

Plato on the gods: *Laws* 10

Ursula Coope and Gregory Hutchinson

Hilary Term, Wednesdays 9-11 (online)

The tenth book of Plato's late dialogue *The Laws* provides one of the most searching ancient treatments of the gods. The question of their existence is directly and extensively confronted. Much later debate on the relation between gods and the world finds a first airing here. In the imagined scenarios of the work, clever young unbelievers and others are forcefully but not fiercely persuaded. The argument sweeps through creation, the cosmos, the soul (human and divine), through motion and change, law and nature. The language, dialogue, and inset speeches are full of invention and vitality. This is a fundamental text for ancient ideas on religion, and an exciting read.

This is a joint seminar between Philosophy and Languages and Literature. Each week, we'll discuss two passages. We are very grateful to those who have volunteered to present. Presenters have been asked (i) to read out a translation (not necessarily their own), (ii) to summarize in a few sentences the main points in the passage; (iii) to raise some questions for discussion—these can be philosophical, literary, or textual, or can concern the larger cultural context.

List of passages and presenters:

Week 1

1 884a1-885e6 crimes against the sacred; challenge from the irreligious [Jason Webber]

2 885e7-887c4 defence of gods' existence and goodness prepared [Jenny Rallens]

Week 2

3 887c5-889a3 be nice to young atheists [Alex Johnston]

4 889a4-890d8 nature, law; cosmos begun by art or chance? gods exist by convention? [Alberto Corrado]

Week 3

5 890e1-892c8 soul before body in universe? [Michail Peramatzis]

6 892c9-894d5 εὖ λέγεις risky river; kinds of 'motion' (κίνησις) [Gregory Hutchinson]

Week 4

7 894d5 ἄρ' οὖν -896b3 self-motion and soul [Ursula Coope]

8 896b4-897e7 soul, mind, cosmos; looking at sun [Peter Olive]

Week 5

9 897e8-899d3 soul and heavenly bodies; souls as gods; gods exist [Ben Cartlidge]

10 899d4-901c7 gods drones? [Holly Hunt]

Week 6

11 901c8-903a6 gods and small matters [Theodore Hill]

12 903a7-904c5 gods, acting for the sake of the whole, and good and evil in us [Mor Segev]

Week 7

13 904c6-905d1 ἔχεις changes in soul; justice; gods care [Chuan Yue]

14 905d1 οὔτι -907d3 can the gods be bought off? [Samuele Coen]

Week 8

15 907d4-909d2 the law on impiety; moral differences among the irreligious; different punishments [Cristiana Sessini]

16 909d3-910d4 private religion bad [Jonathan Katz]

This is the link which (we hope) will take you to the meeting each week:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_ZTQyMWUyZTMtNTdmYS00OTA1LWExYWYtZjhhMWFmMTcxZDEw%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22cc95de1b-97f5-4f93-b4ba-fe68b852cf91%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22b0fc07ec-baf5-42ab-bfcf-2837472015b1%22%7d

Do let us know of any difficulties: ursula.coope@philosophy.ox.ac.uk,
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