

Plato's justice thought in the Republic and its contemporary educational value

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Abstract: Justice is a new topic in human society, and the exploration of justice is the eternal pursuit of human society. Plato's Republic, as the first book on justice in the history of human thought, is still of epoch-making value. Based on Plato's Republic, this paper analyzes the source of his justice thought from the aspects of the era background, theoretical basis and practical dilemma of his justice thought, so as to explain the core meaning of Plato's justice thought, that is, the harmonious unity of city-state justice and personal justice, and further clarify the realization path of city-state justice and personal justice. Plato's thought of justice still has important value implication and enlightening significance for the development of current education.

1. Introduction

As early as in ancient Greece, Plato had made a systematic discussion on the issue of justice in his masterpiece the Republic. "On justice" is not only the subtitle of the Republic, but also the main line of thought throughout the Republic. The interpretation of its justice thought has epoch-making significance for the current educational development. Based on Plato's Republic, this paper analyzes the formation background and theoretical basis of his justice thought, analyzes the main connotation and realization path of his justice thought, and ponders the important value significance to the current educational development, in order to promote the development of educational fairness and justice, and promote the soul to turn to perfection.

2. Thought source: the formation of Plato's thought of Justice

Thought originates from practical life and reflects the demands and mission of an era. Analyzing Plato's background, theoretical basis and realistic dilemma is the only way to study the justice of the Republic.

2.1 Background: political turmoil and moral collapse

The reason why Plato thought about justice is closely related to the era in which he lived. Plato was born in 427 BC. When he was born, ancient Greece was in the hot period of the Peloponnesian War. Plato spent his youth and youth in this 30-year war. Although there were several truces in the middle, the war lasted intermittently for 27 years, which affected the development process of the

entire ancient Greek civilization and greatly destroyed the political, economic and cultural development at that time. This kind of turbulent change in the political situation led people to gradually lose confidence in the democratic system, and impacted the moral civilization based on this kind of economy. People began to reflect on the social system at that time. Although Plato was in the war environment, he was able to receive the training and education of good political elites because of his family background, which had an important impact on his political thoughts.

Based on this background, Socrates, the most just person he thought and the most beloved teacher, was sentenced to death, which stimulated Plato deeply, completely disappointed in democratic politics, and extremely longed for an orderly city-state. In such an era of "ritual collapse and music corruption", the city-state of Athens was in danger, the political situation was decadent and turbulent, Plato's idea of politics was disillusioned again and again, so he had to rethink his political position, try to build an ideal city-state of justice and goodness, and start thinking about the "problem of justice".

2.2 Theoretical basis: Theory of idea and theory of soul

Plato's theory of justice is based on the theory of idea and the theory of soul. Idea is the highest concept in Plato's Republic. The soul achieves justice by pursuing idea.

Plato's theory of ideas is an important theoretical foundation of Plato's thought of justice. First, from the perspective of ontology, "idea" is an independent and objective entity. The world is divided into knowable perceptual world and rational world. The two are opposite. The difference is that the perceptual world is always in motion and change. The objects of feeling, perception and perceptual knowledge all exist in the perceptual world. They can only produce opinions, not real knowledge. The idea world is an eternal existence. Therefore, the idea world is the real existence, the noumenon of justice is "idea", and the order of justice is the pre-determined order of the idea world. People's rational knowledge must be constantly close to "idea" in order to obtain knowledge, otherwise they will never be close to the essence of things. Second, from the perspective of purpose, "idea" is the ultimate goal for the survival and development of all things. Only a wise philosopher can approach the "idea" infinitely and define the rules that the city-state life should follow. The "king of philosophy" is the most intelligent person in the city-state. Therefore, the "king of philosophy" should rule the city-state. Thirdly, from the epistemological point of view, "idea" is a general concept, and the discussion of "justice" is a process of infinitely approaching the "idea" of the common concept. Through the specific justice of the city-state and the individual, we explore the most common and general category of justice. Plato's ideology laid a philosophical foundation for his justice thought.

Plato's theory of justice is closely linked with his theory of soul. He believes that human soul is composed of reason, passion and desire, among which reason is the only characteristic of the soul, which resides in human head and controls human ideological activities; Passion is located in the chest of a person. It is a part of reason and controls the rational emotional abdomen. It is a noble impulse, ambition and love of power; Desire exists in people's abdomen and dominates the tendency of the body to seek pleasure and avoid suffering. The desire of the body either obeys reason and becomes a virtue, or deviates from reason and causes evil. The virtues corresponding to the division of soul are wisdom, courage and temperance. According to Plato, the nature of the soul is reason, and passion and desire should obey reason. Only such a soul is healthy and harmonious, and such a person is full of justice. Based on the three distinctions of soul, Plato mapped them to each part of human body and virtue respectively, thus leading to two forms of justice.

2.3 Realistic Dilemma: the fallacy of secular justice

In the turbulent situation at that time, many wise men were deeply disappointed with the city-state and put forward their own views on justice. Among them, the representative views were "justice is to

say what is true and repay what is owed", "justice is to give good to friends and evil to enemies" and "justice is the interest of the strong", "just people always suffer losses everywhere compared with unjust people, and think that injustice is more beneficial than justice", which prompted Plato to worry, think about what the real justice is and what the essence of justice is, so as to start thinking about justice.

3. Ideological implication: the harmonious unity of city-state justice and individual justice

As for justice, Plato believed that there were both city-state justice and individual justice. Man is a reduced city-state, and a city-state is an enlarged individual. The justice of individual soul is not easy to find, so Plato wanted to investigate the justice in the city-state first and then look for personal justice through the analogy method of "from big to small".

3.1 City-state Justice: each does his duty

Plato believed that the organization of a just city-state should be dominated by reason, just like the virtuous and harmonious souls of the whole universe and individuals. At the same time, there are three classes in the city-state, just like the functions of the three parts of the soul: the relationship between the classes is also equivalent to the relationship between the functions of a healthy soul. In Plato's Republic, there are three classes of citizens, namely, rulers, helpers and laborers.

The ruler is a minority of the best guardians who live at the highest level of the country, have the virtue of wisdom, really care about the national interests, and are most willing to devote their lives to serving the national interests. The auxiliary status is second only to the ruler, and its virtue is the quality of courage. Its main duty is to defend the security of the country with loyalty and courage, so as to maintain the stability and order of the city-state and implement the ruler's decrees. Workers include a large number of farmers, craftsmen and businessmen. As the last class, they have the character of moderation. They receive certain skill training. Their main responsibility is to provide basic material means of living for the normal operation and development of the country and obey the leadership of the rulers. The good city-state finally built has the virtues of wisdom, courage, moderation and justice. Wisdom is the unique knowledge of city-state rulers to consider the national affairs and improve internal and external relations. Courage is a kind of spiritual ability possessed by the guardian, that is, to "completely maintain the correct belief in the spirit of law about terrible and non terrible things", so as not to be confused by distress, fear and desire. Wisdom and courage are in different parts of the country, and moderation runs through all citizens. "A good order or control over certain pleasures and desires" is the consistency and coordination shown in the country or individuals. The rulers use their wisdom to handle the internal and foreign affairs of the country, the guardians use their brave qualities to protect the country, and the workers use their own natural skills to engage in production and work hard, that is, "when the three kinds of people, businessmen, helpers and guardians, do their own things in the country without interfering with each other, there will be justice, thus making the country a just country". So far, we have seen "capital justice" in this most good city-state.

3.2 Personal Justice: healthy soul

The establishment of an ideal and just city-state is inseparable from the existence of just individuals. Plato divided man into body and soul, and soul determines human nature. In other words, whether a person can become a just person depends on whether the three parts of his soul can be in harmony and order, so as to make his soul healthy. However, whether the soul is healthy or not is, in the final analysis, a question of the relationship among the soul's internal reason, passion and desire. Plato

believed that reason distinguishes human beings from animals. It is the rational part of the soul and the highest principle of human soul. It is immortal. It is used to think and reason and plan for the interests of the whole soul; Passion and desire are immortal, but passion is higher than desire. Passion is a noble impulse, such as ambition and love of power. It is the alliance of reason. Desire is a kind of irrational power that yearns for something, contrary to reason. A just man, whose reason is wise, leads passions and desires, corresponding to the rulers of the city-state; The passion part is brave, always remember the content taught by reason, corresponding to the guardian in the city-state, and is the natural helper of reason; "All kinds of desires, pleasures and pains arise from children, women, slaves and a large number of lower class people who are nominally called free people". Corresponding to the workers in the city, the desire part is far away from greed under the enlightenment and training of reason and passion, that is, "the worse part of a person's soul is controlled by the better part of nature", which is moderation. "What exists in the state also exists in the soul of every individual, and the number is the same. On what basis do we recognize that the state is just, and we will recognize that individuals are just on the same basis." Since the justice of the country lies in the three kinds of people doing their own things in the country, individual justice is that the three qualities of reason, passion and desire in the soul play their own roles, do not interfere with each other, and their own order is in order to achieve a state of coordination and harmony, as if the high, low, middle tones and the scales between them are combined to coordinate, Let all these parts be separated from each other into a controlled and harmonious whole. "As long as within the individual soul, when reason plays a leading role, passion assists reason, and desire is subject to the domination of reason and passion, the individual soul is healthy and harmonious, and then the individual becomes a just person.

3.3 Connotation core: orderly and harmonious unity of city-state justice and individual justice

Plato advocated that individual justice and national justice are mutually premise, harmonious and unified. The city-state is the enlargement of the individual, while the individual is the reduction of the city-state. National justice is the premise for the realization of individual justice. Only when the country in which an individual lives is just, can it provide a just environment for individuals and form individual justice; Personal justice is the basis and condition for realizing the justice of the whole country. When the individual soul reaches justice, it will participate in the work suitable for its own nature with its own just behavior, and then promote the realization of national justice. Personal justice without national justice is impossible to talk about and does not exist at all; National justice without individual justice is also empty, abstract and meaningless. Therefore, the national justice in capital and the personal justice in capital are mutually presupposed and interdependent, that is, the realization of national justice and personal justice is a process of dialectical unity. Of course, we can find from reading the works that Plato himself is inclined to national justice under the general principle of adhering to the harmony and unity of the two, which can be seen from his elaboration path of "seeing the big from the small".

4. The realization of Justice: education makes the soul turn to happiness and goodness

All his life, Plato paid attention to the establishment of the Republic, the realization of the city-state justice, and the realization of the supreme good of happiness. Plato believed that to achieve true happiness, we must establish a just order in the soul. The people who can truly understand the just order must be truly intelligent. The most intelligent person in the city-state is the king of philosophy. Only under the rule of the king of philosophy, with the courageous assistance of the helpers and the production controlled by the producers, can the harmony of the city-state order be finally realized. In order to have city-state justice and personal justice, in Plato's view, "as long as the ruler pays attention to a so-called major event, which is often said by everyone", this major event is education, and the

so-called education is "a skill of soul turning".

4.1 The way to realize the justice of the city-state: the rule of the king of Philosophy

The establishment of Plato's just order first depends on the existence of the philosophical king. The king of philosophy is the key ruler of the city-state justice. He is a person with real wisdom, internal quality and ruling ability. Only the king of philosophy can realize the just rule of the city-state. Plato believed that education was the key to promoting the realization of justice, so the highest achievement of education was to screen and cultivate the "king of philosophy", that is, a necessary way for a few rulers. Education is a good means. Rulers can educate the people through education, shape noble hearts, and make citizens become reasonable people. To realize national and individual justice, we should let wise philosophers rule the country. He believes that as "king of philosophy", they are the best candidates to manage the country. On the one hand, philosophers have the conditions to become city-state rulers. From the subjective point of view of philosophers, they have certain qualities, such as unremitting pursuit and exploration of truth, good memory and strong abstinence. These qualities are not common among ordinary people. To become a person with these qualities, of course, it is necessary to have natural wisdom, but also to study hard and master effective learning methods, "In order to master this method of pursuing truth, we need to learn astronomy, mathematics and dialectics through education, which is the most effective way, understand the essence of things through judgment and reasoning, and master the ability to discover good knowledge". On the other hand, after good education, they have the wisdom and ability to govern the country, are good at managing the country, can realize the soul turn, make the soul pursue justice, and guide the city-state order to develop in the direction of justice and goodness. Plato used the "cave metaphor" to illustrate the wisdom of philosophers. In the cave, there is a bonfire behind the bound people. Ordinary people can only see the shadow reflected on the rocks and think that the shadow is the thing itself. One of them gets rid of the shackles of his hands and feet, sees the bonfire itself, and then walks out of the cave to see the bright world outside the cave. Here, the people in the cave are compared to ordinary people. The shadow they see is the "opinion" in the real world. The people who go out of the cave are philosophers. They can obtain knowledge, realize the soul turn, and then get rid of the shackles of the world of opinions, adhere to the truth and realize the goodness of justice.

4.2 The way to realize personal Justice: the education of soul turn

Plato firmly believed that education was the most effective way to build a true, good, beautiful and happy city-state. Justice is the main axis of the city-state, which is the most true, the most perfect and the most beautiful. Education plays an indispensable role in the realization of justice. He believes that all citizens in the city-state should receive certain education or discipline. In the seventh volume of the Republic, Plato's cave metaphor profoundly reveals that education can promote the transformation of individual soul, and he believes that its purpose is to achieve individual justice, that is, through learning and social practice, constantly surpass the sensible world, make rational soul dominate people's passion and desire, obtain universal cognition of things, and finally obtain the highest idea of good. If personal justice is the harmonious coexistence of three parts of human soul: reason, passion and desire, and reason is in the dominant position, then if a person is dominated by passion and desire, he will try every means to meet these desires, so as to do injustice such as thieves, robbers, abductions and even rioting. The education of soul turning is to make people's soul get rid of the fetter and imprisonment of human desire and passion on human reason, cultivate the excellent part of human reason in the soul, and let people's soul constantly achieve their own excellence and excellence in the pursuit of truth and goodness. Therefore, the education of soul turning becomes the way to realize personal justice. According to the purpose of this kind of education, he designed the educational

system and teaching courses of the ideal city-state. First, all education must be "publicly owned", that is, it should be run and managed by the ruling group of the country, so as to cultivate ruling talents and all citizens in a standardized manner. Second, education includes two stages: primary education and higher education. Primary education includes the whole training process of teenagers before the age of 20. The main courses include literature and art education such as physical education and music. The learning contents mainly include reading, writing, music, gymnastics, etc. The purpose of this stage of education is to cultivate citizens' emotional and moral qualities. Young people after the age of 20 receive higher education through strict selection, continue to learn arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and other knowledge, and then learn dialectics and official practice until they are selected as rulers. Thirdly, the teaching materials should contain stories that can inspire children's courage, justice and noble morality. Through the curriculum of civic education, each individual soul of the city-state can be turned to build a perfect and beautiful city-state.

5. Contemporary Value: the educational implication of Plato's thought of Justice

Plato introduced the discussion of what is justice from the secular external interests to the human soul, and demonstrated that justice is the virtue that makes the human soul turn to the supreme good. This kind of virtue and justice can be trained by all kinds of reason, so that people can always follow the instructions of reason, so as not to make the mistake of regarding various secular interests as good itself, and then live a truly happy life. It is precisely because justice is a virtue of human beings that Plato placed his hopes on education for the realization of city-state justice and personal justice, and regarded education as a skill for the transformation of human soul, which made the Republic have profound educational implications.

5.1 Grasping the foundation of Education: promoting the soul to turn to perfection

Education not only involves individuals, but also relates to the healthy development of society. Plato's discussion on the consistency of city-state justice and individual justice fully proves the dual influence of education on society and individuals. In this sense, education, people and society constitute a mutual premise and mutual transformation mechanism. In this process of education, the premise and transformation between man and society, if we recognize that society is man's society and education is man's education, then the state of man's soul plays a decisive role. It can be said that Plato's thought of justice laid the foundation for the development of education. Because although there are many problems in education, the fundamental problem is nothing more than what kind of people to cultivate and how to cultivate people. Plato's theory of justice clearly answers these two questions, that is, to cultivate a harmonious and sound philosopher with a soul dominated by reason and coordinated by passion and desire. Its realization path is to promote the human soul from the visible world to the knowable world. Of course, in different times, people have different answers to "what kind of people to cultivate and how to cultivate people", but no matter how different these answers are, it is an eternal pursuit for education to make people human. Therefore, it has a priority to promote the transformation of human soul in the development of education. In the final analysis, the solution of various educational problems lies in the awakening and perfection of human soul.

5.2 Abiding by the foundation of Education: being the "king of philosophy" as a teacher

In the field of education, as the first educatee, teachers, like philosophers, undertake the mission of cultural inheritance and educating students. However, teachers' inheritance of culture and education of students require teachers to be role models and abide by the foundation of education. In Plato's view, the foundation of this kind of education is to turn the human soul from the visible world to the

knowable world, and believe that the ability of the human soul to acquire knowledge is like the eyesight of the eye. It is not a question of whether or not, but what to acquire. In other words, Plato believed that human learning is memory. Human soul has all kinds of knowledge and good ideas, but human soul is shackled by human body after incarnation into the body and temporarily forgets the previously owned knowledge and good ideas. Teachers' adherence to the essence of education is to use the identity of "ignorance" to elicit various knowledge and good ideas in students' souls through dialogue, so that students can become the best themselves in self-education. Although it is difficult to prove empirically whether people really have all kinds of knowledge and goodness in their soul, it is the premise of education to believe that people are born with the will to learn and the ability to learn. As an important person of students, the key to the effectiveness of teachers' education lies in whether their words and deeds follow the essence of education and practice.

5.3 Pursuing the way of Education: seeking truth and goodness

Education can bring many practical benefits to individuals and society. For example, for individuals, education can change people's living conditions and make them jump to a higher social class; For the society, education can bring about political prosperity, economic prosperity and cultural prosperity, but the various benefits that education can bring to individuals and society need to be guaranteed by the pursuit of truth and goodness. If education is divorced from the pursuit of truth and goodness, then even those with good talents may become bad or even vicious, harming both themselves and others. Because "great crimes and pure sins" do not come from "those with poor talents, but from those who have good talents but have been corrupted by education". Plato used a vivid metaphor to explain: "if any seed or germ (whether plant or animal) cannot get the appropriate nutrients, seasons and places, then the stronger it is, the farther it will be from reaching its due level of development and growth, because evil is a greater opposition to good than bad." The education of soul turn advocated by Plato is actually a kind of education of seeking truth and good. In Plato's view, the education of soul turn is to cultivate people's reason, let people's reason play a leading role, so that people's reason, passion and desire can perform their respective duties and be harmonious. In the cave metaphor, Plato "likened the crypt cell to the visible world, and the fire light to the power of the sun", and compared the heaven and earth outside the cave to the knowable world. The last seen sun symbolized the idea of good, "prisoner" symbolized that uneducated people can only see the visible world, but do not know the knowable world, let alone the idea of good symbolized by the sun. Figuratively speaking, before receiving education, man was only a prisoner bound and bound in the cave. The only thing he could "think" independently was the shadow reflected on the cave wall, that is, the customs and opinions in which man was born were controlled by his various desires. The education of soul turning can lead people's desire to knowledge, truth and eternal goodness, and cultivate people's rationality. It can be said that the pursuit of truth and goodness is not only the eternal pursuit of human beings, but also the supreme pursuit of education.

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