

# PLATO, PLATONISM, ARISTOTLE, ARISTOTELIANISM<sup>1</sup> AND GAP IN CULTURAL HISTORY

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**ABSTRACT.** *Plato and Aristotle have entered the pantheon of cultural history as the icons of Hellenism, proud antiquity, and Western cultural legacy, having inspired different streams of analytical methodology and having caused the ongoing debate over the purpose of existence, the correct pathway of human inquiry, proper values and systems of rule. Both philosophers, master and his outstanding student, became the shapers of intellectual history, propelling the foundation of the two noted trends in philosophy, known as Platonism and Aristotelianism, on the basis of the major differences in regards to the origins of the world and the social order. The canonical texts by Plato and Aristotle – The Republic and The Laws, and Politics and Constitution of Athens – seem to be the keys to understanding their respective differing schools of thought.*

*In addition, we deal with common feature of both thinkers, i.e. the peculiar “forgetting” of the proto-Hellenic cultural foundation, posed by the, little mentioned in history, legacy of the Phoenicians, the Greek rivals and mentors, despite their transmitted tradition of governance. We deal with these intentionally forgotten signs within the controlled semiotic space, cultural memory and its whims.*

**KEYWORDS:** *cultural memory, cultural foundation, signs, semiotic space, platonism, aristotelianism, neo-platonism, neo-aristotelianism, cultural pantheon, digital psychosis, semiotic radicalism, signs, semiotic space*

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<sup>1</sup> In the Biocosmological Association, the neologism “Aristotelism” is used – to emphasize the significance of Aristotle’s philosophy as the (Bio)cosmologically substantive (super)system of knowledge and Type of rationality (of essentially teleological naturalism). Author agrees with this approach, but prefers to use the traditional term “Aristotelianism”.

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*Tante molis erat Romanum codere gentem*  
So much toil the Romans had to undertake to create a people

## Introduction

Plato (427–347 BC) and Aristotle (384–322 BC) not only embody the heights of Hellenic antiquity but they also stand in the **collective world cultural pantheon** as the most towering figures, the shapers of intellectual traditions in the West and the programmers of the ongoing battle of ideas. Both thinkers ultimately came to symbolize two different poles of analytical thinking, two different existential recipes, two different interpretations of cosmos, two different models of ideal society and its governance. The legacy of the two thinkers were fated to have different temporal and geographical prominence, with Aristotle’s somehow overshadowing that of his mentor, Plato, and provoking the ongoing debate even two thousand years later.

Recent growing attention to Aristotle or the renaissance of Aristotelianism in the post postmodern period is revealed in the works by Curtis N. Johnson (2015), David Roochnik (2013), Timothy Chappell (2009), Eugene Gawer (2011), Mogens Hansen (2013), Georgios Anagnostopoulos (2009), Susan Collins (2006), as well in the emergence of the present intellectual forum in the journal “*Biocosmology – Neo-Aristotelism*”, founded in 2010.

Plato and Aristotle also happen to symbolize two different existential and socio-political ideologies, analyzed and adopted throughout history by different cultures in a different way, two visions of the world and two different ethical codes. The proposed comparison of the major well-known works by both classical thinkers aims at disclosing the previously unnoticed or neglected **analytical dissonance** and attitudinal disparities within *The Republic* and *The Laws* by Plato, and Aristotle’s *Politics* and *Constitution of Athens*.

### 1. Prelude to Platonism: Plato’s Republic and its Origins

Plato was “born into a distinguished Athenian family – on his mother’s side he could trace his pedigree as far back as Solon, “the famous poet and lawgiver (Ernest Barker, 1959:61). Solon (630 BC? – 560 BC) passionately condemned the rulers, leaders who cause suffering to the masses and

*who grow rich by yielding to unjust actions, Neither the god’s nor people’s possessions are spared. They steal and plunder, one from here, one from there They do not respect the sacred foundations of Justice* (Fragment in Demosthenes, G.Stanton, 1990:41)

His disillusionment with the state of governance in remote antiquity prompted the critical poet to become the lawgiver whose “strong laws” made Athens a city of equal laws. “Solon went down in history of Greece as the most able lawmaker, who, understanding that “there is no limit to wealth of men,” introduced some semblance of economic equilibrium and justice in ancient Greek society. It was Solon who “admitted the Thetes, the lowest class in Athenian society into Assembly of all

Athenian citizens” (G.R.Stanton, 1990:66).

Plato’s genealogical luck would give him clout among his contemporaries, students of his Academy and inspire him to work out his own system of ideal and just state, later immortalized in his eternally popular *Republic* and in his tale about the life in the **utopian state of Magnesia**.

However, despite its future undying popularity and impact on political thinking of modern politicians, economists and philosophers, Plato’s *Republic* for a long time simply disappeared from the collective cultural memory. According to Ernest Barker, the expert on antiquity, the work went into oblivion and was practically a lost book, from the days of Proclus (410? – 485), the neo-platonist of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, almost until the days of Marcilio Ficino (1433-99) and Pico della Mirandola (1463-99) (E.Barker, 1959:525). Most of the knowledge about the overall legacy of Plato came to Europeans upon the retrieval of the Latin translation of *Timaeus* done by Chalcidius around 400 AD, from the references in Aristotle, in Cicero’s *De Republica* or commentaries by Boethius (480–524 AD) and Apuleius’s *De Dogmate Platonis*. Despite the actual long absent text of the *Republic*, the philosophical debates on Plato and the divisions into “pro” and “contra” his teaching were ongoing. In 1477, Ficino completed the translation of Plato’s work into Latin, having given new birth to his *Republic* and triggering the revival of Platonism in the Renaissance Italy. Florence became the cradle of Platonism in the Middle Ages.

## 2. Why Was Proclus Ready to Ban Plato’s *Republic*?

Proclus, the 5<sup>th</sup> century neo-platonist, allegedly claimed that, “if it were in his power, he would withdraw from the knowledge of men, for the present, all ancient books, except the *Timaeus* and the *Sacred Oracles*” (E.Barker, 1959:525). What could have angered Proclus is unknown but there are some themes in Plato’s *Republic* that could have justified its being placed on the list of prohibited books. For instance, in Chapter XVI of the *Republic*, Plato writes:

*No one man and one woman are to set up house together privately: wives are to be held in common by all; so are the children and no parent is to know his own child, nor any child his parent* (1948 ed. Trans. by F.M Cornford: 153).

This utopian plan is proposed by the ancient philosopher in civilized Greece that by the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC had already had an enduring stable monogamy for centuries! Plato seems to be completely oblivious of the fact that the proposed system of “common women and children” in his ideal utopian state would have been an affront to civilization, if not a direct call for dismantling of the oldest human institution and return to barbarism. Historian of marriage, E.Westermark, described the stage of “sexual communism” as a barbaric stage in the cultural evolution of man, and saw the establishment of monogamy as the marker of early civilized society. Plato’s peculiar, if not mentally challenged imagination took him to the dawn of civilization or its pre-civilized condition. The idea of “common wives,” virtually leading to legalized

promiscuity of the barbaric societies and the destruction of the most ancient and sacred human institution, is very perplexing to be found in the thought of the iconic Greek thinker. This concept alone may have caused condemnation of Plato's works by the overwhelming crowd of atheists and Christians, polydeists and tolerant secular thinkers who could have found this postulate preposterous and highly objectionable.

Incidentally, the later 20<sup>th</sup>-century critics of Marxism, unfamiliar with both Marx and Plato, inspired by the 1917-revolution in Russia and fearful of the fall of capitalism, used the "common wives"-icon in their anti-socialist and communist propaganda at the beginning of their fight against Communism and Marxism. The old Plato's delusions became tools in the modern ideological battles and critique of Marxism that was actually protective of the historic monogamous family. However, Plato's strange postulate would find continuum in the utopian universe of Rousseau and Freud, the confused dissector of the human psyche, and in disturbed Michel Foucault (A. Makolkin, 2000).

### 3. Exemplary 20<sup>th</sup>-century Neo-platonisms

Plato takes the useful and noble clause about the shared property to the shocking radical heights of literal understanding of the term "Equality," thus bringing in the anti-social, anti-civilizational meaning to the concept. His **semiotic radicalism** has distinctly pathological origins – a disturbed imagination has no boundaries and limits, oblivious of the logic, common sense, cultural norms and social obligations. It cannot distinguish the boundaries between the concrete and the abstract, the frontiers between the literal meaning and metaphor. In fact, the first sign of mental disturbance is the loss of the metaphorical capacity, both to create and comprehend metaphor. The pathological ideas take hold of the mind that has lost ability to see the boundaries. The desired world takes over the possible and real, taking over the control mechanism and the critical ability. A deranged mind makes a leap into the anti-humanistic universe of the Will and Desire where there are no boundaries, no limits, no rule of the Ought. Plato's "conjugal communism" is such a leap into the barbaric universe of unbridled impulse, unleashed instinct with the rational promise of happiness in the world without family and monogamy.

Plato's *Republic* is an ancient version of the future Freudian *Civilization and Its Discontents*, anticipating it by two millennia, as well as Freudianism, a neo-platonism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For Plato, the inequality of wealth represents unhappiness, compounded by restricted sexuality. So, Plato aims at solving both social and ethical barriers with his new sexual politics while Freud's focus is solely on sex, sexuality, and destruction of family. Freud revives Plato's utopia for his own, no less mad, universe of another sexual politics. Seeing state, community and family as the three major sources of trauma, Freud emphasizes the latter, caused by the alleged sexual deprivation due to culture and conventions of civilized society. Freud's ideal man is free from limits, obligations, responsibility of a monogamous family and restrictions on one's libido. Unlike Plato, Freud is not concerned with curing the "body politic" but with, the allegedly imprisoned civilized man, in the chains of traditions, control and restricted sexuality. His idea of happiness lies in the universe of pluralistic sexual

liaisons and unleashed libido. The 20<sup>th</sup>-century neo-platonist radicalized the most radical in Plato by having provided a pseudo-medical explanation to the Platonian sexual communism and quasi-philosophical causation to his anti-civilizational and pro-barbarian ideology. The Freudian triad (id, ego, and superego) supplied modern ideological base to the ancient Plato's appeal for dismantling civilization. Freud's idea of sexual pluralism undermined the most fundamental human institution, the marker of the first civilized step of humanity, but it did not exclude women whom he granted equal sexual rights outside the family (A.Makolkin, 2000:119:144).

Michel Foucault (1926–1984) took the “sexual communism” idea to the new heights by excluding contact with women altogether and proposing that only homosexuals were true intellectuals. (A. Makolkin, 2000:150–178). The fictional utopian universes of Plato, Freud and Foucault share one single major feature – the concept of dismantling civilization, re-writing the code of civilization and new sexual politics. Plato's surreal and pathological narrative was given a new life in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century sexual utopias, rooted in the exploitation of the ultimate human drive. Plato's myth remained a utopia while the neo-platonic tales of Freud and Foucault would regrettably cause the formation of the destructive new paradigm and find nearly complete realization in the revised ethics of modernity and declining Western morality (A.Makolkin, 2000:2015).

The 20<sup>th</sup>-century neo-platonists would be limited to the realm of sexual politics. The fascists, the shameful actants in European modern history, followed Plato's prescriptions for cleansing society and creating the perfect, healthy and pure Germanic race. In Chapter IX of his *Republic*, Plato introduced the most barbaric method for improving society via elimination of the sick, infirm and undesirable:

*They [physicians and judges] will look after those citizens whose bodies and souls are constitutionally sound. The physically unsound they will leave to die, and they will actually put to death those who are incurably corrupt in mind (1948:97).*

Driven by the mad desire to create their own utopian state for the superior Germanic race, the fascists actually followed Plato's commandments to the “t”, having embarked on the physical extermination of the undesirable and having drowned the entire European continent in blood.

The anti-intellectual character of the American society is also another form of neo-platonism, expressed in the attitude towards humanities, arts, music and poetry. Plato feared the power of human reason and poetic wisdom, so, poets, the canonical symbols of the critical judgment, were undesirable in his utopian republic of Magnesia and were designated to be ultimately banished. Given the insignificant role allotted to intellectuals in America, their virtual marginalization, one may argue that Americans are the neo-platonists of a certain kind. In Chapter XXXVI of the *Republic*, Plato wrote:

*He [the poet] stimulates and strengthens an element which threatens to*

*undermine the reason. As a country may be given over into the power of its worst citizens while the better sort are ruined, so we shall say, the dramatic poet sets up a vicious form of government in the individual soul (1948:329).*

Fear of poetry and poetic justice led to the virtual obliteration in the American curriculum, giving way instead to the problematic sex education, very low level of critical judgments and ignorance of history and world culture (A.Makolkin, 2015:163–173).

#### **4. The Laws – Plato’s Longest Sermon in the World**

Like all utopias before and after, Plato’s suggested version of ideal society and system of human perfection contains certain practical validity and usefulness while others are more than naive, if not harmful. *The Laws*, written between 350–340 BC and the *Republic* between 387–368 BC, were products of different events in Plato’s life and the life of Greece. For one, the death of Socrates profoundly changed Plato’s views on society, his opinion about democracy and revolutions. One of the modern English translators of Plato, Trevor S.Saunders, pointing out to the differences between the two texts, claims that one may have an impression that they had been authored by two different people. The mature Plato provides a moral sermon to humanity in his tale about the utopian state of Magnesia and her citizens Magnesians. Unlike the author of the *Republic*, this author of the *Laws* re-establishes strict monogamy and re-writes the family laws in accordance with the Western progressive traditions.

The very first book of the *Laws* for his novel republic of Magnesia states:

*When male and female come together in order to have a child, the pleasures they experience arise naturally. But homosexual intercourse and lesbianism seem to be unnatural crimes of the first rank, and are committed because men and women cannot control their desire for pleasure (1970:61).*

The advocate of the “common wives” has been transformed into a strict conservative moralist who places Reason and Control above Desire. The founder of the utopian Magnesia returns to the strict monogamy, placing it on pedestal and even proposing fines for the people who reject it. In the Book IV of the *Laws*, Plato writes:

*A man must marry between the ages of thirty and thirty five. If he does not he must be punished by fines and disgrace (1970:182-3).*

In Book VI, Plato even states that “man of twenty five is confident to found a family” while “a woman could marry between sixteen and twenty”. The author of the *Laws* prescribes only heterosexual relations, stressing the taboo on relations between parents and children. Plato denounced the homosexual relations in which “the human race is deliberately murdered” since these acts “of sowing of the seeds on rocks and stone where it will never take root and mature into a new individual” (1959, B

XXII:337).

Applying the “farming metaphor” or likening human society to horse breeding, Plato, first and foremost, stands on guard of physical health and preservation of the physically sound stock, weeding out the weak and unhealthy. The purging of the weak he proposes to execute in the most radical manner. Admitting that the so-called “purge” is a painful business which involves chastisement in combination with “judgment and punishment, and takes the latter ultimately to the point of death or exile” (1970:203). This Plato’s radical “purge” measure, i.e. death, would be applied by the mad radical social engineers in the Nazi Germany, the designers of their own Magnesia according to Plato’s proposed formula.

Plato planned to rule his Magnesia in a dictatorial manner by a benevolent dictator, exercising necessary purges, punishments, applying fines and measures, regardless of their cruelty. The ruler, in Plato’s view, though should have been selected from among the philosophers, the alleged sole best candidates for the job of governance. Already in his *Republic*, Plato distinguished three classes of men: “the philosophers, the ambitious and the lovers of gain” (1948:300). The philosophers, in his view, were the most suitable to become rulers since they are not interested in financial gain or fame, possessing the most wisdom and the best judgment.

Plato’s ideal state of Magnesia was planned to be a small experimental colony of only 5040 citizens, each owning a farm, some slaves and having moderate wealth. The excess had to be expropriated via taxation and slaves had to perform manual work. After 20 years, they could be freed; the resident aliens had also a restricted sojourn of only 20 years. The idea was to safeguard the racial homogeneity and purity, physical and mental health for the ultimate happiness of the state. Plato even had a provision regarding foreign travel. Fearful of foreign influence and ideology, Plato wrote in XII of the *Laws*:

*First of all, no young person under forty is even to be allowed to travel abroad under any circumstances; nor is anyone to be allowed to go for a private reason, but only on some public business, as a herald or ambassador* (1970:500)

Plato made this provision in order to protect the Magnesians from the dangerous contact or influence, only the mature 40-year old, in his opinion, could handle the contact with the Other. The cross-cultural dialogue was forbidden and feared. Poets, the curious creatures, eager to travel, susceptible to influence had to be guarded and censored first. Censorship was an important instrument of control and maintaining order. Like all mentally challenged, his Magnesians were to be protected from laughter, so comedies, dramas, irony had to be banned in the ideal Platonic mad state.

The numeric limitations placed on the size of the colony have two interesting dimensions. The obsession with number and calculation indicates tribute to Pythagoras (580 BC – 500 BC) and Pythagoreans who launched the cult of number. Plato became convinced that “the science of number and properties of number appear to have the power of leading us towards reality; there must be among the studies we

are in search of” (1948, Chapter XXVI:236). He saw the Ultimate and Ideal Harmony behind the number. This fascination and obsession anticipates by two millennia our post modern technocratic society, with its **digital psychosis** and **digital inquisition**. Plato appears to be a kindred soul of the contemporary technocrats, the artificial intelligence and robot designers, the latest neo-platonists in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The small proposed size of the future republic of Magnesia was justified by the racial concerns – only a very small state could become the genetic lab for the cultivation of the new homogeneous perfect human species. Hence, the policy of travel restrictions and restricted contact with foreigners to secure the ideal desired genetic material for perfect man-cloning. It is of interest that American Universities for years popularized the study of Plato in their curricula. Given the harsh racial segregation, persecution of the mixing of the races in the USA and the idea that even 1/42nd of black blood (if it were possible to determine!) would characterize a person as “black,” up until the sixties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the attraction to Plato becomes quite clear. In contrast, Aristotle would have to wait until the eighties to acquire serious interest of North American scholars and the appearance of another neo-Aristotelianism.

### 5. Aristotle – a Rebellious Student and Founder of His Own Academy

As evidenced by the cultural history over millennia, Aristotle managed to surpass his mentor Plato and his contemporaries in analytical sophistication and wisdom, but one cannot deny that in some respects he was his intellectual ally. If Aristotle would later advocate equality of the sexes, this was the concept debated at length and taught in Plato’s Academy. Plato argued quite convincingly that women, accounting for 50% of population, also possess a half of the intellectual and professional potential, and to leave them uneducated would mean “to lose half the battle” for making ideal society (*The Laws*, 1970, B. VI: 263). He could not though admit that women have the same natural potential, arguing “a woman’s natural potential for virtue is inferior to a man’s” (ibid., 1948:265). The same contradiction one would find in Aristotle as well.

However, when it comes to the matter of religion, Aristotle and Plato hold totally opposite views. In Book VII of the *Laws*, Plato states:

*All men of good will should put God at the centre of their thoughts; that man has been created as a toy for God* (1970:292).

In contrast, Aristotle, Plato’s student, had no doubts as to the role of man and religious mythology and embodies **convicted secularism** that would find its noble continuum in the Romans, such as Lucretius or Cicero, or modern post-Christian thought of neo-Aristotelians such as Machiavelli. Unlike his mentor Plato, Aristotle perceived religion as a form of delusion whose harmful reductive cosmology was stifling human imagination and reasoning. Unlike his teacher, Aristotle defined God as a **false sign**, designed by man to enslave one another, create an obscurantist barrier to acquisition of knowledge and perfecting human life, a harmful tool in the hands of powerful men. The reality of over two millennia after Aristotle, when we witness the



most vicious battles for the human mind in the face of Islam and religion in general, attests to the profound eternal wisdom of his thought and daring secularism.

Plato's analytical universe appeared as a pyramid, with god presiding at the cone and having "men as his tools." Aristotle not only turned the analytical tables upside down but changed the configuration, having put religion into human hands, and making god the toy of man. Place of religion in society is the major demarcation line between the two iconic thinkers. Aristotle sees gods and religion as one of many human inventions and numerous misleading beliefs that turn man away from advancement, knowledge, and process of civilizing oneself. He defined religion as a wasteful territory of *belief-causing signs* that remove humanity from the pathway to Truth, a collective addiction to primitive myth making and cultural regress. He based his firm atheism on his own unique and little known semiotic theory that he specified in his, not widely read, *Rhetoric to Alexander* (A.Makolkin, 2013:57). Aristotle's atheism explains his lesser popularity in para-secular and anti-intellectual societies who could not properly separate themselves from the religious mythology. The current resurgence of religious battles and fanaticism poses an existential paradox, and, regrettably, reiterates the validity and correctness of Aristotle's arguments and his daring secularism. The current post postmodern problems, tied to the battle for the right worship of the same god could have been avoided, had the global intellectual community and educational institutions given enough attention to Aristotle and his secularism, his denunciation of false signs and his clearly charted secular course for humanity.

Regrettably, for over two millennia, Western European philosophical tradition continued popularize Plato's naive utopia, more compatible with the post Judeo-Christian societies. Aristotle's NOUS = intelligence was attached to the supreme power of the maker of cosmos and still survived in the theological discourse of the believers who could not help but be attracted to Aristotle's clear logic and wisdom. For centuries, the church theologians had been seduced by Aristotle's mode of argument which they had been trying to adjust to the defense of their own doctrine. It is this seductive power and the spell of the secular wisdom of Aristotle that salvaged the corpus of his essentially blasphemous texts. Although Aristotle came from Plato's Academy and had formed his world view not without some influence of the debates conducted there, he definitely outgrew his "intellectual nursery," having formed an independent school of thought, firmly rooted in pagan antiquity, in the cult of Doubt, pragmatism and civilized ethics.

In contrast, Plato's defense of religion reached highly radical forms. In Book X of his *Laws*, he claims that "the dissembling atheist deserves to die for his sins not just one or twice, but many times". If the atheist does not change his beliefs after five years of imprisonment, he should be punished by death (1970:444-5). The capital punishment advocated by Plato for atheism in his ideal state echoes the future Inquisition laws of the Christians or barbarism of the contemporary radical Moslems. Aristotle who labeled man "a political animal"/*zoon politikon* also knew that man was also a "myth making animal," including his own mentor, Plato. In many respects, Aristotle's *Politics* is a profound antithesis to Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, standing

absolutely above the fictional utopian Magnesia, a product of impaired and unhealthy imagination. Unlike Plato's imagined ideal mini state/ *cum* mini-penal colony, with restrictions on aesthetic pleasures, poetry, music, theater, and contacts with other cultural traditions, the draconian laws, crippling Reason, Aristotle produced his own realistic project of perfected state, based on study of different constitutional codes of different city-states and countries, and his own theory of ethics. His personal curiosity, serious interest in the experience of others and proximity to the Macedonian Court that had restored the decaying Stagira around 341 BC, i.e. in Aristotle's life time, enabled him to produce an alternative political treatise, far superior to that of his teacher Plato. Aristotle's treatise would influence Cicero, Byzantine jurists, policy makers and lawgivers, historian Boethius (480–524 AD), Byzantine commentator Michael from Ephesus, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Dante among others. It would become the permanently collective globally used reference book, quoted by Machiavelli, Erasmus, Spinoza, Hobbes, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Lock, Condorcet and many other important thinkers. The first Latin translation has been allegedly made by Wilhelm Morbeck around 1260 AD and first published in Venice by Aldo Manuce in 1498 (V.Bibikhin in Aristotle, 4vols. ed, vol.IV: 1983:759–760).

In the very first book of his *Politics*, Aristotle states his alternative position on laws and political governance. If Plato feared poets, their laughter, irony or criticism, Aristotle embraced them as venerable members of society and wise guides. He recalled Hephaestus “who says that the poets of their own accord entered the assembly of the Gods” and thus became the respected authorities in society (1984, vol. II:1989). Aristotle defines Justice as “the bond of men” and to attain it, it must appeal to all members of society and their innate desire to fulfill this collective intention. If Plato delegates the responsibility for administration of justice to the selected few, i.e. the philosophers, his pupil views it as a collective responsibility. In his own dialectic manner, Aristotle advises first “what is just” (1984, vol.2:1988). This process cannot be separated from the understanding what is proper for a civilized man in Aristotle's ideal state (A.Makolkin, 2014:369–379; 2015:37–50).

If the curriculum at Plato's Academy was leaning more towards mathematics, Aristotle's university/*cum* research institute aimed at providing the broadest possible education in the humanities and natural sciences, with their strict application to the needs of society and improvement of human condition and moral character of man. Aristotle's *Politics* is the guide to just society, inseparable from ethics and morality, and his conception of a truly civilized humanity. Aristotle's ideal man is first and foremost a man, driven by Reason, who controls his passions and stands above animals, something that Plato did not stress enough. Aristotle's ideal man is a toiler, engaged in meaningful and pleasurable activities. He acknowledged differences between men and that some people by nature are lazy, and for them he suggested such occupations as those of “shepherds, hunters, brigands, salesmen” while the majority of people were cultivators of soil, hardworking farmers. Some, not willing to work regularly, seek quick wealth acquisition in military conflicts. He calls “the art of war the art of acquisition of property” and in this connection, he remembers Plato's

famous ancestor, poet and lawgiver Solon who authored the most profound statement, “No bound to riches has been fixed for man” (1984, vol. II: 1994). Aristotle aims at providing law and order in society where human wealth getting appetite be curbed. He treats the invention of money as the source of numerous instruments of injustice. For instance, he claims that “originally, money was invented to be used for exchange, but not to increase interest” (1984, vol.2:1997). Aristotle sees the element of the causal injustice in the interest phenomenon and human avarice.

However, first and foremost, Aristotle parts with the “impracticable” and harmful law of “common wives” whose authorship he attributes to Socrates and his *Republic*, condemning it on purely medical grounds “since not only love will be diluted,” as he phrases it, but it would be impossible to establish paternity and maternity lines. A product of established monogamy in Greek society, Aristotle cannot imagine the return to “sexual communism,” tactfully but forcefully rejecting it in Book II of his *Politics*:

*It is absurd to argue that men and women should follow the same pursuits from the analogy with animals* (1984, vol. II:2006)

Aristotle’s civilized man is primarily a being, far removed from the animal kingdom and so advanced that all that connects him with it, i.e. the sexual drive, violent passions and lack of self-control, he regards as a liability.

## 6. A Republic against Plato’s Republic

Aristotle’s *Politics* is an openly anti-Republic treatise and an antithesis to Plato’s utopia. Criticizing Plato’s *Laws*, Aristotle says “there is hardly anything but laws” in the work (1984, vol. II:2007). Unlike Plato’s ideal state, constructed and based on the dogmatic, impractical and unreasonable, if not cruel, prohibitions, Aristotle’s alternative state is, first and foremost, founded on civilized Ethics. It is designed for perfecting man, leading to his happiness among the enlightened civilized beings. Among the fundamental preconditions of such a society, there is one main factor – respect for traditional monogamy and morality that is at the core of education. Prior to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and training of the mind, in his view, people have to be tutored in manners and mores. In Book VII of his *Politics*, Aristotle writes:

*And since we do not allow improper language, clearly we should also banish pictures or speeches from the stage which are indecent* (1984, vol. II:2120).

This is a totally different censorship, driven by moral concerns rather than Plato’s pathological fear of laughter and irony. One could see Aristotle be against pornography in art and media in our modern era.

Aristotle associated law with order and existential harmony: “law is order, and good law is order” (B. VII, *Politics*). Political regime, in his view, could not be separated from ethics either since it is for the “creation of the good” (1984, vol.

II:2113). His ethical foundation is firmly realistic, totally rational and possible to be actualized. His *Politics* is both polemical (with Plato and Socrates) and constructive. It is written on the basis of careful examination and critique of over 158 different constitutions, adopted, practiced and rejected by different Greek and non-Greek city-states (His Work *On 158 Constitutions* did not reach us). Aristotle establishes a single universal mechanism in all human political projects – they all oscillate between tyrannies, oligarchies, democracies, back and forth, with little space in between for just form of governance. (One could see how the famous *corsi-recorsi* or phenomenon of cyclicity in Giambattista Vico, the Neapolitan political scientist and economist, could be traced to Aristotle). Aristotle was equally critical of oligarchy, monarchy and the so-called “extreme democracy” when totally absurd, cruel and barbaric rules could be adopted and followed by deluded majority. Modern history knows many such examples – the democratically elected Hitler wrecked havoc in the heart of civilized Europe; Ukrainian and Russian, Georgian, Uzbek and other oligarchs in the post-Communist states violated their own allegedly democratic principles, having brought misery to the people who democratically elected them.

Aristotle diagnoses these periodic political pandemics, accompanied by revolts and revolutions as a **political constant**. Unlike the product of sick imagination, Plato’s ideal Magnesia, Aristotle’s ideal state is an evolving political organism, experiencing the cycles of growth, maturity, illness, decay, healing, rejuvenation, and reconciliation. One of the useful remedies he would prescribe, both in *Politics* and *Constitution of Athens*, is the forgiveness of debts – something very useful to recall in times of the global economic crisis and debt tyranny in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, imposed by the IMF and the geopolitical clique of post modernity upon the poorer nations of the world. Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not view the ideal state in isolation from other states, its neighbors, but in close contact and relationship. Instead of inventing an isolated min-state/ *cum* penal semi-medical colony, Aristotle appeals to the sense of collective history, experience, often mentioning Sparta, Lacedomonia, Crete, or Carthage and their constitutions.

### 7. Absent-present Models of Governance: the Carthage Motif

Modern scholars (G.Stanton, 1990; B Warmington, 1960) pay attention to the motif of Carthage and Carthaginians in Aristotle who mentions them several times in *Politics*, referring to the known successful models of governance and versions of constitutions in the past of non-Hellenic city-states. By the time Aristotle had been writing his *Politics*, Carthage, the Phoenician colony in Africa founded in 814 BC, had been already the seat of the most powerful Mediterranean Empire, with colonies in Spain, Portugal, Crete, Malta, Cyprus, and Italy. Despite the prominence of Carthage in the Middle East, Europe and North Africa, their historical (little mentioned and studied!) impact on the Greeks, most of the cultural figures, including the most famous ones in the face of Plato and Aristotle, reluctantly, if ever, mention them. Plato mentions them only once in his *Laws* when he talks about the pre-eminence of mathematics in Egypt and Phoenicia but criticizes for using allegedly “wrong methods” (1970:219). Plato, in general, intentionally “forgets” the

Phoenicians. It was the taboo topic in ancient Greece since the Phoenicians were their mentors for centuries. Aristotle, in contrast, mentions Carthage and refers to various people whose cultures continued to develop in Aristotle's time. For centuries, the history of Greeks and Phoenicians had been tied and more than intertwined. Phoenicians, the urbanites, had been spreading their urban culture beyond their borders for millennia, including ancient Greece.

Tyre, mentioned in the Bible, had been founded in 2700 BC (L.Boutos, 1981). There is now archeological evidence of their urban settlements at a time when Greeks had just primitive villages. Phoenicians were transmitters of literacy, science, technical know-how, marine and ship building industry, philosophy, medical and other knowledge. They were Greek mentors, colonizers, rivals and enemies whom ancient Greeks wished to forget. The same way the Romans had expunged the Etruscans from their historical narrative and cultural memory, the Greeks treated the Phoenicians.

It must be noted that Aristotle was a witness of the still existing blossoming Tyre – his pupil Alexander the Great occupied Tyre after a long siege in 332 BC, ten years before Aristotle's death. At the same time the Phoenician diaspora thrived on the coasts of Spain, Portugal, Italy, in Malta, Cyprus and Crete, having built numerous coastal cities and having spread their knowledge and skills all over the world. Carthage, the Phoenician stronghold in Africa, founded in 814 BC, had reached its strongest position in Plato's and Aristotle's lifetime. By the time Greece had been wrestling with the idea of proper political governance, Carthage was already a model of social, political and economic success. Modern historiography, influenced for a long time by the Hellenophilic and Romanophilic mythology, seldom gave any credit to the Phoenicians, to the point of distorting their role in history. With the 20<sup>th</sup>-century archeological expeditions and discoveries, and the works of Maria Aubert, Sabatino Moscati, Harden, Picard and others, the Phoenicians are now in the purview of the modern scholarship. The Phoenician city-states had, apparently, much more to offer to their neighbors in the region, who since the pre- and Biblical times were less advanced culturally and economically. Greece was no exception. Contemporary scholars now come to an agreement that democracy was born before Athens, and numerous sophisticated social and political instruments were, in fact, wise borrowings from the early and later Phoenicians, i.e. Carthaginians to whom Aristotle alludes in his *Politics*.

In Book VII, he makes references to the running of military affairs in Carthage whose experience he finds useful for the Greeks (1984, vol.II:2162). If ancient Greece had acquired magistrates, wardens of the country, inspectors of forests, treasurers, city-wardens, property tax collectors, Assembly Courts, Councils of a Hundred and Senate, it borrowed them from the Phoenicians, the seasoned urbanites and shrewd politically-minded citizens, their unmentionable colonizers and mentors. The Greek polis is in fact predated by the autonomously run Phoenician city-states. (S.Moscati, 1968:27). Aristotle mentions the role of the magistrates as a Greek patriot– first, he talks about the Lacedaemon, proto-Sparta, and then he admits that “a similar principle prevails in Carthage: there certain magistrates decide all causes”

(1984, vol. II:2024). He gives credit to Draco and his laws, and Philolaus who gave the laws to Thebans, Phaleas, regarding the equalization of property.” When Aristotle mentions the Supreme Council of 100 he mentions Sparta and Crete, forgetting about Carthage who had developed these instruments centuries earlier. But yet, speaking of “meritorial democracy”, Aristotle gives credit to Carthage where “they choose their magistrate and particularly the highest of them – their kings and generals – with an eye both to merit and to wealth” (1984, vol.II, B.II :2020). Aristotle deals with advanced and sophisticated Carthage as a jealous Greek – he has to acknowledge it, in contrast to Plato, but the level of discourse is censored and from the obvious Graeco-centric perspective. Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not expunge Carthage from the discourse. He is ahead of his mentor, he honestly includes the Phoenician model into the world history of political governance and into his own doctrine of proper governance. His philosophy of politics and classification of government systems are inseparable from the achievements of the late Phoenicians/Carthaginians. Yet talking about Carthage he does not mention any connection with Phoenicia proper, i.e. Tyre. Herodotus (484–425 BC) wrote a treatise *Hellenosemitica* where he described his trip to Tyre and how he learned about the cult of Heracles (L.Boutros, 1981:7).

B.H. Warmington, the author of the modern works on Phoenicians, admits that the problem in history and scholarship as to Carthage and Phoenicia, in general, that we had for millennia to rely “on the distorted image created by their enemies”– Greeks and Romans (1960:11). It was not in the interest of the future leaders of the Western civilization and the recipients of the Phoenician legacy to admit the impact and mentorship of their ancient predecessors. In 1922, around the same time when Leonard Wooley had discovered Sumer, French archeologist P.Ceritas determined the dates of Carthage by analyzing the unique pottery, having established new chronology of Phoenician colonization in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Crete, Malta and North Africa. Later, the same data were confirmed in the 1970s by the expedition of Maria Aubert, and the discoveries of the Almarna Letters in Egypt opened the previously unknown chapter of the Phoenician impact on Egypt with whom they had contacts back in 1800BC. Apparently, the municipalities existed in Phoenicia as far back as the 1400 BC, as per the findings.

Carthage or “*Kart Hadash*” in Punic, the late Phoenician, meaning “new city,” was a capital of the Phoenician diaspora and migrants from Tyre, Sidon and Beritos/Beirut, and Byblos that became the capital of the mighty Mediterranean Empire. It had been ruling the world seafaring and trade for centuries until the Romans destroyed it finally in 146 BC, after a prolonged battle that lasted since 264 BC! The Phoenician city-states were the ancient prototypes of the Greek polis. Each city had their king up to the Hellenic times and also the Executive Council/SUFET which in 300 BC was appointed only for a year. This, perhaps, inspired Aristotle to state that rejuvenation of membership was a rational need. Apparently, among the late Phoenicians, merit though counted more than hereditary wealth, “aristocracy was not a closed one” (B. Warmington, 1960). These Councils had no military power. They presided over the Senate and Popular Assembly, the latter actually was an instrument of democracy which could overturn even the decisions of the king. The

councilors in Carthage were the prototypes of the modern ministers, dealing with the infrastructure, architecture, construction, road building, environment and water supply that indicates a sophisticated urban culture, unknown to most Phoenician neighbors that were still largely farming tribal village communities, scattered in space, including ancient Athens. Army generals in Carthage had an extra constitutional position and had to preserve peace and stability. Court consisted of a 100 judges. “After each war, writes B.Warmington, “generals had to give an account of their actions to the Court” that stood on of the laws and justice” (1960:147). The Popular Assembly in Carthage played a very important role in actually supervising the military. The Phoenicians, in general, and Carthaginians, in particular, were concerned with preservation of peace and stability. If they could avoid military actions, they would. They were “sailors but not soldiers” (D.Harden, 1963:124). They often purchased peace by buying and selling cities, and running away from the warring barbarians throughout their entire history, be it Egypt, ancient Israel, Libya or ancient Greece. Theirs was a highly sophisticated civilization of peaceful architects, artisans, shipbuilders, glass makers, inventors of literacy, musical instruments, tools, developers of various industries and designers of democratic political institutions. They were not warriors by character, traditionally preferring diplomacy and compromise, but they exercised enormous courage, defending Tyre and resisting Alexander the Great for a decade, and Romans for 18 years until Carthage was mercilessly destroyed. In the opinion of B. Warmington, the Phoenicians “were essentially non-political” (1960:149). Their allegedly archaic Constitution had been preserved intact until the time of Alexander the Great, i.e. 330 BC when the Greeks should have learnt about it at least then was known very well to Aristotle. Aristotle criticizes Carthaginian Constitution for its oligarchic tendency, failing to accept the genuinely democratic spirit of its Popular Assembly, not emulated either by the Greeks or Romans.

The Phoenicians, the leaders in all areas of invention, production, craft, seafaring, shipbuilding and trading had no equals since the Bronze Age. They had been spreading their wealth, various inventions, numerous skills, products of metallurgy, tin, bronze, jewelry, shipbuilding, glass making all over the Middle East, Mediterranean region, Black Sea and Caucasus, predating Greek colonization in Europe by centuries. But recently more is becoming known about the Phoenicians. Stephen Stockwell claims that “for the last twenty years the Phoenician contribution to democracy has become a vexed issue” (2010:125). If previously the discourse was limited to the Biblical references and contacts between Tyre and ancient Israel, now upon the completion of the new archeological discoveries and with the help of the carbon technique, it has become possible to establish new cultural chronology and receive a better picture about the role of the Phoenicians, predating Greece and Rome. Flinders Petrie actually claimed back in 1898 that “municipalities existed in the 1400 BC (S.Stockwell, 2010:125). The excavated Almarina Letters, at the site of the capital built by Pharaoh, Akhenaton reveal also the date about the Assembly of Elders in Phoenicia. However, Aristotle and Plato both refer to Egypt as the most ancient country. Solon, the law maker, is mentioned by both traveling to Egypt and

presumably learning about their laws. Some modern English translators of Plato also notice the taboo topic. Francis Macdonald, for instance, explains in the footnote to the Republic's Chapter XL that the Greeks took the names of their gods from the Syrians (1948). The translator confuses the Syrians with the Phoenicians but he still correctly points out to the cultural borrowing by the Greeks (1948:345). Other sources prove that the ancient Phoenicians were on the higher technical, scientific and overall cultural level than Egypt who employed their architects, artists, shipbuilders, metal workers, tailors and musicians. The Archives in the Verona Conservatory of Music have materials as to the Phoenician role in history of music, describing them as the inventors of the musical instruments and frequent performers at the Egyptian Pharaoh's ancient concerts. In addition, Phoenicians had been spreading not only their products and technical knowledge but also their myths whose traces one finds in the Greek mythology as well. The imprint of Phoenicia, her rich and advanced culture, science and technology was all over the Mediterranean, Asia Minor, Greek islands such as Rhodes, Chios, Kos, Robert Drews argues that "The Spartan systems followed the Phoenician prototypes" (in S.Stockwell, 2010, 1979:47). The scholars argue that the Greek experience with democracy came down to them from the Phoenicians who possessed it back in 1500 BC! The sophisticated bureaucracy described in the *Constitution of Athens* is a clear duplication of the Phoenician political model.

Aristotle's own Academy, the Lyceum, was actively involved in the research of the constitutional history and had Carthage, i.e. late Phoenicia, in the curriculum and his "ideal society of excellence" was built in consideration of the Phoenician experience, albeit with critical consideration. The uneven distribution of wealth bothered Aristotle, as well "the avarice of mankind that is insatiable" (1984, vol. II: 2011). Aristotle's concerns would find their continuum in modernity, in the socialist Nordic states, in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and the now destroyed USSR with the rest of the socialist block. Aristotle's secularism would also be materialized in the same countries, and much more fully than in the rest of Europe or North America – hence better popularity of Aristotle's idea of governance there and his corpus of texts.

## Conclusions

Plato's and Aristotle's models of an ideal state and ethical, and moral codes represent contrasting existential and political recipes, and different pathways to civilization, with and without religious mythology as a base. The Platonian model has served as the ideological reinforcement of religion in society, inspiring the neo-platonists of the religion-minding type. It would also be the cornerstone for the modern family and morality-undermining utopias. Aristotle, in contrast to Plato's impossible utopias, offers a realistic picture of secular governance and possible world without god, based on humanistic ethics of pre-Christian antiquity. Though both schools anticipate by millennia the moral, social and political dilemmas of modernity, it is Aristotle's world view and diagnostics that is most relevant, constructive and cure-promising for our epoch in crisis when Reason has miserably failed us and when



secular cultural and social model is in jeopardy.

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