6.2 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Briefly explain Augustine's concept of love.
2. Briefly explain Augustine concept of happiness.
3. What do you make of Augustine's distinction between God as our chief good and lesser goods?
4. Why is it necessary for us to love God?
5. In Augustine's view, what is the proper way to love temporal, finite beings?
6. Do you think it is possible for finite human beings to possess the infinite God? If so, in what way?
7. Briefly explain Aquinas's concept of law.
8. Briefly explain Aquinas's concept of natural law.
9. What do you make of Aquinas's idea that eternal law is the all-encompassing law of God that governs the universe?
10. In your opinion, are all human inclinations good?
11. In what way is the basic moral truth “do good and avoid evil" universal?
12. “Faith begins where reason ends." To what extent is this true?

7 STUDY UNIT 6: ANCIENT GREEK POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Learning Outcomes

When you have completed this study unit, you should be able to:

- describe what political philosophy is
- give an account of Plato's theory of the state
- give an account of Aristotle's theory of the state
- compare and contrast Plato and Aristotle's theories of the state

7.1 Introduction: What is political philosophy?

It is generally accepted that no human individual is self-sufficient. From the cradle to the grave we are dependent on others. And even in certain instances where we are not dependent, we are expected, from a moral and political perspective, to interact with others, even as we pursue or own interests, in a manner that is acceptable to society.

In one of his private meditations, the English poet, John Donne (1572-1631), points out that “no man is an island". These words, if interpreted in a gender- neutral way (which has not always been the case) underline the central theme of political philosophy. Given the view that, as human beings, we are first and foremost “social and political animals" (Aristotle), a discipline such as “political and social philosophy" finds its justification in the need to examine certain normative aspects of our social and political lives.

The work of the political philosopher overlaps with that of the sociologist and the political scientist, in that all of them are engaged in research into matters of a social or political nature. However, what distinguishes the work of the political philosopher from that of her colleagues is political philosophy's central preoccupation with normative questions regarding, among other things:

- The nature of political authority (the central theme of political philosophy)
- The nature of justice (the central preoccupation of ancient Greek philosophy)
- The liberty and rights of the individual (the central focus of modern liberalism)
- “man" as a social-political being (the central focus of Marxism)

Discussions in political theory have invariably ranged between two extreme perspectives: the one emphasising the primacy of the individual (in society, in the community, and in the family), and the other emphasising the primacy of the state (the authority of “the political"). This is a very controversial debate in political theory, but for our purposes we will maintain a distinction between “the state" and “society". This distinction will furthermore help you to understand that, for the most part, when political philosophers refer to “the state", they are in fact invoking a normative concept. This implies that we must guard against the tendency to identify the state with the government (of the day). Thus, when a political philosopher analyses certain political problems (be it the marginalisation and oppression of blacks or women, the exploitation of the workers, the stigmatisation of queer people), the point of departure is normally a normative perspective. In other words, the political philosopher proceeds from the perspective of the “ought" question, that is, the question of values, rather than the “scientific" question of “the facts", that is, the question of social reality as it exists here and now.

7.2 A Brief Overview of Our Focus

Political philosophy in the Western world begins, as this study guide began: in ancient Greece. We shall be paying particular attention to philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. The Greeks were mainly concerned with the question of justice in community life, the city-state or polis (the Greek word from which “political" is derived). The Greek philosophers pursued the question of justice from the perspective of a central assumption: “man" is a social-political animal, with different needs, interests, aptitudes, talents, competencies, and so forth. Given this assumption, the question that arises is the following: what is the best form of government? More to the point, how can a society, based on the principle of collective harmony and cooperation, be established that is acceptable to all of its citizens, given the fact that there is always a potential for conflict among individuals who are essentially different in terms of personality, needs, talents, dispositions, and so forth.

The issues discussed by Plato in his Republic provide the impetus for the development of the Western tradition of political philosophy. In this work, Plato discusses the central theme of political life, namely the nature of justice. This discussion leads him to a consideration of many important questions regarding political life. These include a consideration of the following: human psychology (the “nature of man"); the moral question of “the good life"; the nature of “the ideal state"; the role and status of political leaders (and the legitimacy of their authority); the question of private property; the role of education in the moral and technical development of the individual (male and female); the question of individual political obligation and responsibility; the role of the military; the “best" economic structure; and the status of the family. It is against the background of all these questions that Plato asks the question: *What is justice?*

Plato seeks to answer this question from a utopian perspective of the “ideal state". His student, Aristotle, however, is critical of the utopianism at the root of the Platonic state, although he agrees with his mentor that the city state (polis) is “prior" to the individual.

Thus, instead of using an “ideal state'' as a blueprint for our political orientation, Aristotle prefers a more empirical route; to this end, he examines a number of different political constitutions and attempts to answer the question: what is the best form of government? In attempting to answer this question, Aristotle combines his ethical theory of ``happiness'' as the highest Good with his political theory of the state as the provider and guarantor of those institutions (political, social, educational) that are best at ensuring the development of the moral excellence of its citizens. In spite of the significant difference in orientation between Plato and Aristotle on how to arrive at the “best form of government'', for both philosophers the state is a “natural'' entity, without which the individual ceases to be human.

We will not have too much to say about the medieval period between Aristotle and the rise of the modern state. This does not mean, however, that the mediaeval thinkers had nothing significant to offer. On the contrary, in the works of Augustine (City of God) and Aquinas *(Summa Theologiae)* we find some of the most profound reflections on the nature of authority of the Church in relation to the authority of the State. The fact that the role of religious institutions in community life is still a very significant question today, in secular and non- secular societies, attests to the importance of these medieval thinkers.

In the modern context, the focus shifts way from the metaphysically oriented speculations of Greek thinking, and the theological orientation of medieval thinkers, to a secular approach. The issue now becomes the authority of the state and how to balance this against the autonomy of the individual. In the modern context, the individual is conceptualised as a being endowed with a range of inalienable rights, such as freedom of speech, freedom of association, and legal protection from harsh and unfair treatment by the state, its institutions, and society at large.

As stated above, for both Plato and Aristotle, the city-state *(polis)* is a natural phenomenon which grows out of the physical and psychological needs of human beings. The association of human beings within the formal structures of the state introduces, however, the need to establish the basic conditions for social harmony which, for the Greek philosophers, required an understanding of the virtue of justice as an expression of the highest Good.

7.3 PLATO

In the *Republic*, Plato investigates the possibility of founding a state based on the principle of justice. Plato tries to convince his reader that the happiness of the individual can only be achieved if the principle of justice is adhered to; and the principle of justice, in turn, depends on knowledge of the highest Good, the source of all virtues**.** Plato's theory of political justice is a projection of his interpretation of the physical, psychological and social needs of the individual. From this perspective he argues that the state is nothing more than the individual “written in large letters”. In the *Republic*, Plato presents his argument as follows (Plato 1955:368):

> Let us suppose we are rather short-sighted men and we are set to read a distant notice in small letters; we then discover that the same notice is up elsewhere on a larger scale and in larger lettering: won't it be a godsend to us to be able to read the larger notice first and then compare it with the smaller, to see if they are the same ... Justice can be a characteristic of an individual or a community.

With the assumption of the community as the individual in “larger lettering", Plato proceeds to construct his ideal state along the lines of three fundamental considerations:

1. The economic infrastructure (the artisans)
2. The military infrastructure (the auxiliaries)
3. The political leadership (the guardians)

According to Plato, if justice is to prevail, all three classes are to function in accordance with the principle of specialisation. Each person must be allowed to do what he or she does best, and thus contribute the fruits of his or her specialised labour to the common good. This means that, depending on their natural aptitude and capacities, the citizens in Plato's state are obliged to serve in one of the three classes, and this will ensure that they themselves will enjoy the best from various specialists in other fields.

In keeping with his argument that the state is a dynamic outgrowth of “human nature", Plato proceeds to offer a theory of “man" in terms of three primary dimensions of human nature or “three parts of the soul”: the physical, the emotional, and the intellectual.

Plato argues, accordingly, that the economic class originates in our physical needs (for food, shelter and clothing); the military class is based on society's need to be protected from internal and external conflict; and that the highest authority is given to the rulers of the state, based on their understanding of the importance of the principle of reason, not only for the “proper functioning" of the individual, but also for the “proper functioning" of the state as a whole.

In the final analysis, the principle of justice is seen as a principle of harmony within the life of the individual and the life of the community at large. It consists in allowing each part of our human constitution to function to the best of its ability, but always under the guidance of reason. Similarly, in the community, justice means allowing each class to function in accordance with the principle of specialisation, but always under the guidance of the rational authority of the guardians of the state, who for Plato, are the most important class because of their understanding of the highest Good. In the ideal state, justice ultimately means “minding your own business” that is, doing what you do best, but always in the interest of the common good.

It should be noted that, although Plato distinguishes three classes in his ideal state, this does not mean that he wishes to promote the interests of any class at the expense of any of the others. He writes (Plato 1955:420):

> Our purpose in founding our state was not to promote the happiness of a single class, but, as far as possible, of the whole community by securing the happiness not of a select minority, but of the whole.

Plato's theory of the state is based on the conviction that justice is a virtue worth pursuing for its own sake, and in the practical context of social life this translates, as stated above, into the principle of minding one's own business (Plato 1955:433):

> I believe that justice is the principle we laid down at the beginning and have consistently followed in founding our state ... We laid it down if you remember, and have often repeated, that in our state one man must do one job, the job he was naturally suited for ... justice consists in minding your own business and not interfering with other people.

From the passage above it is evident that Plato's ideal state is a meritocracy that is the rule of the very best is the fundamental consideration on which the Platonic state is based. The question that arises here is the following: how (if at all) does Plato propose to translate his vision of an ideal state into a practical reality? The answer to this question has to take into account two important aspects of his political theory:

- myth as a means of persuasion
- the rule of the “philosopher-king”

7.3.1 Myth as a Means of Persuasion

The central issue in Greek thinking is that the interests of the community take precedence over the interests of the individual. Plato's acceptance of this as the starting point of political theory finds expression in the importance which he attaches to “the universal” dimension of human existence, that is, man as a “spiritual being” whose primary objective is a life of moral excellence, to be achieved in a life beyond his or her mortal existence on earth. Plato's arguments regarding the “immortality of the soul” must therefore not be isolated from the “practical” (political) context as the path to “eternal bliss". In the simile of the cave, when the prisoner is finally released from a life of bondage, ultimately realising that it is the sun (symbolic of the highest Good) that is the source of all life and light, Plato's “ex-prisoner” is forced to return to the depths of the cave in order to convert his former associates to his new vision of the highest Good. Because Plato is realistic enough to realise that rational persuasion in the form of philosophical debate (“dialectics”) is not every person's strong point, he feels that the establishment of a social framework aimed at the common good (based on the principle of justice) justifies recourse to myth as form of persuasion. In the Republic, Plato presents his “magnificent myth” or “noble lie” as follows (Plato 1955:415):

> You are all of you in this land, brothers. But when God fashioned you, he added gold in the composition of those of you who are qualified to be Rulers (which is why their prestige is greatest); he put silver in the Auxiliaries, and iron and bronze in the farmers and the rest. But since you are all of the same stock, though children will commonly resemble their parents, occasionally a silver child will be born of golden parents, or a golden child of silver parents, and so on.
>
> Therefore the first and most important of God's commandments to the Rulers is that they must exercise their function as Guardians with particular care in watching the mixture of metals in the character of the children. If one of their own children has bronze or irons in its make-up, they must harden their hearts and degrade it to the ranks of the industrial and agricultural class where it properly belongs; similarly, if a child of this class is born with gold or silver in its nature, they will promote it appropriately to be a Guardian or an Auxiliary. For they know that there is a prophecy that the State will be ruined when it has Guardians of silver or bronze.

At the root of Plato's “magnificent myth" is the conviction that the concrete life of the individual can truly assume its full potential and significance within the larger context of the state. One can understand the scepticism of Glaucon, one of Socrates's interlocutors, when confronted with the latter’s vision of the ideal state. He accordingly challenges Plato's Socrates as follows (Plato1955:471):

> I grant all of this, and a thousand other things too, if our state existed ... Let us now concentrate on the job of proving that it can exist and how it can exist (Plato's emphasis).

Glaucon's challenge brings us to the second important aspect of Plato's political theory, the status and authority of the philosopher as political leader.

7.3.2 The Rule of the "Philosopher-King"

When Glaucon confronts Plato's Socrates with the challenge of demonstrating the practicability of his vision of the state, it soon becomes obvious that Plato is quite aware that what he has described is an ideal which we can approximate at best, but which we can never hope to achieve (Plato 1955:472):

> We were looking for an ideal when we tried to define justice and injustice, and to describe what the perfectly just or unjust man would be if he ever existed. By looking at these perfect patterns and the measure of happiness they would enjoy, we force ourselves to admit that the nearer we approximate to them the more nearly we share their lot. That was our purpose rather than to show that they could be realized in practice.

In keeping with his ethical theory, Plato sees the state as the practical context for the striving of moral goodness and perfection and, because the philosopher is best equipped to understand the nature of the highest Good, Plato does not hesitate to entrust the responsibility of political leadership and authority to him or her (Plato 1955:473):

> The society we have described can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there can be no end to the troubles of states ... or humanity itself, till the philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands ... This is what I have hesitated to say for so long, knowing what a paradox it would sound, for it is not easy to see that there is no other road to happiness, either for society or the individual.

In Plato's thought we witness an underlying paradox and tension in terms of the main preoccupation of philosophy (knowledge of the highest Good), and the business of politics, which is often degraded to the pursuit of power, domination, wealth, and so forth. It is for this reason that he feels compelled to assign political authority and leadership to the philosopher-king, in view of latter's characteristic reluctance to take an active interest in matters political. Plato cannot think of anyone except a well-trained philosopher as a guarantee against the abuse of political power (Plato 1955:521):

> Unlike present leaders, they will approach the business of government as an unavoidable necessity. The truth is if you want a well-governed state you must find for your future leaders some career that they like better than government, for only then will you have a government of the truly rich, those, that is, whose riches consist not of money, but of the happiness of a right and rational life. If you get in public affairs men who are morally impoverished that they have nothing that they can contribute themselves, but who hope to snatch some compensation for their inadequacy from a political career, there can never be a good government. They start fighting for power, and the consequent internal and domestic conflicts ruin both them and society.

If knowledge of the Form of Good is the condition for the possibility of realising the ideal state, this does not mean that Plato himself can provide us with such knowledge. In the final analysis, the ideal state is an act of (rational) faith, because the knowledge that we strive for and actually achieve is, at best, a “mere copy” of Truth. As Plato's Socrates puts it (Plato 1955:533):

> My dear Glaucon you won't be able to follow me any further, not because of any unwillingness on my part, but because what you would see would no longer be an image, but truth itself, that is, as far as I can see it. I wouldn't like to be sure that my vision is true.

Let us briefly conclude by summarizing Plato’s political theory.

1. The ideal state needed to mirror the ideals of justice and harmony that was located in the world of the Forms.
2. Plato proposed that the state be constructed as a hierarchical meritocracy with the power to rule being given in greater proportion to those who were better able to understand these ideals. A rigid pyramid of different classes was thus constructed.
3. Instead of only utilizing brute force to keep this strong social pyramid in place, Plato suggested that the philosopher kings use the latent socializing power of religious mythology. They would thus explain to the populace that this social structure was a sacred one handed down to them from the Gods. And since they were more powerful and insightful than human beings, this is how society should be run.

Point to ponder

Despite being utopian in nature, Plato’s political theory raises some critical questions which have a direct impact on today’s Western democracies. Consider the following passage and analyse it in the context of Plato’s mistrust of the people's ability to choose (democratically) a good leader.

“It is of no use to say: Democracy is the rule of the people. This is nothing but the literal meaning of the word democracy. But throughout history this rule of the people presents itself in many various forms. And have we not even been told by dictators that true democracy has been realised only under their regime, as they have been entrusted with the power they wield by the overwhelming majority of the people? This shows the inadequacy of the definition of democracy as the rule of the people”. (Rauche 1963:192)

Feedback: Plato's main question is: why is it that human beings have no problem recognising the need for an expert in many other spheres of life except in politics? If you have a legal problem, you ask advice from a lawyer (legal expert). If you have a medical problem, you ask advice from your general practitioner (medical expert). Now, why is it that in politics we believe that anyone who can collect the necessary votes is able to rule? Do you automatically become an expert by collecting the necessary votes without relevant education and proper training? Plato sees this as a serious shortcoming of democracy. In today's politics, politicians use the services of public relations companies and the media o project a positive image to the voting public. And, as we all know, politicians are full of promises before an election. More often than not, they get elected on the basis of how they project themselves and not because of their expertise. Is this not one of the reasons why some of the politicians find it difficult to relinquish power when it is time to do so? Plato advocates that leaders be carefully educated and trained from their youth.

Perhaps Plato's approach can help us in eliminating dictators throughout the world, men (usually) who take advantage of their citizens whether educated or not and persuade them to vote them into office. How many times have you heard people complaining that they made a serious mistake when they voted politician X into office?

7.5 ARISTOTLE

Aristotle's Politics and Ethics are two complementary works with a common objective: an understanding of the good life. In the Politics, however, the question of the good life is posed within the context of the socio-political order, where the role of the legislator as the provider of a good life for all the citizens of the polis is the primary task. Aristotle develops a political theory in terms of “a community of wellbeing in families and aggregations of families for the sake of a perfect and self- sufficient life”. According to this community-based view of political life, the state is the highest and noblest form of human association. In our discussion of Aristotle's political theory of the state, we will focus on the following:

- His naturalistic theory of the state
- The purpose of the state (as discussed in Stumpf & Abel 2002:465)
- the stability of the state

7.4.1 Aristotle's theory of the state

In his Politics, Aristotle emphasises two important ideas of the state:

- The state is a community.
- The state is the highest of all communities.

As far as (1) is concerned, Aristotle advances an organic or “natural” view of the state. This means that he views the state as the natural outcome of an evolutionary process of social institutions, starting with the family, then the village, and finally developing into the city-state. In this historical process, the state is the natural, final and highest outcome of the evolution of all social institutions. It is in this regard that Aristotle speaks of the “political nature of man”, since the state is a form of human association that testifies to the progressive advancement of the human species. It is in this teleological sense (that is, “final end” sense) that Aristotle asserts the “naturalness” of the political condition as a form of association in which the community can achieve the common good. Aristotle does not, however, defend the progressive status of the state on historical grounds only; he also defends it on metaphysical and logical grounds. He claims:

> The state is, by nature, clearly prior to the family and the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part. This brings us to the second idea above, namely, the state as the highest community.

Whereas the family and the village are basically forms of association that are primarily focused, respectively, on self-preservation and the satisfaction of the social need for companionship, the state, as the third and highest form of association, derives its superiority from its intrinsic value and purpose. Aristotle claims that the “state exists for the good life, and not for the sake of life only ... (and) political society exits for the sake of noble actions, and not of mere companionship”.

Aristotle thus bases his theory of the state on the “nature of man”. In this regard, Aristotle argues that, in the context of the family, the human being reproduces itself; in the village or the community it finds companionship; but in the community of the state, however, it finds the possibility of the noble life, because the state is designed to fulfil the highest potential of the individual as a moral being, whose life is inextricably associated with his or her fellow-citizens. For Aristotle, therefore, the state's legitimacy rests on its moral authority, since the purpose of the state is not to impose its will on the community, but instead to ensure that the community can flourish together “in friendship”.

In trying to establish the best form of government, Aristotle, instead of following the idealistic leanings of his predecessor, Plato, for whom the “the ideal state” could only be achieved “in heaven”, makes an empirical study of virtually all forms of government and constitutions known to the ancient world. Whilst appreciating the normative significance of Plato's theory of the state, Aristotle is realistic enough to know that “politics is the art of the possible”. He is therefore of the view that, because the best is not always possible, the statesman must not only be mindful of the best in an abstract sense, but also in a practical sense, that is, a political sense.

Aristotle's study of the various forms of government and constitutions of the time is motivated by the principle of finding the one which best serves “the common interest”. Aristotle identifies three forms of government: kingship or noble monarchy, aristocracy, and constitutional democracy. Aristotle’s monarchy, conceptualised as one who is “preeminent in virtue”, resembles Plato's “philosopher-king”, and as such he/she is above the law. Aristotle, however, is realistic enough to realise that, if such a person does exist, he or she must surely be a god among mere mortals. But if such a godlike person is an impossibility by nature, Aristotle does not doubt the reality of the noble monarch's opposite: the political tyrant of whom there were many examples in Aristotle's time.

The aristocratic form of government is Aristotle's second choice. He defines aristocracy as a “government formed of the best men absolutely”, as opposed to those whose goodness depends on the contingency of circumstances. It is important to note that, for Aristotle, the notion of aristocracy is not to be associated with wealth as was the custom in ancient Greek society. Like Plato, he is also seeking to establish a meritocracy, that is, a government by the best (in a moral sense) for the sake of the best (the common good). Aristotle contrasts this form of government with its opposite: oligarchy, which is also an aristocratic form of government but whose political status is based on wealth. An oligarchy is unacceptable because it is based on the (economic) interests of the minority, and not on the common good.

The third form of government is that of constitutional government, a form of government in which the majority of citizens legislate in the interest of the common good. This form of government is situated somewhere between the two extremes of “absolute freedom” and “absolute wealth”. Constitutional government must not be confused with absolute democracy which, for Aristotle, is an invitation to anarchy because it is based on the “rule of the poor”. The benefits of constitutional government are comparable to a feast prepared by many, instead of just one or a few people. When they attend this feast, the guests will benefit from the collective experience of the many. It is important to note that the merits of constitutional government are determined by the citizens themselves, just as the benefits of the feast depend on the guests themselves, and not on the chefs. In a constitutional government, the rulers clearly understand that they are there to serve their subjects.

In this form of government, a balance is reached between the principle of freedom and the principle of wealth. As we shall see below, Aristotle sees poverty as the primary cause of social instability and revolution.

7.4.2 The stability of the state

According to Aristotle, the common good can only be achieved in a situation of political stability, and this implies that everything possible must be done to neutralise the threat of a revolution. Aristotle maintains that the greatest threat to stability of the state is poverty, because “a state in which many poor people are excluded from office will necessarily be full of enemies”.

Aristotle is realistic enough to realise that the monarchic as well as aristocratic forms of government (as the best forms of government) are not real options. He therefore opts for constitutional government based on limited suffrage, in which a balance, as stated above, can be reached between freedom and wealth. Constitutional government is a “mixed” government because it is based on more than one principle. If a state is based on one principle only, be it class, wealth, or race, it would necessarily exclude those who do not belong, and because it is not based on the common good, it can only lead to social unrest and revolution. It is interesting to note that Aristotle is of the view that “poverty is the parent of revolution and crime”. He argues further that, where there is no middle class, and the poor outnumber the rich, the violent overthrow of the state is inevitable. Aristotle's recommendation for a state based on an equitable distribution of wealth in practical terms translates into a call for the establishment of a strong middle class to act as a buffer between an extremely wealthy class (“an oligarchy”), on the one hand, and the extremely poor class (a property less proletariat), on the other hand.

Let us briefly conclude by summarizing Aristotle's political theory.

1.Aristotle understood the state to be the noblest social institution which provides best possible framework within which the family and the village could optimally develop. The state’s legitimacy rests on its moral authority alone to ensure that human beings can flourish.
2.The middle class, (male) landowners elect politicians to represent them as a set of constitutional advisors to the king.
3.This middle class thus provides a “pressure valve” between the lower and upper classes. This allowed for representation and social progression whereby a member of the lower artisan class could theoretically become wealthy and progress towards becoming a nobleman who advised the king.

Point to ponder
Consider the following question in analysing Aristotle's argument that the common good can only be achieved in a situation of political stability… Is poverty the greatest threat to democracy? How serious is poverty in South Africa and to what extent does this threaten the country's political stability?

Feedback: South Africa has before been described as a country of two “nations”. The first “nation” is extremely rich and the second is extremely poor. The majority of the poor are black people in general and Africans in particular. The extremely rich consist of white people.

The main question is: is this a threat to South Africa's political stability? If Aristotle's point of view is seriously considered, the answer is "yes", given the fact that the poor are in the majority.
The general instability that comes into play as a result of poverty will, in the end, lead to political instability. If this happens, will the common good ever be achieved? There are already cries in South Africa that "a hungry person is an angry person".
With the poorer countries now being swept up into the globalisation process, leaving many poorer than they were before, the question is: what is the future of the democracies in these countries?

7.5 Self-Assessment Questions

1. What do you think John Donne meant by the words, "no man is an island"?

2. How would you distinguish between the work of a political scientist or sociologist, and the work of a political philosopher?

3. Suppose a friend were to ask you to explain the difference between "the state" and "society". What would you say?

4. What would you say is a normative question? Give a few examples of your own.

5. Why is Plato's theory of the state described as "natural"?

6. Why does Plato conceive of the state as the individual "in large letters"

7. Briefly describe Plato's theory of the state.

8. Explain Plato's understanding of justice.

9. Describe the role and significance of myth in Plato's thinking. Do you think it can be justified?

10. Comment on the significance of Plato's simile (or allegory) of the cave.

11. Do you agree with Plato's argument that society will only be free of evil when politicians become philosophers, or philosophers become kings?

12. Describe Aristotle's organic (natural) theory of the state.

13. Explain the historical and metaphysical basis of Aristotle's theory of the state.

14. Describe the three orders of government that Aristotle considers the monarchy, the aristocracy, and constitutional government. How does each of these degenerate into its opposite the political tyrant, the oligarchy, and democracy?

15. What, according to Aristotle, is the purpose of the state?

16. Why does Aristotle prefer a constitutional government?

17. Do you agree that "man is a political animal"?

18. Compare and contrast Aristotle's view of the state with that of Plato's.

19. What do you think of Aristotle's argument that “poverty is the parent of revolution and crime”?