

Political Science: Past Papers Q & A.

Q. Plato intended to build an institution for scientific study of politics and training of statesmen" elaborate (2008).

Ans: Introduction:

Plato was one of the towering personalities in the annals of philosophy and political science. Bertrand Russell says, "Plato stands at the centre of philosophical development in Ancient Greece". His ideas and theories laid the foundation on which edifice of political science is built. His views about ideal state with a philosopher king as its head has inspired a generation of philosophers in the west and in the muslim world. However, he always wanted to establish an institution where he could train statesmen to be philosopher kings. For this purpose, he established a school, namely The Academy. Let us take brief his Academy.

The Academy as the institution of training statesmen and scientific study of politics:

Plato always loathed ~~Athen~~ ^{Athena} political set-up as it was based on the

furthering self-interest and corruption in the state. Therefore, he wanted to establish an institution where people can learn the art of politics. According to Plato, politics is an art that can be mastered through critical and scientific methods. Thus, he established his academy in 387 BC and took hundreds of students in his tutelage.

(a) The scientific study of politics in his Academy
Plato believed that politics, like other fields, could be studied scientifically. His primary desire was to uncover the laws of just governance and fair justice. For this end, he proposed his theory of forms, especially the forms of Good. By understanding the Goods, people can easily comprehend the art of politics.

(b) The training of Statesmen in His Academy:

Plato wanted to produce good statesmen through his Academy. He divided the course of education in

such a way that students could become more critical thinkers, problem-solvers and good-mannered. In the second phase of education, he introduced mathematics, dialectics, and so on. The primary aim was to train student to engage in intellectual enquiry of every things. Moreover, Plato envisioned 15 years of training to statesmen course. After rigorous training, statesmen could be better equipped to run the affairs of a state in a proper way. In this way, he wanted to train and create efficient statesmen through his Academy.

The legacy of the Academy:

Plato's Academy had a enormous success as he was able to produce great philosopher like Aristotle and great statesmen like Xenophon. These individuals, later on, built on his philosophy and embellished it with more creative ideas and pragmatic solution. Therefore, it is right to say that Plato, even though an idealist, had a great impact on the politics of Athens of his time.

Criticism:

- (a) Plato introduced a concept of communism in the life of the state so as to be free of family and private, which is almost impossible to achieve.
- (b) Plato envisioned that ^{good} statesmen can be only at age of 50 years, which is not a necessary criterion.
- (c) The courses of the Academy, ~~Bertrand Russell~~ says, were censored carefully.

Conclusion:

It is true that Plato wanted to establish an institution to scientifically study politics and train statesmen. The main motive behind the Academy remained the same. The fact is that in his book the Republic, "he writes," all evils of states will not vanish until kings are philosophers or philosophers are kings". In short, he wanted his statesmen to be philosopher-kings, which can run the affairs of state through logic, reason and creativity.

Q

Examine the main similarities and differences in the political ideas of Plato and Aristotle. (2004)

Ans:

Introduction:

Plato and Aristotle stand at the centre of philosophical and political thought development in the Ancient Greek: Athens. The former was the student of the latter. Although Aristotle was a great student philosopher, he was the ungrateful student because he criticised his teacher's theories on the many fronts. His intention was not to belittle his mentor, but to embellish his teachings. Moreover, Aristotle also took similar stance on multiple topics as did his teacher: Plato. Before discussing similarities and differences in the political ideas of Plato and Aristotle, let us take a bird eye of their theories.

(i) Plato and His Ideal state:

Plato presented his ideal state in his famous book, "The Republic". Plato was disillusioned with the governing set-up of city state, therefore, he envisioned a

ideal state. Some of the characteristics of his ideal state are given below.

Features of ideal state

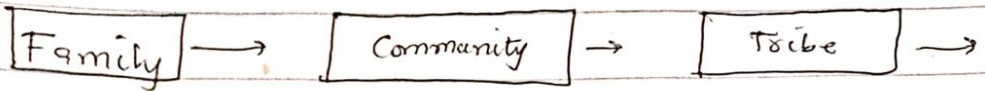
- ① Class-based division of society
- ② Universal Education
- ③ Concept of Justice
- ④ Specialization of work
- ⑤ Commensalism
- ⑥ Philosopher king

Aristotle and His view on state:

Aristotle presented his theory of state in his masterpiece, 'The Politics'. He writes that state is an organic individual which has emerged from social nature of humans. People are social animals; therefore, their survival depends on the cooperation and collaboration with others. This has compelled people to form greater organisations: Family, community, tribe &

Q

state:



→ State

The state is the highest form of organization. Its main motive is the moral perfection of individuals as well as protection of their fundamental rights. Moreover, Aristotle said that ideal state is one which is neither too big nor too small. It is just in the middle of two. The state should be near ports or water, providing services: Agriculture, economic, army etc.

(3) Similarities in the Views of Plato and Aristotle:

There are some similarities in the views of both thinkers, some of them are as follows-

(a) Purpose of state:

Both Plato and Aristotle believed that the goal of government is to establish a just and harmonious society.

(b) Active participation of citizens

Both Aristotle and Plato

agreed to the idea of participation of masses in the politics.

(c) The concept of Rule of law:

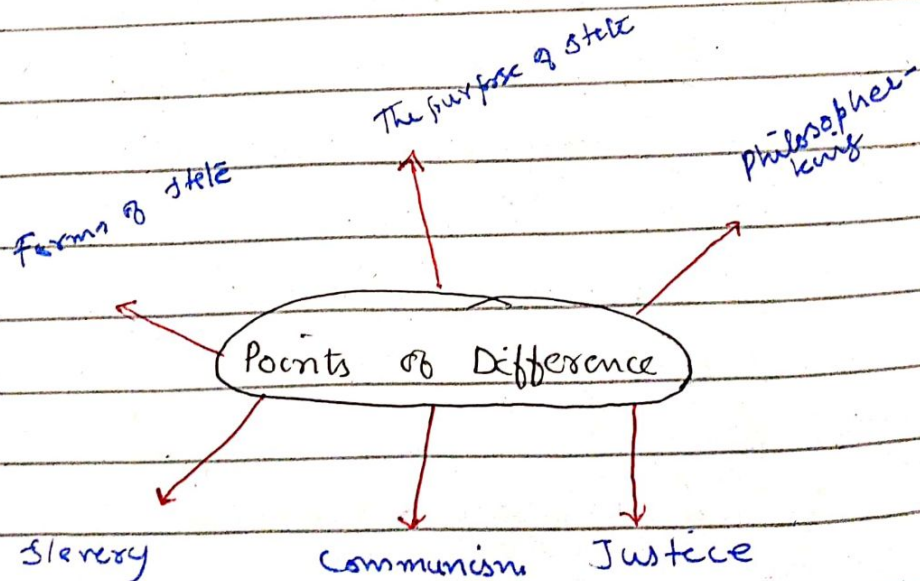
Both Plato and Aristotle agreed that laws should be equally applicable to all without any discrimination.

(d) Education:

Both Aristotle and Plato prioritize the education of masses at all cost.

(4) Differences in the political ideas of Plato and Aristotle:

On many fronts, Aristotle and Plato differ, some of them are as follows.



(a) Justice:

Plato believed justice is giving everyone his due, according to person's appetite or driving force.

Aristotle believed in Redistributive justice meaning giving due in accordance with their contributions to society.

(b) Philosopher-kings:

Plato writes that the head of state should be philosophers. He writes in "the Republic", "all evils of state will not vanish unless kings are philosophers or philosophers are kings".

Aristotle did not see eye to eye on this topic with his master. But he rejected the idea of philosopher-king.

(c) Communitism:

Plato envisioned strict communitism in terms of family and private property for his upper classes.

Aristotle did not see communitism as the right idea because it is against human nature and it does not serve any particular purpose.

(D) The form of government:

Plato believed in the ideal form of state with philosopher-king as its head.

Aristotle has argued for a mixed form of government which is pragmatic and attainable.

(E) Slavery:

Plato banished slavery from his ideal state and called for equality.

Aristotle allowed for slavery but with a condition that Greeks can not be slaves.

Conclusion:

The relation of Plato and Aristotle was of Master and student, but their theories were poles apart. Although some similarities exist, the fronts of differences are multiple, ranging from the form of state to slavery. Owing to their differences, political thought has been developed more rapidly.

Q Examine Montesquieu theory of separation of powers. Narrate those facts on which he has been called 'the Aristotle of Eighteenth century'.

Ans Introduction:

Montesquieu is one of the most influential philosophers during the Enlightenment era. He always wanted to learn, examine, study and comprehend different forms of government. When he went to foreign countries for higher studies, he closely study their government system. His theory of separation of power is the product of his vast knowledge and in-depth intellectual analysis. Moreover, he is often termed as the Aristotle of Eighteenth centuries because of the similarities in their work. Let's take a brief view of his theory of separation of power.

Q Montesquieu's theory of separation of power:

Montesquieu presented his famous theory separation of power in

his master piece, 'The Spirit of Laws'. In his book, he writes, "There is always looming threat of despotism in the government. In order to defuse it, powers must be separated." However, Montesquieu believed that powers must be separated in such a way that government must retain authority and individual liberty is protected. His theory is given below.

The core of his theory.

His theory is consisted of following parts:

(i) Division of Power: The powers must be divided and wielded by different authority. The powers includes follows.

(a) Legislative power: The authority to make laws.

(b) Executive power: The authority to implement laws.

(c) Judicial power: The authority to interpret laws.

(ii) System of Checks and Balances:

Montesquieu proposed the checks and balances so as to prevent

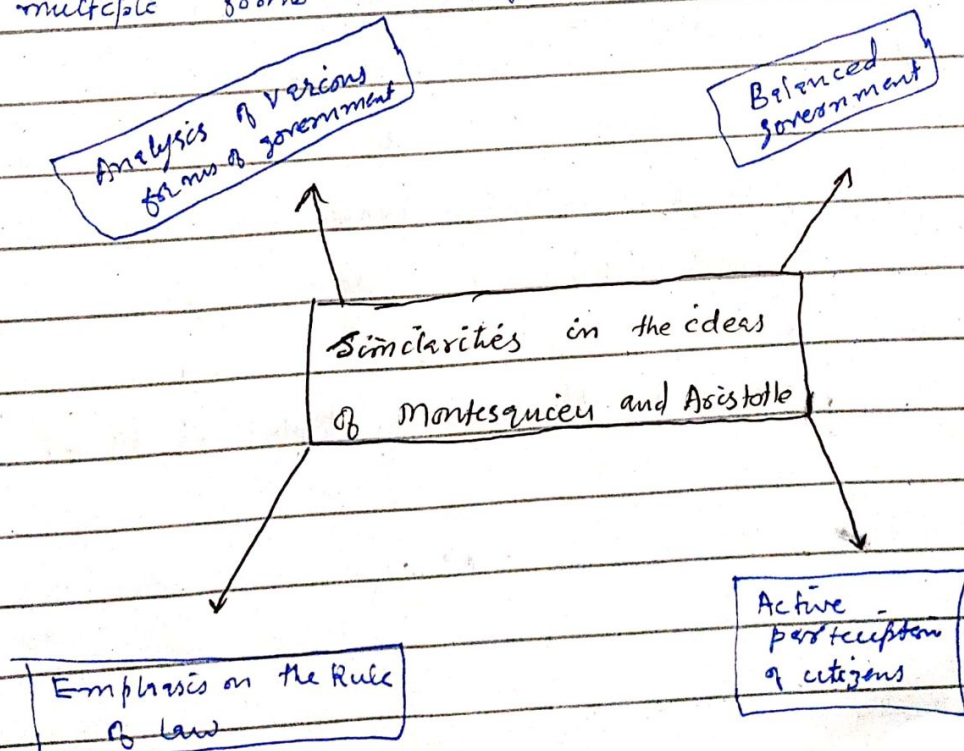
exercise authority in single person or institution and avoid tyranny.

(iii) Protection of Individual Rights and Liberties:

The prime motive behind separation of power is to protect individual rights and liberties.

(a) Montesquieu as the Aristotle of the Eighteenth century:

Montesquieu has earned the title of the Aristotle of Eighteenth century because of similarity in their views on multiple points. Some of them are given below.



(a) In-depth analysis of various forms of Governments:

Aristotle classified government into Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy or polity, and provided a blueprint for their workings and their merits and demerits.

Montesquieu also provided in-depth analysis of classification of state into following three categories: Republic, Monarchy and despotic. He further delved into their merits and demerits.

(b) Focus on Balanced Government:

Aristotle preferred balanced form of government because of his appreciation for Sparta's mixed government.

Montesquieu prioritized balanced form of government because he appreciated the English system which is balanced in aristocracy, monarchy and democracy.

(c) Emphasis on Rule of Law:

Both Aristotle and Montesquieu gave utmost importance to rule of law. They acknowledged the significance of laws to establishing a

just society.

(d) Emphasis on active participation of citizens:

Both Aristotle and Montesquieu called for active participation of masses in the affairs of the state. The intention was to make government responsive to the needs and aspirations of masses.

(3) Difference in their Thoughts:

Following are some of the differences in their thoughts.

(i) Historical context:

Aristotle's theory represents the political set-up of the Ancient Greek city-states.

Montesquieu's theory showcase the enlightenment era, focusing on reason and the rights.

(ii) Separation of power:

Montesquieu has emphasised on the separation of power which was.

missing in the case of Aristotle.

(c) More emphasis on Individual rights and liberties.

Montesquieu put a great stress on the protection of individual rights and liberty. It was not present in Aristotle's theory of state.

Conclusion:

Montesquieu occupies the central place in the Enlightenment era. His separation of power theory is being implemented in USA and other countries. Moreover, he shares some ideas with Aristotle like the form of government, rule of law and so on. Therefore, he is often called as Aristotle of Eighteenth century. Despite that, Montesquieu holds a unique place in the annals of modern philosophy.