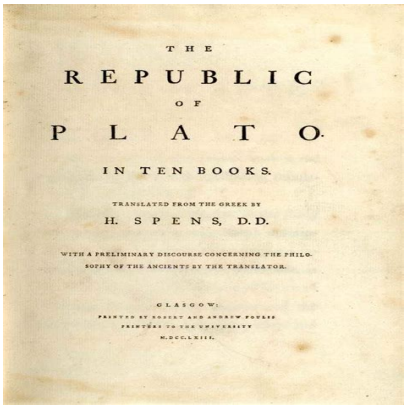
THE
REPUBLIC
OF
PLATO.
IN TEN BOOKS.
TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK BY
H. SPENS, D.D.
WITH A PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ANCIENTS BY THE TRANSLATOR.
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Plato – The Republic

Description

> ‘In which case, the wisdom of a city founded on natural principles depends entirely on its smallest group and element – the leading and ruling element — and the knowledge that element possesses. The class which can be expected to share in this branch of knowledge, which of all branches of knowledge is the only one we can call wisdom, is by its nature, apparently, the smallest class.’

Socrates in dialogue with Glaucon

‘Well, I think the first one to catch the eye is wisdom. And it seems to have an unusual feature.’

‘What is that?’

‘It is truly wise, I think, this city we have described. It has good judg¬ ment, doesn’t it?’

‘Yes.’

‘Now this thing, judgment, is clearly knowledge of some sort. Good decisions, I take it, are the result of knowledge, not ignorance.’

‘Obviously.’

‘But our city contains many types of knowledge, of very different kinds.’

‘Of course it does.’

‘Is it the knowledge possessed by its carpenters which entitles us to call

"Truth has to be repeated constantly, because Error also is being preached all the time, and not just by a few, but by the multitude. In the Press and Encyclopaedias, in Schools and Universities, everywhere Error holds sway, feeling happy and comfortable in the knowledge of having Majority on its side." ~Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

c our city wise, and say it possesses good judgment?'

'Certainly not,' he said. 'That merely entitles us to call it good at car¬ pentry.'

'So a city is not to be called wise because of its knowledge and judg¬ ment in making the best possible wooden furniture.'

'Absolutely not.'

'How about its knowledge of making things out of bronze, or any other knowledge of that kind?'

'No, nothing like that,' he said.

'Nor the knowledge of how to grow crops from the soil, since that's called farming.'

'So I believe.'

'Is there, then,' I asked, 'among any of the citizens of this city we have d just founded, any branch of knowledge which makes decisions about the city as a whole – deciding on the best approach to itself and to other cities – and not about one particular element in the city?'

'There most certainly is.'

'What is this knowledge, and in which group is it to be found?'

'It is the knowledge possessed by the guardians,' he said. 'And it is to be found in the rulers, whom we have just been calling the perfect guardians.' 11

'And what is the label you give your city on the strength of this know¬ ledge?'

'I call it sound in judgment, and truly wise.'
e 'So which do you think our city will have more of? Metalworkers, or these true guardians?'

'Metalworkers,' he said. 'Far more.'

'Of all the groups which have a branch of knowledge of their own, and which are identified as a group, wouldn't the guardians be the smallest?'

'Easily the smallest.'

'In which case, the wisdom of a city founded on natural principles depends entirely on its smallest group and element – the leading and ruling element — and the knowledge that element possesses. The class

which can be expected to share in this branch of knowledge, which of all branches of knowledge is the only one we can call wisdom, is by its nature, apparently, the smallest class.'

'That's very true,' he said.

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web45