

DISCUSSION ON SOME NOTIONS IN PLATO'S "REPUBLIC" IN A. SMITH'S "THE WEALTH OF NATIONS"

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ABSTRACT

One of the striking facts about the political thought of certain Greek thinkers is that it rests upon what may be truly called an economic interpretation of history. To be sure, the Athenian philosopher's conception of history was imperfect, and by an economic interpretation is not meant a materialistic one; but with these modifications, the statement is broadly true. Witness the following from Plato: "A State . . . arises, as I conceive, out of the needs of mankind; no one is self-sufficing, but all of us have many wants. . . . Then, as we have many wants, and many persons are needed to supply them, one takes a helper for one purpose and another for another; and when these partners and helpers are gathered together in one habitation the body of inhabitants is termed a State. . . . And they exchange with one another, and one gives, and another receives, under the idea that the exchange will be for their good." The origin of the state, then, is traced to the lack of individual self-sufficiency in the satisfaction of wants, and to the advantage of specialization and exchange. Such reasoning indicates an important step toward the development of economic analysis.

Key words: State, Republic, Wealth of Nations