

Plato- (429–347 B.C.E.)

Plato is one of the most dazzling writers in the Western literary tradition and one of the most wide-ranging, influential authors in the history of political philosophy. He was Athenian citizen of high status, who displays his works in the political events and intellectual movements of his time, but the questions he raises are so profound. He was not the first thinker or writer to whom the word “philosopher” should be applied. But he was so self-conscious about how philosophy should be conceived, and what its scope and ambitions properly. He examination of ethical, political, metaphysical, and epistemological issues, armed with a distinctive method—can be called his invention.

The Academy, the school Plato founded in 385 B.C.E., became the model for other schools of higher learning and later for European universities.

His famous work *Republic*, the *Statesman*, the *Laws* and a few shorter dialogues are considered to be political dialogues and it can be argued that political philosophy was the area of his greatest concern.

Central Doctrine of Plato-

The most fundamental distinction in Plato’s philosophy is between the many observable objects that appear beautiful (good, just, unified, equal, big) and the one object that is what beauty (goodness, justice, unity) really is, from which those many beautiful (good, just, unified, equal, big) things receive their names and their corresponding characteristics. In every major work of Plato, in some way, devoted to such central distinction.

His political philosophy- the clarification of concepts is a preliminary step in evaluating beliefs, and right beliefs in turn lead to an answer to the question of the best political order that order can clearly be seen in the structure of Plato’s *Republic*.

The Quest for Justice-

Justice is a complex fundamental political- ethical and ambiguous concept. In Book I of the *Republic*, Socrates and his interlocutors discuss the meaning of justice. Large parts of the *Republic* are devoted to the description of an ideal state ruled by philosophers and its subsequent decline; the chief theme of the dialogue is justice. Justice, understood traditionally as virtue and related to goodness, is the foundation of a good political order, and as such is in everyone’s interest. Plato argues, justice is not to the exclusive advantage of any of the city’s factions, but is concerned with the common good of the whole political community, and is to the advantage of everyone. It provides the city with a sense of unity, and thus, is a basic condition for its health. “Injustice causes civil war, hatred, and fighting, while justice brings friendship and a sense of common purpose”

Socrates as a teacher and speaker- **Cephalus** suggests the first definition. Justice is “speaking the truth and repaying what one has borrowed” but this definition is based on traditional moral custom and relates justice to honesty and goodness, for example, paying one’s debts, speaking the truth, loving one’s country, having good manners, showing proper respect for the gods, and so on, is found to be inadequate. Socrates refutes it by presenting a counter example.....

To be continued by Dr Ranjay Reddy