

attention to the latter would have been welcome, Huber's book excels at the former to a degree that it more than earns its place within contemporary Kant scholarship.

Plato's Second Republic: An Essay on the Laws. By André Laks. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022. 296p. \$35.00 cloth.

Of Rule and Office: Plato's Ideas of the Political. By Melissa Lane. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023. 480p. \$49.95 cloth.
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Toward the beginning of her erudite and cogent study of constitutionalism in Plato's *Laws*, *Statesman*, and *Republic*, Melissa Lane offers a series of powerful reasons for why Plato remains a critical resource for the present. "Consider the predicament of liberal democratic constitutions," she writes, when those "at the apex" of judicial, executive, and legislative orders "refuse to recuse themselves in situations of conflict of interest" or "refuse to uphold fundamental constitutional duties of office" or "support the violation of prescribed election procedures" (31–2). Situations like these illustrate an inherent problem for any kind of political constitution, Lane argues—namely, "the challenge of how to keep a political order oriented toward the good of the ruled" (30). *Of Rule and Office* analyzes and elaborates Plato's innovative and intricate response to this challenge, demonstrating the relevance of ancient Greek political theory for today's urgent dilemmas of the political life.

Lane sets as her central problematic the challenge of political rule. Rule, according to Lane, "is a relationship between a ruler and one or more persons ruled" (17). She proposes a two-dimensional analytic of rule derived from Plato: rule consists in both a *telos*, or purpose, and a *taxis*, or order. Put together, a *taxis* is "an ordered set of rules and relationships"—including but not limited to laws—"through which a *telos* might be achieved" (18). Plato adds two important constraints to the *taxis* and the *telos* of any kind of rule: first, the ruler must have "in principle" the power of issuing orders to the ruled (a power Lane refers to as *epitactic*), and second, the *telos* of rule should always be the good of the ruled. In these two respects, Plato is no Weberian: coercion is not fundamental to his idea of political authority, nor is rule "an evaluatively neutral idea" (18).

Lane argues that Plato's dialogues—in particular, his *Laws*, *Statesman*, and *Republic*—develop "constitutional projects" (7) through their analyses of one form of rule in particular: rule by offices (*archai*). The ancient Greek word for "offices," *archai*, is the same word that would later be translated as "rule." Lane's significant innovation here lies

in her sustained and acute attention to how Plato theorized offices and officeholders as a *form* of rule, one on a continuum with kingship and tyranny yet distinct from both. She centers her account on Plato's response to the vulnerabilities of office, encapsulated by the phrase, "Who will guard the guardians?" On this question, Plato's dialogues introduce new concepts and arguments to political theory. In the *Laws*, Plato supplements the usual procedures meant to hold officeholders accountable with reflections on the proper content of laws themselves, the divine inspiration of which is kept separate from officeholders by what Plato called the "Nocturnal Council" and that Lane reinterprets as a "Daily Meeting" (106–14). The Daily Meeting convenes former officeholders who disposed of their duties honorably to guard "the spirit of the laws, in the sense of the constitution as a whole" (111). The *Statesman* introduces a "superordinate figure" who can safeguard the *telos* of office more perfectly than accountability procedures by exemplifying "caring" as a structural feature of the ruler's role (131). And the *Republic* proposes a "service conception" of rule that builds on the *Statesman's* separation of superordinate safeguarding rulers, on the one hand, and officeholders, on the other, while also dramatizing (in books VIII and IX) how rule and office can degenerate through "distortions of both *telos* and *taxis*" (39). This service conception of rule invests the rulers themselves with the conception of the role of the ruler as serving the good of the ruled.

Borrowing from Hans Beck's *Companion to Ancient Greek Government* (2013), Lane situates her project as a return to an "overtly constitutionalist" approach to political rule left behind by the recent generation of cultural and social scientific studies (17n35). Josiah Ober's immense contributions—Lane names his *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens* (1998) and *Democracy and Knowledge* (2008)—have transformed the study of ancient political thought by focusing scholarly attention on the normative and discursive structures that made Athenian democracy work. Lane's research, however, brings the study of norms and ideas into contact with constitutional structures. Plato is not merely a "connected critic" of Athenian democracy, as Ober describes him, borrowing from Michael Walzer's 1988 *Company of Critics* (Lane, 245); Plato also educes "the implicit evaluative presuppositions of existing models of rule and office" and renovates them, in philosophical terms, into "the shape of reconfigured roles" (25). Constitutional discourse in the ancient world provides not just a different angle from the "democratic ideology" Ober began theorizing in *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* (1989) but also a more expansive vision in which Plato's conceptual and political innovations appear both radical and conservative.

Lane's constitutional turn from Ober offers a road not (yet) taken by scholars focused on the significance of ancient texts for democratic theory. Her constitutionalist

approach also rescues Plato from those inclined to dismiss him for his “idealism.” She insists on a “realist” Plato, a Plato who “always already” thought of *telos* and *taxis* together (41), who was not simply dreaming about highfalutin’ soulcraft but was creatively and pragmatically working through the “who, whom” of Lenin (quoted by Lane, 142).

In this respect, André Laks’s *Plato’s Second Republic: An Essay on the Laws* offers a complementary argument through its exploration of Plato’s *Laws* as a “legislative utopia” (62). The power of Plato’s *Laws*, according to Laks, comes from “the cluster of four basic principles at its core: that without accountability power corrupts, that law should rule, that a constitution that can be somewhat misleadingly characterized as ‘mixed’ is the best human beings can achieve, and that laws require preambles” (3). His main claim is that this cluster of principles conveys the *Laws*’ “meta-legislative” message about the tension between “the normative character of law and the conditions of its acceptance” (5). Rather than being idealistic, Plato’s *Laws*, according to Laks, explores how law plays a mediating role between the norms that law embodies (which may or may not be idealistic) and the need for law to shape political action, which law must do to fulfill its function qua law.

Laks organizes his study around what he calls the “paradigmatism” that joins both the *Republic* and the *Laws*. “Paradigmatism” describes a philosophical approach of naming normative ideal-types—of dealing with paradigms—that inform political action. Yet the language of “ideal-types” that Laks uses (38) slightly obscures his meaning, because these paradigms are less ideal than regulative; they aim to control or orient, rather than inspire. Paradigms provide horizons but these are reachable horizons according to Laks. The continuity between the *Republic* and the *Laws* lies in how both consider the possibility of their respective utopias: both seek to orient political action with their paradigms, to instruct readers, and to alter political worlds with their texts. What distinguishes them—and what draws Laks more to the *Laws* than to the *Republic*—is that the former foregrounds an “anthropology” concerned with education as an ongoing project, pursued not just in childhood but “through the whole of human life” (72). The *Laws*’ sense of what it means to be human generates “a notion of possibility” about its own proposals that the *Republic* lacks. The *Laws*, moreover, “goes beyond the *Republic*” by not simply formulating “guidelines to be followed, among all poets” but by offering itself as “the finest and also the best tragedy,” thus “replacing the very foundations of Greek culture” (150).

Here Laks’s love of the *Laws* may lead him to overstate its differences from the *Republic*. Both texts, I would argue, seek to intervene in Greek culture to shape political action. The key difference for Laks would seem to be the explicit

discussion of law’s need for preambles in the *Laws*: this opens the sense of possibility he discerns. Such a sense of possibility is then amplified by the interlocutors’ own “hubristic” self-assessment of their work as “the best tragedy” (150). Yet in the *Republic*, Socrates’s description of a pattern (*paradeigma*, 529b2) that one might use to found a city within oneself seems quite close to Laks’s argument about the *Laws*.

Although complementary in argument, Laks’s approach to Plato differs from Lane’s. Laks offers “a mode of reading that is sensitive to the promptings that emerge from the text itself in the absence of explicit statements or clarifications” (8). In this way, he views “philology as a springboard for philosophical reflection” (8). Where Lane’s work offers abundant philosophical reflection while staying close to the ground of Plato’s text, Laks, by contrast, models a freer spirit; he ventures into conflicts between human law and divine law—“the theologico-political problem”—and touches on Spinoza, Rousseau, Kant, Goethe, and Adorno (among others) across his book. Laks’s approach to reading, however, complements Lane’s with his attention to what Lane calls “discursive legislation” (77)—namely, how the text presents itself as forming political action through its practical paradigms.

Even if Plato’s discursive legislation fails to persuade twenty-first-century readers, Lane provides institutional examples to seed constitutional innovation. Lane and Laks also point to the insufficiency of narrowly institutional responses when it comes to ensuring that officeholders rule for the benefit of the ruled. The US Supreme Court’s ethics code ostensibly was intended to enforce accountability for those at the apex of the nation’s judiciary, yet its toothlessness provides just one example of why the question, “Who will guard the guardians?” remains of vital importance today. What would Lane’s “Daily Meeting” look like in this situation? How could Laks’s true tragedy inspire us to bring into being a culture of continual and ongoing political education?

Dreaming of Justice, Waking to Wisdom: Rousseau’s Philosophic Life.

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One of Rousseau’s best interpreters, Laurence Cooper has an established record of close engagement, careful analysis, and deep insight in his detailed studies of Rousseau. In *Dreaming of Justice, Waking to Wisdom*, he trains his attention on one book, Rousseau’s *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. Unsurprisingly, the result is a thorough and original study of the text, replete with insights that will