

# Political thinkers

Profession, Philosophers



Shocked by the scenario of the political events, which according to him was not how a state would exist and far from the idealist principles which he had sought. He especially was taken aback with the execution of Socrates in 399 BCC and which prompted him to turn to philosophy instead which he believed, " Was the only it could rescue human beings from civil war and political upheaval and provide a sound foundation for ethics and politics". Plato was a multi-dalliance's In the sense that In his writings metaphysics, epistemology, cosmology, philosophical study of the natural sciences, language and of the mind.

Plato also founded his own Academy and also was its director. It was through this academy through which he was seeking to guide his students according to his philosophical principles pertaining to the various disciplines. With his academy, Plato taught various theoretical subjects like philosophy and mathematics which had various theories along with research work but was also involved in practical tasks of developing political constitutions where the kings sought his principles and morals for developing their states. He emphasized on creating an ideal and peaceful learning environment for his students. Plato's most famous work, " The Republic" is a prime example of an exemplary blend of thematic, philosophy, politics and natural sciences and basically all what his Academy represented. Plato died in the year 347 BCC. Plato was well ahead of his time in his teachings and therefore was accused of misguiding the youth with his ideas. He wrote " The Ideal State" and when this work was believed to be a Utopian concept, he wrote " The Second Best State" which was less rigid. This made him the first thinker or philosopher to write about the importance of governance in society.

Plato's best works and writings were put down in his work, "The Republic". This famous work of Plato has lasted through the ages due to the fact that it had three significant characteristics. The first is that of political philosophy which was method rejected in the times before Plato such as the well being of society, the theory of the state and individual by which he prescribed certain methods through which an individual needs to live his life according to certain guidelines to maintain equilibrium in society.

The second characteristic which has ensured that this famous work has endured the test of time is that the Republic arrives at certain bold tenements and conclusions having major interest in its own way, which is independent of the merits of his theories as well as the arguments which augment them. The third characteristic is such that the Republic seeks to provide solid foundations across time periods to justify its political theories and also elaborate the various theories and views stated by Plato such as education, physics metaphysics, etc.

The best way to understand the philosophy of the Republic is by examining its core principles and there are three fundamental ones: 1. "A political society constitutes a natural whole, with its own kind of excellence and well being". Plato. 2. Plato's writings in the Republic are in stark contrast to those holding atomistic views which states that a political society consists of a group of individuals who co-exist in harmony with cohesive characteristics or are hostile to each other.

Plato's writings do not claim that his ideal society is superior to individual parts existing in society, nor does it have possession of an individual destiny

with a separate set of goals. Plato's writings are somewhat in the balance between the two contrasting principles. His view of society is more of that of unity than many liberal minded thinkers would allow. He argues that man and society are so similar that each has similar set of virtues. Even though Plato makes this statement, he does not contend that a society needs to contain people that are wise, courageous and just or temperate.

He preaches that society needs to be so set with its values that in itself it can be just, even goes to the extent of stating that the virtues of a society are relatively easier to understand as they help us with the understanding of an individual. Plato even states that the actions of an individual with his opinions and attitude are the by products of the overall virtues of society and therefore has no existence without society. In the second book of the Republic, Plato mentions what exactly he means by justice.

He states that justice is founded based on the needs common to men and which the latter can satisfy only if there is co-operation among them by division of labor. This is where he states that every individual is gifted with a particular skill set such as a potter, shoemaker, etc. With this principle of specialization there becomes a need for soldiers and rulers. He states that in keeping with the principle of division of labor, gives rulers the natural responsibility of caring for the co-operative whole of society.

Their responsibility therefore includes caring for the society as it is their sole task and do work with determination towards what we believe is good for the overall betterment of society. Also the kings need to possess the kind of knowledge and understanding of not emphasizing on a particular aspect but

rather on society as a whole. Along with these principles of a harmonious society, Plato also mentions about corrupt societies where the sight of the common good is lost and where individualistic interests prevail.

Plato as we see above emphasizes on the importance of the creation of a society par excellence. This he states is possible when there is an agreement between all the sections within society about who governs, who fights, who provides for society major and so on. The basis of all of this is education and makes these goals attainable. Plato therefore very rightly states that societal Justice can be attained when the well being of not a particular group, but the whole of the society is secured.

By this statement Plato does not mean the happiness quotient of the society which is the amount of happiness of the people but rather the well being of the whole of society is attained when the interest of no particular group dominates society whether the group consists of the rich or the aristocratic class. It would be wrong to say that Plato does not care about the individual in society. His concern for man in society is of a different nature as he believes that for man to progress and maintain harmony in society, the whole and not the individual should be taken into consideration.

He even states that it is better rather for an individual to attain Justice in society than injustice for the entire society. This is an exception and this is where the well being of the individual prevails. Justice thereby forming a big part of his first principle in the Republic. 2. " A political society should look to its well being as a whole as an overriding aim: that is as an aim which, in cases of conflict, takes precedence over others. 3 This principle opposes the

notion that whatever concerns the well being of an individual have natural, sovereign and inalienable rights given to them for their well being at the cost of society.

It does not however contradict the claim that individuals within a society even some influence and claim over it and this influence in a way is derived from society is in a way responsible for its well being. What we can derive from both of these statements is that there is a fine line between an individual's well being and that of society and a correct balance needs to be attained. Taking the example of to be a right which is essential for an individual, nor does he see in it the intrinsic worth by which it can be justified.

As stated earlier, everything is for the well being of society and is the same case with education as well. An individual according to Plato is trained for this very purpose till he attains 35 years of age (Tireless and dedicated service towards society). Plato also is a firm believer in the censorship of the arts as he believes that a child exposed to too much nudity or vulgarity in the arts during his/her formative years will have significant impact on the mind and in turn the society as a whole.

Similarly, falsified stories about the after life and the gods need to be given the same treatment as this will have a negative impact on the future rulers and society as a whole. Plato emphasizes that those educated to rule can only be able to attain an ideally just society. What Plato states with conviction that an unjust society is the result of haphazard governance consisting of people not having character required to run the administration as well as the prescribed education.

Plato also states that he does not believe that all of the rulers belong to the hereditary class. He rather establishes that a child born of a ruler but lacking the quality of a ruler is not fit for the role of a king whereas a child of individuals not belonging to the aristocratic class but possessing all of the qualities fit for kingship can be appointed as the ruler. This writing of Plato is contradictory to the very grain of Plato's aristocratic upbringing but rather accords for the sovereignty of the common good of society.

Other philosophers of his time ascribed men and women in society the right to marry and have children and own property, be truthful in political matters or be truthful in order to uphold virtue. Plato on the other hand, for the wider interest of society prevents his rulers from marrying, they are prevented from ownership of property, they are prescribed to consummate with women who the elders or the wise men select for them which meant that the "women with the best emetics" were chosen as this would produce superior offspring and once the child is born the ruler did not know about who his children are.

This Plato believes is essential for societal justice. In the Republic, the importance of justice is mentioned and justified multiple times. Plato states that those who are not rulers, future rulers and soldiers lead a much easier and freer life in the sense that they have no formal means of voting to influence the running of society. The rulers can move them as well as separate them from their families. The working class in society are not even allowed to make money as they please as even this aspect is decided by the ruler to prevent extreme accumulation of wealth and prevent poverty.

Plato as we can see, places utmost trust in his rulers who he states go through a rigorous selection process and this makes him an embodiment of wisdom and knowledge. He can make decisions on what is right or wrong in society due to this wisdom. Plato states that the Philosopher king cannot make mistakes and he is well suited to take decisions thus making the Philosopher king the ultimate power in society of course only by means of true Justice as mentioned earlier. . " What constitutes the well being of society is a matter of objective fact, discoverable by those who have the relevant ability and specialized training". Plato. 4 Political claims for Plato are not questions of decision, convention or prescription. The facts which the rulers have to live up to. Plato always tried to back up his findings and the same goes with this principle. He tries to back up this principle with a theory. The explanation for this theory is as follows. First off are the cases in which the statements are true because it corresponds to the way the reality is which is basically the facts of the world and reality in general.

Secondly, there are two kinds of statements which are possible in the world. First are those whose claims are contingent which means that the truth-values could have been different than what they really are and then there are those statements that are necessary where the truth-values could not have been different. Plato states that the items which cannot be altered and certain aspects of reality are called " Forms". They are intangible in nature and are the solid truth.

Justice, virtue and goodness are examples of forms as they are capable of making changes towards the subject matter of necessary truths which cannot



be manipulated or altered. What Plato ascribes in order for his theory to be applicable is that the task which the future rulers of the Greek city states need to fulfill is to become philosophers and in the sense put forth only by Plato. They need to acquire Forms such as Justice, courage, temperance and most of all goodness. The other classes in the society do not hold the training or virtue to have all of the Forms at once.

Plato also wants his rulers to have a firm and confident grasp of these Forms after fifteen years of specialized training. The society and the world Plato agrees is constantly changing but the philosopher king should be able to apply his knowledge of the Forms to the ever changing world. Plato compares his Philosopher king to a mathematician as a mathematician is able to apply unalterable truths which is formula such as the circles, square and other geometrical terms to the ever changing figures which are to be seen in the physical world around.

The philosopher king he believes would successfully be able to apply morals which cannot be altered and political formula which are the truths associated with Justice ND goodness to the ever changing behavior of men in society along with their imperfect affairs. The philosopher king has this quality and only he is entitled to rule. ANALYSIS OF PLAT'S THREE PRINCIPLES: Plat's first principle concerning the nature of society and how it concerns its own well being is likely to be rejected only by the most extreme political scholars.

Plato does not in any way ascribe special status to society and hence it is hard to see this principle as excessive. What Plato is trying to explain is that, men are not separate or detached from society resembling the organs of the

body which are together without avian any aims or purposes of its own or like the grains in a heap of sand. Plato states that men by nature are social animals and unlike other animals have evolved and survived with notable success due to these social characteristics. Even if the social characteristics of man are flawed, they can certainly be corrected through co- operation.

He stresses on this co-operation and sometimes even over-stresses on this aspect by which he literally means division of labor. Plat's second principle requires a little more attention and discussion in which he states that a society's well being different school of thought hold the view that a society's well being is a goal which has to be pursued and at least needs to be part of society's many goals. The factor which prompts this view is that, the different interests of individuals clash and clash in such a way that it becomes impossible to resolve all of them.

A moral principle therefore is needed to ease out the conflict in a manner which is just and fair. The right answer to this distinct problem as stated earlier is the target of attaining maximum happiness for a maximum number of people. This principle though has a fundamental weakness. For example, the assumption of torture and killing of a few individual people will leading to societal happiness is justified by Plato and this view has persuaded many philosophers to reject it.

Society thereby should not be arranged in a way which would be advantageous to a certain group but rather the interest of all must be considered. This proposal is thereby less sharply defined by Plato and hence makes it difficult to be applied yet not impossible. This kind of consideration

can be compared to that of a parent towards the family where they are not concerned with the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people, but rather on one hand it is ensured that none of the children are favored unduly and also providing a balanced distribution of goods among them.

Regarding the restrictions placed on the rulers such as the denial of the right to marriage, ownership of property and living on only the basic needs required on a daily basis, it may seem like the denial of the right to life to a normal reader but Plato sees the wider picture here. He states that there are no restrictions on what might be done to secure the well being of society and Plato sees these denial of rights to the philosophers as moving towards the desired target. This makes us wonder of what Plato would imply to the statement made earlier about killing the innocent for the benefit of society.

There are no signs in Plat's writings anywhere that he would accept any actions of such nature and justify them and rather all of the evidence is contradictory. The big philosophical question though which remains here is that whether or not would Plato himself succumb to his theoretical beliefs and therefore commit him to endorse these deeds. This principle certainly puts Plato in trouble. Having gone far as stripping the rulers of their basic rights, what is it that is holding Plato back.

The only obvious way open to him is to assert that built into his idea of the well being of society are certain fundamental components and one of the rules being that innocent men and women are not to be killed. The argument which arises from this principle. People have the natural right to freedom

from torture and death and this contradicts the theory which puts forth that the philosopher king can go to any extent for the good of society and the ruler cannot be questioned as he has attained ultimate wisdom due to the rigorous training imparted to him.

Therefore, in the one case the conclusion is drawn from considering the society and in the other the individual. What then of Plato's third principle of the declaration that morals and politics being questions of objective, expert knowledge? Regarding discussions on fundamental political and moral issues, the language of objective assertion is used by philosophers and normal people as though they are speaking of matters of plain fact.

Cases where men can make mistakes, argue over these mistakes and make. What is more is that, they cannot do without the notion of assumption since without it there is no discussion and then they are left with only professions of faith. Comparing with the complex issues of today's time such as nuclear warfare and abortion, there is a tendency to make the added assumption that to arrive there is a need for expertise as well as ability and there cannot be dependence of wit and intuition. Men and women in society need to have the required information but at the same time need to be educated to analyze problems and in assessing consequences.

Now, if common assumption such as these mentioned above are justified, then Plato has a very good case for holding that morals are principles too re matters of objective fact as well being matters of expertise (The philosopher king). Plato though does not stop here and adds that people who are political and moral experts ought to be the righteous rulers of society. Also while

discussing the democratic virtue in relation to Plato, two sets of arguments need to be distinguished which: 1 . That in the absence of Platonic philosophers, the concept of democracy is supported . 2.

The concept of democracy being supported absolutely by philosophers and if such philosophers are to be had or not in society. It can be disputed that western models of constitutional models are in the best forms of political societies developed so far and that too in the absence of Platonic philosophers. Plato would've allowed this to happen as it comes closer to his earlier stated goal of securing Justice for the whole and not for the individual. He would've conceded this solely on balance by pointing out that the conduct of democracy towards society would be uniformly Just.

Now coming to the discussion about Plato's Justification of non-acceptance of the concept of democracy, Plato through the Republic reminds us that it was this ideology which put Socrates to death just because he initiated open discussions. Also he mentions that the same democracy had either enslaved or killed an entire population for not wishing to be part of Athens. It is for these very reasons that Plato would argue that democracies of today would be no match to his concept of the ideal society. Recent philosophers might argue that democracy's case rests with the ultimate sovereign worth of an individual.

A person has the ultimate say on how he is governed and how he wishes to be governed without which the philosophers state that they would not be fulfilling their duties as adults and hence would be no different from slaves and children. On the contrary, Plato would argue that he had not intended to

lower the status of man in society. While the modern philosopher sees the dignity of man in the fulfillment of self, Plato has always seen it as surrender of self just for the betterment of the good of society.

He believed that in spite of having philosophers to rule and give political expertise and contribute to administration, it would be foolish to argue that all individuals should be a part of administration and it is the same as saying that non-authentications should provide calculations for building bridges. All of these points however does not make the democrat any weaker, as he has no major worry yet. The reason being that even if the rulers in the Platonic society possessed the attributes of morals and virtues, it cannot be said with certainty that they wouldn't become oppressive and corrupt and thereby not favor sectional interests at all.

Plato places individual in the administration turns out to be corrupt. Plato thereby in order to prevent such a scenario and maintain this foolproof system created by him believed that education can go a long way in maintaining Plat's concept of the ideal society. The training lasts for fifteen long years involving morality and virtue along with ten academics and religion. An education with a combination containing all these aspects is very less likely to make a person corrupt.

Plat's emphasis on religious training makes the biggest difference as a God fearing man wont be morally wrong and at the same time be virtuous therefore making his system extremely rigid. ARISTOTLE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: Aristotle lifep was the period which can be termed as the turn in the history of hilltop's out of which branched an independent discipline of

politics. 5 He was born in the year 384 BCC in the village of Staggers in located in present day Central Macedonia which was one of HTH Greek city states. Aristotle is called the father of PoliticalScienceand is one of the most celebrated political thinkers.

He was the first thinker to separate the discipline of philosophy from politics and this resulted in the birth of a new discipline of Political Science. He came up with the term of Greek city state of " Polis" and also invented the term politics. His father was the royal physician n the Macedonian Court and shared a good relationship Witt the King of Macedonia. As he was part of the aristocratic class, he was sent to Plat's academy in Athens for education at eighteen years of age. He spent close to twenty years in the academy and also taught there. Aristotle was heavily influenced by Plat's teachings and writings and he was his mentor.

Aristotle though differed on some of Plat's teachings which I will highlight further in this paper. He returned to the Kingdom of Macedon in the year 343 BCC and he was appointed to run and lead the Royal academy of Macedon. At this period, he was also the private tutor of Alexander the Great. In the year 335 BCC, he came back to Athens and started his own academy by the name of Lacey. Aristotle in his teachings whilst at his own academy wrote about different theories of nature and emphasized that for nature to function without any hindrance, change is certain.

Aristotle unlike the other philosopher of his time, looked at nature from a different perspective. He like Plato believed in creating an ideal environment for learning and taught outdoors as believed that being close to nature is

ideal for the overall growth of an individual. Aristotle was forced to flee Athens in the year 322 BCC when there was an uprising in Athens against the Macedonian and as he had published many works supporting the history of Macedonian rule, it left him vulnerable to attack by the Athenians. He left for Above during the uprising and died in the same year.

Aristotle like Plato was believed to be misguiding the youth with his ideas and teachings. What makes Aristotle unique is the fact that he put forth that politics can be devoid of ethics, the complete opposite of Plato who emphasized a lot on ethics. Aristotle like Plato wrote about his own " Ideal State" which is a continuation of Plato's " Second Best State". ARISTOTLE AND POLITY: The politics of Aristotle for the reader becomes intensely empirical at once and also factual knowledge throughout the ancient world known to the Greeks and he put all of this information together to guide action.

He used political processes to guide people towards the right path and giving them a good life by following certain guidelines. These moral views laid down by Aristotle are expressed in his work the 'Politics' and also on his other work 'Noncompliance ethics'. Aristotle unlike Plato held that moral views can be held by a person and known without the complete precision of mathematics or the physical and biological sciences. Living a good life is essential for the well being of man in society and such life can come into existence only when human capacities are developed to the maximum.

Put it simply, one has to feel and act in a way required for working towards a whole hearted commitment towards a well rounded life and this life should be truly moral and most importantly truly human. Aristotle describes this



well living as 'daemonic', slightly mistranslated as happiness. Well being can be a closer word for this term and he states that the ultimate of ethics and politics is to attain daemonic. Aristotle introduces his writings in the Politics with two key ideas: 1. The state is a community 2.

The state is the highest among all communities, " Which embraces all the rest, aims for good in a greater degree than any other and at the highest good. 7 Aristotle considers the state to be a natural being and was the first thinker to consider it as a community. Aristotle also puts forth that the state is an instrument, a sort of mechanism and like machinery can be used to meet ends higher than itself. This view of Aristotle is called the 'instrumentalist' view of the state and which actually not invented by him but rather propounded by Sophists who lived a century before Aristotle.

This view was however rejected by Plato and revived only by the modern thinkers such as John Locke, Jack Hobbes and John Dewey. The good life within the natural creation being the state can be achieved by whole heartedly acting in ways truly human. Aristotle states that to act in such a manner becomes a struggle for man and he can do so only with utmost pain and difficulty. He observed that young hillier are moved by instincts such as pleasure and pain. They need to trained so that they achieve acts of reason once they grow to be adults such as those of courage or cowardice.

They can be trained to endure pain and agony and not to give in to every bodily desire so that everything falls into place and things come easily and naturally. Aristotle like Plato in this case states that education becomes an important element for grooming an individual by developing the right

reason, the right desire and their harmony. Aristotle unlike Plato in his ideal state where he gives ultimate importance to the philosopher king gives great importance to laws. He states that for individuals, to do good to do good for themselves or others does not come naturally. Man lacks virtue and compulsion through law is therefore needed.

In the *Monomaniacs* ethics, Aristotle states that people have the tendency to resent to things told to them by other people but no resentment is seen when law is enforced upon them. Aristotle states law to be reason which is unfazed by desires. The community: Aristotle difference in political thought to his mentor Plato becomes extremely clear when he puts forth that the state is the highest form of association concerning man's family for example man reproduces himself; companionship is resolved when living in a village community; and it is only in the state that man realizes himself and his true worth particularly the highest part of himself.

Aristotle therefore does not make division of labor an essential component of society in his political thought but rather expresses that family is the lowest in the hierarchy of the society and man's biological appetites and material appetites are expressed within the family. A man's social sentiment of companionship and that of community is expressed in the bigger association of the village and then ultimately man's morality the quality which makes him most human is expressed and fulfilled in the state.

Aristotle unlike Plato in his organic view of the state very clearly explains and expresses what are the implicit and explicit factors for society. He unlike his teacher Plato is unwilling to go as far as where he states that it is not

necessary for the betterment of the society, that the happiness of the rulers as well as the ruled needs to be sacrificed. Aristotle is against the principle of excessive unity in the state which he anyways believes to be idealistic and not realistic and even if it is attained it should be rejected as he states that, "It would result in the destruction of the state". Aristotle describes the role of Plato's guardian rulers as just filling a vacuum and that the ideal state put forth by Plato merely contains two states in one with hostility emerging as the most likely outcome due to the importance associated to the philosopher king. Aristotle in his concept of the origin of the state expresses that every state is a community of some kind and it is created with the intention of some good no matter what the methods used.

Aristotle in his concept of politics states that when a ruler has a personal government that he referred to as a king and when according to the rules and principles of political science, then he referred to as a statesman. Aristotle tries to look at things in a scientific perspective and the state is no exception where he puts forth that different kinds of rules differ in different societies and it is essential to attain scientific information from them.

Property: Aristotle's theory of property is completely against Plato's theory of communism or communism of property.

Plato regarded property to be a hindrance to the proper functioning of the state as it blurred human thought process by encouraging the need for wants and, therefore, suggested the guardian class even though the rulers of society have no claim over any property in the entire city state. For Aristotle on the other hand, ownership of property provided psychological satisfaction

to man as human beings he believes have the inherent instinct of possessing and owning property. It is the rightful claim of an individual to own property.

Aristotle claims that if an individual does not own property, then he won't learn the principle of generosity such as giving alms to the needy as well as the concept of hospitable treatment towards the oppressed class of society. What then is the use of moral and virtuous training as stated by Plato when it cannot be put into practice in the wider concept of society. Ownership of property leads to the creation of a good household as the family is society at the micro level and a happy and content family would ultimately lead to the creation of a better society as your needs get fulfilled. Ownership of property is s