Platos Ideal Society Essay, Research Paper

Plato’s Ideal Society

To fully understand the social and political thoughts of Plato, it is best to refer to The Republic, which was written by Plato. The book spells out the goal of society as well as a blueprint to follow to obtain this goal. In this book Plato describes a perfect society; one where everyone lives harmoniously and without the fear of violence or material possession. To understand this utopian community we must look at several areas of it separately. The first we will examine is the purpose of the community. Secondly we will look at the abolition of private property among the ruling class. Next to study is the abolition of the family system. Finally we will examine the opposition to Plato’s perfect society.

You may be asking yourself, “Do you really need a purpose for a perfect community?” The answer to your question is “Yes”. People have tried for centuries to make the “perfect” government; democracy, socialism, communist, monarchy, but all have failed to achieve perfection. In Plato’s utopian society, one would not worry about money, violence, or anyone trying to get ahead through devious ways and this is his purpose.

This is where governments have failed in the past. Plato holds that there is one natural force that has kept a perfect society from happening, and this is selfishness. People are often out to serve their own purpose and this is wrong. Plato believes that if this element is taken out of society then things will run much more smoothly. Plato is not the only philosopher to write on this subject. John Locke and Jean Juaque Russeau have also written about this many years later. John Locke believed that everyone is good by natural law. The opportunity for possessions is what hurts the society. They believed in a Social Contract in which everyone worked towards a common goal. They went so far as to say that there could be anarchy as long as everyone abides by the social contract and works towards a “general will.”

Plato advocates the abolishment of private property among the ruling class. Plato believes that there are differences between people at birth. Some are wiser, some stronger, and some that are better nurturers. The wisest of these people are best suited to be called rulers. Plato believes that they are guardians of society, and they consist of rulers, military leaders, and police. He

believes that they should have no personal property. “The overcoming of selfish interests is regarded as most necessary for those who are to have the charge of the welfare and governance of all other citizens, quite apart from the fact that they are best equipped to overcome them” (Okin p30). If this element of selfishness is driven out of the ruling class, this would turn their focus, from attaining property to what is more important; the well being of the state.

However, I do not agree with this part of Plato’s ideal society. I believe that only taking land from the ruling class is the wrong idea. I believe everyone should have all the land or none of the land. No person should own more than another. In the community Plato calls for, I believe a communal ownership, where everyone including the ruling class would lay claim to the same land, would be better than just taking land from the “Guardians.” Although Plato does not believe this is possible, I believe it is a crucial part of having a society where no one has selfish desires.

The next part of Plato’s perfect society we must look at is the abolition of the family system. Plato feels that

because some people are better nurturers, they are better suited to raise the children. In this society, you will not have children to call your own or a wife to come home to. This is because they are seen as possessions of the male figure. Everyone would live in a communal society, much like military barracks. Reproduction is done in a manner not usually seen. Once a year or so, men and women are matched up through a rigged lottery system. The chance of who you mate with is supposed to be random, however most would be matched up by looks and the task you are best suited for (i.e. If you are an attractive male farmer, you are best suited to reproduce with an attractive female farmer). This may seem like a very weird way of doing things, but taking the aspect of small family systems out of the community will lead to a large family where everyone feels accepted.

This is another area where I must disagree with Plato. I do believe that a wife and children can seem like possessions, but because there is no ownership of property, there would not be the element of pride we experience in society when dealing with offspring. I also feel that denying a man or women from the chance at love can be a

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horrible mistake. It may seem like a mute point, love, in my opinion, helps to push our society along in today’s society, and if that element was removed, it would hurt his utopian community.

Looking at the state of today’s society, it is hard to believe that a goal such as Plato’s could really be accomplished; a society where everyone works together to achieve a common goal with no wants for personal gain. However, I feel that in the right setting, in a developing country, this plan for a utopian society can be accomplished. If people are taught from birth that personal gain is not what we should be interested, they will form the base of a society free of troubles.

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