

Critically examine the concept The "Justice" by plato.

## Outline

- ★ Background History
- ★ Introduction
- ★ Plato's definition of justice
- ★ Plato's theory of justice
- ★ Criticism on plato's theory of justice
- ★ Conclusion

### 1- Background History

Plato in his philosophy gives very important place to the idea of justice. He used the Greek word "Dike/syne" for justice which comes very near to the word 'morality' or 'righteousness' it properly includes within it the whole duty of man. It also covers the whole field of the individuals conduct in so far as it effects others. Plato contended that justice is the quality of soul, in virtue of the which men set aside the irrational desire to taste every pleasure and to get a selfish satisfaction out of every object.

According to plato justice do not consist in mere adherence to the laws, for it is based on the inner nature of human spirit, it is also to the triumph of the stronger over the weaker, for it protects the weaker against the stronger. A just state, plato argues, is achieved with an eye to the good of the whole. In a just state or society, the rulers, military and the producers all do what they ought to do. In such a society the rulers are wise, the soldiers are brave and the

Producers exercise self-control or temperance. For Plato justice is a moral concept. As Prof. Ernest Barker has rightly pointed out;

"Justice for Plato is at once a part of human virtue and the bond which joins men together in the states"

Similar view has been expressed by Prof. Sabine when he wrote that for Plato,

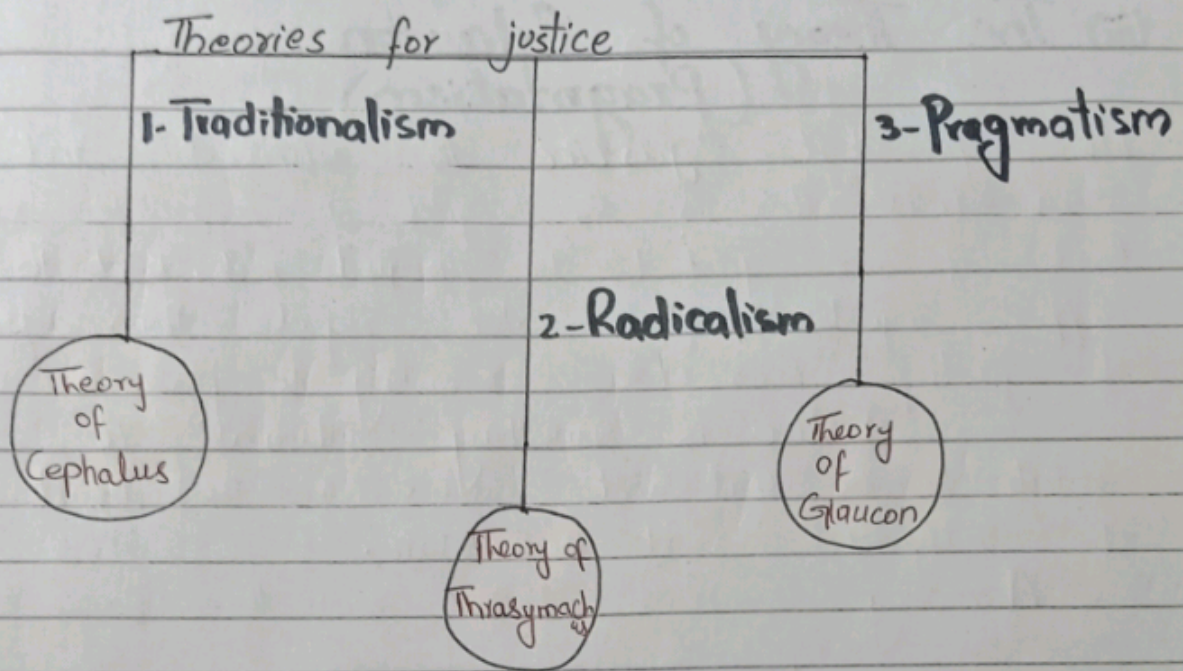
"Justice is a bond which holds the society together."

## 2 - Introduction Plato Theory of Justice

The sub-title The "Republic" shows the extraordinary importance which Plato attached to justice. Plato wanted to bring to an end the prevailing degenerate conditions and political selfishness rampant in Athens, in order to save his beloved Athens from decay and ruin. He saw in justice the only panacea of saving Athens from degradation and decay and propounded his theory of justice.

## 3 - Plato Definition of Justice

The fundamental issue raised by Plato in his book "The Republic" in the definition of justice by some early Sophists, which Plato narrated in his Republic.



## (i) The Theory of Cephalus (Traditionalism)

Polemarchus supports this cephalus definition of justice by saying that:  
 "Justice means helping one's friends and harming one's enemies"

Plato rejects their definitions. Similarly it is difficult to distinguish one's true friends from enemies because appearance are often deceptive and it is immoral and injustice to harm someone without proper inquiry.

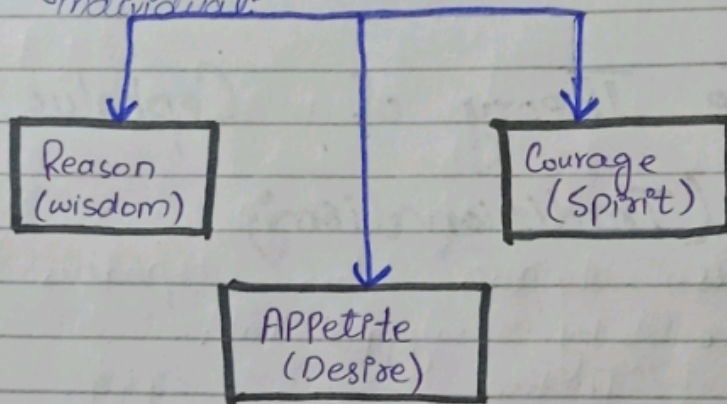
## (ii) The Theory of Thrasymachus (Radicalism)

Thrasymachus regards justice "as the interests or the sovereign" plato rejects the basis that it leads to "Might is Right" which can be applied only in the forest and not in a human society.

### (iii) The Theory of Glaucon (Pragmatism)

He says that "justice is artificial and conventional" it is the gild of fear. He says that it is good to be unjust but bad to suffer injustice. Plato also rejects then definition of justice because according to Plato "Justice is something internal" It relate to the soul and resides in the heart of individual and the state.

According to Plato, there are three faculties in an individual:



The proper (inter-relation) inter-relationship of these faculties in the individual is justice. Justice further demands that two faculties of courage and appetite must be under the direction and guidance of the faculty of reason.

### 4- Plato's Theory of Justice

Plato's ideal empire is based upon justice, according to him;

"Justice is fundamental right of every man. Ideas of any man cannot be correct until it does not contain the fundamental elements of friendly, truth and justice."

Justice is important aspect for all human beings. People of any country cannot enjoy a healthy and wealthy life without the mutual cooperation and having right of justice.

#### 4.1 - Justice of the state

According to Plato, the justice of the state is the citizen's sense of duty. This conception of justice goes against individualism because a man must not think of himself as an isolated unit with personal desire.

Plato's justice does not embody a conception of rights but of duties through it is identical with true liberty. It is the true condition of the individual and of the state and the ideal state is the embodiment of justice. The state is the reality of which justice is the idea.

According to Prof Sabine:

"Plato visualized society as a system of services in which each member both gives and receives."

What the state takes cognizance of is this mutual exchange and what it tries to arrange in the most adequate satisfaction of needs and the most harmonious interchange of services.

Plato's justice leads to functional specialization. From the point of society justice means self control on the various classes of society which make each class mind its own function and not interfere with the function of others. It also makes various members of each class stick to their own allotted

functions and responsibilities within the class and not interferes with the function of other individuals in the same class.

Platonic theory of justice divides the state into three separate classes and is not applicable to modern states with large population and numerous interests and sections of society. His division of society into separate classes would lead to a class state with class consciousness and privileges.

Further, concentration of political power in the hands of philosophers is likely to lead to "Totalitarianism"

## 4.2. Division of Population

Plato divided the population into three classes in which high class is of philosophers, second class is the people of having the military capabilities and the third ones are those who are professional or belong to the labour class. In these three classes are deprived of some privileges. For example; labourers have no right to interfere in military affairs and then soldiers have also no right to dream to become a king. As far as justice is concerned, it should be equally provided to all classes without determining any status.

## 4.3 State as a Body

Plato while explaining his theory declared that the state function as a body.

As all parts feel pain in any parts of his body the pain is felt in the whole body. If any organ of the state is in trouble then the whole state will be disturbed and cannot function properly. To remove the trouble of any organ of the state, all the resources of the state should be utilized, and for this purpose every organ of the state should be looked after, so that the whole body of the state may function quite rightly and may not suffer further.

Prof G.H Sabine written in his book namely, "A History of Political Theory"

"Justice is a bond which holds society together in harmonious union of individuals, each of whom has found his life work in accordance with his natural fitness and training"

#### 4.4 Attempt for justice yourself

It is the responsibility of each class of people to watch its fundamental rights, and if justice is not provided to them, they may unite themselves against institutions individuals and the rulers and approach to law authorities. Everybody should know that justice can only be achieved by the struggling hard and according to the proficiencies in their respective

fields of each class. If somebody feels any discrepancy in his profession then it is clear that he will be treated otherwise as a punishment of indisposition. According to the requirement of justice. Therefore, to spend a better life and to achieve fundamental rights it is necessary that every person should perform his duties with absolute honesty. If anybody has to suffer a loss due to non-completion of his duty then it is not beyond the requirement of justice.

## 4.5- Geographical Division

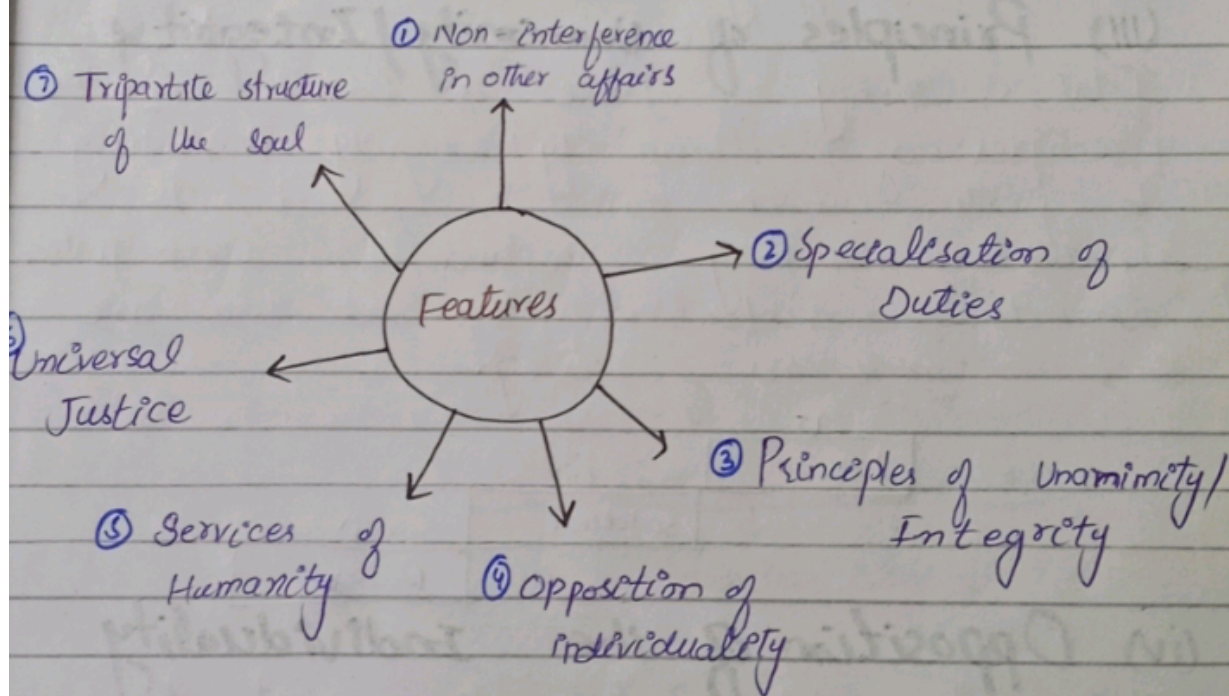
Besides this, geographical location of the country should also be kept in mind. If a country is a vast then it will be very difficult to provide the same kind of justice there, but also impossible. To meet with the requirement of justice geographical division of a vast country should be in such a condition, that for executive responsibilities the country may be divided into very small regions and in these regions such authorities should be appointed by philosopher king which within the specific limits do absolute cooperation to solve the problems of the people also protect their rights. In this way many problems will come into the notice of king who is also protect their rights. In this way, many problems will come into the notice of king.



who is sitting at a distance from the people of his state and awareness of which is necessary for him.

According to this theory probably different countries may be divided into very small regions and as thus many individuals matters may have been solved on regional level.

## Important Features of platonic theory of justice



### (i) Non-interference in other affairs

Theory of justice is dependent upon the spirit of non-interference. The view of the Plato was that every man/individual should do that job which is according to his natural inclination. The interference in other's affairs is not only against the requirement of justice but also cause of

chaos and irreparable loss. According to his view every person should do his own job with a great responsibility and honesty and should not interfere in the matters of other peoples.

## (ii) Specialisation of Duties

Plato's concept of the specialisation of duties is a fundamental aspect of his vision of a justice society in *The Republic*. It is based on justice and harmony in society are achieved when each individual performs the role for which they are naturally suited, without overlapping into the duties of others.

## (iii) Principles of Unanimity / Integrity

Plato's theory of justice is based on the principles of unanimity / integrity. According to Plato, which state is formed with suitable unanimity balance in which justice demands administrative unity and these are three communities of society.

(i)

Labour

(ii)

Soldier

(iii)

Ruler

## (iv) Opposition of the Individuality

Plato's theory of justice is against the individuality. According to this theory, the individual should not think about that he is alone but he should think about himself as a part of whole.

## (v) Services of Humanity

Plato does not consider justice as formal and external thing but he considers it as a quality of soul and speciality of mind.

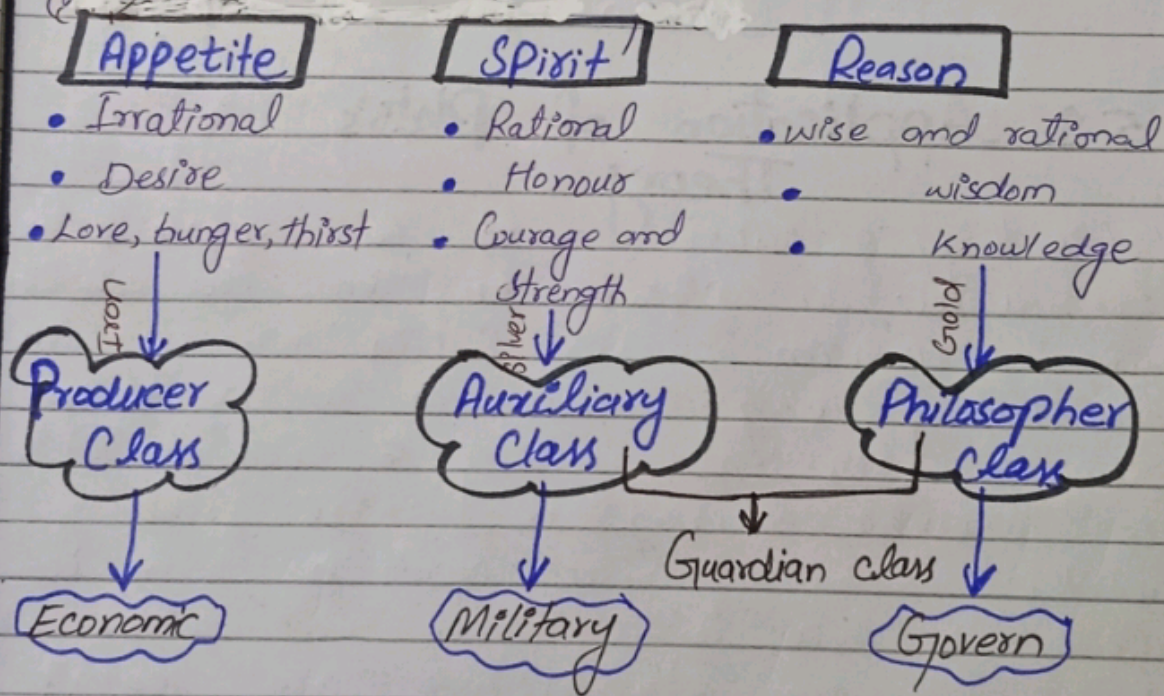
justice mean service to mankind and service to humanity indicates towards such social congregated individuals whose services have been performed.

### (vi) Universal Justice

Plato theory of justice is connected with the universal justice. His theory of justice relates to all the duties of an individual and not only for legal duties of an individual.

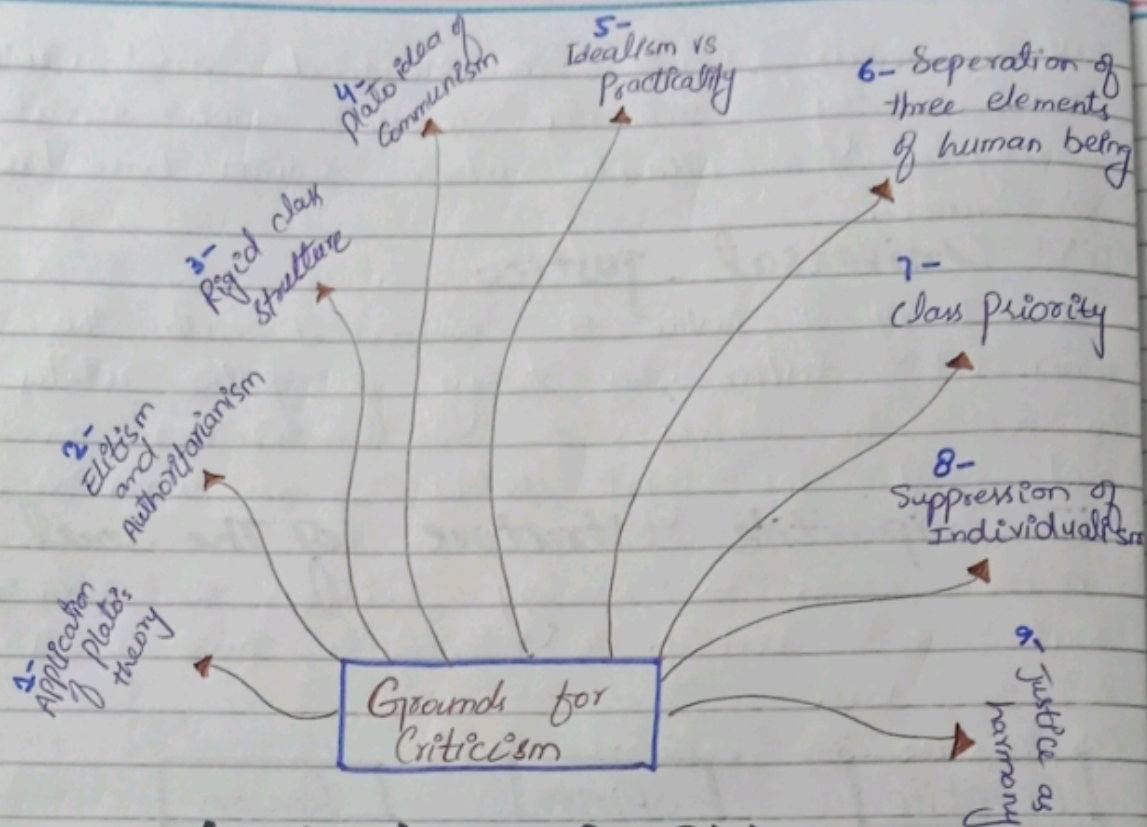
### (vii) Tripartite Structure of The Soul

Plato draws an analogy between the individual soul and society. He identifies three parts of the soul.



## 5- Criticism on plato Theory of Justice

Plato theory of justice is deeply tied to his tripartite model of the soul and his ideal state with three classes, while this theory has been influential, it has also attracted significant criticism



## 5.1. Application of Plato's Theory

Plato's theory of justice cannot be applied on modern states. In Plato's era, there were civilian states. The population of such states were very less than that of today's states as the population of today's states have reached to millions. This is quite impossible, according to medical point of view, that such a great population may be divided into three formal classes and groups and each group may be divided into separate and specific affairs.

## 5.2. Elitism and Authoritarianism

In view of his theory of justice, Plato specifies the right of government only to philosopher king. He thought it is important to establish monopoly of political power in the hands of one class of people, as this class of people will be

demoralised and in this way the state has to suffer a great loss. Critics argue that this creates an authoritarian regime rather than a just society.

### 5.3- Rigid class Structure

Plato's theory assumes that is rigid in structure. It conferred a person in his life time a specific job and for whole life hold himself liable for same job. This neglects individual freedom, mobility, and self-determination. Critics argue that this rigid social order does not account for the potential for personal growth, or the need for equality.

### 5.4- Plato idea of Communism

Plato due to his theory of justice put forward the theory of communism with relation of to wind and property, which is totally against the human psychology and altogether ignores the fulfilment of the natural desires of human soul.

### 5.5- Idealism vs Practicality

Plato's theory of justice is often seen as overly idealistic and removed from practical political realities. His philosopher-king is a near-impossible figure, requiring both intellectual wisdom and moral purity. Critics claim that such an ideal is not only unrealistic but ignores the complexities of human nature and real-world governance.

### 5.6- Separation of three Elements of Human Being

Plato's separates three elements of individual,

hunger, intelligence, and human nature spirit. Plato specifies that each individual should concentrate himself to the growth of only one element. Similarly if he is a soldier then he should prepare himself to strengthen this spirit, and if he is a farmer then he should fulfil this spirit with a great zeal. In this way Plato empowers the individual to completely grow and develop only one element. It intercepts for the building and development of other two elements. Similarly each class is deprived of from the growth of two elements and the act remains incomplete in the individual personality.

### 5.7- Class Priority

Justice usually meant that there should be discrimination between individuals whether by lineage or by class. But Plato considered class priority lawful and by giving the right of government to one class makes them prominent to the other class. Through, generally non-existence of class difference is considered justice.

### 5.8- Suppression of Individualism

Plato's vision of justice subordinates individual desires and freedoms to the needs of the collective. The ideal state sacrifices individual rights for the greater good, which has been criticized as a form of collectivism that erases personal autonomy. This tension between the individual and the collective is a major point of contention in political theory.

## 5.9- Justice as Harmony

Plato's concept of justice as a harmonious relationship between different parts of society can seem overly simplistic. Critics argue that justice should involve fairness, equality, and rights, not merely social roles functioning smoothly. Plato's model does not address issues of inequality or exploitation that may arise even within a seemingly harmonious society.

## 6. Conclusion

From the above discussion we can say that if we collectively understand the original meanings of the Plato's theory of justice of ancient Greek then many useful things came to an end.

“Through Platonic theory of politics in theory of his moral disciplines (and the same in his theory of justice and his theory of morality on the basis of which person of moral disciplines spend their lives. Plato has neither imagined legal states which is based on legal duties nor he has thought that legal duties rights and duties and to keep their relation intact in justice”.

Plato has given the justice, the name of such things by reason of which life is injured in the individual for the

completion of moral duties. The word which  
plato has used for justice is in meaning  
more near to morality or sacristy.

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