

PLATO

Plato- the disciple of Socrates and the teacher of Aristotle adopted the method of dialogues and lectures to propound his philosophy. He was born in a noble Athenian Family. The execution of Socrates filled his heart with scorn for democracy and mob. He left his native state and spent most of the time paying visits to Greece, Egypt and Italy. He returned to Athens in 386 B.C. and set up an academy which is often described as the first university of the ancient world.

Works of Plato

The Republic – 386 B.C.;

The Statesman – 360 B.C.;

The Laws – 347 B.C.

The greatest influence on Plato was exercised by his teacher Socrates. He accepted three doctrines enunciated by Socrates viz.

- **Virtue is knowledge** – Good involves knowledge as in the ability to make, use and choose good things and actions. Without knowledge it is impossible to fulfill our desires and make us happy.
- **Theory of Reality** - Socrates's idea is that reality is unavailable to those who use their senses. Socrates says in the Republic that people who take the sun-lit world of the senses to be good and real are living pitifully in a den of evil and ignorance.
- **Theory of Knowledge** - The acquisition of knowledge is valuable for man because it makes him virtuous and happy. Knowledge is ethically and morally important for all men. Each man must develop his skill in critically appraising propositions through the reasoning process.

The Republic or Concerning Justice is the greatest work of Plato and represents his thought fully. Plato

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took Organic view of the state and found no conflict between the ends of the state and those of the individual.

THE IDEAL STATE

Plato's educational ideas derived in part from his conception of justice, both for individuals and for the ideal state. He viewed individuals as mutually dependent for their survival and well-being, and he proposed that **justice in the ideal state was congruent with justice in the individual's soul.**

In the Republic, Plato constructs the ideal state in **3 successive stages**: The **healthy state** or what Glaucon termed as '**the city of pigs**', is more or less a social grouping where men get together, on the principles of 'division of labour', and of 'specialisation', to meet their material needs; the **luxurious state**, arising out of the men of a healthy state to quench their thirst of 'sofas and tables', also of 'saucer and sweets', and requiring, thus, a band of 'dogs keen to scent, swift of foot to pursue, and stray of limb to fight,' the auxiliaries; the just state, the ideal one, where among the 'dogs', the philosophers are able to judge by 'the rule of knowing; whom to bite,' that is, 'gentleness to friends and fierceness against enemies', are there to guide the rest. Thus, there is a clear hint of the classes, which constitute the ideal state - the producing class, the auxiliary class, and the ruling class. In the Republic, the state is led by the philosophers; in the Statesman, it is a mixed state ideally led by statesman, and in the Laws, it is actual state as it is. led by the laws. The **ideal state** of the Republic is the form of the historical (Politics) and actual (laws) states.

Plato's ideal state was a republic with three categories of citizens: **artisans, auxiliaries, and philosopher-kings**, each of whom possessed

distinct natures and capacities. Those proclivities, moreover, reflected a particular combination of elements within one's tripartite soul, composed of **appetite, spirit & reason**. Artisans, for example, were dominated by their appetites or desires, and therefore destined to produce material goods. Auxiliaries, a class of guardians, were ruled by spirit in their souls and possessed the courage necessary to protect the state from invasion.

Philosopher-kings, the leaders of the ideal state, had souls in which reason reigned over spirit and appetite, and as a result possessed the foresight and knowledge to rule wisely. In Plato's view, these rulers were not merely elite intellectuals, but moral leaders. In the just state, each class of citizen had a distinct duty to remain faithful to its determined nature and engage solely in its destined occupation. The proper management of one's soul would yield immediate happiness and well-being, and specific educational methods would cultivate this brand of spiritual and civic harmony.

CONCEPT OF JUSTICE

Barker says: "Justice is, for Plato, at once a part of human virtue and the bond which joins men together in the states. It makes man good and makes him social." Almost a similar view has been expressed by Sabine. He says: "Justice (for Plato) is a bond which holds a society together."

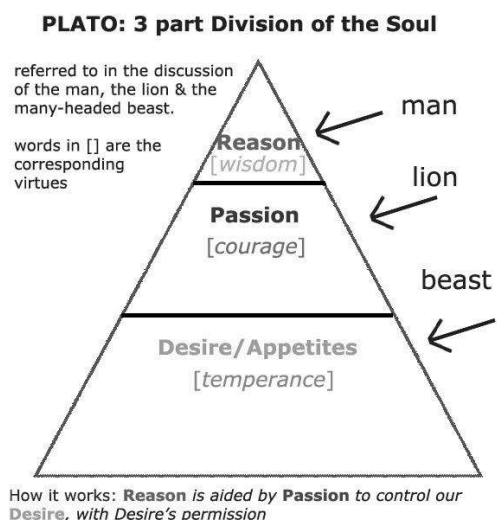
Justice gives the resemblance of what is used in the Greek language 'Dikaiosyne', a word which has a more comprehensive meaning than the word 'justice'. 'Dikaiosyne' means 'just' 'righteousness'. That is why Plato's notion of justice is not regarded legal or judicial, nor is it related to the realms of 'rights' and 'duties', it does not come within the limits of law; it is, as such, related to 'social ethics'.

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The essential characteristics of Plato's notion can be stated as these:-

- Justice is another name of righteousness
- It is more the performance of duties than the enjoyment of rights
- It is individual's contribution to the society in accordance with his abilities, capacities and capabilities
- It is a social morality; man's obligation
- It is the strength of the social fabric as it involves a web of social system

Before stating these views through Socrates, **Plato refuted the then prevailing theories of justice**. He denounced the father-son's (**Cephalus-Polemarchus**) theory of justice of traditional morality— justice giving every man his due, in other words, 'doing to others what is proper' (**Cephalus**) or 'doing good to friends and harming enemies' (**Polemarchus**). Plato recognised the worth of the traditional theory of justice which compels men to do what they are supposed to do or justice as phenomena creating unity. But he did not approve of justice being good for some and evil for others.



Justice is, Plato held, good for all—the giver as well as the receiver, for friends as well as foes.

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Plato also **rejected Thrasymachus' radical notion** of justice according to which justice is always in the interest of the stronger. He did agree with Thrasymachus that the ruler because he knows the art of ruling, has all the power but did not agree that the ruler rules in his own interest. **Plato argued through Socrates** that the shoe-maker does not wear all the shoes he makes; the farmer does not eat all the crops he prepares; accordingly the ruler does not make all the laws which benefit him. Plato agreed with Thrasymachus that justice is an art, and that one who knows the art is the artist, and none else.

And yet, there is another theory of justice advocated by two brothers - **Glaucon and Adeimantus**, Plato's own brothers. The theory is a conventional theory of justice and one which was

Justice in the city writ in larger letters than justice in the individual. **Plato means that political justice is easier to perceive than psychic justice, as large letters are easier to see than small.**

favourably agreed to by Plato's hero, Socrates. **Glaucon held the view that justice is in the interest of the weaker (as opposed to Thrasymachus' view that it is in the interest of the stranger)**, and that it

is artificial in so far as it is the product of customs and conventions. Glaucon says: "...men do not suffer

**Justice is Harmony.
Justice is Doing one's own job.**

injustice than they can inflict, make a contract one with another neither to do injustice, nor to suffer it

to be done; and in pursuance of the contract, they lay down a law, the provisions of which are henceforth the standard of action and the code of justice". Plato did see limitations in Glaucon's theory by describing justice as natural and universal as against Glaucon's notion of it as 'artificial' and 'product' of conventions and customs.

Plato is convinced of the inequality of man by nature. God has made each of us different from others both physically and mentally. Socrates explains that knowledge makes us aware of the good, so knowledge itself is the good. Therefore, it is concluded that knowledge is virtue and ignorance is an evil. Here a point to be noted is which **Plato considers that lack of knowledge of justice was the reason of unjust decision of Socrates' death penalty**. Keeping in view the importance of knowledge, he suggests **four virtues which are: temperance, courage, wisdom and justice**.

Plato insists that one should perform the duty which has been assigned to him. Only then we can attain harmony among us and this harmony leads towards justice.

Plato uses two analogies in order to make the above phrases easily understandable. First one is the division of the parts of soul and second one is division of parts of the state. Plato divides soul into three parts, reason, spirit and appetite.

Desire includes appetite, impulse and instinct; emotion covers spirit, ambition and courage; and finally, knowledge implies thought, intellect and reason.

Plato proceeds from the **microcosm to macrocosm**; from parts to the whole. Both mind and society are heterogeneous and neither of them

can be thrown in one direction in a concentrated form.

Like human mind, the state has three ingredients namely **Reason, Spirit and Appetite**, which are represented by the rulers, soldiers and farmers respectively. Human beings (like **gold, silver, and bronze**) possess different natures that fit each of them to a particular function within the operation of the society as a whole.

Plato thinks if appetitive part is given in the subordination of spirited part and spirited part in the subordination of reason, individual justice will be ensured. Similarly, if the class of peasants and laborers is given in the subordination of warriors and in turn the class of warriors is subordinated to the class of philosophers we shall have collective (or social) justice. Thus, in a perfect state, the artisans will produce the goods, but would not govern; the fighters defend and protect, but would not rule, the guardians or rulers, who are the bearers of knowledge, wisdom science and philosophy, would be fed as well as protected but will rule.

If there is no reason, desire can create chaos and emotion can create anarchy. If there are no philosopher kings, the artisans and fighters would bring about complete disarray. If unguided by knowledge, people are a multitude without order. People need the guidance of philosophers as desires and emotions need the enlightenment of knowledge.

Finally, **Plato believed that ruin comes when the trader becomes the ruler, when the general uses his army and establishes his military dictatorship.** So, in order to avoid this ruin, it is advised that the producer is at his best only in the economic field, the warrior in the battlefield and

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either of them in any public office would only spoil the art of politics.

A society reflecting the soul

Plato asserts that "there will be no difference between a just man and a just society" and in the same way that a society is just when each of the three types of human character performs its own function, the individual will be a just person, which is synonymous with fulfilling his function, only if the three parts of his soul or nature fulfill theirs. These three parts, the rational, the spirited element, and the appetite, correspond to the Ruler, the Guardian, and the tradesman respectively. The soul, mirroring the city, will be a unity and enjoy justice when each part exercises its proper function of ruling or being ruled. Thus, Reason must rule with wisdom, Spirit will employ courage and do battle for Reason and temperance and justice will result. Plato pointed out that states are not made "of oak and rock," but of men, and as the men are, so will the states be.

Plato maintains that every class is bound to fulfill the functions allotted to it in order to attain harmony and a just society. So in Plato's theory individual justice is a prerequisite of social justice and only that society can legitimately be called "just" in which wisdom reigns supreme. Or in other words justice can prevail only in that society which is ruled over by the King Philosopher

Thus justice implies a sort of **Functional Specialization**, and the principle of **non-interference** and **harmony**.

Statesmanship is a science as well as an art and one must live for it and be prepared for it. According to Plato, only a philosopher king is suitable to guide a nation. Plato's theory of justice states that until

philosophers are kings or the kings and princes of the world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and wisdom and political leadership meet in the same man, cities will never cease from ill, or the human race.

Criticism

- (i) No legal sanction
- (ii) Three fold class division is not possible in practice
- (iii) Subordination of Individual to the State
- (iv) Ignores the humanitarian principles like equality, freedom and individualism.

Significance

Plato's concept of justice belongs not to the sphere of legality, but to that of Social morality. Plato considered justice as the root of well-ordered society.

Different types of character in a city/soul and the level of injustice in each:

Best ↑
Aristocracy
Timocracy
Oligarchy
Democracy
↓
Worst Tyranny

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FORMS OF GOVERNMENTS

In the Republic book VIII Plato presents five forms of governments in order to make distinction between justice and injustice. Plato's five forms of government can be understood, in order of the most desirable to least desirable (with each form descending into the next), as:

1. **Monarchy and Aristocracy** (rule by law, order, and wisdom) - **Aristocratic ruler** is a wise and intelligent person, whose rational, spirited and appetitive parts are in balance and through his

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philosophical skills he can better solve the problems and can take the decisions wisely. Plato dislikes democracy and maintains that democracy gives birth to tyranny.

2. **Timocracy** (rule by honor and duty, Sparta as an example) - In **timocracy**, warriors become rulers. They just usurp and collect money, having no genuine concern in the matters of people. A timocratic ruler misuses his powers and creates a gulf between the people and the government. Ambitions of the state are being replaced by the personal ambitions.

3. **Oligarchy** (rule by wealth and market-based-ethics - like a free-trading capitalist state) - timocracy degenerates into **oligarchy**. The greed for money makes the rulers selfish. Virtues are left behind and money becomes the sole target to be achieved. Lust for money stops people from paying taxes; ultimately leaving the state in complete despair. At this stage poor people express their angers and protest. In order to control anarchy state takes action. Cries for freedom, justice and equality get higher.

4. **Democracy and Anarchy** (rule by pure liberty and equality) - It is the time when oligarchy degenerates into **democracy**. Plato disapproved of democracy because it seemed absurd and irrational to him. He is against the rule of average people who are uneducated and unfit to make wise decisions.

5. **Tyranny** (rule by fear, without just laws; like a despot) - Eventually, tyranny comes out of democracy. In a tyrannical state one person rules the horde for his personal welfare. Apparently such type of regime looks very organized but

actually the ruler works for his own interests leaving the rest of the state at its back.

Then, a [ideal] Polity, the most desirable form, is a “balanced” mixed-government (an “ideal” mixed “Republic”) that draws from all the forms except tyranny (as its purpose is to avoid tyranny).

Plato thought political regimes followed a predictable evolutionary course, from oligarchy to democracy to tyranny. Oligarchies give way to democracies when the elites fail, when they become spoiled, lazy, profligate, and when they develop interests apart from those they rule.

THEORY OF EDUCATION

He devised two methods of control and promoting unity in the state, namely **positive method of control i.e., education** and **negative method of control i.e., Communism of Wives and Property**. Platonic education is intimately linked with his theory of justice. He considered education as spiritual remedy for many evils of the society.

Assumptions

Plato, in his proposed scheme of education, accepts certain assumptions:

- o soul, being initiative and active, throws up, through education, the best things that are latent in it;
- o education moulds the character of the growing young; it does not provide eyes to the blind, but it does give vision to men with eyes; it brings soul to the realms of light; it activates and reactivates the individual
- o each level of education has a pre-assigned function: the elementary education helps individuals give direction to their powers; middle level education helps individuals understand their

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surroundings; and higher education helps individuals prepare, determine and decide their course of education;

- o Education helps people earn a living and also helps them to become better human beings.

Plato believed that virtue is knowledge and it is the duty of the state to provide that knowledge. During his time two diametrically opposite methods of education were in vogue. The Athenian System in Private hands and the Spartan system in State's control. The Salient features of Platonic Education are: -

- 1.State controlled education
 - 2.Compulsory education to children
 - 3.Gender equality in education
 - 4.Strict censorship of all literary and artistic works.
 - 5.It aimed at both moral and physical development.
 - 6.Its chief aim was to produce Philosopher kings.
- Plato envisaged education as a life-long process of the Philosopher king.
- 7.Platonic education involves integration. It involves a slow growth.

Plato sees education from the **teleological point of view. Rational action can never be purposeless.**

To what extent mind will act rationally and purposefully that considerably depends upon education. Education teaches man and his mind to act with a definite purpose. So education can be considered teleologically.

CATEGORY	AGE	CURRICULUM
Basic / Elementary - 0-20 years		
1. 1 st Stage	0-6 years	Language, Religion & Religious Institutions.
2. 2 nd Stage	6-18 years	Music and Gymnastic
3. 3 rd Stage	18-20 years	Compulsory Military education.

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HIGHER STAGE - 20-35 years		
At 20 years there has to be screening test. Those showing aptitude for Science & Philosophy were to be given further education for 15 years.	20-30 years At 30 years a screening test has to be held.	Mathematics, Geometry, Logic & other sciences.
	30-35 years	Dialectics as it was the only system of knowledge through which highest reality could be achieved. This stage was essentially meant to produce philosopher kings.

Plato thought of a **state-controlled education**. Education controlled by private persons could not serve real purpose. We have already seen that the chief aim of education is to materialize the well-being and harmony of the state and, to fulfil this mission; education must be controlled by the state.

In Plato's mind there was an idea of compulsory education system which we today see in many modern states. Sabine says that state-directed education scheme of Plato is perhaps the most important innovation.

The primary object of education, Plato says, is to turn the eye, which the soul already possesses, to the light. The message which Plato conveys in this metaphor is that the whole function of education is not to put knowledge into the soul, but to bring out the best things that are latent in the soul.

Plato thinks that human soul is responsive to its environments. But how it will respond, education

teaches that, soul is sometimes ill-nurtured and ill-trained and education places it on a proper footing.

If the purpose of education is the development of soul, Plato proceeds to say that the growth of the soul can be divided into two stages - early stage and later stage. According to Plato, education of the young is important.

In The Republic he says—"the beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing; for that is the time at which the character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken."

Younger people should be taught mythological stories treating of the divine nature whose very essence is to be good and true. God is the manifestation of good and truth and mythology containing the stories of God should be taught. From the very childhood young people should be well-acquainted with good and truth. Education for the young will present heroic nature in its true and good form.

The reason will be presented in the guise of beauty and rhythm. The young will learn art, literature and rudiments of science and figures. The attainment of eighteen years will qualify them to learn gymnastics whose purpose is to fit the young citizens for military and other duties which require a strong and healthy physique.

Education of the second stage - When people will be mature, they will be taught science and philosophy. In Plato's belief only a mature brain is capable of understanding these two subjects. The purpose of learning science and philosophy is to produce a guardian class or, more particularly, statesmen and rulers.

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If we go through the Platonic system of education, we shall find that both the stages are chiefly meant for the guardian class. The purpose of the first stage is to train the young people for military services.

Emotions, spirit and courage all will develop in the mind of the young people. Grown up people, Plato believed, were capable of military services efficiently. But for the ruler and statesman a different training is necessary. The grown up people of guardian class will receive the education of science and philosophy.

Importance of Gymnastics and Music

In Platonic model of politics justice, education, and communism all correspond to the concept of ideal state. The absence of one of these will make the state incomplete.

Similarly, the character and mind of the individual will be so built up as to suit the state. Remembering this fundamental idea Plato has sketched the scheme of education. His emphasis on music and gymnastics has been highly appreciated by many.

Plato has said that gymnastics will train the body and music the mind. "Both modes of training are really intended to serve a moral purpose; both are means to the formation of character."

Plato proceeds to note that although gymnastics aims at improving the body, it also helps healthy development of mind. It is, of course, in an indirect way. The impact of music upon mind is direct. The implication is for an ideal state that type of individual is required whose mind and bodies are fully and in a balance way developed.

Good and robust health of a people builds up a strong foundation of ambitious military services, as

well as it is an asset of the nation. In The Republic, Plato has disapproved of making doctors, because they would only encourage diseases.

Proper gymnastics make people sound and healthy and stop appearance of all sorts of ailments. Plato believed that music created an artistic appeal and rhythm in the mind of the young men.

This makes advent of righteousness easier. By music Plato meant particularly the study and interpretation of masterpieces of poetry, as well as singing and playing the lyre. The rhythm and diction of poetry, the sounds of musical instruments, the shapes and colours of plastic arts appeal to youth themselves.

Higher Education

"Undoubtedly the most original as well as the most characteristic proposal in The Republic is the system of higher education"—says Sabine. The purpose of higher education is to train the guardians and this will be given to a selected number of students between the ages of twenty and thirty-five. In Plato's scheme of higher education the study of mathematics occupies a very vital place.

The mathematical studies were serious. In his curriculum of higher education Plato gave almost highest position to mathematics. That is why Greece produced a large number of geniuses in mathematics. Plato believed that the mathematical studies were connected with philosophy.

In his opinion the units of arithmetic are not concrete counters presented by the senses; they are abstractions of the intelligence. Only with the help of the study of arithmetic the intelligence can be sharpened and this helps attainment of pure truth.

Besides mathematics Plato recommended the study of geometry, astronomy and logic. The study

of geometry “makes easier the Idea of the Good” (Republic). Plato speaks of studying everything philosophically.

When student is studying a subject he must remember the concept “The idea of the Good”. If any student fails to grasp the idea of philosophy, he will be eliminated.

The interest in philosophy is the first and foremost qualification of the higher education. Plato believed that this interest would not arise in early age and that is why he recommended higher education for mature age only.

The students must spend a part of their time in the study of pure philosophy. The study of philosophy was essential -for a person to be king.

The Philosopher king was expected to rule from 35 years to 50 years of his age, then retire and resume study for the contemplation of God.

Criticism

- 1) Meant for Guardian class alone.
- 2) Life-long process.
- 3) Far from reality.
- 4) Not logical.
- 5) No technical and vocational education.
- 6) No training in administration.
- 7) Contrary to human diversity.

Significance

- 1) It aims at both moral and physical development.
- 2) He insists on tests to weed out unfit.

Plato's theory or idea of education is regarded by many as a mental medicine. Its purpose is to remove the evil and malady from mind. It reforms the mind and broadens the whole outlook. Wrong ways of life are arrested by education.

That is why education has been given priority over communism. Education helps man and, more

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particularly, his soul to be fully and properly acquainted with the environment. Plato has never treated the individual as an isolated entity. He is part of the state or environment. How to adjust with the environment is imparted by education.

From the just-mentioned point we can draw an inference. In the entire Greek thought-system, including Plato's, education is regarded as a social process. With the help of education units of society learn to think of social consciousness and fulfil social obligation. Justice demands that every man must discharge his appointed function.

But how he will do it, justice cannot enlighten. Education teaches man how and in what manner an individual will perform his function. Naturally, as Platonic ideal state can never be complete with justice, so also the case of education.

RULE OF PHILOSOPHER KING

- Plato's concept of rule of Philosopher king is a corollary of Plato's concept of justice.
- Plato held that the affairs of the state could be set right only if wise people, after getting due training ruled the nation.
- Plato held that only competent and efficient people should have the right to govern.
- Plato denounced the democratic government as a government of the ignorants.
- He was in favour of a government by the elite. The interests of the Philosopher king and those of the State are identical and there is no clash between the two.
- The philosophers possess the qualities of selfless service and rationality.
- Plato's philosopher kings are the product of comprehensive and rigorous training and education spread over a period of 35 years.

- Some of the basic principles, which the philosopher kings are expected to observe, are: -
 1. Watch against excessive wealth.
 2. Consistency of the optimum size of the state.
 3. Due performance of allotted duties to each class.
 4. Strict adherence to Platonic scheme of education

Criticism –

- 1) It leads to tyranny.
- 2) Neglects the great majority.
- 3) No legal boundedness.
- 4) Against democracy.
- 5) Highly Utopian
- 6) Against the concept of equality.

Significance – This concept is the most profoundly original conception in the entire political history.

This two-type of communism is applied on the **rulers and the auxiliaries called the guardians** by Plato. Plato's argument for communism of property and families was that the unity of the state demands their abolition. "The unity of the state is to secure; property and family stand in the way; therefore, property and marriage must go" (Sabine).

in each stage of its growth is best suited for its development.

Plato's theory of education is important in his political theory. It is important in so far as it **provides a basis for the ideal state designed to achieve justice**. Following his teacher Socrates, Plato had a belief in the dictum that Virtue is

Plato's theory of education is an attempt to **touch the evil at its very source**. It is an attempt to cure a mental malady by a mental medicine. Barker rightly says that Plato's scheme of education brings the soul into that environment which

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knowledge and for making people virtuous, he made education a very powerful instrument. Plato also believed that education **builds man's character** and it is, therefore, a necessary condition for extracting man's natural faculties in order to develop his personalities. Education is **not a private enterprise** for Plato; it is public in so far it provides a moral diagnosis to the social ailments. Barker, speaking for Plato, says that education is a **path of social righteousness, and not of social success**; it is a way to reach the truth. Education, Plato emphasised, was **necessary for all the classes in society**, especially for those who govern the people. The rulers, for Plato, are supreme because they are educated by philosophers, for the rule of the philosophers, as Barker explains, is the result of the education they receive.

PLATO'S COMMUNISM

He began by emphasizing the **equality of men and women**. Plato was a great advocate of the notion that women were just as good as men in almost all fields and spheres of activities except for the fact that they may be slightly weaker physically. Plato was of the opinion that family life curtailed the independence and freedom of a female and induced the male to dominate affecting the equality between the sexes. This was one of the reasons why Plato is against the institution of family.

Psychological Grounds

It is said that Plato's theory of communism is based on psychology. Plato has divided the soul into three parts - reason, spirit and appetite.

In his opinion if reason and spirit are to discharge their functions and to attain justice, then they must keep themselves away from appetite. Domination of appetite is a great hindrance to the

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purification and goodness of the soul. Similarly, in the ideal state, there are three classes-the ruling class, military class and farmers.

If the former two classes are guided by economic motive, then there will be gross negligence of duty on the part of these two classes and that will erode justice. Plato, for this reason, had prescribed the introduction of communism for these two classes.

Only communism could enable the rulers and soldiers to devote their entire energy and enthusiasm to the cause of the state and in this way justice could be achieved. "A communistic life, in the sense of a life divested of economic motive, is thus necessarily connected with and necessarily issues from, the proper position in the state of the two-higher elements of mind" Plato believed that the absence of communism would invite appetite. But justice demands that these three will discharge functions separately.

To Plato **justice was not external, but internal. It was the result of habit.** Mind must acquire true habit. But habit depends upon the material conditions. That is how mind will act and react that will be decided by the material conditions of society. **Communism in property will make men's mind fully suitable for the attainment of justice.**

Historical Grounds

Many of the political ideas of Plato can be traced to his predecessors and the theory of communism is not an exception. In ancient Greek society which existed before Plato there was a form of communism in land. Land was held in common in many tribal societies. But subsequently land came to

be divided among individuals and the authority of the state manipulated and supervised this division.

At the time of Pythagoras and Pythagoreans there were traces of communism.

"Friends' goods were common goods"—this was the motto at the time of Pythagoras.

Platonic scheme of Communism

Plato believed in **communism of property** because he felt that private property led to selfishness of man, which in turn led to the accumulation of wealth and the desire to resort to unfair means to acquire the same. He felt that the family was the root cause of all problems in society because the existence of a family imposed upon an individual the need to accumulate wealth and property.

"As private property and family relationships appear to be the chief sources of dissension in every community, neither is to have recognition in the perfect state." – **Dunning.**

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Hence for the abolition of private property the abolition of family was also required as the two were interconnected. This concept is definitely idealistic in nature and cannot be carried out today, but what is worth noting is Plato's systematic identification of problems in the society.

In order to systematically eliminate the institution of family from the state, **Plato proposed a mechanism which eradicated the very need for family.**

Under the scheme there is no system of permanent wedding among the guardian class and all the women are to be common to all men and vice versa. All guardians (both men and women) are to live together in common barracks.

The state would select mentally and physically men and women who were in their prime - 20 to 40 years for women and 30 to 55 years for men - to form a union and have children.

He believed that the offspring born to parents who are physically and mentally fit would in turn characterize the same aspects and would be more productive towards the welfare of the state.

Men and women who were past their prime would be allowed to associate freely with whomsoever they pleased except their relations in a direct line, such as a father and a daughter, so that children are not conceived as a result of union between close relations. The state would try its best to prevent such unions but if such unions occur, the child thus produced would be killed, as it was immoral that the child be allowed to grow.

A man who produces a baby in union with a female without the knowledge of the magistrate shall be accused of raising an **illegitimate**,

unsponsored and unhallowed child and shall be punishable for the same.

Plato believed that as soon as the babies were born they must be taken away from the mother by the officials of the state appointed for that purpose and that the mother should not have even a single look at the baby. This was because he believed that all children would be taken care of better if the parents did not know the identity of their own child. As soon as the babies were born they were to be taken to a general nursery under the charge of certain nurses who lived in a particular part of the city, which was far apart from the place where the babies were born.

According to Sabine, so firmly was Plato convinced of the pernicious effects of wealth upon government that he saw no way to abolish the evil except by abolishing wealth itself. The same is true also of Plato's purpose in abolishing persons, as another (first being property) potent rival to the state in competing for the loyalty of rulers. "**Anxiety for one's children**", Sabine concludes on behalf of Plato, "**is a form of self-seeking more insidious than the desire for property...**"

The weak and disfigured children were to be killed soon after their birth so that they may not prove to be a burden for the state in the long run.

On eugenic grounds also he favored communism of wives. He was convinced that the improvement of race demands a more controlled and more selective type of union.

The mother would be allowed to go to the nursery for nursing the children present there but

care would be taken so as to ensure that a particular mother does not see her biological child.

Plato felt that in such a society, a person would look upon another either as “a brother or a sister, or a father or a mother, or a son or a daughter, or one of the children, or parents of these” and that a child would honor all its guardians as its parents.

Thus by eliminating the institution of family from his ideal state, Plato actually succeeds in bringing about a better sense of law and order in society.

His view may sound mechanical, utopian and even cruel. However, it can be emphasized that while he formed his theory of communism the conditions in Athens played a major role. His ideals with some modifications and interpretations could even perhaps suit today's troubled times.

Significance

Plato seems to be quite logical in emphasising that the state could not get undivided loyalty unless the institution of family was done away with.

Barker sums up Plato's argument in this regard: “Plato's scheme has many facets and many purposes. It is a scheme of eugenics; it is a scheme for the emancipation of women; **it is a scheme for the nationalisation of the family**. It is meant to secure a better stock, greater freedom for women and for men to develop their highest capacities, a more complete and living solidarity of the state or at any rate, of the rulers of the state.”

It is interesting to note that more than two thousand three hundred years ago Plato realized that private property and accumulation of wealth were the chief sources of discord and corruption in society. **The right to property as a fundamental**

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right of Indian Constitution was abolished by the 44th amendment.

For proper evaluation and judgment of Plato's concept of communism we are to go back to Plato's time and to understand **Plato's political philosophy in the real perspective**. There is no doubt that he wanted to establish a corruption-free and discord-free society which is called the ideal state.

He believed that if the guardians and soldiers were engaged in the management of private property the whole interest of the body-politic will be adversely affected. For this reason he prescribed that these two classes of people would receive from the general store of the society what is absolutely required.

We think that there may be some sort of utopianism in such conception but it is **absolutely in consonance with his whole political philosophy**.

As to the communism of wife and children it may naively be observed that he always wanted the **emancipation of women** from the obligation of day to day life. He thought that it is the duty of the state to assume the responsibility of rearing and educating the children and for that reason he recommended communism in wives and children.

We have said that Plato's theory of communism should not be separated from his whole philosophy and this centres on the lofty concept of the ideal state. In Republic he has said - our aim in founding the state was not disproportionate happiness of any one class, but the greatest happiness of the whole.

He thought that through the establishment of communism the **greatest happiness of the**

whole state would be achieved. We may not agree with the view of Plato but we must say that there are certain clear and definite reasons in his concept of communism.

He was not in a position to grant coexistence of opulence and poverty because in his judgment this is harmful for the state as a whole. We conclude that there is **ample logic** in his theory of Communism.

Criticism

Plato's plan of communism has been denounced by many, from his disciple Aristotle down to Karl Popper.

By Aristotle

1. He carried the organic conception too far and did not see any difference between the family and the State.
2. Distributively one female cannot be the wife of all guardians. It leads to disharmony.
3. Children shall not be able to get the care and nourishment which is possible in a family.
4. It is absurd to apply the analogy of animals to the human beings and plead for state controlled mating, which is quite unworkable.
5. It demands too much of the sacrifice from the guardian class and tends to make them unhappy.
6. Plato wrongly treats the institution of marriage as a mechanical process. It would be wrong to treat family as a mere mating agency. Marriage is a social institution.

General

1. Neither logical nor desirable.
2. Abolition of the institution of family is a serious set back to social and moral notion.
3. It is difficult to understand how a happy state can exist without happy family.

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Plato's communism has been criticized as "half Communism" due to the fact that it is not the Communism of the whole society, but of the half society. He has prescribed communistic way of life only for rulers and soldiers and not for other classes or sections of society.

He believed that non-communistic way of life (i.e., ownership of private property and accumulation of wealth) by guardians and soldiers would invite corruption among the members of these two classes. But the prescription of communism for about half of the society will divide it into two parts—one half will be deprived of the

Barker says: "Platonic communism is ascetic; and just for that reason it is also aristocratic. It is the way of surrender; and it is a surrender imposed upon the best and only on the best"

benefits of private property and accumulation of wealth, and the other half will enjoy the benefits. **Such a division of society, the critics observe, will frustrate the noble and lofty purpose of communism.** Plato believed that ownership of private property would create dissension among the members of society which might not be ideal for an ideal state. .

If this argument is accepted (for the sake of argument of course) we are of opinion that any sort of private property is always harmful. It is not true that it is harmful for any particular class and harmless for another class.

It is said that Plato gave top priority to the idea of unity of state and he believed that there could be no greater good than unity. Ernest Barker does not agree with Plato. He says—"He pushed the organic conception too far."

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Plato laid excessive faith on the organic concept of state. But the experience teaches us that there cannot be solid state of unity among all the sections of society. Various sections of society will try to mould their lives in their own ways and for greater welfare and benefit of society that variety must be accepted. For the sake of artificial unity diversity cannot be sacrificed.

Every section of society has its own will and this demands that only through the institution of private property each section will be able to translate it will into reality. But by prescribing the abolition of private property Plato wanted to abolish the will of a part of society.

Another criticism which has been levelled against the concept of communism enunciated in The Republic is that the state is composed of various parts, and family is an important part of the state. But by suggesting that no family for guardian and soldier classes Plato had practically inflicted injustice upon these two classes and it is irony that this prescription is in the name of justice.

The state is no doubt the supreme political organization and aims at supreme good. But this cannot cover all aspects of human life. Even a state cannot fulfil all the objectives of an individual.

Family has a definite and purposeful role in society and this should be allowed to play the race. If it is forced to discontinue, human life will be barren. Man can develop the finer and artistic objectives through the institutions of family and private property and, if these are abolished, the development of these qualities will be in critical position.

It is unfortunate that a genius like **Plato** **dismally failed to realize the good effects of**

family and private property. Unlimited property is no doubt harmful, but a limited amount of private property is always admissible. Even the 1982 Constitution of China recognizes private property.

Plato's Communism .vs. Modern Communism

Similarities

1. Both want to eliminate the existing frictions and differences in the society and bring about unity and solidarity.
2. Both want to evolve a society organized on the basis of social service and abhor differences based on birth or wealth.
3. Both hold that the society is composed of a number of classes. While Marx believes that there are only two class – The haves and The havenots; Plato envisages the existence of three classes viz. rulers, warriors and peasants.
4. Both want to eliminate economic competition with a view to create a perfect state.
5. Both relegate the individual to the position of an instrument for the promotion of the interest of the community.
6. Both are opposed to the holding of private property.
7. Both hold that the individual interest can be best secured by promoting the general interest.
8. Both hold faith in the principle of rule by the elites or a group of outstanding persons.

In view of the fundamental differences between the two, it would be unfair to compare the two.

Plato's Communism	Modern Communism
Product of the condition prevailing in 4 th century B.C.	Result of the post-industrial revolution condition.

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Athens.	
Applied only to the guardian class.	Applies to vast majority of the people.
Essentially political in character and aims at unity of the state.	It aims at political and economic power in the hands of working classes.
Does not want to effect any change in the existing economic structure and leaves the producing classes intact.	Wants to replace the individual ownership of the means of production by collective ownership.
It is ascetic in so far it lays emphasis on common renunciation of all private property by the ruling class. (i.e.) it is negative.	Lays emphasis on the enjoyment of the fruits of material resources by all the sections of the society. (i.e.) it is positive.
It covered not only property but also the wives.	It deals only with the means of production.
It is aristocratic. It is imposed upon and practiced by the best and only the best.	It is Proletariat. It concerns workers and peasants more than any other sections of the society.
It wanted to bring about only limited changes in the existing society.	It stands for complete overhaul of the society.
It is essentially meant for the Greek City states (i.e.)	It is rather a world-wide movement. (i.e.) International in

National in outlook.	outlook.
It is highly Philosophical and could never be put into actual practice.	It is highly practical and has already been given a practical trial in almost 1/3 rd of the world.

PLATO – STATE & RELIGION

In the republic, Plato advocates censoring "any story," such as told "by Hesiod and Homer and the other poets," which "gives a bad image of the nature of the gods," portraying them as petty, devious, or "warring and plotting and fighting against each other." The Gods, in Plato's eyes, should only be represented as good, and pious, because it is the nature of divinity to be good.

Religion is subject the regulation and supervision of the state as education is.

Private religious practices are forbidden. Religious rites can be performed only in public temples by specifically deputed priests.

"Atheism is a disease of the soul, before it becomes an error of the understanding." In the Laws, Plato recommended various degrees of punishment for atheists.

Popper's criticism of Plato

Plato, to Popper, was an **enemy of the open society**. Popper holds the view that Plato advocated a closed system, which was not different from an idealised reproduction of the tribalism of the past. To Popper, Plato's philosophy and its theories—of justice, communism, and education etc. are but so many subtle ways of **justifying authoritarianism and totalitarianism**. Plato's philosophy sought to perpetuate or eternalise the ideal - the ideal of anti-democracy, anti-change and anti-open society.

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Condemning **Plato's political programme.**

Betraying the open and critical temper of his mentor Socrates, in his Republic Plato devised an elaborate system that would arrest all political and social change and turn philosophy into an enforcer, rather than a challenger, of authority. It would also reverse the tide of individualism and egalitarianism that had emerged in democratic Athens, establishing a hierarchical system in which the freedom and rights of the individual would be sacrificed to the collective needs of society.

Popper argued that education and training should empower one to be autonomous, to be able to cope with situations and to make choices. Above all, Plato was presented as an archetype utopianist who, in the name of virtue, was willing to consider coercion appropriate. Popper, by contrast, advocates the open society, one which attempts to maximize freedom of choice and is democratic in the sense that the citizens can overthrow the government without violence.

Popper argued that Plato was a pessimist who held that the laws of development govern a tendency toward deterioration. To slow down this process, Plato advocated tyrannical measures.

Counter to Popper

If Plato were truly totalitarian, then he would have built a police state; would have made provisions for secret police; would have suggested severe and harsh punishments; would have provided concentration camps. Would have landed terror. But nowhere do we find Plato saying all this. On the contrary, he pictures an ideal state whose aim is ethical, whose rulers are guided by a rational plan and who have to have a particular type of education,

a systematic training and a life of dedication and almost of renunciation.