

Comma 14800

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“Tell us what complaint you have to make against us which justifies you in attempting to destroy us and the State? In the first place did we not bring you into existence? Your father married your mother by our aid and begat you. Say whether you have any objection to urge against those of us who regulate marriage ?” None, I should reply. “Or against those of us who regulate the system of nurture and education of children in which you were trained? Were not the laws, who have the charge of this, right in commanding your father to train you in music and gymnastic?” Right, I should reply. “Well, then, since you were brought into the world and nurtured and educated by us, can you deny in the first place that you are our child and slave, as your fathers were before you?” – Platon’s Socrates in Crito

This passage is in Plato’s Crito, telling the last hours of Socrates. Crito advises Socrates to flee from the jail but he refuses, telling that he owes his existence to the state. One can say he would be a Totalitarian guy if he’d lived today.

The reasoning is true but useless. Man does not behave looking at the past, considering whom he owes, whom he has given to him. It might be virtuous if he does this way, though realistically speaking past actions are important and used in rhetoric when they give a hint about future actions. People does not live by accounting their past but live according to their hope and opportunities.

It is true that person is a product of society, but when you build ethics and *virtue* on this, it is impossible to entertain liberty or personal boundaries. One cannot explain why we should have personal freedom by looking at whom we owe, because, yes, we owe our *existence* to our mother and father and all of the ancestors and the society and the state surrounding them, hence we cannot pay any meaningful portion of this *debt* to them in our lifetime. We can only hope that when we become the *implementation* of the blueprint they have devised and possibly have our own children and a position in the society, the debt we owe to society and the debt people owe to us becomes equal.

This kind of *social debt accounting* in ethics seems not useful for both explaining people’s behavior and devising *ways of living* for the modern society. A futile attempt to fill the life and a useless way to *produce* ethical people who may benefit to the society.

Like any dynamic system, a human society needs *novel elements* and these novel elements are the only way society can evolve to adapt against new threats. *Social debt accounting* cannot produce *novel people* to deal with a *new world*. Creating new ways, experimenting new life needs to zero out the current social debt and people already know this.