

Q Discuss in detail the plato's concept of justice?

Answer

In Context

Ideology

Rationalism

Focus

3 motives of man

Influenced by

Socrates, Pythagoras

Influenced

Hobbes, Mill

Marx, Hegel,

Russell, Al-Farabi

Key works

Apology, Laws

Republic, Meno

Politicus.

36 treatises

1) Introduction

Plato's concept of justice is based on work in accordance with his ^{one's} natural fitness and training, and non-interference with other classes. For other Greek Philosophers' justice was might is right, paying one's debt, giving others's dues ~~and~~ such that Plato tries to put his concept of justice through an ideal state.

2) Political context

Plato experienced some major events that set his course in life. One was meeting with Greek philosopher Socrates, from him he adopted the methods of dialogues and debates. In that method he wrote almost all work including Republic, in which he visualized a debate between Socrates and other philosophers and reached at the true conclusion of Justice. Other event was defeat of Athens by Sparta in Peloponnesian War. Spartans replaced democracy with an oligarchy.

After thirty Oligarchs were overthrown
~~and~~ democracy was restored. Plato
 briefly in Athens democracy seemed
 to be ruled in ignorance. Any one
 free man, ~~can~~ had a say in
 government. It was democracy,
 by less knowledgeable & mob, which
 is responsible for the execution
 of Socrates - when he tried
 to enlighten the minds of youth.
 Thus, for Plato state should be
 governed by Philosophers not
 mob. So, justice is doing work
 according to capabilities.

3) Plato's Concept of Justice

Plato had given great prominence to
 the concept of justice. He subtitled
 his book 'Republic' as 'concerning justice',
 the nature and occupancy of justice
 was the important issue of Republic.
 He mentioned a dialogue in his
 Republic where Socrates was on one
 side and on other side there were

Date: 17 Jan, 2023

various characters. Through Socratic character he rejects all the prevailing theories of justice and proposed his own views on it.

(A) Grounds on which Plato rejected prevailing Theories

Plato rejected the following theories of justice.

(i) Traditional theory - Cephalus, Polemarchus

Cephalus: Speaking truth and paying one's debt.

Polemarchus: Giving to everyone his due.

Socrates asked, what! did you intend to say, that justice is doing good to one's friend and harm to one's enemies?

Polemarchus accepted his interpretation and Socrates demolished it. He said, doing harm to enemy may make that enemy worse than he was. Also, it was not possible

To distinguish between enemies and friends because the appearance would be often deceiving. He further said, restoring weapons to a man who has gone mad is not a justice even though weapons are due to him.

Another flaw of this theory was, it treated justice as an individualistic rather than social concept. Justice cannot differ from person to person and it must have universal application. This theory was not tolerable to Plato because it's handmaid of those in power and gives sufficient scope of misuse.

Socrates: Justice means doing well to all and harm to none.

(ii) Radicalist theory - Thrasymachus

Thrasymachus: Interest of stronger (OR)
Might is Right

If given the opportunity, according

Date: 18 Jan/2022

to Thrasymachus, rulers/strangers will serve in their own interest at the expense of others. For him, Justice consist consists of doing good to oneself but doing injustice to everyone else. Further, Unconventional (immoralism) and successful selfishness is true achievement of life. Thus he claimed that injustice is better than justice and unjust man is wiser than just.

Socrates:

(M. Judd Harmon in his book Political thought from Plato to present mentioned protest by Socrates as following:

↳ The individual serves himself best not by imagining that he has interests apart from those of whole community and that he must help himself only at the cost of others, but by adopting the view that "the self is a part of whole and is affected by what happens to the whole."

↳ The just ruler doesnot pursue individual self-interest but the interest of all, knowing that

his own welfare is inextricable from that of his people. *

→ The government is an art and it must aim at the perfection of the material viz., subjects rather than its own faultlessness.

→ Justice is always better than injustice because a just man is wiser, durable and better off than an unjust man and knows his limitations. He tries to work within limits and does his appointed purposes.

→ There cannot be dual standards for justice one for the ruler/stronger and other for the subjects/weaker.

② Pragmatic theory ~ Glaucon

Glaucon: Justice is the child of fear

Thrasymachus is wrong, said Glaucon, not in his estimates of the force of self interest

Date: 18 Jan

but in his conclusion as to how men react to this force. Men would certainly prefer to exploit others for their own advantage, but they fear the consequences of doing so. An ideal situation would be one in which a person could do injustice without experiencing it. But under such circumstances life would be too precarious, since we would always be apprehensive about the harm others might be planning for us. Justice, then, results from fear. To inflict injustice is best but bad to suffer. He stated that, justice is an artificial thing, a product or convention of social agreement. Men enact laws and agree to obey them because while they are selfish, they are prudent also. Therefore, justice is not the interest of stronges but it is the necessity of weak. Centuries later Thomas Hobbes was to incorporate these views into his great treatise, Leviathan.

Socrates:

Socrates condemned this theory because that it considered that justice is

Date: 18 Jan

something external or an imposition, apart from human's soul. He said that justice is rooted in human mind. Justice is an integral part of human soul. Thus to define and analyze it requires, in a sense, a dissection of the soul of man. This is a difficult problem, but Socrates has the solution. He gains ready assent to his proposition that the state is the individual "writ large". An analysis of the nature of the state will also be an analysis of human nature.

⑤ Concept of Justice by Plato

What is justice if it is not speaking truth, paying debts, rendering to each man his dues, the interest of strangers, or an agreement to obey law?

Plato cannot accept such explanations. He needs a platform to define his own concept of justice, Socrates provided it. Socrates said find justice within yourself.

and then apply it on the world. Thus, Plato arrives at the point of his real task. The construction of a just state and so the discovery of principles of justice in the individual. Plato held that an individual presented almost the same features and qualities on a smaller scale as society on a bigger scale.

(i) Individual Justice ~ Tripartite Soul

Three basic forces, Plato contends, motivate men. They are the forces of desire or appetite, spirit or courage, and reason or rational. Each is present in every man in varying amounts, but one is always predominant.

a) **Rational Part** seeks after truth and is responsible for philosophical inclinations. It enables an individual's abstract and moral reasoning.

b) **Spirited Part** desires glory and honour. It is also responsible for feelings of anger and indignation.

c) Appetitive part is responsible for primary and base desires such as desire for acquisition of material goods, food and sexual desires.

Justice for the individual results from temperance. If each person is dominated by one of the three basic impulses justice will be served if he lives a life in which his primary impulse is made to serve the community and the lesser impulses are strictly curbed since permitting them free play would disrupt the state.

Political Justice

Society may be divided into three classes according to the relative amount of each force present in the individuals who comprise the community. Any one class will play the role for which it is best qualified by virtue of its dominant motivating force.

a) Guardians or rulers who ought to be dominated by and representative of reason and rational part.

Date: 18 Jan

There will be few endowed with reason and motivated by their willingness to serve as rulers.

M. Judd Harmon in 'Political Thought from Plato to Present' mentions that Rulers will not only have greatest capacity to think philosophically and to search diligently for true principles, but they will also realize that their welfare is inextricably bound up with the welfare of the whole.

M. Judd Harmon in 'Political Thought from Plato to Present' mentioned that these qualities when placed in the ideal environment of the Republic, will flourish and permit a kind of rulership never before seen, a rulership absolutely devoted to community interest and completely lacking in the desire of a ruling class to serve its own interest at the expense of the citizenry.

b) Auxiliaries or warrior class who defend the country are dominated by and representative of the spirited part.

Fewer will be motivated by spirit or courage than those will be impelled by desire, but they were still more numerous than those dominated by reason.

c) **Producers** or artisan class who are dominated by the appetitive instincts constitute the lowest rung of the social ladder.

It constitute the largest class, whose function is to supply the community with the material necessities of life. Each person works at what he does best - cobbler, trader, farmer, tailor etc - and through association, not only satisfies his own needs but also the needs of others for that service.

Justice in the state results from a harmonious balance achieved when each person performs only the role for which he is qualified. The composition

Date: 19 Jan / 2022

of good state reflects the harmonious soul of the individual.

Plato built his state on the analogy of an individual organism. He believed that the virtues of an individual and of the state were identical. He held that an individual presented almost the same features and qualities on a smaller scale as society on a bigger scale. The elements of reason, spirit and appetite were common to both and hence the state was a magnified individual or an individual was a state in miniature.

His analogy is shown in the chart:

No.	Parts of an ind. organism	What it symbolises	counter-symbol in the state.
1.	Belly	Appetite/Desire	Labourers, traders artisan class
2.	Heart	Courage/Spirit	Soldiers and Military officers
3.	Brain	Reason/Knowledge	Philosophers, thinkers and rulers.

"Social justice may be defined as the principle of society consisting of different types of men (producing type, military type, ruling type), who have combined with each other to perform their own duties."

(Barker: Greek political Theory)

Justice ~ Principle of Specialization

Specialization

It demands from every social class to specialize in the station of life allotted to it by both lottery and training.

To Plato "Justice is the product of class division and specialization of function."

(M. Judd Hasmon: Political Thought from Plato to present).

Plato defines justice as "giving to everyman his due". And his due is to be assigned the particular task which he is best qualified by aptitude and

training to perform. The principle of specialization must be applied so as to prevent artisans from acting in any other field of the state activity and to guarantee that the upper classes are not compelled to perform tasks which are the proper function of the artisans, also military guardianship must perform their specific function. Justice can be done if each group performs their duty without interfering in each others.

"Justice is a bond which holds a society together, pleasant union of individuals, each of whom has found his life work in accordance with his natural fitness and training, it is both public and private virtue."

(G.H. Sabine: A history of political theory).

Characteristics of Plato's Theory of Justice

Date: _____

1. Functional Specialization:

Division of ^{society} labour - giving a definite function to each ^{group} one according to his capacity and merit.

"The having and doing of one's own and what belongs to oneself."
(Republic).

2. Non-interference:

Different groups should concentrate on their own duties without interfering to others' work. All the classes must recognize their limitations.

"Will to concentrate on one's own sphere of duty and not to meddle with the spheres of others."

3. Mutual Co-operation and harmony:

It implies harmony between the three classes representing wisdom, courage and temperance respectively.

"Justice is the harmonious balancing and the operation of life among the three classes in the state."

4- Against individualism:

Platonic conception of justice goes against individualism because men must think not as an individual or isolated unit, but as a part of organic and harmonious whole.

5- Non-conventional:

To Plato justice is not conventional but it can ~~be~~ only be achieved when external conditions are properly ordered. True justice connotes the idea of service and that "in turn connotes the idea of a social whole to which the service is rendered."

6- Not legal but universal justice

It has no legal or juristic connotation. It is not concerned with the rights of an individual against the state. Instead his justice refers to the whole duty of man, legal as ~~and~~ well as universal.