

Plato's First and Second Revolutions

In this paper I shall compare and contrast some 'revolutionary' thoughts on women, property and justice to be found in the *Republic* and the *Laws*.

On the question of women, I shall argue that, with the exception of what is said about prospective female guardians, what is said about women in the *Republic* is relatively conservative; one has to wait till the *Laws* to find a statement about the equal education of *all* women (along with all men) that is *really* revolutionary.

On the question of property, I shall argue that, with the exception of what is said about property restrictions for the guardian class, nothing revolutionary is said about property in the *Republic*; in the *Laws*, by contrast, there is a major revolution proposed, in which, following a system characterized by a minimum of one and maximum of four property *quanta*, the guiding principle is one of distributive justice for all citizens.

On the more general question of justice, I shall argue that the definition of justice in the *Republic* is indeed revolutionary, but that the notion of justice driving the *Laws*, in which it is now much more clearly seen as a relational virtue than one defined in terms of balance of parts within an organism, is philosophically sounder, and has in fact become the basis for a good deal of contemporary political theory.

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