and are fed by the state with the only obligation to exercise the duty of political governance and the maintenance of internal and external security. Without property and without family ties, it is almost impossible for them to fall into selfishness and greed, but also to be influenced in the exercise of governmental work. All this has the result of cutting off politics from selfish enrichment at the expense of the common good²⁸. Politics is stripped of any personal interest and placed at the service of the whole. Political governance does not abound in superior rights and advantages over the rest of the political parts, but only in obligations arising from the supreme duty of political happiness²⁹. Furthermore, the abolition of the possession of material goods for those in power prevents any descent into material bliss, that is, the tendency of an individual or a political group to accumulate material goods, in the belief that they bring happiness. Happiness is not found in matter and in insatiable greed, but in the proper order of the human soul and its correspondence with the political order of the city. In a rational being, such as human, and in his most important rational creation, the city, passions cannot subordinate reason³⁰.

Equality of men and women in education

Another groundbreaking political measure for that time is public education. Education in ancient Greece, with the exception of Sparta and Crete, was private, parents chose the teachers who would train their children in political and martial arts. Private education cost parents enormous sums. We know that many Sophists who were the providers of private education in ancient Greece during the golden age of Pericles had amassed large fortunes from teaching political virtue to wealthy young citizens, especially the Athenians, where the democratic constitution favored the use of rhetoric. This translates into the fact that only wealthy nobles and merchants had the ability to pay the exorbitant tuition fees and therefore the ability to receive an education. Poor citizens could not be adequately educated, and this constituted a strong inequality within the state. Pericles established the law of

²⁷ Plato, *Resp.* 464b-c: ἔφαμεν γάρ που οὔτε οἰκίας τούτοις ἰδίας δεῖν εἶναι οὔτε γῆν οὔτε τι κτῆμα, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων τροφὴν λαμβάνοντας, μισθὸν τῆς φυλακῆς, κοινῇ πάντας ἀναλίσκειν, εἰ μέλλοιεν ὄντως φύλακες εἶναι. "They should have neither private dwellings nor fields nor any private property, but they should only receive their food from others as wages for guarding, and all their expenses should be common, if they want to be real guards".

²⁸ Plato, *Resp.* 416b-420a.

²⁹ Cf. Kamtekar 2001.

³⁰ Robinson 1971.

the *theorica*³¹, that is, the payment of the entrance fee to tragedies and comedies, so that even the poorest citizens could be educated. But Plato is much more radical than any previous thinker or political reformer, as he proposes universal public education for every part of the political state, in order to create the same conditions for aretaic and political excellence. If a citizen is excluded from the educational process, this automatically makes him inferior to others on the path to natural integration and the taking of political initiative. The characteristic of uniform, high-standard education creates equal opportunities for natural development and political activity. But even more revolutionary is the Platonic suggestion for the participation of women in the educational program of the state³². Women are not treated as beings inferior to men³³, but as humans or citizens who can fully develop their natural abilities³⁴ and be promoted to political positions³⁵. Women participate equally with men in all expressions of political life³⁶ and can, as human beings, reach ethical perfection and happiness³⁷. All these proposals constituted a deep crack in the socio-political establishment that considered women as inferior beings, who had to be confined to the household and raising children.

Women political governors?

But Plato does not limit himself only to the educational right of women. But he paves the way for women as political actors in human society³⁸. All trainees can rise to the rank of guards-assistants and devote themselves to the study of dialectic, but also the art of war. Women receive military training and military roles (soldiers, officials, generals, etc.) and do not differ in any way from their male counterparts. In fact, Plato proposes that women have a similar role to men in the defense of the state and participate in expansionist or preventive campaigns as a basic expeditionary force, if not in the vanguard in the rearguard, to frighten enemies with their numbers and their military readiness³⁹. However, the role of women does not stop at the defense of the state. Women can, if they successfully pass the educational

³¹ Plutarch. *Pericles*, 9.1; Plato, *Gorg.* 515e.

³² Plato. *Resp.* 451e: *Εἰ ἄρα ταῖς γυναιξὶν ἐπὶ ταῦτά χρῆσόμεθα καὶ τοῖς ἀνδράσι, ταῦτά καὶ διδάσκειν αὐτάς.* "So if we want to treat our women the same as men, we must teach them the same".

³³ Levin 1996.

³⁴ Cf. Marshall 2008.

³⁵ Plato. *Resp.* Book V.

³⁶ Cf. Vlastos 1989.

³⁷ Annas 1976.

³⁸ Cf. Saxonhouse 1976.

³⁹ Plato. *Resp.* Book V.

stages, rise to the highest governmental level of philosopher-governors⁴⁰. Women and men form a governing body, where people with more integrated natural characteristics participate, such as intellectual-rational ability⁴¹, but also full knowledge of the essence and purpose of human and political society. In fact, Plato nowhere excludes all political rulers from being women, to the extent that they are human beings and can reach this stage of human value and political science⁴². The selection criterion is not gender, but the possession of dialectic and political science⁴³. There is really no more dynamic expression of the equality of the two sexes on a human and political level in the history of philosophy, especially that period.

Many political governors or one?

Also, in the Platonic *Republic* and in the *Politicus*, Plato nowhere says that the political governor will be an absolute regulator of human affairs⁴⁴. The governors are always many, not one or a few, but a large number of citizens. While in the science of medicine, the scientist can operate alone and absolutist based on the principles of his science, in the practical exercise of politics Plato does not believe that there should be a ruler. The political scientist can find himself in a position of authority, but knowing that human existence is limited in time, he must bequeath to the citizens not hereditary successors, but a scientific law that will be able to replace political science as a manual of knowledge. Only those constitutions that explicitly declare the consent of the political body to the sovereign power through law are right, constitutions without law are wrong and undesirable⁴⁵. Even in the *Laws*⁴⁶,

⁴⁰ Cf. Okin 1977.

⁴¹ Ganson 2009.

⁴² Plato, *Resp.* 454a-455e.

⁴³ Proios, Kamtekar 2024.

⁴⁴ Cf. Popper 1962 (Ch. 8: "The Philosopher King", and not of course "The philosophers Kings").

⁴⁵ Plat. *Polit.* 291e-303e:

	Domination of Law	Lawlessness
One Ruler	1. Monarchy	4. Tyranny
Few Rulers	2. Aristocracy	5. Oligarchy
Many Rulers	3. Democracy with Laws	6. Democracy without Laws (Anarchy)

⁴⁶ Plato, *Leg.* 709e-710a: Ἀθηναῖος: Τοῦ νομοθέτου φράζομεν τοῦτο, ἡ γάρ; Κλεινίας: Ναί. Ἀθηναῖος: Τόδε· 'τυραννουμένην μοι δότε τὴν πόλιν,' φήσει· «τύραννος δ' ἔστω νέος καὶ μνήμων καὶ εὐμαθὴς καὶ ἀνδρείος καὶ μεγαλοπρεπὴς φύσει' [...] 710d: Κλεινίας: ἐκ τυραννίδος ἀρίστην φῆς γενέσθαι πόλιν ἄν, ὥς φαίνῃ, μετὰ νομοθέτου γε ἄκρου καὶ τυράννου κοσμίῳ, καὶ ῥᾶστα τε καὶ τάχιστ'

which proposes that a tyrant friend of wisdom should take on the role of a direct political reformer under the guidance of a philosopher, this role is transitional and not permanent. The power and absolutism of the tyrant can produce immediate political results towards the transformation of a state from conventional to philosophical, but the structure of the subsequent government is collective. Philosopher-politicians or political scientists will make the political decisions on the fate of the political community. Although Plato nowhere explicitly says that these decisions will be made democratically, there is, however, no other way of making decisions in collective political entities. This political group certainly does not constitute the majority of citizens, but it is numerous, which substantiates its collective character. Nor can the law⁴⁷, as a form of society's consent to the sovereign authority, be rigid or absolutist⁴⁸, but must be subjected to constant critical examination by political scientists, in order to avoid erroneous deviations and cases of absolutism. This continuous critical process towards institutions is the basic characteristic of the philosophical constitution.

The criterion of political rightness: is science authoritarian?

So, we come to the final accusation against Plato, authoritarianism in the name of political science⁴⁹. Indeed, Plato believes that political governance should be practiced by experts, knowledgeable in political science⁵⁰, and not by the popular base in the form of direct democracy. However, this is only one side of the coin, since

ἀν μεταβαλεῖν εἰς τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ τοιούτου. "Athenian: Should we answer in the position of the legislator or not? Cleinias: Yes. Athenian: The legislator would answer as follows: "Give me the city with tyrannical government and the tyrant to be young, to have a good memory, to be receptive to new teachings, and to be decisive in what he does and by nature magnificent". [...] "As can be seen, you argue that from tyrannical government comes the perfectly structured state, with the collaboration of a supreme legislator and a decent tyrant, and that from this collaboration this political change could be achieved in the easiest and quickest way."

⁴⁷ Cf. Meyer 2006.

⁴⁸ Plato, *Polit.* 294b-c: Τὸν δέ γε νόμον ὀρώμεν σχεδὸν ἐπ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο συντείνοντα, ὥσπερ τινὰ ἀνθρώπον αὐθάδη καὶ ἀμαθῆ καὶ μηδὲνα μηδὲν ἐὼντα ποιεῖν παρὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ τάξιν, μηδ' ἐπερωτᾶν μηδὲνα, μηδ' ἂν τι νέον ἄρα τῷ συμβαίνει βέλτιον παρὰ τὸν λόγον ὃν αὐτὸς ἐπέταξεν. "We see, of course, that the law almost comes to this thing, like some insolent and ignorant man, who does not allow anyone to do anything contrary to what he prescribes or even to ask, even if something new happens to someone better than the order he gave".

Cf. Hitz 2009.

⁴⁹ Brown 1998.

⁵⁰ Meyer 2004.

the selection of political governors, as we have seen, is done by the popular base with the participation of all political parts. Plato says that political science is autonomous, since it can dictate itself and give orders to the other sciences, in other words, it always speaks in the imperative mood⁵¹. But which science does not speak in the imperative mood? Does not medicine give orders to patients and doctors for the prevention and treatment of human diseases? The art of building does not prescribe how to build a house rightly? Every science is a science in the full sense of the term if it can fully justify its cognitive object and know its purpose. Medical science, for example, knows human nature and has as its goal the preservation or restoration of health as a remedy for a disturbed order. Strategic science knows the nature of war and has as its goal victory in case of defense or attack. However, political science is at a higher level than all other arts that concern human affairs, because it knows the essence and purpose of human in terms of achieving individual and political happiness. The other sciences are auxiliary to political science, because they do not know the final human purpose that is superior to these specific individual purposes. Sciences formulate definitions about their cognitive objects and their purposes, the definitions have an imperative character, if someone is consistent with the definition, he acts correctly, while if someone violates it, he acts incorrectly. If we deny the formulation of definitions about politics or about man, we deny by extension the existence of political science. Politics in that way falls into the realm of chance, disorder and indeterminacy. If we accept that Plato is an absolutist, we accept that every science is absolutist and harmful to human.

⁵¹ Plat. *Politic.* 258b-260e. Political science is a theoretical science that transmits commands due to the knowledge of the final purpose of beings for execution in its auxiliary practical arts. It is self-imposing (αὐτεπιτακτική), transmits commands, does not receive commands. It therefore becomes clear that the philosophers-governors participate theoretically in a cognitive science. Cognitive science in turn is divided into two parts, the critical part, which judges and weighs the objects of knowledge, and the imperative part, which does not simply make cognitive judgments, but commands, transmits commands for the execution of its judgments by performing a governmental cognitive act. The political scientist is not simply a spectator of events, he does not make general judgments about the surrounding events, but he himself is a regulator and ruler of circumstances, he judges and at the same time commands by putting into practice his rational conceptions. The political science speaks in the imperative (ἐπιτακτική) inclination. In the same evidential pattern, the political governor does not accept orders from other superior rulers with the aim of transmitting them to others, such as town criers for example. The political scientist is the cognitive source of imperative orders, which is why he belongs to the self-imperative governmental genus, as he rules and commands in a managerial manner that his orders be carried out, without accepting any directive order. Cf. Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* 1094a27; Plat. *Euthyd.* 288e-292c.

Therefore, Plato is not an absolutist thinker, but completely consistent with the concept of political science. In addition, every science, since it is knowledge of the causes and purpose of an object, has a rational character, and so does political science. Irrational humans plagued by passions cannot apply political science⁵². The rational character of political science also implies the rational structure of the state and the corresponding political stratification⁵³. Therefore, the accusation of authoritarianism is not directed primarily against Plato, but against political science in general. Furthermore, Plato does not desire the authoritarian form of political science, but emphasizes that science is synonymous with research, continuous questioning and redefinition. Therefore, he does not accept a dogmatic science that is imposed by ideological means. Finally, a science, if it wants to be called science, always seeks the good⁵⁴ of its cognitive object, otherwise it is reduced to cunning⁵⁵. Political philosophy or science always aims at the improvement of man and his political societies and not at his exploitation. Consequently, Platonic political philosophy is fully consistent with the concept of science and is in no way authoritarian.

The mixture of liberalism and socialism

Plato is the first to attempt to impose on his ideal *Republic* a mixture of the economic systems of socialism and liberalism⁵⁶, based on the characteristics of human nature, thus preventing the problems and acute contradictions that would arise in the following centuries. The Platonic state has a clearly socialist character, as the common rather than the individual interest is prioritized. The city as a whole constitutes the matrix within which each political part can take a share in happiness⁵⁷. Every manifestation of political and economic life is governed by the absolute control of the state, which has, with education as its main axis, a system of continuous evaluation and development of the political actors⁵⁸. The state also controls the

⁵² Cf. Moss 2006.

⁵³ Cf. Smith 1999.

⁵⁴ Cf. Hitchcock 1985.

⁵⁵ Plat. *Menex* 246e-247a: πᾶσά τε ἐπιστήμη χωριζομένη δικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς πανουργία, οὐ σοφία φαίνεται. "Every science, if separated from justice and the whole of virtue, seems to be cunning and not wisdom".

⁵⁶ Cf. Smith 2000. Versenyi 1977.

⁵⁷ Strauss 1959.

⁵⁸ Strauss 1989.

means of production and, as noted, the political governors and the militia live under a regime of communal ownership. However, in the class of producers⁵⁹, this socialist way does not exist, but there are elements of liberalism and even capitalism. The most numerous political group of producers can have private property, a family and develop autonomous entrepreneurial-commercial activity⁶⁰. The state, of course, monitors individual enrichment and sets a limit on individual property and ownership, so that no political part becomes stronger than the state and tries to control it. But, the life of producers is not uniform and authoritarily controlled, as in strict socialism, but diverse and free, as in liberalism. Unlike the system of Lycurgus in Sparta, where he implemented a harsh socialist system of austerity and restraint in all parts of the state, in order to limit human greed⁶¹, Plato proposes a two-speed political system based on the particular nature of each political tendency. The classes of philosopher-politicians and guardians-assistants are characterized by the dominance of the rational part against the passions⁶², so they are susceptible to a socialist pattern of common ownership and austerity for the benefit of the whole and to self-restraint, so that they can exercise the highest work of governance without being drawn into greed. On the other hand, the producers, being prone to the passions of the senses and greed⁶³, are more compatible with a controlled liberal-capitalist rhythm, where they can manifest their natural impulses. Plato diagnosed that human nature must be in a political environment that can respond effectively and, in this way, resolves the contradiction between socialism and liberalism, even before its modern manifestation. The role of each social factor must be proportionate to its nature and the socio-political or economic environment should contribute to this perspective⁶⁴.

Were there slaves in the Platonic *Republic*?

The issue of slavery in Platonic political thought is a subject of great debate. Plato does not seem to favor the existence of slaves in his political planning⁶⁵. The city he envisions should be self-sufficient with its own forces, where each political de-

⁵⁹ Jeon 2014.

⁶⁰ Plat. *Resp.* 369c-373e.

⁶¹ Cf. Vavouras 2023.

⁶² Burnyeat 2006.

⁶³ Cf. Moss 2005.

⁶⁴ About the relationship of economy with political philosophy cf. Vavouras 2020 and Vavouras 2022.

⁶⁵ Hyde 2009.

partment will perform its own function. There are positions such as that Plato considered the citizens of the class of producers⁶⁶ to be slaves, but this is not true. The philosopher-governors⁶⁷ are those who are forced by law to serve the political body and not the producers. The philosophers, having reached individual fulfillment and bliss⁶⁸, have no desire to deal with politics, where decay and materiality dominate, but want to remain, although alive, in the bliss of the Isles of the Blessed, that is, completely happy but also completely cut off from the many. However, the political law forces them to assume political power, to help their fellow citizens, imprisoned in the cave of illusions, to walk on the path of truth and happiness. Philosophers are forced to serve the producers, and not the producers the philosophers⁶⁹. Also, social mobility, as we have seen, excludes the existence of a class of slaves, since all social parts can ascend or descend into specific political roles. The producers produce and work for their own selfish interest, but, as Adam Smith would say, paradoxically an invisible hand pushes them to work for the common interest. The productive competition of individuals benefits the development of the state as a whole⁷⁰. The dynamic expression of political society as a self-sufficient organic whole, where each political actor fulfills the work appropriate to his nature, does not allow for the existence of slavery. Even Vlastos' view that there is a fourth class in the Platonic *Republic*, the class of slaves⁷¹, which is concealed by Plato, is not consistent with the goal of self-sufficiency and organic wholeness. In any case, the elimination of slavery or the maximum limitation of slavery in a political society of that time and the assumption of the hard labor of slaves by the parts of the political organization is a tremendously progressive concept even for

⁶⁶ Cf. Calvert 1987.

⁶⁷ Brown 2000.

⁶⁸ Johnstone 2011.

⁶⁹ Plat. *Resp.* 519c-520d.

⁷⁰ Adam Smith (1776, 35): *every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good. It is an affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it.*

⁷¹ Cf. Vlastos 1941, Vlastos 1968.

today's data. The Platonic state is a political community of roles and responsibilities towards the achievement of collective happiness and the existence of slaves would be an evasion of the functions corresponding to each human or citizen.

The emergence of human as the ultimate political regulator

In the famous myth of the *Politicus*⁷², Plato wonders whether humans in the paradise of the age of Cronus were happy. Humans in that mythical age lived in ideal environmental conditions, where all goods were generously provided by nature, there were no diseases, no conflicts, and life went in reverse from old age to youth. But if these people of paradise ate and drank every day, like irrational animals, without any intellectual activity, could they be considered happier than us? Plato's answer is that if these humans used their material abundance to philosophize and think productively, then they would be infinitely happier than we, the unfortunate humans of today, who engage in a daily struggle to obtain the necessary material goods in the face of all kinds of adversity. However, since we do not know whether the humans of the earthly paradise had rational pursuits, we should perhaps consider that we, the humans of toil and material necessity, are infinitely happier than they, because within this natural disadvantage we were able to create such a wonderful civilization and we have so much of that characteristic that differentiates us from other living beings, namely rationality and critical thinking⁷³. This is a preliminary answer by Plato to those who believe that the society he proposes is not distinguished by autonomy, but by heteronomy. Plato admires human and his political societies precisely because they are autonomous human creations. Plato's political philosophy is an exhortation to the autonomy of thought and political creation. Human becomes absolutely responsible for his fate, for his happiness and his unhappiness. The fact that Plato introduces political science as a measure of the rightness of human choices does not negate human autonomy, but on the contrary, he shields it with scientific objectivity and rightness of choices. Natural right does not oppose human autonomy, but is a guide to the realization of the rational choices between right and wrong. The Platonic *Republic* is a human and not a divine conception and only humans with their own powers and choices can realize it. Politics is a completely human affair, where human autonomous choices determine its successful or not outcome. Plato is not an enemy of freedom and autonomy, but he considers that freedom and autonomy have substance, if they are compatible with the necessity of nature or history, which necessity is verified by science.

⁷² Plat. *Polit.* 268d-274d.

⁷³ Plat. *Polit.* 272b-d.

Radical Platonism today

To better understand the impact of radical Platonism on the current form of the political state, we will use Alain Badiou's critique using Platonic philosophy as a weapon of argument. In order to approach the question of socio-political position in Plato, we will move along two main axes. The first concerns the way he treats basic concepts starting from Idea⁷⁴ and Truth⁷⁵ and the second how these concepts appear in contemporary Western thought and especially in the French philosopher Alain Badiou through his work. In a way, Badiou reintroduces us to Platonic logic in a reflective way. He contrasts Platonic philosophy against the prevailing, in the West, Aristotelian logic. Always assuming that Aristotle as anti-Platonist was structurally influenced by Plato.

Already in his first Manifesto on Philosophy, A. Badiou, referring to the causes of the "birth" of philosophy in Ancient Greece, focuses on the passage from a hermetic discourse on Being and its sacred narratives to an abstract discourse which becomes public with the prevalence of an open power, it is the invention of Polis that gave this transformation of the mythical narrative of the sacred Presence of Truths into a philosophical discourse. It was an *evential procedure* which activated philosophy in relation to the Truths which now applied to everyone. We refer to the concept of the Event which Badiou introduces as a state of being which is characterized by the accidental, is non-evident and makes sense afterwards. This is how the French philosopher approaches the essence of politics. That is, the event of politics as invention is the place where its radical side emerges, which is the place where its essence is defined. The political event is an opening in the sequence of history. The political event refers to political invention as a state of radical change. We would say that the event resembles the Platonic suddenly (*ἐξαίφνης*, Plat. *Resp.* 515c, 516e, 621b). Alain Badiou considers that "the first philosophical formulation that proposes to arrange these processes as a whole in a common conceptual space so as to affirm that they are synonymous in thought is the formulation that bears the name Plato"⁷⁶. He refers to the *evential procedure* and the four conditions which are necessary for philosophy and its activation in relation to the Truths. They are the mathême, the poem, the political invention and love (eros) as event of two. Plato, according to Badiou's state displays the first term in the phrase "None ungeometrical enters", the poetic as the second term through his questioning of poets as agents of imitation. Their dismissal is necessary if the poem is to be considered as an element of narrative in order to redefine it, according to Badiou, through the

⁷⁴ We refer in the Theory of the Ideas which permeated the entire work of Plato.

⁷⁵ The platonic Truth is eternal and unchanging.

⁷⁶ Badiou 1989, 15.

removal of its relation to its narrative form and to relate it to Truth. It is in a way the result of the conception of the Idea. Plato articulates the third term, Eros, with Truth through his magnificent texts, such as the *Symposium* and *Phaedon*. Finally, the political invention, the fourth condition of activation of philosophy in relation to the Truths concerns the State and specifically at the end of its Book VIII. It is the definition of the ideal Polis that does not concern politics and the way of a pragmatic management of power as in Aristotle. Here it is about a process of philosophical thought and inventive operation. Without political invention, philosophy cannot exist in terms of Truths. Thus, the ruler-philosopher or king-philosopher is a logical derivative of the invention of the politician leading to the Idea of the ideal State (*Respublica*). It is the ruler-political scientist who possesses the knowledge to perform his duties in the true State (*Respublica*) and not in its imitative versions. Plato distinguishes six such versions which he presents to the *Politicus*. We thus detect an articulation of politics with mathematics, the maths. That is, the precise knowledge of the practice of politics in the ideal polity. This unique condition is studied by A. Badiou, interpreting the Platonic position as a rational relation between the *Respublica* and politics as invention.

The Truth and the rhetoric of Opinion

The Platonian event creates the Truths' space. The Platonic gesture is the Idea which is-always-necessary in order to talk about things. The political in Plato concerns the Idea of the concept of Law which is a basic component of the ideal State. The means by which the philosopher grasps concepts in order to turn to Truths is dialectic. Plato believes, and not without reason, that sophistry through rhetoric misleads us with respect to them. Alain Badiou subscribes to Plato's logic and introduces the notion of the corpus of Truths. Here the subject of truth appears through the possibility that each one has to struggle to acquire his/her relationship with Truth as an open, to all, experience. Consequently, there is no subject of truth as a derivative of a transcendental, exceptional condition. On the other hand, then, the dominant opinion which arises through the "operation of the numerical criterion" concerns the subject of opinion. In particular, the French philosopher's open seminar entitled *For Today: Plato!*⁷⁷ begins with Plato's position on the public debate of opinions. Which is the prohibition of it as a logical conclusion of the existence of Truths. As long as the place of Truths exists, opinions and their public expression should not be tolerated by the State. Opinion has nothing to do with Truth and is subject to *the principle of equivalence*⁷⁸ and is diffused in the public sphere

⁷⁷ Badiou 2010.

⁷⁸ Alain Badiou 2010.

while the prevailing rhetoric favors that opinion which is in the interest of the dominant power. The dominant rhetoric will conceal the relationship of the dominant opinion to the dominant interests. Plato defines this process as sophistry. It is, as Alain Badiou points out, the mechanism for producing an asymmetry of power in the context of the general equivalence of opinions. Thus, the patchwork of opinions that confront each other in the public sphere and in the public sphere in particular is nothing more than a way of exercising a power through the imposition of the dominant opinion, which nowadays is the one that serves the market. In particular, Badiou states in his seminar:

“Thèse à bien distinguer de celle pour laquelle c'est un même sujet qui se trouve traversé à la fois par une vérité et par l'opinion. Pour Platon, il ne s'agit pas du même sujet (même si un individu donné peut participer aux deux subjectivités simultanément). Le sujet de l'opinion c'est l'individu démocratique, lui-même substituable (un citoyen en vaut un autre), individu qui valorise l'opinion *en tant qu'elle est la sienne* (“voilà ce que je pense” est un énoncé qui est en lui-même un argument, sur le fond de cet autre : “à chacun son opinion”). C'est ainsi que, dans l'isoloir, se produit la décision de voter : chacun est juge de son propre intérêt en même temps qu'il est adepte d'une certaine rhétorique. Le sujet d'une vérité, quant à lui, ne peut être défini, du moins dans mon lexique, que comme celui qui oriente le protocole de construction d'une vérité à partir d'un événement premier dont il tire les conséquences. Il s'agit bien de deux registrations subjectives différentes. Le sujet de l'opinion, qu'il faut bien considérer comme une construction de la démocratie elle-même (le triomphe de l'individualisme que l'on nous présente comme la caractéristique des temps modernes est très exactement superposable à celui que Platon, dans *La République*, décrivait déjà comme corrélé à la société démocratique athénienne dont il était contemporain) est opposé à la figure du sujet d'une vérité. Celui-ci n'est pas pour autant dans l'exception d'une transcendance: *la vérité dont il est le militant est une expérience ouverte à tous* (il est ainsi loisible à chacun de refaire pour son propre compte une démonstration mathématique, de même que de regarder un tableau, participer à une manifestation politique ou assumer le péril d'un amour). C'est ce que j'ai proposé de nommer *l'idéation* : l'individu comme tel s'incorpore au processus d'une vérité (processus par lequel il n'est plus identifiable comme “individu démocratique”).”⁷⁹

⁷⁹ “This is to be distinguished from the thesis that the same subject is traversed by both truth and opinion. For Plato, these are not the same subject (even if a given individual can participate in both subjectivities simultaneously). The subject of opinion is the democratic individual, himself substitutable (one citizen is as good as another), an individual who values opinion as his own (“this is what I think” is a statement that is in itself an argument, against the background of this other: “to each his own”). This is how, in the voting booth, the decision to vote is made: each person is a judge of his or her own interest, as well as a

Through the Platonic position, Alain Badiou criticizes the identification of democratic logic with freethought and isogony, which in bourgeois democracies and in the context of liberalism, decenters the "democratic individual" from the Truths by identifying it with opinion-information. Especially in late capitalism, with the development of digital media and the enormous amount of information, a rhetoric of opinion is constituted, which we will call digital rhetoric, which functions like the sophistry Plato criticizes. That is, it creates the conditions for a supposed socialization of information management with the possibility for each subject to have free access to social media. Thus, the subject of information emerges. Information as such, through the mechanisms of control and its capitalist transformation into a product, is ideologized and quantified. The subject identifies the opinion to which it subscribes with the set of information corresponding to it. Thus, the subject of opinion is the same as the subject of information. The construction of such a democratic condition creates the oddity of a quantified freedom as a function of information in digital space. In the seminar on 17 February, Badiou will say among other things:

Nous sommes ici aux parages de la question de la terreur. Abordons-là frontalement. L'idéologie contemporaine affirme que si la norme n'est pas la liberté des opinions articulée à la loi du nombre, alors c'est le règne de la terreur. Et, de fait, il n'est pas inexact de dire que les vérités terrorisent les opinions. Platon a été considéré en ce sens comme terroriste (cf. les appréciations de K. Popper).⁸⁰

follower of a certain rhetoric. The subject of a truth, on the other hand, can only be defined, at least in my lexicon, as the one who orients the protocol for constructing a truth on the basis of a primary event, from which he or she draws the consequences. These are indeed two different subjective registrations. The subject of opinion, which must be seen as a construct of democracy itself (the triumph of individualism that is presented to us as characteristic of modern times is exactly superimposable on the triumph of individualism that Plato, in *The Republic*, already described as correlated with the Athenian democratic society of which he was a contemporary), is opposed to the figure of the subject of a truth. This does not mean, however, that the individual is an exception to transcendence: the truth of which he or she is a militant is an experience open to all (it is thus open to anyone to redo a mathematical demonstration on his or her own account, just as it is open to anyone to look at a painting, take part in a political demonstration or assume the peril of love). This is what I have proposed to call ideation: the individual as such incorporates himself into the process of a truth (a process by which he is no longer identifiable as a "democratic individual").

⁸⁰ "We're on the verge of the question of terror. Let's tackle it head-on. Contemporary ideology asserts that if the norm is not the freedom of opinion articulated in the law of numbers, then it is the reign of terror. And, in fact, it's not inaccurate to say that truths

The encounter with the truly true is terrifying. Already the conception of the Idea as an operator of the search for Truth creates the fear of our existence in relation to the World. The Idea of Truth tells us that there is at least one subject who is "outside the cave" or who has at some point been outside of it. The eventual procedure "mutates"⁸¹ the subject that emerges from the event. Suppose that this subject descends into the "cave" and meets the other subjects, which we will here identify with the subjects of cognitions. Others of them imitate their relation to knowledge by considering that "right opinion" is knowledge, and others who consider their freedom to be identified with the possibility of belonging to the rhetoric of some opinion. The disruption of this reality causes the symptom of fear of fear while some of these subjects become hysterical and subscribe to a discourse closer to the truth. But the subject "born" of the event, the meta-event subject, now knows and does not-never- cease-to-be a subject of Truth who is implicitly struggling to commune with it. We thus discern two characteristics of the new function of the subject:

- 1) there is no subjectification in relation to the variable of opinion.
- 2) the materiality of Truth belongs to its certain existence and its disinterested relation to the subject of Truth.

Thus, the place (*topos*) of Truths that exists out there is conceived by the space of Ideas as materialities. Each of them is inscribed in a precise formulation with the possibility of unlimited repetition by any subject that embodies them. It is essentially a rationalization of Truth with its subject no longer belonging to any sacred order that is supposedly entitled to possess the knowledge of Truth and, furthermore, recognizing no metaphysics of it as a derivative of the myth that contains the truth of Truth. With Plato, a Logos arises out of the dialectical form whose intentionality is our relation to Truth. Philosophy belongs to this turn and is activated, as Alain Badiou points out, by the four generic terms.⁸² The French philosopher reinterprets Plato's *Politeia* by restoring the essence of the Platonic position on the ideal state, which is justice for all as the main principle of its existence. It starts from the operator of the Idea of right and clarifies the radical difference between the subject of Truth and that of the subject of opinion. Plato gives us the most powerful possibility for the realization of another social relation in the context of the *Respublica*. The possibility that philosophy gives us through its activation in relation to Truth to conceive of the political as such and to produce the

terrorize opinions. Plato was considered a terrorist in this sense" (cf. K. Popper's assessments).

⁸¹ Badiou 2009.

⁸² These are the four generic terms that activate philosophy in terms of truths.

event of political invention. A position that at the level of revolutionary experience is not only about the ideologization of a meta-evential collective subject but also about the inner position of every human being with the necessity of freeing himself from self-interest and the emergence of his selfless relationship with Truth as such. We would say otherwise that it is the phenomenon that A. Badiou names as *idea-tion* (*idéation*).⁸³

They are singularities and not individualities. The singularities refer to the relationship between the Truth and its potential idealization by each subject in a selfless way. In this way we would name this logic as radical Platonism which is aligned with Alain Badiou's hermeneutics of the political in Plato. In the *Logics of Worlds*⁸⁴, he posits two axioms. The first concerns the so-called *Democratic Materialism* and the second the *Dialectical Materialism*. In the first the assumption of truth is that "there are nothing but bodies and languages"⁸⁵ while in the second that "there are nothing but bodies and languages, except that there are truths"⁸⁶. The theorem of radical Platonism starts from the second axiom. And its second statement is condensed in the formulation "the whole world is capable of producing its truth by itself"⁸⁷. The Popperian reading that has brought so many misinterpretations in Western thought as well as the arbitrary association of Plato with both the misrecognition of the ruler-philosopher in the role of ruler as an uncontrollable form of authority to guide Platonic collectivism and the misrecognition of the realm of Ideas with idealism. Both of these misunderstandings are negated as vague propositions that belong mainly to the imposition of a dominant opinion rather than to a thorough interpretation of Platonic thought. Besides, it is no coincidence that the author of *Being and Event* turns obsessively to the Platonic position.

Considering then that sophistry is the means of promoting freethought, then its massified form with the characteristics of numerical superiority appears as the sufficient truth. In the digital age, the Platonic position is the active agent for critiquing neoliberalism which promotes the notion of meta-truth. The management of the vast amount of information and the rapid construction of a dominant opinion to be converted into a quantitative quantity replaces Truth with numerical majority within the bourgeois democratic ideology. The manipulation of opinion and the information that constructs it constitutes a subject of opinion which in turn is manipulable. Plato enters Truth through the Idea.

⁸³ Badiou 2010.

⁸⁴ Badiou 2006.

⁸⁵ Badiou 2006, "Il n'y a pas que des corps et des langages", p.9.

⁸⁶ Badiou 2006, "Il n'y a pas que des corps et des langages, sinon qu'il y a des vérités", p.12.

⁸⁷ Alain Badiou 2006, "Tout monde est capable de produire en lui-même sa vérité", p.16.

Conclusions

1. Many thinkers of antiquity such as the sophist Antiphon⁸⁸, the Epicureans and the Stoics⁸⁹ are considered by the research to be progressive due to the formulation of positions such as the equality of Greeks and Barbarians, men and women and of communal ownership, but Plato, unfortunately, is not included in this group. However, a thorough look at the texts shows how Plato expressed more progressive views in relation to the context of his time, but most importantly with greater consistency and analysis. Plato's positions on the equality of the sexes, the limitation of slavery, social justice, etc. they are not expressed in isolation, but as part of a well-organized political and educational program aimed at the radical reform of political society. No other thinker of the period of ancient philosophy presented such a well-documented radical political program, where his progressive proposals are not fragmentary or limited in nature, but constitute structural parameters of political change founded on scientific conclusions.

2. The problem of all those who consider Platonic thought to be totalitarian is the existence of political philosophy or science, in the strict sense of the term. If there is a science that determines right and wrong in human affairs, then there is also objectivity of ethical and political choices regardless of its ratification by the majority of society or the dominant class ideology. Also, the acquisition of this science determines the governance of the state, since only citizens who know political science can make political decisions. If we reject the Platonic proposal, if we deny the existence of political science or philosophy, we open the door to totalitarianism, since there are no objective values for man, but only subjective opinions that are imposed by the majority or ideologically by state institutions. From this perspective, no political thought or finding has value or scientific substance unless it is conventionally consolidated, that is, institutionally. Paradoxically, the accusation against Plato of scientific totalitarianism is the one that allows the arrival of totalitarianism in politics under the spectrum of subjectivism, relativism and historicism.

3. It is also noteworthy that all the criticisms against the Platonic political program are anachronistic and fragmentary in nature. Plato, for example, is accused of being a defender of slavery for some minimal fragmentary textual references, while his overall political planning is not based on the existence of slaves. Also, criticism, instead of recognizing the progressiveness and radicality of Plato's positions, e.g., on slavery, at that time, when the phenomenon of slavery was socially

⁸⁸ DK87A5.

⁸⁹ SVF 1, 265; Plutarchus, *De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute*, 329a-d.

established, confronts them with today's socio-political data. The same thing happens with the equality of the two sexes in terms of education and the assumption of political positions or with social mobility. Instead of focusing on the absolutely radical and revolutionary character of these positions in relation to the data of that period, we try to reduce them and thus misinterpret them by comparing them with today's reality, where some human rights are universally recognized, at least in the Western world.

4. Platonic *Respublica* is a political invention and include the substance of politics. Our methodological approach concerns both the clarification of basic Platonic concepts and the concepts introduced by Alain Badiou in relation to the political and its reinvention in relation to Plato. Thus, we follow the dynamics that develop between the two philosophers and the meta-interpretation of their positions that will yield the logic of radical Platonism into day's political situation. Platonic *Respublica* is radical because based in the Idea of Law for all. It's not a form of idealism. It is the material of Dialectic materialism. The philosophers-governors are identified with the political scientists and philosophers.

5. The "dialectical materialism" in order to produce a new logic of the existence of the citizen within society, starting from the Platonic political principle of Truth and its disconnection from the domination of *δόξα* (Opinion). So, Platonic political invention constitutes a vertical section of human political condition as such. Each one could be a, in potential, a philosopher-governor.

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