



## Plato: The Great Philosopher-Educator with David Diener

### Lesson 4: Plato's Model of Education

#### Outline:

#### Chapter 5: Plato's Model of Education: Curriculum and Pedagogy

#### The Republic

- Driving question: “What is Justice?”
- Means of finding an answer: Find justice in the city (the larger entity), and then it will be easier to identify in the individual (the smaller entity).
- Three claims that Plato begins with:
  - The city is made up by multiple members; each fulfills a specific function.
  - Each person is born with different abilities that suits him/her to certain tasks.
  - Individuals are most likely able to succeed at a given job when they focus all of their energies on that single job.
- Classes within a city:
  - The producers: produce goods and services for the city
  - The guardians/auxiliaries: protect the state against enemies (external and internal)
  - The rulers (philosopher-kings): govern and direct the city
- **Justice (for the city):** when everyone practices the occupation for which he is best suited, and each is doing his own work
- Three natures/elements of the individual:
  - the rational part
  - the spirited (emotional) part
  - the appetitive part
- **Justice (for the individual):** when each element of the individual is ordered and regulated appropriately and is doing its own work



authority/rule ↓	The City	The Individual
	The rulers	The rational element
	The auxiliaries	The spirited element
	The producers	The appetitive element

### Plato's "Curriculum Map"

- In order to facilitate justice in the city, Plato proposed a specific program of education. In this program, rulers ascertain the work for which an individual is best suited based on his or her abilities.
  - Birth—Age 10: Children receive early education from parents
  - Ages 10—18: children are raised by the city's educators and trained in music, poetry, physical training, and the subjects of the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy)
  - Ages 18—20: compulsory military training
  - Ages 20—30: selected students continue, studying the sciences and apprenticing in military service
  - Ages 30—35: selected students continue, mastering the tools of philosophy by studying the tools of dialectic
  - Age 35—50: students participate in public service to the city, occupying various positions
  - Age 50+: students become rulers. For the rest of their lives, they rule the city in intermittent periods, while the majority of their time is spent studying philosophy.
- [Plato] viewed education as a process that begins in early childhood and continues throughout one's life.
- The social class system is an educational meritocracy. Class determinations (and educational opportunities) are based on the natural abilities with which



the child was born and on the evidence from his or her educational performance.

## Key Aspects of Plato's Pedagogy

- **Environment**
  - Children gradually accumulate goodness or evil in their souls from their environment.
  - The context in which education takes place is itself part of the education.
  - Teachers therefore should be concerned not only with what content is being explicitly studied but with the surroundings in which students learn.
- **Play**
  - Play should be used proactively as a pedagogical tool.
  - Children's education should not be compulsory.
  - By teaching through play, teachers are able to better assess students' natural abilities.
- **Imitation**
  - Imitation is educationally formative.
  - Children should imitate only "what is appropriate for them, namely, people who are courageous, self-controlled, pious, and free, and their actions."<sup>1</sup>
  - Imitation influences the character of the imitator.
- **Socratic method** (sometimes called the maieutic method)
  - This method is the process of bringing knowledge to birth by asking questions.
  - This method is based on the theory of recollection.
  - Stages:
    - Destructive stage (elenchus—to refute/disprove): The teacher asks questions that help the student see the faults/flaws of his own understanding.
    - Aporia: a state of perplexity or confusion in which the student recognizes that he does not know the true answer to the question at hand
    - Constructive stage: The teacher searches together with the student for correct answers by continuing to ask questions and evaluate the answers.
    - The teacher and student together discover an answer that can withstand scrutiny by further questions.

If we reject the theory of recollection, we should at least question the validity of the Socratic method.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 395c6.