

A PHILOSOPHICAL EVALUATION OF THE GOOD IN PLATO'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

VICTOR OGHENEOCHUKO JEKO (PhD)

Department of Philosophy

Faculty of Arts

University of Benin

Benin City, Edo State

Email: victor_oghene@yahoo.com

&

AMAKA PATRICIA NWANA (PhD)

General Studies unit

Igbinedion University Okada, Edo State

Abstract

Plato tries to address the problem of human nature. Plato's conception of politics reflects the cooperative activity of human politico-existential relations. Plato's moral theory gives birth to his political theory. The suitability or non-suitability of Plato's Republic and its cognate relevance in the past and in our today's contemporary world has to do with humans' abuse of power. The idea of the common good has become a controversial issue due to the problem of human nature. Plato believes that the human being is egocentric in nature. The problem associated with Plato's Republic is that it is utopian ideology despite its utopian ideology; it is also conservative in nature. Plato's Republic has some contemporary significance. Plato's Republic represents reasonable comprehensive moral agreement of persons. The central objective of Plato's Republic is predicated on the idea of justice and the common good. The common good centered on the fundamental wholeness of human interaction or association. The common good brings to the fore the reasonable comprehensive moral agreement and moral background culture of normative ideal social order in modern liberal society. Public happiness ought to be the basis of the normative structure of a society. This paper adopts the analytic method in navigating the contextualization and conceptualization of the Form of the Good in Plato's Republic. This paper, therefore, concludes that Plato emphasizes on the crucial importance of justice and civic education in society. Plato's Republic advocates for a harmonious society and allows each of its parts of the society to flourish. Plato agrees with Rousseau that the sole objective of the formation or establishment of the State is to guarantee the highest good of the highest number. The common good is the fundamental objective and the normative foundation of every contemporary society.

Keywords: Republic, Philosophy, Common Good, Utopianism, Society.

1.1 Introduction

It is germane to assert that the suitability or non-suitability of Plato's Republic and its cognate relevance in the past and in our today's contemporary world has to do with humans' abuse of power and domination. Power as a concept, has a corrupt tendency. It could be used to undermine the common destiny of a people. Those who possess power in the city-state ought to be rational in their desire to rule the populace. The aim of this theoretical discourse is to

analyze the meaning of the good in Plato's Republic. The whole objective of Plato's Republic is to see to the good in society. Politics is all about aiming at the common good in society. The concept of the good in Plato's Republic or in his political philosophy is still very much relevant today in our contemporary socio-political world. The common good brings to the fore the reasonable comprehensive moral agreement and moral background culture of normative ideal social order in modern liberal society. Public happiness ought to be the basis of the basic structure of a society.

Moreover, Plato is a prototypical political philosopher whose ideas had a profound impact on subsequent political theory. He influences Western political thought in many ways. His philosophy is founded on cognitive optimism – a belief in the capacity of the human mind to attain the truth and to use this truth for the rational and virtuous ordering of human affairs (Korab-Karpowicz, 2005:3-4). Plato's Republic is built on virtuous character of rational persons. For Plato, virtue seems to be the key to socio-political order. Plato argues that conflicting interests of different parts of society can be harmonized. The best, rational, and right political order, which he proposes, leads to a harmonious unity of society and allows each of its parts to flourish, but not at the expense of others. Plato's political philosophy aims at the conceptual analysis of political concepts such as the state, power, democracy, freedom, justice, common good, law and social order. The main task of political philosophy today is still often seen as a conceptual analysis: the clarification of political concepts. Conceptual analysis, then, is a mental clearance; the clarification of a concept in its meaning. Plato posits that the question of political justice in the Republic is the question of the best political order. The movement from conceptual analysis, through evaluation of beliefs, to the best political order can clearly be seen in the structure of Plato's Republic. One of the most fundamental ethical and political concepts in Plato Republic is justice. It is a complex and ambiguous concept. Justice means, "rendering to everyone his due". The idea of justice is said to be related to goodness. The Republic represents an argument in defense of justice as a universal moral value and the normative foundation of the best political order. Plato's Republic offers solutions to the problem of social peace based on the equilibrium and harmonious union of different social classes (Korab-Karpowicz, 2005:3-4). This paper is subdivided into six subsections. Section one is anchored on the introduction. Section two focuses on Plato's conceptualization of the good. Section three talks about the contemporary relevance of law, politics and religion in Plato's political philosophy, Section four discusses about some key issues in Plato's Republic. Section five harped on the evaluation of Plato's political idealism and elitism. Section six is anchored on the concluding considerations.

1. 2 The Concept of the Good in Plato's Republic

Plato's Republic was aimed at ensuring or promoting social peace in the environment of inter-subjective cooperation, democratic citizenship and friendship among different social groups where each group can benefit from and add to the common good of a well-ordered society. Plato does not consider democracy to be the best form of government. The quality of human life can be improved on if people learn to be rational and understand that their real interests lie in harmonious cooperation with one another and not in war or partisan strife (Korab-Karpowicz, 2005:3-4). Plato argues that making a political decision requires a good sense of judgment and that politics needs expertise, probity, accountability and managerial competence. Good education brings about a good sense of moral standards. He argues that once political society is properly ordered, it can contribute to the restoration of morals. Plato

is often accused of promoting totalitarian state in a number of important aspects. His Republic is best understood as the principle of justice that is aimed at the whole community of a people defined by law, justice and equality. The notion of equality is needed and preserved in Plato's view of justice expressed by this norm as the impartial, equal treatment of all citizens and social groups. Justice is neither the right of the strong nor the advantage of the stronger, but the right of the best and the advantage of the whole community of people. Humans are immortal souls, he claims, and not just independent variables. They are often egoists, but the divine element in them makes them more than mere animals. Plato's Republic reveals the normative possibility of democratic citizenship or democratic friendship. Plato's notion of democratic government presupposes some cardinal virtues like wisdom, courage, moderation and justice. In the Republic, Plato reveals the spirit of true happiness. He argues that the best political order is best understood as the doctrine of the harmony of common interests. The doctrine of the harmony of interests, fairness as the normative basis of the best political order, the mixed constitution, the rule of law, the distinction between good and deviated forms of government, practical wisdom as the quality of good leadership, and the importance of virtue and transcendence for politics are the political ideas that can rightly be associated with Plato's Republic (Korab-Karpowicz, 2005:13-14). Plato's Republic has been indicted by Karl Popper as the founding text of totalitarianism, for having advocated the rule of philosopher kings and queens without any institutional checks and balances. The Republic does address the danger that power corrupts: It destroys people, who in a never-ending pursuit of power undermine their psychological health (Plato, 2007: xi). In the Republic, Plato actually presupposes an ideal state that is aimed at the idea of the good. It is in the Republic, that, Plato reflects a new understanding of knowledge, art, culture, politics, law, religion and psychology. Plato reveals the fundamental text of Western philosophy and his Republic reveals a transformative democratic vision of self and the state. The gaining of specialized knowledge is quite vital to the socio-political development of the state. This is in consonance with the observation made by Lee et al, when they write that Plato resolves the conundrum by imagining a new city governed by a rare breed of philosophers who, not wishing power for their own purposes, can use it to check and control the desire for it in their subjects (Plato, 2007:xvi-xvii). However, the most immediate for Plato was what he takes to be the failing of the Athenian democracy. Nevertheless, the concept of democracy in ancient Athens was different from the understanding of democracy today but its contemporary significance to socio-political world cannot be undermined (Plato, 2007:xii). Political equality brought rivalry for power in its-strain, as people competed for influence. Democracy can mean "all the people rule", but it can also mean 'the common people rule', because the latter group were numerically and ideologically dominant, generating tension with the elite. Democracy presupposes an opportunity for human association or inter-human existential relationship, and "it accorded all citizens the opportunity for equal political participation. Plato holds that democratic framework and political order requires an expertise and education. It is not a task for all individuals in the city-state". Democratic equality means an application of specialized, qualified expertise and education (Plato, 2007: xiii-xviii). For Plato, just like it has been posited by Rousseau, the ultimate objective of the establishment of the state is to ensure the greatest happiness of the greatest number of all in the political community. Plato's criteria for good rule include expertise, stability, unity, order and happiness which reflect totalitarian republicanism. Plato's Republic requires political order, unity, happiness and stability. Plato's Republic is aimed at the very notion of self-governance, psychological unity and harmony, law and order, political maturity and civic education. However, "political unity and harmony

reflect the highest political goals of the Republic and which cannot be achieved without psychological unity and harmony in each citizen. Plato emphasizes the need for childhood education as well as ensuring standards of better life. Plato identifies and articulates the four leading or cardinal virtues. Accordingly, Lee et.al argued that the four leading or cardinal virtues were broadly ethical: they comprised wisdom, courage, self-discipline and justice while others included such qualities as piety and magnanimity (Plato, 2007: xvi-xix). Moreover, justice' (dikaiosune) meant more than administration of law or legal rights; it could mean broadly what is right as well as more specifically what is justly owed or justly expected. According to Thrasymachus, justice is the interest of the stronger and not the weak in society. His assertion is that justice is simply what is in the interest of the stronger party. Thrasymachus challenge to Socrates links ethics and politics by denying that any non-exploitative political regime can exist(Plato, 2007: xix-xxi). In the Republic, Plato emphasizes the idea of the good as the only normative basis for a peaceable social order of the city-state. According to Plato, no man can be perfectly secured against wrong unless he has become perfectly good; and cities are like individuals. Plato opines that the fulfillment of contracts is the foundation of the state (Plato, 2006:254). Plato argues that the law and the gods maintain the common bond of the state. In Plato's work on Law, special emphasis is placed on children's education and the guardian ought to keep a sharp look-out, and takes a special care of the training of the children, directing their natures, and always turning them to good citizens according to the law (Plato, 2006:157). Plato gives emphasis on education and law of the state. For Plato, let us suppose that there are two parts in the constitution of a state – one is the creation of offices, the other the laws which are assigned to them to administer (Plato, 2006:96). Plato posits that the state can only thrive by virtuous characters. The idea of the good in Plato's Republic reveals the need for the thriving of virtues. Consequently, Plato argues that let every man, then, freely strive for the prize of virtue, and let there be no envy(Plato, 2006:92-93). Plato further argues that in guaranteeing the goodness of the state, the mere preservation and continuance of life is not the most honourable thing for man, as some may think, the preservation of the city-state is the continuance of life. Plato emphasizes the need for freedom. Nations waxed in all respects, because there was freedom among members (Plato, 2006:73). Plato argues that everything depends on human flourishing. In consonance with Plato's Republic, Cohen maintains that Plato's Republic is founded on human capital for the purpose of human flourishing(Cohen, 2008:14-15).For Plato, it follows that the ideal state would be fundamentally designed not to continually adapt and evolve, but rather to have a fixed and unalterable structure controlling and directing changes. In the light of this, the guardian should have strict rules and he should live by them. Plato in the Republic, sketches out the ideal society, an effort which partly reflects Plato's frustration at being unable to play a significant political role in his own society. In the Republic, Plato's main recommendation, coming from a philosopher, is that philosophers should be in charge of democratic governments. The rule of philosophers had already been tried in other city- states, and it was common practice to employ a sage to draw up laws. The concept of the good in Plato's political philosophy is built on social justice. For Cohen, justice is to Plato the correct ordering of the organism (Cohen, 2008:16-17). Plato's conception of the state is that, the guardians are trained for politics with good sense of education for the purpose of sound reasoning or moral judgment in their dedication to duties. Plato's view on the Republic is anchored on the need for ensuring social balance in human society. Plato aims at the maximization of the good in the city-state. The concept of the good is a broader notion of human happiness and the beneficial scheme of social cooperation. Plato emphasizes on the knowledge of the good as a

worthwhile art of human existential relations. The ruler's art of politics is in turn fulfilled when the state is in balance and human happiness and the concept of the 'Good' are maximized. Plato argues that the only thing worthwhile is the knowledge of the good. For Plato, the concept of the good as evidenced in the Republic is a slightly broader notion, fundamentally inspired and deeply rooted in the social and political context; and the ruler-guardian is the protector of the state. The guardians are appointed primarily to protect the city-state. However, the guardians are specialists in the arts of war, but also skilled in the arts of ruling and in management. Plato holds that generally the balance of the state is akin to the balance needed in the individual person. Balance, says Socrates, mirroring the concluding considerations of the Eastern philosophers and mystics, is the key for the individual and equally for the state (Cohen, 2008:19-20). All guardians follow the same basic education and undertake years of military training. At this point, some will become just auxiliaries charged with defending the state, while a minority progresses to studying philosophy and take on the burden of actually ruling the city-state. Plato's Republic is not ideal in the real sense but serves as a broad spectrum of ensuring the ordering principle. However, for the Republic is not ideal at all (Cohen, 2008:23-24). The state is nothing but a political organism. In the Republic, Plato maintains that the state is like an individual-with a head, a heart and a body (Cohen, 2008:29). For man is like the State (Rosen, 2007:58). For Plato, the state is like an organism in which each part finds its life in relationship to the whole. Plato's Republic stands as one of the great classics in utopian literature. Plato was well aware that this ideal society is a very fragile accomplishment. If we are concerned with the health of the State, we should similarly seek out those who have the necessary wisdom to govern. These experts must have a vision of the good...so our political rulers must be able to navigate the ship of the State by means of a vision of the forms and the good (Lawhead, 2002:61-62). Plato further posits in the Republic, that we are left with two qualities to look for in our state, self-discipline and the real subject of our whole inquiry is the idea of the good and justice (Plato, 2007:134). The good then is the end of all endeavour (Plato, 2007:230). In the Republic, Plato demonstrates the normative dimension of political elitism. However, what makes his feminist credentials suspect is his explicit elitism (Hoffman and Graham, 2009:318). Plato in ancient Greece accuses democrats of wanting to abolish the distinction between citizen and slave. Plato's Republic speculates about systems that could be considered socialist. Plato advocates an ideal State that would be referred to as socialist, elitist and conservative (Baradat, 2008:150). Plato argues that women's social equality with men has been a goal throughout history. Indeed, even Plato, although not endorsing equality for women per se, did assert that women should be allowed a greater role in society than it was traditionally the case in ancient Greece (Baradat, 2008:271). On the other hand, Carden asserts that Plato's Republic, for example, begins with a remark about the virtue of listening which would seem to be a moral virtue, but clearly it serves as an important prerequisite for such intellectual virtues as open-mindedness and shared commitment (Carden, 2006:20). In the Republic, Plato's sole objective is aimed at human improvement or human flourishing. In the light of this, Mackenzie maintains that John Stuart Mill, for instance, toed the line of Plato who assumed that the aim of all government is the improvement of the people (Mackenzie, 2009:106-107).

Furthermore, the benefit to society is that free individuals will pursue intellectual, moral and spiritual projects that will lead to the progress of all in society (Mackenzie, 2009:108). Plato's notion of an ideal state is metaphysical and dialectical. He maintains that the philosopher-king should be equipped with the supreme moral character and good sense of judgment. The

philosopher- king should be trained and should have wisdom, knowledge and be able to assign people their proper place in normative society. In the Republic, Plato holds that the political world is to be ordered from above. Plato's Republic is actually aimed at ensuring the common good as the normative foundation of a well-ordered society. Mackenzie further argues that politics is best thought of as the pursuit of the common good (Mackenzie, 2009:4-5). In addition, the common good has a legitimizing force in society. The common good is deeply rooted within the context of reciprocity as we encounter it in every situation of democratic interaction. The aim of interaction is reciprocity (Asouzu, 2003:79). Apart from the idea of the common good in the democratic state, the political state is characterized by certain internal contradiction.

Broadly speaking, the idea of the State is characterized by internal contradiction. The State was beset by a peculiar contradiction (Habermas, 1989, 81). The State attempts to resolve these inherent contradictions by ensuring the common good of the people. The doctrine of politics aims at the good and just life. Politics was understood to be the doctrine of the good and just life; it was the continuation of ethics and social order. The order of virtuous conduct is transformed or changed into the regulation of social intercourse (Habermas, 1973:42-43). Accordingly, B.E. Nwigwe posits that in the Republic, Plato idealizes the city-state; comparing its functioning with that of the body in which harmony can be achieved only if the various organs function properly (Nwigwe, 2004:90). The idea of the good is the most fundamental to Plato's Republic. According to Thomas Hobbes cited by B.E. Nwigwe, men look not at the greatness of the evil past, but the greatness of the good that follows (Nwigwe, 2004:97). Plato's Republic presents an idea of an ideal state but with a totalitarian shape. Property is used in common and decisions and other forms of human activities are extraneously determined (Nwigwe, 2004:103). Politics is deeply rooted in cooperative activity.

1.3 Contemporary Relevance of Law, Politics and Religion in Plato's Political Philosophy

It is germane to assert that Plato's Republic has contemporary relevance. However, religion and politics serve as the sine qua non for normative peace and human emancipation. The idea of freedom has become a metaphysical and relational question in terms of the correlation between religion and politics. In short, religion has resulted in unusual and senseless killings of persons. This subsection examines the need for the relevance of religion and politics in our secular world. Religion and politics serve as the yardstick for human emancipation and normative peace in our socio-political and existential relations of our secular world. Religion can be understood from the point of view of other disciplines, for instance, political science or politics. We, therefore, identify religion as it affects sociology, philosophy, anthropology, history, political science, psychology, semantics and criminology or law. Religion means "binding back", which is derived from the Latin word "religare". It means reverence or the essence or obligation of worship. Religion means communicating knowledge of something to a superior God; the superior God is a supernatural being; we also take cognizance of gods as it relates to the African traditional religion. Plato's Republic has some level of religiosity. Religion strengthens man's democratic commitment to what he believes in. Moreover, one of the earliest conceptions of social groups is that people come to live together under mutual agreements and within the normative context of human politico-existential relations. Religion helps to create self-discipline in the individual members of that group. Secondly, religion creates social unity or social cohesion (Ejim, 2006:18-19). Religion has to do with human experience. Religion reveals the sense of the sacred and the invisible reality that has been part

of human experience (Ejim, 2006:24). Religion does not just imply socio-political or existential relation but a social cohesion. For Hick, religion often enhances social relation. Religion reflects a set of beliefs and practices. Religion is human recognition of a superhuman – controlling power and especially of a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship. Religion should not be seen as an exclusive system that has affected the development of cultures (Hick, 2006:2-3). Religion reflects the dynamic and complex relationship of human beings within their social environment. Hick further argues that:

Instead of thinking of religion as existing in mutually exclusive systems, we should see the religious life of humanity as a dynamic continuum within which certain major disturbances have from time to time set up new fields of force, of greater or lesser power, displaying complex relationships of attraction and repulsion, absorption, resistance, and reinforcement. These major disturbances are the greater creative religious moments of human history from which the distinguishable religious traditions have stemmed (Hick, 2006:111).

Religion just like law is intended for the common good of the community, just as natural law is intended for the common good of the community of mankind (Omogbe, 2007:21). Religion reflects a binding force or order; of ethical nature, deriving from the nature of things and imposing on man the duty to behave in accordance with his rational nature (Omogbe, 2007:59). Religion teaches man to do good and avoid evil. Religion demonstrates or guarantees the realization of the physical-spiritual essence of all mankind. Religion assures moral order and moral order corresponds to the ordering principle of being (Omogbe, 2007:62). Religion, though implicit in Plato's Republic constitutes one of the most fundamental elements of his political thought.

1.4 A Philosophical Discourse on Key Issues in Plato's Republic

Plato reflects the need for social order. Men behave justly because they fear societal punishment. In the Republic, Plato reflects the need for social justice and justice is worthwhile. Plato's conception of social justice appeals to human psychology. In the Republic, Plato identifies justice as the sole objective of civic harmony in a structured political society. An ideal society consists of three main classes of people. These include: producers (craftsmen, farmers, artisans etc), auxiliaries (warriors/soldiers) and guardians (rulers). Society is well structured, ordered and just when the social relations between these three classes of people are right. Each group must perform its function and must not usurp or meddle in others' functions. Plato claims that individual justice guarantees or mirrors political justice. Plato's principle of justice reveals the principle of specialization; a principle that guarantees that each person fulfills the societal role or function to which nature fitted him and he does not interfere in any other function (Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, 2007:79). The idea of Plato's Republic reveals that there is a:

- ❖ Rational part of the soul (this part seeks after truth and is responsible for our philosophical inclination).
- ❖ Spirited part of the soul (this part desires honour and is responsible for our feelings of anger and indignation).
- ❖ Appetitive part of the soul (this part lusts after all sorts of things such as food, sex and money).

Furthermore, just as the soul is aimed at fulfilling the desires of the rational part so also the just society or the political community is aimed at fulfilling whatever the guardian or the ruler wills. The parallel between the just society and the just individual is very profound, appropriate and deep. Plato argues that what the philosopher-king must know in order to become a capable ruler is the knowledge of the Form of the Good. However, it is the source of all other forms of knowledge such as truth and beauty. Plato argues that the aim of education is not to put knowledge into the soul, but to put the right kind of knowledge and desires into the soul that ultimately aimed at the truth and the Form of the Good. Philosopher-kings form the only class of men to possess knowledge of the truth and the Form of the Good. Plato argues that injustice ultimately affects a man's psyche, whereas a just soul is a healthy, unperturbed, happy and calm one. Plato argues that the just life is also the most pleasant life. Justice, for Plato, is always accompanied by true pleasure. The desirability of justice is likely connected to the intimate relationship between the just life and the Forms of the Good in human society. The just life is good in itself because it guarantees the need for civic harmony. In Plato's Republic, justice is established and defined as the greatest good. Plato meant to combat the attitude of injustice and illegality in human society and claims that law and morality is nothing but mere convention. Plato proves that justice is a good thing. Justice is defined as a set of behavioural norms and it could be described as structural as well as contextual in nature. Political justice resides in the structure of the ideal political community, while individual justice resides in the structure of the soul. The principle of specialization separates society into three various classes. Specialization makes it possible that these three classes remain in a fixed relation of power and influence without each classes meddling in any other business (Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, 2007:79-80). Political justice consists in the structural relations among the classes of society. Plato argues that just as the sun provides light and visibility in the visible realm or physical world, the Form of the Good is the source of intelligibility. One of Plato's fundamental objectives in the Republic is to show that justice is worthwhile – that just action is good in itself. In the Republic, Plato reflects the ideas of ethics, politics and the social structure of society. The move from Plato's moral theory to his political theory is an easy one. In fact, the two topics are intertwined in the Republic. The soul of the individual person is a miniature version of the normative structure of society (Plato, 2007: xxvi).

Plato's goal was to prove that justice is worthwhile irrespective of the advantages it offers. Plato's Republic reveals the Form of the Good. The Form of the Good is in the intelligible realm. Plato identifies knowledge and truth as important. The Good is what provides for knowledge and truth. Plato argues that the Form (or Idea) of the Good is the ultimate source or object of knowledge, although it is not knowledge itself. From the Good, things are just and they gain their usefulness and objective value. Human beings are compelled to pursue the idea of the good, but no one can hope to do this successfully without the aid of philosophical reasoning. In "*Nicomachean Ethics*", Aristotle was quite critical of Plato's Forms (or ideas) of the Good and perceived them as irrelevant to human affairs. Aristotle argues that Plato's Form of the Good does not explain events in the physical world. Moreover, Plato's Form of the Good is an elusive concept and does not define things in the physical or material world. Plato's Form of the Good could be accepted as hypothesis rather than criticizing its weakness. Some scholars have argued that Plato intended the Form of the Good to be the essence of which things come into existence. Plato's idea of the good has four basic features. These include utopianism, totalitarianism, feminism and communism.

Utopianism

Plato's Republic reveals a form of utopian ideology. The Republic's utopianism has attracted many commentaries and criticisms. The critics have argued that Plato's Republic rests on an unrealistic picture of human beings. Utopianism is characterized by idealism. The idealism of his vision is inspiring, but most people would agree with Glaucon's complaint that such an ideal community exists nowhere on earth (Lawhead, 2002:318). Plato's Republic defines the explanatory and rational account of human nature. His account of human nature elicits the need for objective goodness and the idea of social order; and it explains the optimal satisfaction of all psychological attitudes. It reflects the cornerstone of civilized human life as Plato understands it. Plato's ideal state reveals the intrinsic value of different kinds of psychological satisfaction. The Republic is optimistic about the normative possibility of an ideal "city-state". The Republic's ideal can affect us as human beings more generally. It reflects on the unity and civic harmony that is fundamental to our existence.

Communism

Communism is one of the most striking features of the ideal city-state because it guarantees the abolition of private families and sharp limitation on private property. Plato's critics claimed that communism is either undesirable or impossible. Plato argues that most people are incapable of living without private property and private families.

Feminism

In the Republic, Plato advocates that in the ideal city-state, the education and job of ruling should be open to girls and women. Plato's Republic reveals Western philosophy's long standing history of sexist denigration of women in society. The broad claim is that Plato's political ethics is feminist in nature and cannot be fully sustained and the labelling 'feminist' is a contested one. Scholars have argued from the feminist standpoint, that one's sex is generally irrelevant to one's qualifications for the right to vote or be voted for, education or employment. Some scholars have also argued that Plato is not a feminist on the grounds that he shows no interests in women right. Feminism requires attention to what actually women want. Feminism requires a concern for women rights. Plato focuses instead on what women (and men) should want. Plato argues in the Republic that women can be among the elite who rule philosophically in his ideal state. Plato adopts (at least in the Republic) a gender free view of political capacities (Hoffman and Graham, 2009). Feminism requires attention to and concern for the interests and needs of women as distinct from the interests and needs of men. In the Republic, Plato advances a couple of plausibly feminist concerns. Some critics have argued that Plato is deeply prejudiced against women and yet committed to some plausibly feminist principles.

Totalitarianism

Totalitarianism as a political ideology remains the most heated discussion of Plato's Republic as famously championed by Karl Popper. In the Republic, Plato provides a picture not just of a happy city or perfect world but also of a happy individual person as well. Plato conceives the good of the ideal city as nothing more than the aggregate good of all the democratic citizens. In the Republic, the individual's own maximal good coincides with the maximal good of the ideal city. Plato's normative assumption was that individuals reap their own maximal good when the city is most unified. The ideal city of Plato's Republic is plainly holistic, paternalistic and totalitarian in nature. We should distinguish Plato's picture of the human

good and the very idea of an objective human good. We might also question Plato's apparent optimism about the trustworthiness of philosopher-kings and insist on how political power could be checked in order to minimize the risk of the abuse of political power and political domination. The best human life is ruled by knowledge and truth.

1.5 Evaluation

Consequently, in the Republic, Plato actually aims at checking corruption. Plato's concern about corruption is clearly informed by his experiences and his deep understanding of history and politics. In the Republic, Plato's account of human nature reveals city-soul analogy. However, the account of political change is invariably dependent on the account of psychological change and vice versa. In the Republic, Plato has an enormous wide ranging influence even in our contemporary political world. In the Republic, Plato reveals to us that the world is well-ordered and that wisdom requires understanding of how the world is, which is aimed at apprehending the basic mathematical and technological structure of things in our physical world. Plato's Republic plainly reveals that one's living depends upon one's fellows and the larger culture. Plato's Republic is eudaimonism-it reveals an egoistic kind of consequentialism: one should act so as to bring about states of affairs in which one is happy or successful. Plato's Republic account for human nature and which reveals his deeper understanding of good psychological functioning. The Form of the Good transcends the natural world; it is a supernatural property. Furthermore, the Republic's politics is a reflection of its moral psychology or ethical realism. Plato's politics reveals moral psychology. In the Republic, Plato reveals a central goal of politics as civic harmony or moral agreement among democratic citizens and that harmony requires that the city cultivates virtue and the rule of law. Utopian socialist movement advocates a society of equals and socialist movement becomes prototype of the new social order. The utopian or socialist movement advocates communal experiments. Thomas More's utopian speculates about systems that could be considered socialist. Socialism advocates the application of collectivist principles. Socialism shares collectivism with communism. Socialism is natural in scope (Baradat, 2008:156-157). Baradat, however, observes that the socialist movement holds that people were both rational and moral creatures by nature. The Utopians believed that people would, with some encouragement, come to understand that socialism was the only moral socio-economic system. In the Republic, Plato reflects the fruit of a non-exploitative political regime (Baradat, 2008:157-158). Plato's strategy for the political regime is elitist, conservative, and elicits the need to guarantee the idea of the Good. Plato's democratic framework is aimed at the vision of reason and truth. This vision of reason, indignation and appetite was a radical challenge to existing understanding of human psychology (Baradat, 2008:158-159). Plato's Republic is governed by harmonious order or normatively peaceable, social order. The good of political rule that Plato seeks are deeply rooted in unity, stability and the other goods considered. The conceptualization and the contextualization of Plato's Republic depend on the ties between ethics and politics. Plato believes that ethics precedes politics. Plato argues that the highest form for the establishment of the state is said to be not the form of justice, but the form of the Good with a greater good. Plato's Republic rests on ordering principle and social harmony in the "city-state". The idea of the good in Plato's Republic is a dual one; it reflects the objective good (Divine good) and the subjective good (human good). The concept of the good as evidenced in Plato's Republic, reveals the need for human improvements or human emancipation and human flourishing. Plato's political thought is pedagogical in the sense that he emphasizes on the education and training of the child. Education would craft out every individual according to his potential, thus emphasizing the importance of nurture and

training. For Plato, society was sustained by a rigorous educational system and the science of eugenics (Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, 2007:89). Plato believes that education remains one of the key elements of ensuring the psychological balance of the child in society.

1.6 Concluding Considerations

Plato reflects on myriad of political issues such as freedom, law, religion, tolerance, virtue, justice, politics, civic education, public happiness, morality, social order and the concept of the good in the “city-state”. In the Republic, Plato assumes that the common good serves as the legitimizing or normative foundation for collective human interest or social harmony. In the Republic, Plato emphasizes on the knowledge of the “Good” as a worthwhile art of human existence. Plato reveals the need for promoting social order and democratic values. Plato has had various influences on many political philosophers such as Aristotle, St Augustine, Rousseau, Niccolo Machiavelli and John Stuart Mill. Mill, for instance, agrees with Plato that the ultimate objective of all government is the need for human improvement. In the Republic, Plato emphasizes on the crucial importance of civic education. The philosopher- king must equip himself with education in the areas of astronomy, mathematics, literature, logic, metaphysics, dialectics, rhetoric, philosophy and geometry. Plato agrees with the notion that politics is grounded in the common good. Plato’s four cardinal virtues include moderation, wisdom, courage and self- discipline. These virtues are still very much relevant today even in our contemporary political world. In the Republic, Plato’s political ethics has an elitist proclivity. It assumes the dimension of political elitism. It distinguishes between slaves and masters. Plato recommends only a tiny number of women to be eligible to become rulers, and those women who are eligible, would have to act like their male counterpart. In the Republic, Plato presupposes the need for equality and justice.

Furthermore, in the Republic, Plato advocates for a harmonious society and allows each of its parts of the society to flourish. Plato guarantees the impartial, equal treatment of all democratic citizens and social groups. Plato argues that friendship, freedom, justice, wisdom, courage and moderation are the key elements that define a good democratic setting. In the Republic, Plato addresses the dangerousness of political power and domination, but despite its dangerousness, political power and domination remains the normative core of any democratic society. Plato assumes that freedom is a political value that we must all have. Freedom remains one of the hotly contested or debated concepts in philosophy. Plato argues that the concept of the Good, justice and the other virtues like open-mindedness have to be redefined. Plato’s concept of the Good and justice reflects compromise – readiness, the ability to be receptive to appropriate rational decisions; and that politics is best thought of as that which is aimed at the common good. From the foregoing, religion and politics are geared towards human emancipation, social cooperation, normative peace, the common good, tolerance, love, sympathy, empathy, universal solidarity, mutual understanding and respect for human dignity. Religion, law, morality and politics serve the purpose of normative peace and the principle of social order. Religion and politics have inextricable nexus of ensuring the normative foundation of the common good in Plato’s conception of democratic society. The common good serves as the normative foundation for our collective human interests and existential relations. Religion and politics are interwoven or interrelated in the sense that religious tolerance reflects the emergence of political liberalism. Freedom as the absence of constraints or impediments characterizes religious tolerance and good socio-political or democratic values. Finally, in the Republic, Plato’s philosophical excursus is encapsulated in

his concepts of law, justice, politics, religion, civic education, public happiness, human freedom, social order and human improvements. It is, however, germane to conclude that the link between Plato's Republic and religion appears hazy. The concept of the good is the most paramount in Plato's Republic. Plato in consonance with Rousseau asserts that the sole objective of the formation or establishment of the state is to guarantee the highest good of the highest number. The common good is the fundamental foundation of every normative society. Plato's Republic is characterized by a normative assumption.

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