

# Importance of unity and harmony to plato



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Plato who lived between 427-347 B. C is known for his development of many distinct areas in philosophy such as metaphysical, epistemology, aesthetics and ethics. Plato was a prototypical philosopher whose philosophical ideas had great impact on the subsequent political theories and concepts. Plato's philosophy is implied in the use of dialectic method in discussion which involves reflective insights into the nature. Also by way of cognitive optimism this method involves a belief in humans mind capacity to reach for truth and then using it for virtuous and rational ordering of human affairs (p. 96). Plato holds that any conflicting interests between the different parts of humanity can be harmonized. Plato proposes a righteous and rational political system which directs to a harmonious unity in a society and that gives chance to each of its parts to develop but not at the disadvantage of others. According to Plato, the practical implementation and theoretical design of such systems is however not possible without virtue in a society (p. 69). This paper studies the importance of unity and harmony to Plato in his philosophical concepts and how these concepts illustrate themselves at the level of individual soul as well as in the political society. This paper will also evaluate Plato's understanding of these concepts and how he uses them to unjustify democratic form of government.

In the Plato's philosophical theories, justice is one of the most important concepts in ethics and politics. Justice may refer to individual virtue, society order or even individual rights in contrast to the general social order claims. According to Plato justice is simply speaking the truth and giving back or repaying what one has borrowed (p. 5). However this definition is grounded on the traditional moral customs and may not be adequate to hold to today's

challenge and the power of critical thinking. If rightfully understood, justice does not act as a special advantage to any of the factions of a city but justice represents the common good of the entire political community which is to everyone's advantage. Justice provides unity in a society which is fundamental for society's health. A political order that promotes social peace in the environment of friendship and cooperation among different social groups whereby each benefits and each contributes to the common good of the society, is the best according to Plato.

Unity and harmony plays a very important role in the republic's politics and ethics since both the good soul and the good state are said to be harmonious (p. 99). Plato constantly argues that harmony in a society is achieved when everyone plays his or her role. From this it seems that good is generally achieved when each thing exhibits its essence harmony. However according to Plato good is not just a property that the forms have but it's a force from which reality comes from. He argues that " if the good is unity and harmony, it is also the first principle of everything, the standard by which everything is what it is, that has as existence and power of all its own (p. 100)

The courage, wisdom and moderation developed by the guardians, rulers and workers ideally give forth the justice in society which those virtues generate in the individual soul when they are nurtured by the three elements of that soul. Only when the three elements work in harmony and with intelligence under control does the individual or society attain the happiness and realization of which it is capable. In the republic he argues that the good use of a human being and his soul is to live in a just manner as well as to attain a state of unity and harmony (p. 110). According to Plato every human

being consist of many parts whereby each is different from the other and each has unique goals, aims and appetites. The three parts of the soul are intellect physical desires and courage. However it's fundamental to conceptualize the soul as encompassing the many conflicting parts although this state of conflict is unwelcome and meaning that man must attempt to harmonize his soul. According to Plato man can harmonize his soul by training each part to function as dictated by nature without hampering other parts business.

In this context each part of a man's soul should not only perform its function but also perform it well. So in the case of physical desires one should not look for luxurious pleasures but should look for survival and good health. When the parts of the soul are satisfying their ordinary functions well and under the direction of reason, they are then in harmony and balance with each other and at that instant the soul id unified, just, good and happy (p. 99). In this context Plato implies that a mans soul cannot be in harmony when performing functions of aimed at bringing luxurious pleasures to him alone and not caring for the goodness of others.

In the republic Plato states that the purpose of man is to use his mind and reason to search knowledge, truth and eventual reality. In this search man should understand that the body is a hindrance and therefore the soul should always struggle against it so as to achieve satisfaction in the individual soul as well as develop a good political society (p. 296). The body always confuses the mind with all types of appetites and desires thus giving the mind time to think. According to Plato the man should therefore remove himself entirely from his body and only use it to survive. This way man will

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be able to reduce the impediments to in pursuing his true function to the best of his ability, for his good and the good of the entire society. This search for mans function and reaching his good life is dependent on justice and harmonization of the soul.

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In today's politics it's universally believed that democracy which is a government of the people for the people is the most justifiable form of political system. This form of government has two features i. e. freedom and equality which are usually conspicuous in its operations. Democracy can be expressed as the rule of people governing themselves directly or by their chosen representative. However Plato does not consider democracy to be the best form of government. Plato criticizes the unchecked and direct type of democracy of that time because of its leading styles. According to Plato democracy is largely characterised by presence of freedom, but although freedom is a true value it can also be dangerous when it's in excess (p. 288). When everyone is given the freedom of doing as he or she wishes then this can results to anarchy.

On the other hand, in democracy there is equality which means that everyone in these systems has the right and equal capacity to rule (p. 288). The right for every one to rule implies therefore that many individuals will seek power in politics not necessarily to help or lead the society but because of their personal gains. These power seeking individuals can therefore make a democratic form of government to be highly corruptible opening ways for potential dictators, demagogues and can thus lead to tyranny. For instance Hitler was democratically elected claiming that he would act on behalf of the

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people but then he turned to be a tyranny and worked for his own personal interests (. p. 296) Plato holds that democratic political systems are and may lead from anarchy to tyranny. This system also lacks proper committed leaders with skills and morals. Though it may not happen in today's liberalized democracies the above reasons are Plato's main problems with democracy.

According to Plato democracy is a political system that depends on chance and thus without able and virtuous leaders it becomes a dangerous form of government. According to Plato therefore democracy is not possible without unity and harmony between the human soul and body. Harmonization of the soul helps human beings to avoid the temptations of the body such as selfishness and greed and pursue his true function which is also the way to good life in the society (p. 268). Harmonization also helps man to fight all sort of bodily desires and appetites which is important for leaders in democratic forms of government. For a society to enjoy the goodness of a democratic form of government it should therefore have leaders with harmony and unity between their soul and body. Thus they will be able to guide the society for the interest and benefits of everybody and not for their own self needs.

## Conclusion

According to Plato for one to be truly happy he or she must participate in the good and to take part in the good one must be just. However not every individual soul that is just and therefore one wonders how the unjust can be happy (p. 267). Just or right means nothing that's in the interest of the more

powerful. According to Plato injustice is not really ones true self justice. Therefore it should be in one interest to understand happiness. True justice and happiness is concurrently webbed together with self-justice. In the republic Socrates agrees that he also doesn't know exactly what good is but then he says we should endeavour for its knowledge since it's what brings happiness. Unity and harmony are therefore important in achieving individual satisfaction and also in developing an appropriately organized political society. Plato's unjustifying of democracy may however not be applicable in today's liberal democracy systems. Today's liberal democracies are not only based on freedom and equality but also on other factors like multi party systems and rule of law.