

International Plato Society, IX Symposium Platonicum: Republic  
2-7 August, 2010  
Tokyo, Japan

## A city that listens and shares: an “archaeology” of the Republic of Plato

*Abstract for Longer Panel (40 min.)*

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The conception of the *Republic* as a *serious utopia* (Finley 1975) or as a *reconstruction project utopia* (Vegetti 2009), both in opposition to a long modern tradition, from Brucker (1742) to Annas (1997), that considers it one of the first evasive utopias, inspires this paper in the search for Plato's political passion for concretizing the ideal city. This passion will be detected in the *Republic's* very pages, dialoguing both with Plato's biography as well as with the political experience of Pythagorean Communities which directly inspire Platonic political philosophy in general and the *Republic* especially. Following the semantic traces of the term *philopólis* in the literature of the IV and V centuries BCE, revealing of a climate of ethical defeat in the city, marked by the sensation that the world of politics was “upside down”, we find, in Plato's *Republic*, an original solution to guarantee that governors won't stray from their zeal (*kêdemonía*) of the city: the proposed solution is philosophy, that is, the foreseen guarantee is that governors be philosophers. This solution is certainly extremely idealist, and not because Plato is an impenitent idealist but, much to the contrary, because of a very concrete problem: there are no more philosophers in the city! The uneasiness shown to the city of few (*óligoí*) surviving philosophers expressed in a list found in *Resp.* VI 496b is marked by an image: that of the philosopher hidden behind a fence (*teichíon*) at the brink of the storm waiting for the *kairós toû práttein*, the best

moment to act. But this exile of the philosophers “is not the most they can do” since, in Socrate's words, “in an adequate city he would have succeeded and saved the common good along with his own” (VI 497e). As such, the current impracticability of the ideal city under the orientation of philosophy is only a question of opportunity, for the tension and passion are still there.

I suggest an alternative route, historiographic and archaeological, for the demonstration of this same plausibility of the platonic project. I will seek to demonstrate the “seriousness” of this utopia, in the sense of its *expectation of practicability*, since it is based on the normative-political experience of the Pythagoreans before Plato, from the sixth to fourth centuries, precursors to this foundational project for the city starting from the philosophical community to which Plato makes direct reference in the Republic. The Pythagorean *koinonía* appears in the literature of this movement as a project that is necessary to escape tyrannical political rule, which as it was impeded the concretization of a philosophical *bíos*. The *koinonía* is, as such, a political alternative to the real *pólis* and its logic. A project founded on two solid institutions: the *omokoeîon* and the sharing of goods. Plato shows knowledge of this project, since the same political logic of listening and sharing marks the origins of the *orthé pólis* project at the start of the Republic's fifth book (449c). A brief reference to the *Quelleforschung* of Pythagorean political literature will allow us, archaeologically, to recognize the fundamental traces of the Republic's city in the Pythagorean city.