

# Good example of philosopher kings essay

[Law](#), [Justice](#)



Plato was a prominent Greek philosopher who posed elementary questions about human nature, education and justice. He was a student of another famous Greek philosopher, Socrates. One of Plato's greatest philosophical ideals regards the concept of an ideal state with ideal rulers. Part of Plato's educational ideas was derived from his personal conception of justice, both for the state and for an individual. He was of the view that individuals are actually mutually dependent for their survival and well-being. He also proposed that the concept of justice in an ideal state is congruent with that in an individual's soul.

According to Plato, an ideal state would be comprised of three citizen categories. These are the artisans, the auxiliaries and finally the philosopher kings. Each category of citizens possesses distinct nature, ability and capacities and it is the combination of these elements that would lead to the success of the state (Reeve, 2006, 172). The artisans for instance had great appetites and desires and were consequently their destiny was therefore to produce material goods for the state. The auxiliaries were essentially had great spirit and soul and as a result possessed great courage to protect and defend the state from foreign invasion. The final group of citizens was the philosopher kings. These were the ideal rulers of the state. Unlike the artisans and the auxiliaries whose souls were ruled by appetite and spirit, their primary strength was reason and rationality and this gave them enough knowledge and foresight to rule wisely. According to Plato, philosopher kings were not just elite individuals but were actually moral and just leaders. Plato believed that it was only through the leadership of the philosopher kings that justice would be achieved in the society. This is because the

philosopher kings would be individuals whose desire for justice for the wider society prevailed their self-interests. He believed that the philosopher kings had the right philosophical temperament to distinguish what was just and what was unjust in the society. They had the ability to distinguish between what merely seemed to be the case and what the case really was. In this sense, philosophers were realists and their detachment from the sensory images realm would render them capable of constructing accurate and just judgments decision about the critical issues facing their states (Reeve, Plato, 176). Because of their deep knowledge and foresight, philosopher kings were incorruptible and this would consequently be reflected in their formulation of just laws and rules to govern the society. Concisely, Plato believes that governance by non-philosophical kings will be dominated by beliefs, opinions and self-interest. On the other hand, a philosophical king will govern with justice and virtue and without any hidden agenda.

First, Plato defines a philosophical king as one who has deep knowledge of ethics, logic, political philosophy and metaphysics. Possession of these qualities does not essentially the political king to be knowledgeable of the interest of the people. A true democracy is not one where the matters of the state are placed in the hands, of a few wise philosophers but is rather one where interest groups meet in a neutral a public arena to discuss and argue politics. In the rule of philosophers, the people might be blinded by the supposed knowledge guided rule of the philosophers that might not actually be in their best interest always.

Additionally, the philosophers are not suited to rule because in Plato's definition, a specific education that is actually accessible to only few will

allows only these few to become philosophers. Once again, when these few become kings, they are ideally a ruling class that is not essentially representative of the entire population.

It factors such as these that might render the philosopher kings not just after all. Although they may possess great knowledge and foresight, they may not necessarily understand the full interests of every single citizen of the state.

Plato asserts, “ There will not be an end to the troubles of the state or humanity itself until philosopher kings become kings in the world and philosophy and political power thus comes into the same hands” ( Plato, 1992, 190). His argument of a small group of highly knowledgeable individuals who have the capability to bring justice and happiness in the republic is perhaps ideal, but is also extremely unrealistic. As his student Aristotle would later argue, a human being is a political animal and it is inevitable for all of humanity to have a say in politics and not just leave to the elite of a few old and knowledgeable men. What Plato is simply arguing is not only asking people to be completely disinterested in the political process but to actually relinquish their rights and opinions and leave them at the hands of a group of benevolent dictators that he camouflages with the term “ philosopher kings”.

## **Works Cited**

PLATO. Republic, trans. G. M. A. Grube and rev. C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett. 1992

Reeve, C. D. C, Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato’s “ Republic”, First Edition. Cambridge, MA; Hackett Publishing Co. Inc., 2006.