

Reflection – lessons from plato's the republic

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Introduction

Social thinkers such as Plato presents school of thoughts that empower the society to live in cohesion and harmonious way. The ideas presented by Plato define the societal problems and build on solutions that ensure the society improves on different areas. Folks in 2019 can find essential thoughts from Plato that can improve contemporary life and result to a life of purpose. Even though Plato defined the society based on the structures and way of life at that time, folks in 2019 can still be empowered by the thoughts presented. The societal changes that have happened from then till now are immense but the structures that define the society are the same. The social processes and social institutions try to define the laws that guide the society towards realization of purpose. This paper examines the ideas of Plato in The Republic that can facilitate improvement of life in the contemporary society.

Justice

Plato`s Republic emphasizes on the need for justice. It is important to be just than unjust in order to avoid misery and live a happy life. The text also teaches us the value of self-control and moderation in asserting democracy (Plato & Cornford, 2010). In defining the need for just than unjust, Plato develops an analogy of the city to individuals. The city contains different classes all of which are driven by their desires for happiness.

A person ruled by desires turns up to be unjust and lives an unhappy life. The key ideas we can derive from Plato in the contemporary society is justice, self-control and moderation (Plato & Cornford, 2010). Socrates in book four provides an answer on what defines a just society. A city that does not make

use of money so that there is no rich or poverty is considered as a just society. This may prove difficult for the folks in 2019 to adopt as part of contemporary life.

The contemporary society has turned into a man eat man society where individualism is at its highest level. The insanity in the society has resulted to creating of a society antagonizes itself. People are no longer willing to engage and work together for the betterment of the society but are driven by individual desires. This is what Plato defines as an unjust society. Justice is desirable based on its consequences. This analogy resonates to the contemporary world and is a key element from The Republic.

Moderation

One of the key lessons the contemporary society can adopt from the teachings in The Republic is moderation and self-control. Moderation has been threatened as a result of desires by mankind. For instance, the contemporary society focuses on investing at the expense of the environment. Trees are cut down to pave way for buildings. This has resulted to degradation of the environment which has resulted to climate change.

There has not been moderation in the need to acquire wealth at the expense of environmental degradation. Even though the current focus is on environmental sustainability, this has proved difficult to achieve due to interests and desires. The scramble to get wealth and the social stigmatization as a result of social class in the society present an unjust society and one that is not guided by moderation. Implementing moderation

in the current society would prove a daunting task as the society has been programmed in an unjust way.

Plato incorporates the context of a city and relates it to the soul. He asserts that the soul comprises of different parts. The just and healthy soul is the one that maintains harmonious relationship among its parts which include spirit, appetite, and reason. According to Plato, the soul has a dominant nature and justice is staying true to the disposition (Plato & Cornford, 2010). It's normally a delicate balance. Realization of the balance is what becomes difficult for the contemporary society to adopt the teachings of Plato. The desire for too much makes one veer off from nature and this upsets it. Plato suggests the reason for the structure governing the balance where Socrates states that, “ And we'll call him wise because of that small part of himself that rules in him and makes those declarations and has within it the knowledge of what is advantageous for each part and for the whole soul, which is the community of all three parts...and he [is] moderate because of the friendly and harmonious relationship between these parts, namely, when the rational part rules and doesn't engage in civil war against [itself]” (Plato, 1984).

Justice is identified as harmonious balance between the parts as guided by reason. The contemporary society as envisioned by folks in 2019 is not defined by justices as reflected in the balance of the parts. The society is at war as each person seeks to satisfy own desires at the expense of others. Plato asserts that the lack of balance and the desires for more makes one engage in irrational practices where he ensures he takes what belongs to the

other person. By seeking more, one is pushed to take away either by force or stealing what belongs to the other and this results to an unjust society.

Socrates therefore focuses on constructing an ideal society that assures uniformity (Plato & Cornford, 2010). It is this uniformity that is needed much in the contemporary society in order to create a balance of parts. The balance asserts that is each member focuses on what they are good at doing and there true nature, then the rational rule defines such society as just. This means that the true meaning of justice will be found.

The question that is then triggered is whether folks in 2019 can be able to stick to what they are good at. The contemporary society is set in such a way that the masses are driven by what is trending. People tend to move in a wave and do not understand or stick to their purpose. This calls for self-reflection in order to understand one`s own purpose and stick to what they are good at doing.

Justice can be realized is everyone performs the functions and purpose they are meant to as guided by reason. The ideal society in the contemporary society is therefore defined by justice (Plato & Cornford, 2010). It can be realized by self-reflection in order to understand what one is meant to do. What ails the current society according to Plato is the desire to have more and more. The context of wanting too much is what destroys an individual and the whole society. Socrates in analysis of the Republic defines in Greek the desire for more as pleonexia. Socrates asserts that,

“ Pleonexia is what one succumbs to when one always wants to outdo everyone else by getting and having more and more. Pleonexia is, or is the cause of, injustice, since always wanting to outdo others leads one to try to get what belongs to them, what isn't one's own. It is contrasted with doing or having one's own, which is, or is the cause of, justice.” (Plato, 1984).

Minimalism

The idea of minimalism is to combat materialism. Plato shows that it is not only the desire for material possessions that results to decay in the society, but also the desire and crave for more recognition. In the contemporary society, the desire is for more status, more pleasure, more success and more power. The balance as defined by Plato in order to realize a just society mean learning who we are, what we were meant to be, being contented with ourselves, managing our appetite, and pacifying our desires through self-acceptance and self-understanding (Plato & Cornford, 2010).

The minimalist movement as echoed by Plato and Socrates emphasizes on self-awareness and the assertion that peace is not found in consumerism. This is one key change needed by folks in 2019 where the context of consumerism defines the contemporary society today. Minimalism in this case is marked by high prices which seems desirable through advertising. The context of consumerism has gone to a higher extent in the contemporary society where it destabilized self-control and created desire for more. The class structure is enhanced as those who cannot afford are viewed as less and this breeds unjust society.

Conclusion

Socrates in The Republic presents key thoughts that can be emulated by folks in 2019. Based on the contemporary life, the society has changed as individualism has negated the need for cohesion and justice. The units that hold people and the society together are no longer reflected in the society today. Socrates emphasizes on creating an ideal society with uniformity. The ideal society upholds justice and ensures self-control which can be emulated by folks in 2019. The desire for more only works at creating divisions in the society making it difficult to realize societal goals in the contemporary society. Moderation and self-control are key in ensuring folks in 2019 do not engage in desires that create an imbalance in the society where the need for more and more negates the idea of social cohesion and integration. The need for justice as echoed by Plato is also key in contemporary society in order to ensure harmonious living across the society.

Reference

1. Plato, (1984) Plato: The Republic – The Greek Text Oxford. Clarendon Press.
2. Plato & Cornford, (2010). Plato's theory of knowledge: The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.