

# Conceptions of Publicness in Plato's Philosophy

This research consists of a Prologue, Notes-Abbreviations, Introduction, two Parts, each of which includes Chapters, Conclusions, Bibliography and one Index. This research examines the aspects and function of publicness in Platonic Philosophy. In particular, it focuses on the determination of the structure and the characteristics of publicness in Plato's political philosophy, his ontology and his theory of knowledge.

In the Introduction, there is a reference to the term publicness, which appeared in the 18th century and became one of the most radical concepts and symbols of the Age of Enlightenment. Also, there is a reference to the position of Jürgen Habermas, according to which the content of publicness has its roots in Hellenic antiquity, and it is connected with the political life and the free communication of the agora. This position of Habermas was the inspiration of the historical and critical approach that follows, in which are presented the elements that prove the unique nature of polis as a social construction. There is an attempt to explain why this particular form of state was so fundamental to both Plato's thought and to that of so many other theorists of Hellenic antiquity. The element of publicness gained special distinction among other elements, since it was the result of the publication of the laws during the archaic era, the dissemination of alphabetic writing, the deep consciousness of citizens regarding the value of public life, the emergence of the public sphere as an area of politics and free communication, and lastly the demand of the democratic constitution for the eradication of secrecy and secret proceedings.

In Part One of this research, entitled "Platonic Political Theory and Publicness," three Chapters are included. The first Chapter bears the title "Plato's Critique of the Public Life of his Era" and focuses on Plato's critique of the democratic constitution of his era and on the inability of some well-known Athenian politicians to educate their citizens. Taking into account the platonic critique of democracy in both the Republic and the Laws, it can be proved that Plato is not an enemy of a moderate democracy that permits the law to become the regulative factor of social life, and also that he is not opposed to the principle of publicness which constitutes the essential element of the democratic constitution.

In the second Chapter, which is entitled "Politics, Public Sphere and Publicness", there is an examination of the political proposals Plato suggests in order to contribute to the restoration of public spirit. The research is focused on the Republic, the Statesman and the Laws, and examines how the public sphere is structured in these dialogues in order to define more accurately the function of publicness in Plato's political philosophy and show its various facets. The equality of men and women in the public sphere, the public and common to all citizens educational system and the status of communal ownership (*καθεστῶς κοινοκτημοσύνης*) are just some of the subjects that are discussed in this chapter.

In the third Chapter, entitled "Rhetoric, Lying and the Public Sphere", Plato's opinion concerning the essential connection between the rhetorical arts and public life is examined. It is supported that Plato is not opposed to the art of persuasion when its use is based on truth and common interest. Additionally, the rhetoric of falsehood is examined, which according to Plato, only true rulers have the right to use. This view is the only point in platonic political theory incompatible with the spirit of publicness.

Part Two of this research, entitled "Ontology, Theory of Knowledge and Publicness," includes four Chapters. In the first Chapter, entitled "The Esoteric Approaches of Platonic Philosophy" there is a discussion of the esoteric approaches of platonic philosophy: the Tübingen and the American Straussian schools. Both hermeneutic schools of platonic philosophy propose that Plato proposes that the significant platonic teachings are covered under a veil of mystery, either because they were never written, or because they were written in a disguised way, or because they were announced only to a narrow circle of students. This kind of approach overlooks (or ignores) the historic and social frame of Plato's era,

which strongly demanded publicity, and absolutely contradict (ἔρχονται σὲ ἀντίθεση μὲ τὸ...) the general spirit of publicness that characterizes Plato's philosophy.

In the second Chapter, entitled "Philosophical writing and Publicness", there is an exploration of the oral tradition and the level of literacy in Plato's era, in order to determine the methods of publication of Knowledge. A careful examination of this matter leads to the fullest understanding of Plato's attitude towards both oral and written speech. The problem of the interaction between oral and written speech, the general prejudice towards writing and the weakness of the dialectic-oral speech that cannot be preserved in memory if not written, can help in the understanding of the reasons why the literary genre of Socratikoi Logoi was created, and why Plato chose the written-dramatic dialogue for his works.

In the third Chapter, entitled "Philosophical Writing and Publicness", there is an exegesis and analysis of the platonic critique of oral and written speech, and of the reasons that drove Plato to this critique. Plato with his critique aims at mostly at the bad and wrong use of the written and oral speech and he is interested particularly in the education of the Sophists. He expresses his mistrust on the educational value of the sophistic treatises as well as of the written speeches of the logographers and of the politicians, because both of them lack philosophical paideia and they do not focus on truth.

In the fourth and last Chapter, entitled "Philosophical Truth and Publicness" there is an examination of the positions of certain scholars, who believe Plato is in favor of the non-propositional form of philosophical truths. This view is incompatible with the concept of publicness, which is distinct in Plato's ontology and theory of Knowledge. According to Plato and his theory of recollection, the essence of the Ideas is propositional, since the knowledge of truth is possible for humans to obtain. Lastly, there is an attempt to answer two questions: a) why Plato chose the dialogue form for his works, and b) who Plato's audience and readers are.

*The research is completed with Conclusions.*