

Summary of Issues from Plato's *Republic*

Plato's Paideia Proposal: The educational vision or *paideia* proposal in Plato's *Republic* is designed for the training of the guardians and philosopher-kings who must be shaped in character and conduct in accordance with a network of objective virtues and a pattern of enduring wisdom by means of a specific curriculum and pedagogy in order that they might provide the necessary moral and political leadership to produce the just, well-ordered, beautiful city, that is, the *kallipolis* or *agathonopolis* for the sake of human happiness.

BOOK 2: EDUCATION OF THE GUARDIANS

1. *Virtus doctrina*, or virtuous learning (375c-d; 376e).
2. *Traditio doctrina*, or traditional learning (376e).
3. *Ordo doctrina*, or the order of learning (376e).
4. *Inceptio doctrina*, or the inception or beginning of learning (377b; 378e; 395d).
5. *Narratio doctrina*, or narrative learning (377b and following).
6. *Theologia doctrina*, or theological learning (377e; 378a, b; 379a; 383c; 391e).

BOOK 3: EDUCATION OF THE GUARDIANS, con't.

7. *Rhetorica doctrina*, or the role of rhetoric in learning (392c; 394c).
8. *Vocatio doctrina*, or learning according to vocational call (395b-d; 397a; 398a-b).
9. *Musica doctrina*, or musical learning (398c-400e).
10. *Cultura doctrina*, or learning by immersion in a particular kind of culture (401b-d).
11. *Affectio doctrina*, or the learning that teaches or trains the affections (401d-e; 402a; cf., 403a).
12. *Moralis doctrina*, or moral education or learning (402b,c).
13. *Omnis doctrina*, or the education for the total or whole person, soul *and* body (402d).

14. *Praetermissio doctrina*, or the omission of learning (403c).
15. *Ordo doctrina*, or the proper order of learning, again (404d).
16. *Professio doctrina*, or professional education (408d-409c).
17. *Anima doctrina*, or the training and learning of the soul (410c-412b).
18. *Civitas doctrina*, or civic learning. (412c-e).
19. *Investigatio or inquisitio doctrina*, or examined or tested learning (413e-414a).
20. *Gradus doctrina*, or grades or levels of learning (414d-415d).

BOOK 7: THE EDUCATION OF THE PHILOSOPHER-KINGS

21. *Transformis doctrina*, or learning that changes and transforms: Plato's cave analogy (514a-517c).
22. *Conditio doctrina*, or the condition of learning, that is, the condition in which people approach the prospect of learning (515a, b).
23. *Liberatio et salutaris doctrina*, or emancipatory and health-giving learning (515c).
24. *Coercitio doctrina*, or coercive learning, or learning that is forced or compulsory (515c, d).
25. *Arduus doctrina*, or arduous or difficult learning, that is, learning is very hard (515e).
26. *Gradatim doctrina*, or gradual or incremental learning (516a-d).
27. *Insectatio doctrina*, or persecution for learning's sake (516e-517a-b).
28. *Socratic doctrina*, or learning according Socrates, that is, the socratic method (518b-d).
29. *Conversio doctrina*, or converted learning, that is, learning that converts the soul and turns it around (518e-519a-b).
30. *Utilis doctrina*, or useful learning, that is, learning that culminates in good works and service (540a-b).
31. *Materia doctrina*, or the subject matter of learning (521d-534e).

32. *Discipulus doctrina*, or the disciple or learner of learning (535a-537a).
33. *Unus doctrina*, or the unity of learning, that is, the subjects of learning unified into a complete, integrated view of the world (537c-d).
34. *Prudens doctrina*, or cautious or careful or prudent learning (537d-539d).

BOOK 2: EDUCATION OF THE GUARDIANS

1. *Virtus doctrina*, or virtuous learning. At the center and as the top priority of Plato's *paideia* proposal was moral formation, that is, the inculcation of various virtues and the shaping of the soul, including the apparent antithetical qualities of spiritedness and gentleness in the guardians. A similar priority ought to shape Christian higher education, including a concern for blending apparent moral and intellectual polarities such as faith and reason, piety and learning, spirituality and scholarship in the self-same student. 375c-d; 376e.

2. *Traditio doctrina*, or traditional learning. Plato's *paideia* proposal was not a new invention, for in asking what the education of the guardians shall be, he affirms that it is "hard to find anything better than that which has developed over a long period" (376e); hence, he draws on the traditional patterns of learning available to him, especially in the form of a poetic, musical, and gymnastics curriculum. Christian higher education must devote itself to the rediscovery and recovery of the intellectual and educational traditions, now lost, available to it from the history of the West and the Church. See Arthur F. Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy*, Eerdmans, 2001.

- Music (*mousike*): poetry, stories as well as music proper
- Gymnastics (*gymnastike*): dance, training in warfare, and physical education

3. *Ordo doctrina*, or the order of learning. In Plato's *paideia* proposal, there was an important sequence to the learning process, the first aspect being education in poetry and music in order to shape the soul, and then gymnastics in order to form

the body; for physical education is motivated by and a function of the condition of the soul (376e). Christian higher education must think carefully about the order of the learning process as well, making sure students have a proper foundation and understanding of the learning process before they proceed through their studies. Hence, a course that provides this basis and perspective must be taken no later than by the end of the first semester of their sophomore year.

4. *Inceptio doctrina*, or the inception or beginning of learning. For Plato, engagement in his *paideia* proposal must begin when students are very young, since the beginning of any process produces the most lasting influence (377b; 378e; 395d). As Cicero says, “New vessels will for long retain the taste of what is first poured into them” (quoted by Augustine in the *City of God* 1. 3). Question for Christian higher education: Can a Christian undergraduate curriculum change students who come to it already substantially formed? If not, why not? If so, how? How can the Church capitalize on this insight of *inceptio doctrina* and prepare students early on in such a way as to shape their character and conduct

5. *Narratio doctrina*, or narrative learning. In Plato’s *paideia* proposal, stories play a huge role in the formation of students, even more influential than the physical affection of their mothers. Hence, the narrative curriculum was carefully chosen and controlled in order to produce the desired, positive characteristics in the guardians (377b and following). What role, therefore, should stories of various kinds play in Christian higher education? As the primary narrative medium in our culture, how can films of various kinds be employed wisely in the educational process? What controls, if any, ought to be exercised over the kinds of stories to which students are exposed?

6. *Theologia doctrina*, or theological learning. Narrative education was largely about the gods (and human heroes) since they constituted the authorities children wished to be justified in imitating (377e; 378a, b; 379a; 383c; 391e). Hence, only those stories that show the gods to be good and not the source of evil (379b-c), and that they don’t change or lie were acceptable (382e-383a). The goal was that the guardians would be as “god-fearing and godlike as human beings can be” (383c). Christian colleges must likewise set forth worthy, biblical views of the triune God for students to know and emulate, since He, and especially the incarnate Christ, will be the primary authority and pattern for their lives.

BOOK 3: EDUCATION OF THE GUARDIANS, con’t.

7. *Rhetorica doctrina*, or the role of rhetoric in learning. In Plato’s *paideia* proposal, not only is the substance of stories a matter of serious concern, but so also is way the stories are to be told (392c; 394c). Form was as important as content, pedagogy (how things are taught) as well as curriculum (what is taught). Educators in Christian colleges must give equal attention to their manner and style of teaching as they do to what they teach. The power of a text is as much in its delivery as in its content.

Indeed, powerful content can be short-circuited by poor pedagogy and rhetorical performance; weak content can be enhanced by an exceptional delivery system. Both are matters of serious concern and attention.

8. *Vocatio doctrina*, or learning according to vocational call. The future guardians of the *kallipolis* are not allowed to be imitators (actors) because they are able to do only one thing well, perhaps based on talent, specialization, calling, etc. (395b-d; 397a; 398a, b). For biblical and theological reasons, students at Christian colleges should be led in their discipleship to choose their majors and elective courses and pursue a line of specialization on the basis of the reformational doctrine of calling or vocation, rather than on the basis of the potential fame or fortune associated with a particular occupation.

9. *Musica doctrina*, or musical learning. Like stories, music according to Plato's conception of *paideia* plays a major role in the education of the guardians in virtue; music education must therefore be carefully circumscribed as well so that the words, harmony, and rhythm of a song produce a graceful soul (398c-400e). Shouldn't the arts and their moral formative power play a greater role in the education of Christian collegians such that the curricula offerings in this area are increased and the rationale for it be explained and understood?

10. *Cultura doctrina*, or learning by immersion in a particular kind of culture. Plato's method of inculcating *paideia* was not only by means of an educational agent or teacher, but also by means of the power of culture. He clearly recognized that the kind of culture one inhabits shapes the soul. Thus, not only poets and musicians, but all artists and craftsmen must be supervised in order to produce a beneficial, enriching culture in the city ("what is fine and graceful"), immersion into which will shape the souls of the young in accordance with the true, the good, and the beautiful (401b-d).

We would not have our guardians grow up amid images of moral deformity, as in some noxious pasture, and there browse and feed upon many a baneful herb and flower day by day, little by little, until they silently gather a festering mass of corruption in their own soul. Let our artists rather be those who are gifted to discern; then will our youth dwell in a land of health, amid fair sights and sounds, and receive the good in everything; and beauty, the effluence of fair works, shall flow into the eye and ear, like a health giving breeze from a purer region, and insensibly draw the soul from earliest years into likeness and sympathy with the beauty of reason.

Hence, a Christian college ought to be about the central and primary business of *cultura doctrina*, that is, creating or establishing a culture and an ethos that is fine and graceful so that those who inhabit it regularly for an extended period of time—faculty, administrators, staff and students—will be shaped by its commitment to the

best that has been said and done in Western, Christian, and global culture. What is true for the school ought also be replicated in the home, the church, and the city.

11. *Affectio doctrina*, or the learning that teaches or trains the affections. Plato explains that the reason why music and poetry are most important in his *paideia* program is because they shape the affections (the dispositions, the loves, the attitudes, the motivations, and the desires) of the soul (401d-e; 402a; cf., 403a). As Aristotle also said, the aim of education is to make the student like and dislike what he ought (*Nichomachian Ethics* 1104b). As a result, students will become graceful themselves (like the gracious affections in their souls), and will learn to be sensitive to fatal omissions in things, to things poorly made, and to things made well. And these things he/she will do intuitively when young, and “having been educated in this way, he will welcome the reason when it comes and recognizes it easily because of its kinship with himself” (402a). The bottom line, then for Christian colleges is this: producing the right kind of love for the right kinds of things in the right kind of way—the *ordo amoris* (see Matt. 22: 37-39). The first and last question for ourselves as individuals and for DBU as an institution is this: what do I love? What do we love?

12. *Moralis doctrina*, or moral education or learning. Just as it is necessary to recognize clearly all letters wherever they are found in order to be able to read, so also Plato explains that the guardians must know how to recognize clearly the virtues (he lists moderation, courage, frankness, highmindedness, etc.) and the vices wherever they may be found in all aspects of life and in all disciplines; they must not be disregarded (402b,c). For the Christian college, therefore, students must recognize that all aspects of life and education contribute to moral development (including residence life, student activities, and the various disciplines, especially literature, religion, history, philosophy, and so on). Each of these areas provide opportunities to observe right and wrong, good and bad, virtue and vice, moral development and the lack thereof.

13. *Omnis doctrina*, or the education for the total or whole person, soul *and* body. Plato stresses not only the education of the soul and its loves and virtues, but also the training of the body via gymnastics to produce a sound mind in a sound body, culminating in “the most beautiful sight for anyone who has eyes to see” (402d). Indeed, a “kallilaos” (beautiful people) generate a kallipolis (beautiful city). And as Plato will say later, those healthy in spirit and soul will generate a lesser need for lawyers, and those healthy in body will generate a lesser need for doctors (405a-d; 410a, b). If any institution of higher education ought to be concerned about the education of the whole person, it ought to be Christian higher education, especially in its efforts at restoring the total human being as the *imago Dei*, including a deep concern for the welfare of the body.

14. *Praetermissio doctrina*, or the omission of learning. Plato points out that it is possible for people to be without learning and culture or *paideia*, that is, to be in the

condition of *apaideusia*. There are those who are untrained in music and poetry and lacking in appreciation for what is fine and beautiful. The Christian college through its curriculum, pedagogy, and culture should try to prevent any student from graduating in this condition.

15. *Ordo doctrina*, or the proper order of learning, again. Plato affirms that since the body will not make the soul good, but the soul will make the body good, the soul must be trained first through music and poetry so that it will love the right things in the right way, including the body and thereby supplying the motivation for its proper care, nutrition, exercise and rest (404d). For a Christian college, perhaps physical education courses and kinesiology courses should not be taken until a student's junior or senior year after he/she has developed the right perspective and cultivated the right attitudes and dispositions regarding the health and training of the body.

Simplicity in music and poetry produces simplicity of soul and thus simplicity in diet and physical exercise induces bodily health (404e). The need for doctors and lawyers will be much less.

Licentiousness in music and poetry produces a licentious soul and thus licentiousness in diet and exercise induces bodily ailments (405a). The need for lawyers and doctors, therefore, will be much greater.

The greater the need for doctors and lawyers, the clearer is the sign of a bad and shameful education (405a-d).

The greater need for lawyers grows out of an inexperience of what is fine (*apadeia*) and constitutes a waste of time, is characterized by legal maneuvering over worthless or trivial matters, demonstrating an inability at self-governance and arranging one's own affairs. The greater need for doctors is similar, a result of an indolent, and slothful lifestyle.

16. *Professio doctrina*, or professional education. Plato argues that the best doctors are the doctors with the best souls and the best judges are the best judges with the best souls. Hence the people with the best souls make the best professionals, and professional education ought to aim at the cultivation of the soul and its virtues through *paideia*. The self-evident application is that students in Christian colleges aspiring to be professionals in business, law, medicine, and ministry, etc. ought to focus on the cultivation of themselves as persons via a program of Christian *paideia*.

17. *Anima doctrina*, or the training and learning of the soul. Plato believes that all education is ultimately soul education, that is, it has the soul as its main target (perhaps because from the soul or heart flow the springs of life-Prov. 4: 23). Hence, physical education supplies courage in the spirited part of the soul and music/poetry supplies wisdom for the rational part of the soul, resulting in balance and a well-

ordered life (410c-412b). The education of the heart and soul ought to be the primary concern for the student at a Christian college and university.

18. *Civitas doctrina*, or civic learning. Plato's *paideia* proposal had as its aim the welfare of the city as a place of justice, as a place where philosophy could flourish and as the source of human happiness. If the city does well, the citizen does well; if the city does poorly, the citizen does poorly; if the citizen does well, the city does well, and if the citizen does poorly, the city fares poorly also. The love and welfare of the city and the self are reciprocal. Christian higher education must give due consideration to its responsibility of forming responsible citizens who also seek the city's well-being. "In the multitude of the wise is the welfare of the world" Wisdom 6: 24. For discussion, see Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens*, Eerdmans, 1994.

19. *Investigatio or inquisitio doctrina*, or examined or tested learning. Plato is decisive in that the apparent product (student-graduate) of an educational system of *paideia* must be tested regarding the kind of person he or she has or hasn't become. When subjected to rigorous testing, they must demonstrate their *paideia* in the following ways (413e-414a):

- Gracious in everything
- Being a 'guardian' of him/herself (self-governance, self-motivated)
- Being a 'guardian' of his/her education
- Rhythmical and harmonious in character

How should Christian professors and institutions administer tests that go deeper than mere facts, to challenge the character and conduct of students? In what sense is graduation and entry into the real world the final exam? Will students weave a fabric of faithfulness over the course of life as a result of their overall upbringing and the contribution of an undergraduate education? Time will indeed tell.

20. *Gradus doctrina*, or grades or levels of learning. As Plato's myth of the metals may suggest (414d-415d), there are real differences between people (gold, silver, bronze) in terms of gifts, talents, and character, and each should be developed appropriately and as far as possible without hindrance from others who may be below or above them. There is a place for honors programs in Christian colleges and universities!

BOOK 7: The education of the philosopher-kings

21. *Transformis doctrina*, or learning that changes and transforms. Plato's cave analogy, or illustration of paideia, addresses the following issue and raises the following questions for all, Christians included, to consider:

Issue: the effect of education and of the lack of it on our nature.

Questions: Can education foster substantive change in the thinking and living of students? Can an educational curriculum and experience transform them at the root of their being and in the fruit of their lives? How does Plato view the issue? According to him, children can be shaped for sure, but what about adults, young and older, and old? Christianly speaking, to what extent does sin and the sin nature inhibit life change educationally? And to what extent does a cosmic redemption make life-change possible (cf. 2 Cor. 3: 18)? Non-Christians seem to undergo conversions in various ways to various perspectives and causes (to Marxism, feminism, etc.): how and why does this happen? What role does pain, crisis, tragedy, and suffering play in the learning and changing process? Are there certain experiences indispensable to personal alteration and transformation? Can one simply be open and receptive to the transforming power of ideas and truth? Why are we so resistant to change and comfortable with custom and convention? Given the resistance of most students to learning and to change, what should teachers do as a prerequisite exercise to pique students' curiosity and make them open up to the teaching and learning process? How can students be awakened to the entire educational process? What content, example, pedagogy is pre-eminently effective? Are teachers themselves lovers of wisdom, models of curiosity and wonder, motivated to learn, open and receptive to truth, and in short, solid examples of what they say they want their students to be?

As Plato points out at the end of the cave analogy, the discovery of Truth does result in profound moral changes, and generates new purposes and desires (517c-d).

22. *Conditio doctrina*, or the condition of learning, that is, the condition in which people approach the prospect of learning. According to the cave analogy, the human condition (since childhood) is one of ongoing darkness ("in an underground, cave-like dwelling") and slavery ("fixed in the same place") and as a result are unable to know the truth ("their bonds prevent them from turning their heads around"). But light is available, but they will have to be set free from "their prison" (515b), from their as yet unrecognized ignorance (of themselves, others, things, and the language used to describe things, 515a, b) by some kind of agent of freedom and change. In what condition to Christian students arrive on campus and are they capable of learning in this condition?

23. *Liberatio et salutaris doctrina*, or emancipatory and health-giving learning. Plato states that the whole goal of education is to be “released” from intellectual “bonds” and “cured” of their deep ignorance (515c). This is the basis for liberal, that is, liberalizing education, and from a Christian point of view, cannot truly be achieved apart from the liberation from sin, death and satan supplied by Christ and the grace of the gospel.

24. *Coercitio doctrina*, or coercive learning, or learning that is forced or compulsory. Plato clearly affirms that sometimes, learning is coercive, at least at first as tough educational love (see Prov. 27: 5-6). This kind of coercive learning is required by the nature of fallen human nature and is present in any academical system that imposes a variety of rules, regulations, requirements, and grades on students who otherwise would probably not apply themselves voluntarily to the teaching, studying, and learning process. In Plato’s language, a student “is freed” (passive voice) and “compelled” to make discoveries that would otherwise remain undiscovered (“to stand up, turn your head, and look up toward the light”--515c, d). Public schooling is “compulsory” as the need for truant officers shows; evangelism, parenting, management are all oftentimes compulsory activities.

25. *Arduus doctrina*, or arduous or difficult learning, that is, learning is very hard. As Plato points out, the exit to the cave is “a long way up” and when students begin to learn, they will be “pained and dazzled” as well as shocked and in a state of disbelief at what they are learning. Indeed, they discover that their previous beliefs are “inconsequential.” Because of the arduous nature of the educational process, progress is often very slow. Students will even resist new discoveries strenuously and flee from them, and seek to return to old convictions. But a good teacher will force the student on, and not let him/her give up, but will press for more discoveries that will require even more time to adjust to (515e).

26. *Gradatim doctrina*, or gradual or incremental learning. Plato suggest that learning is indeed a slow, gradual process in which a student moves from strong resistance (to learning) to deep affinity (for the truth discovered). But once a student has discovered Truth, and recalls his former condition and its false wisdom, and his deceived and enslaved friends, he feels a new happiness and feels sorry for his former companions, but would care nothing for them or their honors or opinions or ways of life (516a-d).

27. *Insectatio doctrina*, or persecution for learning’s sake. Plato reveals that attempts to share one’s educational discoveries of the Truth with benighted friends can result in ridicule, rejection, and even death (so Socrates and Christ). Such is the power of custom and convention over the minds and hearts of human beings. To the uneducated, the educated appear silly, awkward and just plain weird (516e-517a-b). They are unwilling to change.

28. *Socratic doctrina*, or learning according Socrates, that is, the socratic method. For Plato, education is not putting information into minds that lack it (like putting sight into blind eyes). Teaching is not content-transfer from teacher to student. Rather, just as an eye that can see can't be turned from darkness to light without turning the whole body around, so also the power to learn which is present in all must be redirected to its proper object, that is, to the Good. Education consists in turning a soul around, knowing how to turn a soul around most easily and effectively, and knowing what to turn a soul around to. Education is redirecting the soul, or the redirection of the heart (in OT terms) so that it learns to love and therefore seeks the right things. It is stimulating the heart to be a lover of truth, goodness and beauty, of faith, hope and love. Socrates employed the following methods and self-description:

- Elenchus: asking questions and a tart method of examination
- Maieutics: midwifery in helping others give birth to truth
- Gadfly: serving as an intellectual stimulus or pest!

29. *Conversio doctrina*, or converted learning, that is, learning that converts the soul and turns it around. For Plato, structurally, human reason (soul/heart) has real power, but it is misdirected into viciousness. It is clever and capable but bad. Education must take its intrinsically good structure, and redirect it to the good, the truly Good, making it clever and capable but virtuous (518e-519a-b)! It must become pious and learned!

30. *Utilis doctrina*, or useful learning, that is, learning that culminates in good works and service. According to Plato's *paideia* proposal, learning is not only for the sake of the soul but for the common good. The educated person must not retreat from the public square into an otherworldly, detached manner of life, but must employ his education insights and wisdom in service to the city as its rulers, for the sake of its overall well-being and happiness, for the unity and harmony among her citizens. (540a-b).

31. *Materia doctrina*, or the subject matter of learning. For Plato, only certain subjects have the power to lead the philosopher-kings to the Truth, filling the soul with proper loves, shaping it with the proper virtues. In addition to poetry, music, and gymnastics, the advanced curriculum for philosopher kings included number and calculation, geometry, astronomy, harmonics, and especially dialectic or philosophy. These subjects laid the basis for the medieval "quadrivium" in which four subjects were believed to be essential to a genuine education. What subjects are the equivalent today, especially for institutions grounded in the Christian tradition?

32. *Discipulus doctrina*, or the disciple or learner of learning. What kind of person ought to be admitted into Plato's academy and be submitted to his *paideia* program

training to be philosopher kings? Only those who already possessed certain prerequisite virtues including the following list (535a-537a):

- Steady
- Manful
- Comely
- Noble
- Piercing eye
- Learn with ease
- Good memory
- Dauntless demeanor
- Love of work
- Talents of the highest order
- Listening
- Inquiring
- Temperance
- Fortitude
- Loftiness of mind
- Severe discipline
- Young
- Not compulsory learner, for no study pursued under compulsion remains in the memory
- Remarkable self possession

Those admitted into a program of study must be carefully scrutinized regarding the qualities of their lives and abilities for their own sake, the institution's sake, and for the sake of the community of students where each individual is influential in either a positive or negative way.

33. *Unus doctrina*, or the unity of learning, that is, learning united into a whole view of the world. At the age of 20!, students should be able to organize their subjects studied in a haphazard way previously, into a "unified vision" demonstrating their kinship with each other and with the nature of reality, of that which is. Anyone who is truly philosophical or dialectical is capable of achieving this unified understanding of all things. Worldview formation, then, ought to be a primary goal of the educational process.

34. *Prudens doctrina*, or cautious or careful or prudent learning. Educators must be very careful how they introduce students to the educational process, especially philosophy and dialect, so that they will not reject the solid convictions given to them by their families, so that they will not adopt a foolish lifestyle, so that they will not abuse their philosophical powers over others, and so that they will imitate an older thinker who in his maturity loves and seeks for truth. Only in this way will such students give education and a good name! Touché for Christian students as well. (537d-539d).

