

Political Science

(Q#1)

Critically evaluate
Plato's Ideal State.

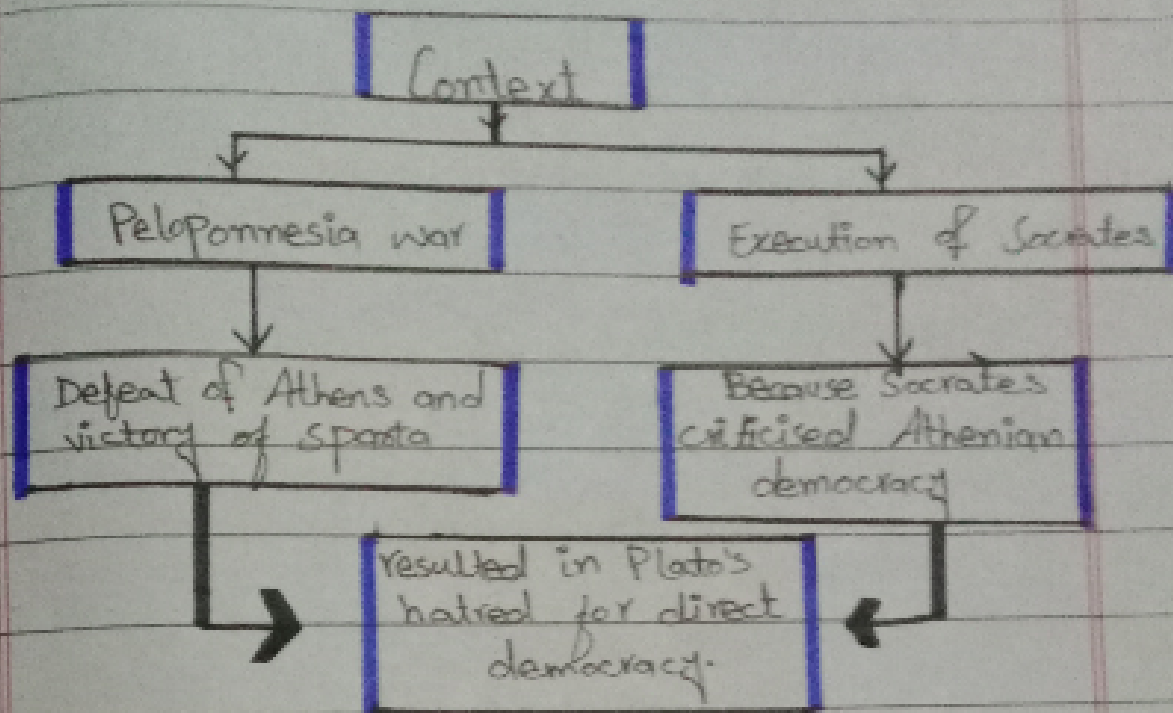
Introduction:

In his "Republic" Plato portrays ideal state. He considered ideal state as the panacea for crisis. He saw in city-state the ideal state is to be ruled by philosopher king. He outlined ideal state in his work "The Republic" which is a theoretical construct where justice, wisdom and harmony prevail. The key features of his ideal state are: philosopher king, division of labor.

communism of wives and property, meritocracy, class structure, censorship of art and literature and system of education. Although he wanted to give the best state, Plato's ideal state serve as a utopian model aimed at achieving justice, harmony and highest ideals of human existence through education, governance, and social organization. His model of ideal state also faced criticism from notable philosophers particularly from his student Aristotle. Plato's ideal state was the best; however, unpracticable in a state.

Context: Why he gave his theory of Ideal Ideal state

Plato gave his concept of ideal state because of peloponnesia war and execution of Socrates, his teacher.



Plato was born at a time when Athen was defeated at the hands of Sparta and their defeat means incompetence of democratic rule. Secondly, execution of Socrates made Plato believe that the system which cannot tolerate people who differ with it cannot be a good system. The regime of democrats brought Socrates to trial on charge of impiety and corrupting the youth. The execution of Socrates brought

a complete disenchantment for Plato with politics. As Judd Hasmon said in his book, *Plato Political thought: from Plato to the Present*,

"It was turning point in Plato's life, turning him from politics to philosophy."

(Judd Hasmon)

Salient Features of Plato's Ideal State

(i) Rule of Philosophy

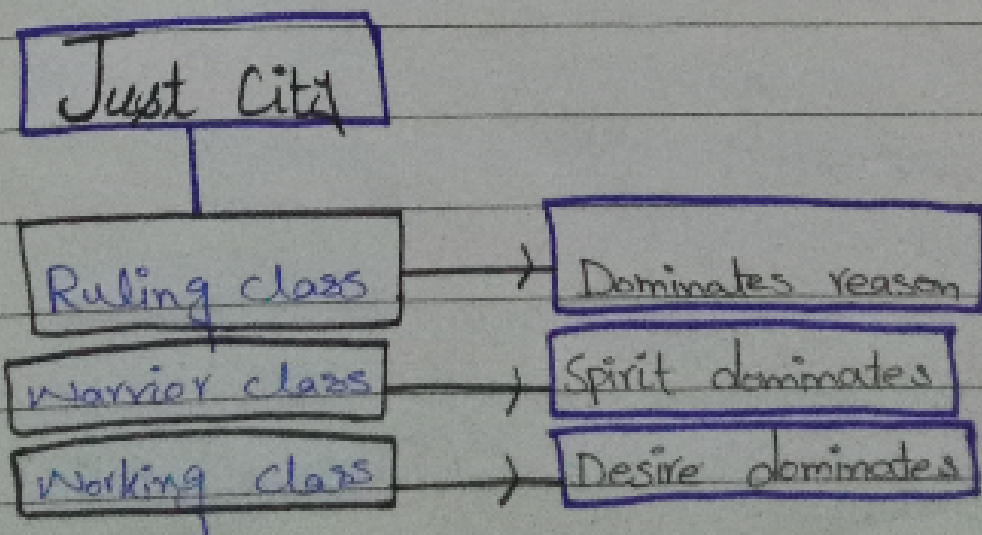
One of the most important feature of Plato's ideal state is only intellectual person should rule. Philosopher king to Plato was a true statesman who represented virtue in his actions. The ruler, said Plato, should be fully

educated and the one who has come to understand the difference between appearance and reality.

(ii) Specialization of Function among three classes

Specialization is another important feature of Plato's ideal state.

According to Plato, state first finds its building force in human needs. The result is an inevitable division of labor or specialization of function. Plato's theory of specialization is one man one work. He said all three classes i.e. philosopher ruler, soldier and producer should perform their own functions.



"Justice will be when everyone minds his own business in the city and in the individual."

(Plato)

(iii) Plato gave absolute power to philosopher ruler

As demanded by specialisation and non-interference, Plato gives absolute power to philosopher ruler.

He said that philosopher rulers are above the law and are not subject to criticism because they represent absolute wisdom.

There will be no end to the troubles of states, or of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in the world.

(Plato Republic)

(iv) Equality between men and women in ideal state

Plato's ideal state is a perfect equality between man and woman. Unlike his great student Aristotle, he says both men and women should have equal facilities particularly educational facilities by the state. If woman has reason and is intellectual, she should become a philosopher ruler.

(v) System of Communism in Ideal State

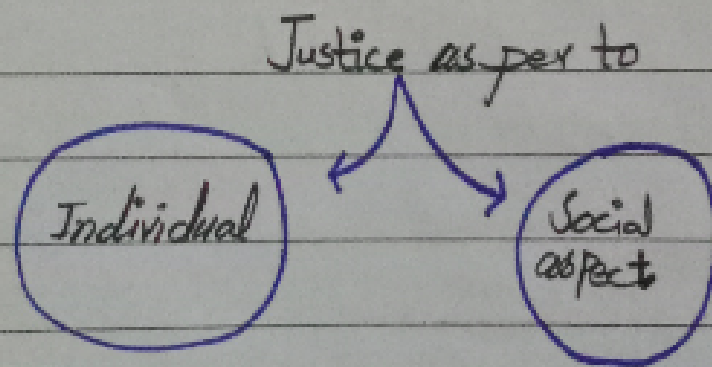
Plato advocates a new social order for his ideal state. This social order is communism of wives and property among upper two classes; philosopher ruler and soldiers. Communism was meant to keep two classes out of economic and worldly temptations and ambitions. So that they could devote themselves to administrative affairs of the state.

(vi) Justice in Ideal State

According to Plato,

"Justice is giving every man his due."

Plato builds his ideal state on the concept of justice. To Plato, justice should be given an opportunity to every man to work according to his/her ability. He says that justice binds society together in harmonious way.



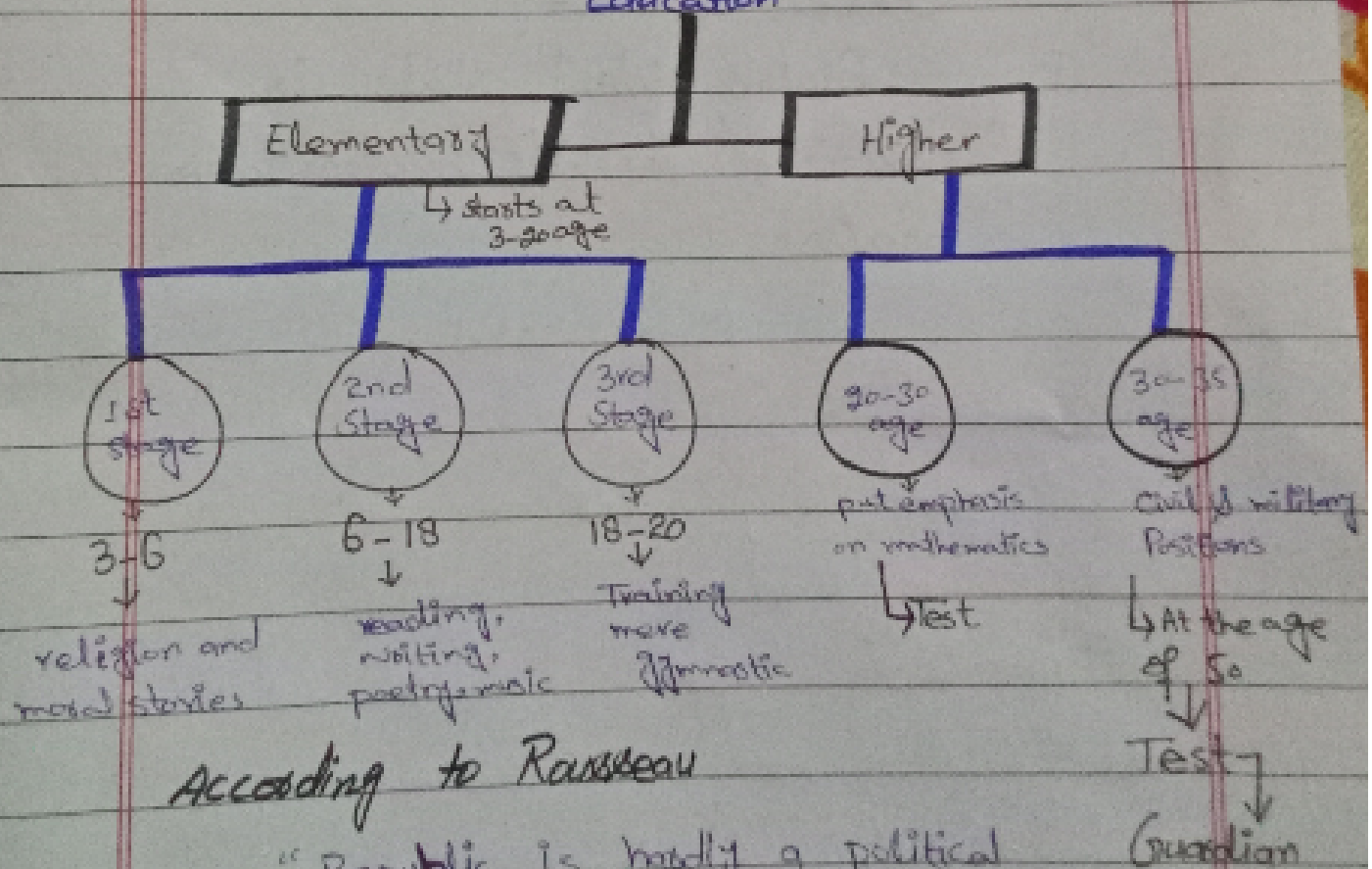
(vii) Aristocracy in Ideal State

He says that ruling class must consist of few able and intellectual persons. The ruling power must not be given to an ordinary man.

(viii) System of Education

Plato advises a state regulated education system. It is a system which differentiates capable from incapable and ensures the constant supply of Guardian to state. His scheme of education is meant to help every individual to discover his true vocation of life.

Platonic scheme of Education



According to Rousseau

"Republic is hardly a political word at all, but it is finest treaty on education that ever was written."

(ix) Censorship of art and literature

In constructing his ideal state, Plato suggests that some poetry of art and literature should not be taught to philosopher ruler and soldiers because it would make them coward. He wants to scrutinize the art and literature

Criticism:

(i) Plato's ideal state is criticized for its Authoritarian nature

Plato's state is authoritarian in nature where a philosopher king rules over the masses without any checks and balances.

John Locke criticised Plato's philosopher king ruling over state. He believes in the importance of consent of governed and popular sovereignty. He asserts that power should be derived from people

rather than from intellectual elite.

(ii) Lack of individual Freedom

Plato's emphasis on the primacy of state over individual has been critical for negotiating neglecting individual rights and freedom. Critics argue that lack of personal autonomy in Plato's state restrict individual flourishing and self-expression.

(iii) Utopian scheme and disconnected from realities of human nature

Plato's ideal state is a Utopian scheme and disconnected from realities of human nature. The rigid class structure and absent of dissent overlooks the complexities and diversity inherent in human societies.