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Plato's Way of Thinking concerning State and Education

Minoru Murai

The intention which gave rise to the educational thought of Plato is characterized here as "philosophical cure" of Athenian State. Accordingly, the main arguments in this paper intend to explain Plato's way of thinking underlying following problems: 1) In what condition for Plato's eye was the sick state? 2) what was Plato's plan for the restoration to health? 3) How did Plato think concerning the ideal of health?

The analysis of Plato's attitudes in the treatment of the first two problems informs us that they are fundamentally influenced by his "essentialist" way of thinking in the treatment of the third problem; it grant to the human intelligence the faculty of seeing ideas, essence or the true being.

The Platonic or the essentialist way of thinking necessarily leads to the totalitarian theory of education, which has been severely criticised by J. Dewey, R. Crossman or K. Popper, who stand on the side of individualistic and liberal theory of education, and assert that human intelligence is unable to see the absolute being and that scientific studies should restrict themselves to the acquirement of positivistic knowledge of man and the world.

This paper refrains from arguing which of those two attitudes of educational thinking might be justifiable; it only intend to point out the inevitability of both in educational practice, and call attention to the importance of the logical and analytical study in the science of this field.