

Classical Political Thought: Lectures

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Lecture 2: Politeia: philosophy against politics

1. *Apology and Crito:*

- public opinion should not affect our conduct – only truth and right should
- the city must be governed by law
- the citizen who enjoys the city has agreed to the authority of the laws and institutions

Plato:

- truth v opinion; sophos v phronemos;
- concern with eternal and unchanging v concern with flux and everyday;
- Plato: the philosopher as ruler;
- Socrates: the philosopher as gadfly

2. *Politeia / The Republic (on Political Justice)*

- arete (excellence, virtue)
- justice – a quality of states, of individuals/individual conduct; - justice pertains when each part (of the state, or of the individual) is working properly and in harmony [BkIV: 443B-444A]
- origin of the city: in needs; [BkII:369A-374D]
- characteristics of the rulers: physical excellence, love of wisdom [374E-376E]
- 'opportune falsehoods': [389B; 414B-415D]
- camp life [BkIV: 419A-420C]
- 5 kinds of constitution: one good – could be aristocracy or royalty [445D]; 4 bad: Spartan, oligarchy, democracy, tyranny [BkVIII:544A-E]
- knowledge, ignorance and opinion [BkV: 477C-480E]
- the state and the true philosopher – the parable of the ship [BkVI:488A-489D]
- corruption of the majority: 491
- the cave [BkVII:514-517A]

3. *Politikus/The Statesman:*

- sophist versus properly political man [291C]
- politikein (statesmanship): the universal art [305E]
- the craftsman sorts and works his materials [308D-310A]

4. *The Laws*

- '... we should run our public and our private life, our homes and our cities, in obedience to what little spark of immortality lies in us, and dignify this distribution of reason with the name of 'law'.' [714]
- law covers every aspect of public and private life

- where law cannot operate [788] public opinion, praise and blame, will fulfil the function [731]
- The constitution sketched in *The Laws* is anti-democratic.
- The problem of judgement.

Works consulted:

Arendt, H. (2004 fp 1990). Philosophy and Politics. *Social Research*, 71(3), 427-454.

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Murdoch, I. (1977). *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.