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# Concept of the Week (PSIR Optional)

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## Plato's Justice as Architectonic

### Structure

- What is Justice according to Plato?
- How is it architectonic?
- Relevance?

### Answer

- The concept of justice occupies the most important part of Plato's *The Republic*. Sabine says: "The theory of the state in *The Republic* culminates in the conception of justice."
- Plato has analysed the virtues or nature of a good community. In his view a community will be called good if it possesses the four cardinal virtues of the Greeks- wisdom, courage, self-control and justice.
- In Plato's theory to perform the nature-ordained duty is justice at individual level. Each class and each individual will do their duty and none will interfere with other's activities- "State is individual writ large."
- In Plato's theory of ideal state, justice as a virtue plays the role of an architect. That is, it is architectonic in relation to other excellences. Michael Foster has illustrated the point in the following way
- A carpenter with a high degree of finesse manufactures a door. But the excellence of the door is not to be judged in isolation. The other parts of the building are to be duly considered while analyzing and estimating the design and beauty of the building.
- The design and dimension of the door must be in harmony with other features of the building. The carpenter cannot do this job; it is the architect's job. Architect's skill has not special department, but it is present in all departments. Justice, in Plato's opinion, plays the role of an architect. It acts as a control office upon the capacities of the individual.
- Thus, justice teaches every individual to practise self-control. It prevents many from doing those acts which are harmful to other members of the society. Self-restraint is, therefore, essential for any political society. Plato's theory of education is geared towards ensuring justice in political arena.
- However, Plato's idea of justice is also criticised for overlooking disputes among members of the same class and for being moral rather than legal.