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Major philosophical thoughts of Plato

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Abstract

This paper considers the philosophical thoughts of Plato on ideal state with ways and means of achieving it. In considering that the researcher examines those major thoughts as states, justice, republic, marriage and or women, education etc. for the purpose of this research, the researcher employed both primary and secondary sources of data gathering and collection, which involves questionnaire administration as well as paired sample statistics of data analysis and interpretation. The paper concludes by offering some recommendations such as given the importance why laws must be enacted, that human being must and should not be denied access to property but need for assets declaration regularly and periodically, etc.

Keywords: Philosophical thoughts, Plato

Introduction

He who refuse to rule is liable to be ruled by one who is worse than himself. And the fear of this as I conceive, induces the good to take office, not because they would, but because they cannot help- not under the idea that they are going to have any benefit or enjoyment themselves, but a necessity, and because they are not able to commit the task of ruling to anyone who is better than themselves, or indeed as good.

Plato and the State

To him, Plato opines that the problem of the state is that it was not in the hands of the people who know how to rule it. If you want an ideal state, a Philosopher should be the King or the King becomes a Philosopher, or you look for the best men in the state and make them rulers. Plato opined that the state is to make everyone happy and contented and live fully. The state is to create ideal condition for people to live in and this is only possible when men and women who have a perfect knowledge of what the good things are created. He believed that through training, aptitude and education the state could inculcate true life into the people. For Plato, true knowledge is different from ordinary, as true knowledge, is what people should strive for. What then is the idea of true/ perfect knowledge? True knowledge is knowing the ultimate and finite, beyond the comprehension for ordinary senses. True knowledge is the real thing in which reality exists. It is the idea behind the idea. The real has no ordinary existence, but it exists behind the back of one's mind. But he concluded that "not all men have TRUE knowledge i.e. knowledge of the ultimate reality"

Organization of the State to Ensure the Good

Three basic forces, Plato contends, motivate men. They are

- a. The Forces of Desire or Appetite (Soma)
- b. Spirit or Courage, (Thumos)
- c. Reason. (Nous)

Each is present in every man in varying amounts, but one is always predominant. Society may be divided into three classes according to the relative amount of each force present in the individuals who comprise the community.

Any one class will play the role for which it is best qualified by virtue of its dominant motivating force. The men who are motivated largely by appetite or desire, (soma) will constitute the largest class. Fewer will be motivated by spirit or courage (Thumos) than were impelled by desire, but they will still be more numerous than those dominated by reason. Thus from the standpoint of numbers, the reasoning (Nous) class will be smallest, and the courageous and spirited persons will occupy the middle position.

The state arises in the first place in answer to the demand or the satisfaction of reciprocal needs; a community organization is obviously best fitted to accomplish that end. For example, goods are needed for consumption, and certain essential tasks must be performed. Since some men perform a particular task better than others, they should perform only that task. Each person works at what he does best and through association, not only satisfies his own needs but also the needs of others for that service.

In looking for the characteristics of a good state. Plato therefore postulated that

A Good State Must Be Properly Fed

The lowest of the three classes that constitute the state is the artisan class, whose function is to supply the community with the material necessities of life. It means a good state must have a class of producers below the Philosopher- Kings and the Guards. This class will include what we now call the working class. It is the DESIRING part that predominates in their souls, therefore, they are addicted to all the pleasures of the world such as ordinary desire for food, wine, sex,

boasting, snobbing etc. The principle of specialization must be applied so as to prevent artisans from acting in any other field of state activity and to guarantee that the upper classes are not compelled to perform tasks which are the proper function of the artisans. However, a community that exists merely to gratify the appetite is no state at all but only a slightly exalted pigsty. Other components are necessary for the creation of a state. A refined civilization requires a large population and territory to contain it.

A Good State Must be Properly Defended

Since people and land must be defended, the state must establish a military guardian class consisting of those in the community in whom the instinct for courage or spirit is dominant. Again the service is specialized; only those who are qualified will be permitted to perform the specific function of military guardianship. This will therefore require the presence of a class the professional soldier who must be "Keen to see, swift to catch, and strong to destroy the enemy". They are supposed to be men of fine quality who would live with the best of men, but they would not themselves be the best of men. They are not to rule but to obey the rulers. Theirs is the spirited soul which is attracted by honour. The qualities needed in the Guardian class are high spirit which is active ability to distinguish between friend and foe; love for true knowledge or Philosophy.

A Good State Must Be Ruled by Philosopher -King

From a select handful of the soldier guardians will be chosen the ruling class of the state. These few will be endowed with reason and motivated by their willingness to serve as rulers. They will not only have the greatest capacity to think philosophically and to search diligently for true principles, but they will also realize that their welfare is inextricably bound up with the welfare of the whole. These qualities, when placed in the ideal environment of the Republic, will flourish and permit a kind of rulership never before seen; a rulership absolutely devoted to community interest and completely lacking in the desire of a ruling class to serve its own interest at the expense of the citizenry.

If the state arises in answer to the demand for an exchange of services, the state which satisfies this need best will be the best state, and the state which satisfies the need perfectly will be a perfect state. *To Plato it is obvious that the state which arranges matters so that each person ruler, soldier, guardian, artisan is doing precisely what he ought to be doing is the superior state.*

For Philosophy, "as the art of the tendance of the soul, must also be for the tendance of the state," In the Republic, Plato said, among other things that, "until then, Philosophers are Kings, or the Kings and Princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, cities will never cease from evil and then only will our state have a possibility of life and hold the light of day". Plato opined that a good state is that in which power is given to those who desire it least i.e. Philosophers who will nevertheless exercise power best. He said power should not be given to those who will use it for their own selfish interest such as wealth, but power should be given to those who would

use it to turn men's souls to pure light of truth.

In order to achieve this, Plato advocated that the governing class be denied property and marriage. The children are to be nurtured by the state, and it is from there the state would select Philosophers. The qualities of a ruler are: Wisdom to govern his executive, discipline to deal with the community, and justice.

A duality of meaning is to be inferred from Plato's definition of justice. One relates to justice as it is found in the state, the other as it applies to the individual. The virtues of the state of the Republic are wisdom, courage, and self-control. Wisdom is to be found in the ruling class of Philosopher-Kings; courage is an attribute of the soldier guardians; self-control is exercised by both the soldier-guardians and by the artisans when they recognize their limitations and do not attempt to interfere with the work of the rulers. The latter, too, exercise self-control when they do not abuse the position they hold. Justice in the state results from the fact that all the other virtues are made possible, and it is organization that makes them possible. The whole state is perfect because each individual part of it operates as it should.

The highest form of state is one in which those who know control the affairs of state. In the light of modern knowledge of Psychology it is apparent that Plato's threefold categorization of man's instincts and capacities is naïve. The attributes, aptitudes, and capacities of men cannot be so neatly distinguished, and differences, particularly in mental capacity, are not so great as Plato imagined. As Aristotle was later to point out, experience is also important as a guide to human behavior, and it would be difficult to determine the relative values of the contributions to society of education and experience. Plato's arbitrary assignment of men to one or another of the three classes, depending upon their individual aptitudes, also destroys freedom. The "natural born" shoemaker, indeed if any such exists, might resent devoting his life to the trade and would probably find it intolerable to be excluded entirely from any kind of activity involving the management of community affairs. Men may be happier with smaller material rewards if they are permitted the freedom to draw their own conclusion, even though the conclusions may be wrong. Democracy does not assume that the contributions of all men to the formation of public policy are equal; it only proposes that most men have something to contribute. Plato scorned the proposition. If Plato's premise is correct, only this class has the ability to rule. For the guardians, of course, the Republic is ideally constituted. Within it the intellectual rules without having to consider law, or public opinion; reason and knowledge, exercised by those who possess those attributes in the greatest measure, are supreme.

Plato considers the problem of determining capacity and developing it and the problem of maintaining the equilibrium of the society once it has been established. The answers to these problems involve two of the most significant features of Plato's plan; they are education and communism.

Plato and Education

Education is thus a chief concern in the Republic, a large part of Greek state was educated; therefore Plato did not neglect Education in his writings. He was of the opinion that

education should be controlled by the state. The rulers of the state could be produced by the right education to produce the next generation of rulers. As Philosopher-Kings, they know the type of education basic to the society. There is Elementary Education made up of Gymnastics and Music to prepare for physical fitness and intellectual awareness. This covers a period of the first eighteen years.

The second division is after the age of 18 years. The children would serve for two years, a sort of National Service Corps.

At the next stage, men and women would go for higher education until the age of 35 years. During the period, Mathematics, Logic and learning of true knowledge would feature. After this stage you would serve the state in a higher post for fifteen years. When you attain the age of 50 years and you prove your worth, you can proceed to be a Philosopher-King.

Phases

The educational public has two phases. The first consists of elementary training for citizens up to the age of eighteen and is followed by a two-year period of military training. At any rate education is given to both men and women.

During the first phase citizens are to study gymnastics and music.

The second phase of education in the Republic involved a plan of advanced study for those who survived the selective screening process of elementary education. This group begins the programme at the age of twenty and remains on it for

fifteen years, if its members prove fit.

At the age of thirty-five those who have successfully completed their advanced education are assigned to civil and military administrative positions in order that the state may benefit from their education and training.

Objectives of the study

- This is to examine if;
- Education alone can produce or make one a good leader;
- There can be an ideal state without law in as much such is under the leadership of a moral person;
- Given the administration to those who know how to rule it can produce an ideal state; and
- Denying the leaders their right to property acquisition can lead to reasons to rule/lead well.

Hypothesis to be tested

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between being an educated person and being a good leader/ruler

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between a State with law and a State without law.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between giving the administration of the State to those who know how to rule it and those that does not.

Hypothesis 4: There is significant relationship between property denial of any leader and reasons to rule/lead well.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1

S/N	Questions	Yes	%	No	%
1	Do you subscribe to the notion that the problem of the state is that is not in the hands of those who know how to rule it?	115	95.83	05	04.17
2	Has corruption renders the aim of establishing ideal state as propounded by Plato impossible?	105	87.50	15	12.50
3	Do you agree that education alone can produce selfless leaders as Plato propounds?	45	37.50	75	62.50
4	Is it true that allowing people to serve in their area of natural talent can promote ideal state?	100	83.33	20	16.67
5	Are you too of the opinion that Plato's ideal state is utopian?	112	93.33	08	6.67
6	Do you agree with Plato that both men and women are equal intelligently?	40	33.33	80	66.67
7	With the look of things can you say that the leadership of women and that of men are of the same quality?	56	46.67	64	53.33
8	Is it possible to have an ideal state with morality alone without law?	19	15.83	101	84.17
9	In order to have an ideal state, is it right to deprive leaders (philosopher king) access to property?	42	35	78	65
10	Do you also agree that we were born equally but not equally talented?	116	96.67	04	3.33
11	Are you of the opinion that true knowledge is different from ordinary knowledge?	112	93.33	08	6.67
12	Is it true that we can have an ideal State without any law?	04	3.33	116	96.67
13	Can education alone produces a perfect ruler/leader?	30	25	90	75
14	Do you subscribe to the notion that denying the philosopher king of access to family and property will allow them to serve people wholeheartedly?	36	30	84	70
15	However ideal a State is, is it possible to make everybody happy?	111	92.50	09	07.50
16	Is it true that classifying people into their area of natural talent to function can produce an ideal State?	113	94.17	07	05.83

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between being an educated person and being a good leader/ruler

Table 2

S/N	Questions	Yes	%	No	%
3	Do you agree that education alone can produce selfless leaders as Plato propounds?	45	37.50	75	62.50
13	Can education alone produces a perfect ruler/leader?	30	25	90	75

Table 3

Paired Sample Statistic							
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair YES 1 NO	37.5000 82.5000	2 2	10.60660 10.60660	7.50000 7.50000	-3.000	1	.205

Interpretation

From the above analysis, it is clear that t-calculated is lesser than t-table. The interpretation of which is that the hypothetical statement will be accepted. That there is no significant relationship between being an educated person and being a good leader/ruler. Meaning that education alone

cannot produce a good leader but with combination of other variables like morality, passion, selflessness, etc

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between a State with law and a State without law.

Table 4

S/N	Questions	Yes	%	No	%
8	Is it possible to have an ideal state with morality alone without law?	19	15.83	101	84.17
11	Are you of the opinion that true knowledge is different from ordinary knowledge?	112	93.33	08	6.67
12	Is it true that we can have an ideal State without any law?	04	3.33	116	96.67

Table 5

Paired Sample Statistic							
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair Yes 1 No	45.0000 75.0000	7 7	58.50641 58.50641	33.77869 33.77869	-.444	2	.700

Interpretation

From the above analysis, it is clear that t-calculated is lesser than t-table. The interpretation of which is that the hypothetical statement will be accepted. That there is no significant relationship between a State with law and a State without law. Meaning that if the state is in the hands of those who are morally upright they will definitely be doing all that

is right to make everybody happy because laws are made to punish evil doers and wrong doings.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between giving the administration of the State to those who know how to rule it and those that does not.

Table 6

S/N	Questions	Yes	%	No	%
1	Do you subscribe to the notion that the problem of the state is that is not in the hands of those who know how to rule it?	115	95.83	05	04.17
4	Is it true that allowing people to serve in their area of natural talent can promote ideal state?	100	83.33	20	16.67
5	Are you too of the opinion that Plato’s ideal state is utopian?	112	93.33	08	6.67
6	Do you agree with Plato that both men and women are equal intelligently?	40	33.33	80	66.67
7	With the look of things can you say that the leadership of women and that of men are of the same quality?	56	46.67	64	53.33
10	Do you also agree that we were born equally but not equally talented?	116	96.67	04	3.33
15	However ideal a State is, is it possible to make everybody happy?	111	92.50	09	07.50
16	Is it true that classifying people into their area of natural talent to function can produce an ideal State?	113	94.17	07	05.83

Table 7

Paired Sample Statistic							
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair Yes 1 No	92.4286 27.5714	7 7	31.07441 31.07441	11.74502 11.74502	2.761	6	..033

Interpretation

From the above analysis, it is clear that t-calculated is greater than t-table. The interpretation of which is that the hypothetical statement will be rejected. Which is to be restated that there is significant relationship between giving the administration of the State to those who know how to rule it and those that does not. Which means that if we want an ideal state that will make everybody happy it has to be in the hands

of those who know how to rule it. That is those with true knowledge which rare and scarce but which should be the goal and target of everybody because is the ultimate and finite as posits by Plato and not with those with ordinary knowledge that is common to everybody.

Hypothesis 4: There is significant relationship between property denial of any leader and reasons to rule/lead well.

Table 8

S/N	Questions	Yes	%	No	%
2	Has corruption renders the aim of establishing ideal state as propounded by Plato impossible?	105	87.50	15	12.50
9	In order to have an ideal state, is it right to deprive leaders (philosopher king) access to property?	42	35	78	65
14	Do you subscribe to the notion that denying the philosopher king of access to family and property will allow them to serve people wholeheartedly?	36	30	84	70

Table 9

Paired Sample Statistic							
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair Yes 1 No	61.0000 55.6667	3 3	38.22303 43.98106	22.06808 25.39247	.112	2	.921

Interpretation

From the above analysis, it is clear that t-calculated is lesser than t-table. The interpretation of which is that the hypothetical statement will be accepted. Which means that there is significant relationship between property denial of any leader and reasons to rule/lead well. Which means that if the rulers were denied of access to stupendous wealth/property accumulation the tendency to rule well is high since code of conduct bureau is there for regular checking of leader's property in commensurate to their salary, remuneration and income.

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the research, it could be deduced that truly an ideal state as propounded by Plato is the best though may not be attainable but a perfect is desirable for everybody to live fully and perfectly by enjoying the benefit of existence of state which is primarily to make everybody happy. This is because if the people in corridor of power decides to make life unbearable and uncomfortable for the masses chaos is likely to be the order of the day, but where commonwealth is the guiding principle with the philosophy of organizing the society in the order of natural talent ability, sense of belonging will be felt by everybody, therefore equity, justice, freedom, etc will be objective, goal and aspiration of all and sundry to be pursued by the spirit of oneness and unity.

To achieve the above it is hereby recommended that

- Though education alone cannot produce an ideal leader as expected, but every citizen must be educated by the state and should not be allowed to be in the hands of private individuals, because education is the only weapon that can remove illiteracy, open the reasoning faculty of people to think well, know what to fight for and how to fight for them.
- Though the research shows that if and once the state is under administration of a morally upright person there may not be need for law in the state, even as opines by Plato that no law is mightier than knowledge. But it is recommended that since human being are unpredictable that can be influenced by other unexpected factors, laws has to be enacted which will be governing the administration of the state to be directing the behaviour and administrative style of any leader who so ever it may be.
- That whenever a leader is to be chosen either by election, selection or appointed, those who know how to rule must

be chosen in order to have an ideal state serve everybody to be happy; and

- Finally that it is dehumanizing to deny anybody be it leaders of followers their right to property acquisition only because they want to rule or lead for limited time but their insatiable appetite of acquiring stupendous property can be checked through regular and periodic assets declaration which must be made compulsory to allow transparency and accountability in the discharge of their stewardship.

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