

PLATONIC IDEAS ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

by

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The increasing entropy of the Greek interstate system in the century between the Peloponnesian War and the Macedonian Empire caused great concern among all political thinkers. Watching their world crumble around them, the Greeks tried to stem the rush of events and re-establish a semblance of peace and order. The writers and orators of Greece agreed of the need for reform in the inter-state system. By the Fourth Century, the Pan-Hellenists presented the most vocal alternative to political chaos and yet their movement never really got off the ground. Attractive as it was, Pan-Hellenism had many shortcomings, not the least of which was that it never developed a strong supporting political theory.

Although they were conscious of the inadequacy of the Greek political system, the thinkers of that period did not leave us with any deep philosophical analysis of politics. Their prime consideration was the immediate problems of Greece and their practical solutions. For that reason their proposals were policy statements rather than scholarly studies. For such studies in depth of the Greek predicament, one must study the philosophers of the fourth century. In this paper, we shall only look at the particular contribution that Plato made to "peace research" in his time, and hopefully learn something that could apply to ours.

I. Patriotism

It has been said that Plato's entire philosophy was a casualty of the Peloponnesian War¹. His negative attitudes towards imperialism can be traced

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1. Plato often declared that he faced many dangers for his country during times of war (Diogenes Laertius, III, 24).

back to his early experiences and background. Plato's opinion of the Athenian Empire was the traditional aristocratic reaction that one reads in the *Old Oligarch*. Plato attributed the initial success of imperialism on the support it had from the democratic parties of all states (*Epistle*, VII, 332bc). As long as the Athenians were fair administrators of the alliance, their leadership was welcomed by the other members (*Critias*, 112d). But when they went too far and threw off all restraint in their arrogance of power, they committed hubris and thus sealed their doom².

As an aristocrat, Plato favored a policy of self-restraint and caution, so he could not approve the recklessness of Athenian foreign policy. Conversely, he admired the conservative and defensive policy of Sparta, and hoped for a reconciliation of the two states. As long as the democratic regime was in power, however, any cooperation was unlikely, so only aristocratic governments could maintain the peace in Greece³.

Because of these opinions, Plato has often been accused of being more of an aristocrat than an Athenian⁴. His well-known views cast upon him the suspicion of disloyalty to the state and earned for him the aspersion of a Spartan sympathiser (*Gorgias*, 5153). This, however, he denied vehemently. After the defeat of Athens, he refused to collaborate with the Spartan conquerors and during the reign of terror of the Thirty Tyrants, among whom were members of his own family, he became so disillusioned with oligarchy that he admitted democracy to be heaven in comparison (*Epistle*, VII).

Like that of Socrates, Plato's criticism of Athenian foreign policy was directed against the regime and not against the state. Although he was bitterly opposed to the democratic policies and criticised them openly, there is no evidence that he engaged in subversive activities on behalf of Sparta. He agreed with Socrates that disloyalty to one's state was high treason. A traitor is no better than a patricide, he said so often as to make it inconceivable for him to be one himself⁵.

2. In the *Lachis* (179c), Plato says proudly that "our fathers worked both in war and peace, governing not only their own affairs but those of their allies". Their downfall came when they fell into the barbarian sin of extemism. *Nomoi*, 692a, 693b, 964c, 700a; *Alcibiades*, I, 104b-105b.

3. In the *Alcibiades* (II, 148e), Plato tells how the fame of Sparta had spread throughout the world because of the piety of the Spartans. In the *Protagoras* (342b), Plato recounts how Spartan superiority was attributed to a secret philosophy which guided them.

4. Much has been said about Plato's love for Sparta. Fite, Popper, Windspear, go a long way to prove this in their commentaries. Even if this were true initially, however, it was certainly not so by the end of Plato's life.

5. In the *Republic*, Plato spoke of "the vile man who turns against his place of birth

In spite of Athenian shortcomings, Plato was proud to be a citizen of Athens⁶. In many of his works this pride shows unmistakably through the criticism. A case in point is the controversial dialogue *Menexenus*⁷. In it, Plato heaps such extravagant praise upon Athens, that some scholars think he is being satirical and refuse to take it seriously⁸. Yet even if the *Menexenus* borders on the absurd, it may show what Plato would have liked Athens to be but unfortunately was not. Since we come across the same ideals in other dialogues, it is safe to assume that this was not a descriptive but a prescriptive work of how a good state ought to have behaved⁹.

It was his disappointment with the performance of Athens both in war and peace, that made Plato join Socrates and other idealistic aristocrats to search for a remedy of the political situation. The tragic death of the master must have, therefore, been a double shock for Plato, both in the personal and the political level. Socrates'unnatural death remained the most traumatic incident in Plato's life.

Soon afterwards, Plato left Athens and travelled extensively, both within Greece and abroad. During these years of travel, Plato formulated many of his ideas on world affairs. Seeing and comparing many countries and peoples, he was able to find their differences and similarities. Unlike Socrates who never left Athens, Plato did not remain a simple patriotic Athenian but became more broadly nationalistic. Having broadened his horizons, he was concerned not only with the affairs of Athens but also with those of Greece¹⁰.

will think nothing of turning against his parents". (575d). And further on he says: "No true lover of his country would dare mangle the land that gave him birth and nurture". (470d). Also see the *Apology*, 29d; *Crito*, 51: and the *Seventh Epistle*.

6. In the *Protagoras* (337d), Plato says that the Athenians were the wisest of Greeks, living in the metropolis of wisdom: Athens was the school of Hellas (319b).

7. The *Menexenus* was written during the high tide of the Second Greek Confederacy, and reflects the optimistic attitude of the times. In it, Plato tries to recapture the highlight of Greek history in the form of a funeral oration like that of Pericles. Because the story abounds in historical half-truths and exaggerations, it has been thought of as a parody of patriotic oratory of the style of Lysias.

8. The glorification of Athens is based on two points: its inveterate antipathy to the barbarians; and its altruistic pan-Hellenism (*Menexenus*, 242-245).

9. Another less biased commentary of the history of Greece is given in the *Laws* (698-9). Shorter notes and comments of historical interest are also to be found in most of the dialogues.

10. Plato has been called a nationalist by Brinton, a tribalist by Ferry, and an etatist by McGovern.

II. Nationalism

Nationalism in Greece was the feeling shared by those who belonged to the same race, religion, and language. Plato also, felt the distinction of being Greek and, therefore, different from other nationalities. Like Herodotus, his travels made him appreciate the relative position of Greece in the world, and accept the basic dichotomy of humanity into Greeks and barbarians.

For Plato, the basic difference between the Greeks and barbarians was racial. All the Greeks descended from a single ancestor, whereas the barbarians from many (*Nomoi*, 692e-693a). Their racial purity thus placed Greeks apart from all other peoples who were mixed with each other (*Politeia*, 470c). Plato, of course, was not so naive as to believe that this principle always held in practice. Very often Greeks and barbarians had intermarried and so it was very hard to know who was racially pure any more (*Theatitus*, 175a).

Moreover, Plato recognized that the Greeks were not all identical. They were divided into countless kinship groups classified into the three major Hellenic *genai*: Dorian, Ionian and Aetolian. The differences between these tribes were sometimes as great as those between Greeks and barbarians (*Nomoi*, 692e). Some were purer and more advanced than others, and of them the Dorians represented the best of the Greeks (*Laches*, 188d). Their simplicity and harmony, through Plato, made them the most promising of all the Greeks¹¹.

Yet in spite of their differences, the Greeks were bound together by strong common bonds. More important than their racial origin were their shared cultural characteristics. Based on common psychological traits, such as industry and thirst for knowledge, the Greeks had developed a unique culture (*Alcibiades*, I, 123d). Without their common customs and laws, the Greeks would be nothing more than a conglomeration of tribes¹².

Finally, the Olympian religion put them in a special relation with a community of free gods. Plato believed in the common heritage of the Greeks and their gods. He accepted the ethnocentric notion that Delphi was the true navel of the earth, recognized even by the barbarians¹³. For their privileged position the Greeks were justifiably proud and Plato confirmed this pride in many ways. His admonition of the Greeks was to honor their national deities in

11. For that reason Plato's ideal state was populated by Dorians and was built in an isolated self-sufficient Dorian environment (*Epistle*, VII, 336cd).

12. In the *Statesman*, 301, Plato thought that men are attached to their national customs much more than to legal laws.

13. *Politea*, 427c; Cicero, *Pro. Font.* 30; Livy, XXXVIII, 48.2.

common pan-Hellenic festivals and give thanks for their good fortune. (*Nomoi*, 947a-950e).

From many such pronouncements, it is easy to see that Plato was a Greek nationalist. His unequivocal emotions in this matter often clash with his philosophical objectivity, resulting in apparent contradictions. Although he usually tried to keep a scholarly impartiality when speaking of Greeks and barbarians, very often he lapsed into extremely subjective opinions¹⁴.

Plato, for instance, seems to take it for granted that the Greeks were superior to any other nationality. Their mental powers and wisdom were strikingly juxtaposed to the simple-mindedness and ignorance of the barbarians (*Hippias, Minor*, 60). And yet, individual barbarians could certainly be highly intelligent and even wise¹⁵. Superior men could be found both in Greece and elsewhere; but taken as a whole the barbarians were limited and could never rise beyond a certain level. The Greeks alone could engage in philosophy and the higher pursuits of life¹⁶.

These opinions of Plato were not unique with him. They were the traditional prejudices of the Greeks, or of any nationality for that matter, towards outsiders. These prejudices shaped the relations between themselves and other peoples. Therefore, in order to understand Plato's theory of international relations, one must know what he thought of nationalities. Uncovering the personal opinions of great philosophers will help us explain their formal ideas. With this in mind, let us then see how did Plato compare the various national characteristics of the Greeks and the Barbarians.

III. Hellenism

Having travelled widely, Plato rejected the traditional dichotomy of Greeks and barbarians because of its inadequacy in accounting for the variety among the barbarians. The non-Greeks were many separate races, unrelated to each other, so Plato did not put them all together in a single undifferentiated group. By dividing all men into Greeks and barbarians, the Greeks were creat-

14. In the *Philebus* (16), for instance, he mentions animals and barbarians in the same breath, as if he meant to put them in the same class. See also *Nomoi*, 699e.

15. This is clearly stated in the *Phaedo*, 78a, when Socrates says that there are few wise men on earth, but they can be found in every land. Later in the *Minos*, 315c, Plato speaks of the learned men both in Greece and abroad. Xenophon also said the same thing in the *Cyropaedia*, II, 2; III, 138. See also, *Gorgias*, 526a; *Nomoi* 870; 951.

16. Some Greeks believed that philosophy originated with the barbarians, but most were convinced that it began in Greece. The term itself, said Diogenes Laertius in the Prologue of his *Biographies*, could not even be translated in other languages. See also *Epinomis*, 973.

ing a ridiculous dichotomy that was both illogical and unrealistic¹⁷. Plato, however, was more discriminating and recognized the many cultures and races that existed outside Greece.

By pointing out the differences within the barbarians, Plato did not mean to break down the distinction between Greeks and non-Greeks. On the contrary, he believed that there were definite differences between them. There were certain distinctive qualities which were exclusive to the Greeks and lacking in all other peoples. The Greeks believed implicitly in their cultural superiority as the basis of their differences with the barbarians. The non-Greek races tended to be either under or over-cultured, so that they were either primitive or decadent (*Nomoi*, 870). The Greeks alone were properly civilized in their classical simplicity, and therein lay their superiority.

Plato did not hesitate to admit that the Greek civilization was a relative upstart compared to the barbarian. He admitted that some of the cultural refinements of the Persians would make the Greeks blush of shame for their inferiority (*Alcibiades*, I, 120d). In the *Cratylus*, he went so far as to derive many aspects of the Greek language, religion, and law, from originally barbarian sources¹⁸. In other dialogues, he gave many examples in which the Greeks had clearly learned many things from their barbarian neighbors (*Charmides*, 156). Plato, therefore, acknowledged the more ancient cultures of the barbarians and ridiculed the Greek apologists for trying to prove the opposite¹⁹.

Having paid the barbarians their due, Plato went on to say how the Greeks improved and perfected upon whatever they took from other cultures. Although they began later and with much less resources than other peoples, the Greeks ultimately overtook and surpassed all other nations in civilization. For this feat alone, the Greeks could be admired, because they were able

17. For Plato's views on the barbarians see: Weber's *Platon Stellung zu den Barbaren*. Also *Politicus*, 262d-263d.

18. In *Cratylus*, Plato gives sociological and political reasons for the origin of languages. Whenever they lived within the same state, Greeks and barbarians borrowed words from each other. Many terms are, therefore, foreign and the purists will get nowhere trying to trace everything back to Greek roots. Even the Greek religion was derived from primitive barbarian deities: Sun, Moon, and Earth. That is why, Greeks still made use of barbarian oracles and vice-versa. (*Alcibiades*, II, 148e). Lastly, even the laws were mixed. Many legal rules derived from primitive customs. Thus Plato concluded that the roots of all culture are based on the same human nature (*Nomoi*, 886a). Therefore, he extolled the educated Greeks to recognize their debts to other peoples and improve their transnational contacts. (*Epinomis*, 988).

19. This conclusion was hardly palatable to the Greeks, but Plato thought it was the only rational explanation; anything else would be either theological or agnostic. *Cratylus*, *passim*.

to do so much with so little and in such a short time. Their genius lay in their capacity to improve the work of others (*Epinomis*, 987e). While the barbarians stagnated, the Greeks developed. "The barbarians are still doing things their ancestors and ours used to do long time ago", noted Plato in the *Cratylus* (397, 421).

It was for their stagnation that the barbarians deserved the contempt of the Greeks. Having so many advantages to begin with and such nobility of origin, the barbarians were left far behind by the fast-moving Greeks²⁰. In the Myth of the *Phaedrus*, Plato emphasizes this culturally acquired superiority of the Greeks and denies any inherent inequalities. Although all races began with similar natural potential, the Greeks by their unique system of *paidea* developed theirs to the highest degree²¹.

The only natural advantage that the Greeks enjoyed was their ecological environment. Plato called attention to the perfect mediterranean climate of Greece as the most conducive to human excellence (*Timaeus*, 24c; *Epinomis*, 987d). Apart from the climatic differences, however, it was the political system of Greece which really made the Greeks unique (*Politeia*, 435e-436a)²². Although Greek politics were by no means perfect, the city-state could not be improved upon in principle.

Plato's belief in the polis could not be overemphasized. No matter how he criticized Greek politics during his lifetime, and how he even admitted that the Greeks could learn something from barbarian practices; his commitment to the polis was absolute²³. Although he was familiar with the endless variety of governmental systems in the world (*Politeia*, 544cd), he could find none superior to the city-state. It was the polis that made the Greeks what they were; therefore, in order to improve the Greeks one had to improve the polis. This, Plato made his political goal.

Plato's ideas of improving the Greek political system were based on his views of Hellenism. Since the Greek city-states formed a sub-system of the

20. The Royal houses of both Persia and Sparta, for instance, were said to be directly descended from Zeus. *Alcibiades*, I, 120d.

21. Xenophon in the *Cyropaedia* also emphasized this point, and even advised the Greeks to imitate some Persian customs without shame (Of *Oeconomicus*, IV, 4). Plato admitted that the educational system of the Persian nobility was one of the best in the world. (*Alcibiades*, I, 121c); but he was not in good terms with Xenophon, so he declared the *Cyropaedia* to be largely fictional. Diogenes Laertius, 34).

22. Plato, however, conceded the possibility that the polis could exist in a barbarian community.

23. Plato nonetheless, admitted that Persia was a good example of a compromise constitutional monarchy. *Nomoi*, 697.

Mediterranean world, any change in one would affect the other and thus the whole picture had to be taken into consideration. Being a Greek as well as a philosopher, Plato could not divorce his theories from his nationality. Plato's ties to both his political and cultural unit were quite strong and they influenced his political opinions.

Because they felt hemmed-in from all sides by barbarism, the Greeks were always in the defensive towards the outside world which they considered a constant threat to their very existence. Plato, like every other Greek, regarded the barbarians as the enemies of Hellenism, waiting to crush the fragile civilization of the Greeks at the first opportunity. As such, any relations between the Greeks and the barbarians were inherently hostile and potentially conflicting. Inter-national relations were simply the struggle of national survival in the state of nature of the world²⁴.

Assuming this natural antagonism between Greeks and barbarians, Plato saw the international events of his time as disturbing examples of the breakdown of Hellenism. By the fourth century, the political situation of Greece had deteriorated to an alarming extent. So great was the corruption of the Greeks and so wide their divisions that the Greek-barbarian dichotomy became meaningless. The sight of Greeks allied with barbarians to fight other Greeks was especially repugnant to the nationalists. Plato's sad reflection that the way Greeks treated each other was only fit for barbarians, was a bitter commentary on the foreign policies of the great powers of Greece²⁵.

Plato must have seen this continuation of the trend, to treat barbarians as friends and Greeks as enemies, as leading to the ultimate destruction of Hellenism. The increasing lawlessness of inter-state politics was weakening Greek culture to the point that it could no longer resist external threats. If a reversal of these tendencies did not take place, the future of Hellenism was dim indeed.

The disgust of Plato towards the state of affairs of Greece appears in many passages of his works. The philosopher rarely lost the opportunity to castigate any policy which sided with the barbarians against other Greeks. For a Greek state to collaborate with a barbarian in order to destroy another

24. *Politeia*, 470; *Menexenus*, 239; Caldwell, 129; Wild, 28 & 256; Zeller, 482.

25. *Politeia*, 471b; *Menexenus*, 241, 244, 245. It is likely that Plato wrote this passage in 374, when Plataea was destroyed by Thebes and its survivors fled to Athens for asylum. Plato's rebuke would have been the same had the passage been written in 386, when Greece was exhausted by the Corinthian war, and the Persians had imposed upon her the infamous Peace of Andalcidas. (Adams, 325).

Greek state, Plato called national treason²⁶. For him, it was clearly the duty of every polis to present a united front against the barbarians²⁷. Whatever their differences, the Greeks had to resolve them among themselves and not involve the outside world. The only chance for survival of the Hellenic way of life was political solidarity of the Greek states as far as the barbarians were concerned.

IV. Regulation of Conflict

The question, of course, was how to get the Greeks to stop undermining each other and turn their energies towards constructive pursuits. Plato's solution was in many levels: moral, legal, political. It required changes in the individual, the state, or the national structures. Ideally, only a sweeping change, from the moral education of the individual to the constitutional structure of states, was sufficient to save Greece. Practically, however, Plato was less radical and was willing to accept partial reforms.

On the international level, Plato's suggestions were somewhat similar to those of Isocrates²⁸. Although Plato never went so far as to advocate a pan-Hellenic crusade against Persia, he agreed with Isocrates that one way to unite the Greeks was to emphasize their dichotomy with the barbarians. By emphasizing the barbarian scare, Plato sought to unite the Greeks to defend their common interests²⁹. By harping on their nationalist sentiments, he perhaps hoped to develop the Greek kinship feeling to such a degree as to rule out, or at least minimize, widespread internecine conflict.

This explains Plato's attitude of international relations as a natural state of war for survival. Being a matter of life or death, there were very few legal rules or moral principles regulating the intercourse among nations. As such the Greeks could vent their brutality on non-Greeks rather than on their fellow countrymen as they were doing at the time of Plato³⁰. In other words,

26. In the *Republic*, 336a, Plato mentions a certain Ismenias who took money from the Persians to stir up trouble among the Greeks and who was therefore condemned for treason. Plato implies that such men are not true Greeks, and expresses his condemnation for similar activities. The passage must have been written soon after 395, when the disgraceful affair was fresh in men's minds (Adam, 22).

27. In the *Menexenus*, 242-5, Athens is praised for its foreign policy of moderation in war and piety in peace which Plato thought as ideal in the *Republic*.

28. Compare: *Politeia*, 469c, and *Epistles*, VII, 331d, 336a, with *Panegyricus*, III, 133. ,

29. The fifth book of the *Republic* (in which most of this topic is covered) was written under the influence of the Spartan campaign in Persia, 400-394. This part of the dialogue is therefore the most definite and consciously practical aspect of Plato's political theory.

30. Specifically, Plato condoned enslaving barbarians by implication. He emphasized

Plato had to sacrifice the barbarians as the only means of saving the Greeks.

Having reaffirmed the dichotomy between Greeks and barbarians, Plato went on to divide conflict into two kinds: internal and external. Internal conflict was the rivalry and competition to be found within a civil society among its individual members and groups. External conflict was the violent struggle to be found in the state of nature among animals or nations. In its extreme forms, the former was *stasis* (civil strife), whereas the latter was *polemos* (war)³¹.

Foreign war differs from civil both in nature and in name. One is fought within a single community among kindred people, the other is fought between foreigners and alien races (*Politea*, 470b). Thus, since Greece was a community of kinship, any conflict within it was limited war; whereas conflicts between Greeks and barbarians were total war. International wars, because they are waged between natural enemies are continuous and everlasting, whereas civil wars are only differences among friends and are, therefore, temporary and abnormal.

As it happened, however, dissention and strife became the norm within Greece. The particular psychosynthesis of the Greeks as well as their socio-political situation made conflict a syndrome of the Greek disease (*Politea*, 470c). This curse of Greece, Plato said, was keeping the country divided and at odds with itself. Civil war was the most bitter of all wars, because it was fought among brothers. In comparison international war was mild and impassionate. (*Nomoi*, 629d).

Because of the Greek proclivity to internecine conflict, it was imperative to create institutional restraints to control the degree and extent of violence. Since Greece was a society, it had to regulate its conflict in the same way as other societies were doing: by legal and moral codes. Plato thought that the power politics which dominated the Greek system could give way to a stronger moral order, through the development of customs and laws shared by all Greeks.

The scheme of regulating war according to a moral code was not an idle philosophical speculation. On the contrary, it was a realistic compromise which took into account practical necessities. Since a call to end all conflict outright would be futile, Plato compromised by pressing only for a limitation

that Greeks must never be taken slaves as a result of interstate wars; thus left it open for non-Greeks (*Politea*, 471b).

31. Cf. *Sophistes*, 225a; *Nomoi*, 626; *Politea*, 471a; *Protagoras*, 322b; *Euthedemus*, 290b; also Xenophon, *Hellenica*, I, 6. 14. Piracy, abduction and tyranny, said Plato, are all parts of the art of war (*Sophistes*, 222c).

of violence. As Plato saw it, limited war was the only alternative to perpetual conflict. Perpetual peace could be a dream of the poets but had no place in political planning³².

The existence of war was thus accepted as unavoidable among the Greek states, and as such it could only be civilized. The taming of war, therefore, became Plato's plan. Rules of war had to be codified and enforced; interstate law had to be strengthened and sanctions applied. Plato's basic principle for the law of war was that the end does not justify the means. The methods and process of war must always take precedence over the goals; victory at any price inexcusable. Interstate war should be like an athletic combat; clean and graceful, according to strictly observed rules (*Nomoi*, 692e).

To limit the circle of violence, Plato advocated personal criminal responsibility for those who are guilty of breaking the laws of war. It should not be the whole state that has to suffer in the misfortunes of war, but the few who are responsible. The victors in a conflict must not destroy the entire community of their enemies but should be content to call to account only the leaders of the state. If necessary, force may be used as a political pressure to influence the policy of other states; but in the end, communities must reconcile their differences by negotiation (*Politeia*, 470e-471a).

The limitation of war also includes its restriction in all directions. Fighting must involve only the armed forces of the state, populations must be spared any violence. The private possessions of individuals must be inviolate. Land must not be ravaged, nor houses devastated, nor food wasted. War reparations must be paid only by the guilty, the innocent must not be made to pay for the errors of their leaders (*Politeia*, 470a-471b).

Above all, personal dignity must be inviolate. The practice of taking slaves must be abolished. The victors of a war have no right to enslave the vanquished. Since all Greeks are kinsmen, to enslave each other is tantamount to destroying one's own family. If this practice is not stopped, the Greek nation will consume itself by its own inhumanity³³. Slavely is a barbarous practice unworthy of Greeks; if there must be war among us, concluded Plato, let it be waged according to principles of humanity, selfrespect, and piety³⁴.

32. In the second book of the *Republic*, Plato sadly comments on the intensification of intra-Greek warfare. This comment has no apparent relation to the general topic of the book, and is introduced abruptly as an aside. It must be that Plato felt the need to say something on contemporary affairs and thus put his comments here parenthetically.

33. *Politeia*, 469c. The policy of sparing Greeks was initiated by the Spartan general Callicratidas after the capture of Methymna in 406. Xenophon, *Hellenica*, I, 6, 14.

34. *Politeia*, 471b. Some of the laws of war which Plato laid down must have already be

V. The Common Law of Greece

During Plato's lifetime, not only there was no progress in the field of interstate law, but there was marked deterioration of moral and legal standards of state behaviour³⁵. As war became more destructive, law became less observed. This inverse relation between law and war indicated that passions and hatreds brought about by hostilities destroyed the fabric of society in which law and order were rooted.

Plato tried to reverse this relationship by making war an instrument of law rather than a wanton act. Since there was no central authority, the common law of Greece had to be revived and enforced by the states themselves. Force could be used as a temporary chastisement for those who violated the law and offended the honor and dignity of Greece. This decentralized law enforcing system, would require of each state to become the upholder of pan-Hellenic justice. Thus Plato envisaged a concept of "just war" which would eliminate the private quarrels and vendettas that had undermined national unity in the fourth century (*Menexenus*, 242a).

Plato's scheme, of course, raises many problems associated with the principle of self-help in a decentralized system. The philosopher, therefore, had to construct an entire theory of interstate relations that would answer these questions and at the same time appeal to the warring blocks of the Greek world³⁶. In this overall plan, as we shall see, law played the most important role as the golden thread which tied everything else together.

Since the traditional common law of Greece was ambiguous and inconsistent, it invited misinterpretations and disputes on both its form and usage³⁷. In the absence of any legal writers in Greece, Plato set out to fill the vacuum by defining and codifying the public law of the Hellenic world. Plato believed that since Greece was a society, there had to be a single legal order based on a system of rights and duties shared by voluntary acceptance and reciprocity. By trying to revive the authority of law in interstate affairs, Plato proclaimed his faith that the best guarantee for a peaceful life was obedience to law.

recognized by the Spartans. In Plutarch's *Apophthegmata Lakonika*, 228 ff, we have statements attributed to Lyncourgos and Cleomenes which closely resemble those of Plato.

35. Among the very few exceptions were the humane treatment of slaves and the disuse of insulting dead enemies.

36. When Plato first began to write on the topic of interstate law, Athens was rebuilding another empire: the second confederacy. The city was therefore waging exhaustive wars against the Spartan alliance.

37. Cf. McIver's *Community*, p. 293, and Niemeyer, 34.

Plato's ultimate comment on the question of the moral basis of interstate law was given in the *Nomoi* as an imperative for mankind to either give itself a law and regulate its life by it or live no better than wild beasts³⁸. By admitting that "the law is king of kings", Plato recognized that all states are subjects of the law (*Epistle*, VII, 355e). The political transcendence of the common law was indicated by its divine origins. Unlike positive state law, interstate law was under the personal protection of Zeus³⁹; thus it had not only human but religious sanctions (*Nomoi*, 729c).

In the final analysis, however, Plato knew that all these constraints would not work without the active cooperation of men of good will. In dealing with sovereign states, he admitted it would be up to the wisdom of individual statesmen to choose lawful rather than arbitrary means for solving their disputes. Only when states preferred the court to the battlefield, would law become effective among states as it was within them (*Nomoi*, 679).

For this to happen, for interstate law to become more effective, Greece had to become more of a community. The common law had to be deeply rooted into the soil of a common culture. Greece, of course, had all the elements of such culture, but unfortunately they had deteriorated and great feaures had developed which broke up Hellenism into unstable pieces. The task of Plato was to rebuild the lost sense of community among the Greeks. That is how he perceived the goal of pan-Hellenism.

It was Plato's conviction that members of the same nation, even if they were politically sovereign, could regulate their behavior according to a common law. As long as this law was based on their shared nationalistic sentiments it did not need a single government to enforce it. The common interest could very well be decided upon and carried out by the states themselves, without the necessity of a central authority.

The concept that political sovereignty can coexist within a legal order is, of course, a controversial one. It goes counter to the positive law theory

38. Plato rejected a single hegemon for Greece since he could not see a sigle individual whose natural endowments would assure that he could always discern what was good for mankind and at the same time be willing and able to put this good into practice. Therefore law was a much better master than man, (*Nomoi*, 690d).

39. Zeus had many faces related to foreign affairs: Zeus Xenios was the patron of foreigners, *Nomoi*, 718a, 730a, 843a, 879c; Zeus Orios was the protector of state borders, *Nomoi*, 842e; Zeus Omophilos was the friend of homogenous states, *Nomoi*, 843a; Zeus Poliouhos, was in charge of multilateral affairs among states including treaties, *Nomoi*, 921c. Generally Zeus supervised the diplomatic corps (*Nomoi*, 941a), and fair play between states (*Nomoi*, 936c).

that there must exist a centralized power to enforce it. Plato's theory, therefore, requires further clarification.

VI. Pan-Hellenic Organization

The idea of pan-Hellenism was not a novelty to the Greeks of the fourth century. Since the time of Herodotus, Greek nationalism had grown sufficiently to create discussion of further unity. The pan-Hellenism of Isocrates had carried the cultural unity of Herodotus a step further by the introduction of collective defense and political consultation. Plato, being a compatriot and contemporary of Isocrates, could not help but be involved in the debate of pan-Hellenism. Although he has been criticized for ignoring the movement of Isocrates⁴⁰, Plato could be considered a pan-Hellenist and approved of the Isocratian defence union.

Collective defence was for Plato a mutual guarantee for the preservation of the political and social institutions of the Greek states from any external infringement. Pan-Hellenism was, therefore, a means for preserving political sovereignty. It was not a means of establishing a national state to supplant the city-states. Plato's devotion to the polis could not contemplate anything like a strong central union, but only an interstate organization of the loosest type.

It was this attachment to the polis which brought upon Plato the strongest criticism from modern commentators. His failure to endorse a federation of the Greek states or at least a hegemony by one state, made him seem oblivious to any such solution and uncompromizing in his stand for absolute political sovereignty.

Because the Platonic political philosophy concentrated in the domestic affairs of the city-state, Plato has been criticized of shortsightedness. It is said that by regarding the polis as the ultimate form of government, Plato contributed to its demise (Barker, 299). The standards and ideals by which the philosopher measured political institutions have been called outdated and regressive, and thus responsible for misreading the trends of history. (Cf. Merritt, 99; Havelock, 51; Ferguson, 100; Levinson, 225).

And yet, the record shows that Plato was quite aware of what was going on and did consider the possibility of larger political units such as the nation or the federation. It was only after considerable study that he rejected them as unpalatable to the Greek ethos. In his analysis of both historical and hypothetical examples of confederations, Plato does not show any overt prejudice

40. Cf. Fite, 294; Chance, 278; Levinson, 223.

against them. Rather, he seems to give them due praise, thus indicating he came very close to something like confederation in his own policy of reform.

The historical example which Plato chose to study was the ancient Dorian confederacy of Sparta, Argos, and Messene⁴¹. This trilateral union—*syntaxis*—was a unique and extraordinary creation which really involved six parties; the three kings as well as the popular representatives of the three communities of these states. The six parties guaranteed to defend each other's existence, both internally and externally; i.e. each promised not to overthrow or usurp the power and prerogatives of the others, as well as to help them against anyone who did⁴². This made the pact an inter-relationship of both domestic order and foreign defence; which, coupled with strong sanctions, presented a formidable institution⁴³.

Yet, Plato reported, such promising endeavor was soon destroyed by internal dissensions. Although from the outside it seemed invincible, it was internally weak and unstable. The confederation was not really a community, since its parties were not of a single mind. The different policies and interests eventually wrecked the greatest organization—*sustema*—that was ever devised⁴⁴. A similar fate befell the mythical confederation of Atlantis, which Plato devised as a model of its type⁴⁵. The difference here was that Atlantis was destroyed from the outside by a small city-state; thus proving both the internal and external inferiority of confederations compared to the polis⁴⁶.

41. The confederation was established after the Trojan war because the Dorians feared the barbarian retribution to their invasion of Asia. At the time of the War, the Trojans were allied with the Assyrians and expected them to avenge their destruction. (*Nomoi*, 684-5).

42. Plato indicated that the most important sanction of the treaty was that any two states would unite against the third in case of infringement (*Nomoi*, 684b).

43. The confederation was not merely a guarantee of the status quo. The governments promised to ameliorate and liberalize their rule gradually as long as the people promised to be loyal to them (*Nomoi*, 684a). See also: Chrimes, *Ancient Sparta*, pp. 272ff.

44. Actually, it was only Argos and Messene that deteriorated while Sparta remained stable (*Nomoi*, 685-6). The same case is also given by Isocrates (VI, 21), who also blamed the Messinians for their faithlessness. This widespread opinion may be attributed to Spartan propaganda after their defeat at Leuctra.

45. The Atlantic Confederation involved ten kings, each ruling an autonomous area. All of them however observed a common legal code in their relations with each other. The law-giver of this code was Poseidon, and each king incorporated it within the constitution of his state. The most significant points of the code were: never take up arms against each other; assist any member who is threatened; consult each other in common councils for joint policy; formal leadership should belong to one single dynasty; any nine kings can inflict punishment on the tenth. *Critias*, 120.

46. Somewhat of an exception was the Cretan Confederation which Plato regarded highly

Plato, of course, did not have to go back to history or to mythology to study confederations. Fourth century Greece was the time and place of many federal experiments. In spite, or perhaps because of the Persian interdict against political unions; small city-states from one end of Greece to the other were banding together for mutual protection. No sooner did the Spartans dissolve one union when another sprang in its place⁴⁷. As much as Plato disapproved of such divide and conquer practices, he did not think that confederations were anything but a temporary expedient and thus refused to have anything to do with them⁴⁸.

Plato thought that the popularity of federalism was due to an over-estimation of the principles of strength through unity. Human nature tends to assume that a worthwhile goal will necessarily be successful if only there is good will a proper way will be found. So, concluded Plato, our admiration for confederacies is because when we behold something large and powerful, we are instantly struck by the bright idea that if only we knew how to operate this wonderful instrument, we would surely make ourselves happy by its great achievements (*Nomoi*, 686e).

Even myself, mused the philosopher, when I beheld such ornament—*stolon*—my immediate thought was what an amazingly fine thing this federation is. Surely if we use it properly, it would be a boon to all Greece (*Nomoi*, 686c). This, however, was self-delusion; for when Plato saw what was behind the fine facade he was disappointed by the bitter reality. The makers of the confederation were building this powerful unit not primarily to secure the freedom of their people, but rather to impose their dominion on others, be they Greeks or barbarians (*Nomoi*, 687a).

This then was the real motive behind federalism, according to Plato; like everything else men do, the goal is power (*Nomoi*, 687c). This is why they unite, organize great armies, pass laws, and make wars. And this is why they are ultimately destroyed. It was not cowardice or ignorance which ruined confederations, but neglect of their internal virtues (*Nomoi*, 688c-689b). Similarly, reasoned Plato, it will not be because Greece is not a federation that it may be

(*Nomoi*, 702e, 708a, 752e). Crete was at the time under the condominium of Cnosos and Gortyn. but the various city-state had internal autonomy. In external affairs however, Crete gave the impression of a strong federation, almost like a unitary state.

47. Within seven years of the Peace of Andalcidas (387-0), the Spartans dissolved the Arcadian, the Chalcidic, and the Boeotian confederations.

48. In 370, Epaminondas, the Theban leader, invited Plato to become the law-giver of the Megalopolitan Confederation in Arcadia, which Thebes was promoting. Plato however refused. (Diogenes Laertius, 23).

destroyed; but because there is lawlessness, impiety, discord, and chaos throughout the land (*Nomoi*, 690b).

For Plato then, federalism was not a palliative to solve the Greek problems. Mere political unification was not necessarily, good in itself; nor did it even provide greater security. In spite of their advantages in certain areas and the formidable fronts they presented to the outside, federations were usually failures because they neglected their internal constitution. And to Plato's way of thinking, it was internal cohesion rather than external strength that made states great; in this respect a good polis could be infinitely stronger than a bad federation (*Nomoi*, 683-686).

If one would ask why a federation could not be internally harmonious, Plato would answer: because it is made up of many city-states, each of which is a separate community⁴⁹. One cannot have a political entity out of many racial and cultural units, other than a barbarian empire. Although Greece was a society, it was not a community. Although the Greeks shared many things, they were still heterogeneous enough to form many communities, and hence necessarily many city-states. To try mix together the various Hellenic tribes, warned Plato, would be as impractical and undersirable as to mix Greeks with barbarians (*Nomoi*, 693a). The result, as Pericles and many others before him found out, would be either outright failure or the monstrosity of Babylon.

The heart of the matter, therefore, was man and the polis. Before one could create larger political unions one would have to produce greater men. But to give to little men great power would inevitably lead to insolence and disaster (*Nomoi*, 691c). For this reason Plato's reforms were in three levels: the individual, the polis, and finally the nation. In the last level, the best course of action was not federation of tribes, but interstate organization⁵⁰.

Plato's idea of political sovereignty, therefore, did not exclude interstate obligations or legal restraints upon the actions of states⁵¹. The ideal organization for the Greek poleis was a system of free and independent communities bound together by ties of friendship, kinship, and convention. Based on these

49. Plato doubted whether confederations could peacefully coexist with city-states with the same political system. When small bodies exist besides large ones, the former tend to disunite the latter and at the same time be absorbed by them. *Timaeus*, 58c.

50. In the *Laws*, Plato classified confederations as the final evolution after the family, the clan, and the nation (682d). We must note that the polis is not part of this line of development, because it is *sui generis*.

51. Interstate obligations could be either contractual by treaties-*xunthekes*- or conventional by custom -*ethos*. *Cratylus*, 434e.

ties there could be built institutions of collective defense, peaceful change, judicial settlement of disputes, common markets, and cultural exchanges⁵².

The attention that Plato placed both on community-building and interstate functional organization indicates how much he believed in the correlation between internal stability and external security of social groups. A political system could not attain stability without some minimal consensus on common goals, nor could political conflict be controlled without the sentiment of mutual understanding.

Based on Hellenic cultural unity as the strongest bond of the Greek states (*Politeia*, 469-471), Plato then, strove to rally the Greeks to cooperate with each other politically and militarily. Their political cooperation would be centered around the ancient Delphic Amphictiony (*Politeia*, 427c) and their military union focused on their common hostility towards Persia (*Menexenus* 245c). Thus the Platonic policies were very similar to Isocratic pan-Hellenism in their goals, even though they were much more sophisticated and philosophical in their analysis⁵³.

From the above exposition, concluded Plato, it would not require too great a mind to draw the proper inferences. If men would have foreseen the tragic effects of their actions, and had thus modulated and organized their states together; they would have preserved the great designs of Greek unity, so that no barbarian power would ever have set out against Greece as it did, nor would the barbarians hold the Greeks in contempt as people of little account. (*Nomoi*, 692c).

These then were Plato's plans for Greece, both for its internal order and its external security. The platonic ideal would ensure interstate harmony as well as political stability. But what of international peace? What of the relations between the Greek world and the barbarians? Could they be planned and organized as interstate affairs could? In other words, did Plato envisage a world government ruling a united humanity? These questions, the ultimate ones in world affairs, should now be investigated.

VII. World Government

Although in our own day the unity of mankind is taken for granted, at least in principle; in ancient times the opposite was true. The Greeks, as we

52. See Plato's Advice to Dion: *Epistles*, vii, 322e, 336a, 351b; viii, 357ab.

53. Plato's proposals were also similar to the foreign policies of the Athenian statesmen Cimon and Callicratidas.

saw, were notorious for their divisive concepts of humanity. No Greek theorist considered the problem important enough to make it the central issue of his philosophy. In spite of their deep concern with man as an individual, the Greeks fell short of conceiving man as a member of a species. Only here and there can one discern some glimpses of a broader view of man⁵⁴, but such view was unfortunately not shared by major philosophers of Greece.

Plato's position is quite equivocal; as it was pointed out previously, he accepted with qualifications the Greek-barbarian dichotomy. Yet, he also seems to transcend the distinctions of race, nation, and class⁵⁵. His world travels must have indicated to him the transnationality of human concerns which emanated from a single supra-national source of human nature. As a result of his wide knowledge, Plato admitted that the human race is very complex indeed (*Nomoi*, 777). But, he concluded, there were certain common denominators shared by all men, both in their physical and moral make-up⁵⁶.

In spite of his acceptance of human nature, however, Plato was not a humanist in the modern or even in the Hellenistic sense. His aristocratic standards were quite exclusive even for the Greeks, let alone the barbarians⁵⁷. In a way, Plato may be thought of as the very negation of *humanitas* or *philanthropia*⁵⁸. Individually, of course, Plato never made any invidious distinctions between Greeks and barbarians as to their personal worth and dignity. Nationalities were not condemned wholesale; a more basic cleavage with Plato was rather that between the *aristoi* and the rest of the world.

Having such an ambivalent conception of humanity, Plato could not build upon it any institutional forms. Since the human race did not and could not form a community, it could not be organized in any meaningful sense. It may have been that in the world of ideas, existence was universal and man

54. For a complete exposition of this theme see the "Introduction" of Baldry.

55. When Plato speaks of the human race, sometimes he only implies the Greeks and others he sounds as if he means men everywhere *Politeia*, 603c; 818b; *Timaeus*, 90d; *Nomoi* 770de, 937e, 950bc, 951b.

56. In the myth of *Timaeus* (68cd), all souls are said to have been made according to a single formula. In *Phaedo*, the subject is not the soul of Greeks, but of men in general. In *Meno* (73ad), virtue is equally applicable to all men.

57. Popper accuses Plato for having contempt, if not hostility, for humanity as a single unit (238-9). His bias is shown in the contemptuous way in which Plato refers to barbarian slaves in Athens for not being able to speak proper Attic. *Lysis*, 223a; *Alcibiades*, I, 122b; *Politeia*, 473c.

58. It is said that Plato had no love for man *qua* man. His notion of *eros* is not the same as *agape*. He knew of no human dignity as the claim of every man upon every other man (Jaspers, 165).

had a single model; but in the world of actuality mankind lived in many mansions (*Nomoi*, 692e, 693, 729d). Not only was order among the different cultures impossible but undesirable, since it would require mixing up the races and creating a common mongrelized mass. The world was for Plato in a state of nature, so all he could hope and work for was to put in order a small segment of it⁵⁹.

For these reasons, Plato considered it the height of folly for the Greeks to aspire for any kind of world rule⁶⁰. He found any suggestion of a world government equivalent to a world empire, and hence ridiculous⁶¹. The idealization of the polis as a fixed unit, precluded any thought of extensive governments. Greeks and barbarians could not live as equals within the same political system. Improving the polis, not enlarging it, was the philosopher's answer to the troubles of Greece.

VIII. Political Praxis

Plato's chance to put his ideas on world politics into practice came in 369, when Athens, Sparta, and Syracuse formed a triple alliance. For the first time, the three greatest states of Greece were together on the same side, something that could very well develop into the first step of pan-hellenic union. As a result of the improved relations among these states, Dionysius, the Syracusan ruler, invited Plato and other distinguished Athenians to visit his city⁶². The formal occasion for the invitation seems to have been a pan-Hellenic festival, in which Greek thinkers could present and discuss their ideas⁶³.

Plato accepted the challenge to put forth his plans to the best minds of

59. In his later works, Plato shows a movement towards a broader conception of humanity and a lesser emphasis on the Greek-barbarian dichotomy. See *Cratylus*; *Statesman*; *Laws*.

60. For Plato anyone who strove for world domination, be he an Alcibiades or an Alexander, committed the sin of hubris. *Alcibiades*, I, 105c; II, 141.

61. In a disputed section of the *Republic*, 494cd, Plato, seems to ridicule Alcibiades for wanting to rule the world and "lord over both Greeks and barbarians".

62. Along with Plato were invited: Isocrates; Aristipus; Aeschines; and others. Isocrates sent his regrets, but took the opportunity to write the tyrant asking him to take up the leadership of the pan-Hellenic cause in the west. (Ryle, 40, 60).

63. Many ancient writers (Xenophon, *Hiero*, i. 2; Isocrates, *Evagoras*, *Nicoles*; Plato, *Laws*, 953), indicate that such festivals patronized by wealthy rulers were quite a common occurrence in Greece. Dionysius, who was a patron of the arts, was thus doing a customary thing. Plato too, was no novice in literary competitions. Most likely, he had already participated in many Athenian festivals before and many foreign ones after.

Greece, and especially Dionysius who was in the best position to implement them. It is very plausible that it was for this purpose that Plato prepared to write a special trilogy. The single theme that was to run in all three dialogues was to be precisely what preoccupied Plato at the time: i.e., the survival of Hellenism amidst a sea of barbarism. As we have seen in his theory of international affairs, two of the three dialogues, *Critias* and *Timaeus*, form the core of Plato's ideas on world politics.

It was in the *Timaeus* where Plato begins his transition from the problems of the internal activities of the polis to those of external import. The dialogue deals with the finest hour of the polis: its struggle to survive a foreign invasion. The dialogue reminds us of an international parallel to the David-Goliath duel. The gigantic struggle between Athens and Atlantis in the dialogue clearly represents the Graeco-Persian wars. The moral of the story is that virtue can defeat power, and hence Greeks are superior to barbarians (24e-25d). At the end of the *Timaeus*, Plato promises to continue in greater detail the international implications of war in the next dialogue (27ab).

In the *Critias*, the awaited discussion hardly gets under way before it is abruptly cut short, and the work is left unfinished. There is a lot of speculation why Plato did not complete the dialogue, and consequently why he never even began the last one of the trilogy: *Hermocrates*⁶⁴. This half-finished project is especially regrettable to students of international relations, since it promised to complete Plato's political theory on this topic. Perhaps the reason for the incomplete project was the unexpected death of Dionysius in 367 which cancelled the festival.

The last opportunity, however, was soon made up when the son of Dionysius ascended the throne. The power behind the young tyrant became Dion, an old friend of Plato and associate in the Academy⁶⁵. As a platonist, Dion was all for putting Plato's plans in action, so he invited the philosopher to come to Syracuse to see what could be done. This was indeed a unique oppor-

64. Perhaps Plato put aside the trilogy and began the *Laws* in which he got so involved that he never came back to the other dialogues. The fact that the third book of the *Laws* fits as a conclusion to the *Critias*, confirms this hypothesis. In the *Laws*, of course, the international struggle takes more of a historical and less of a mythical form when Persia replaces Atlantis as culprit.

65. Dion's friendship with Plato may have been exaggerated. The Syracusan statesman was a wealthy aristocrat like Plato. He had many foreign contacts both in Greece and in Carthage. In the Academy he was much closer to Speusippus than to Plato; but he did help the institution as a whole when he contributed large sums of money as grants. (Ryle, 70-1).

tunity which Plato seized immediately and thus sailed west to put into practice the most ambitious scheme of his career⁶⁶.

Once in Syracuse, Plato's strategy was first to convert Dionysius to his way of thinking before trying any political moves with Dion⁶⁷. Plato saw his task of proselytizing the young monarch as the making of a philosopher-king. It did not take very long, however, for the master to realize that Dionysius was not philosophically inclined and that Syracuse could not be transformed into a republic. The domestic politics of the city were hopelessly corrupt. The palace intrigues and court machinations were a most unphilosophical environment for Platonic education and political reform.

Having failed in his high objective, Plato tried at least to influence some of the political decisions of the tyrant. But since the internal politics of Syracuse were a very dangerous area to get involved with, Plato concentrated on foreign policy. Specifically, the philosopher was concerned with the situation of Hellenism in the west, so this became the main topic of advice which he gave to the Sicilian leader.

Within a few years the situation in Sicily deteriorated dramatically. The Greek states in the island were in disarray and fighting among themselves, while the barbarians were knocking at the gates. Plato saw that the divided and weakened Greeks could not hope to hold off for very long the increasing pressures from Carthage and Rome; unless they put up a vigorous united front after a thorough preparation⁶⁸. Plato's plans for the salvation of Magnae Graecia was based on two specific projects. First to resettle the Greek communities which had been destroyed or decimated by constant wars and to strengthen the Greek population in those cities which were mixed with barbarian races. Second, to affect some form of collective defence so that the Greeks could live in peace and security⁶⁹.

Plato placed great emphasis on his proposal for the recolonization of the west, since only a rejuvenated Hellenism could survive the barbarian pressures. Not only more new colonies had to be planted and old ones re-

66. Coincidentally, while Plato was sailing westwards in 367, a pan-Hellenic mission was sailing eastwards to Persia for another international conference. Also at the same time, Aristotle was travelling south from Macedonia to Athens, to complete his education.

67. Athens had already made Dionysius the Younger an honorary citizen of the state, during the Lenian Games of 367.

68. For most of the information on Plato's ideas and actions in Sicily, see the *Epistles*. Although the authenticity of some of the letters is doubtful, they do give an excellent summary of the historical background of the philosopher's activities as they could have happened.

69. Cf. *Epistles*: iii, 315d; vii, 332cd, 336ad; viii, 357ab, 353e.

vitalized, but the political systems of these states had better be patterned according to the platonic standards. For this purpose, Plato asked Dionysius for land and people to establish a model colony as an example (Diogenes Laertius, 21).

The philosopher was hopeful that his model state would be emulated by others until western Greece would be filled with such republics. Being of the same political ideology these states would form a cultural and defensive community which would be impregnable from outside and indestructible from inside. It would thus solve both the problems of internal order and external security. This fraternal inter-state Greek community would then perhaps spread and unite with the entire Hellenic world.

For such dream to come true, a first step had to be taken somewhere. What was needed was a strong leader to take the initiative to rally around him the Greek states and impart to them his unity of purpose. This leader, Plato, was trying to convince Dionysius, was the ruler himself.

As is well known, however, Plato's plans failed to win support. In a letter he wrote in 353, Plato points out the increasing threats of the barbarians closing in from all sides upon the Greek city-states. He warns that the civil war which broke out in the island around 357, could only weaken all sides and thus make them ripe for enslavement by the Carthaginians. If Sicily fell to the barbarians, it would mark the beginning of the end of Hellenism in the west.

To avert such catastrophe, Plato suggested both domestic and foreign reforms. The first, he wrote, could be done by selecting a group of wise men from many Greek states and letting them draw up a new constitution for Syracuse. The second, he reiterated, would be a defence alliance uniting all the Greek states of the island (Plut. *Ad. Col.* 32). For this purpose was needed a strong leadership to inspire men to action. So Plato concluded, wishing that such a great statesman could be found to become the benefactor and savior of Hellas⁷⁰.

This then was Plato's last will and testament concerning the politics of western Greece. His traumatic experiences there were the main factor of his changes in the political ideals he held originally. His disillusioned idealism turned more and more into skepticism and mysticism; thus influencing accordingly philosophic thought in the years to come.

70. Plato gave Dionysius his due by recognizing that the Greeks owed him the preservation of their culture in the island, since he did prevent the Carthaginians from barbarizing Sicily. *Epistle*, viii, 353-355.

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