

On Plato's Virtue Education for the Defenders of the City-States: A Study Based on the Text of the Ideal State

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Abstract: *In The Republic, Plato conceived the ideal city-state as consisting of rulers, auxiliaries, and earners based on his conception of the division of labor among the various classes of the city-state. As the alternative to the ruler, the guardians of the city-state are responsible for the protection of the city-state, so how to train the guardians of the city-state becomes a major issue for the city-state. Plato's efforts to create ideal guardians of both beauty and goodness by implementing music education and physical education have significant implications for character education today.*

Keywords: *The Republic, virtue, city-state guardian, education*

1. Virtue

In the ancient Greek period, philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, who expounded the meaning of virtue with philosophical concepts, considered virtue as the ultimate goal of human nature.

1.1. Exploring the connotation of virtue

The first discussion of the concept of virtue in the Republic appears in Book I when Plato asks Polemarchus whether a wounded horse is "according to the good qualities of the dog, or of the horse?" Polemarchus replied, "According to the horse's"[1], the excellent quality here refers to the goodness and perfection of something, the bravery and tenacity of a warrior, etc., i.e., "outstanding character" or "virtue", etc. The meaning is that the horse is injured, so the virtue of the horse has become bad. Later in the dialogue, Plato asks Thelachmahos: "In your opinion, does every thing have some excellent quality because it is endowed with some function?"[1], for his part, Thraxumachus argues that the eye and the ear have excellent qualities, i.e., virtue, so the concept of virtue then establishes a connection with the concept of function. And later Plato and Thraxumachus jointly admit that "by their own excellent qualities, they function effectively in the things they operate on, by inferiority, they are less effective." [1]

"Virtue" and "inferiority" became two opposing concepts, so it is clear that "virtue" as understood in ancient Greek society did not refer to moral virtue alone in the sense of today's times, but rather to good qualities that enable something to perform its function. "Virtue" as understood in ancient Greek society did not refer to moral virtue alone in the sense of today's times, but to the good qualities that enable a thing to perform its function. It is as if a wounded horse does not have the function of being fast, which means that the horse's "virtue" is impaired, and thus the horse cannot perform its function as a horse.

Immediately afterwards in Book II Plato also discusses virtue with Glaucon in terms of the virtues of animals such as horses and dogs. Here Plato explicitly speaks of the virtues of animals (horses and dogs) and sees them as noble animals, i.e., noblemen. The two imagery of horses and dogs are then apt metaphors for the three types of human souls discussed in the Republic, for although horses and dogs are natural animals by nature, they are likewise animals domesticated through acquired domestication, and virtue is in fact mixed with the nature of acquired indoctrination in this formulation.

Thus, virtue can be said to be both a natural and an artificial thing, and the difference between the two will be reflected in the different approaches to virtue education.

Another portrayal of virtue is in the dialogue where Plato discusses whether or not the art is neutral, arguing that "only it is not neutral because, by definition, it seeks the good of the whole" [2], that is, the art itself, such as philosophy, can only benefit its friends if it is good, and if the virtues are not in harmony with each other and cannot properly fulfill their function is evil.

1.2. The virtues of the three classes of the ideal city-state and their roles

Plato believed that all classes of the state should have four virtues: wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice, and he constructed a virtual ideal society in the Republic. In this society, there is a clear division of labor, and everyone does his or her own work without interfering with each other and living in peace and happiness. The foundation of such an ideal kingdom is to have a harmonious social order, and the "harmonious social order" here is equivalent to Plato's "justice", that is, "each one does his own thing". So, how should such a harmonious social order be constructed?

Plato divided people into three classes: the first class was made of gold, and they were the rulers of the city-state; the second class was made of silver, and they were the guardians of the city-state; the third class was made of bronze and iron, and they were always called laborers.

The first class consisted mainly of well-educated, virtuous, and knowledgeable people from noble families, i.e., philosophers, who must also have the virtue of wisdom and reason to take up the important task of governing the state, which is what they should do, and nothing else. In Plato's view, those who could possess such knowledge could only be a small group of people with the ability to rule and lead. In the second class, the defenders of the city-state, he believed that the defenders must be men of bravery, piety, and temperance, and that only those who possessed all three qualities at the same time could be the defenders of the city-state. Likewise, the city guards need only guard the security of the city state and its people, and the rest of the work is done by men made of brass and iron, which is the third class, who will continue to indulge their desires in due course, and whose duty it is to meet the needs of the state, and precisely because they have wealth and can make money, Plato believes that measures must be taken to control their excessive wealth or excessive poverty, and therefore, they must possess the virtue of moderation.

Therefore, Plato believed that the rulers ruled mainly because they possessed the quality of wisdom, the defenders of the city-state defended because they possessed the quality of bravery, and the third class of people could only be ruled and managed by the first two because they did not possess the quality of wisdom and bravery. Only when each class in the city-state fulfills its own duties and does its work in its own order will the city-state achieve overall harmony and order, and the justice of the city-state can be realized.

2. The importance of the virtue of the city-state guardian

Plato proposed the need to strictly divide society into three classes, and the defenders of the city-state, as the second class, were concerned with the interests of the first class and, to some extent, determined the survival of the third class.

2.1. The importance of the city-state guardian class

When Plato and Glaucon explore a feverish city-state in Book II, Glaucon builds up a lavish city-state with the desire that "luxury causes scarcity and necessitates the taking of land from others"[2], So Plato also discovered the root cause of war: "It is because of these desires that all kinds of mischief fall on the heads of city-states, to the detriment of the individual and the community, every time it happens." [1], thus they discussed the formation of a city-state in the strict sense of the word, corresponding to "a brotherhood that has enemies and must wage war and become warriors." [2] It is precisely because of the emergence of the class of guardians that the city-state has a ruling class and a ruled class, and "the warrior class will become the link between the highest and lowest classes deriving its significance from the service it provides to the higher classes," [2] This class in order to protect the interests of the city-state, it is inevitable to fight the invaders to the end, because the warrior city-state is harsh, reflecting the conflict between people, so this class of people are not all able to fill, must be specially trained from childhood, Plato believes that "it requires the greatest, not to worry about other matters of leisure, but also requires the most comprehensive professional art and the most adequate training." [1]

The guardians of the city-state are necessary for the protection of the ideal city-state, as well as the basis for training and creating future rulers and philosophical kings, so what kind of people with what temperament should be selected to defend our city-state?

2.2. The three elements of the virtue of the city-state guardian

Plato believed that the defenders were the only group that possessed the talent to shape their philosophical temperament, and that they should also possess qualities similar to those of watchdogs: bravery, strength, and loyalty. For the defenders must treat the people of their state well and keep them safe; but when dealing with their enemies, they will show an extremely ferocious side. Plato likens the defenders of the city-state to dogs, and just as dogs are friendly to those they know well, so the defenders of the city-state must necessarily have a love of knowledge, and therefore they must also love philosophy and possess it as a quality.

For there to be justice in society, desires must be controlled by the defenders in an authoritarian manner, so they, as controllers, must first learn moderation. If the defenders of the city-state did not possess the necessary bravery and moderation, they would have entered the third class of peasants or craftsmen, so the defenders of the city-state must possess these three virtues in order to guard the order of the city-state.

2.2.1. Bravery

In Book II of the Republic, Plato suggests that a defender must have a sharp eye, be able to discern master and foe, and also possess strength, for can an animal or man possess the virtue of bravery without abundant strength?

Temperance, which in Greek contains the meaning of verve, boldness, passion, courage, anger, etc., is considered an essential part of the structure of the soul, and Plato defines the blood temper in this way, "What an irresistible and invincible thing is temperance, that with it at one's side the whole soul is fearless and unconquerable against everything." [1] So the brave man will never abandon this belief at any time, and the one who has the quality of bravery must be the defender of the city-state; the warrior can only charge to defend his city-state and the righteous if he prefers to fight and is able to be angry. The blood of the warrior helps to preserve life and will likewise put honor above life, and the city-state must have such a team that will die for it.

In Book IV of the Republic, Plato argues that "courage is a certain spirit of perseverance"[1], Bravery is a persistent and stable belief in what should be feared and angry. After a long period of training in how to use the passion part properly, the truly brave person can maintain a belief in what is good and resist pleasure, pain and temptation.

Therefore, bravery is a very important quality for the second class. Plato emphasized that soldiers were vested in obedience and worked in unity under the leadership of philosophers, and that soldiers had to achieve a character of both gentleness and bravery after their education. The city guards, as men of blood, could deprive foreigners as conquerors and serve the city state and the ruler as members within the city state, but the virtue of bravery or blood could not distinguish between friend and foe if it lacked reason, just as their sentencing of Socrates implied the threat posed by blood to philosophy.

2.2.2. Moderation

According to Plato, "moderation, by and large, is an order, a restraint on certain pleasures and desires"⁰, unlike bravery and wisdom, temperance pervades and permeates all citizens, uniting the strongest, the weakest, and the middle to create harmony, bringing people together in harmony toward the same goal. Plato clearly says that the virtue of the desiring part of the soul is temperance, "There is a certain part of one's soul that is superior and another that is inferior; and whenever the superior one controls the weaker one according to its nature, this is called 'stronger than itself'"[1], Therefore, we can say that a man as a whole, whose superior part is dominant, is temperate and master of himself, however, if in a city-state soon established, you will find that "if, when the superior part of it controls the inferior part, the whole should be called temperate and self-controlled. "[1] In other words, Plato believed that the rule of a city-state should be controlled by a small number of noble people with good qualities and a spirit of moderation.

In contrast to wisdom and courage, Plato further speaks of the necessity of temperance for all classes in the city-state, for only temperance will enable everyone to know which of the two qualities, "inferiority" or "excellence," is more important. Therefore, the guardians of the city-state, without exception, must have temperance, and they can make our city-state the happiest one only if they have temperance. But the achievement of moderation must be guided by reason, and if the control of the desire part is involuntary in itself, then the human soul is also disharmonious.

Plato believed that the city guards should live a life in which they could fulfill their duties and should

avoid the temptation of power to do something detrimental to the state, so the city guards should not have their own selfish desires, that is, they should limit their desires. Plato also emphasized that they were not to drink wine or even eat sweets, because at that time sweets were considered harmful to the body and excessive pleasure would affect their knowledge of virtue, so the defenders of the city-state were to be temperate in body and mind as well as in their work in life.

However, it is not so simple to achieve moderation. Although the ideal state is an ideal city-state built in rhetoric, and although every class of society is educated differently, there is no guarantee that everyone can be single-minded enough to follow the system together and maintain a harmonious order, so there is still a great need for laws. So we can say that making laws is also a manifestation of Plato's emphasis on moderation: for example, as mentioned above about the property of the guardians of the city-state, Plato believed that private property was the root cause of corruption, so he advocated that the guardians should own everything in public and should not have any private property, and fixed it in the form of laws; in terms of marriage, Plato advocated the abolition of monogamous small families and advocated the system of common wives instead. Of course some of the laws seem less reasonable now, but most of them are still valuable, and their ultimate purpose served to bind the citizens of society, as well as played an important role in safeguarding social order.

As defenders of the city-state, they had a certain degree of military and political power, were the "chain" between the ruling class and the third class, and possessed physical strength and spiritual rationality, but how to make these warriors with excellent qualities willingly obey the ruler, concerned only with the interests of the city-state, and able to fully control their desires? But how to make these warriors of good qualities willingly obey their rulers, care only about the interests of the city-state, have full control over their desires, and become lovers of the soul of beauty? So Plato used the "noble lie" to make the defenders of the city-state love the city-state completely and to make them a devout warrior!

2.2.3. Pious

In Book II, Plato compares the defenders of the city-state to the dogs of philosophy; the defenders should have the same qualities as the watchdogs, i.e., brave, strong, and loyal. The "philosopher" or "knower".

Plato believed that the best few of the protectors eventually became the rulers of the city-state.

First, he believed that the best protectors must be those who, in addition to the virtues of bravery and temperance, also insist on the primacy of the state's interests.

Secondly, we must always examine whether they "are truly the upholders of this idea, and will not be enticed or forced to banish or forget the belief that they must do what is best for the city-state." [1] That means they have to hold on to the belief that it is good for the city-state.

Finally there is a third examination concerning bewitchment to test the firmness of their faith, namely, to take advantage of what people lack most, to kindle their desires, to examine whether they will be tempted by the outside world, whether they can be indifferent, whether they can guard the cultural training they have received, and whether the best defender who shows on all occasions that he knows rhythm and harmony is the most useful for the state. Plato considered that such a person, who had been raised without stain, must be established as the leader and defender of the city-state, and given honor, reward, and the highest treatment.

In order to make the warriors love the city-state, Plato needed to "invent something noble and use it to convince people, especially the rulers of the city-state, but if not, turn to others in the city-state," [1] So he says that the city guards are made of silver and stipulates that they must not have any private property, and as for gold and silver, we must tell them: "This divine gift from the God of heaven will remain in their souls forever, and they do not need earthly gold or silver, besides it is impious"[1], Plato believed that if the defenders of the city-state possessed gold, silver and jewels, they would have desires and gradually become hated by the people, so he used "noble lies" so that the defenders of the city-state would be free from the control of their desires, love the city-state completely and derive pleasure and happiness from fulfilling their duties, and only "have a community of fully dedicated public servants,"[2] It is what is good for the city-state.

2.2.4. Relationship of the three elements

The defender of the city-state needs both bravery to defend his country and moderation to keep his body strong and his mind good, and then to have a pious heart that enables the defender of the city-state to use all his virtues only to defend the interests of his country.

For Plato, justice is the greatest good, "the quality that enables temperance, courage, and wisdom to arise in the city-state and that protects them all the time after they arise." [3] The virtue of reason represents wisdom, which plans the interests of the whole mind and leads the mind in good and evil; the virtue of desire is temperance, which is what occupies the vast majority of the soul, in other words, the majority of the soul is the greed for wealth; the virtue of passion is courage, which leads and monitors desire together with reason, and those who have desire must obey the wise and accept the control of the courageous in order to be temperate.

In a city-state, the rulers are able to rule because of the quality of wisdom, the defenders are able to defend because of the quality of bravery, and the producers are only dominated in the city-state because they do not possess the qualities of wisdom and bravery. Therefore, when all classes in a city-state are able to perform their respective roles, the city-state will achieve overall general harmony and justice in the city-state will be realized.

2.3. The need for education of the City and State Guardian

"Education is the foundation of politics, and the city-state is both a political and an educational institution." [4] Since wealth leads to greed, jealousy and cynicism, which can easily lead to plunder and war, someone must be needed to guard the state, and an important class of people to fulfill this role is the city-state guards. Plato believed that virtuous guardians were both necessary to protect the ideal city-state and the basis for the training and formation of future rulers. In order for the city-state to be better protected, the ruler had to pay attention to the issue of education, and a good system was necessary to produce good city-state guards. Since some of the good city-state defenders would become rulers, the city-state defenders discussed in the second and third books include both classes of rulers and soldiers, and the education received by both classes is the same, for the rulers to be cultivated here are not yet the later philosopher-kings.

According to Plato's division of social classes, those who become the defenders of the city-state are most suitable because of their nature and interests. It is important to know that those who can become the defenders of the city-state are quick-witted and spirited, brave and generous, and they can be ruthless to their enemies and loving to their friends, and since they have the ability to distinguish between enemies and friends, they must love wisdom and learning. But Plato believed that talent is only a foundation, but only nature cannot fully guarantee that we will be able to do our job well.

The nature has to be further developed and perfected in order to bring out its maximum function, and the fundamental way to perfect the nature is education. In other words, those who have the nature of the defender of the city state do not necessarily become qualified defenders of the city state, but also need to be nurtured and trained later in life. Therefore, nature (physis) is only the foundation, but also needs to be nurtured and trained later. For example, education may make a person temperate, but no matter how much we train a tiger, it is unlikely that it will become temperate.

Thus, in order for the city-state to become one, Plato emphasized that the city-guards must be formally educated, otherwise the state would be as corrupt as any other. The city-state guards formed such a military force, and Plato did not deny that they would have political and military power, but he believed that as long as those who had power had to be raised properly, they would use that power wisely for the good of the community.

3. Measures to educate the guardians of the city-state

In the States, Plato "proposes a scheme for the construction of an ideal city-state, and education is the fundamental means of realizing the ideal state." [6] Plato believed that the order of education of the guardians should be to teach music first and gymnastics second. Sports should be used to exercise the body, so that it has a healthy body to ensure the fulfillment of its duties, in order to guarantee that the soul is strong enough; and music to cultivate the emotions, so that the physically fit person cannot possess only brute strength, without spiritual coordination. An ideal education should combine the two; mere literary training only makes people weak and without strength; while physical training without literature only makes people savage; the two should be unified and as balanced as possible.

First of all, when it comes to literary training, the Greek word "mousike" has a broader meaning than "music" does today. It can include poetry, fiction, music, and drama, so it might be more appropriate to translate it as "literary composition" or "literature. Moreover, when Plato criticized "poetry," he was not just attacking the literary genre we refer to today as "poetry," but included all literary creations.

Plato discusses not only the content of literary education, but also focuses on the genre forms of literary education. The main point is to examine what should not be taught in literary education and what should be taught. Why is this review needed? Because before the Homeric Hymns and the works of Hesiod, there were basically no texts for the ancient Greeks to read. Thus, they became the source and foundation of the cultural and moral upbringing of the ancient Greeks, and they played a great role and contributed greatly to the formation and growth of ancient Greek civilization.

For Plato, "the poet should be the educator of society, and the work of art should provide a good example." [4]The content of the story itself is subject to selection criteria; not just any story can be told. For example, myths that create negative and negative emotions in children, stories that are not conducive to their healthy development should be removed from the catalog of stories that educate children. The content of the stories must be positive and should encourage and cultivate such virtues as courage, temperance, piety, and justice in people. Plato cites a great deal of material to prove that most of the stories that poets come to tell do not meet this criterion and are not conducive to the cultivation of human virtues and the development of the human body and mind. Therefore, he wanted to transform the traditional Greek mythology, and the criteria for transformation were: the gods are good, the gods are always beautiful, the gods do not lie, and they are always consistent with their words and actions.

Through music education and physical education, he cultivated a group of good guardians who were both beautiful and good. In music education, in order to cultivate good qualities such as fear of God, filial piety, friendship, strength, courage, and self-restraint in the guards of the city-state, he not only prescribed what kind of stories the poets told, but also the way of telling them; in physical education, the main purpose was to cultivate good habits and a strong body in the guards. If a person devoted his life to music and completely neglected sports, he would become excessively weak, and conversely, excessively barbaric. Therefore, in order to make the souls of our defenders both temperate and brave, it is necessary to harmonize both kinds of education.

Moreover, Plato believed that a good defender of the city-state must be one who loves learning and wisdom, i.e., philosophy. "A well-bred guardian, like a well-bred guard dog, should feel keenly, be vigorous and brave, and be quick to pursue, fierce and victorious against a perceived enemy; in mind they should be spirited and have an exuberant spiritual will. In order to avoid conflicts among themselves, or with other citizens they should also be gentle with their own people and fierce with their enemies." [6] And how can we unite the two opposite personalities of gentleness and fierceness? By what means should it be achieved? Plato argues by analogy with the example of the dog: the dog is very gentle with acquaintances, but the opposite with strangers, for it distinguishes between friend and foe by virtue of acquaintance, and as a truly good defender of the city-state, it is their nature to combine a love of wisdom with the qualities of fierceness, agility, and strength.

The class of city guards was concerned with the security and development of the city-state, so the moral education of the city guards was very strict and orthodox, and only when the city guards could completely align their personal interests with the interests of the city-state, could the rulers of the city-state be selected from among them. However, in real life, there are often endless desires that tempt people, so it is not enough to educate the city guards, but also to make special arrangements for their lives.

"The pursuit of truth means the pursuit of true knowledge about the nature of things, and at the same time, only under the guidance of true knowledge can people live happily"[7], Plato's insistence on putting the interests of the city-state first at the expense of individual autonomy is in contradiction with today's Western liberal values. The difference lies in Plato's belief that truth is more important than freedom, and that truth is embodied in the state system he designed.

In short, Plato believed that a person does not have the essence of being a citizen of a city-state if he does not have the virtues of his own class. In today's society, in addition to the most basic moral qualities, each person must also have the unique virtues of each position, otherwise it is "virtue does not match the position", those who are not firm enough in their own beliefs must read and study, practice and other ways to improve their level of thinking and Political beliefs, in any position must always remember their beliefs, face temptation to firmly reject, encounter problems to challenge, breakthroughs and thus really have the basic virtues as a member of the country.

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