

# Blessed Tolerance - The Virtue of a Republic in Decline



<http://www.dfamily.com/philosophy/teach/hswtl/journal.html>

[Plato and Socrates teach us how our immorality will destroy us. Part of this reads like the Gospel.] Ancient Greek

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## Blessed Tolerance- The Virtue of a Republic in Decline

<http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2003/6/1/171813.shtml>

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Approximately two and a half millennia ago, Plato, in his classic work "The Republic," unveiled what happens to a democratic people when "liberty in law" swaps its identity for "anything goes."

[Would you have thought an ancient "thinker" could have worked out the logical outworkings of unlimited freedom?]

It's not a pretty sight.

The trouble starts when equality before the law morphs into the bizarre belief that all moral viewpoints are equally valid. Oh! But wait a minute! Political correctness suggests -- no, demands -- two provisos:

- 1) Self-love and self-indulgence must be ranked as the greatest of rights, and
- 2) Toleration (for every sort of extreme) must be placed upon a throne and worshipped by one and all as the highest of all virtues.

[Are all moral viewpoints equally valid?

If no, name some.

If yes, name some anyway. (Thought you'd take the easy road?)

How can "all moral viewpoints equally valid" be ranked?

Is this logical?

Tolerance is ranked even higher above all its other equals?

Is logic even a consideration in this discussion?

Logic is what is used by philosophers like Plato and "thinkers".

What sort of belief system would hold Toleration as #1, self-love and self-indulgence as tied for #2 in a field of equals? What is the, well, philosophy of the individual?

What makes them tick? Their motivation? Their goals?]

Have you ever heard of such an equality as this? It sounds all too familiar. In the end, Plato informs us, a nation of self-loving, self-worshipping freedom seekers finds itself

bound in personal and political fetters of its own making.

[Galatians 5:19-21

<sup>19</sup> When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin.]

Perhaps the Western classics have more to offer than our dumbed-down state universities (*which universally ignore and debunk the study of them*) claim they do.

Let's give Plato a try and see what he might teach us. The dialogue is between Socrates and Adeimantus; Socrates speaks first.

[Let's assign parts for this dialog or skit or whatever you wish to call it. 2 volunteers.]

\* \* \* \* \*

**Socrates:** The tyrannical man in the true sense of the word comes into being when, either under the influence of nature, or habit, or both, he becomes drunken, lustful, passionate. O my friend, is not that so?

**Adeimantus:** Assuredly.

**Socrates:** Such is the man and such is his origin. And next, how does he live?

**Adeimantus:** Suppose, as people facetiously say, you were to tell me.

**Socrates:** I imagine, I said, at the next step in his progress, that there will be feasts and carousals and revellings and courtezans, and all that sort of thing; Self-Love is the lord of the house within him, and orders all the concerns of his soul.

**Adeimantus:** That is certain.

**Socrates:** Yes; and every day and every night desires grow up many and formidable, and their demands are many.

**Adeimantus:** They are indeed, he said.

**Socrates:** His revenues, if he has any, are soon spent.

**Adeimantus:** True.

**Socrates:** Then comes debt and the cutting down of his property.

Of course.

**Socrates:** When he has nothing left, must not his desires, crowding in the nest like young ravens, be crying aloud for food; and he, goaded on by them, and

especially by self-love himself, who is in a manner the captain of them, is in a frenzy, and would fain discover whom he can defraud or despoil of his property, in order that he may gratify them?

**Adeimantus:** Yes, that is sure to be the case.

**Socrates:** He must have money, no matter how, if he is to escape horrid pains and pangs.

**Adeimantus:** He must.

**Socrates:** And as in himself there was a succession of pleasures, and the new got the better of the old and took away their rights, so he being younger will claim to have more than his father and his mother, and if he has spent his own share of the property, he will take a slice of theirs.

**Adeimantus:** No doubt he will.

**Socrates:** And if his parents will not give way, then he will try first of all to cheat and deceive them.

**Adeimantus:** Very true.

**Socrates:** And if he fails, then he will use force and plunder them.

**Adeimantus:** Yes, probably.

**Socrates:** And if the old man and woman fight for their own, what then, my friend? Will the creature feel any compunction at tyrannizing over them?

**Adeimantus:** Nay, he said, I should not feel at all comfortable about his parents.

**Socrates:** But, O heavens! Adeimantus, on account of some newfangled love of a harlot, who is anything but a necessary connection, can you believe that he would strike the mother who is his ancient friend and necessary to his very existence, and would place her under the authority of the other, when she is brought under the same roof with her; or that, under like circumstances, he would do the same to his withered old father, first and most indispensable of friends, for the sake of some newly found blooming youth who is the reverse of indispensable?

**Adeimantus:** Yes, indeed, he said; I believe that he would.

**Socrates:** Truly, then, I said, a tyrannical son is a blessing to his father and mother [*Socrates is being sarcastic*].

**Adeimantus:** He is indeed, he replied.

**Socrates:** He first takes their property, and when that falls, and pleasures are beginning to swarm in the hive of his soul, then he breaks into a house, or steals

the garments of some nightly wayfarer; next he proceeds to clear a temple. Meanwhile the old opinions which he had when a child, and which gave judgment about good and evil, are overthrown by those others which have just been emancipated, and are now the bodyguard of self-love and share his empire. These in his democratic days, when he was still subject to the laws and to his father, were only let loose in the dreams of sleep. But now that he is under the dominion of love, he becomes always and in waking reality what he was then very rarely and in a dream only; he will commit the foulest murder, or eat forbidden food, or be guilty of any other horrid act. Self Love is his tyrant, and lives lordly in him and lawlessly, and being himself a king, leads him on, as a tyrant leads a State, to the performance of any reckless deed by which he can maintain himself and the rabble of his associates, whether those whom evil communications have brought in from without, or those whom he himself has allowed to break loose within him by reason of a similar evil nature in himself. Have we not here a picture of his way of life?

**Adeimantus:** Yes, indeed, he said.

**Socrates:** And if there are only a few of them in the State, the rest of the people are well disposed, they go away and become the bodyguard or mercenary soldiers of some other tyrant who may probably want them for a war; and if there is no war, they stay at home and do many little pieces of mischief in the city.

**Adeimantus:** What sort of mischief?

**Socrates:** For example, they are the thieves, burglars, cutpurses, footpads, robbers of temples, man-stealers of the community; or if they are able to speak they turn informers, and bear false witness, and take bribes.

**Adeimantus:** A small catalogue of evils, even if the perpetrators of them are few in number.

**Socrates:** Yes, I said; but small and great are comparative terms, and all these things, in the misery and evil which they inflict upon a State, do not come within a thousand miles of the tyrant; when this noxious class and their followers grow numerous and become conscious of their strength, assisted by the infatuation of the people, they choose from among themselves the one who has most of the tyrant in his own soul, and him they create their tyrant.

**Adeimantus:** Yes, he said, and he will be the most fit to be a tyrant.

**Socrates:** If the people yield, well and good; but if they resist him, as he began by beating his own father and mother, so now, if he has the power, he beats them, and will keep his dear old fatherland or motherland, as the Cretans say, in subjection to his young retainers whom he has introduced to be their rulers and masters. This is the end of his passions and desires.

**Adeimantus:** Exactly.  
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**Socrates:** When such men are only private individuals and before they get power, this is their character; they associate entirely with their own flatterers or ready tools; or if they want anything from anybody, they in their turn are equally ready to bow down before them: they profess every sort of affection for them; but when they have gained their point they know them no more.

**Adeimantus:** Yes, truly.

**Socrates:** They are always either the masters or servants and never the friends of anybody; the tyrant never tastes of true freedom or friendship.

**Adeimantus:** Certainly not.

**Socrates:** And may we not rightly call such men treacherous?

**Adeimantus:** No question.

**Socrates:** Also they are utterly unjust, if we were right in our notion of justice?

**Adeimantus:** Yes, he said, and we were perfectly right.

**Socrates:** Let us then sum up in a word, I said, the character of the worst man: he is the waking reality of what we dreamed.

**Adeimantus:** Most true.

**Socrates:** And this is he who being by nature most of a tyrant bears rule, and the longer he lives the more of a tyrant he becomes.

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Plato hits the nail on the head. **Liberty, defined by license, is but a dream.** Inevitably, we reap what we sow. Who should be surprised that a culture of selfishness breeds a nation of idlers and infidels, drunkards and dependents, scoundrels and sluts, power-hungry politicians and apathetic citizens, and thus, a nation ripe for tyranny.

[We've been though Plato and Socrates opinion on this. We also have the authors opinions on the consequences of liberty without limits. You also have your own experiences to draw on.

Now, expound your ideas on this subject.

Can we have unlimited liberties?

Is absolute tolerance of everything required to provide absolute liberty?

In granting absolute tolerance, are not some liberties infringed upon?

How can I reconcile tolerance for those who use bad language and my desire to be in a foul language free environment?]

And although this sounds, in some ways, very much like America today, there is hope. For

the "anything goes" paradigm and its accompanying social anarchy often spawn a **revival of conservatism**, as we also see in America today.

[Why is a revival of conservatism a counter movement against anything goes?

Try again, your definition of "conservatism".

Does your definition seem to match the authors idea of what a conservative is?

What happened to our language where we can't even agree on what our word's mean?]

The trouble is, as Plato asserts elsewhere in "The Republic," the bad guys know all about that probability; in fact, they plan on it, even pray for it. Such movements can be and are easily hijacked by opportunists and revolutionaries, men who pedal a law and order agenda, in order to get elected -- and then the real trouble begins.

Either way, "tolerant," **self-centered democracies, unchecked by law and morality, tend to vote themselves a tyranny**. Fair warning that conservative Americans have a right, even a duty, to stand up and say "No!" to free-for-all tolerance -- lest legal lines once clearly drawn in the granite become lines faintly drawn in the sand, awaiting the first blast of hot air to come along and blow them away.

[When we were reviewing history, we discussed "What is Polybian Republicanism?" (<http://www.dfamily.com/philosophy/teach/hswtl/journals/journal-day-06.html#polybianrepublicanism> ). I wonder if anyone remembers it? From Roman times, there was a cycle all governments move through if outside conquest does not intervene.

(<monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy>, tyranny, oligarchy, and mob-rule, democracy, ochlocracy, <monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy>)]

Plato had it right, but perhaps, Benjamin Franklin summed it up best: "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt, they have more need of masters."

[Does Benjamin's remark seem right to you?

We have more laws being written every day. Does it seem these new laws are making us a better people?

Does it seem some of these laws are not being enforced?

If this is true, then are we a lawless people?

Tell me what you think of this statement.

A virtuous, moral people, write laws to codify their values.

Whereas, an immoral people create laws in an attempt to prop up values for people to discover.]



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