



Plato: The Complete Works : From the greatest Greek philosopher, known for The Republic, Symposium, Apology, Phaedrus, Laws, Crito, Phaedo, Timaeus, Meno, ... Protagoras, Statesman and Critias

Plato

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This carefully crafted ebook: "Plato: The Complete Works" is formatted for your eReader with a functional and detailed table of contents.

Plato (428/427 BC - 348/347 BC) was a philosopher in Classical Greece. He was also a mathematician, student of Socrates, writer of philosophical dialogues, and founder of the Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the Western world. Along with his mentor, Socrates, and his student, Aristotle, Plato helped to lay the foundations of Western philosophy and science.

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Zahwil says

This book does not identify who did the translation from Greek or all the commentary that is interspersed through Plato's various works. The end of the preface just notes, Balliol College, 1871 for the first edition and 1891 for the second and third editions.

It took me about 8 months to read this book, with consistent daily reading every morning.

Not all of it was insightful and revelatory, to be expected with a book spanning over 6,600 pages, but

considering it dates back to the 4th Century BCE or 2,400 years ago, I marveled at how much of it was.

Due to the fact that Plato is the father of Western philosophy and originated so many of the ideas that would shape human thought over the next two and a half millennia, he can be truly said to be a "spectator of all time and of all existence".

Socrates makes a common appearance in the earlier dialogues of Plato. He presents himself as a 'no-nothing' who desires to learn through asking questions to others, especially those who profess great learning and knowledge. Invariably, Socrates exposes the conceit of knowledge. For modern readers it is a good reminder that we should not put our blind faith in the experts of our times as human knowledge is fallible and the world remains full of charlatans.

Perhaps a deeper message is that we should strive to emulate Socrates and be humbler and more open minded when it comes to knowledge.

In fact, Plato warns us against excessive self-love because it blinds us to the truth and causes us to put our own interests ahead of justice. "Men do not easily see themselves as others see them. They are very kind and very blind to their own faults; the rhetoric of self-love is always pleading with them on their own behalf"

Plato is very concerned about discovering the Good, and he identifies and analyzes the virtues of Temperance, Courage, Justice and Wisdom.

Temperance has to do with controlling and regulating our passions. The opposite of temperance is Self-Indulgence or excess. "Wherever there is excess...there destruction is certain". Here history offers us many examples where a society, a corporation or an individual has brought ruin to itself by decadence.

There is a nod to Buddhism in this idea because self-contentment is achieved by moderating or eliminating desires. "Pleasure and pain are two fountains which nature lets flow, and he who draws from them where and when, and as much as he ought, is happy...and he who indulges in them ignorantly and at the wrong time, is the reverse of happy".

Plato warns us throughout his writing of the corrupting influence of wealth on men's souls: "the inordinate love of wealth absorbs the soul of a man, and leaves him no time for any other pursuit". Again, in our times, it is apparent how easily one can fall into a trap of money-making to the exclusion of other things. For Plato, riches and virtue are opposite sides of a scale, where one rises as the other falls, and he observes how easily ambition turns into avarice.

Plato makes it clear that riches are only for the sake of the body, and the body is only for the sake of the soul. Thus, those of us who center our lives on making money are caught on the lowest level of human life.

Those preoccupied with the body fare no better. "The lover of the body goes away when the flower of youth fades; but he who loves the soul goes not away, as long as the soul follows after virtue".

At death, the body and soul separate and each bears the marks or scars in revelation of the life lived. "His soul is marked with the whip, and is full of the prints and scars of perjuries and crimes with which each action has stained him....because he has lived without truth".

For Plato, knowledge is the nourishment of the soul. "When the sun shines the eye sees, and in the intellectual world, where truth is, there is sight and light".

Plato's best known parable is that of the cave. Our necks and legs are chained such that we are facing the wall of a cave. Behind us there is a fire, and behind the fire lies the real world or truth. Consequently, as bound inhabitants of the cave, we see only the shadows of the images which the fire throws on the wall. "If we could turn and see the real world, we will regard as worthless the honours and glories of the den." In a similar vein, the soul only requires to be turned around toward the light.

Plato has much to say about education. The consequences of our actions can often only be understood by reflection, and education awakens the habit of reflection. Conversely, "he who neglects education walks lame to the end of his life, and returns imperfect and good for nothing to the world below".

Plato's education is holistic and includes giving one's body its due exercise and one's soul music and philosophy.

If we fall into ill-health, regimen and not medicine is the true cure. And as the end of our lives draws near due to old age, this should be a time of peace in which the tyranny of the passions is no longer felt.
