Philosophical views of plato and aristotle essays example

Experience, Belief

Plato and Aristotle, along with the first great philosopher Socrates, are considered to be the founders of all philosophical concepts and the top of Greek philosophy. They developed such philosophical systems that lately found a number of adherents, and even nowadays famous philosophers apply to the classic works of Plato and Aristotle since after these Greek authors there were not any fundamentally new ideas in philosophical studies. However, the difference between Plato's and Aristotle's views is significant; even though Plato laid the foundation of many political, social thoughts and the theory of Ideas, they were criticized by Aristotle, who developed his own system of views. And the main difference between Plato's and Aristotle's philosophical views lies in the fact that, according to Aristotle, Plato's theory of Ideas (or Forms) is quite insufficient to explain the empirical reality, that is why he was trying to overcome Plato's gap between the world of sensible things and the world of ideas.

Plato (429–347 B. C. E.) lived in Athens and was the citizen of a high status; he used to express his reaction to numerous political and social events and intellectual movements of that time in his philosophical works. These works were profound and persuasive enough to unite a great number of confederates and adherents around itself, thereby many philosophers started to name themselves as Platonists and took Plato's doctrines as basis (Kraut " Plato"). Plato developed his philosophical system of views in the form of dialogues (" Euthyphro", " Sophist", " Crito", " Apology", etc.), where they appeared as the debates (or philosophical discussions); and in the works " Laws" and " Republic". Plato's follower Aristotle (384–322 B. C. E.) came to Athens from the north in the age of seventeen in order to study in

the Academy of Plato, where he had spent the next twenty years until Plato's death (Shields " Aristotle"). The Aristotle's heritage is huge since he had been researching different fields of science and knowledge: logic (" Categories", " Topics"), physics (" Physics", " Generation and Corruption"), biology (" Parts of Animals"), psychology (" Metaphysics"), ethics (" Nicomachean Ethics"), politics and economy (" Politics"), rhetoric and poetics (" Rhetoric", " Poetics").

Plato upheld nonconformist views and when Socrates was condemned to death he started to demonstrate acute and critical interest in the state system. He claimed that the state should seek to the best form of social life – the embodiment of the idea of virtue in the world. Plato is mostly considered as theorist-dreamer who wanted to practically apply his concepts on the scale of a small state, even though his interest in philosophy was not empirical or materialistic. Studying natural philosophy, Plato did not seek to research the world around human objectively; he brought Socrates' method of dispute to perfection and used it in order to find a solution of the main problems of being: how the world works, what are the reasons for the development, etc. The philosopher also invented dialectics and the main philosophical course – idealism. Plato's doctrine about world of Ideas, which exists in people's lives along with the sensible world, remains his main achievement; Plato in his works contrasted the world of ideas and material world, stating that certain things are independent of people's mind, imagination and ideas. The philosopher claimed that everything that exists in the world exists only because it is the copy of universal and unchanging form (idea) and that there is the hierarchy of ideas. Platonic doctrine characterizes

craving for the ideal supersensible world, and seeking to create reality much more similar to ideal (Kraut " Plato").

Aristotle, in turns, divided philosophy on the three types: theoretical, which studies the problems of being, different spheres of being, the origin of everything, and the causes of various phenomena; practical – about the human activity and the state structure; and poetic. The Aristotle's doctrine about the Form is the doctrine of objective idealism; according to the philosopher, every single thing that exists in reality is the unity of matter and form. Aristotle's works on ethics are significant heritage as well – here he states that the ideal human behavior is his sense of proportion; it is not enough for a man to be aware of what virtue is, he also has to act and live according to this virtue (Giray " Plato and Aristotle on ' Justice'"). " He [Aristotle] sees justice not something what is virtually included in the soul, but that depends on the actions of doers and their wishes. Aristotle searches for justice and other virtues in actions" (Giray " Plato and Aristotle on ' Justice'"). One of the greatest inventions of Aristotle is his doctrine of Four causes (Causality), where he suggested that everything that happens it the world happens for four reasons: material cause, formal cause, efficient cause and final cause (Shields " Aristotle").

Speaking about my own preference for any of these two systems of views, I would like to choose Aristotle's philosophical views since they are more realistic and materialistic. I think that is it not enough only to reflect and speak about high Truth, constantly debating over these true issues in the dialogues as Plato did. Aristotle's doctrines are partly connected with natural sciences, and those, which are based on theoretical sciences, can also have

an empirical application, thus they can be applied in the daily life.

In order to prove my point of view the most principle differences between philosophy of Plato and Aristotle should be determined. First of all, while comparing and contrasting basic philosophical views of Plato and Aristotle, it becomes obvious that Plato were researching an invisible realm of ideas and consider philosophy as a way of purifying the soul; and his follower Aristotle was mostly doing empirical research of the world of phenomena, he was studying the facts in order to comprehend the truth and use it in science. According to Plato, true being is expressed only in general concepts, which exists separately from phenomena in the special realm – in the realm of ideas; in the same time, Aristotle considered that ideas exist in phenomena itself (idea is only a form), that is why it was so essential to research the phenomena itself in order to study then the ideas. Secondly, the difference between the views of these two philosophers is also presented in their approach to the issue of the essence of philosophy. In general, they both considered that true knowledge is different from the knowledge of majority and from views of uneducated crowd, and that true knowledge is the highest aim of human aspirations. However, Plato connected virtue and Truth, hence, philosophy is now important not only for mind, but for moral perfection as well, and Aristotle determined the difference between knowledge and practical life more accurate. That is how philosophy, according to Aristotle, is divided into theoretical and practical parts. And finally, Aristotle explanation of thing existing (doctrine of Four causes) differs enough from Plato's suggestion, which is based on the theory of Ideas; Aristotle here proved that idea is something that precedes form, thus the philosopher applied an

empirical method, while his peer had built only theoretical ideas and principles.

Therefore, Plato sought to rise above the nature and took the essence of his philosophy from the area of supersensible and celestial; and Aristotle took for his researches the nature itself, the earth, things that exist on the earth, he systematized the knowledge with the help of clear, strictly logical inferences and evidences. Plato left some space for further reflections, perceptions and conclusions, while Aristotle had already formed general laws that had influenced a lot on the next researches. That is why, to my mind, Aristotle's views are more useful and applicable in human life – people are able not only speak about these views, but also observe how they work in everyday's life. In conclusion it is necessary to specify that both philosophers made an immense contribution to the development of philosophy, and Aristotle started his studying being based on the works of Plato; therefore, these two authors are inseparable from each other and without Plato the world could never find Aristotle.

Works cited

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