

**To cite text:**

Lefka, Aikaterini (2023), "The Citizens' Lifelong Learning in Plato's *Laws*", *Philosophy and Society* 34 (1): 5–31.

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## THE CITIZENS' LIFELONG LEARNING IN PLATO'S LAWS<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

In the *Laws*, Plato presents an educational program for all members of the projected city of Magnesia, which concerns not only various kinds of specific knowledge, but also, and more importantly, the application of ethical and political virtues, in view of becoming excellent citizens and achieving a "good life" in the long run, at the private and public level. These objectives are realised in many ways, as for example, by the people's participating in the legislation and the city's administration, by receiving a common fundamental education, including lessons of reading, writing, mathematics and astronomy; practicing sports; playing music; singing; dancing and also by taking an active role in religious festivals. The population is then divided in three groups, according to age, and they form "choirs" dedicated to different divinities (the children to the Muses, the young people to Apollo, the elderly to Dionysus). Thus, we may deduce that Plato was one of the ancient Greek philosophers who supported the concept of "lifelong learning," expanded through various kinds of knowledge, skills and qualities. In my paper I examine the objectives, different contents of Plato's pedagogical project destined to all the Magnetes, the various methods he proposed to use in order to arrive at its attainment, as well as the eventual reasons for these choices, related to his philosophical theories. I conclude by making a comparison with the notion of "lifelong learning" as we understand it today.

### KEYWORDS

Plato, *Laws*, ideal city, ethics, politics, citizen, good life, lifelong learning, religious, ethical and civic education, virtues, body-soul-intellect relations, gods.

## Introduction

Plato (428–347 B.C.) lived during a troubled period. At the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the city of Athens, engaged in the Peloponnesian war against Sparta and its allies with the well-known disastrous results, presents, according to the philosopher, a serious intellectual and moral decay (supported by materialist and relativist doctrines), influencing also the political, intellectual and religious

<sup>1</sup> I would like to dedicate the present article to my dear father, Periklis Lefkas, extremely courageous, sensitive and generous as a person, an inspired and inspiring professor and headmaster, as well as an enthusiastic researcher for new knowledge and experiences, since his early youth till today.

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life of the next century. The Athenian democracy showed many weaknesses; some of them touched Plato, of aristocratic descent – as, for example, the sentence to death of his venerated teacher, Socrates.

The philosopher's wish to see men lead a good life in the framework of their city is fundamental. He believes, as many other thinkers of the Antiquity, that this should be the objective of politics and that philosophy should define the content of the best life, as well as the means to achieve it. Plato develops constantly the reflection around this subject since his early dialogues. Arriving at his maturity, he tries to express more precisely what he believes to be the best way to organise the public domain. His "ideal cities" take form especially in two dialogues, his longest works: the *Republic* and the *Laws*.

The *Republic* represents a discussion on the definition of justice between Socrates and his friends. They imagine the city of Kallipolis as an example for a better understanding of this notion and the way to apply it in practice.

The *Laws* are inspired by the ambition to revise all the known political systems and to elaborate in detail a model of legislation combining in an original way a selection of their most interesting elements for Magnesia, a supposed future colony, resulting from the cooperation of different cities (a "second rank" city, after the ideal one of the *Republic*). The dialogue takes place in Crete during a pilgrimage from Knossos to the sanctuary of Zeus Idaeus of three aged friends: Clinias the Cretan, Megillus the Lacedemonian and an "Athenian Stranger". The spirit of this work is much more concrete. As it is the last Platonic dialogue (I consider the *Epinomis* its epilogue), one may think that the philosopher transmitted thus the quintessence of his experience and his political, ethical and religious positions, oriented until the end by the will to realise the individuals' well-being in a society.

For Plato's ethical and political theories in general, one may say that *eudaimonia*, or the "good life", is an objective which consists in the exercise of dialectics and the persons' critical spirit for the rational definition of the Good and the virtues, so that these could be applied in the private and the public spheres, in all circumstances.<sup>2</sup> The government of a city, conceived in its totality as a living organism, should be undertaken by the wisest and the ethically best citizens, men and women:<sup>3</sup> the Platonic ideal regime is a "timocracy", where each person assumes political functions according to their qualities, in the service of the common good.<sup>4</sup>

There are, however, differences in the way this main idea is adopted in the ideal cities of Kallipolis and Magnesia, respectively.<sup>5</sup> I shall cite only briefly those that are the most interesting for us here.

2 See, for example: Wersinger 2008; Lefka 2009; Tordo-Rombaut 2017.

3 Plato is a supporter of the egalitarian participation of both sexes in the public life, against the patriarchal attitudes of his time.

4 For Plato's political theories see, for example, Klosko 1986; Fine 1999; Bobonich 2002; Schofield 2006 and more specifically concerning the *Laws*, for example: Strauss 1975; Stalley 1983; Bobonich 2010; Sanday 2012.

5 See, for example, Aristotle, *Politics*, II, 6, 1265 a–b and Saunders 1972: 28.

In Kallipolis the social “classes” are defined clearly in relation to their function, according to each person’s character and natural qualities. The exercise of political power is reserved to the philosophers, who are educated by the city in all the sciences and the practice of dialectics up to the highest point, the knowledge of the Idea of the Good, for 40 years, passing progressively from severe exams of selection among the guardians. The conditions of their life are particular: they are hosted together in the centre of the city, having no right to private property or to a particular family, so that they won’t be tempted to abuse their great power, instead dedicating themselves wholly to the city’s well-being.<sup>6</sup>

In the projected Magnesia, the citizens aren’t divided in the same way (the four classes are based on financial criteria, as it was the case in Athens) and they have a greater share in the exercise of political power. Indeed, this regime tries to combine the democratic and the oligarchic dimensions, as all the citizens (men and women) participate in the assembly and may assume specific important magistrates. These are defined by nomination, vote, lot, and scrutiny, which are the means of favorising the so-called “arithmetic” equality (the same rights for all) as well as the “geometric” equality (distribution according to each person’s merits). The highest administrative body is the “Nocturnal Council” (*nykterinos syllogos*), a group of seniors possessing the highest degree of knowledge, wisdom and virtue, who should ensure that the city continues to follow the philosophically defined principles and the spirit of the initial legislators, even when changes should occur in the laws (they could be considered as the equivalent of the philosopher-governors of Kallipolis) (see also Baima (internet) 2023).<sup>7</sup>

In Magnesia all citizens participate in the government, at various levels. Therefore, as I will demonstrate, Plato insists here on a lifelong education for the whole population, concerning not only specific kinds of theoretical knowledge and practical capacities, but also the realisation of intellectual, ethical, political, and even bodily virtues that he considers crucial for the optimal functioning of the city’s common life and the good life itself.<sup>8</sup>

In my article, I shall examine these educational objectives and the different methods Plato proposes in order to achieve them, as well as the eventual reasons for these choices, in relation to his philosophical theories. Finally, I shall compare the positions of the ancient Greek philosopher to the actual way we usually conceive the notion of “lifelong learning”.

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6 For the functions, the selection, and the education of the philosopher guardians, see *Republic*, IV, 419a 1–421c6; 423c5–d 2; V, 454d6–456d1; VII, 514a1–521c7; 535a3–540c2. For the conditions and the objectives of their life, see *Republic*, III, 416c4–417b8; IV, 423e3–424a2; V, 449c2–462e2; 464a1–466b3. See also, for example: Kent-Sprague 1976; Reeve 1988; Edmond 1991; Lefka 2011a.

7 For the Nocturnal Council, see, for example, Brisson 2003.

8 For different aspects of Plato’s ideas on education in this dialogue, see also, for example: Jouët-Pastré 2000; Mouze 2000; Cleary 2003; Domanski 2007; Georgoulas 2012; Castel-Bouchouchi 2013; Calame 2017; Spieker 2017; Stalley 2017.

## Plato's Educational Objectives in the *Laws*

It is noteworthy, I think, that the *Laws* begin with the word “god” (*theos*), integrated in a question about the origin of the legislation of the interlocutors' homelands (*Laws*, I, 624a1–625b1). Indeed, the most important Dorian countries, admired by Plato for their political organisation, Lacedaemon and Crete, attribute their legislation respectively to Apollo<sup>9</sup> and Zeus.<sup>10</sup> Apollo's instructions were transmitted by his oracle of Delphi<sup>11</sup> to the legislator Lycurgus, who adapted them in the way he thought best to the laws of Sparta. As for Crete, Zeus communicated on this subject at regular intervals with his son, the just king Minos<sup>12</sup>, in the Idean Cave, when he was taking the same path with the interlocutors of the *Laws* to climb the sacred mountain. There are no clear references to the Ionian city of Athens here.<sup>13</sup> However, one could take under consideration the allusion to its founder, Athena, made by the Cretan Clinias, when he says that he calls the Stranger “Athenian” and not “Atticus”, because he seems to prefer a name evoking the goddess (*Laws*, I, 626d3–5). According to É. des Places, this name is intended to attest some qualities in common with Athena: “protector of the arts, inspirator of the sober reason and the eloquence, which are found united in the Athenian Stranger” (Des Places 1951: 4, n. 1). In fact, Plato seems to underline the “philosophical nature” common between Athena and “one of her children” to indicate the personal proximity of the Athenian Stranger with the goddess who was believed to found his country's legislation.<sup>14</sup>

In all the three cases of these existent cities Plato describes the legislation as a divine present and as the action of “divine men” of different kinds, who serve as intermediates between the divinity and the city. These legislators are capable of understanding and applying the “divine justice” to the elaboration of the laws that will regulate the human societies in the best possible way (Lefka 2013: 269–270).

9 For more information about Apollo, the archer god, protector of music and medicine, his different attributes and the Oracle of Delphi see, for example: Parke 1939; Roux 1976; Monbrun 2007; Detienne 2009. For an interpretation of his role in Plato's work, see Schefer 1996.

10 For Zeus, the divine king of the world, the “father of gods and men”, see, for example, Cook 1925; Parke 1967; Lloyd-Jones 1971.

11 Therefore, it is the Pythian Apollo; see also *Laws*, I, 632d1–6.

12 Minos was considered a contemporary of Theseus, the first king who realised the unity of Attica's *kômoi* and centralised the political power in the city of Athens. For the Idean Cave see Sakellarakis 1988.

13 It is the case in other dialogues, where the Athenians are considered as raised and educated by Athena alone (*Timaeus*, 23d4 *sq.*) or by Athena and Hephaistus (*Critias*, 109c6 *sq.*). For Athena, the virgin war goddess of wisdom see, for example: Kérenyi 1952; Herington 1955; Kasper-Butz 1990; Deacy and Villing 2001. For Athena in the Platonic dialogues, see Lecomte 1993.

14 In this passage, it is accepted by the interlocutors that the questions of the Athenian and his way to structure the information, in view of defining the principles on which a habit is founded, clarified the subject. The Stranger applies in fact the dialectic method, which succeeds to facilitate the comprehension.

In the *Laws*, the city's good function is founded on religious beliefs, which, according to the interlocutors, should be shared by all citizens: the gods exist, they are just and they care for humans (*Laws*, X, 885b4–10; 907b6–9).<sup>15</sup> In book X, there are specific provisions of the legislation for the “religious (re) education” of the citizens who would put into question these basic metaphysical positions, or, in case of insistence, their for social. In fact, for the legislators, a person who wouldn't believe in the existence of divine justice could at any moment transgress secretly the city's laws and would not respect any moral principle (*Laws*, X, 885c1–909d3). Plato considers the faith in the gods of the city, as established by the legislator, the only guarantee of political stability (Derenne 1930: 250–252), as other Athenians of his time do. There are, however, some important differences: Plato introduces the laws of his ideal city concerning the official religion in accordance with his personal view on religious beliefs (provided they are approved by the oracle of Delphi). He privileges the pious internal disposition rather than the external manifestations of the cult (which are however present, too, in all the city's activities and at all moments of the public life, cf. Reverdin 1945; Lefka 2013: 189–275). He is interested also, as an educator, in the psychical, ethical and epistemological condition of the “impious” (Saunders 1972: 316–318). As G. Van Riel stresses, the Platonic piety is interiorised, linked mostly to morality as imitation of the divinity: being just and observing temperance is the best way to please the god, who is the measure of all things. Plato apparently founds the legislation of the city and its ethical values on this divine measure, in order to escape from the traditional “ritual formalism”, as well as from the sophists' subjectivity. The failure of the “atheists” in religion becomes thus the reason of their failure in the moral and the political domains (Van Riel 2008).

As mentioned above, the gods' good will is attested, among others, by the various presents they offer to the humans, in view of helping them to survive, but also of educating all those who wish to follow their example, cultivating

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15 It should be noted here that already in the *Republic* (especially in books II and III) Plato exercises a severe criticism against the immoral anthropomorphic elements of the traditional religious beliefs about the gods, and then he advances, for the first time in the framework of the ancient Greek religion, what he considers rationally defined “theological rules” (*typoi theologias*): the gods are excellent beings (physically, morally and intellectually); as they are just and benevolent, they accord only goods to the humans (*Republic*, II, 378e4–383c7; III, 386a1–392a1). In his references to all divine beings, Plato follows these principles, transforming the traditional divinities into models of wisdom and virtue (see also Lefka 2003c). They are taking care of the harmonious function of the whole universe and especially of humans, the only mortal living beings possessing an immortal soul – the intellect being its highest part, which should guide the two irrational parts, linked to emotions and desires (for a concise presentation of the complex subject of the parts of the soul in Plato and the relations between soul-mind-body, see, for example: Guthrie 1957; Robinson 1970; Mattéi 2000; Safty 2003: 181–226; Karamanolis 2017: 340–349). For various aspects and interpretations of Plato's religious ideas, see also, for example: Goldschmidt 1949; Menn 1995; Motte 1997; Brisson 2002; Bordt 2006; Karfik 2007; Carone 2010; Timotin 2012 and 2017; Lefka 2013; Benitez 2016; Dillon 2016; Yount 2017.

their reason and the virtues and advancing towards the realisation of a “good life”, which is also considered as “becoming like god” (*homoïōsis theōi*).<sup>16</sup> This means that each divine present has a beneficial influence on our lives and that there exists also a “correct” way to use it, so that its aim is accomplished. For example, the “felicitous choir of the Muses” offers us the knowledge of the appropriate mathematical analogies, so that we may play with rhythm and harmony (*Epinomis*, 991b3–4).

When Plato insists on the divine character of the legislation, qualifying the laws as a godsent gift, this should imply their beneficial value and the innate connection that the well-governed human cities should present with the divine laws ruling the universe (*kosmos*).<sup>17</sup> At the same time, he implies that, through the divinities' intervention, there could be a certain “objective” element in the elaboration of the laws, which guarantees their ethical and political excellence, against the purely subjective, arbitrary and pragmatic vision of these products of the human society, advanced by the sophists.

The “Athenian Stranger” considers the objective of all the mentioned legislations of these excellent cities to be helping the citizens become virtuous persons (*Laws*, I, 630c1–5). And the interlocutors decide to investigate together which would be the set of laws that could achieve this goal in the best possible way for the projected colony of the Magnesians (*Laws*, I, 643a4–644b4, II 652b3–653a3).

This conception of the legislation seems perhaps surprising to our modern mind, which stands closer to the perceptions of the sophists. However, Plato in fact follows the traditional beliefs of the Greeks concerning the role of the legislator and the laws. In fact, the legislator was considered also an educator of the citizens in the civic virtue (cf. Jaeger 1947: 217). The laws were supposed to teach the citizens what is fine, good and just, and to incite them to apply this teaching in order to achieve an excellent private and common life, and therefore *eudaimonia*. In fact, the essential differences among the cities' legislations were considered to reside in the different ways of defining the virtues that would assure the best possible common life, taking under consideration especially the contribution of the citizens in the administration and the function of their city.

Plato agrees with these ideas. It would be fortunate, he says, if men didn't even need a legislation, and if they were capable to think by themselves to find what would be the best actions to undertake so that they would satisfy their city's needs (*Laws*, IX 857e3–858a3).

16 See also, for example: Sedley 1999; Pradeau 2003; Lefka 2003b and 2013: 431–434.

17 See also *Laws*, IV, 715e3–718c10, where the legislators are thinking of a discourse addressed to the future citizens of Magnesia, in order to explain better the relation between the divine justice governing the universe and the legislation of their city. Those who freely accept these laws, because they understand their crucial importance for their own ethical quality and for the felicitous stability of the city, “follow” the divinity, who “holds the beginning, the middle and the end of everything”, being thus “the measure of all things”. See also Romeiro Oliveira and Simões 2018.



For Magnesia, the three interlocutors would like to create a legislation that would lead the people not only to become pious and just, but also to a combination of the principal ethical virtues pursued by the Dorian and the Ionian cities, that is an equilibrated mixture of courage and temperance (*Laws*, I, 634a1–4). This would be an original composition of the best qualities cultivated by each kind of regime (oligarchic and democratic).

Of course, as all citizens participate in one way or another in the administrative tasks, we may deduce that they should acquire a certain degree of intellectual virtues, also, as solid reasoning and critical thinking.

## Means and Methods of Lifelong Education for the Citizens of Magnesia

We shall examine now some of the most important means and pedagogical methods that the interlocutors of the *Laws* propose, in order to realise the above objectives, during an education that should be extended to the citizens' whole lifetime.

### Legislation and Practice of Citizenship

A lifelong civic education is undertaken, as we saw above, by the legislation of the city of the Magnesians. The citizens are rational and free persons; therefore, the interlocutors consider that they should be treated as such. Thus they should be convinced to accept the rules the legislators think best to establish for the projected city, and not just feel obliged to submit to them, under threat of punishment. Plato believes that coercion should be used only if absolutely necessary (*Laws*, IX, 858d6–9). This is why the Athenian Stranger proposes that, in their great majority, the laws should be preceded by “preludes” that explain the reasons supporting their adoption by the citizens, in order to treat them as free persons (*Laws*, IV, 722d3–723e8).<sup>18</sup> I think that this way to present the laws already constitutes a method of educating the citizens to acquire critical spirit, to act as independent persons and to understand in practice the notion of respect for one's freedom (as Plato understands it here) (cf. Lefka 2003a).

Another method of lifelong civic education related to the legislation in Magnesia is the participation of the people in the revision of the laws that are related to each person's domain of activities and specialization, if they notice

18 The commentators offer various interpretations of the preludes in the *Laws*: Bobonich 1991 and Laks 1991 consider them as an example of “rational persuasion”, equivalent to the dialectical demonstration. According to Stalley 1994 and Brisson 2000: 249 (and n. 5), the preambles of the *Laws* are persuasive discourses of “mythical” or “rhetoric” type, addressed to the emotivity and not to the reason of the citizens (the one of the book X, treating of the existence of the gods, is an exception). All the preambles are just the expression of a necessity known by the legislator. Nightingale 1993: 291–292, thinks that the use of the rhetoric or mythical means of persuasion is due to the fact that these texts contain directives and not an incitation to questioning.

any problem in their application. This is valid, for example, even for the laws concerning the religious rituals of the city, introduced by the oracle of Delphi (*Laws*, VIII, 828a1–5), which can be modified after the relative objections and proposals of a person exercising some sacerdotal activity (*Laws*, VIII, 828b3–5).

This participation of the citizens in the final elaboration of the legislation is an original measure of the *Laws*. In spite of the apparent absolute and inflexible character suggested by the idea of the godsent origin of the legislation, we may attest that the divine intervention is limited to the principles of the laws, which should express justice and goodness, but that the humans concerned should constantly remodel the concrete application of these principles by participating in the legislative procedure (and therefore showing that they may possess the wisdom and the virtues of a good legislator, as well as his educative capacities).

The Athenian democracy, too, expected the participation of the citizens in the process of changing the legislation. The essential difference with Magnesia resides in the fact that all the Athenian citizens participated in the same way in the discussions concerning all the laws, on any subject. Plato thinks that the citizens should interfere only in the domain related to their personal expertise, so that the modifications would be really pertinent and efficient. For the Magnesians the criterion of participation in the legislative procedure is especially their experience regarding the specific subject and not simply their citizenship.

Their knowledge, their capacities and their qualities are also taken primordially under consideration in the procedure of their selection for specific administrative roles, as we already saw. Assuming these functions is at the same time an occasion to apply the relevant virtues.

In general, practicing the various duties of a citizen, as defined by the legislation, was considered in the Antiquity the best way to be constantly educated in being a good citizen.<sup>19</sup> The participation of the Magnesians in the functioning of their city is integrated in this concrete method of civic education.

### The Magistrate of Public Education

Athenian Stranger: In the department we have been dealing with, we have still to appoint an officer who shall preside over the whole range of education of both boys and girls. For this purpose there shall be one officer legally appointed: he shall not be under fifty years of age, and shall be the father of legitimate children of either sex, or preferably of both sexes. Both the candidate that is put first, and the elector who puts him first, must be convinced that of the highest offices of State this is by far the most important. For in the case of every creature – plant or animal, tame and wild alike – is the first shoot, if it sprouts out well, that is most effective in bringing to its proper development the essential excellence of the creature in question. Man, as we affirm, is a tame creature; none the less, while he is wont to become an animal most godlike and tame

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Pythagorean School, D.-K. 58 D 4: Stob., *Anthol.*, IV, I, 40; Solon, D.-K., 10, 3, b, 10: Stob., *Anthol.*, III, I, 172.



when he happens to possess a happy nature combined with right education, if his training be deficient or bad, he turns out the wildest of all earth's creatures. Wherefore the lawgiver must not permit them to treat the education of children as a matter of secondary or casual importance; but, inasmuch as the presiding official must be well selected, he must begin first by charging them to appoint as president, to the best of their power, that one of the citizens who is in every way the most excellent. (*Laws*, VI, 765d5–766b2)<sup>20</sup>

The Stranger insists here on the major importance of education for the development of a human being's character. Thus, he proposes, in an original way, the election of a magistrate officially charged with the education of all the young people of the city, boys and girls. The person elected to accomplish this fundamental function for five years should be the best among the citizens, in every way, that is someone who knows and applies virtue, so that he would be not only an expert on the subject, but also himself a living example for future citizens.<sup>21</sup> He should have a certain maturity and the precious experience of raising his own children, too.

In fact, in Plato's time the education of each child depended on the choices and the financial possibilities of the parents. The girls would receive only elementary instruction or just the knowledge of the practical skills necessary to keep a household and to raise children. The boys, as future citizens, would be educated progressively. The most privileged young men of the classical period would attend private courses on the art of argumentation and persuasive discourse, offered by the sophists or the rhetors, who were considered "masters of the civic virtue" – a role contested by many philosophers. Plato, among others, underlines on many occasions the importance of the coherence between the knowledge of the virtues (piety, justice, courage, temperance, wisdom) and their application in the private and the public life.<sup>22</sup> This is achieved by the philosophical teaching, which becomes the best education "of the civic virtue".<sup>23</sup> The innovations introduced in the city of Magnesia for a public education common to all the boys and girls of the city, under the official supervision of the most virtuous citizen, clearly represents in practice the way Plato conceives the necessary elementary education.

Let us add that the election of the magistrate responsible for the public education is taking place in the temple of Apollo, being thus put under the auspices

20 Translated by Bury, 1926. For all the citations of this paper, the same edition and translation is used.

21 In fact, we find here the same concepts that Socrates expressed in the Platonic dialogue *Alcibiades I* (121d12–124a7), where he mentioned the example of the education of the king of Persia, assigned to men who are excellent in each one of the arts and virtues to be acquired by the prince.

22 Thus, the personalities of Pythagoras or Empedocles, for example, granted also with a dimension of "divine" man, exercised an attraction on their disciples as strong as the influence of their doctrines.

23 For the relation between the theoretical knowledge of the Good and its application in Plato, see also Lefka 2014.

of a divinity not only protecting traditionally the young people<sup>24</sup> and music, but also assuming a predominant role of guide in religious, ethical and political matters for the ancient world, through his oracle at Delphi (Otto 1947: 71).<sup>25</sup>

### Education of the Soul by *mousikē* and of the Mind by *gymnastikē*

When the Athenian legislator speaks about the youths' education, he puts forward that it has a double objective: it should cultivate their bodies by "gymnastic" (*gymnastikē*) and their soul by "music" (*mousikē*), so that they would become "in all respects as beautiful and good as possible" (*Laws*, VII, 788c6–8). Indeed, these were the two parts of the traditional fundamental education in the Antiquity. The term *mousikē* covered the whole of the theoretical subjects of learning: reading, writing, mathematics, poetry and singing – let's not forget, too, that the Ancient Greek language was practically sung. Then the Stranger divides the *gymnastikē* in two parts: dancing and wrestling (*Laws*, VII, 795d6–e1) (which, in fact, is one of the various sports practiced in Magnesia since childhood).

The legislator insists also that there should be stability already in the games of Magnesia's children, continued in the methods and contents of their education later. In this way, the citizens may learn to keep more easily unchanged the city's principles for the political organisation (*Laws*, VII, 797a8–798d6), as permanence is also one of the objectives of Plato's political ideal.

### Mousikē

In the *Republic*, Plato had already developed in detail his ideas on the capacity of art, especially poetry and music, to form the soul of the listeners. He stressed the dangers that this would imply, if the models the poets represented in their works were immoral, like the ones of the traditional divinities figuring in the epics of Homer and Hesiod (*Republic*, II, 376e6 *sq.*). He introduced the imposition of the *typoi theologias* to the content of all works of art accepted in the ideal city, and used more particularly for the education of the young people. The different modes of music itself would be also controlled, according to the effects they could have on the character. In the *Laws*, the legislators insist also that the poetry and the music used for the education of the city's

24 Apollo, as well as Hermes and Heracles, protect the young people who train in the gymnasiums; see Graf 1996.

25 Otto sees in this ethical function of Apollo an "interiorization" of his cathartic properties. Apollo, through his Oracle of Delphi, was giving also precepts for a good moral conduct, as "Know thyself" (*gnōthi seauton*) or "Do nothing in excess" (*mēden agan*) – the most famous of these maxims, attributed to the "seven sages", which the visitors could read when they arrived at the temple. The "seven sages" of the Antiquity, recognised as advisors in matters of virtue for all Greece, were thus placed under the auspices of this divinity. The importance of this Panhellenic traditional function of Apollo is such that certain historians of the Greek religion speak of the god as "the highest expression of the Greek genius in the religious and moral domain": see Séchan and Lévêque 1966: 213, 223 (n. 170).

youth should present paradigms of good ethical behaviour and therefore follow a strict regulation by the laws, without permitting any original deviations. The “soul’s training” aims essentially at the familiarization of the young people with virtue, as it is applied by the divinities, the heroes and the humans, in a stable way (*Laws*, II, 654e, 668a, VII, 798d8 sq.).<sup>26</sup>

As for the more general sense of *mousikē*, concerning also the other parts of the fundamental education, as reading, writing, mathematics, we saw that in Magnesia all the boys and girls of the city will follow these courses, under the supervision of the responsible magistrate. As mathematics is considered by Plato to be a practice of abstract thinking and preparation for the teaching of philosophy, we may deduce that all the citizens have a certain access to this kind of high theoretical knowledge and intellectual training, whereas in the Kallipolis it remained the privilege of the philosopher-governors (Baima (internet) 2023).

Another subject that is added to the scientific education of the Magnesians is astronomy. In the *Laws* the interlocutors consider the periodical, cyclical movement of the sky and the celestial bodies as an irrefutable proof of their divine identity, i.e. of their excellent soul and their perfect intellect, which are the sources of this ideal movement. This observation concerning the “visible gods” is used as a proof for the existence of the divinities in general (*Laws*, X, 886a1–899d3).<sup>27</sup>

The religious, ethical and educative function of astronomy is supported in other passages of the Platonic dialogues, too.<sup>28</sup> Based on his astronomical observations, man will conceive how the excellent reason can guide the body in well-coordinated movements in the sky and will try to imitate the relevant attitude on earth. In this way the same harmonious connection will be achieved among the parts of the soul and between soul and body, but also among all citizens and all humans. By following the example of the stellar divinities, every individual, every state, all humankind can move, if they wish, according to the same rules of rhythm and harmony, in order to participate in the felicitous cosmic dance. These concepts are indicative of the strong relations between the movements of the body and the virtues of the soul for Plato, as well as of their multiple importance.

## Gymnastikē

### *Sports and Panhellenic Games*

As we know, sports were highly appreciated by the Ancient Greeks. They were aiming not only at the good physical condition of the body (the bodily virtues of strength, flexibility, endurance), and the acquisition of specific capacities, related

26 On Plato’s attitude towards music and poetry see, for example: Moutsopoulos 1959; Murdoch 1977; Janaway 1995; Murray 1996; Naddaff 2002; Destrée and Hermann 2011.

27 For Plato’s “*theologia naturalis*” see Ferrari 1998; Naddaf 1996, 2004.

28 For example: *Republic*, 528e3–531c8; *Laws*, VII, 817e5–818a1; *Epinomis*, 986a8–988b7; see also Sedley 1997: 332; Slezák 1997; Karfik 2004; Carone 2005; Lefka 2011b.

indirectly to a constant training potentially useful for military purposes, but also at the cultivation of relevant psychic virtues, like strength of will, perseverance, temperance. Sports encouraged also a spirit of noble emulation among the athletes and of a peaceful competition among the cities, within the framework of the Panhellenic games. They were celebrated on the occasion of great religious feasts at famous sanctuaries, as the Olympic games at the temple of Zeus at Olympia, the Nemean games (at the temple of Zeus at Nemea), the Isthmian games (in honour of Poseidon), the Pythian games (at the temple of Apollo at Delphi).<sup>29</sup>

In Magnesia, the legislators encourage the practice of sports for children and for adults of both sexes. They insisted on those that may become agreeable exercises for the military training, like running in arms, wrestling or fighting with weapons (*Laws*, VIII, 832d9 *sq.*). They always imply also sanctuaries of divinities related to the particular activity: for example, Ares<sup>30</sup> for the runners in full armour, Apollo and Artemis<sup>31</sup> for the archer runners (*Laws*, VIII, 833b2–c2).<sup>32</sup> The legislator describes the runners' departure for the sanctuary that would be the middle point of a race, from which they should return back afterwards to their initial starting point, as if the runners "went towards the god" and then came back to the magistrates who had sent them. It is a very particular way to present an athletic competition. But if one takes under consideration that this game is also a way to train the citizens for their "departure for war", one may imagine that in case of a true battle, the same persons would have the impression, thanks to this kind of conditioning since their early youth, to "go towards the divinity" that will protect and help them to go back home safely afterwards, as winners. Sports become also an exercise in courage, the military virtue *per excellence*.

The legislators of Magnesia further consider that the city should participate in the traditional Panhellenic games, by choosing the best possible ambassadors to accompany the athletes. They shall thus develop the most favourable image of the city in the domain of international relationships, as it was undertaken usually by the representatives of the Greek cities at the international athletic meetings. The difference of the Platonic city is that it should earn its reputation based not on the exposition of material power and wealth, but on the excellent qualities of its citizens, corporeal and psychic.<sup>33</sup>

29 For the Panhellenic importance of these competitions, whose religious character was always valorised by the inaugural sacrifices and by the processions and hymns of the closing ceremony, see Rudhardt 1992: 149–158.

30 For Ares, the god of war, son of Zeus and Hera, see, for example: Brown 1989; Jouan 1989; Wathelet 1991; Mezzadri 2002; Blanco-Rodriguez 2005.

31 For Artemis, twin sister of Apollo, the bow-bearing huntress, protectress of the wildlife and all the young living beings, see, for example: Monbrun 1989; Serafini 2013, Ellinger 2008; Guarisco 2015.

32 The interpretation of this complicated passage has provoked many discussions; see Saunders 1972: 71–74.

33 "The games is therefore a display of money, force, ability or talent; it offers to the represented groups the occasion to show in this display their vital resources and their

Athenian Stranger: It is right that embassies should be sent to Appollo at Pytho and to Zeus at Olympia, and to Nemea and the Isthmus, to take part in the sacrifices and games in honour of these gods; and it is right also that the ambassadors thus sent should be, so far as it is practicable, as numerous, noble and good as possible, – men who will gain for the State a high reputation in the sacred congresses of peace, and confer on it a glorious repute that will rival that of its warriors; and these men, when they return home, will teach the youth that the political institutions of other countries are inferior to their own. (*Laws*, XII, 950e2–951a4)

An interesting detail is the way in which the legislator chooses to speak about the games. In fact, he says that they should send citizens to Apollo and to Zeus, so that they could participate in the sacrifices and the games in honour of these divinities. The first objective of the embassy should be religious, followed by the athletic, social, and political dimensions. It is still a way to transform a human sportive reunion into a practice of piety. The second important point to note is that the persons who can travel outside the city (only on rare occasions, as this one), should adopt an educative attitude towards the young citizens, by insisting on the superiority of the political organization of Magnesia. It is important, as we shall also see later, that the citizens are convinced of the excellent quality of their political system and institutions, so that they wouldn't wish to introduce any radical changes – this is why the legislators manifestly prefer avoiding as much as possible the contacts of the Magnesians with foreign cultures and ways of life.

### *Dancing and Religious Festivals*

Athenian Stranger : Of dancing there is one branch in which the style of the Muse is imitated, preserving both freedom and nobility, and another which aims at physical soundness, agility and beauty by securing for the various parts and members of the body the proper degree of flexibility and extension and bestowing also the rhythmical motion which belongs to each, and which accompanies the whole of dancing and is diffused throughout it completely. (*Laws*, VII, 795e1–7)

The second part of corporeal education is dancing, which is also divided in two kinds: the first “imitates” the nobility and the liberty of the “style of the Muse”. The nine Muses (*Mousai*) protect and inspire all kinds of music, but also dancing and other fine arts and sciences. Besides, their name is etymologically parented and often a synonym of the term “music” (*mousikē*).<sup>34</sup> The second kind of dancing, lighter, aims at the harmonious development of the body by appropriate rhythmic movements. But the legislators will advance also another important distinction of the dances they wish to implement to Magnesia.

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energy. The winner is inhabited by power. The games reveal in this respect and consecrate all superiority” (Saunders 1972: 152). See also Des Places 1969: 147–148.

34 For the nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, protectors of the arts, the sciences and philosophy, see, for example: Montana 1988; Murray and Wilson 2004; Walde 2000.

### A. “Civic” or “Political” (politikoi) Dances

On the one hand, there are the kinds of dance Plato calls *politikoi*, which can be translated as: “civic” or “political”, i.e. the two categories that correspond to the above mentioned principles and therefore may be accepted as appropriate for the citizens of Magnesia.

The first kind of civic dances, named “warlike” or *pyrrichē*, aims essentially at the education to military fighting, at reinforcing the body for fighting through appropriate movements and at developing a courageous spirit. The second kind, the “pacific” one or *emmeleia*, trains the body and the soul to the virtues that are necessary in times of peace: the well-being, the harmonious movement, but also the action showing temperance towards pleasure (*Laws*, VII, 814d8–815b6).

1. “Warlike” dances, taught by armed divinities, or semi-divine *daimones* followers of gods.

The Athenian legislator refers to the necessity for the young people to imitate the divinities or the semi-gods or the *daimones* (minor divinities) followers of gods, who were the first to teach certain armed warlike dances, and gives concrete examples coming respectively from the three states of origin of the interlocutors: Athena for Athens, the Dioscuri Castor and Pollux<sup>35</sup> for Sparta and the Kouretes<sup>36</sup> for Knossos. In this way, the youth on the one hand participates in the city’s festivals, while on the other they practice the use of weapons, and at the same time honour the gods (*Laws*, VII, 796b3–d5).

It is noteworthy for the Platonic theories that the model of Athena is used here, presented as a young girl who “enjoys the amusement of dancing” to support the egalitarian education of the two sexes that the philosopher wishes to offer to all the young people of his city (cf. *Laws*, VII, 788a1 sq.).

2. “Pacific” dances, taught by the divinities supervising the three choirs of age groups.

35 Mythology reports that Leda, after her union with Zeus under the form of a swan, gave birth to two eggs. Two boys came out from the first: Castor and Pollux ; from the second, two girls : Helen and Clytemnestra. Only one child of each pair of twins was immortal. The Dioscuri were connected by such a brotherly love that they obtained finally from their father to share equally among them the status of immortality and the submission to death. As heroes and *daimones*, they received a very important cult in Sparta, their homeland. They constituted the model of the regime of the “double kingship” and protected more particularly the initiation rites of the young warriors, being always represented themselves as armed horsemen. According to the Spartan traditions, they were the inventors of the armed dance; see Burkert 1985: 212–213 and 432, n. 6.

36 The Kouretes were, according to mythology, Cretan *daimones* warriors who covered the cries of Zeus, when he was still a baby, by the noise of their armed dances, so that his father Kronos wouldn’t suspect the existence of the young god. This myth was used by the Cretans as an “explanatory narration” for the dances that took place on the mountain Ida during the initiation rites of the adolescents to adulthood, placed under the auspices of Zeus Kouros; see Jeanmaire 1939; Burkert 1985: 102, 388, notes 36 and 37.



Renovating the traditional beliefs, Plato presents the divinities as teaching also the “pacific” dances to the members of the city, within the framework of the religious feasts.

In book II of the *Laws*, he reminds us that the virtues, especially temperance and courage, that he considers, together with justice, fundamental for the citizens of the ideal society, are realised thanks to the right education, so that man can keep a well-balanced and wise position towards his basic emotions, pleasure and pain.

Now these forms of child-training, which consist in right discipline in pleasures and pains, grow slack and weakened to a great extent in the course of men’s lives; so the gods, in pity for the human race thus born to misery, have ordained the feasts of thanksgiving as periods of respite from their troubles; and they have granted them as companions in their feasts the Muses and Apollo the master of music, and Dionysus, that they may at least set right again their modes of discipline by associating in their feasts with gods. (*Laws*, II, 653c7–d5)

Therefore, the feasts, which the merciful divinities offer to us, become a fundamental element of entertainment, in a double way. On the one hand, they help us to relax and to take a break from the struggle for our survival. On the other hand, they remind us of the moral principles that everyday life may cast to oblivion.

That is why the gods come in person to help us organise them. This dimension of the religious festivals is an original idea of Plato, which is added to the generally accepted vision of the feasts as a tribute of honour towards certain divinities.

In the festivals of Magnesia all members of the city participate: they are divided according to their age in choirs that sing and dance in different ways.

- 1) The children (up to 18 years old) compose the choir of the Muses.
- 2) The adults (30–60 years old) are members of the choir conducted by Apollo *Paian*.<sup>37</sup>
- 3) The choir of the elderly people, who enjoy essentially the performance of the younger ones, is put under the auspices of Dionysus (as the older persons possess the necessary temperance so that they can drink following the right measure) (see also: Larivée 2003).

The content of the songs and the dances is however common: it supports that the just, pious and moderate life is at the same time the happiest and the best (*Laws*, II, 664b3–666d2).

It seems reasonable that the Muses and their sovereign, Apollo, god of music and of the education in general, who offer pleasure to the Immortals with their art according to the mythology, are presented here as responsible for

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<sup>37</sup> This epithet is inspired by a choric song usually dedicated to Apollo or Artemis, as an expression of gratitude for the salvation from an evil, be it an illness or a military victory; it was also sung before the beginning of an enterprise, as a prediction of its success.

these educative festivals. The connection of Dionysus with dances and festive manifestations globally isn't curious, either. Many ceremonies were organised in his honour, as the agrarian feasts with specific songs, one of which was the dithyramb, the precursor of drama. However, Dionysus was also the donator of wine, and usually he was attached to the abuse and the excess provoked by abundant drinking.<sup>38</sup> Plato, faithful to his own theological principles, cites him on the contrary as the god who will inspire self-discipline and temperance for the best use of his present to humanity.

These gods are then “co-dancers” of the young people and the other citizens, succeeding thus to educate them, so that the natural tendency of movement and shouting that we possess since our childhood is transformed to orderly songs and group dances, where we all hold hands together, thanks to the cultivation of the sense of the rhythm and of the harmony that characterises man (distinguishing him from the other animals). Besides, “to the choir (*choros*) they have given its name from the ‘cheer’ (*chara*) implanted therein” (*Laws*, II, 653e5–654a8).

### *B. The “Not Civic” or “Not Political” dances: the Imitation of Nymphs, Pans, Silens and Satyrs*

There is also another kind of dances that Plato considers too difficult to classify, as it doesn't belong either to the “pacific” or to the “warlike” dances. It concerns those danced for purificatory reasons by drunken people, disguised in divinities of nature and vegetation: Nymphs<sup>39</sup>, Pans<sup>40</sup>, Silens and Satyrs.<sup>41</sup> They are the orgiastic and other dances connected with the cult of Bacchus, taking place during festivals that usually closed the winter period and saluted the beginning of Spring and the renewal of the vegetation. As we know, theatre is rooted in these feasts and various relevant customs are still to be found in many regions of Greece during the Carnival period. Naturally, Plato cannot agree with the behaviours of these dancers and thinks that it would be better to leave this kind of dance out of the ideal city, as it is “not civic”, “not political”, and “unfitting for citizens” (*ouk esti politikon*) (*Laws*, VII, 815b7–d4).

I believe that this constitutes a discrete effort of Plato not to condemn openly a traditional religious manifestation, but to underline that, according to the criteria defined by the legislators of the new city, the Bacchic dances offering models of *hybris* (excess), cannot be integrated to the Magnesians' cult.

38 For Dionysus or Bacchus, see, for example, Jeanmaire 1951; Detienne 1977; Bourlet 1983; Berti and Caspari 1989; Schlesier 2011; Isler-Kerényi 2015.

39 For the Nymphs, who animate various elements of the natural environment, like trees, rivers, lakes or the sea, see, for example, Connor 1988. For the Greek nature divinities, see Hedreen 1994; Larson 2007.

40 For the goat-legged pastoral divinity Pan, inventor of the musical instrument *syrinx*, see, for example: Borgeaud 1979, 1988; Bader 1989.

41 For these *daimones*, traditionally followers of Dionysus, half anthropomorphic and half animals, see, for example: Brommer 1939; Janmaire 1949; Heinze 2001a, 2001b.

Let us note also that Plato expresses one more concern. Namely, the men who participate in this kind of ceremonies call themselves imitators of Nymphs, Silens, Satyrs and Pans. However, the use of the plural for the last divinity here is indicative of a “generalisation” deprived of seriousness. Nothing proves that it is a faith based on truth. Even the minor divinities, precisely because of their divine identity, couldn’t behave in ways incompatible with wisdom and goodness, according to Plato. His criticism isn’t turned against the nature’s divinities themselves, but against the false beliefs that men hold about them.

In book VII of the *Laws*, the Athenian legislator explains that man is impossible to stay immobile when he speaks or sings. The imitation of the discourse by the movements gave birth to the art of dancing as a whole. However, some realise these movements harmoniously and in accordance with the music, others do not. Harmony is expressed by the “civic” or “political” dances. This is why the legislator should give instructions, in order to combine the right music with the right dance and to distribute these artistic activities among all the city’s festivals and in a way to assure their stability, so that no one can modify them. Thus the citizens will get used to the invariability of the pleasures offered by this music and these dances, keeping stable themselves and the whole city, which will thus be living well and achieving *eudaimonia* in the long run (*Laws*, VII, 816a3–d2).

For Plato there is a right way to choose the most appropriate works of art protected by the Muses (cf. Hatzistavrou 2011). The criteria of the “finest” Muse, who will organise the citizens’ choirs and the theatrical performances and all kinds of artistic performance, are identical with the ones that express the truth: grace, pleasure, rectitude, and utility (*Laws*, II, 667a9–c7).

We may therefore say that dancing, combined with the appropriate music, when it follows these rules within the framework of the religious feasts of the city, succeeds more precisely in attaining the following aims: it educates the body in the harmonious movement and contributes to its health and its well-being, while offering entertainment as an agreeable activity. It becomes a method of ethical education for the soul, by the integration of the virtues characterising the particular kinds of music and choreography. It accomplishes important political functions, as it trains citizens in the role they have to play successfully for their country’s welfare, in times of peace and of war. At the same time, it reinforces the feeling of unity among the members of each choir, who have the same age, but also of the whole city. Finally, it constitutes a crucial religious ritual and a spiritual exercise, facilitating the approach of the divinity, as the gods are considered teachers who participate in the dance themselves and humans imitate them.

In order to highlight the importance of the image of the gods dancing with us, offered by Plato, I would like to stress here that this is the only moment in our terrestrial life when the divinities are supposed to intermix with men and to enjoy with us the *theoria* (“contemplation”) of the most beautiful spectacle a city can offer: the young people dancing (cf. Motte 1996).

The notion of *theoria* from the beginning has religious and social connotations, as it signifies initially the function of the representatives sent by each city-state to the Panhellenic sports games. At the level of more “personal” ceremonies, the *theoria*, or contemplation, of sacred objects and actions in the Telesterion of Eleusis was the most crucial moment of the Mysteries.

Therefore, the *theoria* becomes a source of knowledge due to its direct experience, imposed as an unquestionable truth. For Plato, the “ascending” dialectical method guides the philosopher to the sudden and direct *theoria* of the Ideas of the Fine and the Good in the *Symposium* and in the *Republic*, respectively (cf. *Symposium*, 210e2–211b5; *Republic*, VII, 516b4–c1).<sup>42</sup>

An equivalent image is found in the myth of the *Phaedrus* (246a2–256e2), where the soul is represented metaphorically as a winged chariot with two horses, the “desiring” and the “spirited” parts, and a conductor, the “intellect”. There the human souls, before their first incarnation in a body, can participate in the periodical procession of the divinities, which reminds the movement of the circular dances, towards the supra-celestial world and contemplate with them the Ideas of the Good, the Fine, the Just and the other ethical values, which “nourish” the intellect and fortify the wings of the soul. Moreover, Plato uses here the term “the choir of the gods” (*choros ton theon*) (*Phaedrus*, 247a7), when he insists on the good will of the divinities towards humans.

In consequence, according to Plato, since the initial moments of our souls we were dancing with the gods, who guided us to a knowledge necessary for the realisation of our intellectual and ethical excellence. I think we can say that the city’s dances, which are periodically organised during the specific religious feasts of every year, represent in a certain way, through the body actually hosting the human soul, this original dance and that they help the soul to “remember” the principles that it should follow to become virtuous (as we know, for Plato all knowledge is a “reminiscence” of the Ideas). In this way, man can realise the best possible life both at the private and at the public level. In addition, the soul, recovering its wings after the body’s death, can join again the dance of the divinities in the supra-celestial world.

Therefore, dancing is presented as capable of providing for all people, from their childhood until their most advanced age, educational work agreeable as much as it is efficient, equivalent to the role of philosophy, that concerns only the persons who are capable and wish to practice it (cf. Lefka 2018).

## Some General Final Remarks

I believe that, after the discussion above, we may attest that in the *Laws* Plato adopts an all-round lifelong education for all the members of the ideal city: religious, intellectual, ethical, social, political, which is aiming at the metaphysical beliefs, the reason, the emotions, and the body. In this way, he takes into consideration the multiple aspects of a human being and of our private and

42 For the notion of “contemplation” in Plato see also Festugière 1936.

public life. This is indicative, I think, in the passage of this dialogue where he presents the human being as a puppet, created by the gods, moved by various strings, representing the different motivations of our actions, as our emotions, our desires, our fears, our will. These strings are hard and steely, but one among them is “golden”, soft and holy: it symbolises our reason (“calculation”), as well as the just law, and moves us towards the best direction, but it is extremely weak, compared to the other strings (*Laws*, I, 644c1–645c4). Education of all these elements of the human being is therefore necessary, so that the action incited by the “golden string” would be followed with less effort.

As we saw, according to Plato, human life should aim at a stable and complete *eudaimonia*, both at the individual and at the social level. The material and corporeal goods aren’t sufficient to assure the excellent life, whereas the “divine” goods of the soul, independent and stable, are the most important, as the legislators of Magnesia underline, because the material goods depend on them (*Laws*, I, 631b3–d7). Therefore, they believe that the best way to achieve the city’s welfare resides in the cultivation of all the virtues and their practice, in a cooperative spirit, by all means, within a peaceful environment.

In consequence, the “lifelong education” in the city of the Magnesians, as defined above, comes to help the citizens to attain these objectives.

Athenian Stranger: But we must not allow our description of education to remain indefinite. For at present, when censuring or commending a man’s upbringing we describe one man as educated and another as uneducated, though the latter may often be uncommonly well educated in the trade of a pedlar or a skipper, or some other similar occupation. But we, naturally, in our present discourse are not taking the view that such things as these make up education: the education we speak of is training from childhood in goodness, which makes a man eagerly desirous of becoming a perfect citizen, understanding how both to rule and be ruled righteously. This is the special form of nurture to which, as I suppose, our present argument would confine the term “education”; whereas an upbringing which aims only at money-making or physical strength, or even some mental accomplishment devoid of reason and justice, it would term vulgar and illiberal and utterly unworthy of the name “education”. Let us not, however, quarrel over a name, but let us abide by the statement we agreed upon just now, that those who are rightly educated become, as a rule, good, and that one should in no case disparage education, since it stands first among the finest gifts that are given to the best men... (*Laws*, I, 643d8–644b3)

I think that here we may distinguish clearly the main difference between Plato’s vision of the citizens’ “lifelong education” and the one adopted by our times. The actual “developed” societies require high specialisation concerning professional training and activities, in a technological environment evolving constantly and extremely rapidly. Modern “lifelong learning” aims essentially at the updating of the necessary technical knowledge for the workers, so that they may assume their professional functions in the most efficient and productive way.

On the other hand, our world is characterised also by great instability. Resilience and the capacity to change professional occupation are considered as

great qualities for an elementary survival. Thus, contemporary “lifelong learning” may help people get acquainted with completely new domains of knowledge, but always concerning practical competences, so that a shift in their career path could become possible at any moment of their lives.

Of course, our vision indeed involves quite a different attitude towards education than the one defended by Plato in the ideal city of the *Laws*.<sup>43</sup> We are inspired by practical necessities, trying to affront them. One could say that the comparison of two different eras and ways of thinking should stop here. However, given the ethical and political crisis of our times, putting people in difficult positions, shouldn't we perhaps reconsider the importance of the well-being of a person from perspectives other than the material, financial or professional? Without necessarily following a position as rigid as Plato's, couldn't we think more about the eventual positive effects of educating people in view of becoming sensitive in developing harmoniously all parts of their being? That should include their critical thinking, their ethical values and their application, their emotions, their body, their cooperative social relations, their responsibility as free citizens of democracies to participate in the political life in view of the common good, and their leisure activities.

Human life is complex and difficult, but perhaps an education taking into consideration all its aspects, in a perspective of developing its best elements and of achieving personal, social and political harmony and well-being (not to mention a necessary equilibrium in the relations with the natural environment), might bring some precious advantages to the future generations.

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43 See also Dillon 2017, who considers Plato “the ancestor of the ideal of humanist education [...] which is now fast fading from the educational scene in the face of the pressure for purely vocational training: that is, the idea that the study of purely abstract subjects, whether pure mathematics, or Latin and Greek languages and literature, or whatever, is in fact the best mental training for success in a whole range of practical activities, particularly such vocations as politics, public administration, law, or the upper echelons of business, for proficiency in which nowadays specific schools and institutes have been set up, largely to the detriment of true competence in those areas. That is the true legacy of the Platonist model of education, on which modern civilisation is progressively turning its back: that the properly structured study of quite abstract subjects is the best training for the mind, even when the mind is turned to the solution of entirely practical problems”. I agree with all these ideas, but I believe that Plato's educational project is richer, containing many more aspects, as demonstrated above.



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## Aikaterini Lefka

### Doživotno učenje građana u Platonovim *Zakonima*

#### Apstrakt

U *Zakonima*, Platon predstavlja obrazovni program za sve članove zamišljenog grada Magnezije koji se tiče ne samo različitih vrsta specifičnog znanja već i, još važnije, primene etičkih i političkih vrlina sa ciljem da se stvore odlični građani koji će moći da žive „dobar život“ na duge staze kako u privatnom tako i u javnom smislu. Ovi ciljevi mogu biti ostvareni na mnoštvo načina, kao, na primer, kroz učestvovanje pojedinaca i pojedinki u zakonodavstvu i upravljanju gradom, kroz zajedničko osnovno obrazovanje koje bi uključivalo čitanje, pisanje, matematiku i astronomiju, kroz vežbanje sporta, kroz pevanje i igranje, kao i kroz aktivno učestvovanje u religioznim festivalima. Stanovništvo se tada deli u tri grupe prema starosti, te se formiraju „horovi“ koji su posvećeni različitim božanstvima (deca su posvećena muzama, mladi ljudi su posvećeni Apolonu, a stari ljudi su posvećeni Dionisu). Dakle, možemo zaključiti da je Platon bio jedan od drevnih grčkih filozofa koji je podržavao koncept „doživotnog učenja“, proširen kroz različite vrste znanja, veština i kvaliteta. U svom radu, ispitujem ciljeve, različite sadržaje Platonovog pedagoškog projekta koji je namenjen svim stanovnicima Magnezije, različite metode koje je Platon predlagao kako bi se došlo do postizanja pedagoških ciljeva, kao i eventualne razloge za ove izbore u skladu sa njegovom filozofskom teorijom. Rad zaključujem tako što pravim poređenje sa pojmom „doživotnog učenja“ kako ga danas razumemo.

Ključne reči: Platon; *Zakoni*; idealni grad; etika; politika; građanin; dobar život; doživotno učenje; religiozno, etičko i građansko obrazovanje; vrline; odnos između tela, duše i intelekta; bogovi.