Virtues in a Just City

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The Just City

• The function of a city is to govern, provide and defend.
• According to Socrates, the most important qualities of a city to have include: justice, wisdom, temperance and courage.
• Socrates believed in order to see how injustices came about into the city, one must look at the origin of its creation.
• Humans are not self-sufficient enough to satisfy their needs and desires; thus, they must live under the social contract of a just city.
• It is also vital to be aware of the injustices that must change within the city.

The Foundation of a Just City Must Stem From Virtuous People

Aristotle

• Suggests that the just city must care about virtues and making the citizens good.

How the Just City is Affected By Virtues

Plato

• Justice in the city could only be accomplished with just individuals. You cannot have one without the other as individuals need to be taught the important virtues within the just city.
• Justice in the city is created as a result of the desires of the individual, scarce resources, and the conflicts over these scarce resources.
• Justice is to be found within the needs of the individuals, as individuals are not self-sufficient to satisfy such needs, thus creating the just city.

Philosophers’ Theories On Virtues in the Just City

Conclusion

In order for a just city to exist, there must be just and virtuous individuals, as they go hand in hand together. Although virtues can be taught and learned in a city that is not necessarily just and virtuous, a city cannot be just and virtuous without such individuals. Without these fundamental moral virtues, city life would coexist under a system known as state of nature characterized by chaos, instability, and hostility.

Virtues

• Patience, as taught by Gandhi, is a peculiar quality that may not seem to have moral hold. ¹
• “It enjoins slowing down, waiting, enduring, and doing things at the appropriate place and the appropriate time.” ²
• According to Confucius, to acquire certain virtues, the common person can be made to do certain things but cannot be made to know certain things. ³

Observational Study

• The first part of the study required observations of a Mullah, or Islamic “guardian.” The Mullah’s life revolves around virtues. In order to perform their religious duties, they themselves must be righteous.
• The second part of the study consisted of observations of common individuals or people who have not given much regard to virtues.
• The last part of the study consisted of two interviews.
• The purpose of this study is to show how virtues can affect people and how virtuous people can ultimately benefit a just world.

Interviews

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, how happy are you?
2. How important are virtues in your everyday life?
3. What virtues do you consider to be the most important? (List two.)

Findings

Mullah’s Answers:
1. Happiness is one of many things that cannot be fully measured. But I am most certainly estimate that out of 10, I am at least an 8. Not everyone is truly happy.
2. Virtues are the foundation of my happiness. Without them, I would be unable to perform my duties as a Mullah and not able to be able to differ right from wrong in my life.
3. Patience and honesty are the most valued virtues to me.

Common Individual’s Answers:
1. On a scale of 1 to 10, I’d have to say a 4 or 5.
2. In today’s society, virtues are not really used. Everyone lies, no one is honest, and patience is limited. To be completely blunt, I see virtues when I least benefit from them.
3. I wish people were more selfless and patient. No one takes the time to enjoy themselves or help others anymore.

References