**PLATO (427-347 BC)**

The Greek school has produced eminent thinkers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. In the entire history of political thought no thinker evoked the admiration, reverence and criticism that Plato did- Plato has left behind many important works out of which three **the Republic**, (380-370 BC) **the States man** (360 BC) and **the Laws** (350BC), were of perennial interest to all those interested in the history of political ideas. Plato has been generally regarded as the founder of philosophical idealism by virtues of his conviction that there is a universal idea in the world of eternal reality beyond the world of the senses. He was concerned about human life and human soul or human nature, and the real question in it is how to live best in the state within the European intellectual traditions. He conceptualized the disorders and crises of the actual world and presented to his readers a vision of a desirable political order, which till today has fascinated his admirers and detractors.

Plato, along with his disciple Aristotle has been credited for laying the foundations of Greek political theory on which the western political tradition rests. These two thinkers between themselves have explored, stated, analyzed and covered a wild range of philosophical perspectives and issues. Plato was born in May-June 428/27 BC in Athens in an aristocratic though not affluent, family. His father, Ariston, traced his ancestry to the early kings of Athens. His mother, Pericitione, was a descendant of Solon, the famous law giver of Athens. Plato's original name was Aristocles, which meant the “best and renowned”. He was given the nick name 'Plato', derived from platys, because of his broad and strong shoulders. He was known for his good looks and charming disposition. He excelled in the study of music, mathematics and poetry. He fought in three wars and won an award for bravery. He met Socrates in 407 BC at the age of 20 and since then was under his hypnotic spell. The trial and execution of Socrates in 399 BC proved to be a turning point in Plato's life. In 386 BC on returning to Athens, Plato's friends gifted him a recreation spot named after its local hero Academns. It was here that Plato established his Academy which became a seat of higher learning and intellectual pursuits in Greece for the next one hundred years. The academy was initially a religious group School of Distance Education Western Political Thought 6 dedicated to the worship of Muses and its leader Apollo. The academy concreticised the possibility of a science of knowledge with which one could reform the world. Plato saw in the academy a training school for future philosophic rulers'.

**THEORY OF JUSTICE**

The concept of justice is the most important principle of Plato's political philosophy. The sub-title of the Republic, ‘Concerning Justice’ shows the extra ordinary importance which Plato attached to justice. Plato saw in justice the only practical remedy of saving his beloved Athens from decay and ruin. The main argument in the republic is a sustained search after the location and nature of justice. He discovers and locates the principle of justice with the help of his ideal state. An ideal state for Plato possessed the four cardinal virtues of **wisdom, courage, discipline and justice**. It would have wisdom because its rulers were persons of knowledge, courage because its warriors were brave, self discipline because of the harmony that pervaded the societal matrix due to a common agreement as to who ought to rule, and finally, justice of doing one's job for which one was naturally filled without interfering with others. For Plato, the state was ideal, of which justice was the reality. Justice was the principle on which the state had to be founded and a contribution made towards the excellence of the city. According to Plato, justice does not consist in mere adherence to the laws, for it is based on the inner nature of human spirit, it is also to the triumph of the stronger over the weaker, for it protects School of Distance Education Western Political Thought 7 the weaker against the stronger. A just state, Plato argues, is achieved with an eye to the good of the whole. In a just state or society, the rulers and military, the producers all do what they ought to do. In such a society the rulers are wise, the soldiers are brave, and the producers exercise self- control or temperance. For Plato, justice is a moral concept. As Prof: Ernest Barker has rightly pointed out; justice for Plato is at once a part of human virtue and the bond which joins men together in the states. It makes man good and make him social" A similar view has been expressed by a Prof. Sabine when he wrote that for Plato' “Justice is a bound which holds the society together”.

Platonic justice has two aspects - **individual and social.** According to Plato, every individual was a functional unit, assigned a particular task with clear cut obligations and privileges, which one was expected to perform diligently and meticulously. William Bernstein wrote in the discussion of justice, all elements of Plato's political philosophy are contained, In his theory of justice the relations of man to nature, to the polis, and to his fellow men from an architectonic whole. Plato explained his arguments for differing individual capabilities with the help of the theory of three classes and three souls, an idea borrowed from Pythagoros. He pointed out that every human soul had three qualities: **rational, `spirit and appetite** with **justice as the fourth virtue** balancing and harmonizing the other three qualities. In each soul one of these qualities would be the predominant faculties. Individuals in whom the **rational faculty** was predominant would constitute the **ruling class** and the virtue of such a soul was **wisdom**. This soul, a lover of learning had the power to comprehend the idea of good. Those in whom **spirit** was the predominant quality were the **auxiliaries or warriors** and the virtue of such souls was **courage**, implying the ability to hold on to one's convictions and beliefs in adverse times. **Together the rulers and soldiers would constitute the guardian class**. Individuals whose souls were **appetitive** exhibited a fondness for material things. They were lovers of gain and money. They were the artisans, the **producing class**. The quality of such an appetitive soul was **temperance,** though Plato did not see temperance as an exclusive quality of the artisan class. Though Plato took into account the role of spirit and appetite in human behavior, he was convinced that reason must ultimately control and direct emotions and passions. Thus **justice in the state meant that the three social classes (rulers, warriors and producers) performed the deliberative and governing, defense and production without interfering with the functions of others.** Justice was **“one class, one duty; every man, one work.** Prof. Ernest Barker has defined the Platonic theory of justice when he wrote that justice means ‘will to concentrate on one's own sphere of duty and not to meddle with the sphere of others". According to Plato, the justice of the state is the citizen's sense of duty. This conception of justice goes against individualism because a man must not think of himself as an isolated unit with personal desire. Plato's justice does not embody a conception of rights but of duties though it is identical with true liberty. It is the true condition the individual and of the state and the ideal state is the embodiment of justice. The state is the reality of which justice is the idea. According to Prof: Sabine, Plato visualized society as a system of services in which each member both gives and receives. What the state takes cognizance, of is this mutual exchange and what it tries to arrange is the most adequate satisfaction of needs and the most harmonious inter change of services Platonic justice leads to functional specialization. From the point of view of society justice means self control on the of various classes of society which makes each class mind its own function and not interfere with the functions of others. It also makes various members of each class stick to their own allotted functions and responsibilities within the calls and not interferes with the function of other individuals in the some class.

**CRITICISMS**-Several criticisms have been levelled against Platonic theory of justice. Platonic doctrine of justice is based on self - control and self abnegation of the individual in the interest of society. It leads to functional specialization. It ignores the evils of functional specialization which does not sufficiently realize and properly provide for the whole of human personality.lt stunts the growth of the individual and there - by impoverished the society. Platonic theory of justice divides the state into three separate classes and is not applicable to modern states with large population and numerous interests and sections of society. His division of society into separate classes would lead to a class state with class consciousness and privileges. Further, concentration of political power in the hands of philosophers is likely to lead to totalitarianism.

**IDEAL STATE**

**EDUCATION**- Plato's republic is not merely an essay on Justice. It is one of the greatest treatises on education to be ever written. The main objective of Plato’s philosophy was to bring about reforms in the Greek city – states. The object of the Republic was to locate and thereafter establish justice in the ideal state and his scheme of education is the spiritual remedy for the realization of justice. According to Plato, social education is a means to social justice. It is; therefore, correct to say that education for Plato has been a solution to all the important questions during his period. The ideal state ruled by the philosopher king was made possible through an elaborate and rigorous scheme of education. The state was wholly constructed around the scheme of education, in the belief that if the state performed its task of conducting and supervising education properly, Plato looked to education as an instrument of moral reform, for it would mould and transform human souls. Education inculcated the right values of selfless duty towards all, and was therefore positive. It helped in the performance of one's functions in society and in attaining fulfillment. Thus, education was the key to the realisation of the new social order. As Prof.: Ernest Barker has rightly pointed out; Plato’s scheme of education brings the soul into that environment which in each stage of its growth is best suited for its development. Plato attached more importance to education that either Aristotle or other Greek thinkers did. He clearly saw that education was more than acquiring of basic facts and ideas in one's childhood and adolescence but he was the first to propose an elaborate system of adult training and education. Following his teacher Socrates, Plato had a belief in the dictum that virtue is knowledge and for making people virtuous, he made education a very powerful instrument. Plato 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. According to Plato, education promotes justice and enables a man to fulfill his duties. Education has the twin aim of enabling the individual to realize himself and of adjusting him harmoniously and usefully to society. In his masterpiece, The Republic, Plato has recommended a state controlled compulsory and comprehensive scheme of education meant for both men and women. He wants that deduction must itself provide the needed means, must see that citizens must actually get the training they require and rust be sure that the education supplied is consonant with the harmony and well being of the state. As Prof.: Sabine has rightly pointed out Plato's plan is, therefore, for a state controlled system of compulsory education. His educational scheme falls naturally into two parts, the elementary education, which includes the training of the young person's up to the age of 20 and culminating in the beginning of military services and the higher education intended for those selected persons of both sexes who are to be members of the two ruling classes and extending from the age of 20 to 35. Plato considered the state as an educational institution capable of providing the benefits of education to each and every student in his ideal state. Plato's scheme of education had both the Athenian and the Spartan influence. Impressed by the result of state - controlled education in Sparta, Plato duplicated the same for Athens. An important draw back in the Athenian curriculum was the lack of training in martial arts that would prepare the individual from childhood to the service of the interests of the state. Plato attempted to balance the two contrasting models. The education system drew from Athens values of creativity, excellence and individual achievement, which it tried to integrate with that of Sparta, namely civic training. Its content was typically Athenian and its purpose was dominated by the end of moral and intellectual cultivation. The curriculum of the elementary education was divided into two parts, gymnastics for training the body and music for training the mind, The elementary education was to be imparted to all the three classes. But after the age of twenty, those selected for higher positions in the guardian class between twenty and thirty five. The guardians were to be constituted of the auxiliary class, and the ruling class. These two classes were to have a higher doze of gymnasium and music, greater doze of gymnastics or the auxiliaries, and greater doze of music for the rulers. The higher education of the two classes was, in purpose, professional and for his curriculum Plato chose the only scientific studies – **mathematics, astronomy and logic**. Before the two classes could get on to their jobs, Plato suggested a further education till the age of about fifty, mostly practical in nature. **Platonic scheme of education was progressive and systematic. Its characteristics can be summarized as follows**. 1. His educational scheme was state controlled compulsory and graded one moving from lower to higher levels of learning process. 2. It aimed at attaining the physical, moral, mental and intellectual development of human personality. 3. It is a graded process which consisted of different levels and stages starting from 6 to 50 years. 4. His scheme was particularly aimed at producing philosopher kings, the rulers in his ideal state; 5. His educational plan aimed at preparing the rulers for administrative statesmanship, soldiers for military skill, and producers for material productivity and finally. 6. His educational plans sought to bring a balance between the individual needs and social requirements. Plato’s scheme of education was undemocratically devised in so far as it ignored the producing class completely .It was limited in nature and was restrictive in extent by laying more emphasis on mathematics and logic than on literature. The whole plan was unexpectedly and unduly expensive . It is further criticized that Platonic scheme of education will create an ideal philosopher more than an ideal man of action. Plato does not sufficiently realize that education should be relative to the character of the individual.

**COMMUNISM** According to Plato, justice could be achieved by spiritual and material means. While education is the remedial measure for the achievement of justice through spiritual means communism is the solution through material means. While education was designed to create the proper environment for the nurturing and development of the human soul, the communism tried to eliminate all the negativities that obstructed the proper growth of the individual. Platonic theory of communism has two parts - **communism of family** otherwise known as communism of wives and children, and **communism of property**.

Plato's ideal state consisted of three classes, those of the rulers, of the auxiliaries, and of the producers, each class doing its own assigned duties and responsibilities with utmost sincerity and devotion. The guardians are to live a life very different from that of the producers, one in which they must forgo all that makes life for the ordinary man worth living. Plato believed that justice would be ushered in if the ruling class does away with property, for property represents the elements of appetite, and to do away with properly demands the communism of families. Plato abolished private family life and property for the ruling class for they encouraged nepotism, favoritism particularism, factionalism and other corrupt practices commonly found among the rulers. Politics was to promote common food and interest of the state. Plato thereby established a high standard for the rulers. He proposed that the members of the guardian class live together in a common barrack. The life of the guardian class would be in accordance with the rule followed among the Greeks that friends have all things in common. In the Republic Plato devoted greater space and consideration to communism of family than to property. This was mainly because he had perturbed by the negative emotions of hatred, selfishness and the envy that the family encouraged. Plato believed that conventional marriage led to women's subordination, subjugation and seclusion. He rejected the idea of marriage as a spiritual union based on love and mutual respect. However, marriage was necessary to ensure the reproduction and continuation of the human race. He, therefore, advocated temporary sexual union for the purpose of bearing the children. He relieved women of child caring responsibilities. Once children were born, they would be taken care of by the School of Distance Education Western Political Thought 12 state controlled unserious, which would be equipped with well trained nurses. Except for the philosopher ruler, none would know the parentage of these children. Plato's argument for communism of property and family was that the unity of the state demands their abolition.

**Criticism**

1.It is doubtful if communism of families would bring greater degree of unity by making the guardians a single family. 2. Communism of wives and children was found to create confusion if not disorder - one female would be wife of all the guardians and one male, the husband of all the females 3. Common children would tend to be neglected, for every body's child would be nobody's baby. 4. It is also doubtful if the state controlled mating would ever be workable; it would rather reduce men and women to the levels of mere animals by suggesting temporary marital relationship. 5. Plato’s communism of family suggests a system of marriage which is neither monogamy nor bigamy, nor polygamy, nor polyandry; and finally. 6. Plato's theory of communism is too idealistic, too utopian, too imaginary and accordingly far away from the realities of life. Some critics have gone to the extent of criticizing Platonic communism as half communism'.

**STATE AND GOVERNMENT** According to Plato, it is the duty of the state or govt. to help people live a complete life. The problem which Plato addressed was not having best a govt. could be created but how best a govt. could be installed. His model state is an Ideal state ruled by an ideal ruler known as Philosopher King. In his masterpiece, namely the Republic, Plato constructs his ideal state on the analogy between the individual and the state. According to Plato, human soul consists of three elements of **reason, spirit and appetite**, functioning within proper bounds. The state must reflect such a constitution, for the state was a magnified individual, the virtues and the constitution of the two being the same. This identification for the state with the individual makes Plato present a number of false analogies between the two. Plato's Ideal state comprises or three classes, namely the **ruling class, the warriors and the producing class**. The main objective of his ideal state is good life and Plato let his imagination pursue this good which results in the portrayal of a utopia. Plato's portrayal of an ideal state may be compared to an artist’s portrayal of an ideal landscape. His ideal state is an ideal in the sense that it is an exhibition of what a state ought to be. The ideal state was a reflection of man's best and noblest self and provided the medium in which a man found his best self. **Plato believed that man found his perfection only in the ideal state. Plato builds his ideal state in three successive stages**.

1. In the first stage, Plato believes that men and women are different in degree only and not in kind. Hence they should be given same educational facilities and should partake in the same public functions.
2. In the second stage Plato advocates the abolition of the family on the basis of communism of property and wives among the two upper classes.
3. In the third stage he introduced the rule of philosophy. Plato’s ideal state is hierarchical in composition and functions. At the head of the ideal state is a philosopher ruler highly qualified people capable of ruling the country either fear or favour.

In order to ensure a steady supply of philosopher rulers, Plato advocated a state controlled compulsory scheme of education meant for the children belonging to all the three classes of people. The communism of family and property among the two upper classes was meant to keep them out of economic and world temptations and ambitions so that they could concentrate on their duty to the state. The other features of the ideal state were **functional specialization**, **equality of men and women** and **censorship of art**. Having outlined the details of an ideal state, Plato examined other types of regimes, accounting for their decline and decay. He listed four types of governments namely **timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and despotism or tyranny**. The first of these forms of state is timocracy "based on ambition and love of honor and war as represented by Crete and Sparta "so commonly admired". The second is oligarchy or Plutocracy the rule of the wealthy, the third is democracy, the rule of the people, the fourth, and most important imperfect is despotism or tyranny, which develops inevitably out of the anarchy of the democratic state. In his classification of forms of state, Plato considered democracy the second worst type of government. His description of life in a democratic society may be overdrawn, but remains to this day the most incisive critique of democracy. Democracy was characterized by license, wastefulness, insolence, anarchy and democratic man gave more importance to his desire and appetites. Quantity rather than quality was the main criterion honoring all values on an equal basis. In the Statesman, **Plato divided the states into lawful and unlawful states**, a classification that Aristotle adopted when he spoke of good and perverted forms of government in his Politics. For Plato, there were three law abiding states, and their corresponding corrupt and lawless states. **The rule of one** yielding **monarchy and tyranny**, **the rule of a few**, **aristocracy and oligarchy,** and the **rule of many** included **moderate and extreme democracy.** For the first time, Plato conceded two kinds of democracy, and made it the best of the lawless states, though the west of law - abiding states. Both forms of democracy were better than oligarchy and even monarchy, tacitly admitting the importance of popular participation and consent in the polity.

**An assessment of Plato’s Political Philosophy** Plato's political philosophy, which emerges from his writings, has its special importance in the history of western political theory. Plato was the first systematic political theorist and a study of the western philosophy of tradition begins with his masterpiece, the Republic. Jowet rightly describes Plato as father of philosophy, politics and literary idealism. Plato's contribution to the western political thought is without any parallel. He was given it a direction, a basis and a vision. Political idealism is Plato's gift to western political philosophy. He innovated novel ideas and integrated them skillfully in a political scheme. His radicalism lies in the fact that his rulers are rulers without comforts and luxuries possessed by men of property. Plato's attempt in the Republic is to portray a perfect model of an ideal order. Plato was the first to allow women to become rulers and legislators. His scheme of **collective households**, **temporary marriages** and **common childcare** were accepted as necessary condition for the emancipation of women by the socialist of the 18th and 19th centuries. The whole bent of Plato's Political thought was the welfare and development of the community.