

# PLATO (427–347 BC)

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# Introduction:

- ▶ Student of Socrates & Teacher of Aristotle, Plato was one of the greatest philosopher in ancient Greece.
- ▶ He adopted the method of dialogues and lectures to profound his philosophy.
- ▶ Greatest logician and dialectician of his times.
- ▶ He was born in a noble Athenian family in 427.
- ▶ His life time witnessed the most troubled time of Greek history.
- ▶ The execution of his teacher Socrates, the defeat Athens and death of his uncle in the Peloponnesian war, etc greatly disturbed his mind.
- ▶ He left his native state and visited Greece, Egypt & Italy.
- ▶ He returned to Athens and set up the academy in 386 BC.
- ▶ Plato spent his remaining life here guiding and inspiring his disciples.

# Works of Plato:

- ▶ The most important works of Plato are –
  - a. The Republic(386),
  - b. The Statesman(360) &
  - c. The Laws(347), etc.
- ▶ Most of his were in the dialogue form.
- ▶ Plato is called the philosophers philosopher.
- ▶ Plato is famous for his ideas on Ideal State, Philosopher King, Justice, Communism of Wives and Property.
- ▶ Some calls him as an idealist, romantic or utopian thinker, etc.
- ▶ Plato one of the most controversial political philosopher died at the age of 81.

# 1. Plato's Ideal State:

- ▶ Plato's name is very much associated with Ideal State.
  - ▶ He was the Father of the Idealist School of thought.
  - ▶ He considers the rule by the philosopher king assisted by trained guardians as the best rule.
  - ▶ His frustration with the existing system of state and politics that led him towards an ideal state.
  - ▶ Of all knowledge, knowledge of virtue or God is the highest knowledge.
  - ▶ It can govern all other knowledge's & things in society.
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# Ideal state.....

- ▶ Since only philosopher can attain this knowledge of virtue or the highest knowledge at its best, only philosophers are qualified to govern and his rule is the best rule.
  - ▶ Good life is realized only in an ideal state.
  - ▶ His ideal state is a model for all places and times.
  - ▶ Plato did not worried about the practicability of the ideal state but wanted to show what in principle & in theory the state ought to be.
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# Features of Ideal State:

1. **Rule of the philosopher Kings:** there is a government of the philosopher ruler, only philosophers are qualified to govern – as only they can attain this knowledge of virtue.
  2. **Restriction of Arts and literature:** Complete censorship of arts and literature.
  3. **State controlled Educational system:** Education is under the control of the state.
  4. **Proper administration of Justice:** There prevails Justice in the Ideal state, everyone should perform his individual function for which he is best fitted and should not interfere in others spheres.
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# Features of ideal state....

5. **Division of Classes:** Society is divided into 3 classes – Rulers, Soldiers and Peasants.
6. **Functional Specialization:** Division of labour and functional specialization is another important feature of his ideal state. Here, each class should perform its respective functions for which it is best fitted.
7. **Communism of Wives and Property:** Women are held in common for the Rulers and Soldiers. Again, the Rulers and soldiers live under a system of communism of property. Private property and permanent marriages are totally denied to the two guardian classes.

# Features .....

8. **Equal treatment of Men and Women:** Women are given equal status with men in his ideal state.
9. **Bringing up of the Children:** Children born of temporary unions(marriages) are reared up state control.
10. **Retention of Slavery:** He tried to perpetuate the system of slavery for providing leisure to the ruling class.
11. **Totalitarian Outlook:** He differentiates between the ruling class and the working classes. He had no regard for individual freedom which has been sacrificed for the cause of state absolutism.
12. **The Philosopher King is above Law:** As the Philosopher ruler is always virtuous he need not be subjected to any laws of the state.

# Criticisms:

- ▶ Plato's concept of ideal state has been subjected to a number of criticisms. Though it theoretically sounds well but has certain practical limitations. They are as follows –
  1. **Non– development of human personality:** Functional specialization which leads to devotion to one's duty & perfection in a particular direction – but other aspects are absolutely ignored or not properly developed – one aspect of life finds development at the cost of other aspects.
  2. **Wrong comparison of Individual and State:** The 3 qualities of the individuals like reason, spirit & appetite with the 3 organs of the state like Rulers, soldiers & producers – such a comparison is wrong because, the interests of the individual and the interests of the state are not one and the same.

# Criticisms ....

3. **It is Totalitarian:** As it completely merges the individual in the state, no regard to the individual freedom. It badly underestimated the common man and tried to maintain privileged classes.
4. **Ignoring producing classes:** Ignoring the working/larger class is against the notion of an ideal state. To him, working classes are there to provide leisure for the ruling class.
5. **Anti- human State:** It is against human nature. His idea of communism of wives & property is against human sentiment & feelings.

# Criticisms ....

6. **Denial of Education to the lower classes:** He has practically denied the right of higher education to the lower classes. It may lead to distinction between the ruling and working classes. Thus it may create hostility between the two. Such a class ridden society is bound to do more harm than good to the society.
7. **Perpetuating Slavery:** He has failed to condemn the institution of slavery. Slavery symbolizes tyranny of man against man. He tried to perpetuate the system of tyranny for providing leisure to the ruling class.

# Criticisms .....

8. **Utopian State:** Not practicable to have a philosopher king. State controlled system of education. The whole arrangement is more or less ideal rather than real.
  9. **It can result in Anarchy:** It may result in creating hostile classes leading to confusion & disorder in the state.
  10. **No recognition to laws:** In his ideal state rules are above laws of the land. Philosopher king is above law.
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# Criticisms ....

11. **It is anti democratic:** Since the philosopher king is above law. There is no equality between the classes.
  12. **Philosopher king has no training or knowledge about finance and military tactics.**
  13. **Fullest development of the state is not possible.**
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