



## Human Nature in Plato's Philosophy

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Research Article

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**Abstract:** Plato argued that knowledge of human nature can be reached through dialogue and dialectical method in accordance with the Socratic heritage. In his philosophy, man can be defined as being capable of rationally answering a rational question. By giving rational answers to himself and others, human also becomes a moral subject. In Plato's philosophy, we see a clear program based on human nature. Issues related to human nature are discussed in the process of applying Plato's theory of ideas to the field of morality, art, politics and education. What emerges in practice, for example, right and fair behavior is a manifestation of the principle of truth and justice. According to Plato, man reflects the character of the state he lives in. To understand a person, it is necessary to consider the society in which he lives. The state is not an institution that people come together and establish with their own will, but an organism, a whole. According to Plato, in order to grasp the true meaning of human society and to arrange it properly, one must first comprehend the astronomical cosmos. Because, knowing the meaning of the concepts of harmony and order is possible only by understanding the astronomical cosmos, which is the expression of an eternal order. While studying the astronomical cosmos, a man comes to the idea of harmony and order itself. Indeed, the infinite canonical and harmonious movements of the stars in this pre-eternal order on their perennials lead to the concept of law itself.

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People who admire this harmony and order in the sky want to realize a model of it on earth. He concludes that the laws that will rule over the human world must be continuous and compatible, just like the laws in the world of stars. Thus, the state must be an earthly model of the astronomical cosmos. If a person lives in the state, he should realize this harmony and order in the state in his own spirit.

**Keywords:** Socrates, Plato, philosophy, state, human nature.

## Introduction

Each theory of human nature, primarily "What is the place of man in the universe?", "Why are we here?" "For what are we here?" and "what should we do" as a result of the effort to make sense of existence.<sup>1</sup> When we look at the human problem in terms of Socrates and Plato, we witness that a transcendent and objective purpose is foreseen for human life and human history.

In the early stages of philosophy, we see that philosophers' interest was more towards natural studies. Although explanations based on reason came to the fore in this period, mythological explanations were also frequently used. In the following periods, these explanations continued to exist by gaining a new form and depth. However, in the first mythological explanations about the universe, we always see a primitive cosmology accompanied by primitive anthropology. Because "the problem of the beginning of the world is inextricably mixed with the problem of the beginning of the human."<sup>2</sup> The human problem, which finds its clearest expression in Heraclitus' saying "I discovered myself"<sup>3</sup>, gained a solid theoretical framework and a competent

<sup>1</sup> Leslie Stevenson, et al., *İnsan Doğası Üzerine On Üç Teori*, Tr. trans. Damla Tanla (İstanbul: The Kitap Yayınları, 2018), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *İnsan Üstüne Bir Deneme*, Tr. trans. Necla Arat (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1980), 15.

<sup>3</sup> Herakleitos, *Fragmanlar*, Tr. trans. Cengiz Çakmak (İstanbul: Kabalıcı Yayınevi, 2005), fr. 101.

form with Socrates.<sup>4</sup> The only universe directed by his research is the human universe.

If we classify Socrates' philosophy, we can clearly say that it is an anthropological philosophy. He finds the truth and universality criteria of the knowledge he is looking for in conceptual knowledge. For this reason, he thinks that mythological narratives and nature studies will not benefit him. The reason for this is explained in the Phaidros dialogue as follows: "I have not yet known myself, according to the advice on the door of the Delphoi temple. It seems ridiculous to me to try to know foreign things while I don't know myself... I study myself, not myths."<sup>5</sup> In the aforementioned Dialogue, Socrates and his friend Phaidros come to a natural wonder outside the city walls of Athens. Phaedrus is very surprised to realize that Socrates has seen these beauties for the first time. In the face of Phaidros' surprise, Socrates said, "Please tolerate me, my good-hearted friend; After all, I love learning." It is the people in the city, not the fields and trees that teach me anything."<sup>6</sup>

When it comes to human nature, experimental observation and logical analysis are insufficient. We cannot investigate the nature of human beings with the methods we study the nature of physical objects. Physical objects can be described through their objective properties. But man can only be described and defined through his consciousness. To understand human beings, one must really encounter him. Philosophy is understood as an intellectual monologue until Socrates has turned into a dialogue in Socrates. Socrates believed that the knowledge of human nature could only be reached through dialogue and dialectical thinking.<sup>7</sup>

Instead of giving a direct and definitive answer to the question "What is a human?" We have to give an indirect and open-

<sup>4</sup> Cassirer, *İnsan Üstüne Bir Deneme*, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Platon, *Phaidros*, Tr. trans. Furkan Akderin (İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 2017), 230a.

<sup>6</sup> Platon, *Phaidros*, 230e.

<sup>7</sup> Cassirer, *İnsan Üstüne Bir Deneme*, 17. See also, Fatih Özkan, "Sokrates'in Entelektüalist Ahlakı," *İğdır Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 4 (2013), 35-53.

ended answer. Because man is a being that constantly researches himself and therefore the conditions of his existence must be examined and controlled at every moment of his existence. Socrates says, "A life that is not researched, questioned and not thought over is not worth living."<sup>8</sup> We can summarize Socrates' thought by describing the human being as a being capable of the rational answer when asked a rational question. Human knowledge and morality can be understood within this framework.<sup>9</sup>

In classical psychology, life changes and flows within itself. But the true value of life must be sought in an infinite order that accepts no change. By holding the right to perceive, question and judge, the man grasps his pioneering role in the relationship with the universe. "In fact, it is the richness of nature, the intelligibility and the versatility of the human being that determine it."<sup>10</sup> For this reason, it is not possible to reveal a permanent and unchanging "nature" of human beings, a simple and homogeneous existence. It is a strange mixture of matter and meaning. The place of man is between these two poles.

### Human Nature

Plato's inspiration to the thinkers after him is that he promises that we can discover both the knowledge of the truth and the wise ways of life only if we use our logic carefully and systematically. It is emphasized in the Phaidon dialogue that human nature is "in the soul of man". Spirit or mind is a mirror in which divinity is reflected in us. For a person to know himself essentially, he must know himself in the essence of someone else. Real recognition of the essence is possible by understanding the difference: Spirit is the shelter of divinity in man.<sup>11</sup> We discern that

<sup>8</sup> Platon, *Sokrates'in Savunması*, Tr. trans. Furkan Akderin (İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 2015), 38a.

<sup>9</sup> Cassirer, *İnsan Üstüne Bir Deneme*, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Cassirer, *İnsan Üstüne Bir Deneme*, 21-2.

<sup>11</sup> Platon, *Phaidon*, Tr. trans. Suut Kemal Yetkin and Hamdi Ragıp Atademir (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1997), 133a-e.

it is the divine homogeneity between people that is truly realized. And we reinforce our self-knowledge through other-selves.

Knowing the self enables the person to realize whether his/her things are good or bad. Likewise, if we know who our interlocutors are, we can open the way for them to realize the good and the bad. Also, an important purpose of the "Know Yourself" principle is to remind that people are not the measure of everything. Because self-knowledge eliminates pride.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, "to know and do the things that concern him, to know himself is reserved only for the wise man."<sup>13</sup> Plato insistently emphasizes that every person has the will to know himself. Accordingly, doing philosophy is more than accumulating knowledge or acquiring a technical skill.

We see a clear program based on human nature in Plato's philosophy. Issues related to human nature are addressed in the process of applying Plato's theory of ideas to the field of morality, art, politics and education. The right and fair behaviors that emerge in practice, for example, are the manifestations of the principle of truth and justice. Plato also demonstrated the meticulousness of Socrates in distinguishing between examples of moral behavior and his ideas. While one person does well for another person, this action may not be good for another. Accordingly, although moral behavior has a share of an absolute idea, they do not carry absolutely.

The main feature of the human nature theory put forward by Plato is the claim that man is a social being. As an individual, man is not self-sufficient because he has many needs that he cannot fulfill on his own. He cannot even meet his material needs such as food, clothing and shelter without relying on others. Someone who spends most of the time struggling to survive has little time left for activities such as friendship, play, art, and learning. It is also an obvious fact that different individuals have

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<sup>12</sup> Platon, *Phaidros*, 229e.

<sup>13</sup> Platon, *Timaios*, Tr. trans. Furkan Akderin (İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 2015), 72a.

different interests and abilities. For example, there are farmers, craftsmen, soldiers, administrators and the like in society. Each individual specializes in a task, with education and experience according to their nature.<sup>14</sup> The naturalness of living in society is a typical Greek understanding and is adopted by Plato. Nothing else can be as human as social.<sup>15</sup> People have weaknesses as well as strengths. These weaknesses and deficiencies seen in humans are also caused by some problems in the social structure. An incompetent society produces incompetent individuals. With reverse reasoning, flawed individuals form imperfect societies. Unfair individuals create an unfair social structure. The opposite is also true. Because justice is the fulfillment of each individual's duty properly and in harmony with each other.

According to Plato, man reflects the character of the state he lives in. To grasp the human being, it is necessary to consider the society in which he lives. The state is not an institution that people come together and establish with their own will, it is an organism, it is a whole. Therefore, while the state is a human being on a large scale, and a human being is a state on a small scale. For example, the enthusiasm for glory and honor of the individuals living in a state that regards glory and honor above everything else subordinates all other virtues and all other values. Individuals who grow up in repressive states become oppressors and slaves. They are merciless tyrants when they take power, and slaves when they fall from power. In the souls of individuals living in a state where wealth is at the forefront, only ambition for wealth takes place and keeps all other values in second place. Finally, a democratic state, which is a toy in the hands of master orators and demagogues, also produces individuals who act according to their ambitions and enthusiasm. Because a state that has become a toy in the hands of demagogues and constantly

<sup>14</sup> See, Platon, *Devlet*, Tr. trans. Sabahattin Eyuboğlu and M. Ali Cimcoz (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2001), 424a-25c and 519a.

<sup>15</sup> Stevenson, *Yedi İnsan Doğası Kuramı*, Tr. trans. Necla Arat, et al. (İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 2005), 39.

changes their minds according to their whims can never set a constant and stable example for individuals.<sup>16</sup>

According to Plato, in order to understand the true meaning of human society and to arrange it properly, one must first understand the astronomical cosmos. Because, knowing the meaning of the concepts of harmony and order is possible only by understanding the astronomical cosmos, which is the expression of an eternal order. While studying the astronomical cosmos, a man comes to the idea of harmony and order itself. Indeed, the infinite canonical and harmonious movements of the stars in this pre-eternal order on their orbits lead to the concept of law itself. People who admire this harmony and order in the sky want to realize a model of it on earth. He concludes that the laws that will rule over the human community must be continuous and compatible, just like the laws in the world of stars. Thus, the state must be an earthly model of the astronomical cosmos. If he is living in the state, he should realize this harmony and order in the state in his own spirit.<sup>17</sup>

Plato suggested that either philosopher should be kings or kings should be philosophers, as a condition for the complete harmony between individuals and society and the solution of their problems. In this way, the power of the state and the power of the mind will be united in the same person, and it will be possible to achieve the highest level of harmony in the life of people and society by giving everyone a job that suits their nature.<sup>18</sup>

According to Plato's opinion, man is not a being that can only know what reality is and remain indifferent to other things. In addition to being knowledgeable, the human is a being with moral, aesthetic, social and religious aspects. Hence, for man to become ultimate competent, the world in which he lives must be one that can meet the demands of his complex nature. That is

<sup>16</sup> Kâmuran Birand, *İlk Çağ Felsefesi Tarihi* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1958), 61-2.

<sup>17</sup> Birand, *İlk Çağ Felsefesi Tarihi*, 67-8.

<sup>18</sup> Platon, *Devlet*, 473d.

why Plato calls the highest reality 'the idea of the highest good'. When the idea of the highest good is known, our ultimate questions are resolved. In other words, Plato affirms the ancient Greek ideal of the cosmos. The world and man form organic integrity.<sup>19</sup> In that case, the world of ideas is not only a data warehouse where information is stored but also a field of reality that responds to the demands regarding justice, aesthetics, religion and morality, as Plato suggests. For this reason, the idea of the highest good is above all other ideas in terms of competence.

As Jones stated, the analysis of the idea of 'justice' brings up the concepts of organism and function: "It comes from the fact that the purpose of man is not pleasure, but happiness, that man is an organism whose various functions must be balanced and harmonized."<sup>20</sup> These are objective facts about human nature, according to Plato. According to Plato, sophists either did not understand the nature of the good or ignored it.

Plato designed the soul as a triple anatomical structure by defining the separate elements of human nature. Although mind, will, and appetite are present in every human being, Plato identified three different types of people according to the dominant role of one of them: knowledge follower; fame follower; pleasure follower.<sup>21</sup> The right of management and control over the will and appetite among the elements of the soul should be in mind and there should be complete harmony between them. Plato meets this ideal condition with the Greek word *dikaiousune* (justice).<sup>22</sup> A well-organized just society is one in which each element plays its role in harmony with each other. Plato considers virtue as the competence and full functionality of the moral values within its scope. He sees immorality as a flaw and weakness. Therefore, the theory of the elements of the soul represents the

<sup>19</sup> William T. Jones, *Batı Düşüncesi Tarihi*, Tr. trans. Hakkı Hünler (İstanbul: Paradigma Yayınları, 2006), I, 202.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, *Batı Düşüncesi Tarihi*, I, 242.

<sup>21</sup> Platon, *Devlet*, 581e.

<sup>22</sup> Stevenson, *Yedi İnsan Doğası Kuramı*, 38.



ideals of the individual and society in Plato's thought.

As Stevenson pointed out, many people today review the overlapping and diverging aspects between the Platonic ideal of society and the current situation. According to this, "many people still do not coordinate their mental powers with any inner harmony, and many societies do not have the order and stability that Plato followed."<sup>23</sup> In Platonic thought, individual problems are closely related to social problems. Individual problems arise not only from social processes or social problems only from the flaws of individuals; they feed each other positively or negatively as stated in the composite pot theory.

According to Plato, there is a one-to-one relationship between the governance styles of states and the characteristics of citizens. He sees the aristocracy as the best form of government. Individuals attain mental and physical health and individual harmony mostly under this management style. All other forms of government and their citizens are problematic. It would be appropriate to dwell on four of the other forms of state and to consider the human being who corresponds to each shape. So, he went through them all, separating the best from the worst; we can understand whether the best person is the happiest and the worst person is the unhappiest. The first and most famous of this state form is the timocracy, which is the state form of Crete and Lakedemonia. The second in terms of value is the oligarchy, the flaws of which are countless. Third comes democracy, its opposite. The fourth and last, tyranny that suppresses them all.<sup>24</sup> There are all kinds of these in both Greeks and foreigners... There are as many forms of the state as there are human beings. The forms of state also emerge from the predominant habits of the citizens in every business. Habits of citizens correspond to the habits of states.<sup>25</sup> Plato follows the traces of the negativities experienced in political processes from the past and examines in

<sup>23</sup> Stevenson, et al., *İnsan Doğası Üzerine On Üç Teori*, 122.

<sup>24</sup> Platon, *Devlet*, 544a-c.

<sup>25</sup> Platon, *Devlet*, 545a.

detail the effects of intergenerational relations on the shaping of the individual characters of new generations.

### **Sophia and Phronesis Coexistence**

The basis of Plato's philosophy is knowledge. By asking rational questions, it is aimed to reach definite, conceptual and universal knowledge. Sound knowledge ensures both the empowerment of individuals and the building of the state. Because the question of how to ensure a good life and a just state is a question of knowledge rather than reconciling conflicting opinions. There is a truth about how we should live, and those who have reason and goodness can reach the knowledge of this truth using the method of dialogue.

According to Plato, if such a superior order had not been found in this world, it would not have been possible for real knowledge to emerge. This superior order in the world can only be explained by the existence of a good God. This superior force carries out this goddess order in the world. The essence of this order is the future life of the immortal human soul. The soul will be rewarded for good deeds and punished for bad deeds.<sup>26</sup>

Plato rejects a categorical distinction between Sophia, in which Aristotle subsequently focused on theoretical virtues, and phronesis, the subject of practical virtues. Plato did not make such a distinction between Sophia and phronesis and thought that theoretical knowledge of forms was necessary and sufficient for the correct application. In Socratic thought, the unity of virtue results from the identity of wisdom and virtue. In fact, a pure virtue is a knowledge that really contributes to what is truly good for man, the health and harmony of his soul. More important than the definition here is the teachability of virtue. Sophists no doubt claimed that they would teach the art of virtue, but Socrates separated from them by mentioning the existence of universal and unchanging moral criteria. The main point to be noted is that 'teaching' is not just a conceptual informational meaning for

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<sup>26</sup> Platon, *Devlet*, 621d.

Socrates, but rather a means of leading a person to real insight.<sup>27</sup>

W. T. Jones states that the reason for Plato's appeal to metaphors such as sun and cave is to reach the virtues themselves and to experience some virtue through metaphors in the relational context provided by dialogues, rather than the conceptual knowledge of virtue. According to him, metaphor is about reconstructing an experience with the help of imagination rather than reflecting it in person: "There are only two ways of knowing what it is like under fire. One is to be under fire; the other is not a description but a reconstruction based on imagination. This helps explain the role of myth in Plato's writings. Plato thought that none of the truly important things - the essence of goodness, nobility of the spirit, humanity - could not be reduced to idioms carefully written in a clean draft notebook. These things cannot be reduced to such aphorisms, just as the real pleasure from Paris cannot be obtained from a city guide. In Plato's opinion, the best way to learn the meaning of such concepts is to live close to someone who already knows them (just as the best way to get to know Paris is to go there and walk the streets and sit in sidewalk cafes along the banks of the Seine and stroll through the gardens of Luxembourg). If one lives with such a great-spirited man for a long time, he can learn and understand what he knows - not through formal lessons or even wholly exemplary, but some kind of intellectual and moral fusion. That would be a direct experience. Plato offered to those who were not fortunate enough to participate in such a direct experience a myth that was an imitation of that experience. Myth is not a description of the experience, but an artistic call to experience."<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, both Socrates and Plato have gained the identity of philosophers not because they teach behind a chair, but because they put forward the possibility of philosophizing based on social

<sup>27</sup> Frederick Copleston, "Bölüm 1a: Ön-Sokratikler ve Sokrates," *Felsefe Tarihi: Yunanistan ve Roma*, Tr. trans. Aziz Yardımlı (İstanbul: İdea Yayınevi, 1997), 103.

<sup>28</sup> Jones, *Batı Düşüncesi Tarihi*, I, 200.

life. Philosophy in antiquity is both a discourse and a way of life, this dual wisdom trying to reach but never reaching it. Lifestyle and discourse should not be confronted as if one is practice and the other is theory. Discourse has an applied aspect to the extent that it has a certain impact on the listener or the reader. The way of life, of course, cannot be theoretical, but it can be contemplated.<sup>29</sup> Socrates' personality had a decisive influence on the definition of "philosopher" suggested by Plato in the Symposium dialogue.<sup>30</sup>

What is questioned in the dialogues involving Socrates is the values that govern our lives rather than the information we think we have. Thus, the interlocutor becomes conscious of his own self and starts questioning himself. So the real problem is not to know this or that, but to exist in one form or another.<sup>31</sup> In his defense, Socrates expresses this in the following words: "I have no worries about what most people are concerned about; monetary affairs, management of goods, military duties, success in public speaking, judgment, political partnerships, separations. I will do my best by dedicating myself not to this path... to persuade each of you to be more concerned with what you are than you have so that you are as flawless and rational as possible."<sup>32</sup>

Ultimately, in the Ancient Greek tradition, knowledge stands out as a life, a skilled knowledge rather than a completed, conceptual and theoretical quality. The philosopher type Plato drew in the Symposium also reveals such a figure of Socrates. The knowledge of the truth, *Sophia*, and the knowledge of good deeds, *phronesis*, emerges in the person of Socrates as a whole.

### **The Allegory of the Cave and Enlightenment**

Using the allegory of the cave in book VII of his book *The State*, Plato helps to advance the path of wisdom, encouraging to

<sup>29</sup> Pierre Hadot, *İlkçağ Felsefesi Nedir?*, Tr. trans. Muna Cedden (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi, 2011), 14.

<sup>30</sup> Hadot, *İlkçağ Felsefesi Nedir?*, 33.

<sup>31</sup> Hadot, *İlkçağ Felsefesi Nedir?*, 39.

<sup>32</sup> Platon, *Sokrates'in Savunması*, 36c.

rise gradually from the darkness of the cave to the principle of light beyond what the eye sees. With this metaphor, Plato talks about our nature, sees people as prisoners at the beginning and points out that they think the shadows and reflections on the walls of the underground cave are real. Without a transitional period, going out of this environment suddenly only leads to rebellion, madness, severe pain, and vicious transformation in every way. Because when a person comes out of the cave in a hurry, his blindness increases.<sup>33</sup> Plato emphasizes that education requires a long-term effort. He states that the prisoners in the cave need time to understand that what is on the wall consists of shadows and to understand their development process and that they should be willing to change by their own will and to suffer the physical and spiritual pain that this change brings.<sup>34</sup>

If the prisoners' eyes want to see the world, they will have an exercise period for it. Starting from the shadows that they can easily see, they will first focus their attention on the reflections in the water, then raise their eyes and see the stars and the moon. Finally, they will see the sun itself beyond its reflections in the outside world. They will realize that the sun arranges the whole visible world and that the source of everything they see in the cave is the sun.<sup>35</sup> The sun is the cause of the appearance of being, but also and particularly, the cause of the sensible being. In the sixth book of his book *The State*, Plato mentions the sun as the source of the Good as well as the sun of the material world. It also symbolizes the good idea, which is at the top of the order of ideas in terms of value. The good idea created the sun as its equivalent. What the sun is in the visible world, it is a good idea for the conceivable things of the world conceived.<sup>36</sup>

Likewise, Plato sees the value of those who think among

<sup>33</sup> Platon, *Devlet*, 515c-e.

<sup>34</sup> Jacqueline Russ, ed., *Felsefe Tarihi: Kurucu Düşünceler*, Tr. trans. İsmail Yergöz (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), I, 52.

<sup>35</sup> Platon, *Devlet*, 516b.

<sup>36</sup> Platon, *Devlet*, 508b-d.

people above those who act. He uses the following statements in the dialogue between Socrates and Kriton in the Kriton dialogue: "The ideas that should be respected were not bad ones, they were good ones, right Kriton" says. Kriton confirms this. Socrates then said, "Well, good ideas are the ideas of the sages and bad ideas are the ideas of the fools, right?" he says. Kriton confirms this too. Thereupon, Socrates says, "So, dear Kriton, we should not bother ourselves by asking what the majority would think, but it should be cared about that the man who has mastered the right and wrong, that is, the truth itself,"<sup>37</sup> As can be seen, we come to a clear conclusion about Socrates in the last dialogue. "Is it important what is said or who is saying it?" Socrates' answer in his discussion is clear: Who says is important; it is true if the wise have said it.

According to Plato, the process of knowledge takes place through a special kind of seeing. The wise man sees through the eyes of the soul. For this, it is necessary to get rid of the things that can cover and obstruct the soul's eye in a methodical way. Achieving the intellectual vision required for this is opening up to another world for the prisoner in the cave. This world is certainly not in another, remote and inaccessible place, it is within one's own; it only becomes clear and conscious at the end of an effort. The allegory of the cave describes the different stages of the remembering process in which existence, knowledge, action and contemplation are intertwined. Plato proves that "learning is nothing more than remembrance", especially with the help of the educator who, in the State and Menon dialogues, leads the soul to itself and takes it back to 'homeland'.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Harmony of Spirit**

Plato is one of the earliest sources of the dualist view that the mind and soul are intangible beings that can survive separately from the body. He argued that the immortality of the human soul

<sup>37</sup> Platon, *Kriton*, Tr. trans. Furkan Akderin (İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 2010), 47a-c.

<sup>38</sup> Russ, ed, *Felsefe Tarihi: Kurucu Düşünceler*, I, 54.

will continue its existence after death as well as before birth.<sup>39</sup> The knowledge of ideas that do not change in Plato's thought and are not subject to existence and deterioration does not appear in the body, but the soul.

Plato adopts the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which was defended by the Pythagoras before him. According to this teaching, the soul exists independently of the body before birth and after death. Therefore, the soul remembers the previous knowledge of the world through association. Plato clearly stated this in his Menon dialogue by having an untrained slave solve complex mathematical problems from simple to difficult.<sup>40</sup> It is possible that such a mental skill to accept the validity of inferences and conclusions is innate. Because, to learn something, one must have the ability to learn beforehand.<sup>41</sup>

The immortality of the soul holds an important place in Plato's philosophy. Plato attempts to prove the immortality of the soul in Phaidon, Menon and some other dialogues. "Remembering" comes first among these evidences. The fact that the soul remembers previous ideas is proof that it existed before coming to this world. On the other hand, according to Plato, the act of knowing ideas by the soul shows that it has an essence similar to ideas, close to ideas. Because only beings that resemble each other can get to know each other. Therefore, the soul that knows eternity must itself be eternal. Then, according to Plato, the soul is something to do with the idea of life. Because every soul is alive. In this case, the soul should not be related to the ideals of death. Because something cannot enter both circles of two concepts that are opposite to each other. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul also allows for the existence of true knowledge, and the existence of true knowledge is proof that the soul is immortal.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Platon, *Menon*, Tr. trans. Furkan Akderin (İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 2012), 81b-c.

<sup>40</sup> Platon, *Menon*, 82c-4a.

<sup>41</sup> Stevenson, at al, *İnsan Doğası Üzerine On Üç Teori*, 117.

<sup>42</sup> Birand, *İlk Çağ Felsefesi Tarihi*, 59.

Plato points out the existence of two equal forces related to the soul. The soul is not one and one whole but consists of three parts. The soul has a thinking aspect, which is the mind. Then there are two more aspects of the soul, which make up the will and consist of instincts. In the part of the soul where the instincts occur, certain cravings appear from time to time. The soul is tormented by the satisfaction of instincts. However, against these lower forces of the soul, the mind, which represents the superior part based on thought, comes into play. Mind mostly dominates instincts with the help of will. The overcoming of a strong desire for anything shows the power of the mind. The mind should always resist the compulsion of instincts and prevent it from directing itself. When it comes to will, it is a force that is separate from both instincts and reason. The inferior forces of the spirit, which are constantly driving people in pursuit of some extreme desires, are concentrated in the lower part of the body. Will, which is a superior force, is located in the chest and heart of a person. Finally, the mind, which is the supreme force governing the will, resides in the head of the man.<sup>43</sup>

The thinking aspect of the soul requires thinking within the scope of Delphoi understanding and principles, knowing oneself, turning to oneself and making an effort for the salvation of the soul. In reality, other things are of secondary value. According to Plato, the principle that will enable the realization of the harmony in the astronomical cosmos and that this harmony in the astronomical cosmos will be applied to the individual, the society and the state is justice.<sup>44</sup> Tips on how to achieve such harmony are included in the symposium dialogue. Great emphasis is placed on education as the most important way to raise virtuous, harmonious, balanced and just people. Plato sees education not only as formal processes but also evaluates all social effects on a

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<sup>43</sup> Birand, *İlk Çağ Felsefesi Tarihi*, 59-60.

<sup>44</sup> İlyas Altuner, "Ontological Bases of the Universe in Plato's and Aristotle's Cosmologies," *Iğdır University Journal of Social Sciences* 3 (2013), 4.



person's development within the scope of education. Like Socrates, Plato believed deeply in the value of the soul for the mind and will and realized the value of knowledge and true wisdom for the soul to gain competence.

### Conclusion

We are witnessing that a transcendent and objective purpose is predicted for human life and human history in Plato. The main and enduring feature of his theory of human nature is that it shows that we are social beings. Plato states that human nature is in the "soul" of man. Hence Human nature is unchangeable, and thus moral values are also immutable. According to Plato, in order to grasp the true meaning of human societies and to organize it properly, one must first grasp the astronomical cosmos. Because knowing the meaning of the concepts of harmony and order is only possible by understanding the astronomical cosmos, which is the expression of an eternal order. Thus, the state must be an earthly model of the astronomical Cosmos. If he is living in the state, he should realize this harmony and order in the state in his own spirit.

Plato also predicted an identity relationship between knowledge and virtue in accordance with the Socratic tradition. In fact, a mere virtue is an insight or knowledge to truly contribute to what is really good for man, to the health and harmony of his soul. However, an even more important result is that virtue can be taught.

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