

For decades, the relation between Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* has remained a source of spirited debate (BARKER, BOBONICH). One of the most notorious differences between the two works is the absence of a formal class of philosopher-rulers in the *Laws* (SCHOFIELD). Yet in both utopian vistas the visceral idea that society is to be governed according to a rational principle subsists. However, *whose* reason is to be laid down as law for the city is less transparent in the *Laws* than it is in the *Republic*. I will argue that the fact that both works offer alternative, but internally coherent, sets of measures imposing reason (λόγος, λογισμός) upon society as a whole, is due to the respective absence or presence *within* society of an organ able to give a rational account (λόγον δίδοναι) of society's order.

In the *Republic*, the just city takes the shape of a hierarchical class society. A relatively small number of people, who dispose of an outstanding rational faculty and apprehend the good of society are therefore naturally superior to all other citizens and in control of the whole. They are assisted by an allied force of armed soldiers (σύμμαχοι), the 'auxiliary class' (οἱ ἐπίκουροι). The auxiliary class is equipped for imposing the absolute good upon society, and for subduing the class susceptible to the impetus of their emotions. This rather violent and radical conception of the just society—social harmony being preserved by an armed force—is vindicated by the presence of an unquestionable authority on what *the* good for society *as a whole* consists in: the philosopher-kings. The philosophers possess knowledge of the ultimate purpose underlying the various socio-political regulations, and can give a rational account of them. In Callipolis, the social good can be imposed with authority, in correlation with the possibility of putting it to words.

In the *Laws*, the idea of whose *logos* governs society, and therewith the status of the envisaged society, is more ambivalent. On the one hand, the more egalitarian structure of Magnesia is the corollary of the absence of a clearly demarcated human agency possessing reason—no-one is excluded from the political apparatus in advance. On the other hand, in Plato's final dialogue the claim is, initially at least, that *god's* reason is to be established as the city's law. But god is not part of society, and cannot be appealed to to explain, or enforce, his dictates. The cord of reason (λογισμός) is sacred and golden, but its pull is also 'lenient and not oppressive' (πρᾶος καὶ οὐ βίαιος). Since the cords of the emotions are harsh and made of iron, reason is in need of 'servants' (ὑπῆρται). The fact that society lacks an organ able to explain society's rationale is obviated, a.o., by the attachment to the laws of written preambles, designed to persuade (πείθειν) the citizens into obedience. Whereas the written form of a λόγος was severely criticized in the *Phaedrus*—a written text being unable to respond and in need of a voice to defend it—in the *Laws* the written form is claimed to be the 'aid' (βοήθεια) of intelligent legislation. The preponderance of πείθειν over dialectical speech, and the spectacular idea that a written text can be a 'helper' suggest that the internal organization of Magnesia suffers from the absence of an authoritative mouthpiece of the rational order of society (if such a rational account is even deemed possible). Paradoxically, the notions of ὑπῆρται, βοήθεια and πείθειν suggest that such an authority nevertheless *does* exist.

The *Republic* and *Laws* display alternative but internally consistent models of imposing the principles of reason upon society. In the *Republic* the 'support' of the people whose reason governs society takes the shape of a military class. The mechanisms of 'assistance' in the *Laws* are less oppressive—although ultimately, the use of more forcible remedies is by no means excluded.

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