

Plato and aristotles or machiavellis ideas of citizenship philosophy essay



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In this essay I am going to compare and contrast Plato and Aristotles ideas of citizenship by first giving a definition of citizenship. I will then move on to comparing and contrasting both Plato and Aristotle's ideas of citizenship by discussing the ideal state, social roles, human nature education and a just society.

In order to understand the idea of citizenship from both Plato and Aristotle one must first understand the definition of citizenship. The exact definition of the citizenship can be very much debatable. A general definition of citizenship is ' A status of having the right to participate in and to represent in politics' (John Baylis, 2011, p. 560).

Having understood the definition of citizen we will now focus on the two philosophers' ideas of citizenship. Plato was philosopher from 429 to 347 BC. He was a pupil of the famous philosopher Socrates. According to Plato's analogy, he believed that an individual should have full right to notions in search of the certainty with in their state. Plato's work is based more on the idea of duty and ethnics. Plato is considered to be one of the first political philosophers. Aristotle, who was famously known for being one of Plato's students, from 384 – 322 BC, Aristotle's reflections on citizenships are mostly based on communication, politics and society Aristotle in a sense is recognized to be one of the first political scientist. Aristotle believed that only if both parents of an individual are citizens to a society only then can an individual take part in political affairs of a state.

Plato's main aim and focus is to have a society that is to perfection. In his work the Republic he produces a blue print for a utopia society. Within the

blue print Plato managed to erase all that he thought was seen as problematic within the society. He had the ambition to come up with a solution to perfect both the human personality and the society they live in. Plato's focus was to basically create a perfect society.

Aristotle wanted to improve the already existing society rather than making new perfect one like Plato. Aristotle suggested that society should seek for a good political system that would suit society as a whole. He believed in a more logic approach in improving the existing society. He agrees with Plato that the Utopia regime can improve society however Aristotle argues that surely not every single state is indeed of such major and dramatic change with in their society. He strongly believes that the best thinkable regimes to improve society already exists it just a matter of pushing it forward and improving it.

Plato's idea of an ideal state strongly relies on a just society and the ideal political justice relies on the value of knowledge. Every single person within a society should have the obligation to fulfil a role that he is best suited for by nature, and not the role that he may desire to fill. Individuals are a reflection of a political justice. Plato believed that there was more to humans then just a physical body. He believed that every human being has a soul which is divided into three parts (the tripartite soul) that match up to three classes within the state, each part playing a role in its own way to in creating an individual. The three main qualities of a soul are Rationality, Sprit and Appetite. Rationality is the reasoning part of each individual's soul; it seeks truth those are in relation to the social roles within a state. Rational thinking ' wisely makes the rational decisions in accordance with which human life is <https://assignbuster.com/plato-and-aristotles-or-machiavellis-ideas-of-citizenship-philosophy-essay/>

most properly lived '(Sailer, 2012). However the spirited soul is the emotional part of the soul it is really an in-between part that can receive commands from reason which comes from rationality and control the desires from appetite. Lastly is Appetite (emotion or desire) which has the ability to desire and crave. You were born a certain way and that way you were born defines you. ' Justice in a society is similar to that of an individual. He saw this as individual justice.

Aristotle agrees with Plato that every individual has a soul however it is not divided in to three but two. Aristotle believes that a human soul which had ability to reason and which had the ability could exist without the body. Aristotle suggests that individuals have two parts to their souls ' one of them has reason in itself, the other does not but it is merely capable of listening to and be persuaded by reasoning.' (Kraut, 2002). Aristotle further on tells us that we must understand that the capacity of rationality within a human soul is limited. He gives an example of this by saying that an individual can rationally decide on a course of action however another part of us advise we do otherwise. Which leaves us with two options, to either listen to the reason or we might choose to go against it. (Kraut, 2002). He also mentions that reason within our souls is what separates us from animals and plants. The reason why rationality is so vital for individuals is because it drives one to have a specific goal for a eudemonia.

Both Plato and Aristotle agree that an ideal state is greatly based on justice. Justice should be for all individuals, equality between individuals should provide not caring weather they are high or low the social status. Plato defines Justice in two, the individuals and the groups.

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Surely the balance of the tripartite soul for Plato determines who you are and where you fit into with the social classes. Plato's utopia involves three class systems, the guardians and they are the ruling elite. The auxiliaries would be worriers such as soldiers. Lastly the workers would normally include farmers or craftsman they are also sometimes seen as unskilled workers. The guardians were seen to be suited for ruling as they were seen as the best and the wisest. He strongly believed that the guardians should be given the tile of absolute rulers; they should be a very small and carefully elected few. He strongly believed that if the right relationship between the three social roles of the ideal state makes up an idea society. All three groups must accomplish only its suited function as well as each of the three social roles must be situated in a precise order of authority in relation to the other. ' Rulers must rule, auxiliaries must uphold rulers' convictions, and producers must limit themselves to exercising whatever skills nature granted them' (Anon., 2012).

Aristotle disagrees with the idea of the guardian should hold absolute political power due to their class. A restriction of interactions between classes very much leaves out those men who might very might be as wise and ambitions and have the ability to be a good ruler but because they are not in the class of guardians they have no right to hold the powers of ruling. For Aristotle an impractical way for a political system is through the social classes. To him the Guardian does sacrifice their happiness. However it is to benefit them in order to gain control over society. Guardians who lead such a strict life will also think it necessary to impose the same strict lifestyle on the society it governs (Hacker 86).

The perception of reality is that others are of more value to society if they are from higher class than others. Plato believes that a good society should be built on the truth; the truth is, not everyone within a society is equal. Both Plato and Aristotle were great Greek philosophers who were determined to figure out the nature of polis. Plato talks about government regimes that would be good for creating an ideal state in the republic book IIV; he believed the best regime would be autocracy. He chose autocracy due to the fact that the government form should be ruled by elite few selected philosopher are very well educated to lead the citizens into good will. ' Since the ruler would be virtuous, he would not want to deceive and abuse the citizens.' (Anon., 2011). Ideally for an ideal state king philosophers should rule, however king philosophers would not want the responsibility of ruling a state. Therefore there ' must be a handful of virtuous individuals willing to rule.' (Anon., 2011). Aristocracy for Plato meant rule by those who will be honourable to the state and its citizens. Plato then moves on to describing the worst possible form for the government which are democracy as we have no way of knowing the individual in whom we have chosen will be a good ruler. He strongly believed that on a philosopher will be able to rule for the good of the people. He believed this to be group justice.

Aristotle wanted to improve the already existing society rather than making new perfect one like Plato dreamed. He believed that there was a correct and an incorrect method for achieving an ideal state. The correct method should run by those who seek main target of the common good. Therefore ' kingship, aristocracy, and polity were good regimes that served the political interest of the community as a whole.' (Holung, 2008). He strongly believed

that it would be better if a state was ruled by one or very few rulers.

Whereas the incorrect method for an ideal state he believed would be run by those that only seek advantage that would suit their own personal interest.

As a result ' Tyranny, oligarchy, and, democracy were incorrect regimes that were " selfish" and were aimed at satisfying personal interests.' (Holung, 2008).

Both Plato and Aristotle agreed that democracy would be the worst form for the government. Plato believed that corruption would be a result caused due to democracy as allows there to be ruler who don't know how to rule. '

Democracy is the worst of all lawful (best) governments and the best for all lawless (worst) ones.' (Anon., 2010). Aristotle believes Democracy is ruled by the poor therefore the rich would be restricted in ruling. Contrasting from democracy, oligarchy is where the rich have the power to rule. Therefore a good polity should be the combination of both democracy and oligarchy but at the same time should not categorize to democracy or oligarchy. Aristotle strongly believed that in every state there is always going to be great pressure amongst the rich and the poor. Therefore surely it is not wise to give individuals within a society the opportunity to share their interest with the society. Both philosophers believed that is this was the case it will put too much pressure on the government form therefore democracy will not be fit for a government regime.

Plato stated that equality should be given to all individual within a state in order to prove that they belong to a social justification. Equality of education and employment was visible in Plato's work in the republic. He especial

reinforces feminism; he simple believed that the opportunity for education
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and employment should be open to Men and women, gender should not be not really matter nor be an issue. If women are within the social group of the guardian surely they can Even though Plato and Aristotle share different views on what rights an individual had, it can be seen that they agree on the fact that an individual's right should be placed on the hands of a superior and higher power.

Aristotle slightly disagrees with Plato's views; he simply thought that education should be guided by laws as a national concern. Aristotle asserts that the women are normally subordinate to men, for the male is by nature superior and the female inferior. The men rules but the women are rule (though not as slave) thus Aristotle accepts the customary patriarchal subordinate to women and men. Slaves were slaves because some people were simply created with an incapability of any responsibility, therefore slaves should be treated as slaves and this should not be frowned upon but seen as normal.

These two men were great thinkers. They each had ideas of how to improve existing societies during their individual lifetimes. It is necessary to look at several areas of each theory to seek the difference in each. Even though Plato's and Aristotle's views differ, in a sense they come to answer more or less the same question and by doing this it led them to present different ideas of citizenship. Their opinions on society and its functions were quite different, but they both had the same intention, to build a better way of life for the societies they lived in and for the societies that would come to be in the future.

Plato's ideal polis is to creates justice whereas, Aristotle's state is to create happiness