

Question No 2

Give a critical analysis on Aristotle's classification of Governments?

In Context
Ideology ↳ Polity
Focus ↳ Political Virtue
Influenced: By ↳ Plato, Homer, Pythagoras
Influenced ↳ Hobbes, Ibn-e-Sina, Al-Farabi
Subject of Enquiry ↳ State
Method of Enquiry ↳ Observation
Books: Polity, Poetics

INTRODUCTION

Aristotle, the student of Plato was a great thinker and philosopher of his

ment.

time. He was influenced by Plato but was skeptical of his theory of ideal state. So, Aristotle gave his classification of government in which he explained different forms on the basis of number of rulers and purpose of rule. He then devised a cyclic process of change in which the good and perverted forms of government come alternatively.

Political Context

Aristotle was skeptical about the conception of state given by his teacher, Plato. He was of the view that Plato's theory of state is Utopia because his methods of inquiry for the formation of an ideal state is built on his imagination which is not practically applicable in reality. So, Aristotle travelled and observed almost 150 different states with different forms of governments.

and on the basis of his observation he classified forms of government on the basis of two principles i.e number of rulers and purpose of rule and there he gave a form of government most suitable for the formation of a state.

PRINCIPLES FOR THE CLASSIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT

There are two principles on the basis of which he classified forms of government:

- 1- Number of rulers
- 2- Purpose of rule

On the basis of number of rulers he gives three classifications i.e rule of one, few and many. While on the basis of purpose of rule the classification is divided into normal form and perverted form of government.

ARISTOTLE'S CLASSIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT

No of Rulers	Purpose of Rule	
	Normal	Perverted
One	Monarchy	Tyranny
Few	Aristocracy	Oligarchy
Many	Polity	Democracy

RULE OF ONE

Monarchy:

Aristotle says when the state is ruled by one person for the welfare and betterment of its citizens it is called monarchy. The ruler gives priority to national interests than the personal interests. But when the ruler becomes corrupt and selfish, monarchy changes to tyranny.

Tyranny:

In tyranny, the ruler is a single dictator who rules by his own will. He does not work for national cause. So, in the rule of one, if the ruler works for state it is monarchy, while its corrupt form is tyranny.

Rule of Few

Aristocracy:

According to Aristotle, if the state is ruled by few people for the welfare of state and its citizens it is called aristocracy. The aristocrats work for the collective wellbeing of national interests. But after sometime, aristocracy changes into oligarchy which is a perverted form of government.

Oligarchy:

Eventhough, it is a rule by few / a group of people having commonalities but they rule for their self interests and creates a monopoly of few. So, oligarchy is the corrupt version of Aristocracy.

Rule of Many

Polity: → (According to Aristotle, most suitable of all form of governments)

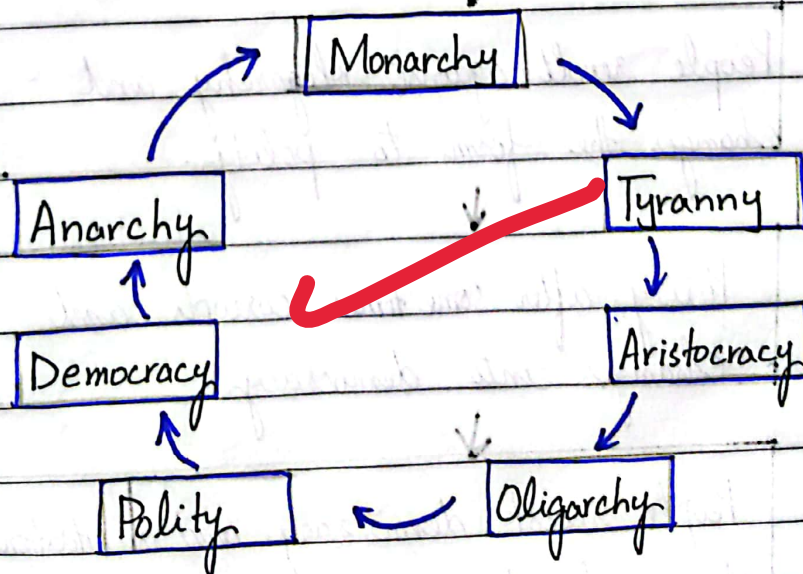
In polity, there is a rule of many i.e the chosen candidates to rule by the citizens of the state. These chosen people work better for the national cause. But after some time, it changes into democracy and for Aristotle, democracy is the perverted form of polity.

Democracy:

According to Aristotle, it is the rule of many, for the betterment of a selected class and it only favours the will of rulers and not that of public. So, democracy is the corrupt form of polity.

⇒ After polity, there comes a period of anarchy, from where the cycle of these form of government starts again.

ARISTOTLE'S CYCLE OF GOVERNMENT



CYCLE OF CHANGE

A man with strong nerves and intellect holds control and anarchy change to monarchy.

After few monarchy, there comes an era of selfish ruler which changes monarchy to tyranny.

People donot tolerate and give power to few intellectuals so tyranny changes to Aristocracy.

Aristocracy dominates by corrupts and changes into oligarchy.

People revolt against oligarchy and changes the form to polity.

Polity, after some times corrupts and changes into democracy.

People resist democracy, and a situation of anarchy develops which is then taken under control by monarchy.

CRITIQUE ON ARISTOTLE'S CLASSIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT

Following are some of the major critique posed on Aristotle's classification of government.

1- Aristotle does not distinguish between state and government even though they are different institutions.

2- Aristotle's classification does not cover all modern form of governments i.e. theocracy.

3- Democracy is not the worst form of government. It was at his time because of dominance of anarchy.

4- Aristotle's cycle of change does not fit in the development of modern states i.e. Dictatorship of communist party was established after absolute

Good attempt!!!

Date: _____

Day: _____

monarchy
majority in Russia

5- There is no place for mixed form of government in Aristotle's classification.

6- Aristocracy and oligarchy has no difference in the modern world.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Aristotle's classification of government is based on his observation of different forms of government. He gives a more classified and organized way to study forms of government and to implement it. He divided his classification on the basis of number of rulers and purpose of rule and gives a cyclic method of change of one form of government to another where normal form and perverted form comes alternatively. Though, his classification is more practical than Plato but it has many loopholes if seen through modern lens of forms of government.