

Western Political Thought

Ancient Western Pol. Thought →

→ originated in Ancient Greece. Time - around 400 BC.

→ the term politics comes from Greek word "polis".

Ancient prominent city state - ~~Greece~~ Athens
Sparta

Village can't be self sufficient but city can be.

globalisation can proceed only by localisation.

Ancient Greece was not a nation but had "city-states"

like citizens of Athens, citizens of Sparta.

Vatican City, Singapore → present city state

Greece - earliest practice of direct democracy

Those who didn't have property were not citizens, ^{adult} only males were citizens

Switzerland gave right ^{to} of vote for woman only in 1972.

Greek society was hierarchical & ~~and~~ patriarchal one.

Characteristic Features of Greek political life:-

Political life revolve around the idea of city states. It

means city was state. State means a self-sufficient

viable political unit. In Greece there was no analytical

diff between society and state because of the small size.

- Greek society was hierarchical that means no concept of equality. It was divided into property and property less class. In Greek society, inequality was considered as natural desirable. They justified inequality.
- Greek society was patriarchal. Women were not considered as citizens. The role of woman was confined within family.
- Greek economy was agrarian, can be called as slave economy. There was no concept of nation, hence no international relations.
- Greeks were ethno-centric. They used to consider people outside Greece as barbarians.

Plato

- major contribution of that particular thinker.
- major contribution of Plato = Philosophical King
- Why thinker writing something?
- Plato belonged to Athens. He wanted Athens to become a ideal state which is ruled by philosopher King
- Then try to understand circumstances of thinker.

- His time was during "crisis period of Athens".
- Then, intellectual influences on Thinker.
- Socrates and Pythagoras & Heraclitus & Parmenides were his prominent influences.

- Then, major works of the ~~that~~ thinker.

- His prominent was "Republic", "The Statesman", "The Laws".
- Then, Who is the prominent critic of that thinker?

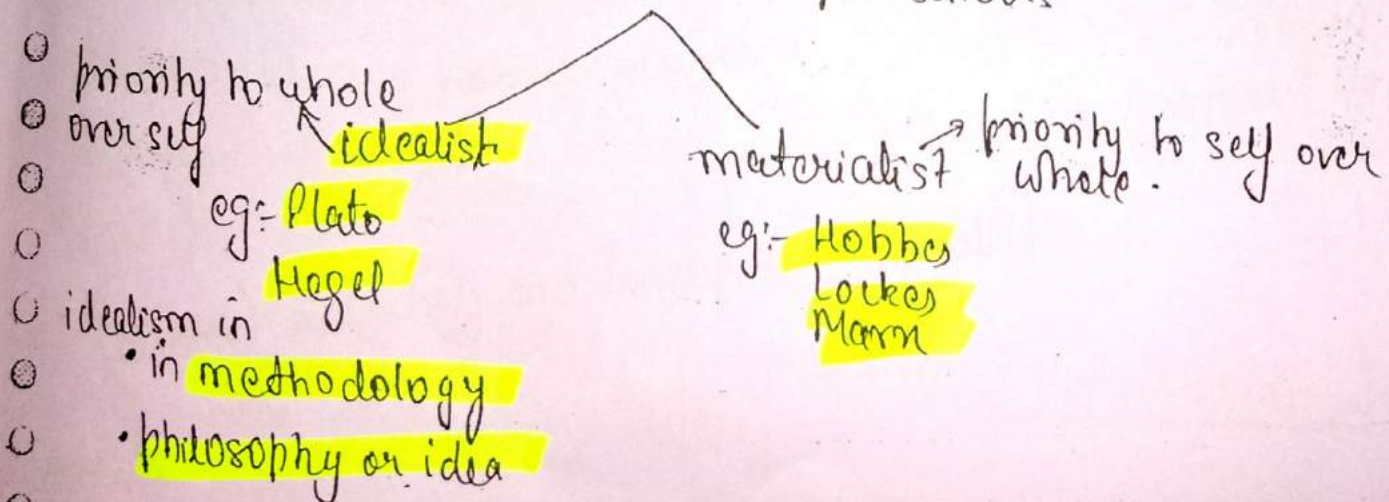
- His was Aristotle
- ~~Plato~~ ~~Aristotle~~

Socrates disciple → Plato disciple → Aristotle

- Another critique of Plato was "Karl Popper" in his book "Open society and his enemy" and its three enemies were Plato, Hegel & Karl Marx.

- Then, Know about thinker's school of thought.

In Western 2 major schools



Plato is idealist in both aspects in terms of methodology and in terms of political philosophy.

Political idealist means:-

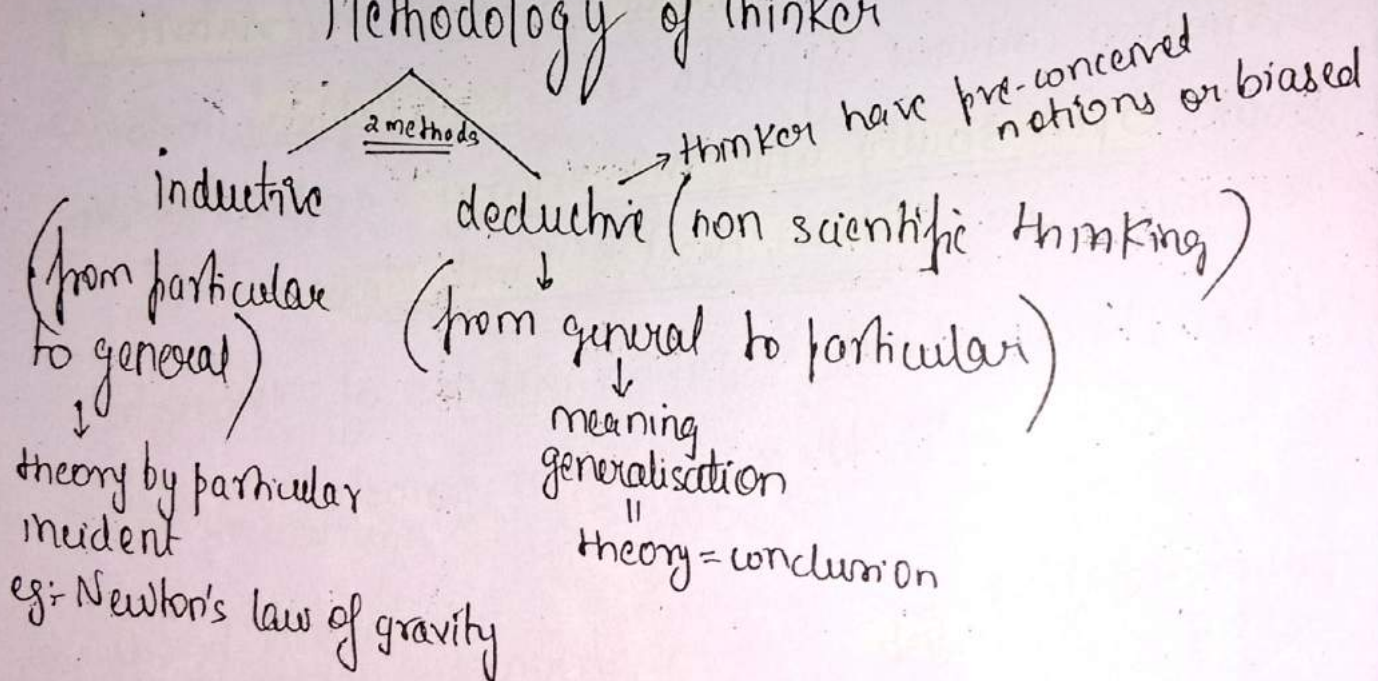
1) if priority is on whole over self or priority to social over self interest.

2) priority to state over individual

no concept of rights in idealism. it started with liberalism.

3) no importance to rights but only to duties

Methodology of Thinker

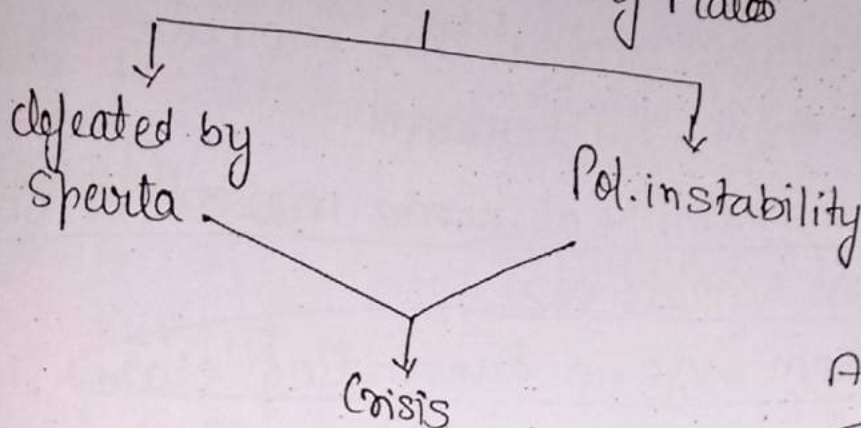


philosophers in general are deductive (biased)

Contribution of Philosopher

Plato is known as "father of political philosophy"

Problems of Athens
during the time of Plato



Athens

Rich
↓
Ruling class

Poor
↓
ordinary man.

0. root cause of fall of any state
0 is political corruption.

0. He wanted Philosophers to be the rulers.

0. "Knowledge is a source of virtue" - Socrates

Concern/Purpose of Plato

0. Plato wanted to know the causes for decline of Athens. During his time, Athens was passing through a phase of crisis.
What crisis?

- 1) Athens was defeated by Sparta in "Peloponnesian War".
- 2) There was internal instability
- 3) One form of govt changing to other form.

3) The indication of dissatisfaction.

Plato observed that Athens is not a single city but a twin city i.e. city of rich and city of poor. The wealth of the society was concentrated in the hands of few belonging to ruling class whereas life of ordinary citizens being miserable. Such situations impact the morale of the people towards their motherland.

Political instability at home makes a state vulnerable to external threats also.

The problem was in the ruling class. The ruling ^{class} in Athens was corrupt. They were not ruling in the interest of the people but in self-interest.

Ruling class was running after money and power.

Plato held that the root cause of the problem is the ignorance of the ruling class. They lack real knowledge about the things that are desirable, which are permanent and worth

pursuing. They lacked the understanding of the purpose of governance. It is happening because

of their ignorance. Hence, he concludes
Statement →

Until philosophers are the rulers or rulers learn philosophy, there is no end to the predicament

of human life".

How to write a short note.

1) Introduction → your understanding of statement.

2) Content of the statement.

3) What exactly Plato has found?

4) Why Plato proposes rule of Knowledge?

5) evaluate the statement — have your own position.

Paragraph form is recommended.

Introduction

Above statement is about Plato's thinking of

Philosopher king where Plato is saying that

state is best governed when philosophers are king

Content of statement

While finding out the causes of decline of Athens,

Plato comes to this conclusion that the root

cause of problem is ignorance.

Describe Plato's View

• explain predicament by which Athens was suffering

• Why Plato thinks ignorance is problem?

↓
running after money is ignorance

• Source of influence on Plato

Socrates view that Knowledge is virtue.

• Assess the relevance of Plato's thinking

Influences on Plato

Statement →

All that is Platonic is Socratic

Statement telling influence of Socrates on Plato.

Socrates never talked about Philosopher King.

→ Statement shows the influence of Socrates on Plato. Socrates was Plato's teacher. Plato had high regards for Socrates. He used to consider Socrates as "Wiseest man on Earth". Plato is influenced by not only the ideas of Socrates but life of Socrates also. Plato's disliking for democracy and preference for the institution of Philosopher King is linked to the event in the life of Socrates.

Socrates was ordered to drink poison.

At that point of time, Athens was ruled by democrats. Both Plato and Aristotle were critics of democracy and considered democracy as "rule of ignorance".

Plato was influenced by Socrates's "theory of Knowledge".

Socrates used to say that knowledge is virtue. Socrates statement form the foundation of Plato's theory of ideal state. Since knowledge is virtue, Athens can become a virtuous state only when ruled by the philosopher. Plato was also influenced by dialectics - a method invented by Socrates. Socrates is the main character in Plato's dialogue. Plato expresses his views through the character of Socrates. For above reasons, it is said that all that is Platonic is Socratic. However, above statement is partially correct as Plato is influenced by other Greek thinkers also like Pythagoras, Parmenides and Heraclitus. Plato is one of the most original thinkers. Though influenced by Socrates yet many of the ideas like that of philosopher King, system of communism are that of Plato's own ideas.

Original ideas of Plato - Philosopher King
Communism

Socrates's Theory of Knowledge

- they don't think rationally
- mass- technically means mindless
- too much participation of people can lead to demagogic rule. eg: Hitler.

Plato & Aristotle have aristocratic bend of mind.

virtue-good

Knowledge is a source of virtue

↓
good life

↓
good

Knowledge will lead to good life.

(become good by gaining knowledge)

Wise is soul. Soul is perfect guide. Soul is God inside you.

How to enlighten the soul?

To understand soul, method is dialectics.

Dialectic is a method of discourse b/w two parties who have different view

↓ method of
questioning or reasoning

but want to come on to a

2 types of knowledge

ultimate
flawless
fundamental

Knowledge which is unquestionable

Belief
(it will break one day)
belief gets converted to knowledge with dialectics

vision
arguing

For Socrates Knowledge is a source of virtue and ignorance is vice. To lead good life, one must have the knowledge of what is good life? ^{V. imp} The source of knowledge is within our soul to understand what is right and wrong, we need enlightenment of soul. Socrates suggest the method of dialectics. The role of a teacher is not to teach rather help the student to understand the truth on his own. Hence, logical reasoning is the process by which beliefs get converted into the true knowledge.

True knowledge is permanent, its foundations cannot be shaken and thus it is different from the beliefs. The true knowledge about a good life is the source of good life for a person. If a person is knowledgeable, he will understand that he is a part of the whole. The interest of individual is not different or contradictory to the interest of society. Good life is not simply leading good life as an individual but as a member of society.

It means that, the model of Ideas / Form are the same

Graphical representation of dialectics
Thesis → Antithesis → Synthesis

Plato's Theory of Knowledge
Ideas / Form
↳ Critique Aristotle

He wanted to make Athens an ideal state

↓
perfect / best

• U should know the idea of ideal state for that u require knowledge → which comes from soul

Part of Physical Body & Part of Spiritual Body

every soul don't have capacity to get enlightened
3 types of soul

Gold (1st class) → rare
Silver (2nd class)
Copper (3rd class) → majority of ppl.

Soul is part here

Soul can reach God and attain knowledge and learn from there the idea of ideal state & then by coming back to earth then with idea of or method of dialectics.

Theory of soul or Myth of Metals

He is influenced by Pythagoras wrt theory of soul as well as love for geometry. Acc to Plato, soul is the permanent part of our body.

Permanence and change is the characteristic feature of this world.

^{soul}
↓
body

When soul ~~reaches~~ leaves the body, it resides in the kingdom of god, here soul observes the perfect form of everything. When soul takes rebirth and witness the things in this world, soul recollects the impression it had when it was in Kingdom of God. Though every person has a soul but every soul is not equal. Every soul does not have equal capacity of enlightenment. He categorises souls into 3 types

- 1) Gold → rarest
- 2) Silver
- 3) Copper → majority

Science
↓
• talks about
• physical world
• method is
• empirical
• what you see
• you believe

Philosophy → branch of Knowledge which gives you idea of ultimate ~~real~~ reality.
↓
talks about
metaphysical world

diff between matter and idea

↓
change
part of physical
world

↓
does not change.
part of metaphysical
world

Theory of Ideas

→ based on theory of knowledge. The theory of knowledge suggest that there are (2 types)

of knowledge

① which can be called as true knowledge, ultimate knowledge, which cannot be challenged.

② which we think is knowledge but is just our belief. It can be easily shaken by someone having real knowledge. This knowledge is not

permanent. True knowledge is about the things which are permanent. Beliefs is about the things which are changing. Physical world is changing. Hence the knowledge about matter or material goods is changing. Ideas are permanent.

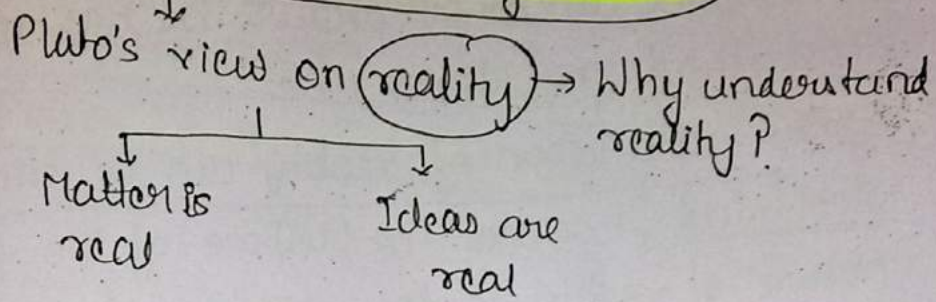
The knowledge about ideas is superior.

One should try to understand the essence rather than physical manifestation. Thus the

true knowledge is about ideas. Thus philosophy is superior to physics. The purpose of philosophy is to understand the idea. The knowledge of physical world is gained through empirical observations. The knowledge of idea is gained

through dialectics. For ^{imp} knowledge of physical world, one needs just an eyesight but for knowledge of ideas, we need vision or enlightenment of soul.

Q. Statement - Reality is shadow of ideas.



Plato's views are "teleological".

Is not neutral explanation of reality.

Answer - This is Plato's explanation of reality.

Philosophers have been trying to understand reality so that human life can be organised on the basis of ultimate reality or ultimate truth.

In political philosophy there are 2 broad classifications.

One set of philosophers like Karl Marx suggest that matter is ultimate reality. On the other hand scholars like Plato, Hegel held that idea is ultimate reality.

For idealist scholars, Idea is superior to matter. Matter is changing, hence there cannot be an ultimate principle about material things. Ultimate knowledge can only be about

the idea because idea is permanent. Philosophers also classify worlds into 2 categories:-
a) The Physical world - which is a world of change and
b) World of Ideas - which is the world of permanence

Plato has given the theory of idea to support his theory of ideal state which is ruled by philosopher king. If Athens to become an ideal state, only philosopher can do so because he has reason to understand the ideal state.

~~Plato's~~ explanation of reality can be considered as teleological. It serves the purpose of his politics. The nature of reality is too complex, diverse and vast. It is beyond the capacity of human mind to understand the reality in totality.

Acc to "Oakeshott", in the world of politics, we move in a borderless and bottomless sea.

Explanation of Shadow of Reality or Reality is shadow of ideas
For Plato, when we look at the worldly things, we consider them as real. However they are not real rather shadow of reality. Ultimate reality lies behind not in appearance but in essence. To understand the physical world, one require eyesight^{but} to understand ultimate reality one requires vision, enlightenment of soul, insight or reason.

Plato gives "allegory of caves". A man's sitting with his

mb

back towards the mouth of the cave looks the shadow on the wall of the cave and consider them as real. However they are mere shadows. When man turns himself towards the light, then only he will understand.

Q. Plato as the "father of Political Philosophy" Why??
A. Philosophy is the understanding of ideas. Plato was the 1st person to systematically establish that the study of ideas is superior to the study of matter. It means philosophy is higher branch of learning than physics. For study of philosophy one requires special faculty of reason. Plato also elaborated on how to go for study of ideas through dialectics i.e. why it is said that Plato is philosophy and philosophy is Plato. Plato is known as father of political philosophy because he established that purpose of study is not just the explanation and description of existing states but to understand the features of ideal state and to make efforts to establish ideal state. Thus he has also provided philosophy with social purpose.

Q. Until philosophers are the rulers or rulers learn philosophy there is no end to the predicament of human life.

A. Above statement is justification of rule of philosopher king. From Plato's point of view only philosopher king can end the predicament of human life.

because philosopher king knows what is real and desirable. We need to understand Plato's perspective in broader sense. Plato is emphasizing on the fact that we cannot have good life without good government.

The aim of human life is not simply to live as animals. The aim is to lead a good life. To overcome the predicaments to good life in the objectives of man's good life, role of state become important.

Without political reforms, it is not possible to achieve the conditions of good life. Ethics and politics are not separate from each other. The question of good life is inseparable from good political life.

In case of India, it can be said that since 1990s, we focussed on economic reforms but overlooked political reforms.

Plato's ideas in Republic

- 1) Plato's theory of justice
- 2) theory of education
- 3) theory of communism
- 4) theory of philosopher king and comparison between rule of law of rule of philosopher king
- 5) assessment of Plato
 - a) Plato as 1st communist

- b) Plato as 1st fascist
- c) Plato as totalitarian thinker.
- d) Plato as 1st feminist
- e) Plato's position in political philosophy.

"Republic" is a book of young Plato when he was in his youth.
~~Statesman~~ "Statesman" - his 2nd book.
 "The Laws" - his 3rd book

Introduction of Republic

Republic is a work of young Plato. Here Plato is idealist, radical, romantic and thus utopian.
 ↳ very imaginative.

Plato's Theory of Justice

Justice has 2 aspects

↓
legislative or
policy making system

↓
 distributive justice
 OR
 social policy making

↓
Judiciary system or administration
of justice
 rectificatory justice

State which is not just is not a state. Justice as a policy should be implicit in concept of state.

Republic is the constitution of Plato's ideal state

The subtitle of Republic is "Concerning Justice".

The most imp. concept in Plato's ideal state is theory of justice.

Importance of Justice Concept in Political theory

Justice is archaetonic principle in Plato's ideal state
Justice is always the foundational theme in any state.

Plato's Purpose in his Theory of Ideal State

is to understand perfect idea of justice.

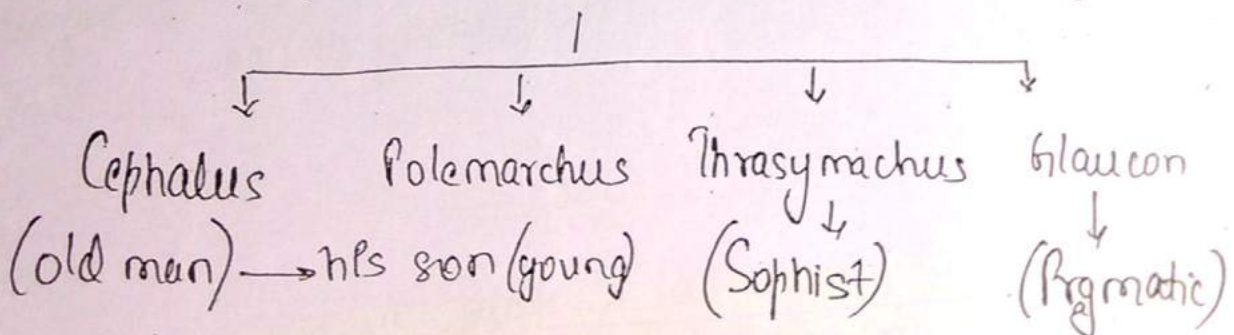
The perfect idea of justice means God's idea of justice

To understand God's idea of justice, one needs enlightenment of soul or reasoning. Only philosopher can bring the perfect idea of justice.

Imp Plato's Methodology

→ dialectics - ^{his} methodology.

He is engaging 4 characters in a dialogue



Cephalus View of Justice → He represents traditional common man's perspective on justice.

Acc to Cephalus, justice is :-

① performing one's duties

② paying one's dues

Thesis → Antisynthesis → synthesis

Plato's view → He accepts that justice is duty but he further questioned the 2nd principle.

Polemarchus's views → Son of Cephalus. He tries to elaborate Cephalus point of view. Doing good to your friend and doing harm to your enemy.

Plato's point of view → possibility of wrong application as not easy to identify who is our friend and who is our enemy.

Justice is not to harm anyone rather justice is to reform.

Thrasymachus view → He is a sophist. Justice is the interest of stronger.

Q. Who were sophist?

A. Sophist were teachers who were charging for imparting education. There was a rivalry between Sophist and Socrates. Socrates considered that Sophist are misleading the youth. Sophist not doing justice with their profession. They are teaching not what is to be taught but what their pupil wanted to listen. They were teaching that self interest is

Superior to social interest Objective of life is to
earn power and money.

Q. Justice ^{is} ~~the~~ the interest of stronger.

It implies that justice is "might is right". Above statement is equating justice with power. Those who have power and what they say become justice. There is no scope for justice for the weak. Hence, one should try to acquire power. It is of ^{argument of} said that the world understands power, ~~of~~ rather than power of argument.

Critical evaluation of this statement—

(Plato rejects) that justice is interest of strong. Power and justice can't be equated. Power is against the idea of justice.

It is wrong to consider that laws made by state only in the interest of ruling class. Laws made by state should be seen for well being of all. Being unjust is never better than being just. Person who does not obey law, he is never at peace.

Individualist's form is anarchy.

Sophist → Self interest > state

Sophist → realist but undesirable

Plato → desirable but unrealistic

Thrasymachus point of view is realist; cannot be over looked altogether, more visible in international

politics where as Plato's views is desirable. It is the direction towards which any civilized society should move.

Gillaucon's Idea of Justice / Pragmatic Theory of Justice or Contractual Theory of Justice.

Justice is the interest of weak. It means because weak cannot protect themselves. Hence they came together and formed the state. State is a contract or bargain between strong and weak.

Plato's Criticism

- 1) It is wrong to consider justice as a bargain.
- 2) It's wrong to consider law, state and justice stand only for weak.
- 3) Justice is a universal idea, not depends on contract.

Constituent elements of Plato's idea of justice on the basis of above discussion.

- 1) Justice is related to duty
- 2) Justice is a source of virtue, its never to harm anyone.
- 3) Justice is for all and ^{not} just for the ruling class.
- 4) Justice is not dependent on contract.

→ Continue after 13 Pages

(8)

Plato's Theory of education

Explain how theory of education in Plato is linked to his theory of justice.

Introduction of his Theory of education

1) Education system is the main mechanism to bring out dominant characteristic of soul and to place persons accordingly.

2) Plato has dealt with system of education very comprehensively.

Rousseau held that republic is the best ^{→ book the best} in the field of education.

Prominent views of Plato on education.

I. Plato on Athenian system of education

Demerits:-

a) Privatisation of education:- Acc to Plato, education of strategic significance, cannot be left entirely in private hands. State must maintain vigilance on education. He proposes State Censorship. The most imp. duty of state is to impart education. Education should not depend on will and capacity of the parents. Education is most imp means of political socialisation. Getting desirable citizens and achieving social change. Plato held that state is essentially pedagogic (in French).

is most important) institution. ①

b) He disliked the denial of equality of opportunity to woman in getting education. He didn't believe that woman suffer from any natural disability w.r.t acquiring education or ^{claim} role in public sphere ^{playing}.

Plato regarded as 1st feminist because of his belief in equality of sexes.

c) He disliked the neglect of physical and military education.

Merits:-

One aspect of Athenian system he like was
a) focus on the study of geometry, philosophy, literature and dialectics. These branches help in developing the logical faculties of our mind.

His views on Spartan system

He liked following features:-

- 1) State controlled education system.
- 2) Compulsory education for all
- 3) Compulsory military education
- 4) Equality of opportunity to women also.
- 5) Missing element in sparta is study of philosophy, logic those things which develop rational faculty.