

Discussion Post

What is Plato's justification for the idea that intellectuals should govern?

For his utopian republic, Plato devised a rather contentious structure. He claims that intellectuals are enlightened and should not have to engage the individuals whose preferences they rule, a regime that Voltaire would have called "benevolent dictatorship." Popper went so far as to criticize Plato for advocating tyranny. Young people would be removed from their caregivers and nurtured by professionals to promote their national devotion and sense of togetherness and teach and supervise them. They would be separated into three categories subsequently. Earlier on, those who exhibit the greatest potential might be granted special schooling, and only a few would rise to become leaders. After receiving their advanced learning, they would be financed by the nation, lead lives of introspection, and manage the nation out of a sense of obligation, not a wish to dominate (The Online Library of Liberty, 1892). They would be denied all amenities save a little stipend to keep them from growing envious. They would be without a home and a household. Other youngsters would be nurtured to be helpers and employees. To avoid caste enmity, people were fed a fable that the deities created with gold, bronze or silver in their legislation. The leaders were commanded to determine which category they conformed to.

Plato felt that philosophers might be the ideal leaders of mankind since they can grasp genuine virtue and social equity in a manner that others cannot. They would behave ethically rather than selfishly since they would recognize that the highest self-benefit is operating virtuously. They would be more suited to make legislative judgments than regular individuals since they have the finest cognitive talents and knowledge. Plato offered a contentious structure for governing his philosopher-governed commonwealth. Even though his material could not be applied as a roadmap to effective government, it does show the consequences of governing by "experts" instead of individuals. It also provides some interesting insights, including the meritocracy's perspective, a model in which a person's development is dependent on his or her artistic value.