

Ancient Philosophy: Comparing Plato and Aristotle

Starter

1. What is the key message(s) of Plato's story of the cave? How does it link to the idea of the forms?
2. What are Aristotle's 4 causes? Which of the causes is most important to him?

ISSUE 1: Reliance or Reason vs Reliance on senses

First explain (AO1) the key differences in method between the two thinkers

1. Write a few sentences explaining Plato's use of reasoning – use the terms A priori and innate ideas. Use the cave and the forms to illustrate these points
2. Write a few sentences explaining Aristotle's use of the senses – use the terms A posteriori and tabula rasa. Use the theory of the causes and the Prime Mover to illustrate these points

Second assess (AO2) the arguments (who is right?)

Sort these arguments into two columns – those which support Plato and those which support Aristotle

Descartes' Wax Example seems to support rationalism	A Posteriori knowledge brings us useful knowledge of the world. It is what science is based on
The arguments in favour of the forms eg) one over many, ideal standard	A Priori gives certainty rather than just probability
The A priori only gives certainty to Maths and logic not things we experience	The arguments against the forms
A posteriori ideas only give us probability not certainty	It seems difficult to understand how we can of know some ideas without experience EG) colour.
The senses are the beginning of thought. How can we think about things that we cannot experience?	It is harder for this thinker to account for how we get ideas of God or morality

BONUS – Have a go at turning one of the points above into a paragraph remembering to explain your argument clearly and include some discussion (or a counterargument) of how strong the argument is

ISSUE 2 : Comparing Form of the Good vs Prime Mover

First start by **explaining** what each idea involves (1 paragraph each)

Second, here are some possible comparative points.

- Neither the Good or the Prime Mover is directly or personally involved with the world.
- Both are to some extent responsible for the existence of things in the world albeit indirectly. They are explanations, the prime mover explains change. The Good as a Form is a refuge against the uncertainties of change. It is an attempt to find permanence in a world of change.
- The Prime Mover has consciousness – it thinks about thought and its own nature. The Good is not conscious. It is an idea.
- Both have been influential to the Christian idea of God, it may or may not be a helpful influence. The Prime Mover has been adapted by Aquinas and others and used as an argument for the existence of God. The Good and the idea of the forms as perfect and unchanging have also influenced the idea of God.
- Both are perfect and necessary beings, they are eternal.

Third, the critical comparison. Look at the points above thinking about them or discussing with a partner. What are the key issues with each idea? Which of the two ideas is the better one? Why?