

Rosalie Helena de Souza Pereira PhD.  
Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP)  
Add: Rua da Consolação 3207 ap.07 - São Paulo 01416-001 Brazil  
[rosaliepereira@uol.com.br](mailto:rosaliepereira@uol.com.br)  
fax: (55) (11) 30853638  
20-minute presentation in a “parallel” session

THE RULER’S ESSENTIAL QUALITIES IN  
AVERROES’ *COMMENTARY ON PLATO’S “REPUBLIC”*

My paper draws a comparison between the essential qualities of the philosopher-king, the ideal ruler pictured in *Republic* VI, 484a - 487a, and the qualities specified by Averroes in his Commentary on this work by Plato. The first question one poses is why did Averroes, known to the Latins as the “Commentator”, i. e., of Aristotle, write a Commentary on the *Republic*, this being his only work dedicated to the “divine” philosopher, the deserved nickname given to Plato by the Arabic speaking wise men. As Averroes himself justifies in the initial pages of his exposition, the *Commentary on Plato’s “Republic”* is due to the fact that Aristotle’s *Politics* “has not fallen into his hands”. To achieve his aim, i. e., the writing of a treatise on Political Science, Averroes resorts to the *Republic*, but nevertheless breaks with his habitual style of exegesis when commenting Aristotle’s works. The *Commentary on Plato’s “Republic”* is permeated by original ideas, mainly because Averroes addresses several critiques to the society of his time as he adapts the Platonic theses to the political context of Al-Andalus in the XIIth century. The treatise is divided in three books and the topic of the ruler’s qualities is approached in Book II. This book concerns mainly the ruler’s education. Book I approaches mainly the education of the guardians with emphasis on the virtue of courage; Book III analyses the different political regimes and their transformation. The tradition of the essential qualities of the ruler is a topic that Averroes inherited not only from the Platonic tradition, but also from that ancient tradition of persian origin, the *specula principum*, from the Islamic religious tradition, the Islamic Law and, mainly, from his predecessor, the Arabic philosopher Al-F r b . The list of qualities in the Commentary has an Aristotelian signature, as for exemple, the first one, which for Plato is the love of truth and of science, for Averroes it is necessary that the ruler is able by natural disposition to gain skill on the study of the sciences, and in so doing, that he becomes owner of the knowledge of the things that are essential, being able to distinguish them from those that are accidental. The Aristotelian signature is noticeable also in the demand for the ruler to be eloquent and be able to quickly find the middle terms as he proclaims anything he thought about. As for the virtue of courage in the philosopher-king, which for Plato is not to fear death, for Averroes the courageous ruler must not fear to despise the nondemonstrative arguments on which he has been grown up. This last quality is a severe criticism that Averroes addresses to the theologians of his time, a criticism that permeates several of his works. The issues presented here are based on the Latin version of the *Commentary on Plato’s “Republic”* done from the hebrew version by Elijah Delmedigo in the XVth century. The original Arabic treatise is lost.