

In Context

Ideology	Focus	Influenced by
Rationalism	Philosopher King	Socrates, Homer, Protagoras, Parmenides, Pythagoras, Heraclitus.
Influenced		Key Works
Augustine, Cicero, Plutarch, Descartes, Hobbes, Leibniz, Stuart Mill, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Marx, Hegel, Russell.		The Apology, The Republic, The Laws, The Meno, The Politicus.

Plato's Concept of Justice

1. Introduction:

Justice is a core concept in every society, whether ancient, medieval, or modern. Justice has been the most crucial part of a person's morality since immemorial. The ancient Greek philosopher, Plato, held the same view. He wrote a book, "The Republic," describing the concept of Justice. Plato's Republic is a dialogue between his mentor Socrates and other political philosophers such as Cephalus, Polemarchus, Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and others to accomplish the Justice definition. Finally, with his deliberate efforts, Plato provided the ideal concept of justice for all world societies. It faced criticism, but it became a torch bearer in the long run. Plato said;

Justice was "one class, one duty, one man, one work." (- Plato).

2. Dialectical Method of Defining Justice:

- In the Republic, Plato discussed the concept of Justice through dialogue. It is known as the Dialectical Method. The Dialogue occurs between

different philosophers.

i. The Dialogue between Philosophers defining Justice:

Cephalous: Justice is telling truth and paying one's debts.

Socrates: It cannot be applied universally.

Polymarchus: Justice is giving to everyone his due.

Socrates: What do you mean by that? Be good with friend & go against the enemy?

Polymarchus: Yes.

Socrates: Doing harm to an enemy may make that enemy worse than he was.

Thrasymachus: Justice is in the interest of the stronger.

Socrates: A person, party or people cannot correctly define justice.

Socrates cannot accept such explanations because they define justice as something apart of man's soul. Socrates define justice as;

Socrates: Justice is integral part of human soul.

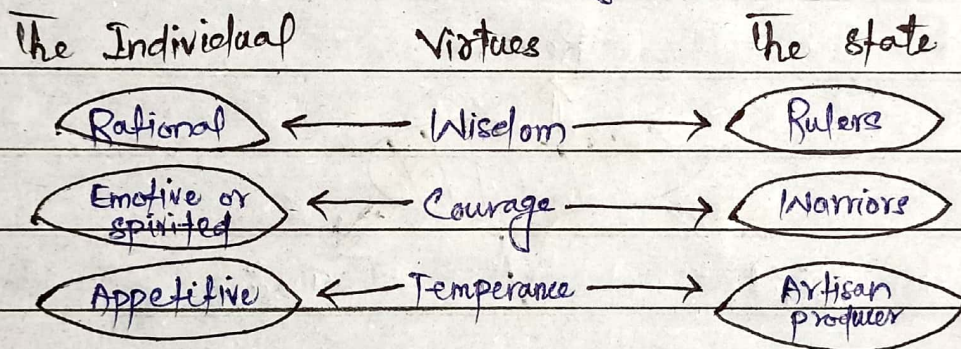
3. Plato's Theory of Justice:

Plato rejected the prevailing concepts of Justice and put forth his own. For

him justice must exist, both at an individual and societal level. For Plato, justice is a human virtue and the bond, which links individuals together in the state. It is the harmonious strength of the soul.

4. Plato's Observations on Justice:

Plato's justice has two aspects: individual and social. Individual means self-control, and social aspect demands self-control on the part of various classes in society.



i. Classification of Plato's Justice on the basis of Individual:

According to Plato, the human soul is tripartite in nature. It possesses three constituents; Rational part, spirited part, and Appetitive part.

a. Rational Part of an individual:

Rational part or reason seeks after truth and is responsible for our philosophical inclin-

ations. It enables an individual's abstract and moral reasoning.

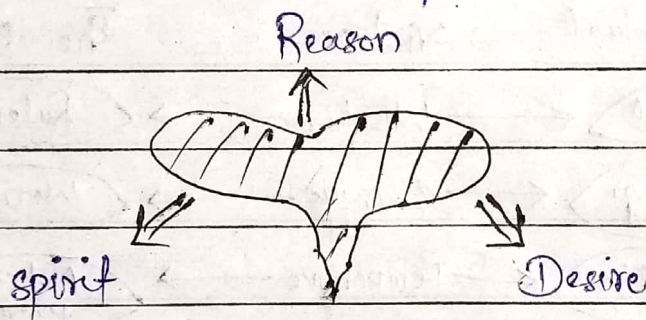
b. Spirited part of an individual:

- spirited part desires glory and honour. It is also responsible for feelings of anger & indignation.

c. Appetitive part of an individual:

- Appetitive part is responsible for primate and base desires, such as desire for acquisition of material goods, food and sexual desires.

Plato's Tripartite Soul



ii. Classification of Plato's Justice on the basis of Society - Political Justice:

- There are three social classes, corresponding to the above three constituents of the human soul.

a. Guardian or Philosopher:

- Guardian or rulers who ought to be dominated by and representative of reason and rational part.

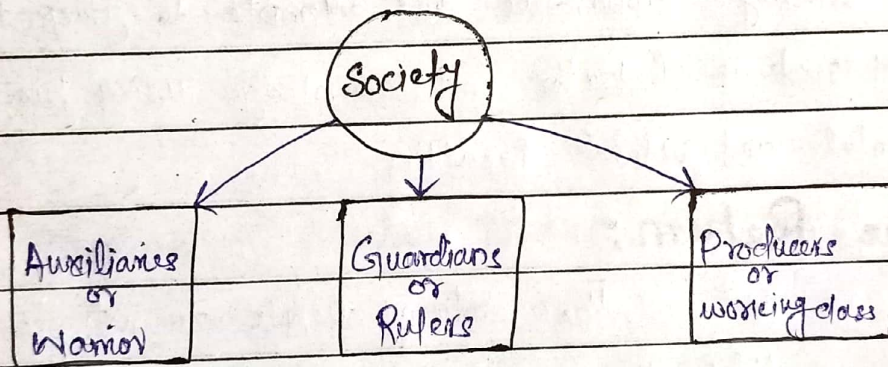
b. Auxiliaries or Warrior class: Auxiliaries or

warrior class who defend the country are dominated by and representative of the spirited part.

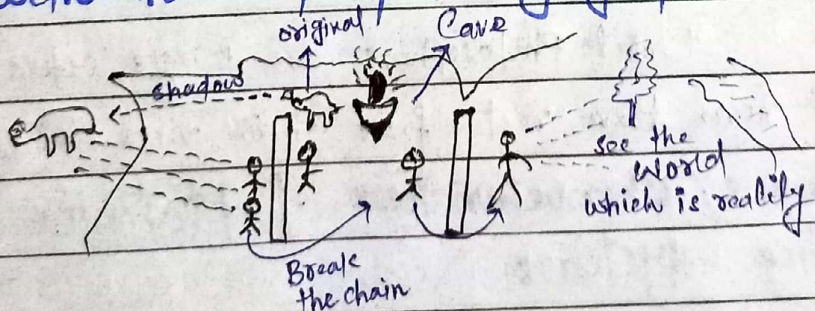
c. **Producers or Working class:**

- Producers who are dominated by the appetitive instincts - consist of craftsmen, farmers, artisans - constitute the lowest rung of the social ladder.

Plato's Political Justice



5. **Justification of Plato's theory of Justice with the help of Allegory of the Cave:**



i. **The Cave:**

The Cave, in Plato's story, represents

Conventional view that True Knowledge comes from our senses.

ii. **The Shadows:**

The shadow represents the perceptions of those who rely exclusively on what they see and hear, instead of their rational faculties, to grasp reality.

iii. **The Escape:**

The escaped prisoner represents the philosopher who has broken free from bondage of sensory apparatus and attempts to grasp the full nature of truth and knowledge using his mental and rational faculties.

iv. **The Return:**

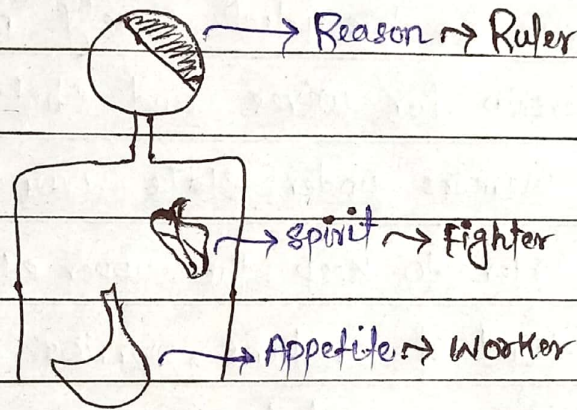
The ordinary people do not see the reality the way philosophers does. Only the philosopher has the skill and wisdom to rule an ideal society.

Until philosophers are kings, cities will never have rest from their vices - Plato.

6. **Features/Characteristics of Platonic Justice system:**

i. **Principle of functional specialization and Harmony:** Based on the dominant character

of the soul, the state is divided into three classes. Every individual in the state will only perform assigned duty. It is the founding principle of the state that each individual in the state should practice only one thing, and that thing should be the one to which the individual's nature is best adapted.



ii. Principle of Mutual non-interference:

- Moreover, these three classes should not interfere with each other's functions. For Plato, the principle of true justice is non-interference. He views the state as a perfect whole. In which each individual component functions not for its own sake, but for the well-being of the whole.

iii. Role of Philosopher King to ensure justice:

- Plato believed that justice was possible only if the state was ruled by a Philosopher, b/c in his views only philosophers can ensure

good life for people. He considered philosophers the wisest among all, as only philosophers has knowledge of ethics and morality. According to him, political power should only be given to philosophers b/c ^{only} they have this ability.

iv. Plato's Justice in Communism of Wives and properties for Guardian & Warrior:

- Plato's for his ideal society proposes common ownership for wives and children for Guardians and warriors under state ownership and central int order to keep the upper class away from any kind of emotions, worries and envies.
- He also suggested the communism in property for them in order to protect them from desire and struggle of wealth.

v. Plato's Educational scheme to achieve Justice:

- Plato suggested state controlled ~~pub~~ education system to achieve justice, both at social and individual levels. He presented fifty years education scheme. People who could not qualify screening test would go for working class, people who could not qualify screening test would go for military, and people who complete

50 years of education without failure will be the philosophers. According to Plato only philosophers can rule and ensure justice.

vi. Sexual Equality - Freedom of Women for justice:

• He said that in order to achieve justice, it is necessary to provide freedom to women. They should be given equal rights to participate as men. According to Plato, justice demands that both genders must have equal rights.

vii. Anti-individualist - Man is not individual but a part of an organic whole:

• According to Plato detachment of individuals from society is a hurdle in the way of justice. Justice demands reciprocal fulfilment of needs.

For Example:

If an individual buys something from a shop, this activity fulfills the needs of both. Therefore, justice demands collectivism in the state.

viii. Geographical Division in Platonic justice system:

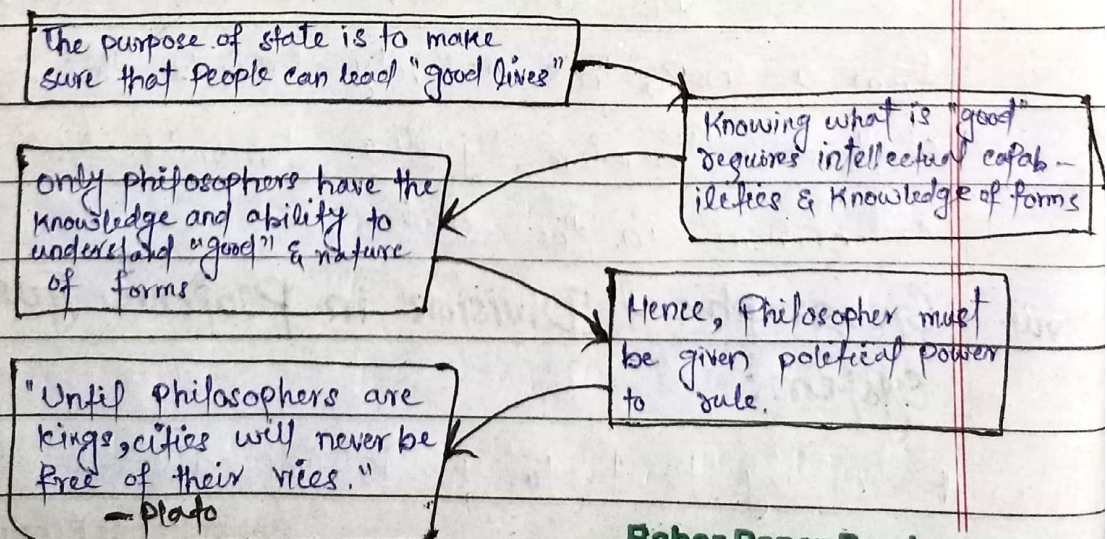
• According to Plato, it is impossible to deliver

justice to every citizen in a large state. Therefore, justice demands that the state may be divided into smaller sub-administrative units for the purpose of smooth deliverance of justice.

7. Application of Plato's Concept of Justice in the contemporary world:

- Plato's justice philosophy is still applicable to all ages today since it is based on moral principles, clarifies virtues, and divides social classes. However, in the contemporary world, it is also seen that states which are practising the virtue of justice are more democratic and peaceful than those which are not practising justice. For instance: In Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, people face hardships because of no justice.

8. Summary of Platonic Justice Theory:



9. Critical Analysis of Plato's Justice Theory:

- Plato's concept of justice, as outlined in his famous work "The Republic," is one of the most widely discussed and debated ideas in Western philosophy. Some critics, though, say that Plato's idea of justice is too simple and does not consider how complicated and nuanced people & society are.

i. Plato's Justice system is valid only for small population of a city state: Idealistic in Nature.

- Platonic theory of justice cannot be applied to a modern state as it is generalized and based on stereotypic division of society into three classes. Plato's justice is idealistic in nature and only applicable for small population of a city state.

ii. Division of Society is not possible because it may give rise to class consciousness and cause class war:

- He divided society on the basis of tendencies of the personality. But heredity is not solely responsible for personality traits.
- Plato's division of society is impossible as it may cause class difference among Rulers,

Warriors, and workers. Such class differences may lead to class war.

iii. The sacrifice of individuality at the altar of the personality of the society:

- Plato's justice is only based on self-control and self-abnegation in the interest of society.
- Plato denied the participation of the average person in politics and decision making process.
- Plato has placed much emphasis on state but not on the development of the individual.

iv. Static concept of life - Plato's Theory of Justice is motionless:

- Platonic justice system allots a person, a particular position in life and condemns him for his entire life and does not allow a person to change his profession. Therefore, Plato's justice system gives a static concept of life.

v. Plato's concept of Functional Specialization deprives individuals of a full and rich variety of life:

- It is intolerable for an individual to be excluded from certain activities involving community affairs.
- In Plato's state, the lower class is deprived of participating in state affairs. He defined

~~authority~~ citizenship not as participation but in terms of obedience to authority.

vi. Aristotle criticized Plato for confusing unity with harmony in his idea of the family and the state:

- Plato gives no regard to human emotions by separating children from their parents. Family and state are two different types of organization and each ought to be the way they are without them imitating each other. Theory of Communism of Plato ignores the essence of human psychology and human nature.

vii. Plato gives monopoly of power to guardian class and is against democratic ideals:

- Plato's unflinching opinion that absolute power was safe in the hands of the philosopher was misplaced because it was unimportant who governed. The key issue was to maximize rule and prevent misuse and abuse of power. He gave enormous powers to the philosopher-king but failed to realize the principle that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Thus, even the wisest king can become corrupt if given absolute powers.

vii. Abolition of Disable - Plato's justice system ignores rights of disable people:

- Plato demands to have a healthy society by abolishing the physically disabled children which is against human nature, and humanity is not permitted by any form of justice in the world.

10. Conclusion:

- The Philosophy of Justice is well-known by the name of Plato's theory of Justice. Plato's idea is also known as the Architectonic Theory of Justice because of the correlation between architecture and the structure of society. Plato believes that justice is a prerequisite for living a decent life. To sum up, it supports people's happiness. His most well-known work, *The Republic*, illuminates his view of justice.

"Justice means minding one's own business and not meddling with other men's concerns." - Plato.