

Date: ____/____/20____

Question: Aristotle was a realist and not an idealist. Elaborate with reference to his theory of the ends and function of the state

Answer

EXORDIUM

Aristotle was a realist and not an idealist, this statement can be justified by his work 'The Poetic'. and The comparison between Aristotle and Plato further signifies the argument that Aristotle was ~~ideal~~ realist in contrast to Plato who was idealist. Aristotle was Plato's student and supported the idea of 'Ideal State'. However, they differs from each other in deep insight of 'Ideal state'. Aristotle's ideal state is realistic and can be applicable to society. Whereas, Plato's ideal state is regarded as eutopian.

Features of realistis state

1- Population of state

Aristotle argues regarding population in his ideal state. He emphasized that more population can lead to unrest and difficulty in management. In contrast, less

population can not defend the state. So, he gives specific numbers that an ideal state must have population of 15k - 100k.

2- Territory of state:

Aristotle belongs to Athens and there were small city states at that time. He gives idea of territory which is realist and applicable. He told that an ideal state is which where a ruler can see whole state from top of the mountain.

3- Geography of state:

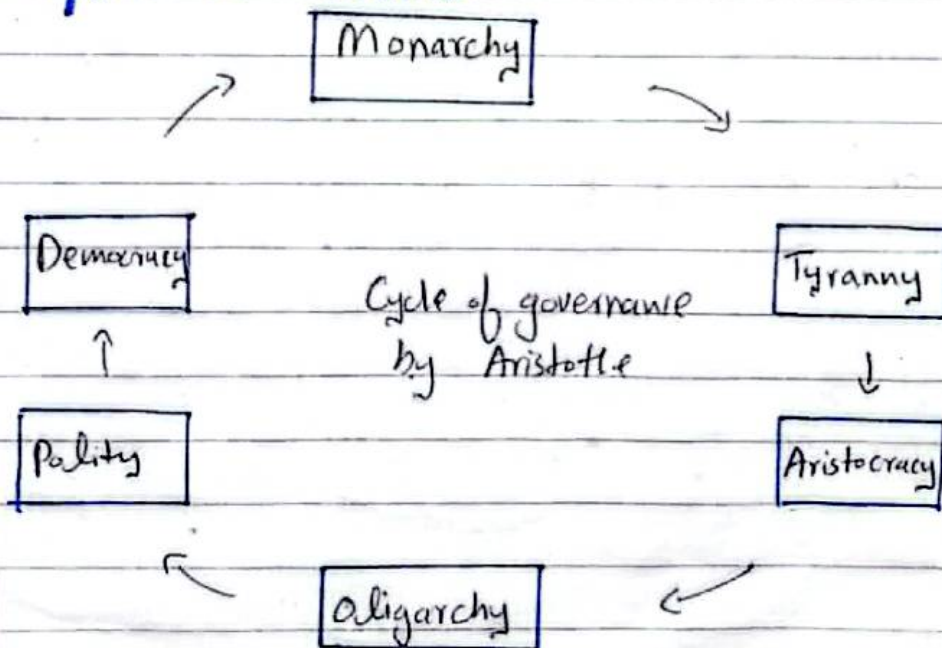
The geography of ideal state is also achievable. He highlights that an ideal state must have such geography which is difficult to attack and easy to export. For this, an ideal state must be away from sea but not a complete land-lock. Sea can bring enemies to attack and land-lock can not trade with other states.

4- Division of power in state:

Aristotle divided the population in two main cate-

- gories. This include citizens and slaves. Aristotle was in favour of slavery that god created some to rule and other to be ruled. The main jobs of state including; Agriculture, art, craft, defence, religion and ruling. The agriculture, art and craft was given to slaves. Similarly, defence, religion and ruling was given to citizens. Among citizens, defence is the responsibility of youth, ruling is the responsibility of middle aged and religion is responsibility of elders.

5- Cycle of rulers



Aristotle emphasized that monarchy decays into tyranny. Aristocracy decays into oligarchy. Polity decays

into democracy and the cycle repeats. Aristotle considers 'Polity' is the best form of government where a middle class creates balance between quality and quantity. Democracy is the worst form of government. Exempli gratia, Dawn, newspaper regarded Scandinavian countries an example of 'Polity'. These can be taken as an example of Aristotle's ideal state to some extent.

Aristotle was idealist or realist

Here is detailed explanation of Aristotle as a realist by comparing him with his teacher Plato who is true example of idealist.

1- Right of property:

Plato in his ideal state removed the right to own property. He strictly reserved the right to own property to producers. He is often criticized for not giving right to own property to soldiers and rulers. Therefore, Aristotle is more realistic because it is almost eutopian that upper class can not hold property. Aristotle gave them the right to own property.

but also restricted to hoards alot of wealth.

2- Right of family:

Plato disturbed the natural law to have family and faced alot of controversies on idea of communism in family. However, Aristotle did not disturb the natural law to have family of one's own.

3- Ruler of state:

Plato defined an education system of fifty years to identify real rulers. This is not easy to apply in real life. That's why, Aristotle makes middle class as the one to govern system by controlling authoritarianism of upper class and lawlessness of lower class. A ruler who is philosopher of 50 years is idealistic and polity is more realistic which can be seen in present day.

4- Rule of law:

Plato gave full authority to ruler and law is nothing for him. It is evident that

power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. So, Aristotle give preference to law and everyone should follow the rule of law. The rule of ruler is dangerous and rule of law is realist and currently almost the whole world follows the rule of law.

5- Number of population:

Plato gave specific number of 5040 as the number of population in ideal state. It is idealistic as exact a number of population is impossible to maintain. Aristotle did not give exact number which is realistic idea, as population can vary with time.

Denouement

Aristotle writes, "Plato is dear, Truth is dear. Nay, Truth is dearer than Plato. Aristotle being a student of Plato contrasts in his deeper detail of ideal state. This contrast made his realist and Plato as idealist. The views of Plato regarding ideal state

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is unachievable and regarded it as idealistic or utopian state. The features of Aristotle's ideal state are easy to follow and the examples are present in modern world. Aristotle is often criticized for his approach against female education and support of slavery. But, during Aristotle life in Athens, these two ideas were common. They own slaves and females were not allowed to get education and restricted to domestic life. So, we can say even these two points are criticised in modern era but it was the reality of that time. Hence, Aristotle was a realist and his theory and his work is the proof of this.
