Civic Participation, Ideal Education, and Well-being

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Senior Philosophy Thesis
April 22nd, 2011

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Abstract:

If one is struggling between a decision to party or to organize for social change, this thesis hopes to provide resources for reconciling this tension between personal desires and political duties. I argue that civic participation is an essential part of living a good life. Living well entails more than material satisfaction, it requires active engagement in the affairs of the state. In the process of deliberating the affairs of the state one establishes concrete and genuine relationship with valuable people/objects/events. Such a relationship is an actual manifestation of one's well-being, beyond the lofty psychological state of happiness. I arrive at my conclusion by considering the essential purposes of the state and thus its responsibilities. I structure my thesis according to the following four sub-questions: 1. what sort of responsibilities does a state have toward its citizens? 2. what sort of responsibilities do citizens have toward their state? 3. what constitutes human well-being? 4. what sort of mutual responsibilities will lead to the individual and the collective well-being? I will look at Plato's *Republic*, and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *The Politics* to locate the responsibilities of ideal citizens and an ideal state. I will look at Mill's *Utilitarianism* and James Griffin's *Well Being* to locate essential elements of well-being.
Civic Participation, Ideal Education, and Well-being

1. Introduction

1.1 Motivations

This thesis is driven by two motivations. The first motivation is a concern for the sort of education China ought to have as to benefit not only the growth of the country but also the well-being of individual citizens. The debate about the kind of education individual citizens should receive has been intimately connected with considerations of the future of the country. In thinking about China's future, one must necessarily consider its colonial past. Today, China is no doubt one of the greatest economic powers. This is surprising considering the long and hard roads the country had to tread. In the early 19th century when China was under the sovereignty of the Qing Dynasty, western colonial powers imposed their marks on China through military might. After losing the second Opium War, China signed humiliating treaties with countries such as Britain, the United States, France, and Russia, granting them trading rights and exclusive legal privileges. Many foreign concessions were thus created. The Qing government was forced to give up many of its trading ports and the surrounding areas to those foreign powers. ¹

Discussions about China’s future increasingly involve responsibilities to the greater global community\textsuperscript{2}. Although China has traditionally placed a great emphasis on the importance of education, many question whether its current education system is able to adequately prepare students to meet the challenges of China’s changing reality. I can imagine several suggestions that will help guide China towards a more ideal education\textsuperscript{3}.

1. The state ought to educate citizens that are capable of carrying out the nation’s economic agenda: able business people, skilled workers, and scientists who are at the edge of innovations. Scientists are vital to the technological innovation that can put China at an advantage economically and militarily; skilled workers in all areas are needed to carry out the production of goods in the economy; business people facilitate the flow of money, goods, and the direction of technology. As business people expand their global reach they serve as the unofficial ambassadors of the state. The state should enjoy the economic prosperity and continue to expand its wealth. The business approach

\textsuperscript{2} Some people would argue that with power comes responsibility and China’s current actions do not measure up to the responsibility it ought to bear. China has been accused of many human rights violations: media censorship, denial of due process, inhuman prosecution of Falun Gong practitioners...etc. Ironically, China has also been accused of imperialism, especially in the case of the African continent. China is investing heavily in many African countries, mostly in natural resources. Some have argued that replacing the West, China is becoming the new imperial power in Africa. China has been under fire for conducting business with the Sudanese government and not using its power to urge the government to stop its genocidal policy.

In response, China often cites its vast poor population and many other internal problems as reasons that it cannot yet bear the responsibilities as a developed country.

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in the long run creates a world of pragmatic thinkers. Peace follows because it is good for business.

2. Educating citizens for the sake of economic prosperity is too low of an ambition and a grave mistake. The goal behind economic prosperity is to enable citizens to engage in other personal and national projects without worrying about where to get the necessary money. Amongst worthy personal projects are intellectual pursuits, artistic endeavors, and other areas of personal growth. Developing cultural sophistication—to name one example—may be considered a national project.

3. Aesthetic education should be part of the education for two reasons. Rigorous training in logic and practical reason helps the economic and the intellectual growth of the nation but it also dulls the nation's sensitivity for morality. It can lead to blindness toward injustice within and outside of the state. Aesthetics helps one to reconcile natural impulses with reason and thus increases the moral ability of its citizens. Second, an education in aesthetics contributes to a better quality of life. Aesthetic teaches one to recognize and appreciate beauty, thus the wholeness of a person.

4. Above all, the state should produce citizens who care about the state and its progress. In times of crisis such patriotism should lead individuals to place the nation's well-being above that of families and friends. By this suggestion I do not mean blind nationalism. Although said care for the nation must be guided by ethical concerns, the bottom line is that a strong state makes individual flourishing possible.

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4 One can argue that wars are even better for business. Wars might be good for a small group of individuals and companies but they are generally detrimental to the collective wealth of the state.
The above-mentioned four suggestions are not mutually exclusive nor are they the only possible ones. It is theoretically possible for an ideal state to live up to all four suggestions. They seem to be complementary elements in the creation of a good education system, in a healthy society. Not everybody needs to be a businessperson, a scientist, an artist, or a politician. In fact, it is greatly beneficial to the society to have diverse occupations. But it is important to ask the question, ‘what should be the guiding emphasis?’ Is it economic growth? Is it aesthetic development? Is it patriotic sentiment? Or is it cultural sophistication?

Since the education system is intimately connected to the future of a state, the discussion will benefit from an exploration of the reason(s) for forming a state at all\(^5\). Once those reasons are clear, we will be better equipped to further discuss the kind of education China, or any state, ought to provide for its citizens.

The second motivation is personal and yet political at the same time. Since freshman year at Haverford College, I have been torn by the tension between devoting time to organizing for social change and wanting to enjoy more leisurely activities. It only became more apparent recently that this thesis at its core is also about reconciling the tension between personal desires and political obligations.

1.2 How to Proceed:

I will tackle the thesis question by answering four sub-questions: 1 what sort of responsibilities does a state have toward its citizens? A state is a purposive social and political entity. One of the most important purposes of the state is to provide a better

\(^5\) Or a country, or a nation. The particular political configuration does not matter; I am referring to, in the most general sense, a relatively self-sufficient political union.
living environment than the individual could otherwise afford on his own. I want to be clear about the kinds of responsibilities that are essential to the state functioning toward this end. 2. What sort of responsibilities do citizens have toward their state? Insofar as the state is constituted by its citizens and providing benefits to its citizens, the citizens are bound to certain duties to maintain and strengthen the state’s ability to care for its citizens. 3. What constitutes human well-being? In sorting out the mutual responsibilities of the state and the citizens, we cannot lose sight of the main motivation for talking about responsibilities at all: making life better for everyone in the state. It is necessary to articulate to what ends do those responsibilities serve. Well-being is a rich notion that will serve the purpose of guiding the articulation of the responsibilities in accordance with the mission of providing a better living environment for citizens. 4. Finally, when I have the necessary conceptual resources from the previous three questions I will ask the synthetic question: what the mutual responsibilities of a state and its citizens which promote the individual and the collective well-being? I will look at Plato’s Republic, and Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics and The Politics to locate the responsibilities of ideal citizens and an ideal state. I will look at Mill’s Utilitarianism and James Griffin’s Well Being to locate essential elements of well-being.

2. Plato’s Ideal State

2.1 The Purpose of forming a State:

Plato explores philosophical connections between the state and citizens’ well-being through an imagined city. As the precursor of this imagined city, a small group of
people form a community for the purpose of mutual benefits. The need for this mutually beneficial community rests on the assumption that we are not self-sufficient individuals. We all have some needs that are not met by our own labor. Plato thinks that through the division of labors each individual is able to do whatever he does best and thus produces the goods at a greater quantity and quality. In this way, everyone not only has their basic needs met, but in addition, they can also enjoy more material luxuries made affordable by the production surplus. Beyond material satisfaction, he suggests that the state ought to provide a greater benefit for the citizens: it should enable the soul to flourish through participation in civic affairs.

2.2 Feed the Stomach and the Soul:

Plato argues that we are non-self-sufficient. We cannot do everything by ourselves, let alone do everything well. However, each individual can do something well. Thus, the division of labor results in a greater production overall. We all have different “natures” and we should do the work that is appropriate to our nature⁶. When focusing on a single craft one will be able to devote all one’s energy and time to that craft. As one improves the craft one will be able to produce higher quality products more efficiently. It seems better to be a master in one art than to be a so-called “jack of all trades.” The “jack” of all trades is, in a sense, underdeveloped. A large number of bad skills does not increase the quality of any of those skills, nor their usefulness. This set of underdeveloped skills will not significantly contribute to the good of the state. It is actually

⁶ Plato 370a.
quite contrary to the purpose of forming a state which is to benefit from the high quality goods and services produced by one’s fellow citizens.\footnote{Goods and services}

Plato subtly suggests that the life of material affluence is barbaric. He has Glaucon comment that a materially impoverished city is “a city of pigs” and goes on to describe a much more luxurious city. But it becomes clear that Plato does not actually endorse a life with only material luxury when he said “if people lead this sort of life, we will have much more need of doctors than before” (Plato 373d). Indulging in luxury actually makes one sick and it is not good for the body. He hints that it is also not good for the soul.

The concern with the development of the soul is more evident during the discussion concerning the education of the perfect guardians for the city, which is made possible by the surplus obtained from the division of labors. Guardians should be taught music for temperance and gymnastics for strength. The education of the guardians should achieve a harmonic balance. Though strength is needed to defend the state, excessive training in gymnastics can lead one to violence—even toward one’s own fellow citizens. The musical education is needed to temper this strength but again, excessive training in music softens the body and neither a violent tendency nor a softened body is desirable. In education, we see the concern shift from the material wellbeing to the well-being of one’s character, or one’s soul.

Plato stresses the importance of state unity in educating the right kind of guardians so as to sustain the right kind of civic structure and thereby to allow everyone’s soul to flourish. From a practical point of view, a unified state is more capable
of defending itself against its enemies. The full-time soldiers in the imagined city are professionals who do nothing else but practice the art of war. They are capable of defeating a less trained and uniformed army, even when facing three times as many soldiers\(^8\). In time of war, the citizens would be willing to devote their resources to fight the enemies and the rulers would be well trained in the art of uniting people against a common enemy. A unified state can provide the necessary security for delivering its promises to the citizens.

Since cultural unity is an integral part of the whole state unity and can be achieved through censorship, Plato recommends that music and literature that convey undesirable messages should be banned. He cites many Homeric verses as examples. Verses that convey the fear of death, cowardice, corruption, injustice, quarrels between Gods, and deception are destructive for educating the perfect guardians. While the guardians censor undesirable contents, the citizens should, for the sake of unity, be totally open and honest to their guardians just as the patients should be open and honest about their conditions to their doctors, for the sake of unity. Literature against deception will be banned. However, guardians can make use of deception for the good of the state and the destruction of the enemies. Guardians’ monopoly on the use of deception helps the people to act in unison.

The idea of the division of labors implies that in order for the state unity to stand everyone needs to stay in their role and play their role well. However, it is very difficult is to convince people to stay in their respective social roles. It is naive to think that the promise of practical mutual benefits is enough to convince everybody that assuming a

\(^8\) Plato 422c.
single role is the best way to flourish. Some craftsmen might want to become soldiers midway through their lives. Some people might want to try as many roles as possible. Some farmers might aspire to be the ruler. Plato suggests a birth myth so as to clearly separate the rulers and the ruled. The myth is the following: everyone is born from the earth with one of the four elements: bronze, iron, silver and gold. Those who are born with bronze or iron are to be craftsmen and farmers. Those who are born with gold or silver are to be guardians. The bronze and iron are not to be mixed with silver and gold. However, should they happen to mix, the children thus born will be assigned to either the ruling class or the ruled according to their constitution. The myth ends with a prophecy: “the city will be destroyed when guarded by iron or bronze” (Plato 415c). People might not believe the story immediately but through cultural censorship of counter narratives and active promotion of the myth the future generations will be more willing to accept the myth as a truth into which they are born.

2.3 Assessment of Platonic State

The argument about material affluence is quite convincing. The division of labors brings to mind a capitalist intuition, disregarding the dominant drive for endless profit. The organizational insight of assigning people different roles remedies our non-self-sufficiency. The likelihood of general economic success in this model is very high. I imagine in Plato’s city most—if not all—people can enjoy some degree of luxury beyond the most basic necessity.

Given the fundamental need for subsistence, it seems obvious that the state should set up and maintain an economic structure with fair rules and efficient procedures
for the production and the exchange of goods in the market. However, it is not clear what this market should look like. Words such as “fair rules” and “efficient procedures” sound like buzzwords for a market economy. Yet Plato does not have in mind today’s full-blown market economy making profit simply for profit’s sake. Plato’s idea of the market differs from the modern market economy in two important ways. First, the division of labors seems much less mechanical than its modern capitalist counterpart. Although each person should concentrate on doing one craft, there is the sense that each individual works on the whole craft instead of just one mechanical step in the craft. One not only creates products but is also involved in the development of the skills of craft. The Platonic division of labors is more transformative than mechanical. Second, Plato advocates the division of labor so that there will be just enough surplus to sustain other worthy activities. The growth of the economy is not encouraged to become limitless.

I argue that civic participation as proposed by Plato is problematic in three ways. First, Plato’s city can only function if everyone plays their designated role. But the fact that Plato has to use various kinds of cultural censorship and a national myth to persuade people to stay in their “nature role” is indicative of some dysfunction of the state. Naturally, everyone needs some guidance to live the best life possible, but if there is an inherent nature, the extensive censorship and propaganda does more to harm one’s nature than to develop it.

Second, if we are not free to choose our life, why would it matter whether the life we lead is the best kind of human life? The state should not to impose upon its citizens a life, even if it is a life of divine pleasure. Plato’s city gives the individual too much

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9 I will discuss those worthy pursuits in the following section.
“guidance” in how to live their life. There is little room to explore one’s diverse interests. I’m not arguing that diverse interests are always good by virtue of being diverse. But the right to choose one’s interest and have the majority of control over how one develops is a distinctively human practice.\textsuperscript{10}

I do not agree with the literal interpretation of Plato that there should be one role for people to play in their life.\textsuperscript{11} It is uncertain whether Plato sees this nature as inherent and largely unchangeable or second nature acquired through practice. If, “by nature” he means the former, there seems to be no justification in designating roles for the citizen and asking them to uphold those roles, when so much of who we are as people is shaped by our environment and our interaction with the environment. I do not want to discuss how much of who we are is shaped by nature and how much by nurture. The observation that children who are given different opportunities grow up in different ways seems sufficient to make us worry about the danger of pushing people to play one role in their life. It is very possible that some people will want to do something that better fits their interests. The fact that Plato has to use extensive censorship and a national myth to convince people to stay in their role and fear the fall of the state should they step out of it—especially should farmers or merchants want to rule the city—is an indication that our nature can change as we grow up. If we accept that our nature is at least somewhat malleable throughout our life, the diverse ways of being happy is not only possible but inevitable. The state needs to make it possible for the citizens to pursue not only a diverse set of occupations, but also the freedom to choose amongst those occupations.

\textsuperscript{10} Hegel discusses that it is good for people to learn how to value their own opinions.

\textsuperscript{11} A plausible interpretation of Plato might say that taking the words in the \textit{Republic} literally misses the point, which is to convey the essential elements of a state through metaphors and exaggerated tales.
Third, strict state unity is not necessarily needed to create an environment for civic participation. The state needs to be united enough to have a workable political structure. But other than this loose requirement, unity in all aspects is not required. In fact, it could be harmful to civic participation. It seems like there is minimal opportunity for civic engagement in Plato’s state. People simply do whatever they are designated to do. In a state in which people are given the choice about their economic activities and civic participation, their diverse interests and opinions will be manifested. The opportunity for civic engagement would consequently be rich in quantity and quality because a diverse pool of interests and opinions necessitates substantive interactions in order to reach decisions and meet needs to satisfy most people.

On second thought, the three above-mentioned problems are almost too obvious for Plato not to notice them himself. Instead of focusing on the shortcomings of Plato’s prescriptions, I think it is more fruitful to interpret Plato’s city as a metaphor for essential elements of a well-lived life. Perhaps we can be generous and say that without extensive guidance from the state and the societal norms we will be prone to animalistic mindless enjoyments and laziness. Because the benefits of a well-lived life are not immediately apparent, citizens need to be enculturated from a young age.

At this point, it is clear that the purpose of the state is to fulfill certain needs of the citizens. Although Plato and my assessment of Plato both outlined some preliminary suggestions for what those needs are, the issue of locating and defining those needs remains the task of the following sections. Locating and defining those needs demands a justification of why they ought to be the needs to which the state should attend. The notion of well-being figures centrally in Plato’s cit, but the Republics does not make its
exact nature explicit. In the section that immediately follows, I will attempt to understand
the notion of well-being more clearly. I will then synthesize this understanding with the
implications for well-being in *The Republic* to provide a justification for the kinds of need
a state ought to fulfill for the citizens

3. Well-being

3.1 Utilitarian Happiness:

Plato’s *Republic* outlines some important responsibilities that a state and its
citizens ought to perform in order to make possible and promote the flourishing of all
citizens. But it is not entirely clear yet why those responsibilities are conducive to our
well-being. The first step in evaluating Plato’s suggested responsibilities is to
understand more fully what well-being exactly is. Then, I will evaluate why those
responsibilities promote well-being. As a starting point, this section will explore the
notion of utilitarian happiness.

According to Mill, it is a natural fact that we, as human beings, like to enjoy
pleasure and avoid pain. All desirable things, material or social, are either a part of
happiness or a means to happiness. He distinguishes two kinds of happiness: the higher
one and the lower one. Those kinds of happiness accord with our mental capacities: the
higher and the lower of our faculties. It is easier to satisfy lower desires. They only need
quick sensuous fixes. It is harder to satisfy higher desires such as artistic excellence and
moral virtues. They often require more complex mental and physical work. Mill places
faith in humans to go for the higher pleasures instead of the lower ones because he
thinks that nobody willingly degrades himself. If someone exclusively enjoys the lower pleasure then he has lost the capacity to enjoy the higher pleasure. He says, “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied” (Mill 57). The loss of human dignity is a price too high to pay, especially for lowly sensuous pleasures.

Mental cultivation is needed to train people to appreciate higher pleasures; amongst them are the pleasures of feeling, imagination, moral sentiment, intellect...etc. It is not exactly clear how one is supposed to rank those pleasures. But in general, mental pleasure is perceived as higher than physical pleasures. Not many people are born with the inexhaustible ability to appreciate the world in all its richness. Proper training is needed to develop the various faculties appropriate for the pleasure. For example, if one did not have the ears for musical beauty then even masterpieces will sound the same and as bland as any cacophony.

Since the greatest utility is gained in the general happiness of the people, the general happiness ought to be a higher standard against which all considerations are measured. The motivation of the individuals does not matter in this equation. The resulting general happiness is what really matters. Mill envisions that a happy society comprises noble individuals who strive to make others happy. In the overall calculus, one still gets pleasure as benefits from others’ nobleness. The individuals who are in public positions bear heavier duty to live their lives in contribution to the general happiness. Sometimes, painful sacrifice is needed. But sacrifice is only valuable to the extent to which it contributes to the general happiness. Those who are not in a public position can, to a greater degree, enjoy their private happiness, although some burden to contribute to the general happiness still remains.
Ways to strengthen the moral authority of utilitarianism are also common to other moral principles. Fear of peer’s disapproval and God’s disapproval are external ones. Uneasiness of conscience is an internal one. Instilling an internal motivation is the most effective way of reinforcing the moral authority. Moral feelings and intuitions can come about organically from within. Those feelings and intuitions that are firmly established can withstand one’s own critical evaluations.

3.2 Happiness is More than a Psychological State

Mill offers some compelling suggestions of the nature of happiness and how we ought to evaluate it. However, Mill’s account seems to be missing important elements of what should constitute well-being. The simple measure of pain and pleasure does not seem to have the whole picture of a good life. For example, human beings often act, despite the painful consequences, when knowing that the action will bring complex satisfaction beyond the two-dimensional measurement of pain and pleasure. In this section, I will look at Griffin to get a better sense of what well-being consists of.

Griffin thinks that mental state and desire are inadequate in explaining some things we value. It makes some intuitive sense to say that what ultimately matters is what we can experience and what does not enter our experience does not matter, at least to us. But there are several problems with this account. First, if mental state is the right way to account for utility, there has to be some way of measuring the amount of satisfaction and a way of ranking each experience accordingly. But this is not how we normally choose one experience over another. In many instances, the issue of quantity of satisfaction does not enter the picture, but rather the question is usually, ‘what is my
greater desire? We may very well choose the experience that offers the lesser amount of pleasure. Griffin gives the example of Freud saying, “I prefer to think in torment than not be able to think clearly” (Griffin 8). Freud’s greater desire is to think clearly, even at the expense of pain, illustrates the way we often select experiences.

Mill would attempt to reconcile this scenario with the utilitarian account. Previously, he says that there are two kinds of pleasure: the lower one and the higher one. The physical pain is a low cost sacrifice in comparison to the higher pleasure Freud gets from being able to engage in intellectual activities. This distinction is useful but it does not address the fundamental problem: would Freud want to be plugged into a machine that programs a series of high intellectual activities which stimulates thoughts he himself will not be able to generate without the machine? Robert Nozick takes us through the thought experiment of imagining an experience machine where one can preprogram such a series of great experiences for one’s life12. All the surprises, affections, and dramatic ups and downs, mellow and sustained happiness, and even the personality you want to assume can be entered into the program. One can simply vegetate in a tub and be connected to the machine to experience the greatness of it all. The choice sounds tempting but there is some uneasiness, to say the least, about the fact that an inorganic machine is living the life for an organic and intelligent being13. In living our life, we seem to value more than just mental states14.

13 Being as in a biological being. Here I do not implicate a spiritual entity, although it might possible for humans to reach a realm of spiritual experience unattainable for other animals.
14 I am not throwing out mental states as trivial to well-being, but a good life has to include something more.
3.3 Assessment of Utilitarian Happiness and Well-being

Mill’s utilitarian account falls short of the kinds of responsibility that lead to well-being. To be fair, one can infer from Mill’s account of happiness that the state has a role in maximizing the general happiness of the people—happiness as defined as the maximum amount of pleasure, and at the very least, the state ought to make sure that the people’s basic survival needs are met. But in Mill’s account, it is not clear how much material guarantee do people need. Mill dangerously allows the interpretation that the bare minimum will suffice. He points out that one has the best chance of being happy if one does not “expect more than [what life] is capable of bestowing” (Mill 60). This qualification makes utilitarianism a tenuous promise, especially because, as Plato has rightly pointed out that the fundamental purpose of forming a state is to provide for the citizens more than what life passively bestows.

The state also ought to make possible the enjoyment of higher pleasures. In order to make this possible at least two things need to be done: 1. create social opportunities for higher pleasures 2. Educate people to appreciate those pleasures. Although the state has an obligation to help people enjoy happiness, it can get away with providing a very little amount of material well-being as long as it sufficiently conditions people’s desire. The moral authority of mill’s utilitarianism seems insufficient. It is not particularly condemnable if the state does not provide opportunities for higher pleasures. If higher desires are not satisfied, one can at least be content with the fact that one’s human dignity is reaffirmed by desiring higher pleasures.

Mill’s utilitarianism does point out an important relationship between people and happiness: although there is a distinction between higher pleasures and lower pleasures,
everyone’s happiness is equally worthy of being promoted. However, this equality does not automatically translate into having exactly the same opportunities and the same way of achieving happiness. For example, Plato seems to suggest that citizens can be fulfilled in different roles, as long as they become best at what they do. In the imagined city, the division of labor is not just an economic strategy to increase productivity; it is also a social strategy to push people to be the best they can be in their craft. The guardians can take joy out of fulfilling their duty of defending the freedom of the city and the farmers can take joy out of producing the best quality food at a great quantity.

One difficulty with Mill's theory of happiness is that it implies that it does not matter what one does with his life as long as he is happy and does not harm other people in the process. Even though he distinguishes lower and higher pleasures, the definition of happiness remains subject-centric. There seems to be no important relationship between our happiness and what we do specifically.

Plato is right to place great importance on the relationship between what one does specifically and their consequent fulfillment. Recall that Plato recommends that citizens should stay in their role in accordance with their nature. For example, if one is fit to be a farmer one should stay as a farmer. One's fulfillment is intimately connected with

15 The general happiness principle commits every individual and every nation to a very high moral standard. When calculating the general happiness, should we not include the whole human race in the calculus? Confining the application of the principle within a national border seems at odd with the principle itself. Maybe for practical purposes a nation can impose a border on the principle but one cannot ignore the suffering in other countries and be satisfied with the overall happiness in one's own country. Everybody is equally deserving of happiness and equally capable of learning the means to happiness. Utilitarianism has the resources and maybe is even committed to say "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

16 I use "fulfillment" instead of happiness because I think Plato has a different idea about happiness than Mill.
one's designated role. According to Plato's strict assignment, it is only not good for the individual to play an “unfitting” role; the well-being of the state is also at stake. Plato seems right in emphasizing that a strong purposeful relationship with one's work is part of an individual's fulfillment.

In the fulfillment of a good life, the object of desire has to matter. Otherwise the notion of human well-being would be reduced to mental states. If it turns out that what we truly value is some property of the object, we can just go straight to the objects themselves. But eliminating desire from the ingredients feels just as uneasy as having a machine living one's life. Besides, valuing something implies some sort of motivating force, or a desire of some sort. Without desire, even if we do all the valuable deeds and accumulate all the valuable things, we would not be able to have a meaningful relationship with what we do and the products of our labor. This schizophrenic split does not seem to be a characteristic of a fulfilled human life. A fulfilled human life has to include genuine relationships with valuable things.

4.1 Responsibilities: what needs of the citizen the state ought to fulfill?

We now have a reasonably clear understanding of well-being. The next task is to synthesize this understanding with some relevant implications for well-being in Plato's city in order to provide a fuller justification for the needs a state ought to fulfill for the citizens.

17 According to the national myth of Platonic city, if farmers and merchants were to rule the city, destruction will be forthcoming.
18 The relationship with one's work as a part of well-being is discussed in more detail in section 4.3 (Happiness is More than Psychological State).
It is reasonable to say that there needs to be some level of material guarantee for the citizens so that they may engage themselves in other worthy activities\textsuperscript{19}. Since the material condition is every country is different, it would be presumptuous of me to make detail recommendations for the kinds of things the state needs to provide for the citizens. However, first, I would argue that people should have enough resources to function normally as a healthy biological being. Second, citizens should have enough surplus that they have enough spare time to devote to deliberating the affairs of the state\textsuperscript{20}.

Despite my disagreement with Plato on the extent to which people need to be guided to live a good life, this basic point seems clear and valid: the state ought to provide opportunities for people to participate in the governance of the state. Having an official title seems beside the point of this governance. The most important thing is that one participates. The guardians in Plato's city, without a doubt, participate in the governance of the city. They defend the city and provide general order for the city. But even the craftsman, the farmers, and the merchants do their work with a sense of collective well-being. A large part of their job is to ensure that the city is self-sufficient, at least as far as material goods are concerned.

\textsuperscript{19} I am aware that some people differ from my assumption that the state needs to provide some level of material guarantee for the citizens. An author I have cited, Robert Nozick, holds the view that the state's sole responsibility is to provide security, and anything more will not be legitimate. I am not going into detail arguments but will simply say that it makes intuitive sense for the state to assume this responsibility if the purpose of the state is to provide a better living condition than the one we can afford on our own. See Nozick's Anarchy, State, and Utopia (Basic Books, Inc., 1974) for a detail account.

\textsuperscript{20} Some people would say that some states cannot provide more than the most basic biological necessity, and it is judgmental of me to impose this requirement on those countries. I would respond that, in such cases, the state fails and one might fare better living in the wild.
In the *Republic*, it is not immediately clear why the states need to provide opportunities for civic participation. One possibility is that it is important for the citizens to have a say in the affairs of the state to ensure that individual interests are attended to within the larger political decisions. Having a say in how one’s state ought to be governed is undoubtedly important, but in Plato’s city, there seems to be something more important at stake than a voice in the state. Let us recall that Plato recommends for the guardians to have monopoly over the use of deception\(^21\). This recommendation strongly indicates that the defense of the state and the promotion of the greater good take precedence over the citizens’ interest in knowing the affairs of the state and having a say in those affairs.\(^22\) The fact that Plato wants to convince people to stay in their designated role as a bronze, silver or gold, possibly against their wish and developing interests, is further evidence that having a say in the affairs of the state is not the most valuable thing at stake in the efforts to provide opportunities for civic participation\(^23\).

Therefore the value of civic participation has to lie somewhere else. Previously, we have discussed that Plato disapproves of living like “pigs”— indulging in material luxury. This unhealthy lifestyle necessitates many more doctors in the city\(^24\). I think he also implies that this life style makes one sick in the soul and Well-being requires an

\(^{21}\) Refer to section 2.2

\(^{22}\) Again, I do not agree with Plato on guardians’ (or in today's language, government officials) monopoly over the use of deception, as with many of his recommendations. But reading it as a metaphor allows us to extrapolate what is at stake in civic participation.

\(^{23}\) One might not qualify Plato’s assignment of role for the citizens as truly “civic participation” in the sense of giving people a say. I use civic participation in a general sense to mean the participation in the governing of the state. How much say one should have in this participation is another debate. Later in the thesis I will suggest that freedom of choice is essential to civic participation if the goal is to bring about well-being.

\(^{24}\) Refer to section 2.2.
alternative life style. I want to suggest that such an alternative life style entails engaging actively in the affairs of the state, be it in an official position or not. Let us also recall Plato's effort to unite opinions and hearts in order to educate the most capable guardians\(^{25}\). Implicit in the emphasis on unity is a greater project: the cultivation of the soul through civic participation. I think Plato used those extreme measures such as censorship, deception and national myth to make the point that participating in the affairs of the state is important, and perhaps even worth the sacrifice of many personal conveniences and comforts.

Plato makes a valid point in noting that state unity is necessary. However, this necessity needs to be qualified - state unity matters only to the extent that it creates the environment for people to flourish. The very act of creating state unity is already indicative of Plato's deeper concerns with the development of the human soul. After all, animals do not think beyond daily sustenance, whereas humans have a social life beyond material satisfaction. This social aspect of our life is best captured in the participation in political affairs. Intelligent animals may have a quasi-social life, but this group life is nothing close to a political life\(^{26}\). The suggestion here is that our capacities will be fully developed and exercised because political participation seems to demand rigorous application of our talents and of the integrity of our character. Therefore, a major responsibility of the state is to ensure the well-being of the citizens' soul, and to accomplish this goal, the state needs to provide opportunities to encourage citizens to participate in the affairs of the state.

\(^{25}\) Refer to section 2.2

\(^{26}\) Herds of animals congregate together but they do not think about their choice of doing so as if they may deliberately choose another life style.
Civic participation contributes to a fulfilled life not simply by producing the right experiences or the psychological states in the citizens because the experience of active participation can be cheaply reproduced. Our society has many equivalences of the experience machine. For example, Sims allows one to experience a political life with vividity. The software program can simulate real life political processes so well that it produces in one the desirable mental states. We cannot say that the Sims player is living a good life because he does not have the right kind of relationship with the affairs of the state.

Being active is central to maintaining the right kind of relationship with valuable things, because this relationship comes about as a result of doing something concrete in the world. This action is not just a mental maneuver. Rather, it is the process of affecting the affairs of the world. In civic participation, if one stops being active then one stops having a genuine relationship with the structure and functions of the state. One may live the experience in imagination or nostalgic remembrance. Despite the great experience, the discontinued relationship does not contribute to one's well-being. It is simply not enough to envision a state; one needs be actively constructing the envisioned state.

In fulfilling the citizens' need for civic participation, the state has to provide real opportunities for engagement. Some states create pet projects that are empty of relevance, so that the citizens feel part of the deliberative process without affecting how
the state is functioning. The citizens can still be actively participating, but if their work does not impact the function of the state, then they do not truly have a say in the deliberative process. Although being active in pet projects fulfills the requirement of doing something concrete and establishes a genuine relationship with the work and the product of one’s labor, the work and its products can still be too trivial or harmful to count toward well-being. There is another essential aspect of well-being: one needs to have a genuine relationship with, not just anything, but valuable things. Even in pet projects, one would at least be able to enjoy the experience of actively participating in the deliberative process. However, there does not seem to be very much value in this kind of participation because it merely requires arbitrary activities to satisfy psychological desires. Participating civically in the Sims game can satisfy many psychological desires. But if the projects one engages in do not matter to the world then they will not help one reap the benefits of well-being.

With the previous requirements of well-being in mind, I will suggest two ways the citizens should be able to participate. It is not a coincidence that the ways citizens should be able to participate is very democratic in nature because democratic values closely

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28 Empty committees are widespread examples of trivial participation. Speaking concretely, one worthwhile project is to exam Haverford’s numerous committees in which students can have an important official role, to see whether the decision-making process truly exemplifies the ideal of civic participation.

29 Taking one step back, truly having a say in the deliberative process of the state means first and foremost that what is relevant and important is discussed and not simply assumed. One may place much faith in ways of life and ideas that have been proven to be valid again and again, but it does not change the fact that those ways of life and ideas emerged out of a process of deliberation of their merits.

30 I do not promote a particular kind of political system. My aim here is to promote a particular set of values. Democratic values are not the sole property of a democracy. The government can be a monarchy and still have much room for democratic values (i.e. constitutional monarchy).
align with the requirements for well-being: having a say and use that right to actively participate in the affairs of the state. Here are at least two ways in which the citizens should be able to participate:

1. In general, citizens should be able to make or influence decisions about the laws that govern the state and the citizens themselves, including those laws that influence the collective norms and values.

2. I am assuming that a functional state has some way of generating income with which to pay for administrative costs and public projects. Citizens should be able to make or influence decisions about the ways the state spends the money derived from the citizens.

All affairs concerning the well-being of the state are political. But political nature of the affairs does not mean that one needs to participate in the official political process. One may choose to distance oneself from governmental politics and choose instead to deliberate important matters at a local level: tending the affairs of one’s local community. This choice is compatible with well-being’s requirements to deliberate the affairs of the state and sustain a genuine connection with valuable projects, provided that one does not enclose oneself off from the outside community. Acting locally is often an effective mean of bring about larger political changes. However, if one’s interest is solely that of the local community, disregarding the collective well-being, then one’s individual well-being is in danger.
4.2 Citizen’s responsibility:

Insofar as the state is constituted by its citizens and providing benefits to its citizens, the citizens are bound to certain duties to maintain and strengthen the state’s ability to care for its citizens. Defining the kind of citizens that constitutes the ideal state is pivotal to specify the duties of the citizens toward the state. Currently, there are many ways of recognizing one’s citizenship: such as by place of birth, birth mother or father, time of residence and marriage. Since my project is concerned with an ideal state, instead of the question ‘who is a citizen?’ I am more interested in asking ‘who ought to be a citizen?’ I have discussed previously that civil participation in the state constitutes a part of living a good life, and that one of state’s central responsibilities is to ensure that citizens have the opportunities for civic participation. Extending from this view of the function of the state, a natural definition of citizens would be those who participate in the governing of the state.

Aristotle expresses a similar idea of citizenship when he says, “He who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration of any state is said by us to be a citizen of that state; and, speaking generally, a state is a body of citizens sufficing for the purposes of life” (Aristotle 1275b20). One must have the “power” to be able to participate in the deliberative process on how the government and the society ought to function. Here power can be understood in two ways: 1. the particular skills of the citizen (knowing the official procedure, the ability to articulate opinions...etc); 2. the permission or authority granted by the state to participate in such a deliberative process. You might rightly point out that in the ideal state the power to participate in the deliberative
processes of state affairs needs not be “granted” by the state. Since one major reason for the existence of the state is to provide opportunities to be involved in the deliberative process regarding state affairs, such a power ought to be inherent to citizens of any state. If such opportunities are not provided, citizens’ well-being would be jeopardized and the state would fail to fulfill its major duty and will be unable to justify its existence.

If the citizens are, by definition, able to participate, should they, by definition too, also be willing to participate? There are cases in which citizens do not exercise the power granted to them\(^{31}\). Requiring all citizens to be both able and willing seems too strict of a legal definition. Just as I am not interested in the legal definition of a state, my aim is not to find a viable legal definition of citizenship, but rather to find an ideal citizenship that defines the duties citizens \textit{ought} to perform in order to sustain and improve the state’s capacity to provide for the well-being of the citizens. It is important that citizens meet the state half way. If the state provides opportunities for civic participation but the citizens are unwilling to participate, the citizens will not only jeopardize their well-being, their inaction will also disable the state to fulfill its duties to the citizen and thus jeopardizing its existence as a state. Considering what is at stake, the citizens should be able\(^{32}\) and willing to participate in the deliberation of how the society ought to function\(^{33}\).

\(^{31}\) For example, the low voter turnout in American elections.
\(^{32}\) There are unfortunate circumstances where one is born with certain disabilities which prevent one from participating fully as a citizen. Technology can remedy some disabilities by equipping those in need with the necessary tools to articulate their opinions and to participate in the deliberative process of the state. In cases where no current technology is adequate of a remedy, it is unclear whether well-being is possible. I am inclined to say yes, but maybe not to the same degree.
\(^{33}\) It is great if the citizens are happily inclined to participate in the affairs of the state but it is a worthy sacrifice even if they have to do it at their inconvenience. It matters most that they
5. Conclusion

5.1 The Ideal Education

Implicit in the state’s responsibility to provide substantive opportunities for civic engagement is the need to prepare the citizens to take on this task. No one is naturally born with the skills and the inclination to participate in the governing of the state. Citizens need to be taught the skills and cultivate the right inclination in order to be able to and willing to participate in civic affairs. The education system is critical in producing the right kinds of citizens. Children spend the most formative years of their life in schools. While family is no doubt influential in shaping the way children think and act, schools are the place where they are brought into intimate contact with their peers and form character and worldview under collective mutual influence. My goal in this concluding section is not to construct a new education system from the ground up. Rather, I am attempting to recast what we have learned about well-being to highlight some important elements of an ideal education for the citizens of any state so that they can gain the opportunities and the skills necessary to live a good life.

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participate, not how they feel when they participate. If they consistently participate, even with a slight grudging devotion, then they are essentially willing to participate.

34 Education does not have to happen in schools necessarily, as in a designated physical space and institution. But there needs to be a clear articulation of the guiding principles for educating the right kind of citizens. In other words, education has to be intentional and reflective.

35 I have in mind countries where children spend a substantial time in school. In those places where much of the education happens at home or at informal social settings, having clear ideas about some important elements of an ideal education would help growth of desirable citizens.
In all systems of education, there is an attempt to cultivate a certain set of skills of the students. This skill set consists of at least the following: 1. the rational ability to deliberate affairs of the state; 2. the willingness to participate civically. The preparation for individuals to function adequately in the deliberative process of the state is both necessary and good. It is necessary because a well-functioning society needs people who are competent in rational thoughts and who are disposed to engage in the social world. Political deliberation requires a reflective process of working with existing old beliefs and values in order to make them relevant to the current time. Critical civic reasoning deconstructs contradictory ideas, values and artifacts, but it is also committed to constructing a new set of ideas, values and artifacts with more explanatory power of truth. In order to come to a new construction of ideas, values and artifacts, one has to engage others in the enterprise because if the explanation were to be authoritative it has to persuade the rest of the community. The preparation for active civic participation is also good because the preparation itself—acquiring the skills through participation—is part of living a good life. With individual and collective well-being at stake, any education system should provide a fertile ground for students to develop the necessary skills and attitude to participate actively in the deliberation regarding the affairs of the state.

5.2 Summary

The state, since its formation, serves some essential functions the individuals cannot take on alone. This thesis identified two essential responsibilities of the state: 1. Again, I am aware that some people do not agree with my assumption that it is state’s job to provide education for the citizens. I am not committed to say that the state should prescribe and fund every aspect of citizens’ education. However, insofar as the state has a stake in the kind of citizens it educates, it should at least provide some support for the collective education.
provide the citizens with basic material necessities so that they may live, at least without
harmful discomfort; 2. the state ought to provide opportunities for civic participation.
Those two responsibilities are constitutive of the existence of the state. The first
responsibility is commonly agreed upon because survival is the most basic and non-
negotiable guaranteed that the state needs to provide. The second responsibility is
essential because it turns out that to live well entails more than material satisfaction; it
requires that one actively engage in the affairs of the state. In the process of
deliberating the affairs of the state one establishes concrete and genuine relationship
with valuable objects/events. Such a relationship is an actual manifestation of one's
well-being, beyond the lofty psychological state of happiness. Finally, in order to live a
life of active civic participation the state needs to provide the citizens opportunities to
make independent judgments on the affairs of the world. The education should focus on
the transformative experience of instead of the products of civic participation. After all,
living well is not about possessing or producing certain products but rather having a
concrete and genuine relationship with valuable things. Once the state's responsibilities
are clear, the citizens are naturally responsible for meeting the state half way -- in this
case: participating in the deliberation of state affairs. In civic participation, the citizens'
wellbeing and the state's legitimacy are both at stake.
Bibliography


