

Q) Discuss in detail Plato's concept of justice (2)

Brief Overview of Plato's Background

Plato (427 BC - 347 BC) was born in Athens, Greece to a aristocratic family. His original name was 'Aristocles', however due to his sturdy body he came to be known as Plato. There are two incidents that played a vital role in shaping his political views: his acquaintance with Socrates, particularly how the latter was executed, and the war between Sparta and Greece. Among his many contributions to political science, the prominent are Republic, and the establishment of a school called 'Academy' that schooled many great thinkers such as Aristotle.

Justice, a cardinal pillar of Plato's Ideal State

In order to better understand Plato's concept of justice, it is essential to understand Plato's ideal state. Justice was the fundamental aspect of Plato's ideal state. Emphasising ~~of~~ the significance of

Justice, Plato said:

"Justice in the life and conduct of the state is possible only if first resides in the hearts and souls of the citizens"

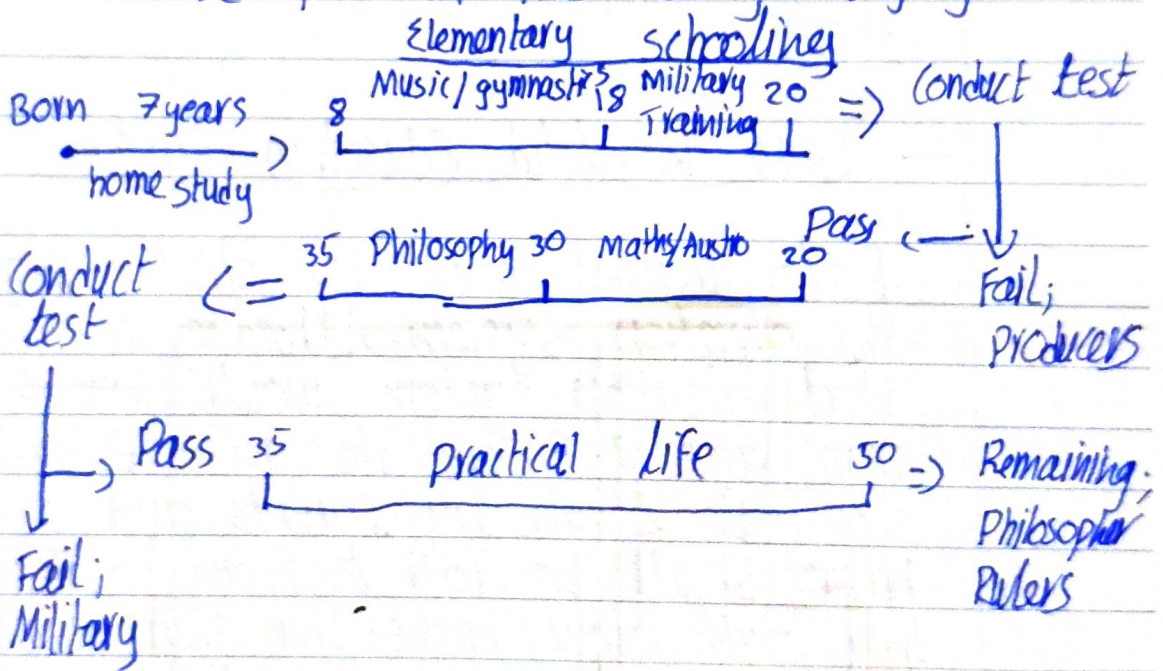
→ Division of class

In his ideal state, Plato divided the people into three categories: Businessmen (belly of the state), Military (heart of the state), Philosopher King / Rulers (brain of the state).

— State Regulated Education System

Plato wanted state to strictly regulate the education system. According to him, the ideal education system would ~~taught~~ begin from age 8. Before the age of eight, children should be taught by parents and stories of bravery should be told to them so ~~they~~ that they could grow brave. Then their elementary schooling would begin from the age of eight till twenty. For the first ten years they should be taught gymnastics and Music. When they reach age of eighteen they

should be given military training for two years. There shall be a test to weed out the production class. Those who pass shall start their secondary education which will be for fifteen years. For the first ten years they should be taught maths and astronomy, and for the next five years they should be taught Philosophy. Then conduct a test those who pass shall proceed practical life towards becoming philosopher kings and those who fail shall be put in the military category.



Plato was too prudent to not consider that the people placed into production and military might grow resentful and pick

up arms. In order to pacify them and make them content, Plato resorted to Religion. Will Durant in his Book 'Story of Philosophy', states that Plato suggested we tell the resentful the following:

"Citizens you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of you have the power of command; and these he has made of gold, wherefore they have the greatest honor; others of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again, who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen."

→ Plato's Communism

Plato allocated the most responsibility to Philosopher Rulers and Soldiers. He greatly feared that if these classes were to grow corrupt, it would severely impact the state. That is why he devised communism of wives and property for these classes. They were not allowed to keep monogamous partners, nor keep any private properties. The state had to regulate breeding in such a way that it would produce the best offsprings. Moreover, these two classes were meant to live in barracks in order to

suppress any urges for private property.

Other theories of justice at the time

→ Theory of Traditionalism by Cephalus

Cephalus argued that every person should be given his/her right. Whatever they own should be given to them irrespective of any circumstances. Plato rejected this theory on the grounds that giving a mad man his gun would cause mayhem.

→ Theory of Radicalism by Thrasymachus

According to Thrasymachus, ~~the~~ justice is the interest of the strong. The stronger man will always protect his interest even if it is at the cost of the weaker's interest. He says that the strong should inflict injustice to the weak and do what suits him. He was of the view that injustice is better than justice.

→ Theory of Pragmatism by Glaucon

Glaucon's theory of pragmatism holds that man is doom to suffer injustice. He has always been suffering and will continue to do so. If man does not inflict injustice, it is only because he fears punishment or bad reputation. He further says it is better to inflict injustice than to suffer it.

Plato's concept of Justice

→ No encroachment between classes

In his ideal state, Plato holds that justice is ~~no encroaching~~ any class not encroaching in other's matters. He argued that each individual has been carefully put in their respective class, and should they interfere with the matters of other class, a breach of justice would incur.

→ Functional Specialization

Plato was of the view that the three classes should live in harmonious balance. Though they should not meddle in the ~~per~~ domains of one another, they should be cooperative and make an environment conducive for all three classes to live in and focus on their respective tasks.

→ Justice should not be confined to legal justice

Plato argued that justice is not limited to ~~justi~~ legal justice but extends over to other spheres of life. It is man's duty to provide justice whether it is legal or of any other sort.

→ Self - Renunciation

Unlike theories of pragmatism, radicalism and traditionalism, Plato ~~at~~ was of the view that justice

was not an external phenomenon but a internal one. He argues that justice should be in the soul of a person, and he should suppress or shun desires to inflict injustice.

→ Justice as a whole

Plato argued that individuals should not chase after their selfish interests, rather interest of the whole state should be considered. The state, in Plato's view, was one whole above individuals.

Conclusion

In a Nutshell, Plato is one of the greatest philosophers to step on the face of the earth. His contributions to political science are second to none. His concept of justice, although courted much criticism, was well suited for that epoch and served as a model for many future philosophers.