

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
B. A. II SEMESTER III
PAPER I HISTORY OF WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT
UNIT I PLATO

PLATO'S THEORY OF
JUSTICE

“Justice in the life and conduct of the State is possible only if it first resides in the hearts and souls of the citizens.”

-Plato

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DIFFERENT VIEWS/THEORIES OF JUSTICE

□ Traditional theory of Cephalus:-

“Justice consists in speaking the truth and paying one’s debt.”

This theory of Cephalus is criticised by Plato and discarded. He gives the analogy of **gun and insane man**. In this case, adhering to the definition said above would violate the righteousness. Therefore, this can’t be taken as universally sound definition.

□ Improvement by Polemarchus:-

“Justice is giving everyone his due.”

By this Polemarchus meant- **Doing good to friends and bad to enemies**. Plato asks how can one know that a friend is a real friend and not an enemy? Also, **justice (any morality) will produce virtue only and not vice**. This definition can only be applied individually not socially and according to Plato, **justice is a social service**.



□ Radical Theory of Thrasymachus:-

“Justice is the interest of the stronger”

“might is right” is what is meant by Thrasymachus. Two views are taken by Thrasymachus here:-

1. **Government governs for its own benefit.**
2. **Injustice is better than Justice.** (because unjust man is stronger, wiser and happier than just man.)

Plato retorts to this by saying that Governance is an Art and any Art aims at the advantage of its recipient. Therefore, how can government ignore its citizens? It can't act selfishly.

The second argument is countered by Plato by saying that- **a just man is more stronger** because justice unites him with his fellow beings. A **just man is more wise** because he knows the principle of limit. A **just man is happier** because Happiness lies in doing one's own duty/function. If one does one's appointed duty, he is just and happier as it satisfies him.



□ Pragmatic Theory of Glaucon:-

“Justice is the interest of the weaker.”

It is the **child of fear, a compromise, a burden and people are just unwillingly, under compulsion.**

They all were taking Justice as something **external**. Plato says that **justice is a quality of the soul**. It is something internal. It is a **reward in itself**. Justice is natural, not artificial.

THREE ELEMENTS OF AN INDIVIDUAL

- According to Plato, the individual has **three basic elements**, which are:- **Reason, Spirit** and **Appetite**.
- This is the **tripartite division** of the Individual soul based on which the **three social classes** in the State are established.
- This division forms the basis of the **Republic**.



APPETITE

SPIRIT

REASON

Irrational

Rational

Wise and rational

Desire

Honour

Wisdom

Love, hunger, thirst

Courage and strength

Knowledge

IRON

SILVER

GOLD

PRODUCER CLASS

AUXILIARY CLASS

PHILOSOPHER CLASS

ECONOMIC

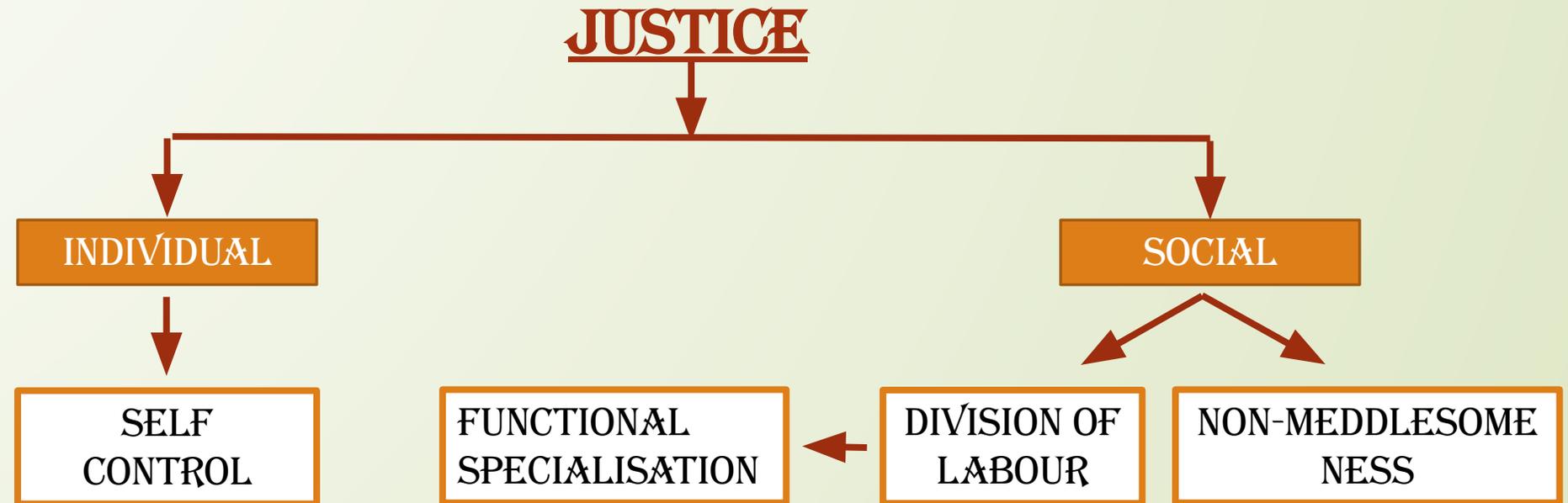
MILITARY

GUARDIAN CLASS

GOVERN

PLATONIC JUSTICE

- According to Plato, **justice is not a legal concept but a moral one.**
- Plato categorises **Justice** at two levels- **individual justice** and **social justice.**



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- According to Plato, Justice represents itself on a larger and more definite scale in a State.
 - Individually, **justice is a human virtue.**
 - Socially, **justice is a political consciousness which makes state internally harmonious and united.**

“Justice is the will to fulfil the duties of one’s station and not meddle with that of another station”

- The foundation of the State is the principle that **“one man should practise one thing only and that to which his nature was best adapted.”**



CHARACTERISTICS

- ❑ Justice as a virtue, a moral concept.
 - ❑ Individualism along with Idealism. Individual as a part of society.
 - ❑ A Universal theory.
 - ❑ Organic conception, leading to first organic theory of State.
 - ❑ State has a will and personality of its own.
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CRITICISM

- ❑ **Plato's theory of justice lacks legal definition:-** there is no law to guard individual voluntary action and protect against the clash of interests.
- ❑ **Subjective definition**
- ❑ **A system of duties.** It makes the state bigger than the Individual.
- ❑ **Functional specialisation** leads to retarded development of the individual, not all round development.
- ❑ **Power is given absolutely to the philosopher king** which can degenerate into dictatorship and absolutism.



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