PLATO AND HIS SEARCH FOR JUSTICE

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Abstract

The search for the concept of justice in a multitude of forms has been the highlight of Platonic thoughts and scholarship. According to ancient and classical Greek jurisprudence, Socrates had made it the focus of his arguments to seek the quintessence of justice and after his death, that task became the raison d'être of Plato, the most renowned among the Socratic disciples. The creation of the ideal state based on the hallmark of justice was the Socratic dream, which Plato sought to achieve and substantiate in his own manner of arguments, characterized with an amalgamation of logical precision and philosophical brilliance. He traced the contours of complexities of the roles of the individuals and groups of citizens, created the allegory of the Cave in an erudite attempt to emphasize the necessity for virtues and by means of his Theory of Forms and Theory of Souls, laid down the framework of which on which the ideal city-state should rest. The paper also describes the modification made by Aristotle in Platonic theories and the manner in which the said theories have been subjected to changes in course of time. The paper concludes with the author’s interpretation of Plato’s primary and secondary goals in penning creations such as the Republic, degree of success attained by him in course of his quest and the criticisms leveled against his approach by contemporary and later scholars.

Introduction

Wise men say, Callicles, that heaven and earth and gods and men are bound together by communion and friendship, by orderliness, temperance, and justice, and that is the reason why they call the whole of this world cosmos (order) . . . not disorder or dissoluteness. – Gorgias 507e-508a

For millennia, the definition of justice has been the bone of contention of many a dispute between the political pundits and the legal scholars as well as philosophers throughout the world. The earliest treatment of the concept of justice in Greek literature and philosophy can boast of jewels such as the musings of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, among its ranks. Born in 428 B.C. to a distinguished Athenian family, Plato was perhaps the most famous disciple of Socrates and a towering philosophical intellect in his own right. His thoughts and creations bore the hallmark of influence of the Peloponnesian War, the inheritance of ideas from both Parmenides and Heraclitus, the influence of the Pythagoreans when he visited Sicily after the trial and execution of Socrates, and finally, the growing importance of

1 RICHARD CRAUT, THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO PLATO 7 (1997).
rhetoric on public debate in Athens. Plato bequeathed to the scholarly world elenchus or the so-called ‘dialogue form’ that is supposed to be the method adopted by Socrates in his philosophical explorations.\(^2\) During such explorations, Socrates sought to question the supreme values in human life and threw a simultaneous challenge at the customary notion of ‘virtue’ — the social ‘skills’, attitudes, or character-traits that were all too often geared towards their possessors’ success, to the detriment of their neighbors’ or the community’s well-being. Socrates made it his mission to instigate a re-valuation of those values — and it cost him his life. In spite of that, the Socratic legacy prompted Plato to undertake a thorough examination of the nature of knowledge and reality, an examination that gradually took him far beyond the scope of the historical discussions that Socrates had engaged himself in. Strangely enough, despite having thus deviated from the Socratic path, Plato continued to present his investigations as dialogues between Socrates and some partner(s) and preserved this form even in those of his late works, where Socrates had been replaced by a stand-in and the didactic nature of the presentations appeared to be hard to reconcile with the pretense of dialogue. The quest for the meaning and philosophical virtues of justice that Plato had thus embarked upon, seemed to reach its culmination in his longest (with the exception of The Laws) and arguably the greatest work, The Republic. The argument of The Republic is the search after justice, the nature of which has first hinted at by Cephalus - then discussed on the basis of proverbial morality by Socrates and Polemarchus - then caricatured by Thrasyvachus and partially explained by Socrates - then reduced to an abstraction by Glaucon and Adeimantus, and having become invisible in the individual, finally reappearing at length in the ideal State that is a pure Socratic construction.\(^3\) Divided into ten separate books, these dialogues portray in every line the ease with which Plato had managed to identify the flaws in the definitions and the examples used by some of the greatest thinking minds of his time, like the definition given by Polemarchus in Section Two of Book One, saying that justice is giving everyone what is “appropriate” to him.\(^4\) Plato’s apparent strategy in the Republic, as the author has sought to identify in course of this paper, is to first explicate the primary notion of societial or political justice and

then to derive an analogous concept of individual justice from such notion. The author has also attempted to contend that the motivation that had prompted Plato to proceed in his quest for justice seems to be an ardent desire to define justice, and to define it in such a way as to show that justice is worthwhile in and of itself.

**Justice from a Socratic Perspective**

Perhaps the most significant contribution made by Plato through his works was the manner in which he lent clarity to the Socratic views of justice and good. Socrates was convinced that justice was good for all, and such universal good could only be attained by a human being through self-knowledge. He went on to say that the need for good was a natural one, because it fulfilled everyone’s unique nature (*daimon or the inner soul*) and that the pursuit of happiness through use of knowledge was the natural aim of life. Socrates further argued that since knowledge of self leads to the knowledge of the difference between good and evil, therefore knowledge in itself is good. In other words, virtue is knowledge, while ignorance is vice. He also identified the four virtues of courage, temperance, justice and piety, which could be retraced to knowledge.\(^5\)

Once having concluded that justice and good are inseparable from each other, Socrates proceeded to derive a workable definition of justice by stating in *Gorgias*, “Happiness surely does not consist in being delivered from evils, but in never having them.”\(^6\) He then drew an analogy of the man, who has never fallen sick, being happier than the man who has been cured from sickness and claimed that punishment for the crime is the cure for evil, and justice leads to that punishment. As the healthy man is happier than the cured man, the man who has done no wrong is happier than the man who has received punishment (justice) for his actions. But following this, the most miserable man is one who leads an evil life and thinks himself better for not suffering punishment. According to Socrates, this man is like a child who is so afraid of the immediate pain of the cure that he becomes blind to the benefits he will receive in the long run, viz. a soul free from corruption, disorder, injustice, and ultimately, evil.\(^7\)

Regarding the role of justice in the life of man, Socrates was also the first person in European Philosophy to have declared that to harm any person, even an enemy, is the act of the unjust, and the just man will not

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\(^5\) Supra note 3.

\(^6\) *Id.*

\(^7\) G.M.A. GRUBE, PLATO’S THOUGHT 32 (1980).
harm another, because by doing so he will prove himself the opposite of what he claims to be. In his opinion, since just life is more important than the external pleasures that vice and injustice can yield, loss and suffering resulting from leading a just life is an acceptable price to pay.⁸

Plato’s quest of justice appears to initiate with Socrates gazing upon the larger scale (the state) and then the smaller scale (the individual). The analysis of the state is concluded with the following words of Socrates: “Justice consists in minding your own business and not interfering with other people”.⁹ This view of justice, emphasizing passivity and indifference, is contrary to both the conventional view of being honest and giving to others what they deserve and the cynical view of justice being created by the authority figure. However, such definition, while serving as a useful link between the state and the individual, is by no means complete, since it presupposes the existence of the perfect state. Socrates himself had apparently used this notion merely as a framework to analyze the constituting elements of the individual and to eventually reach at a definition having broader universal application. In Socrates’ ideal state, each member specializes in a specific trade according to his ability, working for the good of society. Performing such a job to the best of one’s ability is the sole reason for existence of an individual who is defined in terms of his contribution to the state. Any interference with each other’s job or interchange of the same, according to Socrates, is liable to cause great harm to the state, as would any eventual blurring of the boundaries between the different classes. Such exchange of roles between, say the elite ruling minority, the Guardians and one of the lower classes (Auxiliaries or businessmen) would mean that the Guardians would not be able to devote their entire attention to ruling, while the lower class-members, who would be ineffective leaders, would spend their time in futile attempts to acquire power. On the contrary, when each class does the job to which it is assigned, the state will contain the virtues of wisdom, courage, self-discipline, and justice. This notion of justice is then applied to the individual, who is constituted of three elements viz. reason, spirit, and ambition.¹⁰ The reason controls the individual like the Guardians control the state, the spirit supports reason like the Auxiliaries support the Guardians, and the ambition is kept in check by the reason.

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⁸ Supra note 7 at 34.
¹⁰ Id.
and spirit like the businessmen are ruled by the Guardians and Auxiliaries. When the three elements are balanced and do not interfere with each other, the individual can attain the ideal attributes of being wise, courageous, self-disciplined, and just.

Socrates further ventured to say that the aforementioned definition of justice is but a mere outline of the original concept. He seeks to elaborate on his definition by saying: “Justice, therefore, we may say, is a principle of this kind; its real concern is not with external actions, but with a man’s inward self, his true concern and interest. The just man will not allow the three elements which make up his inward self to trespass on each other’s function or interfere with each other...So justice is produced by establishing in the mind a similar natural relation of control and subordination among its constituents and injustice by establishing an unnatural one.”11 In a summarized form, Socratic justice is thus the natural balance of the mental elements of man and the positive results produced by the same.

Other Athenian characters like Polemarchus and Thrasymachus had presented their own perspectives on justice in The Republic, only to be shot down by the quick Socratic wit or the calm Platonic precision. By saying that justice is doing the right thing, or giving everyone his due, Polemarchus meant that if a man is good, then an appropriate return for his goodness is to be good back to him.12 Similarly if a man acts in a troublesome way, an equally stringent punishment is needed to counter his actions. Socrates, however, found this definition useless if followed, because of there not being a person best at benefitting friends and harming enemies. To the Sophist Thrasymachus on the other hand, justice was nothing but the advantage of the stronger, with the tyrant being happy and fortunate on having broken the rules that he imposed on the weak.13 What seemed justice to the weak was thus nothing but

11 Id.
12 Supra note 2.
13 The Sophists tried to teach their students how to live the most effective kind of life. They saw worldly success as the way to happiness. Both Socrates and Plato were however disturbed by the Sophists’ emphasis on material values and by the amorality of their teachings. Socrates believed that man must make morality his ultimate concern in order to achieve true happiness. Plato, on the other hand, was of the opinion that the Sophistic view of knowledge was subjective and their stress on the relativity of truth undermined morality. It was clear to Plato that the average man, who could not explain to himself or to others why the rules of morality should be obeyed in a given situation, would certainly follow the dictates of his self-interest rather than any external moral standard. To Plato, this was a dangerous state of affairs, which leads to moral chaos. Plato believed that morality must be based on objective truth and must be reconciled with self-interest: that is, morality must be shown to be in the interest of the individual; see generally Republic, available at http://ablemedia.com/ctcweb/netshots/republic.htm (Last visited December 6th 2008).
slavery and no one truly strong would act that way. In Book I of The Republic, Socrates had promptly proceeded to refute Thrasymachus by advancing an apparently circular logic when he said that if the weak, after all, are capable of preventing the strong from taking what they want or can prevent someone from becoming a tyrant, then they should be known for their strength and not their weakness.

Plato’s Allegory of the Cave

The Allegory of the Cave in The Republic has been told and then interpreted by Socrates at the beginning of Book VII (514a–520a). It is related to Plato’s metaphor of the sun (507b–509c) and the analogy of the divided line (509d–513e) which immediately precede it at the end of Book VI. Allegories are summarized in the viewpoint of dialectic at the end of book VII and VIII (531d–534e). The allegory has also been commonly referred to as the Myth, Metaphor or Parable of the Cave. It begins with an imaginative scene where prisoners have been chained since their childhood deep inside a cave, with their limbs immobilized by the chains and their heads bound in one direction so that their gaze remains fixed on a wall. Between the prisoners and an enormous fire lies a raised walkway, along which puppets of various animals, plants and other objects are moved along, thereby casting shadows watched by the prisoners. When one of the puppet-carriers speaks, an echo against the wall causes the prisoners to believe that the words come from the shadows. The prisoners engage in an apparent game of naming the shapes as they come by. They are thus conditioned to judge the quality of one another by their skill in quickly naming the shapes. If a prisoner is released, his eyes will be blinded by the sunlight coming into the cave from its entrance, and the shapes passing by will appear less real than their shadows. The last object he would be able to see is the sun, which, in time, he would learn to see as the object that is in some way the cause of all the things seen by him. Once thus enlightened, the freed prisoner would refuse to return to the cave to free the others, but would be compelled to do so. Moreover, the other prisoners may not even want to be freed, for to them it would seem that their fellow prisoner has lost his eyesight on having been taken outside as

14 Similar sentiments have been reflected in the writings of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.
15 Supra note 2.
he would be unable to identify the shapes in the wall until he acclimatizes with the
darkness once more.\textsuperscript{16}

Plato actually believed that one could only learn through dialectic reasoning and
open-mindedness. Human beings had to travel from the visible realm of image-
making and objects of sense, to the intelligible, or invisible, realm of reasoning and
understanding. The aforementioned allegory symbolizes this journey and how it
appears to those still in a lower realm. What Plato meant to say seems to be that
humans are all prisoners within the cave of tangible world, with the perceived notion
of reality being mere shadows on a wall. Just as the escaped prisoner ascends into
the light of the sun, so do humans amass knowledge and ascend into the light of
true reality to understand the form of ‘Goodness’. The coherence of these
sequential comparisons remains the subject of raging scholarly debates. The main
problems arise from the allegory of the cave having three cognitive stages and the
divided line having four of them, where the first division (shadows/ reflections) does
not need to be applied to the cave and is hard to be interpreted ontologically. The
metaphor of the sun seems to assert that from seeing things in the light of the sun
one can transcend to seeing ideas in the light of the good, while in the cave it is not
evident that it can not be done without helping and forcing prisoners to look at the
light.

It is also open to one to choose whether to interpret the allegory from an
epistemological or ontological point of view, i.e. whether to correlate the shadows
with things perceived in the real (seemingly) world, the things in the cave with
mathematical entities, and things outside the cave with ideas or whether to merely
concentrate on the cognitive stages.\textsuperscript{17} However, Greek traditions, especially
Platonic views had never been known to have adopted a purely epistemological
perspective. Plato himself had introduced the allegory by saying that it is about
education (\textit{paideia}) and miseducatedness (\textit{apaideusia}). Nevertheless, besides
cognitive interpretations the allegory has also clear political implications, like the
fourth stage\textsuperscript{18} of returning to cave to help fellow-prisoners. Also in the light of a

\textsuperscript{16} WAYNE MORRISON, JURISPRUDENCE: FROM THE GREEKS TO POST-MODERNISM 34 (1996).
\textsuperscript{17} ALLEN BLOOM, INTERPRETIVE ESSAY: REPUBLIC 63 (1968).

\textsuperscript{18} Since allegory is by Socrates' words about education, it should be interpreted from the viewpoint of
conditions for taking steps toward higher stages, i.e., conditions for education. There are four steps described:
(1) prisoners who think that shadows are reality; (2) prisoners who are freed and forced to look at the things that
are used to cast shadows on the wall and do not recognize these as sources for shadows; (3) prisoners who are
freed and dragged along to the outside of cave; and (4) free men returning to the cave to former fellow-
contextual analysis of *The Republic*, the play of shadows can be interpreted as political maneuvering with citizens as expendable pawns. Furthermore, the highest knowledge in the allegory being ‘The Good’, the interpretation should even bring together at least a modicum of ethical allusion about attaining virtues.

**Plato’s Theory of Forms and Theory of Soul**

The traditional scholarly approach adopted by the Greeks involved treating law as being closely related to both justice and ethics. Plato’s *Republic* was intended to be a constructive attempt to discover the permanent basis of justice amidst the diversity of the actual systems of the world. However, there has always existed a conflict between the concepts of justice and legality, the true nature of which has been revealed to the greatest extent in the dialogue between Socrates and one of his pupils in *Minos*.\(^{19}\) Therein Socrates had sought to shift from the original definition of law as a stipulation in proper form by the appropriate authority to emphasize upon the urgency of relating law to the revelation of truth and good. The conflict between the two ideas has been stated with a touch of dialectic sarcasm. Nevertheless, the conclusion of the dialogue, describing the manner in which Minos’ code of laws had been inspired by Zeus himself, seems to be in consonance with Platonic conception of justice as the revelation of good received by the select few and communicated by them to the community in the garb of laws.\(^{20}\)

One can trace to the Platonic chain of thought the particular strand of natural law that regards values as having an eternal existence as well as perpetual veracity. In fact, Plato had proceeded further to proclaim that the abstract values like honour, courage, beauty and equality, all enjoy permanent and unchanging existences independent of the fact that certain worldly actions tend to reflect the qualities themselves.\(^{21}\) From there did originate Plato’s Theory of Forms, identifying

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\(^{20}\) Such an interpretation seeks to serve Plato’s political ideal of a rigidly stratified anti-equalitarian society, where every individual is told what is good for him.

\(^{21}\) Supra note 17 at 58.
transcendental archetypes having existence independent of the physical world or human mind, unburdened with constraints of time and space. Such forms are there in their own rights - human beings can but seek to reproduce their manifestations by gaining knowledge of the eternal truths. Like a true cognativist, Plato believed that human beings have the potential to succeed in their endeavor to gain such knowledge. Such a theory undoubtedly contains traces of idealism, since it advocates the independent existence of the idea of a thing. Since for Plato, the so-called forms of ‘goodness’, ‘virtue’ and ‘honesty’ were eternal and immutable, they constituted moral principles of universal and timeless validity existing above and unaffected by changing human attitudes; principles by reference to which human actions of all kinds ought to be judged.\(^{22}\)

In course of his analysis, Plato had put forward his renowned Theory of Soul, describing the soul to have three parts corresponding to three different kinds of interests, three kinds of virtues, three kinds of personalities (depending upon the dominant part) and ultimately to three kinds of social classes that should be based on the three personalities, interests, and virtues.

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<th>CLASS</th>
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<td>REASON</td>
<td>KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>PHILOSOPHERS</td>
<td>WISDOM→JUSTICE</td>
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<td>SPIRIT</td>
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<td>WARRIORS</td>
<td>COURAGE→JUSTICE</td>
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<td>DESIRE</td>
<td>PLEASURES</td>
<td>COMMONERS</td>
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Justice applies to all the virtues in the sense of their organization. Reason (and the philosophers) should be in control of the Platonic ideal state with the help of spirit (and the warriors) as guardians. Only then can each interest be satisfied to the proper extent, with philosophers, warriors and commoners having their respective desired knowledge, honor and goods/pleasures. To Plato it seemed that all trouble originate from unrestrained desire.\(^{23}\)

\(^{22}\) *Id.*

\(^{23}\) Supra note 2.
Philosophic Platform on Which Rests the Ideal State

To prevent corruption of Guardians of the ideal state proposed by Socrates and Plato, a code of conduct was proposed for the Guardians that would render their position undesirable to the commoners:

The Guardians must live in poverty, with any possessions they do have held in common. The Guardians will even have their families in common. Since children will be raised in common, individual women will not be burdened with the task of child rearing and will be free to take their places in their proper occupations along with the male guardians. Finally, a system of education needs to be incorporated that will sort the children on the basis of whether they are dominated by desire – if they are, they belong to the commoners irrespective of their intelligence.  

Thus in the ideal state, the first care of the rulers (philosopher-kings) is to be education, of which an outline is drawn after the old Hellenic model, providing only for an improved religion and morality, and more simplicity in music and gymnastic, a manlier strain of poetry, and greater harmony of the individual and the State. To the perfect ideal succeeds the government of the soldier and the lover of honor, this again declining into democracy, and democracy into tyranny, in an imaginary but regular order having not much resemblance to the actual facts. Book I of The Republic while containing a refutation of the popular and sophistical notions of justice, seems inconclusive at the best. The Republic is an imperfect whole; the higher light of philosophy breaks through the regularity of the Hellenic temple, which at last fades away into the heavens. The seeming discrepancies of the work may only arise out of the discordant elements which the philosopher has attempted to unite in a single whole, perhaps without being himself able to recognize the inconsistency which is obvious to the readers. Morgenstern and others have asked whether the definition of justice, which is the professed aim, or the construction of the State is the principal argument of the work.  

One would like to reply that the two seem to blend in one, for justice is the order of the State, and the State is the visible embodiment of justice under the conditions of human society. The one is the soul and the other is the body, and the Greek ideal of the State, as of the individual, is a

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24 Id.
25 Supra note 19 at 91.
fair mind in a fair body. In Hegelian phraseology the State is the reality of which justice is the ideal. Or, to use a Platonic image, justice and the State are the warp and the woof which run through the whole texture.\textsuperscript{26} And when the constitution of the State is completed, the conception of justice is not dismissed, but reappears under the same or different names throughout the work, both as the inner law of the individual soul, and finally as the principle of rewards and punishments in another life. The virtues are based on justice, of which common honesty in buying and selling is the shadow, and justice is based on the idea of good, which is the harmony of the world, and is reflected both in the institutions of States and in motions of the heavenly bodies.\textsuperscript{27} One can even question the need to discuss the practicability of an ideal State as conceived by Plato, or whether the outward form or the inward life had come foremost into his mind. For the practicability of his ideas has nothing to do with their truth; and the highest thoughts to which he attains may be truly said to bear the greatest marks of design - justice more than the external frame-work of the State, the idea of good more than justice. The great science of dialectic or the organization of ideas as pursued by Plato thus seems to have no real content whatsoever –it is a mere embodiment of the method or spirit in which the higher knowledge is to be pursued by the spectator of all time and all existence.

\textit{Aristotlian Deviations from Platonic Concepts}

The aftermath of the Peloponnesian War saw a subsequent decline of Athenian democracy, governmental standard and societal conditions which in turn paved the way for the scholarly preoccupation with justice that dominated the Platonic and Aristotlian legal philosophy.\textsuperscript{28} Both Plato and Aristotle had to confront a situation the spelled the disintegration of the Athenian society and abolition of all accompanying values and accomplishments therewith. The said challenge prompted them to enquire about a relatively more concrete definition of justice and the relation between justice and positive law. However, the approaches adopted by them differ significantly from each other – while Plato looked for inspirational derivation of the concept of justice, Aristotle sought to chalk out an idea of justice through scientific analysis of rational principles developed against a background of existing types of political communities and laws. The chain of argument that seeks to

\textsuperscript{26} Supra note 7 at 48.
\textsuperscript{27} Supra note 25.
\textsuperscript{28} Supra note 1 at 102.
blend their thoughts is the concept of virtue, the all-embracing idea of which justice is an essential ingredient. It is from this idea that notions like balance and harmony are born to pose as the test for a just commonwealth as well as a just individual. However, while Plato thought of harmony as a state of inner balance of mind not prone to rational analysis, Aristotle looked upon it as the mean between extremes, deduced by quasi-mathematical principles from an admixture of extremes in government and human relations. According to Aristotle, justice could be distributive, spreading honour and wealth among the citizens on the basis of the merit ratio, or it could be remedial, wherein law looks at the injured and seeks to restore the pre-existing equality prior to the commission of the wrong. Another significant contribution made by Aristotle was his attempt to distinguish between natural justice that is universal in nature and conventional justice that derives its sanctity from a particular authority. As for example, the rule that one must eventually return what has been lent to him stems from natural justice, but it is up to conventional justice to decide the period of prescription. Following the classical Greek way of trying to understand the true nature of a substance by observing it at the pinnacle of its development, Aristotle agreed to the concept of state being a natural form of evolution, since it is only within such an organization that human beings can hope to reach the highest degree of their political persona.

**Change in the Platonic Concept in course of Time**

Plato’s perception of justice was tempered by the change in his attitude towards the necessity and importance of law for the community. His earlier works like *The Republic* envisages a commonwealth where law as an organized and formulated system of rules binding upon the society has failed to gain any prominence. In such works, he kept his attention confined to an analysis of the different class-functions within such commonwealth and the manner in which the execution of justice therein is entrusted to the education and inspired wisdom of the philosopher-kings who seem to be in control of the detailed roles played by their subjects in life. However, in the later part of his life, Plato began to wonder about the necessity of a state

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29 Supra note 19 at 112.
30 *Id.*
‘second best’ to the ideal state that he had envisioned in *The Republic*. It was in all probability his work as an advisor to Dionysius, the Sicilian tyrant that was responsible for such a turn in his thoughts. In *The Laws*, Plato had sought to portray a discussion between an Athenian, a Spartan and a Cretan on the principles and subject-matter of laws in a state. The degree to which Plato intended to subject diverse matters like marketing regulations, community meals, agricultural activities and even intimate personal relations to the control of law, with state-appointed officials being guided by the written law in the enforcement of such control through detailed sanctions, seeks to indicate that Platonic philosophy in its later stage resembled that of the modern authoritarian welfare state. In effect, one may even venture to infer that Plato had in course of his search for justice, succeeded in anticipating Bentham in his faith in the omnipotence of laws formulated by an all-powerful legislator. To Plato, law apparently appeared as a golden stream, embodying ‘right reasoning’, regarding the source and content of which, Plato remained strangely silent. However, he did go on to observe that justice, which is nothing but virtue in the sense of inner harmony and balance, cannot be explained by rational argument, nor is it amenable to verbal expression, unlike other branches of knowledge.

It remains beyond any doubt that Platonic philosophy had evolved in course of his journey from *The Republic* to *The Laws*. The origin of such evolution lies inherent in the realization that one cannot hope for the existence of a class of aristocratic philosopher-kings who would have sufficient wisdom to apply justice without taking recourse to any written code. Instead, one has to rely upon mystical inspiration to gain the knowledge of justice directing the laws of the state.

**Conclusion**

Plato’s primary aim in *The Republic* was to show that justice is worthwhile—that just action is a good in itself, and that one ought to engage in just activity even when it doesn’t seem to confer immediate advantage. In Book IX, Plato presents three arguments for the claim that it pays to be just. First, by sketching a psychological

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31 Supra note 1 at 73.
32 However, Jerome Hall has in his essay *Studies in Jurisprudence and Criminal Law*, challenged the popular belief of there being a major divergence between Plato’s views on law as laid down in *The Republic* and *The Laws*. According to Hall, such difference as there is owes its origin to the two works having differing objectives altogether. While *The Republic* was intended to delineate Plato’s views on state and governance, *The Laws* meant to offer a practical code of regulations.
33 *Epistle VII*, 341c.
portrait of the tyrant, he attempts to prove that injustice takes such a wretched toll on a man’s psyche that it could not possibly be worth it. Next, he argues that, though each of the three social classes have their own conceptions of pleasure, only the philosopher is in the position to judge since only he is capable of experiencing all three types of pleasure. Finally, he tries to demonstrate that only philosophical pleasure is really pleasure at all; all other pleasures are but mere cessation from pain. However, the author will like to infer that Plato’s goal being to prove the worth of justice independent of the advantages conferred by it, for him to argue that the worth of justice lies in the enormous pleasure it produces is beside his point. Instead, it seems that Plato managed to identify the primary source of justice’s worth in its connection to the Forms, which he had held to be the embodiment of Good in the world. Justice is worthwhile, on this interpretation, not because of any advantage it confers, but because it involves grasping the Form of the Good and imitating it. The just man tries to imitate the Forms by making his own soul as orderly and harmonious as the Forms themselves.

One of the more severe criticisms leveled against Platonic model of ideal state and justice is that although Plato had always defined philosophers as those who are aware of their ignorance, yet he had simultaneously referred to the wisdom of the Philosopher Kings/Guardians. However, if a philosopher is devoid of wisdom, then he may not make any better a ruler than someone who is virtuous because of correct belief. The contention thus seems to be whether philosophic awareness of the extent of one’s ignorance grants true wisdom to him. Moreover, although Plato defines the soul as consisting of three parts for everyone, he really talks about each of his social classes as though they only had one part of the soul i.e. the dominant part. Only such a stance can explain why he disregards the fact that Guardians, like commoners, may also be driven by desire. The ideal state also suffers from drawbacks like the possibility of warriors seizing control on the basis of monopoly of power, that of the Guardians refusing to give up children who are found to be driven by desire and hence incapable of assuming guardianship and that of concentration of wealth leading to formation of plutocracy/oligarchy, followed by people’s rule or democracy and finally, by tyranny. The use of the Myth of Er at the end of The Republic also tinged Platonic justice with unwanted idealism while at the

34 Supra note 17 at 112
same time undermining the rational essence behind it.\textsuperscript{35} Platonic virtue similarly suffers from limitation of effectiveness only in particular habitual circumstances owing to its own nature being akin to a force of habit. In unfamiliar circumstances, it fails to lend the knowledge that would enable recognition of novel cases of good and evil.

Plato’s search for justice and the conclusions which he reached were thus by no means above criticism. That is precisely why an unrestrained and unquestioning absolute acceptance of Platonic ideas is bound to cause violation of the Socratic spirit of enquiry. Having said that, Plato’s quest, the manner in which he was able to see past the popular notions of justice and identify their weaknesses and above all, his Theory of Forms do indeed constitute an integral part of European if not global philosophic enquiry into the true meaning and nature of justice, so much so that led A.N. Whitehead to comment, “The safest general characterization of the European philosophic tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.”\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{35} Supra note 2.