

**Prof. Vicente Dobroruka**

dobroruka@pej-unb.org

Universidade de Brasília

IHD - Dpto. de História

Brasília -DF-

70910-900

---

Fonte: Platão, *Leis*

Origem: Grécia

Período: séc. V a.C.

Edição: *Plato in 12 volumes*. Vols.10-11. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967-1968 (trad. R.G.Bury)

Seções: 704V-C; 707E-708D; 735E-737B; 744BC; 831C; 847D

[704c] Athenian

Dear me! how unfortunate! But what of the surrounding country? Is it productive in all respects, or deficient in some products?

Clinias

There is practically nothing that it is deficient in.

Athenian

Will there be any State bordering close on it?

Clinias

None at all, and that is the reason for settling it. Owing to emigration from this district long ago, the country has lain desolate for ever so long.

Athenian

How about plains, mountains and forests? What extent of each of these does it contain?

[704d] Clinias

As a whole, it resembles in character the rest of Crete.

Athenian



You would call it hilly rather than level?

Clinias

Certainly.

Athenian

Then it would not be incurably unfit for the acquisition of virtue. For if the State was to be on the sea-coast, and to have fine harbors, and to be deficient in many products, instead of productive of everything,--in that case it would need a mighty savior and divine lawgivers, if, with such a character, it was to avoid having a variety of luxurious and depraved habits.<sup>1</sup> As things are, however, there is consolation in the fact of that eighty stades. Still, it lies unduly near the sea, and the more so because, as you say, its harbors are good; that, however, we must make the best of.

[707e] Athenian

In the next place tell me this: who are the people that are to be settled? Will they comprise all that wish to go from any part of Crete, supposing that there has grown up in every city a surplus population too great for the country's food supply? For you are not; I presume, collecting all who wish to go from Greece; although I do, indeed, see in your country settlers from Argos, Aegina,

[708a] and other parts of Greece. So tell us now from what quarters the present expedition of citizens is likely to be drawn.

Clinias

It will probably be from the whole of Crete and of the rest of the Greeks, they seem most ready to admit people from the Peloponnese as fellow-settlers. For it is quite true, as you said just now, that we have some here from Argos, amongst them being the most famous of our clans, the Gortynian, which is a colony from Gortys, in the Peloponnese.

[708b] Athenian

It would not be equally easy for States to conduct settlements in other cases as in those when, like a swarm of bees, a single clan goes out from a single country and settles, as a friend coming from friends, being either squeezed out by lack of room or forced by some other such pressing need. At times, too, the violence of civil strife might compel a whole section of a State to emigrate; and on one occasion an entire State went into exile, when it was totally crushed by an overpowering attack.

[708c] All such cases are in one way easier to manage, as regards settling and legislation, but in another way harder. In the case where the race is one, with the same language and laws, this unity makes for friendliness, since it shares also in sacred rites and all matters of religion; but such a body does not easily tolerate laws or politics which differ from those of its homeland. Again, where such a body has seceded owing



to civil strife due to the badness of the laws, but still strives to retain, owing to long habit, the very customs which caused its former ruin, then, because of this, it proves a difficult and intractable subject for the person who has control of its settlement and its laws.

[708d] On the other hand, the clan that is formed by fusion of various elements would perhaps be more ready to submit to new laws, but to cause it to share in one spirit and pant (as they say) in unison like a team of horses would be a lengthy task and most difficult. But in truth legislation and the settlement of States are tasks that require men perfect above all other men in goodness.

Clinias

Very probably; but tell us still more clearly the purport of these observations.

[735e] the purge which hales to punishments by means of justice linked with vengeance, crowning the vengeance with exile or death: it, as a rule, clears out the greatest criminals when they are incurable and cause serious damage to the State. A milder form of purge is one of the following kind:--when, owing to scarcity of food, people are in want, and display a readiness.

[736a] to follow their leaders in an attack on the property of the wealthy,--then the lawgiver, regarding all such as a plague inherent in the body politic, ships them abroad as gently as possible, giving the euphemistic title of "emigration" to their evacuation. By some means or other this must be done by every legislator at the beginning, but in our case the task is now even more simple; for we have no need to contrive for the present either a form of emigration or any other purgative selection; but just as

[736b] when there is a confluence of floods from many sources--some from springs, some from torrents--into a single pool we have to take diligent precautions to ensure that the water may be of the utmost possible purity, by drawing it off in some cases, and in others by making channels to divert its course.<sup>1</sup> Yet toil and risk, it would appear, are involved in every exercise of statecraft. Since, however, our present efforts are verbal rather than actual, let us assume that our collection of citizens is now completed, and its purity secured to our satisfaction; for we shall test thoroughly by every kind of test and by length of time the vicious among those

[736c] who attempt to enter our present State as citizens, and so prevent their arrival, whereas we shall welcome the virtuous with all possible graciousness and goodwill. And let us not omit to notice this piece of good luck--that, just as we said<sup>1</sup> that the colony of the Heraclidae was fortunate in avoiding fierce and dangerous strife concerning the distribution of land and money and the cancelling of debts (so we are similarly lucky) ; for when a State is obliged

[736d] to settle such strife by law, it can neither leave vested interests unaltered nor yet can it in any wise alter them, and no way is left save what one might term that of "pious



aspiration” and cautious change, little by little, extended over a long period, and that way is this:--there must already exist a supply of men to effect the change, who themselves, on each occasion, possess abundance of land and have many persons in their debt, and who are kind enough to wish to give a share of these things to those of them who are in want,

[736e] partly by remissions and partly by distributions, making a kind of rule of moderation and believing that poverty consists, not in decreasing one's substance, but in increasing one's greed. For this is the main foundation of the security of a State, and on this as on a firm keel it is possible to build whatever kind of civic organization may be subsequently built suitable for the arrangement described;

[737a] but if the foundation be rotten, the subsequent political operations will prove by no means easy for any State. This difficulty, as we say, we avoid; it is better, however, that we should explain the means by which, if we had not actually avoided it, we might have found a way of escape. Be it explained, then, that that means consists in renouncing avarice by the aid of justice, and that there is no way of escape, broad or narrow, other than this device. So let this stand fixed for us now as a kind of pillar of the State. The properties of the citizens must be established somehow or other on a basis that is secure from intestine disputes;

[737b] otherwise, for people who have ancient disputes with one another, men will not of their own free will proceed any further with political construction, if they have a grain of sense.<sup>1</sup> But as for those to whom--as to us now--God has given a new State to found, and one free as yet from internal feuds,--that those founders should excite enmity against themselves because of the distribution of land and houses would be a piece of folly combined with utter depravity of which no man could be capable.

[744a] of more honor in the State than temperance, or wealth than health and temperance, it will quite clearly be a wrong enactment. Thus the lawgiver must oftentimes put this question to himself-- “What is it that I intend?” and, “Am I succeeding in this, or am I wide of the mark?” In this way he might, perhaps, get through the task of legislation himself, and save others the trouble of it; but in no other way could he ever possibly do so. The man who has received an allotment shall hold it, as we say,

[744b] on the terms stated. It would indeed have been a splendid thing if each person, on entering the colony, had had all else equal as well. Since this, however, is impossible, and one man will arrive with more money and another with less, it is necessary for many reasons, and for the sake of equalizing chances in public life, that there should be unequal valuations, in order that offices and contributions may be assigned in accordance with the assessed valuation in each case,--being framed not in proportion only to the moral excellence of a man's ancestors or of himself, nor to his bodily strength

[744c] and comeliness, but in proportion also to his wealth or poverty,--so that by a rule of symmetrical inequality<sup>1</sup> they may receive offices and honors as equally as possible, and may have no quarrelling. For these reasons we must make four classes, graded by size of property, and called first, second, third and fourth (or by some other names) ,



alike when the individuals remain in the same class and when, through a change from poverty to wealth or from wealth to poverty, they pass over each to that class to which he belongs.

[831c] is that there are two causes, and both most weighty ones.

Clinias

What are they?

Athenian

The first springs from a lust for wealth which allows a man no leisure time for attention to anything else save his own private property; and when the soul of every citizen hangs upon this, it is incapable of attending to matters other than daily gain. Whatsoever science or pursuit leads to this, every man individually is most ready to learn and to practice; but all else he laughs to scorn.

[847d] if there is need to import any craft or plant or metal or rope or animal for military purposes, the hipparchs and generals shall have control of both imports and exports, when the State both gives and takes, and the Law-wardens shall enact suitable and adequate laws therefor; but no trading for the sake of gain, either in this matter or in any other, shall be carried on anywhere within the boundaries of our

[847e] State and country. Touching food-supply and the distribution of agricultural produce, a system approaching that legalized in Crete would probably prove satisfactory. The whole produce of the soil must be divided by all into twelve parts, according to the method of its consumption. And each twelfth part--of wheat and barley, for instance (and all the rest of the crops must be distributed in the same way as these, as well as all marketable animals.