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JUSTICE AND EQUALITY IN PLATO'S IDEAL STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR ADDRESSING SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITIES IN UKRAINE

Hlib Manuilo

*Kharkiv National University V. N. Karazin,
Y.B. Shad department of theoretical and practical philosophy,
Svobody sq., 4, 61022, Kharkiv, Ukraine*

This article delves into the application of Plato's concepts of justice and equality, as outlined in "The Republic," to address the persistent socioeconomic disparities in Ukraine. Plato's vision of an ideal state, where justice is achieved through a harmonious, well-ordered society governed by philosopher-kings, provides a philosophical foundation for understanding modern challenges. By critically examining the tripartite structure of the soul, the allegory of the cave, and the division of roles in Plato's ideal society, this study draws meaningful parallels to Ukraine's ongoing struggles with income inequality, poverty, and systemic corruption. The emphasis on communal harmony and the pursuit of the common good, central to Plato's thought, offers potential policy insights for alleviating socioeconomic disparities in contemporary Ukraine.

In addition to examining justice and equality, the article explores the relevance of Plato's meritocratic ideals, his concepts of communal property, and his clearly defined social roles, all of which are crucial in fostering a more equitable society. The analysis stresses the importance of ethical considerations, such as maintaining a balance between individual liberty and state intervention, to ensure the equitable application of these philosophical principles in a modern context. By weaving together classical philosophical ideas and modern socioeconomic realities, this article offers a robust framework for addressing Ukraine's pressing social issues.

The findings suggest that while Plato's philosophical concepts can serve as a guiding tool for addressing inequality, they must be adapted to Ukraine's specific historical and cultural circumstances. This article aims to contribute to the wider discourse on social justice, encouraging policymakers, scholars, and civic leaders to recognize the enduring relevance of classical philosophical thought in crafting fair and inclusive societies. Through such engagement, we aim to develop policy strategies that promote equity, justice, and the overall development of Ukraine's citizens.

Key words: justice, equality, Plato, The Republic, socioeconomic disparities, Ukraine, meritocracy, philosopher-kings.

Introduction. The **problem statement** lies in the tension between Plato's theoretical framework of justice and equality in his ideal state and the practical challenges of applying these principles to address real-world socioeconomic disparities in a contemporary context like Ukraine. Plato's concept of justice, as depicted in his Republic, emphasizes the harmonious functioning of society through a structured hierarchy and specialization of roles, where individuals fulfill their duties without interfering with others. However, implementing such a system in a modern society raises concerns about individual autonomy, freedom, and the potential for oppressive governance. In the context of addressing socioeconomic disparities in Ukraine, the application of Plato's principles of justice and equality may face challenges related to practicality, individual rights, and the complex dynamics of a contemporary society. There is certainly a need to critically assess how Plato's philosophical ideals can be adapted to address real-world issues like

economic inequality, social mobility, and gender disparities. Balancing the theoretical framework of justice and equality with the diverse and evolving needs of a modern society like Ukraine poses a significant challenge, as it requires reconciling ancient philosophical principles with contemporary ethical standards and practical considerations [9].

This research article's **primary purpose** is to extract useful insights and strategies that can help shape and enhance policies aimed at decreasing income inequality, poverty, and corruption, consequently promoting a fairer and more just society in Ukraine.

This research article **aims** to scrutinize Plato's views on justice and equality, as expressed in 'The Republic,' and assess their significance and applicability in tackling current socioeconomic disparities in Ukraine. The study will examine the philosophical foundation and explain Plato's concepts of justice and equality within the context of his perfect state, as depicted in 'The Republic.' The research involves analyzing the philosophical basis and principles of justice and equality in Plato's ideal state and contrasting these ancient ideas with contemporary socioeconomic problems in Ukraine, such as income disparity, poverty, and corruption. The study evaluates Plato's philosophy's potential contributions and criticisms to address these issues and assesses the ethical dilemmas and practical challenges of implementing Plato's ideas in the modern Ukrainian context. The objective is to provide practical recommendations for utilizing Platonic principles to promote a more equitable and just society in Ukraine.

Main Part. In examining the philosophical foundations of justice and equality, Plato's work "The Republic" offers profound insights that remain relevant to contemporary discussions on socioeconomic disparities. Plato presents a complex and nuanced theory of justice and equality. Central to his vision is the idea of a tripartite society composed of rulers (philosopher-kings), guardians (auxiliaries), and producers (farmers, artisans, and merchants). Each class has distinct roles and responsibilities, contributing to the overall harmony and justice of the state. Plato's notion of justice hinges on the principle that everyone should perform the role for which they are best suited by nature and not interfere with the roles of others [5].

Plato's ideal state is governed by philosopher-kings, individuals who possess the wisdom and rational capacity to rule justly. This ruling class ensures that the guardians protect the state and that the producers provide for its material needs. Equality, in this context, does not mean equal distribution of wealth or power but rather an equitable distribution of roles that align with each individual's natural abilities and contributions to society. Justice, therefore, is achieved when each class performs its appropriate function in harmony with the whole: "our aim in founding the city is not to make one group outstandingly happy, but to make the whole city as happy as possible" [5, p. 111].

Plato's conception of justice also emphasizes the importance of education and moral development. He argues that only through rigorous training and the cultivation of virtues can individuals become just and capable of contributing to a just society [5]. This educational framework is designed to ensure that the rulers are truly wise and that all citizens are capable of understanding and fulfilling their roles within the state.

Having established the core principles of justice and equality in Plato's ideal state, it is imperative to explore how these philosophical concepts apply to Ukraine's modern socioeconomic challenges. Plato's ideas offer valuable insights into Ukraine's ongoing struggles with inequality, corruption, and the need for effective governance [10]. Ukraine's transition from a Soviet legacy to a market-based economy has been fraught with challenges, including significant socioeconomic disparities and systemic corruption. Plato's vision of an ideal state, while utopian, offers a framework for considering how justice and equality might be structured in a way that promotes social harmony and reduces inequalities.

One of the key insights from Plato that can be applied to Ukraine is the importance of role differentiation and the alignment of individuals' abilities with their societal roles. In contemporary terms, this can translate to policies that ensure individuals are placed in positions where they can best utilize their skills and talents, thereby enhancing overall productivity and social harmony. Additionally, Plato's emphasis on education and moral development highlights the need for robust educational systems and ethical leadership to address the root causes of corruption and mismanagement.

Furthermore, Plato's concept of philosopher-kings suggests that those who govern should possess not only technical expertise but also moral and ethical wisdom. This idea can inform contemporary debates about the qualifications and qualities necessary for effective leadership in Ukraine. By advocating for leaders who are both knowledgeable and virtuous, Plato's philosophy underscores the importance of integrity and ethical governance in addressing socioeconomic disparities.

To fully appreciate the implications of Plato's concepts for modern Ukraine, it is essential to first understand the historical context in which "The Republic" was written and the socioeconomic landscape of ancient Greece.

Plato wrote "The Republic" during a period of political turmoil and moral questioning in ancient Greece. Following the Peloponnesian War, Athens experienced significant instability, marked by the decline of its golden age and the rise of democratic excesses and oligarchic corruption. Against this backdrop, Plato sought to propose a vision of a just society grounded in philosophical principles and ethical governance [5].

"The Republic" serves as Plato's response to the perceived failings of Athenian democracy, which he believed led to poor leadership and moral decay. His dialogue explores the nature of justice, the role of the individual within society, and the ideal structure of a political state. Central to his argument is the notion that a just society can only be achieved when individuals fulfill roles suited to their inherent capabilities, guided by rulers who possess philosophical wisdom.

Plato's emphasis on philosopher-kings and the tripartite class structure reflects his belief in a hierarchical but harmonious society, where each class contributes to the common good according to its strengths: "The philosopher-king's rule is justified by his superior wisdom and his ability to create a harmonious and just society" [3, p. 82]. This vision was not merely theoretical but intended as a critique of contemporary Athens and a proposal for a more stable and just political order [3].

Having explored the historical context of Plato's "The Republic," we now turn to a detailed comparison of the socioeconomic landscapes of ancient Greece and present-day Ukraine to highlight relevant parallels and contrasts.

The socioeconomic landscape of ancient Greece, particularly Athens, was characterized by stark class divisions, economic disparities, and political strife. The society was primarily agrarian, with a significant portion of the population living as subsistence farmers, while a wealthy elite controlled substantial land and resources. Slavery was prevalent, further entrenching social inequalities [2].

In contrast, present-day Ukraine is a post-Soviet state navigating the transition to a market economy. This transition has been marked by significant economic challenges, including widespread corruption, income inequality, and a struggling middle class. The legacies of Soviet centralization and the challenges of democratic governance in a pluralistic society present unique obstacles to achieving socioeconomic justice [8].

Despite these differences, there are parallels between ancient Greece and contemporary Ukraine that make Plato's ideas particularly relevant. Both societies grapple with issues

of governance, social stratification, and the ethical responsibilities of leaders: “The social stratification in post-communist societies has become more pronounced, with a growing divide between the wealthy elite and the impoverished majority” [8, p. 148].

In ancient Greece, economic disparities and political instability prompted philosophical inquiries into justice and the ideal state. Similarly, Ukraine’s socioeconomic disparities and governance challenges invite a reevaluation of justice and the role of the state in promoting equality [8].

Plato’s prescription for justice, with its focus on aligning individual roles with natural abilities and ensuring ethical leadership, offers a philosophical framework that can inform contemporary Ukrainian policies. For instance, addressing corruption and fostering a meritocratic society where individuals can thrive based on their capabilities resonates with Plato’s ideals. Additionally, Plato’s advocacy for education and moral development underscores the need for reforms in Ukraine’s educational and political systems to cultivate a more just and equitable society [4; 5].

With the socioeconomic landscape established, we proceed to a detailed examination of Plato’s definition of justice and its manifestation in the ideal state. Plato’s concept of justice in “The Republic” is foundational to his ideal state, which he constructs through dialogues involving Socrates. At the core of Plato’s definition is the notion of harmony and order within the soul and the state. He posits that justice in the individual mirrors justice in the state, where each person fulfills their role in accordance with their natural abilities and virtues [5]. Central to Plato’s vision is the idea that justice entails everyone performing their designated function, leading to a harmonious society governed by reason and wisdom.

Plato argues that the ideal state should be structured hierarchically, with a philosopher-king at the helm. The philosopher-king, possessing both intellectual acumen and moral integrity, embodies Plato’s vision of a just ruler who governs with wisdom and a commitment to the common good [5]. This hierarchical organization ensures that the state functions efficiently, with each individual contributing to the collective well-being in accordance with their innate abilities and virtues.

Plato further explores the nature of justice through the allegory of the cave and the theory of the tripartite soul. In the allegory of the cave, Plato illustrates the journey from ignorance to enlightenment, suggesting that true knowledge and justice emerge from a process of philosophical education [5]. The prisoners in the cave represent those who are unaware of higher truths, while the philosopher who ascends to the realm of the Forms symbolizes the enlightened ruler who governs with wisdom and justice.

The tripartite soul theory, as articulated in “The Republic,” posits that the human soul consists of three parts: reason, spirit, and appetite. Justice within the individual occurs when these parts are in harmony, with reason guiding the spirited and appetitive elements towards virtuous actions. This psychological framework mirrors Plato’s conception of justice in the ideal state, where the philosopher-king embodies reason and oversees the harmonious functioning of the state’s other classes.

Plato’s philosophical insights into justice, manifested through the tripartite soul, the allegory of the cave, and the role of the philosopher-king, provide a theoretical foundation for understanding and addressing socioeconomic disparities in contemporary societies. By examining these concepts, we can draw implications for promoting equality and social justice in Ukraine, leveraging Plato’s ideas to inform policies that aim to achieve harmony and fairness in societal structures.

Having thoroughly examined Plato’s definition of justice, we now turn to an exploration of his vision of equality within the guardian class and the broader society. Plato’s concept of equality

in his ideal state is intricately tied to the hierarchical structure he proposes in “The Republic.” Central to his vision is the division of the state into three classes: the guardians, auxiliaries, and producers. Within this framework, Plato advocates for a system where each class fulfills a specific societal role based on their innate abilities and virtues [5].

The guardian class, composed of philosopher-kings and warriors, occupies a central position in Plato’s ideal state. Equality among the guardians is achieved through rigorous education and training, aimed at cultivating wisdom, courage, and self-discipline [5]. Plato argues that this educational process ensures that only the most capable individuals, irrespective of birth or social status, ascend to leadership positions, thereby promoting meritocracy and equality of opportunity within the ruling class.

In the broader society, equality is maintained through principles of communal property and social roles. Plato proposes that property, including housing and material possessions, should be collectively owned by the guardian class to prevent private accumulation and the emergence of social inequalities. Moreover, social roles are determined by a person’s natural talents and abilities, with each individual contributing to the common good according to their vocational aptitudes [5].

Building upon Plato’s principles of meritocracy, communal property, and social roles in achieving equality, the discussion now shifts to an analysis of their implications for contemporary socio-economic disparities in Ukraine.

Plato’s principles of meritocracy, communal property, and social roles play a pivotal role in promoting equality within his ideal state. Meritocracy ensures that individuals advance based on their intellectual and moral merits rather than hereditary privileges or wealth. By emphasizing education and virtue as criteria for leadership, Plato seeks to mitigate socioeconomic disparities and foster a society where talent and ability determine one’s status.

Communal property serves as a safeguard against inequalities arising from private ownership, promoting economic equality among citizens. Plato argues that communal living among the guardian class strengthens social cohesion and solidarity, minimizing divisions based on wealth and material possessions [5]. This communal ethos extends beyond property to encompass shared responsibilities and obligations, reinforcing the collective pursuit of justice and harmony.

Furthermore, Plato’s emphasis on social roles underscores the importance of each individual contributing to society according to their capabilities. By assigning occupations based on innate talents and skills, Plato aims to maximize productivity and ensure that every citizen plays a meaningful role in the functioning of the state. This division of labor not only enhances efficiency but also cultivates a sense of purpose and fulfillment among citizens, contributing to overall societal well-being.

Plato’s principles of meritocracy, communal property, and social roles offer valuable insights into addressing contemporary socioeconomic disparities in Ukraine. By adopting elements of Plato’s framework, policymakers and stakeholders can explore strategies to promote equality of opportunity, reduce income inequality, and enhance social mobility. These principles provide a philosophical basis for designing policies that strive towards a more just and equitable society, resonating with ongoing efforts to address socioeconomic challenges in modern Ukraine.

Transitioning from the examination of Plato’s ideal state, the focus now turns to assessing the potential insights and critiques derived from its application to address the complex socioeconomic disparities prevalent in modern Ukraine.

Plato’s conception of justice and equality in “The Republic” provides several insights for addressing socioeconomic disparities in Ukraine. In his ideal state, justice is achieved through

a strict division of labor based on the natural aptitudes of individuals, which ensures that each person fulfills their appropriate role in society [5]. This principle could be seen as a precursor to modern meritocratic systems, where individuals are rewarded based on their abilities and contributions.

However, this approach has been critiqued for its rigid hierarchical structure and lack of social mobility, which might perpetuate existing inequalities rather than ameliorate them: “Critics argue that Plato’s ideal state, as depicted in ‘The Republic’, undermines individual freedoms and fails to account for the complexities of human nature and societal dynamics” [3, p. 73]. Critics argue that Plato’s model does not adequately address the complexities of contemporary socioeconomic disparities, particularly those related to systemic issues like corruption and unequal access to education and healthcare [6].

In the Ukrainian context, the challenge lies in adapting Plato’s ideals to a society transitioning from a Soviet legacy to a market economy. The emphasis on communal well-being and the role of the philosopher-king in ensuring just governance resonate with the need for ethical leadership and effective public administration in Ukraine. However, implementing such ideals requires a careful balancing of state intervention and individual liberties to avoid authoritarianism.

Implementing Plato’s ideas in modern Ukraine presents several ethical dilemmas. Plato advocates for a class of guardians who would rule not for personal gain but for the benefit of the entire community. This raises questions about the feasibility of identifying and empowering such a selfless and wise ruling class in a contemporary democratic society. The risk of corruption and abuse of power is a significant concern, especially in a country like Ukraine, which has struggled with these issues.

Furthermore, Plato’s concept of communal property among the guardian class could theoretically address wealth disparities by reducing economic inequality. However, this idea conflicts with the principles of individual ownership and personal freedom that are fundamental to modern democratic societies [1]. Implementing such measures would require substantial cultural and legal shifts, which could face resistance from the populace.

Balancing individual liberty with state intervention is one of the critical challenges in applying Plato’s ideas to address socioeconomic disparities in Ukraine. Plato’s ideal state involves significant state control to ensure that each citizen fulfills their designated role [5]. While this could theoretically lead to a more just and efficient society, it also risks infringing on personal freedoms and rights.

In modern Ukraine, a balance must be struck between fostering individual initiative and ensuring that the state provides necessary support and regulation to prevent inequality. This involves promoting meritocracy while also ensuring that all citizens have equal access to opportunities, such as education and healthcare, which are essential for achieving true equality [7].

Moreover, the ethical considerations of implementing a meritocratic system must be addressed. While meritocracy aims to reward individuals based on their abilities and efforts, it can also lead to social stratification and neglect those who, for various reasons, cannot compete on equal terms [10]. In Ukraine, where historical and socioeconomic factors have created significant disparities, any move towards a meritocratic system must be accompanied by robust social safety nets and policies that promote inclusivity and fairness.

Conclusion. The examination of Plato’s “The Republic” offers valuable insights for addressing socioeconomic disparities in Ukraine. Plato’s model of a just society emphasizes harmony, where justice is achieved when individuals fulfill roles suited to their natural abilities, contributing to the collective good. This structured vision provides a philosophical framework that, while ancient, offers contemporary relevance for Ukraine’s socioeconomic challenges.

Key elements of Plato's thought, such as the role of education in developing virtuous leaders, hold particular importance for Ukraine. His concept of philosopher-kings underscores the need for ethical and competent leadership. By investing in education and cultivating ethical governance, Ukraine can tackle corruption and inefficiencies as primary obstacles to social equity [3].

Additionally, Plato's focus on communal well-being and his guardians' shared ownership of property, though not directly applicable in modern capitalism, align with the broader ethos of social welfare and fair distribution of resources. This suggests that policies aimed at reducing inequality by ensuring access to education, healthcare, and opportunities for all citizens are essential [1].

A central challenge lies in balancing individual liberty with state intervention. While Plato's model supports state control, which may conflict with democratic ideals, a more nuanced approach is needed. A state that ensures basic services while safeguarding personal freedoms can promote equity without undermining individual rights. The development of policies ensuring equal access to essential services is critical to fostering a more just society in Ukraine.

Plato's critique of the pursuit of wealth and power for personal gain also resonates with current calls for a meritocratic system that rewards individuals based on societal contributions. Establishing transparent, fair employment and public service mechanisms can enhance social mobility and reduce inequalities [7].

In conclusion, Plato's insights ethical leadership, equitable resource distribution, and balanced state intervention provide a framework for addressing socioeconomic disparities in Ukraine. By adapting these ideas to modern democratic principles, Ukraine can work toward a more cohesive and just society. Future research should focus on practical policy applications that integrate these classical insights with contemporary social needs.

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СПРАВЕДЛИВІСТЬ І РІВНІСТЬ В ІДЕАЛЬНІЙ ДЕРЖАВІ ПЛАТОНА: ВИСНОВКИ ДЛЯ ПОДОЛАННЯ СОЦІАЛЬНО-ЕКОНОМІЧНОЇ НЕРІВНОСТІ В УКРАЇНІ

Гліб Мануйло

*Харківський національний університет імені В.Н. Каразіна,
кафедра теоретичної та практичної філософії імені Й.Б. Шада,
майдан Свободи, 4, 61022, м. Харків, Україна*

У статті досліджується застосування концепцій справедливості та рівності Платона, викладених у «Державі», для подолання соціально-економічних диспропорцій в Україні. Платонівська ідея ідеальної держави, де справедливість досягається через гармонійне суспільство під керівництвом філософів-правителів, розглядається як можливе джерело вирішення таких проблем, як нерівність доходів, бідність і корупція. Увага зосереджена на паралелях між платонівським розумінням справедливості, заснованим на гармонії соціальних ролей, та сучасними проблемами України.

Стаття аналізує тричастинну структуру душі, алегорію печери та диференціацію соціальних ролей у платонівському суспільстві, щоб виявити потенціал адаптації цих ідей до сучасного контексту. Підкреслюється, що справедливість у Платона полягає в тому, що кожен виконує свою функцію в суспільстві відповідно до своїх природних здібностей, що дозволяє забезпечити гармонійний розвиток держави.

Також досліджується, як платонівські ідеї меритократії, спільної власності та соціальних ролей можуть допомогти забезпечити рівність в Україні. Хоча концепція спільної власності платонівських охоронців не є практичною для ринкової економіки, її етичні підвалини можуть надихнути на створення політик для зменшення економічної нерівності й зміцнення соціальної згуртованості.

Окремо обговорюються етичні виклики, зокрема питання балансу між індивідуальною свободою та втручанням держави. Платонівське бачення державного контролю може суперечити демократичним цінностям, але його ідеї можуть сприяти справедливому розподілу благ. Держава повинна забезпечувати рівний доступ до освіти, охорони здоров'я та економічних можливостей.

Висновки статті свідчать, що ідеї Платона, хоча й утопічні, можуть допомогти у вирішенні сучасних соціально-економічних проблем України. Платонівська концепція справедливості й рівності може надихнути на розробку політик для створення справедливого суспільства.

Ключові слова: справедливість, рівність, Платон, «Держава», соціально-економічна нерівність, Україна, меритократія.