

# Why Plato Readers Aren't Surprised by the Collapse of Thought on Campuses

Over the weekend, the *New York Times* ran [an article](#) on the continuing fiasco at Evergreen College. For those unfamiliar with the situation, the unrest on that campus began when students of color suggested that their white counterparts leave for a day. Liberal-leaning, Bernie Sanders-supporting professor Bret Weinstein [politely](#) declined, and chaos ensued.

As the *Times* reported, the unrest continued up until graduation, which took place in mid-June. What was striking about the *New York Times* article on the Evergreen graduation ceremony was the picture which accompanied it. As shown in the tweet below, the ceremony was held at a sports stadium 30 miles away from the campus where even the graduates themselves were treated to TSA-like treatment before they walked.

*A Campus Argument Goes Viral. Now the College Is Under Siege., via [@nytimes](#) | Coverage of campus in turmoil <https://t.co/zRGisFlTlw>*

– *Columbia ScholasticP (@CSPA) [June 17, 2017](#)*

Such an image is startling and seems to portray a rather cruel and uncomfortable treatment for those students who have worked hard toward the achievement of a degree. But perhaps what is even more startling is the fact that such treatment was predicted nearly 2,500 years ago in Plato's *Republic*.

Plato recounts a [particular conversation](#) between Adeimantus and Socrates in which the two discuss the outcomes of a poor education and fallacious thinking. As Socrates tells it, such

influences cause many to get caught up in the throng and go along with the crowd, even when the crowd is dictating ideas which are “base” in nature:

*[Socrates] “Then the nature which we assumed in the philosopher, if it receives the proper teaching, must needs grow and attain to consummate excellence, but, if it be sown and planted and grown in the wrong environment, the outcome will be quite the contrary unless some god comes to the rescue. Or are you too one of the multitude who believe that there are young men who are corrupted by the sophists, and that there are sophists in private life who corrupt to any extent worth mentioning, and that it is not rather the very men who talk in this strain who are the chief sophists and educate most effectively and mould to their own heart’s desire young and old, men and women?”*

*[Adeimantus] “When?” said he.*

*[Socrates] “Why, when,” I said, “the multitude are seated together in assemblies or in court-rooms or theaters or camps or any other public gathering of a crowd, and with loud uproar censure some of the things that are said and done and approve others, both in excess, with full-throated clamor and clapping of hands, and thereto the rocks and the region round about re-echoing redouble the din of the censure and the praise. In such case how do you think the young man’s heart, as the saying is, is moved within him? What private teaching do you think will hold out and not rather be swept away by the torrent of censure and applause, and borne off on its current, so that he will affirm the same things that they do to be honorable and base, and will do as they do, and be even such as they?”*

*[Adeimantus] “That is quite inevitable, Socrates,” he said.*

But as Socrates goes on to explain, such a mentality leads to the loss of many things which we hold dear:

***[Socrates] “And, moreover,” I said, “we have not yet mentioned the chief necessity and compulsion.” “What is it?” said he. “That which these ‘educators’ and sophists impose by action when their words fail to convince. Don’t you know that they chastise the recalcitrant with loss of civic rights and fines and death?”***

***[Adeimantus] “They most emphatically do,” he said.***

Such outcomes have certainly played out upon the “recalcitrant” at Evergreen State College. Professor Weinstein has gone into hiding. Numerous students have been affected by threats of violence, which could very well turn into risks to life. Still others have found their civil rights challenged through the loss of their free speech, or even as the picture above shows, through the invasive searches they encountered in order to enter the graduation ceremony.

Socrates certainly seems to have accurately foretold a phenomenon we are seeing in today’s culture. The sad part is, many young people will never be able to recognize themselves in his prediction, for many of them will never come across his words in the course of their education. Instead of being fed by the wisdom of the ancients, they will feast on the instruction of modern-day sophists sowing seeds of political correctness and relativism.

Is this really the path we want the next generation to take?