

Analyzing 'The Republic' by B. Jowett: Mosaicum Books 2018 Edition - A Critical Book Review

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Abstract

Plato's famous literary creation, The Republic, has emerged as a highly significant and academically significant opus within philosophical and political thought. Plato's Socratic discussion, composed in 380 BC, explores the concept of justice, delving into the organization and nature of the moral city-state and the just individual. I am excited about this new movie that just came out. It has received rave reviews, and the exact moment of the exchange's occurrence has been a subject of extensive scholarly discussion. While it is widely accepted that the conversation is set within the

timeframe of the Peloponnesian War, assigning a particular year between 432 and 404 would introduce significant historical inconsistencies. Socrates, accompanied by a diverse group of Athenians and individuals from other regions, engages in a discourse regarding justice. They undertake an examination to determine whether a just individual experiences greater happiness compared to an unjust individual. This exploration involves the creation of several hypothetical cities through verbal discourse, ending in conceptualizing a city called Kallipolis, which kings of philosophy govern. Additionally, the character of current political systems is scrutinized as part of this inquiry. The discourse among those involved also encompasses examining forms, the concept of eternal life for the soul, and the societal functions attributed to philosophers and poets.

Keywords: Translator's Influence, Philosophical Themes, Narrative Structure, Characterization, Cultural and Historical Context.

I. Book I (I-29):

Man will always make sense of every situation presented to him based on his mental capacity. An older man may be happy despite being poor and unhealthy, and the same person may frown upon everything despite having riches and health. Will this older man be just or unjust, and how can justice be defined in terms of a state? Justice has a different definition for a ruler, subject, and in other forms of Government (p.10). Standards of justice in democratic,

autocratic, and monarchy will be different for issues and different rules serve their rulers. Unjust represents two very other behaviors of a person, but an unfair person can never make a profit as he is not even sincere to himself if we consider excellence a standard of achievement for a soul.

2. Book II (30-55):

Socrates is further questioned that he cannot just justify that the excellence of the soul is a desired destination for humans, and that's why they have to be just. However, the reality is otherwise. An unjust person has respect and honor if people don't know about it or have no authority over his behavior (p.35). On the other hand, a just but poor person will have no respect and no elevated spirit. Often the saints will knock on the door of an unjust person to give charity and be closer to God. It is a bitter reality that a person who achieved all his wealth through injustice, had respect and lived an elevated life can also become closer to God just by giving away the same unjust wealth. Socrates shifts his attention to building an ideal state and its working mechanism. People with specific abilities will do particular jobs and do their best to run the state. This suggests that a state will have a cobbler, sailor, farmer, merchant, retailer, soldier and everyone best at their jobs for the ideal state (p.45). If all the men in perfect shape are putting up just behavior for the state, this suggests that God is also just. Everything good follows from GOD and people have to forget blasphemies about God by poets that they are in every form and take a different state at night and walk over cities (p.53). While it is believed that each portion of the spirit aligns with a certain political party in the town, it is evident that each citizen has these components of the soul. For the parallel to be valid, laborers must possess neither intellect nor spiritedness, helpers lack both cognition and wish, and philosopher-kings possess neither spiritedness nor ambition.¹

3. Book III (56-89):

Socrates gives a theological vision of his ideal state in which all the past lamenting deeds committed by Gods should never be told to youth by poets and

philosophers. Gods can't have immortal follies attached to them as it gives an excuse to youth to commit the same (p.64). In the proper development of a state, everything is to be allowed with a specific cause and its outcome. Poets, musicians, and actors can only express themselves in ways that serve the state. Music is a significant source of harnessing the soul and becomes deeply settled in a person's body. Youth should only hear the music of courage, bravery, power, and nobility of Gods and their state service. People are to be trained to see their capabilities. Some people are born to become gymnasts, and others to become musicians and philosophers. The state has to discern among youth their future as a farmer, soldier, statesman, or musician (p.74). If a person is being trained to be a soldier, then he cannot be all muscles and no brains. Similarly, a poet cannot be all soft and polite. Moderate grooming is to be done to make a soldier civilized too along with his muscles. Defenders of the state who are soldiers should not be allowed to indulge in business or wealth. They should be paid out-of-state wealth only enough to fulfill their needs (p.85). If soldiers are allowed to indulge in wealth, they will become tyrants instead of saving a state from a foreign enemy.

4. Book IV (90-117):

The state is the total of its individuals. An individual is its smallest part: his wisdom, spirit, rationality and temperance represent him. Grooming an individual's soul will decide a state's rules and working. If an effort is put in to train individuals to be gymnasts, raise their spirit by poets, and put rationality in them through philosophers, then we have created a just man (p.103). We call him just because he does not let the making of his soul run over its parts, and he has learned to reason with emotions and make himself temperate. In the same way, if the state is considered to be of three parts: counselors, auxiliary and traders then only a just state will keep a check over its three components. It will always retain its distinct features by limiting everyone to its job. Socrates raises the discussion of injustice over justice as injustice only allows us to be corrupt for worldly gains (p.115). But if a person is unjust then he is not even sincere to himself as he has not learned to groom his soul and has made himself a beast guided by spirit and greed.

5. Book V (I18- I51):

After agreeing that only a person who has elevated his soul can make a just state, Socrates discusses the existence of women and children in such a state. If men are groomed through gymnastics and music to be guardians of the state and individuals who don't have the depth to learn will become artisan then the women will not be differentiated on the mere difference of body. A woman may be weak compared to men but it never means that she does not have wisdom and body strength (p.125). Just like men, women will train with men to have physical strength and improve their intellect through philosophy and music. Women will be employed along with men as per their strengths and abilities. The state will restrict marriage for women to the age of 20 and for men, age will be limited to 25. The state will also ensure that guardians marry guardians and counselors marry their kin (p. 138). Men who have performed excellently can marry more than one woman and have as many children as they wish. As for children, there will be no difference among them as a parent will not have seen their children. Children born at the same time as their child will all be their children and they will receive attention equally. Women will give milk to children with no difference. Women who are guardians and have state duties will not be burdened to provide their milk to children instead maids will be used for nourishing the needs of the children (p.145). Children of the same age will consider all the parents the same age as their parents to be their parents too. In this way, children will receive equal love and care and parents will feel an obligation to all children thus creating unity in the state. In the state of Socrates also gives a specific criterion for men of knowledge to be only those who see absolute and eternal truth in each thing (p.150).

6. Book VI (152-179):

A state comprising just individuals with a system for its citizens to be guardians and artisans along with rules for the role of women in it and children

to be children of the state needs a ruler too. An illustration may be found in Book VI, which depicts the societal functions of women and youngsters. Although Socrates has a progressive stance by advocating for the inclusion of women in all three social divisions, he still gives them subordinate roles inside every group due to their perceived inferiority as the less effective sex.² "The question is to define the criteria for its ruler; indeed, he has to be of the highest stature to lead a state with that ideal composition. Its ruler has to be tested in pleasure, pain, adversary, affliction and most of all his sincerity to state above everything; if ever he fails then he is never up to the task (p.163). He cannot be just an intellect or a poet instead he has to learn gymnastics when he is young and then later he can commit himself to refine his soul. There will be people who will determine standards for the ruler and decide that he has aura to rule and those people must be philosophers. Socrates asserts that the state must be saved from corrupt philosophers. A true philosopher will always find absolute goodness in everything (p.172). He will never indulge himself in abnormalities of appearances. Rather, he will accept the totality of beauty and accept nature in the plural, such as good and evil, beautiful and ugly, strong and weak, ordinary and extraordinary. Only a true philosopher will find a ruler with the aptitude of a philosopher. A ruler will never be up to the task if he cannot accept the world in its totality, and he will improve his soul through steps of courage, wisdom, reason, and temperance in absolute goodness.

7. Book VII (180-206):

Achievement of absolute goodness to be the primary virtue for a state ruler is a very rosy term and Socrates toils to explain the details and procedure to reach that level. A metaphor of the contemporary world is drawn to be like a dark den where all the things appear to us as walking shadows due to the light behind us. Only after a search and toil will a man know the most accurate form of objects not just clouds and the working mechanism of the world. In the same way, a person has to be trained to give him the ability to attain a level where his soul can see absolute truth (p.191). To open his eyes and mind, a man must learn worldly knowledge of geometry, astronomy, and science. Rigorous training of the body and examining scientific knowledge can lead him to a journey from being

to becoming. Students trained to be rulers will only be allowed to dialect at thirty as this is a mature age. In the meantime, besides their training in the philosophy of finding the truth, they will also carry on their obligations to the state, such as service in the military and state offices (p.200). Only at fifty years, when a person has become a master of philosophy, he will become a ruler and his fellows to be governors. Moreover, a person who wants to be a ruler should never be made instead a person who takes it as a duty to state and is happy to live his own life when relieved from duty will stop the corruption of the character of rulers.

8. Book VIII (207-233):

Socrates discusses five Government forms: aristocracy, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny. A complete comparison is formed between different forms of government and which kind of rulers govern them. Most importantly, which type of government will be formed in the ideal discussed state? Aristocracy is to be ruled by the few which with time gives birth to timocracy as it is a government of people who love rule and honor and it will emerge due to civil war breaking out between the ruling class and the majority (p.217). People who have fought for the state will consider their right to be part of this form of rule, but with time, they will grow fond of private castles and property as they have no more passion for honor and courage than they had in their youth; they will increase lust for wealth. Two classes of people rich and poor will be born in the state and hence oligarchy will be born. Both classes of people will always be at war with each other. Ultimately, oligarchies decay into democracy. As ideal as democracy appears to be all liberty, freedom, and equality; it will also suffer from natural downfall due to its excess of liberty. It will be a democracy that will give birth to a tyrant (p.228). The tyrant will want many things and authorities will snub him; thus, he will wear a cloak of sweetness and brotherhood. By gaining widespread support, he will become a master of people. A tyrant will purge the state by taking away its better part of people and leaving the worse to rule along with them.

9. Book IX (234-255):

The State is representative of an individual attribute. He is an aristocrat or oligarch or democrat or a tyrant and thus a state is born as per the qualities of his ruler. Socrates discusses at length that a tyrant is vile and mean and a greater enemy of himself than of anybody else. Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men. ³ A tyrant's personality is far more grown in servility than an oligarch or an aristocrat; thus, he is the greatest sufferer of fear and rejection. His nature is produced in the admiration of others. The tyrant cannot feel the beauty and everyday virtue while all other citizens enjoy the pleasures of nature (p.242). A tyrant is in a consistent state of fear of losing as he cannot think of living without that mirage he built for himself of happiness. The most excellent affliction which can fall on a tyrant is that he is made a ruler. It will only add to his greed and desire to store everything for him. In contrast, a true king brought up in the light of philosophy to nourish his soul will be guided by the soul's wisdom and rule the state in virtue and goodness. As food is necessary for the body's survival, in the same way, the soul's survival lies in wisdom, reason and spirit (p.251). The soul is always superior to the body and that is why if the soul is not nourished then a man is just a vile beast full of greed and injustice. The ideal state will have to plan to nourish the body and soul of its future king, which will be critical to its survival.

10. Book X (256-281):

After concluding that just and unjust persons will nourish or destroy their souls and ultimately make a state of character they possess. Socrates warns that in the search to be and nourish the soul to wisdom and reason, a person must save himself from imitators. Imitators may be poets or philosophers far from reality and truth and describe the events as sensual. An individual has to be closer to truth and accept nature in its raw form. Only in this way can he guide himself through the darkness. The soul is immortal and can endure good and evil (p.279). We must hold fast to the heavenly way and follow justice and virtue. Thus shall we live dear to one another and collect all the gifts this world offers.

Conclusion

The book *The Republic* is an exemplary work of its day and an unparalleled achievement in the context of Western culture. The works of Plato still provoke ongoing discussions in contemporary times. All philosophy students need to thoroughly understand Plato's work since he was one of the pioneers in defining and implementing concepts of social well-being, including justice. Although there may be room for discussion about some elements of his analysis, it is noteworthy because its creation represents the pioneering effort in tackling such a complex topic. Furthermore, his several metaphors have significant value in enhancing our understanding of the human individual, humanity and the globe.

End Notes

¹ Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Republic: A Study* (New Haven, Conn. London: Yale University Press, 2008).

² Plato and Allan Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 2nd ed (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

³ Mark A. Johnstone, "Tyrannized Souls: Plato's Depiction of the 'Tyrannical Man,'" *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 23, no. 3 (May 4, 2015): 423–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2015.1017799>.