

Q. Discuss in detail the Plato's concept of justice.

Introduction:

The Plato's theory of justice is a collective system that reflects wisdom and virtue. His theory was a phenomenal work striking down the conventional definitions of justice. The Sophists of that time altered the entire notion of justice very differently. Thus, Plato criticising the same, presented a ideal system or state where a pure concept of justice exist through a ruler that is utmost wisdom centric and intellectual. He also suggested societal harmony over individual rights and liberties.

Philosophical context of his theory

1) Peloponnesian war rendered Athenian democracy in shambles

In the war of peloponnesian, Athens got a major blow which rendered it to be under tyranny for almost 30 years. This span was loved by Plato and thus this revolutionary system was presented by him.

2) Influence of socratic discipleship

Plato was a good student of socrates and socrates was perceived as major critique of democracy. Thus, Plato followed the same and the assassination of his teacher further catalysed his endeavour.

3) Reaction to sophists

In time of fall of democracy of Athens, the notion of justice was perceived as 'benefit of powerful'. Thus, Plato strikes down these pre-conceived notions and he introduced a nuanced justice system.

Plato's definition of theory

Plato defines justice as:

"Giving every person his due"

In his famous work 'The Republic' he defines justice as 'one job one person'.

He further elaborated justice not merely individual rights and liberties but he emphasized justice as a system creating a nuanced society with harmony and collectivism.

Justice In State

1) Tripartite structure of state

a) Wisdom-centric (Philosopher King)

It was the utmost moral-centric category that was categorized by him as ruler of state.

Altruism was valued by Plato rather than self-centrism.

2) Courageous ones - Spirits - centric

This category was bifurcated by him and they are full of sports and they must join military services of the state.

3) Artisans (self - centric)

Artisans were individuals that ponder on individual justice and greater subjective peace over collective equity and justice. These include businessmen, etc.

According to Plato, these all must be filtered out and educated as per their proficiencies. Thus, collectively, upon giving their complete share, a harmonical justice system can be established.

How humans can be gauged?

1) Tripartite nature of human instincts.

a) Reason-driven

b) Spirits - driven

c) Appetite - driven

According to Plato, reason driven are the ones who must rule. Spirits-driven are military persons and appetite-driven are ones who lack the patience and control over their desires thus they must be ruled by a prudent ruler.

2) Justice as Inner harmony

At part from state, he pondered on individualism. He believed that ones who can overpower desires and their ambitions can rule the state in the best manner.

It was the reason why he criticised democracy - he found it a system driven by emotion rather than rationale.

Role of education in achieving justice

1) Purposive education : filtering individuals as per instincts.

He believed that education is a bedrock of any political system. He further emphasised that education creates self lessness in thinker, that provide an impetus to think about social harmony and justice.

2) Stages of education

He defined in his 'The republic' that elementary education must educate one with music and poetry. Apart from it, he introduced that mathematics must be taught that will inculcate analytical abilities in one.

3) Philosopher Kings : The torch-bearers of justice

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He introduced a strict pattern of examination that can filter out the philosopher kings. Philosopher kings were ones who steer the polity of state.

Communism of family and property

Plato checked out a restriction for philosopher kings that are barred from marry or keeping wives with them. Moreover, he barred them from buying properties. It was criticized further by some modern thinkers and idealists.

Criticisms of his theory

1) Elitism

The notion of philosopher king was heavily criticized as it segregated individuals as per their capabilities, creating social inequality.

2) Authoritarianism

As philosopher-kings will come a system that might be always prone to transform into autocracy or tyranny.

3) Utopian nature

The modern day thinkers and idealist presented his theory as baseless and utterly utopian as it lacks the rationale to be implied practically.

Influence of his theory

- Aristotle was influenced from his critique of democracy.
- John Rawls' system of justice was influenced by Plato.
- Popper was also influenced.

Conclusion

The theory of Plato presents a ideal state that can be created upon following his theory of justice. Besides criticisms, he created a exemplary difference in the world of metaphysics and epistemology.