

# An Analysis of Plato's Political Thought

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**Abstract**—This paper makes a preliminary analysis of Plato's political concepts from three aspects: the concept of justice, the king of philosophy, and state system and the ideal state. Plato paid close attention to the decline of Athenian politics and the reconstruction of sound politics. He adhered to ideological and explanatory framework of ideal political philosophy and explored the relationship between justice and philosophy. Therefore, the analysis of Plato's establishment of a complete judicial system in the Republic will help us understand his political blueprint. Plato explained the two forms of justice: city-state justice and personal justice, pointing out the direction for the justice pursuit of political society and the individual at that time. In Paula's ideal country, the king of philosophy is in a dominant position, and it is a necessary condition for the realization of the just city-state. When the king of philosophy ruled, the Republic was realized. So, it is valuable to probe into the ideological origin and political significance of Plato's thought of philosophical king.

**Keywords**—Plato; Politics; Republic; Justice; King of philosophy

## I. INTRODUCTION

Plato is one of the most outstanding philosophers in ancient Greece, and he is also regarded as the founder of political philosophy. The Republic is Plato's prime work, the thought is broad and profound, the content involves the politics, the education, the military, the ethics and so on each aspect. Among them, its political thought can be said to be very characteristic, not only reflects the social state of the city-state at that time, but also expresses Plato's own political ambition and ideals.

## II. THE ESSENCE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF JUSTICE

The word "justice" is one of the most central words in the book "the Republic". In the Republic, Plato established a complete justice system, pointed out the direction of the pursuit of justice at that time, and drew a blueprint for a just country for social politics.

### A. Meaning of "justice"

"Justice" is pronounced "dike" in Greek and transliterated as "Dike" in Chinese. she is the beloved daughter of Zeus, king of the gods, and Themis, the goddess of law, and one of the three goddesses of time. Dike is the embodiment of justice, black and white is her attitude to judge good and evil in the world. In Greek mythology, the order to be followed by justice itself is divine, and this order is strictly forbidden and single. If you want to be a just person, you must live in accordance with the order prescribed by God. in China's "Ci Hai", justice has three meanings: the first is the truth of justice. In here, justice is said as fairness. The second refers to the appropriate meaning of the language; the third refers to the behavior in accordance with certain moral norms.

In Plato's philosophy, justice represents wisdom, bravery and moderation. Plato pointed out that justice is not simply good faith in words and behavior, such as debt repayment, not lying, this is only a code of conduct, cannot be used as the correct definition of justice; justice is not the interests of the strong, A true ruler, like a captain at sea, must take into account not only his own interests but also those of the ordinary people, for only when the people live well and the country can be stable, justice is not absolute freedom and simple democracy. The just order is the harmonious, controllable and orderly operation of the political life of the country, and the rights of individuals or groups can only be brought into play by justice.

### B. City-State justice and personal justice

Plato divided the thought of justice into two concepts: city-state justice and personal justice, both of which are the embodiment of justice in the real society. Individual justice is the epitome of city-state justice, and city-state justice is the expansion of individual justice.

Plato believed that the city-state originated from people's needs. If one wants to live, one must solve the different needs such as food, clothing, housing and transportation, but everyone's ability is limited. When the limitations of people's abilities and the diversity of needs collide, the social division of labor appears. Because no one can live on their own, people get together to learn from each other in order to form a survival society. Each person plays a different role in society. Plato divided the city-state into three levels: producer, helper and ruler. Because of the different division of labor at different levels, there are different requirements for their virtue and quality. Plato believed that rulers must have a higher level of wisdom than the other two levels in order to make political decisions for the city-state. This wisdom is the knowledge of how to manage the country, is the ruler's exclusive philosophy of the country as a whole; the auxiliary needs to have brave, heroic character. This bravery is nurtured by a good education. With the right education, the helper can be clear about what should be feared and what should not be feared. They can not only serve and assist the rulers, but also protect the rights and security of producers; producers are ruled civilian groups, solid efforts and know that moderation of desire is a requirement for them. Therefore, producers should absolutely obey the ruling class, concentrate on production, and reduce their desire for money and power. In this way, the ruler's rule with wisdom, the auxiliaries with bravery, and the producers with abstinence in production. But unlike the first two, Plato believes that "bravery" and "wisdom" can belong only to one class in the state, but "moderation" should belong to all citizens and should be possessed by all classes. When these three classes complement each other and each share, the city-state justice is formed. City-

state justice is in fact the unity of wisdom, bravery and moderation.

And personal justice is the three classes of their own justice requirements, they must each do their part, and loyal to their own responsibilities. Plato believes that there is a God-given reason in the depths of everyone's soul, but the dazzling human life will cloud this reason and produce improper desires. Therefore, people must always maintain rationality, with reason against desire, in order to achieve the purpose of distinguishing good and evil, understanding justice. In this way, as long as everyone adheres to their duties in a down-to-earth manner, the lower class cannot overtake the upper class by improper means, and the city-state can maintain a stable order all the time.

### III. THE THOUGHT OF THE KING OF PHILOSOPHY

To discuss Plato's political thought, we have to mention the word "king of philosophy". In the above, we learn about Plato's three strata in the construction of a just state system: rulers, auxiliaries, and producers. Among them, the king of philosophy, as the ruler, occupies the core position.

#### A. *Meaning of the King of philosophy*

Plato believes that only those who have philosophical knowledge can master political power and thus rule the whole country. Therefore, in order to establish the state power, the first thing to do is to train enough good philosophers to make them monarchs or let the current rulers become people who advocate philosophical wisdom. That is, through the rulers to combine wisdom and power, which is also a necessary way for the country to move towards justice.

To become philosophers, rulers need to learn more than ordinary people, constantly improve their ability, so that producers and auxiliaries can willingly assist. The philosophical king adopted the method of rule by man to govern the country, which put forward higher requirements for the quality of the rulers, only to receive a comprehensive and correct monarchy education, including learning the technology of governing the country, physical exercise, learning literature and art, and so on. To cultivate a qualified ruler. In addition to politics and literature and art, rulers also need to increase their knowledge and cultivate their ability through the study of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music and dialectics, so as to better govern the army and pursue the truth. In addition, it is important for the king of philosophy to always love wisdom. they need to keep an eye on the truth and be able to understand the beauty of the truth with their heart. That is to say, they should be able to see the essence through the phenomenon, and be keen to explore the true nature of the object. Only in this way can the rulers master the true knowledge in an all-round way, maintain rationality, and distinguish the truth and falsehood of good and evil.

#### B. *The role of the King of philosophy*

In the Republic, Plato vividly lets people understand philosophy through cave metaphors. The sun outside the cave symbolizes the idea of flashing, and the idea of good is the root of all truth and reason. The people tied up in the cave symbolize the majority of people who are uneducated and do not know the truth. When they saw the shadows on the cave walls, they thought it was real. There are "ideas" in the real world, but they are not aware of them. Only by getting rid of the false world and

reaching the real state can we understand what the real idea is. Plato believes that philosophy is to awaken people and lead people to the truth. As a result, the king of philosophy, as the king of knowledge in the country, holds the state power and receives a better and more comprehensive education than others, so he has a better ability to carry out philosophical thinking and participate in political activities, and to convey knowledge to the general public. On the one hand, philosophers can use what they have learned to participate in politics, he knows more about politics, he can solve different political problems in reality, come up with reasonable political solutions and provide quality political advice; on the other hand, Philosophers can teach others real knowledge in the way of discussion and debate, so as to achieve the purpose of enlightening the people and spreading culture. Therefore, when a philosopher becomes a ruler, he can enlighten the people and serve the country in political life and social life. The legitimacy of the political power held by the king of philosophy is the source of knowledge. people regard the king of philosophy as a model and obey the king of philosophy, but in fact it is the recognition of authoritative knowledge.

### IV. NATIONAL SYSTEMS AND IDEAL KINGDOM

The city-states of ancient Greece were based on slavery. However, the ways in which each city-state is in power, that is, the political system, are various, and in practice, all kinds of political systems have shown their own characteristics and drawbacks. Philosophers are very concerned about this. Plato's ideal city-state is undoubtedly the political expression of his idea theory, so he compares and analyzes his ideal political system with other political systems at that time.

Plato lived in an era of fierce confrontation between democracy and tyranny, and he was critical of both. Plato divided the real city-states into five categories, one by one, from monarchy or aristocracy to honor, again to oligarchy, then to democracy, and finally to tyranny. Among them, the "honorary political system" is often said to be a Spartan state, which is characterized by the country's military as the foundation of the country, attaches great importance to military honor, so it is called "honorary rule" or "honorary political system". The auxiliaries in the city-states were neither kind nor good. when they took over the power of their parents to govern the country, they despised education and were therefore unable to perform the duties of the auxiliaries, and eventually divided into two factions and fought against each other. This system lies between the monarchy and the oligarchy, so it has the characteristics of both political systems. In other words, the honor system is a kind of political system in which good and evil coexist; an "oligarchy" refers to a country dominated by an economically rich minority. In such a country, laws are also enacted on the basis of the amount of property, and those with less property cannot hold any position. Rulers love wealth, covet gold and silver, waste and stingy. This is the characteristic of a typical oligarchy; then there is democracy, and Plato's democracy is very different from what we now call democracy. This is a system of government in which ordinary civilians are in power, also known as the civilian system. In the city-states of the time, civilians were the majority. So, what Plato called democracy is a form of government in which the majority is in power. The unbridled pursuit of freedom is a characteristic of democracy and the reason for its downfall; extreme democracy will make

the incidence a decoration, and people will go to tyranny without restraint, a regime in which civilian leaders hold power. This is actually an authoritarian system. Civilian leaders do not have the talent and wisdom to lead the country, so they are always afraid of their precarious position. As a result, the ruler increased the degree of protection, and in order to maintain the cost of these guards, he must continue to exploit the people, and eventually lead to the suffering of the people, social unrest. In the face of these obvious defects of the political system, Plato put forward the perfect monarchy in the heart, he believes that only the just city-state ruled by the philosophical king is the real ideal kingdom. In order to establish a just city-state, Plato proposed that the king of philosophy should become a public mentor of knowledge and wisdom, and assume the responsibility of educating and guiding other strata. Plato designed an educational program that required the cultivation of an educated, knowledgeable, physically and mentally healthy samurai class from which to select those who knew dialectics, wisdom, and experimental experience. Plato admitted that he had designed "an ideal city-state that cannot be found on earth" and that "there is a prototype of it in heaven, and those who want to see it can find it in their hearts." [17]

In his later work "Law", Plato put forward a realistic and feasible "sub-good" legal system. Plato believed that in order to establish a stable system, the state needs to play the role of law. He said that the law is the master, the ruler is only the servant of the law. In addition, in order to prevent abuse of power and corruption, Plato designed the legal system also retained some of the advantages of democracy, such as improving the civic assembly and jury system. Ideologically, he advocated strict thought control and did not allow individuals to worship gods in private. In the area of wealth and honor, he advocated the principle of moderation, he advocated the absorption of reasonable wealth and reputation, the abandonment of controversial rights and money.

## V. CONCLUSION

In Plato's description of the ideal kingdom, we can see that he highlights the importance of polity all the time. He stressed that the overall interests of the country are the highest interests, and personal values are relatively backward interests. Both the ruler and the ruled have to serve the whole country, not just for their own benefit. "A guardian becomes a true guardian, trying to make the country as a whole happy, not just for one class, but for one class." [10]

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