Abstract

Barker wrote two books on the political thought of Plato, both of which were also directly related to his study of the political thought of Aristotle. This essay examines the way Barker’s readings of Plato changed, first from the earlier to the later of his two books, and then from the later of these books, written during WWI, to his translation of Aristotle’s *Politics*, written during WWII. The contention is that, as Barker himself partly confessed, WWI led him to read hopes into Plato’s works that he not had before and that he abandoned in WWII. This shift in reading Plato was essentially a shift in Barker’s allegiance to political Hegelianism (of the sort he imbibed from T.H. Green), which, while it intensified during WWI, had given way entirely to a thoroughly English Whig Constitutionalism by the end of WWII. The abandonment of Hegel enabled Barker to reach not only a better understanding of Plato in his Aristotle book but also a better and more wry understanding of German philosophy.
THE DISILLUSIONED HEGELIAN:
BARKER’S READINGS OF PLATO

Introduction

Sir Ernest Barker published two books on the political thought of Plato. His first, entitled *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, appeared in 1906, and it is its centenary we are celebrating this year. His second, *Greek Political Theory: Plato and his Predecessors*, was published in 1918. The latter was reprinted, with very slight revisions, in a second and third edition in 1925 and 1947 respectively. These two books are closely connected because the second was originally intended to be a revision of the first. But when Barker started out to do this he soon realized that, in order to take account of the new work that had been done since 1906 as well as of his own now “matured” ideas, he needed to rewrite the whole book.¹ He planned, in fact, to write the new book in two volumes, but the first volume, on Plato and his predecessors, was the only one of the two that appeared. The second volume, which was to be on Aristotle and his successors, was effectively replaced by his translation, published in 1946, of Aristotle’s *Politics*. At any rate, in his preface to the 1947 edition of the Plato volume, Barker commends this translation to the reader, with its extensive introduction, notes, and appendices, and says that it should in some sense count as the second and final volume of the whole work. The two may be regarded, he continues, as a single whole, composed of different parts, to be sure, but of parts that are complementary.²

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² *Greek Political Theory*, pp. ix-x.
Barker offers no direct explanation for his failure to write the second volume in the form originally planned. His translation of the *Politics* is offered only in extenuation of that failure. He does, however, say that he was impelled to write it by a feeling that the best service which he could render to the understanding of Aristotle was to produce a readable and readily understandable translation of what Aristotle had actually said. In other words, the translation superseded the second volume of *Greek Political Theory* because Barker thought a translation more important. Presumably, however, he did not think this before 1918, else one would have expected a translation of Plato to have been adjudged more important than the first volume of *Greek Political Theory*. But perhaps this is a hasty inference, because, among other things, it could also be that Barker thought there were adequate translations of Plato into English already available, and notably, one would suppose, the classic ones by Benjamin Jowett. But Jowett also produced a translation of Aristotle’s *Politics*, and left instructions in his will for part of his estate to be used to complete the translation of all Aristotle’s works (thus arose, under the editorship of Sir David Ross, the now equally classic Oxford Aristotle). One might be tempted to conclude, then, that Barker thought Aristotle’s political thought more important than Plato’s. But this is questionable too. For one thing he looks forward to someone producing an edition of Plato’s *Laws* on the scale of Newman’s edition of the *Politics*.\(^3\) This has, unfortunately, not happened, and that Barker never got round to undertaking it himself may, perhaps, be put down to his preoccupation with translating the *Politics* first or instead.

Returning, however, to the first volume of *Greek Political Theory*, Barker confesses to having had to hold himself back in writing it. He remarks that the volume

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\(^3\) *Greek Political Theory*, pp. viii-ix.
contains signs of the times in which it was written (the Great War of 1914-1918), but hopes these signs are not obtrusive. “Plato has come,” he says, “to mean more for the writer, on many points, than he would have meant if the war had not stirred the depths.” He goes on to mention several topics where “it was impossible not to feel that a new feeling for an old message came from the circumstances and environment of the times.”

He never said anything comparable about his translation of Aristotle’s *Politics* which, however, was being written during another Great War, that of 1939-1945. Had Barker grown a bit world-weary perhaps, and, disillusioned by the failure of “the war to end all wars” to end a war barely more than 20 years into the future, given up hoping anything for his own age from Greek political theory, or given up hoping from his own age any new feeling for Plato’s old message? Had his ideas undergone yet more, and rather different, maturation?

*Barker’s 1906 Plato*

In his 1906 book Barker is less forthcoming about what Plato meant for him. He says in his preface that the book began as an introduction to the *Politics* of Aristotle. But, he continues, he soon found that he could not write such an introduction without first explaining the political views of Plato and that he could not explain the views of Plato without first saying something about Socrates, Plato’s teacher, and the sophists, Plato’s enemies. Further, reflecting on the later history of Aristotle, he could not, he says, refrain from touching upon such thinkers as Aquinas and Marsilio. The book therefore developed into something of a historical review of political Aristotelianism, from its

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4 *Greek Political Theory*, p. viii
prehistory in Socrates and the sophists to its culmination in the medievals. But this
historical contextualizing, so to say, brings the book, contends Barker, nearer to the spirit
of Aristotle who “saw in knowledge a development” and each of whose treatises “can
only be properly studied in the light of the development of the subject with which it
deals.”6 But there is more than one kind of development, or more than one way of
looking at development in the case of human thought. For later in the preface, when
acknowledging his debts, Barker declares his dependence, for his general conception of
political science, on T.H. Green (a noted British Hegelian), and, for his discussion of
Plato and Aristotle, on R.L. Nettleship (another British Hegelian) and on nineteenth
century German scholarship (noted for its historical approach to its subject matter, an
approach which, seen in its own historical context, owes much, if not all, to the
historicism of Hegel).7

Barker seems to be more imbued, in his treatment of his subject, with the
developmental spirit of Hegel than of Aristotle.8 For Aristotle, in full agreement here
with his teacher Plato, did not think that human thought was subject to history in the
sense that ideas have their times and cannot be thought before their time or believed after
their time. Wisdom, for both Plato and Aristotle, is not the final stage of some Hegelian
dialectic but a permanent human possibility, which is always and everywhere open to any
who would seek after it. The Platonic cave never lacks its path up to the sunlight, and

6 Political Thought, pp. v-vi.
7 Political Thought, pp. vii-ix, cf. p. 530. For Barker’s Hegelianism, as well as for the larger historical
context of Platonic scholarship at the immediate time and later, see the mastery review by K.N. Demetriou,
pp. 64-65, 90-91.
8 Consider the following remarks, Political Thought, p. 161: “[Plato] had risen above contradiction to the
eternal verity; and in the strength of his hold upon it he was too eager to enforce it upon the world for its
salvation. He did not sufficiently recognise that the eternal verity had been working throughout history, if
not consciously realised by man: he was too anxious to make its conscious realisation by the philosopher
into a ground for attacking all its past works.”
Aristotelian nature, being the permanent structure of an eternal cosmos, never ceases to attract cities as well as philosophy into existence.  

Barker does not, to be sure, accept the full Hegelian vision of history, but he does very much accept the Hegelian vision of politics and the Hegelian inspired-vision of classical scholarship. He thinks, for instance, that the days of the city, or rather the city-state as he calls it, are historically over and that they ended, in fact, with Alexander. He also accepts the Hegelian distinction between state and society as determinative for politics, and finds the distinction come to full expression already in Plato. He regards the Platonic dialogues as datable to particular periods of Plato’s life and as displaying a Hegelian-style development through Plato’s career. The Republic, for instance, was composed in Plato’s maturity, “between his fortieth and his sixtieth year,” while the Laws is “the last work of Plato’s life” having something of “the mystical lore of life’s sunset.”

This is, of course, the prevailing scholarly view still today, but it is remarkable how little evidence there is in its favor. All we actually know (from the testimony of Aristotle in the

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9 Barker was fully aware of this difference, as is clear from the following, Political Thought, p. 153 note 1: “[Plato’s] want of historical perspective was natural to a Greek inquirer. Instead of seeing in the present the fruit of the conditions and circumstances of the present, and in the past the fruit of those which reigned in the past; instead, again, of seeing this present linked to the past by the chains of a natural development, he saw, in both present and past, things possible at either time, and in neither any necessary connection with the other. He ignored at once the causation which connects the present with its environment, and that which binds it to the past.” Barker goes on to add that Aristotle did have something of “the modern “historic” sense” of development, but I think myself that this is just a mistake. Both Plato and Aristotle were, of course, aware of the idea and fact of development, but neither thought of this development as being compelled from behind, so to say, by the mechanism of some inner dialectic.


11 Political Thought, pp. 11, 115. Barker rightly changed his mind on this matter later, as I note in the final section below. For an intriguing and compelling argument that the Greek city was not a state at all but rather what anthropologists nowadays call ‘a stateless society’, see Moshe Berent, ‘Sovereignty: Ancient and Modern’, Polis 17 (2000), pp. 2-34; and ‘In Search of the Greek State: A Rejoinder to M.H. Hansen’, Polis 21 (2004), pp. 107-46.

12 Political Thought, pp. 81, 184, 205
Politics)\textsuperscript{13} is that the Laws was written later than the Republic. But we do not know, pace the consensus of the scholars, how much later; nor do we know whether it was Plato’s last work. In fact, if truth be told, we know nothing about the dating of the Platonic dialogues. The datings, and the orderings, that scholars now prefer may indeed be interesting, stimulating, provocative, as well as fertile of thought and speculative analysis, but they are, though dear to Hegelian historicism, without historical foundation.\textsuperscript{14}

Barker also accepts, again in full agreement with the scholars, the identification of Socrates in Plato’s dialogues with Plato himself, so that what Plato makes Socrates say is what Plato himself believed. About this identification, as well as the chronological ordering of the dialogues, I will offer some comments towards the end. For the present let me concede that the identification and the ordering, though lacking in historical, if not also literary, conviction, do constitute a possible way of reading the Platonic writings. This way is certainly not the only way, nor need it be the best way. But it is one way. At any rate it is Barker’s way. Barker’s way not only follows the historical developmentalism discovered, or invented, by Hegel, it also follows, through the mediation of Green, the Hegelian understanding of the state. For not only does Barker adopt, as before remarked, the Hegelian distinction of state and society; he also adopts the Hegelian identification of the true individual with the citizen of the state, or he adopts what we might today call the “communitarian” subsumption of the individual into the state. He certainly rejects the individualist liberalism of Hobbes (and Locke).\textsuperscript{15} He also attributes this communitarian thinking to Plato himself, finding fault, not with Plato’s

\textsuperscript{13} Politics 2.6.1264b26-27
\textsuperscript{14} See J. Howland, ‘Re-Reading Plato: the Problem of Platonic Chronology,’ Phoenix 45 (1991): 189-214. This is an article, and a message, I find myself drawing attention to, and having to draw attention to, time and time again.
\textsuperscript{15} Political Thought, pp. 96, 99 note 2, 138-39, 155-63.
adoption of the idea, but with his extreme zeal for it. Barker did not change his mind about this Platonic communitarianism in his 1918 book, but he did very much increase his appreciation for it. So, leaving discussion of this matter to the next section, I will only note here that in 1906 Barker thinks the extremism of Plato needs to be moderated by a good dose of the “English spirit of compromise” such as he finds in Aristotle.

The rest of Barker’s discussion of Plato, while containing many a gem for the curious eye, follows pretty largely these principles of interpretation. Socrates (or the Athenian Stranger) is assumed throughout to be the mouthpiece of Plato; the dramatic and literary character of the dialogue form is pretty largely ignored; the Hegelianism of Green is taken as the measure of political theory; the dominance of time over thought, or the limitation of thought by its times, is adopted as a general, if not absolute, principle; the admiration for the Republic is countered by the preference for the practical compromise (or “Englishness”) of the Laws and of Aristotle’s Politics. However, Barker ends his discussion of Plato on the following curious note:

…the political philosophy of Plato [cannot] be other than eternally and everlastingly true, because it is wrought into the substance of a philosophy of the world, which can never lose its truth. His philosophy has its time-vesture: it is the philosophy of a limited experience. It is of a city-state he thinks; and it is of a city-state that he states the truth which he has found. Much of its detail has an

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16 Political Thought, p. 161.
17 Political Thought, pp. p. 162. No similar reference to the English spirit of compromise is found, by the way, in the 1918 book—check!.
18 Political Thought, p. 184: “And here it may be remarked—the point is one of some importance—that in the whole of the Laws there is much Aristotelianism… Above all, the spirit which breathes through the Laws is that spirit of naturalism, or realism—of practical compromise, and truth to actualities—which distinguishes Aristotle.”
historical interest: all of its essence is still essential. Much may be criticised; yet
the staple criticism is simply this, that he was too generously eager for the reign of
pure truth and the realisation of pure principle.\textsuperscript{19}

I say this is ‘curious’ because one cannot tell from it whether it is a rejection or a re-
assertion of Hegel. Thought is indeed bound by time for Hegel, but earlier thought, while
transcended by later thought, is never wholly got rid of or denied. It remains synthesized
into later thought where, instead of existing in isolation as a part falsely separated from
the whole, it is integrated into its proper place within that whole where it attains, along
with all other thought, its final truth. Barker could, therefore, be meaning something like
this when he says that Plato’s philosophy is eternally true, in which case he would be re-
asserting Hegel. On the other hand, he could be meaning that there is something in Plato
which is not bound by time even in the Hegelian manner but has a supra-temporal truth,
in which case he would be rejecting Hegel and returning to the conception of truth
present in Plato and Aristotle and, one might fairly say, in all thinkers prior to Hegel. The
Hegelianism that Barker embraced as his intellectual heritage (from Green and Nettleship,
if not also others) would make one incline towards the former interpretation. His evident
love for Plato, and his closing remark about Plato’s too generous eagerness for pure truth
(which seems to attribute Plato’s thought more to the man than to the times), might
incline one to the latter. I will not attempt to resolve this question. I raise it only by way
of anticipation of Barker’s own development (for if we do not know when Plato wrote
any of his dialogues, we do know very well when Barker wrote all of his books).

\textsuperscript{19} Political Thought, p. 207.
Barker’s 1918 Plato

The issues where, in his 1918 book, Barker says Plato has come to mean more for him than in 1906 are those of might against right, the meaning of militarism, the character of international relations, and the scope of a true national education. As regards the first of these topics Barker refers us to pages which are part of his discussion of the sophists and, by anticipation, of how Plato confronted them (these pages, while much expanded, remain close in thought to what Barker wrote in his 1906 book).

Barker does not, however, refer us to the pages where he gives us a translation of the sophist Antiphon’s On Truth (a text then but recently discovered and not discussed in the 1906 book). In a footnote Barker gives his own answer to Antiphon’s typically sophistic pitting of physis (nature) against nomos (law or convention). Where Antiphon, in Barker’s reconstruction of his argument, says that the law opposes nature because, for instance, it forbids theft when theft would be naturally advantageous (as for a starving man), Barker responds that this argument is a fallacy because it “isolates” the individual.

If an individual existed absolutely by himself, it might be advantageous for him to steal; but there would be nobody from whom he could steal. But if he exists, as he does, in society, and as a member of society, nothing can in the long run be really disadvantageous to him, which is socially advantageous… If a man respects the property of others, others will respect his property: and if at the moment he has no property, that does not prevent the possibility of his having property in the future. Rights and duties are correlative, and the one implies the other. The assumption of

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20 Greek Political Theory, pp. 71-74, contained within chapter iv, which runs from page 55 to page 85; cf. Political Thought, pp. 28-46.
21 Greek Political Theory, p.84 note 3.
“invisibility”—that is to say, of going unobserved in a failure to respect rights—does not vitiate this argument; for it is an assumption that cannot be made. Social man, whose life is lived in the presence of his fellows, is not “invisible”; and the more society perfects its mechanism—not only of police, but also of communication—the more do all its members live in glass houses.

There are several curiosities about this passage, the first and most significant of which is that there seems to be nothing in it that Barker could have got from Plato. The invisibility assumption does, of course, recall the ring of Gyges in the second book of the Republic, but Barker ignores how Plato makes Socrates answer that argument. To begin with, neither Socrates nor Glaucon would have regarded Barker’s rejection of the real possibility of the invisibility assumption as adequate. Whether this assumption is really possible or merely a sophist’s dream is not the point. One is supposed, in good philosophical fashion, to take it as a hypothesis, if only per impossibile, and then consider what follows. Socrates’ answer is that injustice never pays, even if one always gets away with it, because injustice is a disease of the soul. It is, therefore, its own punishment. Justice by contrast, being health of the soul, is its own reward, and makes the just man 734??** times happier than the tyrant (that most unjust of men), regardless of whether the tyrant enjoys all the other goods of life and the just man none of them. Socrates, as it were, steals the sophists’ argument and turns it on its head. Justice, which is condemned by the sophists as conventional, is in fact natural, and injustice, praised by the sophists as natural, is in fact conventional. For only a convention, the convention set up by tyrants and their admirers (the many), could pass off disease as good and health as bad.
But Socrates goes further still. He replaces the sophistic contrast of nature and convention with the philosophic contrast of conventions that are natural and conventions that are unnatural. For there are natural and unnatural ways of organizing, that is of reducing to conventions and laws, the life of men and of cities, and the tyrant has chosen the most unnatural while the philosopher has chosen the most natural. The many, of course, hate both ways: the tyrant’s out of envy, because the tyrant has what they want, and the philosopher’s out of anger, because the philosopher despises what they want. The many choose instead some way in between, the way of the social contract (or the original position as we call it nowadays) that, as Glaucon explains, protects the weak, who do not have Gyges’ ring or his daring, against the strong tyrants, who do. But this way of the many, while it is the best they can conceive given their desires and their lack of spirit, is, from the philosopher’s point of view, worse than the way of the tyrant. The tyrant has at least realized that the way of the many is unnatural (and unnatural because conventional, because the result of a rather contemptible contract), and has at least had the guts, if I may so speak, to seek out the natural way. He has, to be sure, miserably failed to find that way, but he has tried. Unlike the pusillanimous many, he possesses, or is possessed of, the strong passion, the eroticism, that could, if properly trained in the right conventions, make him into a philosopher. For to be a philosopher is to be in the most natural state, and to be in the most natural state, and not to live the low compromises of the many, is what the tyrant wants. But, strange though this will seem to the sophist as well as to the tyrant, no one is in the most natural state by nature. One only gets there by hard training and education. What is natural is not by nature; it is by convention. The trick is to find this convention and, if possible, to implement it.

The point is neatly expounded by Aristotle, *Politics* 2.8.1267a2-14.
Admittedly all this is just another interpretation of the *Republic*, which, like Barker’s, may be contested. But the parts of the *Republic* on which it is based do not figure in Barker’s answer to Antiphon [give refs to Plato????!!!!!!]. That answer takes its cue, not from ideas to be found in the *Republic*, but from ideas to be found in the political theorizing of Green (as will be explained shortly). At any rate, when Barker turns directly to Glaucon’s argument, he criticizes it for, among other things, its false view of human nature, the individualistic view that man is a selfish unit. This individualism is not only what is at fault in Glaucon’s view, says Barker, but also what is at fault in that of Thrasymachus and Hobbes.

Those who, like Plato, seek to expose the errors of this extreme individualism must answer by urging a truer conception of the nature and the ‘rights’ of human individuality. They must show that the self is no isolated unit, but part of an order with a station in that order; and that fulness of expression and true consciousness of pleasure are only to be found in doing one’s duty in the station to which one is called. This is the ultimate answer which Plato gives and writes the *Republic* in order to give.  

This is indeed the answer that Plato, or Socrates, gives, but not, I would contend, his ultimate answer, or not his answer for tyrannical souls. It is his answer for the Guardian class, to be sure, but it is only apparently his answer for the Philosopher class. Their good is not to serve the state, or the city, but to escape the city and live in contemplation of the

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23 *Greek Political Theory*, p.160 n1.
24 *Greek Political Theory*, p.156; cf. *Political Thought*, p. 96, where the same words can be found.
They are, indeed, the only ones fit to rule. They are also the only ones who do not wish to rule.

There are, if you like, two levels of individuality: the individual below the city and the individual above the city. The individual below the city is the tyrant, the strong-willed man who devours the city, like a wild beast, for his own private advantage. He needs the city in order to satisfy his untamed passions. The individual above the city is the philosopher, the strong-willed man who lives, as far as possible, outside the city like a god. He does not need the city, but the city does need him, for he is the only one who knows how to rule it justly. The many and the gentlemen soldiers are, by contrast, the ones who live in and for the city. The many do this unwillingly because they would prefer to be tyrants. The patriotic soldiers and gentlemen do it willingly because they have been brought up, like good guard dogs, to love what is familiar and oppose what is foreign. [Plato reference??**]

Barker shows no hesitation in acknowledging the existence of the state-destroying individual who is a tyrant, the one praised by the sophists for whom might is right; but he wavers over the state-transcending individual who is a philosopher. He acknowledges the tension that exists in the Republic between the life of contemplation and the life of action, and concedes that there is “something of asceticism in Plato’s picture of the philosopher turning from the vision [of the Idea of the Good] to mix in secular affairs.” But he also thinks that “the antithesis implicit in Plato’s thought” is something we ourselves need not accept.

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25 Republic 519c8-520a5.
26 Greek Political Theory, p.204.
We may say that we cannot draw a distinction between action and contemplation—at any rate on the ground that the one has a social quality which does not belong to the other. Both may be social—just as both may be non-social. Plato, at any rate, has influenced the world of action in infinite ways by his contemplation.²⁷

It would be more correct, of course, to say that Plato has influenced the world of action by his activity as a writer and a teacher than by his contemplation on its own. And Barker himself really concedes this when, on the same page, he says in general about thinkers, and therefore also about himself, that “to communicate, if only by teaching and writing, the truth we have seen is to fulfil the duty of our station.” It would also be more correct to say that the implicit antithesis is not in Plato’s thought, but in Socrates’ thought in Plato’s Republic.

The second topic Barker explicitly mentions as one where he has felt the relevance of Plato to the times is militarism, and here he passes to something that did not engage his attention in the 1906 book.

Looking, it may be, at the signs of the times, Plato in the first book of the Laws preaches the sovereignty of peace, and criticises the type of State which like Sparta has made war its aim. His words have a modern ring and a modern application. To the militarist “peace is only a name; and every State in reality is in a constant state of war with every other…” (Laws 626)… “In reality” (as the

²⁷ *Greek Political Theory*, p. 204 note 2.
militarist says, not knowing the nature of reality), there are wars to be waged
within the State, which demand the true courage that is born of self-control… Evil
is pitted against good in an inward conflict; and true courage, like all true virtue,
can only be shown in those internal struggles in which education meets ignorance,
and social justice is set against social injustice. Every State should look inward
rather than outward [and here Barker adds a footnote suggesting Austria-Hungary
had, with fatal results, failed to do that]… So the military state, if it listens to
Plato, will abjure the outward direction of its life…, its hopes of conquest and
annihilation…; it will turn to the battleground within its borders, and…will
seek…to secure that harmony and reconciliation of different elements which only
self-control can give.\textsuperscript{28}

It is possible for states too, says Barker continuing with a quotation from the \textit{Laws}, to
achieve inward virtue and enjoy peace if they are good but war both within and without if
they are evil. Here too he adds a footnote, this time to Green, a passage from whose
\textit{Principles of Political Obligation} he quotes:

The military system of Europe is no necessary incident of the relations between
independent States, but arises from the fact that the organisation of State-life,
even with those peoples that have been brought under its influence at all, is still so
incomplete.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Greek Political Theory}, pp. 299-300.
Green wrote those words for lectures he gave in 1879-1880 (they were published after his untimely death in 1882), and so not that long after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. About these lectures Barker had said in 1906, as already noted, that he owed his general conception of political science to them, and that it was with Green’s teaching that he contrasted or compared that of Plato and Aristotle. We should be grateful for this straightforward acknowledgement. It explains a lot in Barker’s discussion, in particular of Plato, that is otherwise puzzling.

To begin with, as regards the quotation from Green just given, one would have thought that, by 1918, there was good reason to doubt whether the military system of Europe arose from the fact that the organization of state-life was so incomplete rather than from the fact that it was far too complete. Certainly the states that fought in the Great War had achieved a control over their citizenry so total that millions of them knowingly threw away their lives in pointless to-ings and fro-ings across the murderous no man’s land of France. One finds it hard to imagine people in the Middle Ages, when no one conceived political rule after the fashion of Green, being as slavish towards their superiors or as superstitious about Government authority as to do the same. Admittedly

30 The Franco-Prussian war was a harbinger of the warring militarism to come (though Green was not to know this). By the Treaty of Frankfurt in 1871, which ended this war, France forfeited Alsace-Lorraine to Germany (Germany’s Second Reich dates its beginning from this year), and only recovered it in 1919 by the terms of another treaty, the Treaty of Versailles, which ended another war, the Great War of 1914-1918 (and also ended, incidentally, the Second Reich). The Germans, of course, seized it back in 1940, at the beginning of the next Great War, and incorporated it into the Third Reich. The French then had to wait until 1945 to recover it again. Alsace-Lorraine, or Elsass-Lothringen to give it its German name, was originally part of the German or Holy Roman Empire (the First Reich, that is, which did indeed, unlike the Third, last a thousand years), but was ceded to France by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

31 Political Thought, p. vii.

32 Lingering elements of medieval insubordination and repudiation of the state are perhaps to be traced in the famous Christmas truce of 1914, when British and German infantrymen, in defiance of their superiors, fraternized and played soccer in no-man’s land. Had the troops been more medieval, and the state and its militarism less total, I think the Great War would have ended then and there. The war went on, of course,
Barker was not well placed to see this truth about the Great War in 1918 when so much was hidden in Government records or obscured by Government propaganda. Some at the front, however, already saw it, and others later carefully documented the fact.\(^33\) Moreover, one would think that by 1947, when Barkers’ third edition came out, there was even more reason to question, against Green, whether it was not rather the over-organization of the state than its under-organization that was to blame for militarism and war.

Of course it was not the military organization of the state that Green and Barker were concerned about. As Barker himself put it in the quotation above, the state should turn to the battle within and not to the battle without. It should, following the Laws, combat social injustice and ignorance at home, not direct itself to conquest abroad.

Leaving aside for the present whether Bismarck, Kaiser Wilhelm, Hitler, and Mussolini were not as keen to socialize people at home as to arm them for foreign aggression, we must certainly consider more carefully what sort of idea of the state Barker was using for his study of Plato, as well as of Aristotle.

The quotations Barker gives from Green come from Section K of Green’s *Principles*, headed “The Right of the State over the Individual in War.” About Green’s argument in this section Barker wrote that it “constitutes one of the finest and strongest parts of his Lectures.”\(^34\) Green’s point is, however, not altogether easy to grasp, but one may begin with the following quotations:

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\(^33\) I have in mind, as regards the first, Siegfried Sassoon again and, as regards the second, Winston Churchill in his *The World Crisis*, (London, 1923-31).

\(^34\) *Political Thought in England from Herbert Spencer to the Present Day*, (London 1915), p. 46.
…according to its idea the state is an institution in which all rights are harmoniously maintained, in which all the capacities that give rise to rights have free-play given to them. No action in its own interest of a state that fulfilled this idea could conflict with any true interest or right of general society… There is no such thing as an inevitable conflict of states…

The more perfectly each [state] attains its proper object of giving free scope to the capacities of all persons living on a certain range of territory, the easier it is for others to do so; and in proportion as they all do so the danger of conflict disappears…

Just so far as states are thoroughly formed, the diversion of patriotism into the military channel tends to come to an end. It is a survival from a condition of things in which, as yet, the state, in the full sense, was not; in the sense, namely, that in each territory controlled by a single independent government, the rights of all persons, as founded on their capacities for contributing to a common good, are equally established by one system of law.35

Green attributes wars and the existence of standing armies in Europe to the imperfect realization of civil equality in states, that is, to the particular interests of a part thwarting the common interests of the whole.36 Consequently the more completely states become

35 Political Obligation, §§ 166, 172
36 Political Obligation, §§169-174
states, or the more particular states come to instantiate the general idea of the state, the more will wars and weapons disappear.

This seems something of a roundabout way of doing things, to secure mutual harmony of all peoples by first putting them into separate nations (for Green considers the nation with a national feeling of its own as necessarily underlying states properly so called), and then putting these nations in harmony with each other. Why bother to go through the intermediary of the nation-state to begin with? For Green admits that nations, in their coming to be, are a potent source of war, and that Europe is only a “great camp” because of the presence in it of separate nations. Was not the nation-less conglomerate of Medieval Christendom, which was only in modern times split up into separate nation states, a better idea (it had wars to be sure, but nothing like the wars of modern Europe), and therefore a better place to start for developing harmony? Green does not think so, because the state, indeed the nation-state, is the precondition of human perfection.

Green’s position on the individual and the state is nicely expressed in the following:

The highest moral goodness [is] an attribute of character, in so far as it issue[s] in acts done for the sake of their goodness, not for the sake of any pleasure or satisfaction of desire which they bring to the agent…

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37 Political Obligation, §171
38 Political Obligation, §173
39 Green seems to have an idea of the person and of rights as only to be realized in some unitary Kantian kingdom of ends and as, therefore, not realizable in Medieval Christendom where, to say nothing of other things, there is no unity of kingdom but the political whole is divided by the presence of an independent and authoritative Church. At any rate Green hints darkly that the Catholic Church is one of the forces preventing the full realization of the state and so one of the causes of war, Principles of Political Obligation, §167.
…the claim or right of the individual to have certain powers secured to him by society, and the counter-claim of society to exercise certain powers over the individual, alike rest on the fact that these powers are necessary to the fulfillment of man’s vocation as a moral being, to an effectual self-devotion to the work of developing the perfect character in himself and others…

No one…can have a right except (1) as a member of society, and (2) of a society in which some common good is recognised by the members of the society as their own ideal good, as that which should be for each of them. The capacity for being determined by a good so recognised is what constitutes personality in the ethical sense…

The capacity…on the part of the individual of conceiving a good as the same for himself and others, and of being determined to action by that conception, is the foundation of rights; and rights are the condition of that capacity being realised. No right is justifiable or should be a right except on the ground that directly or indirectly it serves this purpose. Conversely every power should be a right, i.e. society should secure to the individual every power, that is necessary for realising this capacity…

There can be no right without a consciousness of common interest on the part of members of a society. Without this there might be certain powers on the part of individuals, but no recognition of these powers by others as powers of which they
allow the exercise, nor any claim to such recognition; and without the recognition or claim to recognition there can be no right…

…rights do not belong to individuals as they might be in a state of nature, or as they might be if each acted irrespectively of the others. They belong to them as members of society in which each recognises the other as an originator of action in the same sense in which he is conscious of being so himself (as an ‘ego,’ as himself the object which determines the action), and thus regards the free exercise of his own powers as dependent on his allowing an equally free exercise of his powers to every other member of society…

Barker’s own comments on Green may be added to reinforce this idea:

The rights with which [Green] is concerned are not legal rights, but ideal rights: they are the rights which a society properly organised on the basis of the good will should ideally recognise, if it is true to its own basic principle. Such rights we may fairly term “natural” rights, if we conceive natural rights properly; if we regard them, not in the old and erroneous way, as rights which isolated men possessed in a pre-social state of nature and must consequently be presumed (though the consequence is not obvious) to possess in a state of society, but as rights inherent and “innate” in the moral nature of associated men who are living (as they cannot but live) in some form of society. …[T]he rights of which Green speaks are relative to morality rather than law; and the recognition of which he

40 *Political Obligation*, §§ 2, 21, 25, 29, 31, 138
speaks is recognition by a common moral consciousness rather than by a legislature. The rights are relative to morality, in the sense that they are the conditions of the attainment of the moral end; and the recognition is given by the moral consciousness, because it knows that they are the necessary conditions of its own satisfaction.\textsuperscript{41}

These quotations make clear that both Green and Barker are operating with a Kantian notion of ethical personality and that they are adding to it a Hegelian notion of the state as the concrete realization of ethical personality in many individuals. Certainly neither thinks that ethical personality, with its constitutive rights, can be realized except in the legal entity that is the modern nation-state. Such an idea of the state does, however, help to explain and give some plausibility to Barker’s discussion of Antiphon and Glaucon. If the individual is only complete, and only realizes his nature, in an organized social state where the possession of equal rights by all is the condition for the possession of any rights by anyone, then Antiphon’s and Glaucon’s vision of the individual who is complete outside or against society is erroneous if not indeed incomprehensible. Thus, for instance, my right to property, even if I do not yet have any, does depend on my recognizing, and so respecting, others’ property; and my dream of invisibility within society is incoherent, because the idea of society is only thinkable on the assumption of the openness of all to all in the mutual recognition of equal rights.

So far, so good. But the question we must ask is whether Antiphon or Glaucon, or Thrasymachus for that matter, would be impressed by such Greenian conceptions of individual and state. To be sure, one will be impressed by them if one cares about ethical

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Herbert Spencer to the Present Day}, p. 35.
personality or if the perfection of such personality in the mutual recognition of rights is what one wants. But why should one care about such ethical personality or want its perfection? Only, surely, if ethical personality is my nature and its perfection my ultimate happiness. But no argument is given by Green or Barker, or Kant for that matter, that such is the case. They make the supposition, to be sure, of ethical personality, and from this, of course, the rest follows. But what is now in question is that supposition itself. One might say, indeed, that Thrasymachus’ attack in the first book of the Republic is precisely to call that supposition into question. To assume it, therefore, in order to answer him is to beg the question. One must, instead, directly engage the question of human nature and prove, not just assert, that ethical personality is its essence and its happiness. One must prove, in other words, that ethical personality is, in Socrates’ words, the health of the soul. We do not get this in either Green or Barker. Or if we do, it is in a roundabout and unthematized way. Green and Barker are, as it were, addressing the morally virtuous citizen from the start and affirming for him the rectitude of the choice he has already made; they are not trying to persuade the tyrant or would-be tyrant that he would be better off choosing to be a morally virtuous citizen instead. Of course, both tasks are important and indeed valuable. But Barker, to say nothing of Green, only reads Plato for what he contributes to the first task and not also for what he contributes to the second.

Indeed, this is hardly surprising, for what Plato contributes to the second could not seem persuasive or, indeed, worthy of commendation to a Kantian minded philosopher.
Why does Thrasymachus commend anti-social behaviour? Because he thinks that justice does not naturally benefit the just man, and because furthering the interests of others is not one of his, Thrasymachus’, purposes. How does Socrates meet him? By arguing that justice does naturally benefit the just man, and that therefore it should be one of Thrasymachus’ purposes to care for others. Why ‘should’? Surely because it is one of Thrasymachus’ purposes (or perhaps it is his all-embracing purpose) to live a satisfactory life, and he cannot do that unless he cares for others. It is thus common ground between Socrates and Thrasymachus that if either can show that the way of life he recommends brings satisfaction to the man who pursues it, that is victory.

There are thus criticisms that can be brought against Plato. You can say if you like that the notion of totally disinterested motivation of the Kantian kind does not enter his head, and that therefore the commendatory expressions he uses are all of one kind (‘prudential’), that he is unaware of the possibility of pure moral evaluation. I think he might reply that pure moral evaluation is just what the vulgar do, and what Thrasymachus saw to be groundless…

The third topic Barker explicitly mentions as one where he has felt the relevance of Plato to the times is international relations (and here again he passes to something that does not figure in the 1906 book). Barker is thinking here of remarks at the end of book five of the Republic about how Greeks should treat Greeks. Plato, he says:

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42 I.M. Crombie, An Examination of Plato’s Doctrines (London, 1962), vol. 1, p. 275
has a clear conception that the Greek world, at any rate, is a single society, with a
civility or comity of its own, to which all its members are bound to conform.
Within this society peace should rule; or, if there is war, war should be waged
according to humane rules… Plato believes, in a word, that there is a public law
of Greece, and that all Greek States are bound by this law.\textsuperscript{43}

Barker sees Plato here as a forerunner of international law, indeed as the first thinker who
stood for the rule of international law.\textsuperscript{44} So it is easy to see how, in 1918, he could have
wished for a Europe still in the throes of the Great War something of what Plato had
wished for the states of ancient Greece. Of course Barker was aware that Plato’s vision of
international law extended only to Greeks and not also to barbarians. But he allows him
the excuse of time. Plato has not, he says:

any notion of a universal brotherhood, or common human society, within which
the State is contained, and by which its action is conditioned. Such an idea was
impossible before the world-empires of Macedon and of Rome had done their
work, and before thought, accommodating itself to these facts, had attained the
conceptions, which appear first in Stoic philosophy and then in Christianity, of the
brotherhood and equality of all men.\textsuperscript{45}

Barker’s subordination of thought to time is derived, of course, from Hegel and not from
Plato. Moreover it is itself strangely out of time. For if Plato, because of his time, could

\textsuperscript{43} Greek Political Theory, pp. 265-66.
\textsuperscript{44} Greek Political Theory, p. 268
\textsuperscript{45} Greek Political Theory, p. 265
not ascend to the idea of universal brotherhood, how is it that, long after that ascent had been made, the idea was, in Barker’s time, more denied by men’s deeds than ever it was in Plato’s time? Are we to suppose, then, that while time so controls thought as to limit what men think, what men think does not so control their power as to limit what they do? If so, what is the value for men’s deeds of reading, and writing about, what men, or in particular what the man Plato, actually thought?

The fourth and final topic Barker explicitly mentions as one where he has felt the relevance of Plato to the times is the scope of a true national education (and this too is lacking in the 1906 book). Here Barker refers to a whole chapter of his book, chapter XVII, which is headed “The Theory of Education in the Laws.” Barker runs through the elements of this education and seems to find fault with the particulars of almost all of them. Notably he finds fault with the strictures against innovation in music and poetry, with the curtailing of freedom of choice and the draining of the springs of initiative. He then adds on his own account:

Perhaps it matters less in what we are educated than what sort of mental energy we develop in the process; and the enthusiasm of youth for new modes, new authors, and new music is after all the generous enthusiasm of a growing mind.46

It is the general vision of education in the Laws rather than such particulars that Barker finds so attractive:

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46 *Greek Political Theory*, p. 371
...nothing in the *Laws* is more striking, or perhaps more valuable, than [Plato’s] advocacy of the organised school, his belief in compulsory education, and his plea for the education of girls.47

But surely it matters a great deal what we are educated in, or what sort of new modes and authors the young get enthused about, or what the organized school is organized for, or what the compulsory education, whether of girls or boys, is used to compel. Barker did, after all, live to see Hitler’s Nazi regime, not to mention Stalin’s Bolshevist one, but he surely could not have had to wait for either to appreciate the way in which organized schools and enthusiasm for new authors might twist the minds of whole nations.

*Barker’s 1946 Aristotle*

Perhaps this is to be too harsh on Barker who, though he could not have been ignorant of the possibilities of abusing, was, in 1918, rightly more caught by the possibilities of using, what he read in Plato. Still we, who do not live in 1918, or indeed in 1906, but rather at the end of that most murderous of centuries, cannot proceed so innocently. Barker’s Plato is, for us, in need of some careful weighing.

The weighing begins, or elements of it do, already with Barker himself. At any rate his increased enthusiasm for Hegelian or Greenian statism, that marks the shift from the 1906 to the 1918 book, seems to have very much waned by the time he came to translate Aristotle’s *Politics*. This translation was begun in 1940 and published in 1946. A reprinting, with only technical corrections, appeared in 1948.48 What is significant

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47 *Greek Political Theory*, p. 380

about this work is the different atmosphere it breathes. True, its debunking, with respect to the *Politics*, of Germanic *Entwicklungsgeschichte*, such as was popularized by Jaeger,49 is found already about Plato’s *Republic* and also, if less clearly, about the *Politics*, in his 1906 book.50 But it now lacks the lingering Hegelian characterizations that are still to be found in that earlier work.51 Barker also now seems less confident that the Hegelian state and society distinction can usefully be applied to either Greek practice or Greek thought. In fact, one of the most striking things about his translation is that, unlike in his earlier books, he refuses to translate *polis* as state. Instead he does not translate it at all and contents himself with a mere transliteration of it. In addition, and more provocatively, as well as more correctly, he likens the *polis*, not to the state, but to the church.52 We also find him saying the following about both the Platonic and the Aristotelian vision of the *polis*:

Plato and Aristotle may differ; but for both there is one end—the end of moral perfection which can only be attained in the *polis*—and that end is the measure of all things… The end justifies; the end condemns; the end is sovereign. It is easy to glide into the view that the state and its ‘well-being’ (in the full Greek sense of the term) are thus made into a higher end to which the individual and his personal development are sacrificed. Generally stated this view is erroneous: it involves a return, in another form, of that antithesis between political society and the individual which Plato and Aristotle refuse to recognize. The state (they believe)

51 *Political Thought*, pp. 82, 521-22.
52 *The Politics of Aristotle*, pp. xlvii, li-lii, lix-lx, lxiii. The idea that the city might instructively be compared to a church is hinted at in *Political Thought*, pp. 137, 498.
exists for the moral development and perfection of its individual members: the
fulfilment and perfection of the individual means—and is the only thing which
means—the perfection of the state; there is no antithesis.\textsuperscript{53}

What is especially noteworthy here is that the state is now understood by Barker to be
precisely not Hegelian. For to say, as Barker does, that the state is perfected in the
individual is not the same as to say that the individual is perfected in the state. The
second is Hegelianism; the first is not.

Moreover, as remarked earlier, the first could be meant in two ways, depending
on the two ways of understanding the individual: either in the modern liberal way, where
the individual that is the goal of the state is the individual in his primitive or original
condition;\textsuperscript{54} or in the ancient (and medieval) way, where the individual that is the goal of
the \textit{polis} (or the \textit{civitas}) is the individual in his perfected and final condition. Both
conditions are said, by their protagonists, to be man’s natural condition, but Barker is
right to see that Aristotle and Plato repudiated the former condition as not at all natural,
as indeed a return to the old error of the sophists. Barker is right, and percipient too, to
suggest that the Hegelian view, for all its subordination of the individual to the state, is
really a version of the view that the individual is the primitive individual. That is why the
individual has to be subordinated, because, as primitive, he is the enemy and the
antithesis of the state. But no such antithesis, nor any such subordination of individual to
state (let alone to \textit{polis} or \textit{civitas}), can exist or be justified, or even, indeed, be made
sense of, on the Platonic or Aristotelian view. For not only did Plato and Aristotle not,

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{The Politics of Aristotle}, pp. l-li.
\textsuperscript{54} This is the way, of course, of Hobbes and Locke and of their doctrine of individual rights, which plays
such a powerful role in modern politics and political rhetoric.
after all, have a notion of the state (as Barker has at last in 1946 been prepared to admit); they did not have a notion of an individual who, in being morally perfected in the polis, could suffer anything that might be called subordination, or could be deprived of anything that might be called rights.

The world of Plato and Aristotle is separated from the world of Hegel, to say nothing of the world of the two Great Wars, not just by the passage of time, but also by a revolution in how to conceive and conduct politics. Barker had clearly “matured” enough by 1946 to admit this fact, and it shows itself strikingly, as already indicated, in his transliteration of the word ‘polis’. Thoughts are communicated by words, and a change in words is often the best clue to detecting a change in thought. We should do the founders of modern political thought, and certainly Hegel, the courtesy of admitting that they knew what they were doing when they changed ‘polis’ (not to mention ‘civitas’) to ‘state’. When Barker changed ‘state’ back again to ‘polis’ we should do him no less a courtesy.

We may well wonder, therefore, whether Barker might not more quickly have come to this result, and about Plato as well as Aristotle, had he been (especially in 1918) less Germanic or less Hegelian in his readings of Plato. For if he had been prepared not to read the dialogues according to some unhistorical, if popular, chronological ordering and theory of development, and if he had been prepared to allow Plato to speak through more voices than that of Socrates, and indeed to speak, because of the drama of the dialogue form, with irony and humor and indirection, I wager that the Platonism he found would never have been as imbued with Hegelian and Greenian enthusiasms as, in 1918, in fact it was. Of course I do not wish to imply by this that one may not read Plato with a view to analyzing, explicating, and criticizing the doctrines and arguments presented through the

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mouth of Socrates. That is surely a legitimate exercise (and one which Aristotle carried out with his usual consummate skill).\textsuperscript{56} But it is not the only exercise, nor is it the only way to read Plato. It is not even, I venture to say, the best or most instructive way to read Plato (and here again I would appeal to Aristotle and his suggestion, in the \textit{Poetics}, that we should read Socratic discourses as we read a tragedy or a comedy or any imitation).\textsuperscript{57} Although there is little if any deviation from this way of reading Plato in Barker’s 1906 and 1918 books, I do not think that, had he written on Plato at the end of his career, he would have insisted on remaining so one-sided.

But Barker was an Englishman. Ordinarily, of course, a person’s ethnic origin should play no role in judging or analyzing his thought. I only mention it in Barker’s case because he himself mentions it, or rather he mentions Englishness, and Englishness possesses a small but by no means insignificant part in his reflections on Plato and Aristotle.

There is…a long line of transmission which runs from Aristotle to St. Thomas, from St. Thomas to Hooker, from Hooker to Locke, and so eventually to Burke. There is not only an analogy…between the climate of Aristotle’s \textit{Politics} and the climate of English political thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There is also some measure of affiliation.\textsuperscript{58}

About this analogy of climate Barker says:

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Politics} 2.2-6, for detailed comments on which see my \textit{A Philosophical Commentary on the Politics of Aristotle} (Chapel Hill, 1998), pp. 74-99.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Poetics} 1.1447b9-16.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{The Politics of Aristotle}, p. lxii
Like the Marquis of Salisbury at a later date, [Aristotle] set down what might be called ‘the Trimmer’s opinion of the laws and government’; like him, he thought, ‘That our climate is a trimmer, between that part of the world where men are roasted and the other where they are frozen; …that our laws are trimmers, between the excess of unbounded power and the extravagance of liberty not enough restrained; that true virtue hath ever been thought a trimmer, and to have its dwelling in the middle between two extremes’. But perhaps Aristotle was even more of a Whig than of a trimmer—a Whig of the type of Locke or Burke… [I]f there is any modern climate which is the climate of Aristotle’s *Politics*, it is the climate of 1688.\(^{59}\)

Barker was a Whig trimmer; or at least, so I contend, that is what he had become by 1946. The hope for reform from Platonic enthusiasms, suitably Hegelianized, that the crucible of the Great War had induced him to harbor in 1918, seems to have been completely abandoned. He does not, for instance, any more look to the state for a universal moral education after the model of the ‘holy discipline’ of Plato’s *Republic* or *Laws*.\(^{60}\) Nor, as his mention of 1688 intimates, does he look for a communitarian state into which to subsume the individual. Instead he finds solace in the ancient democracy of Athens, which both Plato and Aristotle harshly, though, says Barker, unjustly, blamed. Still Aristotle is better here than Plato, and Barker turns with evident satisfaction to that praise

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\(^{59}\) *The Politics of Aristotle*, p. xxxi. The year 1688 was the date of the Glorious, and bloodless, Revolution in England, when the unwisely autocratic James II was induced to flee into exile and replaced by the pliable William of Orange. This revolution and its effects marked the victory of Whig liberalism over Tory absolutist monarchism.

\(^{60}\) *The Politics of Aristotle*, p. li.
of rule by the people that Aristotle, if with his usual trimming moderation, gives in the third book of the Politics. Moreover, at the end of his summary of Aristotle’s thought, Barker asks what the nature of the legacy is that the Politics has bequeathed to Europe, and says it may be answered in a single word, the word ‘constitutionalism’. “This,” he says, “is the fundamental nature of the legacy derived from the Politics, and especially from its third book on ‘the theory of citizenship and constitutions’.”

Barker says that this is the legacy of Aristotle. But he also thinks that it is, in central ways, the legacy of Plato too. Despite the considerable time and energy Barker spent on the Republic, it is evident that he preferred the teaching of the Laws, that “most neglected, and yet in many ways the most wonderful—and the most modern (or medieval)—of all the writings of Plato.” The Laws contains for Barker, after all, more of that practical common sense that, he says, one finds in Aristotle and, indeed, that Aristotle took, in part, from the Laws. Echoing in his 1918 book sentiments he had already expressed in his 1906 book, and which he never expressly withdrew, even in 1946, he goes so far as to say that Plato’s thought, both in the Republic and the Laws, is codified in the Politics.

If Aristotle wrote the Politics, and arranged the content under the categories and in the scheme of his own philosophy, Plato supplied a great part of the content. There is as little absolutely new in the Politics as there is in (let us say) Magna

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63 Greek Political Theory, pp. viii.
64 Greek Political Theory, pp. 380-82.
It is not, therefore, in any grand vision of a Platonic, or even Aristotelian, best regime, whether mediated through Hegelianism or not, that Barker’s review of Greek political thought comes to an end (for recall that the 1946 book takes the place of the second volume of the 1918 book). Nor does it end in any praise of the politically transcendent life of philosophical contemplation (of which, however, Barker was not unaware, though he was suspicious of its political applications). Rather does it end in the thoroughly English trimming of Salisbury, Locke, and Burke.

So let me end in my own English way. I take my cue from another of Barker’s remarks, namely that minor details go to make the character and to determine the influence of any great book—for Barker’s books, though not great like Plato’s or Aristotle’s, are nevertheless great in their own genre and have had no little influence there too. At all events, relegated to a footnote is the following:

> It is only just to say that the Latin translations of Aristotle’s philosophical terminology (substance and attribute, quality and quantity, and many others) have given to French and English thinkers a clarity denied to German philosophers, who have used native Teutonic forms.

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65 Greek Political Theory, p. 382; Political Thought, p. 185, cf. p. 530.
68 The Politics of Aristotle, p. iii
One just has to pause in admiration at the sardonic understatement of these words. They were being penned, recall, during the second of the two Great Wars which pitted the English and the French against the Germans. One of the more famous, or at least notorious, German philosophers of the time was Heidegger, about whose philosophy and political allegiances it is impossible to think that Barker could have been ignorant. Heidegger also famously, or notoriously, endorsed the view that only German and Greek (and possibly Sanskrit) were philosophical languages. Latin, a work written in which had been the subject of Heidegger’s habilitation, is thus repudiated. Barker’s footnote, which mentions no German philosopher by name but gestures indiscriminately towards them all (including Kant and Hegel therefore), simply begs to be read as a put-down of Heidegger. It also begs to be read as a repudiation of the enthusiasm, not to mention fanaticism, to be found in so much German idealism (of which enthusiasm and fanaticism Heidegger can properly be considered an heir). It therefore neatly encapsulates Barker’s own development, as well as his Englishness. The Teutonic idealism he imbibed and was attracted by in his early years, and which tempted him into Hegelianized Platonic enthusiasms in 1918, has given way to the down to earth practicalities of Aristotelian and Whig constitutionalism. These enthusiasms have now been subdued, as well as codified, by Aristotelian trimmings. And Latin, along with English and French, but not German, has inherited Greek philosophy.

The ironies of the footnote are delicious. The dryness of expression exquisite.