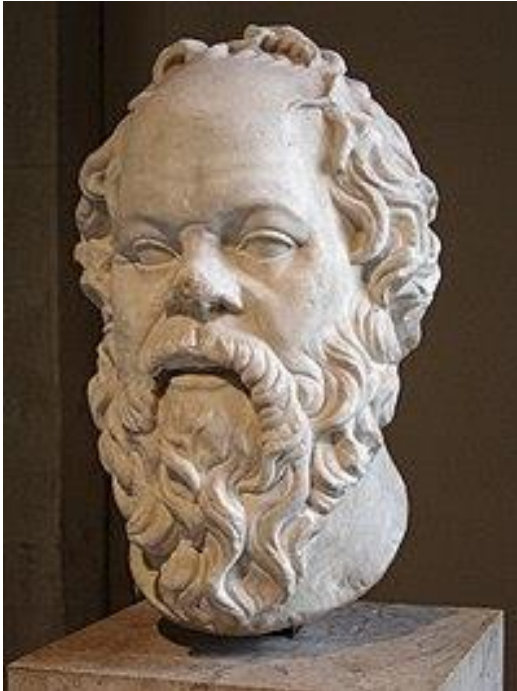


ANCIENT POLITICAL THOUGHT

Greek Political Thought: **SOCRATES, PLATO, ARISTOTLE**

SOCRATES. (469 BC–399 BC)

Western Political Thought: History of Western Political Philosophy can be traced into three periods; Ancient (1st to 5th cent), Medieval (up to 15th century) and Modern periods. Even though philosophies



existed in the ancient Egypt, Babylonia (modern southern Iraq), Persia, India and China, the western world was predominantly influenced by the philosophies of **ancient Greece**. With the decline of the city states and advent of Greco-Roman civilization and by the increasing influence of Christianity, there arose a new world view of **Universalism** in the middle ages. All persons belonged to one universal society with two heads namely, Roman **Emperor and the Pope**. Therefore, the major problem of the middle ages was the proper determination of the relationship between the two. The age was concerned more with theological problems. Then, **Renaissance**¹ and **Reformation**² transformed medieval into modern Europe. Nation states began to emerge. The political thought of the modern age is determined by the nature of nation states. The **Industrial Revolution**³

brought to the fore the new economic issues.

Greek Political Philosophy: According to Barker, the origin of Greek political thought is from the **calm and clear minds of the Greeks**. Though political philosophies existed in other parts of the world, the **modern world** is influenced by the **western civilization** which in turn is the heir of Greek Philosophy. In the development of Greek Philosophy, the role of **City States** is cardinal. Its life was different from the heavy routines of the Eastern Empires, bureaucracy of the Egypt and Mesopotamia⁴, and the barbarianism elsewhere in Europe. Actually, a City State was neither a city nor a State. It was something like a community of men sharing a common life and purpose. It can be compared to a social club or a college. They talked, walked learned and played together in the market place, in the gymnasia and at all places. It included whatever is necessary for human life. Both agriculture and industries thrived in the City States. It combined 'the growing of corn and olives with making of potter and leather'. The size of a City State was almost that of a modern Indian district. The population was over a lakh including slaves who were double in number than citizens. There was no distinction between the religion, state or government. The State absorbed everything including the collective activities of citizens. The entire life of the citizen was political life. Thus Aristotle said 'man is a

¹ Renaissance, revival of art literature and architecture, etc in the 14th–16th c

² Reformation 16th-c. Movement for the reform of abuses in the Roman Church ending in the establishment of the Protestant Churches.

³ It began in England in the 18th century. Technological changes included the use of iron and steel, the invention of new machines like steam engine and the spinning jenny, the development of the factory system, developments in transportation and communication (including the railroad and the telegraph). The Industrial Revolution was largely confined to Britain from 1760 to 1830.

⁴ Region between Euphrates and Tigris.

political animal'. Though the Greeks lived in City States, they understood their unity. However, they did not think about political unity because they found the city States ideal.

By **defeating Persians at Marathon in 490 BC**, Athens came into prominence. Under Pericles it became most democratic and prosperous. By the **defeat of Athens in the war with Sparta (431 BC)**, Aristocracy gave way to Plutocracy of rich go-getters. Then the secret of success lay in the ability of eloquence, rhetoric, disputation and practical ability to control elections. These are exactly what Athenians received from **Sophists**, a sort of teachers. Protagoras, Thrasymachus et al were well known sophists. Their aim was to provide practical learning to succeed in life. Only rich people could afford them. They criticized current moral and social ideas and challenged tradition. They also invented grammar and logic for Europe. They did not constitute a particular school of thought. They were mostly foreigners who resided at Athens and were not given political rights. They made man the centre of human thought away from nature.

Socratic Contributions:

Dialectical Method: To solve a problem, it would be broken down into a series of questions. The answers will bring out the underlying beliefs and the extent of their knowledge of the concerned person or persons. This is similar to the modern method of proving a hypothesis in a research.

Virtue is Knowledge: there are two kinds of knowledge. 1. Opinion or belief and 2. Real Knowledge. There are two kinds of goodness. 1. Goodness based on opinion or belief and 2. Goodness based on real knowledge. The second one cannot give away to temptations. It is a permanent possession of mind. It cannot disappear in a new environment. Virtue⁵ is knowledge. Vice is ignorance. Knowledge permeates not only mind but spirit also. It is Realisation. It is the illumination of soul. Knowledge promotes virtue. Knowledge is virtue because there can be no virtue without knowledge. Knowledge enables us to use wealth, health and all other advantages. It is only wisdom that makes things good.



On Law and governance: Socrates had great respect for law. Law is the sovereign of both the ruler and the ruled. It is a written agreement of citizens. Rulers should have special knowledge. The wise should rule.

Death of Socrates: Socrates died for upholding truth. He held truth above politics. Therefore he said that ruling requires highest type of knowledge. When the Council of 500 tried him, he said that he would stand for truth. It was the duty of each individual to judge right or wrong according to his individual reason and follows his reason. Each man is the only measure of himself. When a citizen follows his conscience, he must obey the laws of the land. Even though he could escape death, he did not.

⁵ virtue n. moral excellence; goodness.

Essay:

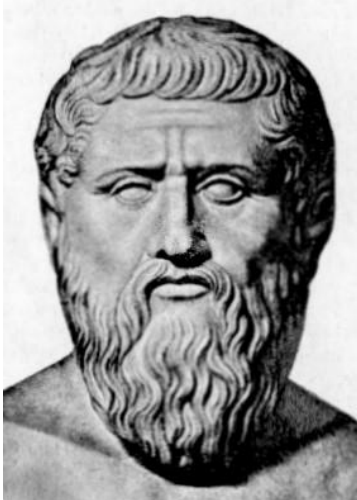
1. Socrates: Examine the **contribution** of Socrates to the development of Greek Political Thought. 08

Short Essay:

1. Socrates: Explain the **dialectical method** of Socrates 07

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Plato (427 BC – 347 BC)



Classical Greek philosopher. Laid the foundations of Western philosophy alongwith his master Socrates, and his student, Aristotle. Founded the Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the western world. Plato was also a mathematician.

Syllabus:

The Republic: Ideal State

Concept of Justice

Theory of Education

Theory of Communism.

Introduction: The 4th and 5th century B.C. represent the classical period of the Greeks. There was a galaxy of talents. Plato and Aristotle were the most outstanding. Plato whose original name was Aristocles was born in an aristocratic family and was a disciple of Socrates. Upon his death, Plato travelled for more than a decade.

The Republic: The Republic is the greatest of Platonic dialogues. It gives the picture of an *ideal state*. It raises four questions: 1. What is justice and right action. 2. What educational system would best promote *virtue*. 3. Who is the *ideal man* and 4. What is the best form of government?

Plato's Ideal State: Plato's idea of the ideal state is based on his concept of the individual. The human soul consists of three elements namely, *reason*, *spirit* and *appetite*. Corresponding to them, there are three elements in the State namely the philosopher, the soldiers and workers. Wisdom is the quality of the ruler. Courage is the quality of the soldier and appetite is the quality of the worker. The first element in the formation of the state is the economic motive. Everyone wants to satisfy his food and other needs. There workers and artisans will take care of the need. Then there is the need for preservation and expansion. The soldiers will take care of that need. Finally, there is the need for political speculation and the art of governing. The philosophers will take care of that need. Plato's

philosopher king is able law and above selfishness. He is a true statesman. Thus in the Platonic state, there is the system of functional specialization. Thus, the state reflects human nature. The state is a magnified individual. The state is *individual writ large*.

The object of the Ideal State is 'Good' life. For this firstly, education is important. Men and women should have the same education. This is because of the fact that they are different only in degree and not in kind. Both should have the same public function. Along with this he gives the scheme of education also. Secondly, Plato wants to abolish family. There should be communism of property and wives. Thirdly, there should be the rule of philosophy through the philosopher king. Therefore, the head of the state is a philosopher ruler or king who represents *Reason*. The scheme of education will ensure the constant supply of philosopher rulers. The system of communism of property and family is to keep them out of economic and worldly temptations.

Platonic Concept of Justice: Plato lived during the time of decay of Athenian democracy. According to Plato justice is the only remedy to save the state. Justice is inseparable from the state. Justice resides in the state. It means complete virtue. It consists of *wisdom, courage, and self control*. It is a quality. It is the true condition of the individual and the state.

At the individual level, justice means sticking to the true vocation in life. It makes him control his social ambition, stick to his station in life. It means specialization of function.

From the point of the society, justice means the division of the society into three classes representing the elements of reason, spirit and appetite. Each class must mind its own business. They should not meddle with the function of the other classes. This specialization leads to efficiency.

Platonic System of Education: For Plato, education is the most important function of the state. Department of education is the most important department of the Platonic state. Education should be under the direct and strict control of the state just like in Sparta. The objective of education is the realisation of the idea of good. It is to promote justice. It helps individual to realise himself. It makes him harmonious with the society.

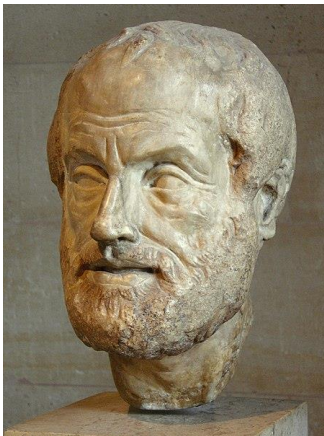
Platonic system of education is systematic and progressive. In the childhood, the education is to impart knowledge and develop the right kind of attitude. In the youth, education is both spiritual and intellectual. So there should be music for the soul and gymnastics for the body. In the adult stage, education is general and vocational. It helps him to find his true vocation in life.

Plato's Communism: In the Platonic state, the elements of Reason and Spirit are represented by the ruling and soldier classes. These two upper classes must renounce the elements of appetite. They cannot have private property. The guardians were entrusted with the function of ruling. They should not handle property because economic and political power in the same hands is not good for the society. They have no private property, no land and no houses of their own. They live in common barracks and have common public mess. They get a fixed pay just enough to maintain themselves for a year. Abolition of private property leads to abolition of private family only. So only the lower class can have private family. The family system and family feeling would lead to personal ambitions. Only the lower class namely the worker can have private property.



The 'Academy'

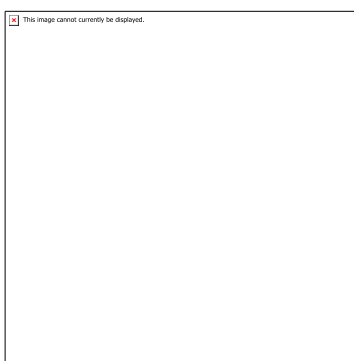
ARISTOTLE (384-322 BC).



Born in Stagira, in the Macedonian coast. Not a city state. Ruled by a king. Son of the Macedonian King's doctor. Interested in Biology. Plato's Academy attracts. Leaves Academy. Serves two kings in Asia Minor— Returns to Macedonia and becomes Alexander's Tutor—returns to Athens, establishes Lyceum—when an anti-Macedonian party came to power in Athens, he flees to save himself from death.

Syllabus: Origin, nature and ends of state---Constitutional government---the best state---Revolution---Slavery.

State: Man is a political animal. To meet his needs, he first forms the family. In the family, master, slave, male, and female come together. However, the family cannot meet all his economic needs. Therefore, he forms a village. It finally develops into a city or a state. The state is a 'Koimonia' or a community of some kind. The state is the highest of all communities. It aims at the highest good. It is the perfect form of organisation **It came into being for the sake of life and continues for the sake of good life.** Man is a man only when he lives in a state. **Without and apart from it man cannot realise the destiny of good life.** There can be **no opposition between it and the individual.**



Just as family is natural, the state also is natural. State is the logical development of the family. State is the highest form of social organisation. Since man is a political animal, state is the natural destination of man.

It is the supreme association. **It is an association of associations.** It covers all individuals and associations. They have meaning only when they are parts of the state. State is not merely an association of associations, it the supreme association. It is supreme because it is the highest of all and embraces all the rest. It is the highest because it aims at the highest good.

There is an **organic nature for the state.** The state is a whole of parts. The state embraces all the other human associations. The whole embraces the parts. But it is more than the sum-total of parts. The whole is prior to the parts. The parts precede the whole. State is an **evolutionary entity.** The state is the result of an evolution. Family and village have developed into the state.

Function of the state is the moral perfection of the individual. It is like an educational institution. State has the positive function of promoting good life. It is an instrument of training the citizen in intellectual, moral, and physical goodness.

Slavery: To lead a virtuous life, man should have all necessaries. There are animate and inanimate instruments. Property is inanimate instrument. Slaves are animate instruments. Slave is a domestic servant to do all the menial type of works in a family. Utensils and furniture are part of property. The basic principle of slavery is that in the universe, there are superior beings and inferior beings. State is an entity in which several parts must combine. The soul must rule over the body, and reason rules over appetite. Thus, the superior must rule over the inferior. Persons with high capacity of soul and reason must command the inferior. The masters possess intellectual strength, while the slaves possess physical strength only. However, the combination of both is necessary for the survival of the household. It is necessary for the intellectual and moral development of the householder. It is impossible for the householder to live a good life without the slaves.

The slave also benefits from this arrangement. With his attachment to the master, he also gets moral and intellectual virtues in a second hand manner. The choice for him is between no virtue and inferior virtue. Thus, slavery is good for the slave because it enables him to share the virtuous life of the master. By being a slave, he also becomes part of the state.

Aristotle defended slavery because he thought that for the citizens to participate in the public life of the community, they must have leisure. They must free from manual labour. The master uses his slaves for leading a virtuous life and not for wealth and power.

Constitutional Government: According to Aristotle, citizenship is the participation in the sovereign functions of the state. The question is who should to share in the exercise of these functions. According to Aristotle, constitution is the arrangement of the offices of the state. It also means who should hold which office. The nature of the ruling class determines the nature of the constitution. The nature of the state changes according to the nature of the constitution. According to Aristotle, the constitution is not just a part of the state. It is the state itself. It is not just arrangement of offices; but

it is the inner character of the people. The constitution is the way of life of its citizens. Change in the constitution means change in the way of life of the people.

There are three main kinds of government. The classification is based on the number of people having power. The power may be vested in a single person, in a few or many. Thus, there is 1. Kingship 2. Aristocracy and 3. Polity. These are *normal* forms of government. There are *perverted* forms of these governments also. They are 1. Tyranny, 2. Oligarchy and 3. Democracy. Kingship becomes tyranny when he rules for himself. Aristocracy becomes oligarchy when they rule for the benefit of a few people. Polity becomes Democracy when it benefits only the poor. Of all the different types of government, Monarchy is the best because, it has the highest virtue. Out of the perverted forms of government, the democracy is the best because of social equality. But if the rich is given power, they will oppress the poor. If the poor is given power, they will plunder the rich. Therefore, there should be a formula. The offices of influence should be given to the rich and the meritorious. The poor should be given participation in the government through election and supervising commissions.

Thus, it can be seen that Aristotle's best form of government works for the whole community. It consists of different elements in the state like rich and poor.

Revolution: There are various kinds of revolutions. It may change the constitution or it may change the ruling people. A revolution may make an oligarchy more oligarchic or change democracy into more democracy. Finally, a revolution may change just an institution or just a set of people.

Causes of Revolution: The factors are: 1. the temper of the revolutionaries 2. the motives 3. the causes and 4. occasions of the revolution. The most general cause of revolution is men's desire for equality. The particular causes of revolution are the love for gain, love for honour, fear, undue prominence of some individuals in public life, carelessness in granting office, and neglect of changes. In democracies, the excesses of demagogous cause revolution. Oligarchies are overthrown because of the oppressive rule of the oligarchs. In aristocracies, jealousy towards aristocrats causes revolution. In Aristotle's theory of revolution, economics do not play an important part. Inequality of honour is most important.

Prevention of Revolutions: Aristotle suggests a number of useful preventives for revolution. The most important thing is to inculcate the spirit of obedience to law. Small changes in the constitution should be observed. Too much power should not concentrate in few hands. No man or class of men should not feel that they are left out. Financial administration should be open to public scrutiny. Offices and honour should be awarded on the basis of distributive justice. The citizens should be educated in the spirit of constitution.

Previous Questions:

SHORT ESSAYS.

1. Bring Out Aristotle's ideas on Revolution 2003.
2. Explain Aristotle's ideas on nature and functions of the state. 2006.
3. Explain Aristotle's view on human nature. 2007
4. Examine Aristotle's view on slavery. 2008

SHORT ANSWERS

1. Aristotle on best government.2005
2. Aristotle on best state.2007
3. Aristotle on origin and end of state. 2003
4. Aristotle on citizenship. 2008
5. Aristotle's criticism of Plato.2008