

Analyze Critically the Salient features of Plato's "The Republic"
Do you think some of its features are applicable today?

Introduction

Plato is a Greek philosopher (427-347 BCE). He is the disciple of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle. He is famous for his three major works named "The Republic", "The Statesman", and "The Laws". In "The Republic", he explained concept of justice in detail. He further provided explanation about education as well as communism theories of poverty and family. He divided society into three classes, introduced higher education and abolished right to family and property for upper two classes. Although, his work is unique, yet it is not applicable completely. There are some points which are relevant even today and some are not.

Plato's Concept of Justice

Plato's favourite literary device is dialogue form. All the above major works are in dialogue form.

Since he was disciple of Socrates and much influenced by him, after the death (execution) of Socrates, he became disillusioned with Athenian democracy.

He started believing that ignorance and mob rule lead to death of a just man. He travelled for 12 years for search of truth and justice.

In 387 BC, he returned and established academy in Athen. There he wrote

"The Republic" (380-370 BC). It is basically dialogue with setup in the house of an old man named

Cephalus who believed justice is telling the truth and paying debt.

Polymarchus, his son agrees and says justice is paying everyone's debt.

Socrates (Plato) demurs. He asked what does it means? It means that doing good with friends and bad with foes. Polymarchus accepted the

interpretation. Plato rejected this interpretation arguing this will worsen the enemy. Thrasymachus & Glaucon also provided the explanation of justice but Plato objected with everyone. At the end, when Plato was asked that if justice is not speaking truth, not paying debt, not mighty's interest then what is it? Then Plato said: Justice is paying everyone's debt but explanation was different from that of Polymarchus. According to Plato:

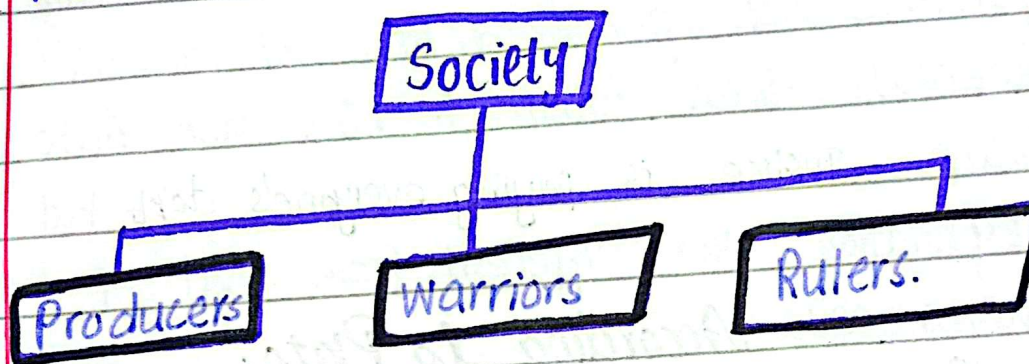
"Justice is something internal, related to soul, resides in the heart of individual & state."

Plato's Classification of Society

According to Plato, State is similar to individual which means state has a soul. The humans are driven by Three motivating forces which are:

- i) Hunger (Desire)
- ii) Courage (Bravery)
- iii) Wisdom (Reasoning)

These forces are present in every individual but not in similar or equal quantity. Plato says; one force must be dominated over other two. On the basis of the dominated factor, he classified the state into three classes:



He argued:

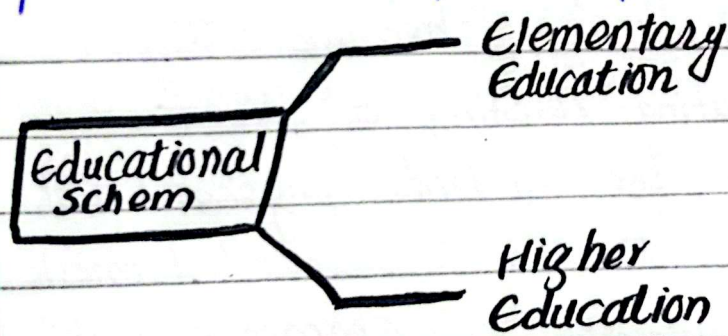
- Those individuals in which hunger is dominated are producer or Artisans.
- Those with courage as the dominating factor are warriors.
- The wisdom as dominating force leads to class of rulers.

Plato's Educational Scheme

In Greek, (Athene), the educational system was publically administered while Aspartan's educational system was state administered. Plato was

was partially influenced by their educational system. So Plato introduced amalgam of Athenian and Spartan's educational system. Before Plato, education was limited to elementary level; he introduced Higher education with state-administered system.

As he had divided the society into three classes, the way to determine the individuals' association to different classes was decided to be done by education. The educational system provided consists of two phases:

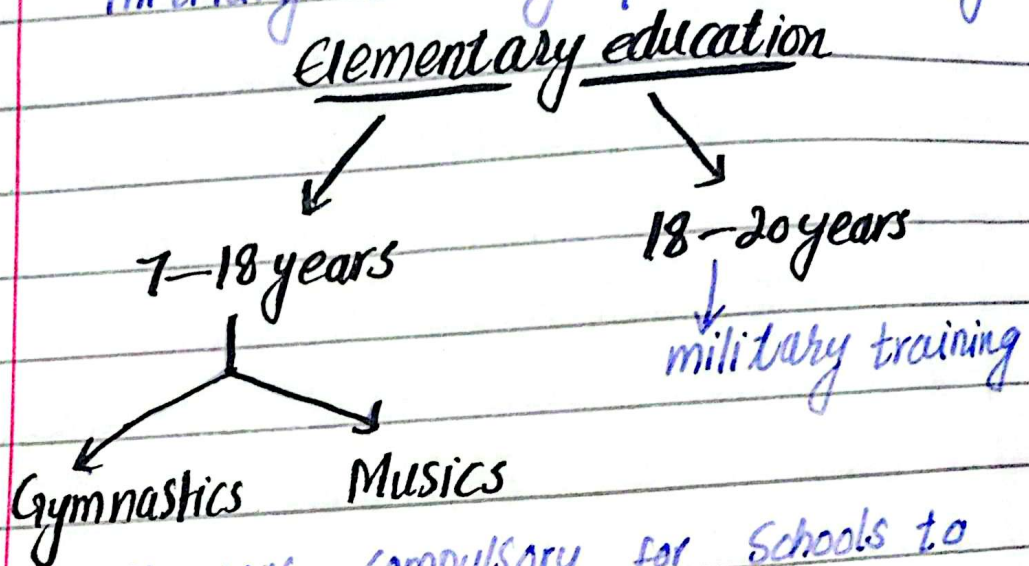


1) Elementary Education

Plato's has mainly focused on environment and atmosphere because he believed that positive atmosphere results in good and innovative ideas.

Since child birth, education began

poetry, story-telling and song of bravery were provided to children till 7 years. After 7 years, the individual became state's responsibility. Elementary education begins from 7 years to 20 years with military training from 18 to 20 years.



It was compulsory for schools to have gymnasiums because they help in creating resisting to diseases & important for student's physical health.

Then, Plato also recommended music for refinement of character and beauty of soul and body. Some science, math was also recommended but in quotes and songs forms because Plato believes:

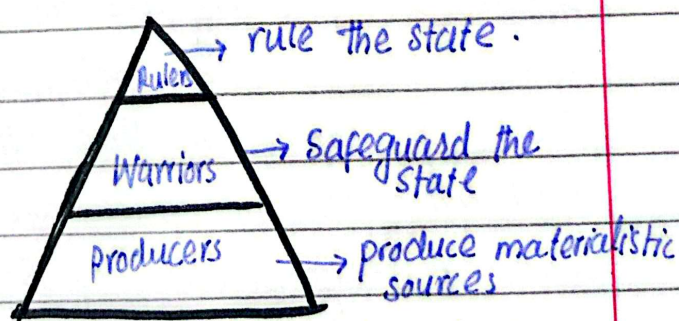
"Education provided under compulsion has no hold on mind."

After that two years military training is provided.

When twenty years Education is completed, an examination is held. Those who passed the exam, would enter into other phase of education and those who failed are considered artisans.

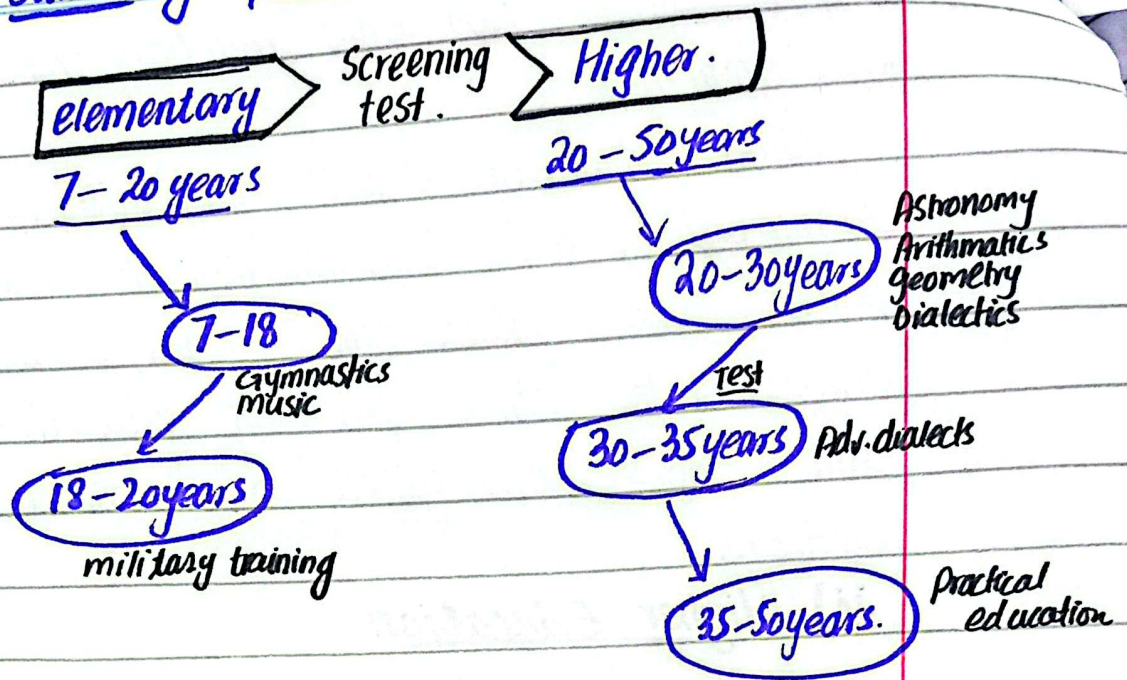
ii) Higher Education

This education consists of 20 to 50 years. Firstly, Astronomy, arithmetics, dialects and geometry are included. Then a test would held which will separate warriors from rulers. The passed students would study Advance dialects for five years. Then they would enter to practical Education along with philosophy. They are the rulers dominated by reasoning.



The rulers would have absolute power and not answerable to anybody.

Summary of educational scheme



Plato Theory of Communism

(i) Communism of family

Plato divided society into three classes. He also emphasized that warriors and rulers are not like producers. He abolished the right of family and marriage. He introduced the rule of common by Greeks, in which all friends have all things in common. He allowed polygamy for the sake of production. And these children would not have any parentage. They would be responsibility of State and would pass through the same educational

phases.

(iii) Communism of property

Plato considered both family and plato as diverting agents which may impact the attention of warriors and rules from state. so he also abolished right to property. Plato believes that if these rules are followed, an unprecedented ideal state would be established.

Criticism to Plato's "The Republic"

(i) Absolute of Power of ^{Ruler} King

Plato has provided absolute power to ruler. He said that after passing through 50 years of education, who succeeded would not be answerable to anybody. But in reality, absolute power led to absolute corruption. so it was not ideal.

(ii) Non-Interference of classes

plato suggested that functions of classes are pre-determined. No class would interfere in others work because it leads to chaos in society

thus concept limits the check and balance principle.

(iii) Lengthy and hectic Education

The education was un-necessarily lengthy and expensive. It was not possible to remain consistent for such a big duration for individuals.

(iv) The Philosopher King

The education was designed undemocratically. This education produces philosophers rather than man of action. As it only includes philosophy as major content rather than administrative subjects.

(iv) communism Theory against human nature

Human beings irrespective of belonging to any class have some basic needs and this communism theory is against them. As it negates the right to family and property, so it is opposite to human nature.

(vi) Focus on Women Empowerment

He was the first Greek philosopher

who maintained equality of men and women. He emphasized on education of women as well. According to him, women can also be rulers and warriors.

(vii) Too imaginative to adopted

His concept of ideal state was too imaginative to adopted. Even from Aristotle to Karl Popper, everybody criticised Plato.

Features of "The Republic" Applicable Today

(i) Concept of Educated Ruler.

When Socrate was executed, there was mob rule. After a long struggle, plato introduced concept of educated rulers. This concept is relevant even today. Democracy and literate head of state and government are mirrors of his philosophy.

(ii) Introduction of Higher Education

Plato was first one to talk about higher education. He established universities. According to him buying knowledge is heinous crime. It is applicable in present world as higher education has

an important step of education.
(iii) Emphasis on woman Education

Today, education of women has become very important, and Plato was also in favour of education of women. He considers them necessary part of society.

Conclusion

Plato's worked on division of society into three classes, focused on initiation of higher and state-administered education. He also given communism theory of property and family; but it was criticized from Aristotle to Karl Popper. There were many points to be criticised but the positive aspect was the work on education of women. Even, concepts of educated ruler, women empowerment, and higher education are still relevant in modern world.