

Example of argumentative essay on aristotle on slackness

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As one of the most prominent philosophers of Western civilization, Aristotle had many perspectives on a number of subjects. He was a strong proponent of the people as a group serving each other in a community; to that end, he has discussed the issue of ‘slackness’ at length. To what end are people responsible for their actions? According to Aristotle, these ‘slack’ people are “themselves by their slack lives responsible for becoming men of that kind, and men make themselves responsible for being unjust or self-indulgent, in the one case by cheating and in the other by spending their in drinking bouts and the like; for it is activities exercised on particular objects that makes the corresponding character”(Nicomachean Ethics, Book III, sections 1-5). To that end, Aristotle places the onus on men for being responsible for their own actions, even if they are actions taken without their full control, because they likely made the choice that put them in this position in the first place. This emphasis on personal responsibility ties in directly with Aristotle’s firm beliefs in the use of intellectual practice to achieve true wisdom; one must be able to account for one’s own actions in order to actualize oneself as a human being.

Aristotle believes that men and women are prone to imitation of nature, and must follow their highest Form. Aristotle’s imitation theory is based on a concept known as mimesis – meaning “to imitate” (Poetics, 1984). For him, mimesis tended to follow the imitation of nature, attempting to emulate a perfect form and, in so doing, capture some of that perfection. This can happen when someone is inspired by another work – they see something they like and admire, and wish to emulate it. In mimesis, the person experiencing the imitation is well aware that it is so, as they recognize what

is being imitated. However, if it is followed too closely, it can become straightforward copying - this is something that must be avoided at all costs.

Aristotle writes that "The objects of imitation are men in action; it follows that we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are." He leaves open the nature of a work or subject to interpretation of the author, making it easier for dramatic license to be taken. Aristotle's take on plagiarism is much more liberal than others'; he believes that imitation allows a subject to be understood more clearly, and that it is the right of the imitator to do as they would with the subject.

Aristotle's concept of the state is related to the concept of the human good, wherein authority by the state is used to create a common good that works toward the happiness of its citizens: "Even if the end is the same for an individual and for a city-state, that of the city-state seems at any rate greater and more complete to attain and preserve. For although it is worthy to attain it for only an individual, it is nobler and more divine to do so for a nation or city-state" (EN I. 1. 1094b7-10). Basically, it is of the highest good to serve the state, as the individual is dedicating their life to a higher ideal - that of serving the absolute good. A citizen is defined as anyone who is able to participate in the governmental process, and Aristotle believes that the vast majority of people in the polis have the power to be citizens. "He who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration of any state is said by us to be a citizen of that state; and speaking generally, a state is a body of citizens sufficing for the purpose of life." (Aristotle Politics, Book 3). Aristotle places the utmost faith in the human being to make his

own choices and account for them, leading to his perspective on 'slackness.'

How does this relate to involuntary action? Aristotle believes that actions and passions must be voluntary in order to receive blame or praise for them; actions are involuntary if they are forced upon the person in question or if they were ignorant of its consequences. In the case of drug addiction, for example, Aristotle would likely not forgive the action since it was voluntary - the person took the drug and became addicted by their own choice.

Ignorance of drug addiction is likely not applicable, because of the widespread knowledge of drugs being addictive; therefore, Aristotle would consider the drug addict to be 'slack.' The person in question must be the moving principle behind the action in order for it to be a poor choice; in the aforementioned circumstances of ignorance or duress, however, Aristotle is willing to avoid blame for a person's actions.

In conclusion, the moral philosophy of Aristotle is predicated on the notion of virtue; we are not dependent on moral codes and obligations but by working hard on their own human nature. It is the responsibility of the individual to achieve those virtues that make one distinct as a human being; namely, intellectual practice and service to the state. By training in one's own skills and faculties, one becomes more responsible for the way they are and their own character. By remaining diligent, character is improved; by slacking in their duties, they lose their character. To that end, Aristotle's belief in slackness as a lack of self-examination and self-improvement has merit; an individual is accountable to himself for his choices, and is only worth something if he works on himself.

References

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