



ژړوېشگاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرهنگی
پرتال جامع علوم انسانی

The Impact of Greece's Political and Social Conditions ...

(تأثیر اوضاع سیاسی و اجتماعی یونان قرن پنجم قبل از میلاد بر اندیشه سیاسی افلاطون)

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each other and they opposed each other in practice. The Sophists' method was a unilateral education from their side, but Socrates believed that not acknowledging to be ignorant is ignorance and whoever thinks of himself as knowledgeable is, indeed, ignorant. On the other hand, most Sophists considered man as the standard of the truth, but Socrates believed that there is only a single truth and to achieve it, man has to nourish his soul. Plato accepted neither Sophists' beliefs nor their method and regarded Socrates as a teacher and a unique learned man.

Based on what has been said here, it should not be concluded that all of Plato's thoughts and beliefs were influenced by the fifth century B.C. Rather, we have tried to evaluate Plato's view about the trends of this period as he never distanced himself from the political and social trends of his time. In fact, it is unadvisable to consider a philosopher's metaphysical thoughts apart from the social and political conditions because "a man's soul is dependent on his social nature and these two cannot be separated from each other. Individual and social lives are interconnected. If social life is bad and corrupt, individual life cannot grow and fulfill its goals" (Casirer, 2006, p. 83).

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Plato's thoughts were also influenced by the intellectual trends that emerged in the fifth century B.C. and even before that. Thales and other Ionian philosophers such as Anaximander and Anaximenes are considered the pioneers of developing philosophical thought in Ionia when it was moving towards democracy. These philosophers who had distanced themselves from Homeric and Hesiodic theological thoughts and had washed their hands off the role of any theological elements in the creation of the world, considered a material element to have played an essential and fundamental role in the creation of the world. These philosophers had the same firm view in the fifth century B.C. and philosophers such as Anaxagoras, Empedocles and atomists such as Leucippus and Democritus did not gain access to any metaphysical understanding about the world, and only tried to explicate the existence relying on the observable and accessible phenomena. The interesting point is that all the philosophers who had material belief, more or less, favored democracy. However, it should be mentioned that the objective of belief in material phenomena in those days was different from what the term *materialism* denotes today because, at that time, schools of thought had not split yet and immaterial and mythological elements were still involved in material beliefs. It seems that Plato opposed those who believed in only observable phenomena.

However, another scholastic trend which distanced itself from the Ionian materialistic view and followed idealistic thoughts started by Pythagoras and continued by Pythagoreans. They resorted to numbers and geometry which were absolutely mental and immaterial elements and explained all natural phenomena using these tools. This trend continued in the fifth century B.C., and reached Elea philosophers, especially Parmenides. Although Heraclitus has a somewhat materialistic view about the world, he can be put in this category too and his belief in **Logos** is a testimony to this point. It appears that Plato accepts the beliefs of this scholastic trend which was mainly against the democracy of that era.

However, both of these trends were overshadowed by two newly-established trends in the fifth century B. C. One of these trends was Sophists' beliefs and the second one was teachings of Socrates. They both distanced themselves from the existing ontological thoughts and believed that those old beliefs about existence could no more settle the unsolved problems of mankind. Therefore, they embarked on epistemology and sought the truth in knowing man. They both agreed on this notion, but their methods and beliefs were completely different from

6- Conclusion

The fifth century B.C. and the era when Plato lived was an eventful period and a lot of social, political and intellectual changes took place then. Before Plato, Heraclitus had found out that everything is in a state of change and fluidity. His belief in this notion was so firm that he said, "No one can step into the same river twice". It seems that Plato believed in this conception too but, like Heraclitus, he does not get stuck in that belief and concludes that fluidity of everything does not denote that there is nothing safe from change and annihilation. Hence, he agrees with Parmenides' view, which was against that of Heraclitus, and perceives an absolute existence which is safe from change and annihilation. Based on this conception, he considers the absolute and eternal existence equal to the idea of good and absolute good. This is an essential principle in Plato's thought, and there is always some kind of connection between this principle and Plato's other theories on society, politics, education and ethics, and dialogue. This idea has been dealt with more firmly in *Republic*. While the focus in this book is, mostly, on the political, ethical and educational issues, surprisingly, we come across Plato's most important metaphysical theory, i.e. the cave allegory. Therefore, we should not ignore the influences of the fifth B.C. century regarding both politics and society, and ontology and epistemology.

In this paper, some important influences of the fifth century B.C. on Plato's political thought are tackled. However, if we want to give a more general overview of these influences, we have to divide them into two categories. The first category includes the political and social events and phenomena of the fifth century B.C. It seems that Plato is against any political thought and conduct that respect the masses and favor democratic structure. Plato was from an aristocratic family and his ancestors were both politicians and aristocrats. This aristocratic spirit was accompanied with the observation of immoralities and disorders that occurred in some democratic societies and made him completely against democracy. Therefore, he firmly emphasized that people are not equal and the superior ones should have more privileges and also the big decisions should not be made by the masses, because they always seek their desires and personal gains. Based on this view, it can be said that Plato evaluates the things that were far away from democracy in the fifth century B.C. positively and accepts them more or less, and evaluates the things that were in proximity to democracy negatively and rejects them.

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stand against the oligarchs and achieve victory. Since the strong government has become feeble and, instead of leading people, it looks for pleasure and personal gains, the poor become victorious. What, practically, happens is that the rich become poorer and weaker gradually when the oligarchic wealthy leaders purchase their lands and make them go in debt. Little by little, they think about nothing but their personal gains and luxuries. On the other hand, the poor notice their weaknesses and find themselves to be superior to them and do not see it fair to be deprived of wealth and government. Under such conditions, a small pretext such as unity with the neighboring country starts a war and if the poor and the masses win the war, the oligarchy system turns into a democratic one. Believing in equality among people, the democratic individuals think that their desires should be treated equally and makes fun of the belief that one desire needs to be nourished more, and another one has to be suppressed. In Plato's view, democrats consider chaos as freedom, shamelessness as braveness and manliness, self-control as weakness, and modesty and religiosity as foolishness. In a democratic community, meritorious individuals are forced into exile, and good characteristics are scorned (ibid, pp. 1037-1038).

Obviously, Plato strongly opposed the democratic governments of those days and he never agreed with the covert, conceptual foundations of democracy. One of these conceptual elements is the idea of equality among people which was being developed by democrats. Plato's definition of justice was totally different from the democrats' beliefs. Perhaps, the seizing power of a demagogue such as Cleon through democratic mechanisms in the fifth century B.C. had an impact on Plato's objections. Of course, there are many examples of exploiting the poor to seize power in the history. What actually happens under this condition is that the poor, who are many in number, lose all their hopes to live, and then are willing to accept any promise to get out of this situation not knowing that the promise giver gives nothing but slogans. Therefore, the same individual, who is apparently democratic, seeking justice and caring for the poor, turns into a dictator. Furthermore, Plato refers to excessive liberty among people in a democratic society and regards it as one of the reasons because of which a democratic government degenerates into a dictatorship. Thirty authoritarian rulers' seizing power and their numerous crimes at the conclusion of democracy in Athens might have influenced this belief of Plato and the execution of a wise man such as Socrates by the democratic government might have reinforced it.

is a kind of government that was established in Keret and Sparta and it is based on the principle of making efforts to achieve honor and dignity (Gomperz, 1996, pp. 1034-1035).

An individual congruent with timocracy is someone who has lower power of wisdom, anger is nourished in his soul, and he has only a strong will power for fighting and preservation of values. However, this individual has a covert look at possessions and luxuries of which he was deprived during his lifetime. Therefore, since the oligarchy elements are also hidden in this government, the society is divided into two segments of the ruler and the ruled.

The title of oligarchy government is derived from the Greek word "*oligos*". "*Oligos*" means a "small group." Therefore, a government in which a small number of rich people were ruling over the community was called oligarchy. In defining oligarchy system, Plato says "It is a system that is based on the value of wealth, in other words, everything in this system is decided by the wealthy, and the poor have no role in running the government (Plato, 2001, p. 1103).

The degeneration of the timocracy to oligarchy takes place when at the inner layers of the timocratic society, and among the rulers, the force of gaining private benefits emerges which is manifesting in an oligarchy society. Hence, money pours into the timocratic society and virtue loses its value, high class people become poor and the poor become wealthy, and it seems that a skilled but poor captain is replaced, by coercion, with an unskilled but rich one. Hence, two hostile classes of people confront each other and fighting breaks out. Under such circumstances, both forces are like male and ineffective bees one of which has stings and the other doesn't but both of them are only consumers (Gomperz, 1996, p. 1037). An oligarch individual, whose father was a brave man and a timocrat, finds out that now he has lost his money and his honor. Since he had lived honorably in the past and now he is disillusioned and isolated, he decides to gather wealth and look only for money. Hence, the appetitive part of his soul becomes dominant and rules over the wise and brave parts. Thus, the honor lover turns into someone who seeks wealth.

Plato had observed the oligarchy societies and had found out their flaws. Hence, he tackles the anthropology of such people and governments in the fifth century B.C. He believes that the community is split into the poor and the wealthy under oligarchy government. Under this condition, governments or democratic individuals should assist the poor and get them to act on the basis of democracy so that they can

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oligarchy and after that democracy was set up and ultimately it led to dictatorship. However, it seems that change of one type of government into another is scrutinized in *Republic*, according to their superiority and value. We should keep in mind that since Plato's precise and geometric mind had been developed under the influence of Pythagorean, he maintains a geometrical and abstract outlook together with the idea of the good in his political philosophy, too. It can be said that no government is absolute because elements from other governments are shared in establishing every government. For example, in Sparta's timocratic government, oligarchy and dictatorial elements are also seen, but the pivotal force for running this government is timocracy. Therefore, we can say, on the one hand, Plato has a historical look at all possible types of governments and, on the other hand, he uses his philosophical mind to philosophize the issues and, in a way, he tackles anthropology. Based on the harmony and correspondence that Plato sees between individual and government, he believes there are five types of government systems and, accordingly, there are five types of human traits.

The first one is Plato's Utopia and, accordingly, a just and wise individual; the second one is timocracy and a timocrat; the third one is oligarchy and an oligarchic individual; the fourth type is democracy and a democrat individual; and the last one is tyranny and, accordingly, a dictator (Strauss, 2008, p. 214).

Man is not aware of all the mysteries of the heavens and the earth and this is true about the rulers of Utopia too. Thus, it is possible for the rulers of Utopia to make mistakes in selecting individuals for social and political positions. Hence, Utopia is prone to decadence. In this way, the first form of decadent government, i.e. timocracy, emerges. The kind of timocratic government that Plato talks about is the same political system which had been established in Sparta and among Dorians of Keret. Therefore, it seems that the Spartan government had impacted this belief of Plato, too.

In transition to timocracy government, ownership, gradually, gets out of the control of government and private ownership takes its place. Disrespecting knowledge, preference of war over peace, and greed for wealth are among the characteristics of this period. This type of government, which is at a lower level than the ideal government, is called tymarchy or timocracy by Plato. "Contrary to Aristotle, who considered tymarchy or timocracy as the government of the rich, Plato believes that oligarchy government is the ruling of the rich, and his idea of timocracy

heart to philosophy, and if philosophy and political power are not mixed up, and all today's one-sided temperaments which are inclined towards this or that do not rise up, mankind's misery will never come to an end and the government that was described will not get established" (Gomperz, 1996, p. 1023).

The idea of Plato's Utopia, especially his belief in ruler philosopher or philosopher ruler, was specifically created by Plato himself, but it seems that Pythagoreans' thoughts have greatly influenced this idea. Applying the principles of natural philosophy to governance, Pythagoreans helped the growth of politics. Some of them went beyond applying numbers to the concept of justice and learned a special theory of politics, which its core was the right of the wise to run the government, and, accordingly, its outcome was belief in governance of the theocratic type, which prescribes ruling over citizens just like God. This belief might have been stated after the fifth century B.C. and there might have been only a resonance of Plato's ruler philosopher in *Republic*. It is also may be the case that the idea had been stated before that time and had influenced Plato. The effort for materialization of this belief can be seen in Plato's social and political life. In his frequent trips to Sicily and in his contacts with the kings of Siroccos, i.e. Dionysius the first and the second, Plato tried to make them philosophers and make them interested in philosophy and, then, implement this idea.

5- Why Plato Opposed Different Greek Governments in the Fifth Century B.C.

After portraying his Utopia and scrutinizing its main elements, Plato begins to evaluate different types of the existing governments and considers their advantages and disadvantages. It is obvious that Utopia comes into existence when wisdom rules over the community and the government tries, in a wise manner which is depicted by philosophers, to materialize goodness everywhere. Opposingly, the decadent governments are those in which elements such as ambition, stinginess, seeking enjoyment, arrogance, and crime replace wisdom and knowledge (Koyre, 2010, p. 86).

It needs to be mentioned that what Plato has in mind for conversion of one type of government into another is not necessarily based on the historical necessities to think that such changes actually took place in the fifth century B.C. Nor can we say that, in the fifth century B.C., the system of government was timocracy at first and then it changed into an

and happiness, gold and silver have to be set aside.

In the Spartan community, communal meals were served to soldiers to maintain connection among them. Examining the flaws of this law, Plato is attracted to it and considered it to be effective for the cohesiveness of Utopia. In the Spartan society, even the marriage laws and the selection of husbands and wives were in the hands of the rulers who wanted strong men to marry strong women to produce a strong generation so that their children can strongly protect the government. To establish justice and to prevent disruption of the social classes, Plato, also, agrees with only those marriages that would take place between the members of the same class.

4- The Theory of Philosopher Ruler or Ruler Philosopher

It has been made clear so far that a just individual or a just government is the one who follows wisdom and this is wisdom that rules over the individual, other sections of the soul, and social groups. Thus, in Utopia, philosophers should rule over the society. And this is the principle that prevents the downfall and corruption of Utopia and individuals. Thus, first, we need to know who the philosopher is, and what the nature of philosophy is. It seems that the views of Pythagoreans as the first group that established the term *philosophos* have influenced Plato's belief in the philosopher. According to Plato, "Philosopher is someone who does not give into various sensual perceptions and does not spend all his life bewildering on the wobbly sea of beliefs and perceptions. Instead, his inner eye is always fixed on a single being. He is the only one who possesses true knowledge and wisdom and can seek the true nature of things – idea – on the zenith of single and multiple phenomena. Only can he define the just by nature and the beautiful by nature. Ideas and perceptions of the masses, whether about this or other problems and issues, wander in a half-dark area between the real being and non-existence. Politicians and ordinary people are not different in this regard" (Yaeger, 1977, p. 919).

Therefore, contrary to other people and politicians who merely follow conventional practices, laws, and governments, philosophers have their own true models and are the source of emulation instead of imitating the imitated. Educating philosophers is one of the important characteristics of Utopia in which people of pure race, who deserve this kind of learning, are educated. "If philosophers do not become kings, or if those who have the title of king and ruler do not truly and genuinely give their

basis of which individuals belonged to a tribe, and individual freedom was regarded meaningless. Since the Spartan social and political system endured for years, it is hardly possible to relate its laws to only one person, though we cannot deny the historical role of Lukourgos. It seems that the decline of the democracy of Athens, which opposed the Spartan government, was one of the factors that caused Plato to be influenced by the Spartan government. "Plato had reached the conclusion that laws and the political system are valuable as long as they have the moral value that protects them and guarantees respect for them" (Yaeger, 1997, p. 889).

Thus, Plato needed to set up a social system that, like the Spartan government but without their shortcomings, would be able to prevent the social and political changes. Founding such a community required an educational method and establishment of strict laws that would take decision making away from the important source of these changes and degenerations, i.e. the masses, and stop the influence of foreign cultures. Plato believes that the best political system and the most perfect government and the most competent laws belong to a society in which "Citizens truly share whatever they have". He says, "If such a condition exists in a country now or in the future, the implication is that people share all the existing possessions, and personal ownership of all kinds and quality is eliminated, and even all the naturally-possessed things such as eyes, ears and hands are shared to some extent, i.e. people see together, listen together, and work together. Furthermore, all members of the community enjoy the same thing and get sad at the same thing, they admire the same thing and scold the same thing, and, in short, laws succeed to turn the society into a complete unit. It can be said assuredly that such a society will reach the highest level of perfection and there will never exist a society anywhere and at any time to be superior to that in goodness and righteousness" (Plato, 2001, vol.1, p. 2039). It can be said that achieving unity in a society and unification of the laws are among the important factors that Plato traces among the Spartan laws wishing to make his Utopia as consolidated and unified as the Spartan community and consequently to stop it from destruction. Stopping people's desire for gold and silver which was part of the laws in the Spartan community was one of the laws that Plato had in mind for his Utopia. In *Republic*, Plato formulates a law according to which "no citizen is allowed to have gold and silver" (ibid, vol. 2, p. 2042) because, in his view, the achievement of society to virtue is against what the rich wants to achieve through gold and silver. Therefore, in order to reach virtue

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another group has considered them as divine blessings over the rules that he had suggested" (Durant, 1988, p. 95). The belief behind this government was that moralism, based on the virtues of aristocrats, should prevail all over the society and people should live in a unified and integrated society so that every individual, based on his social class and under the government's supervision, can receive the special kind of education of that class.

Hence, the life of Spartans was highly dependent on the government and individualism had no meaning in their life. The government's capital was provided through heavy taxation of the second class and war spoils. They were not actively involved in trade, and business between them and other regions in Greece was forbidden. Every Spartan family owned a piece of land which was not transferable and Helots farmed on it. Citizens were deprived of economic activities. Foreigners would be driven out of town and there were no trade with foreigners. To sustain unity, private ownership of gold and silver had been forbidden, and there was no respect for arts. Children were taken away from their families since infancy, and the government raised them collectively so that they would become good soldiers to defend their values.

Moral education was more important than intellectual education for Spartans and they believed that character is more important than knowledge. Their educational activities were more based on oral conventions than the written ones. The outcome of the Spartan educational system was hard-working and resistant individuals. Spartans were brave and nobody could challenge them in bravery and pursuit of victory. They were incomparable in moderation and self-control. What the Spartans offered to the future generations was their ideals which created strong will power in citizens and this characteristic has its roots in human nature and has always been with man. Following the laws of Lukourgos and during a very eventful period, the Spartan government enjoyed ever-increasing power for two hundred years.

In *Republic* and especially in *Laws*, Plato tries to explore the factor which contributed to the preservation and unity in the Spartan government and finds some models for his Utopia from their practices. Obviously, this does not mean that Plato shapes the elements of his Ideal City completely on the basis of the Spartan government.

Plato and Xenophon believed that the Spartan political system was the outcome of their genius and absolute governance which had enjoyed deep philosophical prediction power, too. However, we can, actually, consider it as a result of the first developments of primitive man on the

moral nature while Socrates' and Plato's philosophical teachings had, mostly, aristocratic nature and aimed at selection of elite for philosophy. And this is the root of Socrates' and Plato's hostility toward Sophists." It seems that the democratic society of the fifth century B.C. did not tolerate the Sophists' thoughts either and great Sophists such as Protagoras, whose beliefs are the subject of debate even today, were exiled. In this regard, Diogenes Lateritious says, "Protagoras was accused of being irreligious and atheist in Athens and his writings were set on fire" (Lateritious, 2008, p. 402).

Plato believed that this kind of prevalent pedagogy in the fifth century B.C., which was based on some of Homer and Hesiod's poems, was harmful for educating children and the youth. Before Plato, Xenophanes criticized the views of Homer and Hesiod about gods. He rejected the image they had created in the minds of people about gods and believed the real God to be superior to them. Gods should not lie or make mistakes while Homer and Hesiod's gods were human-like. Influenced by Xenophanes and respecting the works of Homer and Hesiod, Plato seems to have eliminated some of their teachings from his Utopian education that removed the youth's happiness and hope. He says "If someone having lots of talents comes to our Ideal City, imitates everything, displays his numerous artistic talents and reads his poems to us, we will honor him as a holly, amazing and delightful man. However, we will tell him that there is no place for people like him in our City, and our laws do not allow such a person to live in our City. We will, then, rub some fragrant oil on his head and tie a wool ribbon around his head and send him to another city. We will choose more simple-minded and less capable poets and story tellers for our City, who are satisfied with following the free and honorable men and the principals which were dealt with in the beginning of our discussion about educating warriors" (Plato, 2001, p. 906).

3- Analysis of the Spartan Government's Thought Foundations and their Impact on Plato's Political Thought

The Spartan government, which ruled over part of Greece during the fifth century B.C. and resisted Athens' power, worked on the basis of the laws of the founder of the Spartan government, Lukourgos. According to Herodotus, "Lukourgos, who was the uncle and guardian of Kharilaos, the Spartan king, received some orders from The Unseen World. Some have called these orders the laws of Lukourgos, and

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Education, on the basis of fifth century B.C. method, is important for Plato from the beginning of early childhood and even before that, i.e. when the embryo is formed. He says "As you know, we do not leave children on their own; we, first, establish a system in them similar to the one that we have established in the society. Then, we nourish and empower the noblest piece of their soul with the aid of the same piece of our own soul so that it may become a trustworthy guard for their whole soul; then, we set them free. ... Then, how can the life mixed with cruelty, unruliness and commitment of actions leading to annihilation of the soul, despite bringing power and political influence, be advantageous to us" (Plato, 2001, p. 1140).

There are many similarities between education from the viewpoint of Plato and education in the Spartan government, which will be discussed in the last section. Plato criticized both the educational methods employed by the democratic governments during the fifth century B.C. and those of Sophists. Sophists, on the one hand, disagreed with thinking about existence and focused on man. On the other hand, because of the requirements of democratic governments and the need for people's participation in the judicial and political affairs, they embarked on educating people in return for money so that they could acquire eloquence and oratory skills and the knowledge of the day. They believed that most human issues including morals are relative and opposed any kind of absolute thought about existence and man. "To substantiate the claim that moral laws do not have macrocosmic validity and value, Sophists resorted to the most effective and inspiring argument they had at their disposal. They argued that different nations have been brought up by different customs and laws, and the commitments undertaken on the basis of these customs and laws are not the same among world nations and even they cannot be combined" (Taheri, 2011, p. 34).

However, Plato not only rose against Sophists' teaching method, but criticized their metaphysical, political, social and moral beliefs. Plato's argument against Sophists is that they do not care about the truth and using eloquence skills, they merely seek their own personal gains. Since they charged some fees for their instruction, Plato accused them of turning their "instruction" into some kind of business and selling people soul nourishment. Some Sophists and their pupils do not know whether the knowledge sold by Sophists is useful or harmful for the soul. Plato had another reason for his disagreement with Sophists' educational method: "the form and content of their teaching had, mostly, social and

the ones who are unequal. In *Republic*, he says, "If equal things get into the hands of unequal people, the harmony of things will be disturbed and, consequently, the equal things will end up becoming unequal". This belief of Plato about equality was in conflict with the thoughts of Alkmaion, Herodotus, and Hypodamus who believed in equality among people. Sophocles complained about the idea of people of low-race to be prosperous and the brave and the high class people to be poor. Contrary to this was Euripides who said parting people of high-race and people of low-race to whom slaves also belong is only possible in words and the labeling itself is shameful enough (Popper, 2006, p. 442).

2- How the Prevalent Method of Education in the Fifth Century B.C. Influenced Plato's Political Thought

It seems impossible for Plato to aim at maximum justice in Utopia without laying the foundations of education in it. The dialogue and the connection that Plato establishes dialectically between the government and the individual in his political thought is maintained between individual and group education as well. What, in Plato's view, is of the highest importance in education is moderation.

Plato tackles education all through his works, but in two of them, i.e. *Republic* and *Laws*, which are the subject of this research, he deals with education very deeply. We can consider *Republic* as the philosopher's ideal work in education and *Laws* as a more realistic and intimate look at society. These two works not only do not contradict each other, but complement one another. It appears that Plato had, somehow, distanced himself from the ideals of his Ideal City when he was writing *Laws*. It seems that he gets back into the cave, where he has seen the truth, and writes *Laws*. "Now, it seems that, because of old age, the Greek philosopher's old thoughts about the importance of giving shape to human conduct take priority and, in fact, he develops a new outlook on the truth of these thoughts. This apparent return from ideals to the historical reality is not an unnatural phenomenon. He had ascended in his ideal world as much as he could and now his desire to fulfill his ideals makes him return to the real world and, like Prometheus, undertake the task of shaping human conduct. The general idea that it is a philosopher's duty to give shape to human conduct has been discussed in *Republic*, but, in *Laws*, Plato deals with this duty more seriously and brings up the idea of giving shape to the irrational powers of the soul" (Yaeger, 1997, p. 1263).

in the soul. The first one is the rational section where the power of wisdom rests and it manages everything related to the eternal prosperity of the soul. The second section of the soul is the spirited part which seeks superiority and stops losses. The third part of the soul is the appetitive section which seeks man's daily desires and short-lived enjoyments. Hence, there is some virtue for each of these three sections: the virtue of wisdom is knowledge; the virtue of the spirited part is courage; and the virtue of the third part is abstinence. All these three virtues are achieved when they are all governed by a virtue named justice. Therefore, justice is achieved and its true meaning is understood only if every one of the three powers fulfills its own main function. In addition, the spirited and the appetitive powers can function properly only if they follow the power of wisdom. And the power of wisdom can fulfill its duty only if it can rule over all the sections of the soul. A similar perception of justice is manifested in society too: like the tree sections of the soul, there are three classes in society. Since no one can take care of his daily needs by himself, people need to benefit from others' assistance. Thus, three classes are created in society. The first are the rulers who should be followed by all segments of society. The second are the soldiers who are responsible for protecting the country during the war and insecure times. And the third class is the craftsmen who are generally active in generating income and supporting the economy. Everybody in these three classes should act based on his natural talents, and refrain from interference in others' affairs since this interference will lead to corruption and annihilation in society (Enayat, 1998, pp. 52-53; Yaeger, 1997, pp. 851-584). It could be said that Plato's classification of social classes was influenced by Pythagoreans who classified society into lovers of wisdom, lovers of honor, and lovers of profit.

Therefore, Plato's opinion about justice was totally contrary to the belief about justice that was common in the political and social atmosphere of Athens in the fifth century B.C. and in the democratic government of that era. The notion of justice in the eyes of democrats of those days had its roots in the equality among people. This point can be detected in Pericles' words in a funeral ceremony, which shows that he believed that everyone was equal before the law (Klosko, 2010, p. 30).

However, Plato neither believed in the equality among people nor did he think the law should treat the unequals equally. He considered equal treatment of unequal people against justice and believed that equal treatment should be practiced for those people who are equal and not

result, the discovery of rhythm and tune in the nature is a necessary beginning for transferring these concepts to the higher world and man's interior and finding discipline and system in his life (Yaeger, 1997, p. 239).

In addition to the effect of belief in some kind of order and harmony in the world on Plato's thoughts, Pythagoreans' belief in the soul and its immortality, which had its roots in the Orpheus' elements of their thoughts, had influenced Plato's view about justice to some extent. Therefore, Plato has based his theory of justice on this principle and considered the harmony and symmetry between individual spirit and group spirit. Hence, Plato sees some kind of symmetry between the elements of the soul and government and finds the real virtue in this harmony, which signifies Pythagoreans' view about virtue. About the influence of Pythagoras on Plato, Russell, in *A History of Philosophy* says, "In Plato's philosophy, belief in the immortality of the soul, attachment to the other world, the spiritual tone, likening the world to a cave and the relevant concepts, and also the enormous respect that Plato has for mathematics, and the mixture of wisdom and illuminations seen in his views are all the result of the influence of Pythagoras" (Russell, 1986, p. 169).

The establishment of dialogue and harmony between the soul and government and the relationship between the two, which are influences from Pythagoreans, can be seen in the following statement of Plato in *Republic*, "I figured it is better to start the research this time from a different perspective. Hence, I decided the subject we are studying is very subtle and requires sharp sight. Since we are not sharp-sighted and are as near-sighted as those who are shown small letters from far away, we would better assume that: If, among them, someone notices that somewhere else bigger letters are displayed, he undoubtedly will read the bigger letters first and then will try to compare them with small letters to see if the small letters are the same as the big ones or not" (Plato, 2001, p. 867).

This transition from individual justice to social justice, and vice versa, indicates Plato's belief in the mutual influence of man and society, which is also found in Socrates' thought one way or another. This relationship between man and state shows the importance of Plato's mixing of ethics and political philosophy. To reach the definition of individual justice, Plato divides the soul into three sections, because – in his opinion – the existence of different and contradictory wishes and desires in man is an indication of the existence of different sections and powers

The Impact of Greece's Political and Social Conditions . . .

(تأثیر اوضاع سیاسی و اجتماعی یونان قرن پنجم قبل از میلاد بر اندیشه سیاسی افلاطون)

Plato's Utopia rest on justice. After defining justice, Kefalus claims that it is the same as "the fulfillment of a debt", but Socrates rejects this definition by giving a contradicting example. He states, "Is it right to give a borrowed weapon back to its rightful owner knowing that he is no longer sane?" Then, benefiting from reasoning, Socrates rejects Plumarkos' definition of justice according to which justice is it whatever suiting the interests of the mighty (Plato, 2001, pp. 817-829).

Such definitions of justice were common among the Sophists during the fifth century B.C. They considered whatever perceived to exist as reality and accordingly came to educate people. What Protagoras says is an example of this outlook: "Man is the standard for the truth". However, Plato drew a distinction between what really existed and underwent change and the truth and what has to exist and is stable and eternal. As such, he believes whatever takes place in reality cannot be an indication of the truth. This belief may have contributed to the theory of absolute ideas and absolute good, and these two different views seem to have been the root of philosophers' political and social theories throughout the history. Therefore, we can say that the basic difference between the sophists and Plato, which is mainly manifested in the theory of justice, is the point that Sophists considered anything happening in the society as real. "Sophists differentiated between what is natural and what is conventional and believed that, like any other creature, people, naturally, favor what can be gained unjustly and they limit their desires only because others block their gain of profits" (Klosco, 2010, p. 119). In contrast, Plato holds that whatever happens is not desirable and should be changed and made nearer to the desired idea.

On the other hand, we cannot ignore the influence of Pythagoreans on Plato's belief about justice as they were actively involved in the social and political affairs of their era too. Plato who became familiar with Pythagoreans' thoughts during his trip to Sicily, owes most of his philosophical ideas to them. The impact of Pythagoreans' thoughts on Plato's beliefs can be examined from different perspectives one of which is that "It is said the first person who used the term, '*kosmos*' about the universe was Pythagoras. This term denotes "order" and the universe is named so after the regularity that governs it" (Hooman, 2002, p. 73). Pythagorean believed that harmony is the essence of the creation of the universe. They had attained the concept of harmony, which is manifested in music, from the concept of mathematical symmetry some examples of which are the geometrical figures. Based on this idea, Pythagoreans believed all human actions and the nature are governed by laws. As a

Introduction

The factors influencing a philosopher's thought have various aspects one of which is the prevailing political and social conditions of the philosopher's life period. Plato has tackled political and social issues in his works so much as it seems even his pure philosophical or metaphysical thoughts have been influenced by the political and social conditions of the fifth century B.C.

Due to his family background and the lifestyle of his time, Plato could not have ignored political affairs and the critical and declining conditions of that era; instead he planned to improve the existing circumstances. To fulfill his goals, he stopped at nothing. His historical view caused him not only to reflect on the political and social conditions of the fifth century B.C., but to scrutinize the metaphysical beliefs and ontological thoughts of philosophers of his age.

Thus, this article delves into Plato's important political thoughts and the impacts of the fifth century B.C. on them. First, his justice theory which forms the foundation of his political thoughts is analyzed. Then, education, which is necessary for establishing the justice, is brought up. One of the factors which influenced Plato's political philosophy is the Spartan government. In fact, there are many similarities between educational system in this government and in Plato's Utopia. The sovereignty of wisdom in Plato's Utopia has a firm relationship with the ruler philosopher or the philosopher ruler theory. The other issue scrutinized in Plato's political thoughts is the types of existing governments in the fifth century B.C., which have all been criticized by Plato. An attempt has been made here to analyze and explicate the factors which influenced Plato's political thought.

1- How was Plato's Justice Theory Influenced by the Social and Political Conditions of the fifth Century B.C.?

The term "justice" is the translation of the Greek word "*dikyonon*". Like the word "*Politeia*", "*dikyonon*" has multiple meanings in Greek language, but the English word "justice" does not reflect all these meanings (Maragheie, 2005, p. 42).

Plato's *Republic* begins with a discussion on justice and gives an accurate definition of this concept. This indicates the importance of justice in Plato's Ideal City. It seems that the foundation and stability of

The Impact of Greece's Political and Social Conditions (Fifth Century B.C.) on Plato's Political Thought

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Abstract

Plato is the first philosopher who states his political views in a sound philosophical system. The testimony to this statement is his two important works, i.e. Republic (Politeia) and Laws (Nomoi) in which one can trace his political views. Plato's political writings indicate that his life as a great philosopher has never been devoid of the political and social issues of his time. The fusion of politics, metaphysics, ethics and education in Plato's works demonstrate that he was involved in political and social problems in an important and eventful period. Since no thought is created without passing through the historical bottlenecks, an attempt is made here to examine the impacts of Greece's eventful and flourishing period, i.e. the fifth century B.C., on Plato's political views as the recognition of the effective factors influencing the views of a philosopher which will help the researcher understand the historical trends.

Keywords: *politics, community, justice, equality, absolute, philosopher, education, government*

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