

BACHELOR'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT
PPE – Bachelor's in Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Plato and Aristotle on the Functions of the State
Student's name:	Samuel Blecharž
Referee's name:	Jakub Franěk

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	50	15
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	15	6
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	15	4
Total		80	25
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	10	4
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	5	2
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	5	2
Total		20	8
TOTAL		100	33

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score: 11% (Turnitin score after exclusion of bibliography, quotations and citations)

[NB:] If the plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score is above 15%, the reviewer has to include his/her assessment of the originality of the reviewed thesis in his/her review.

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria (min. 1800 characters including spaces when recommending a passing grade, min. 2500 characters including spaces when recommending a failing grade):

Introduction

While the topic of the evaluated BA Thesis – a comparison of Plato's and Aristotle's approaches to political philosophy – cannot be described as original, it is certainly relevant and interesting. At the same time, however, it is a rather demanding topic – especially for a BA Thesis. Unfortunately, it appears that the author has underestimated the complexity of his chosen topic. The resulting text is unconvincing and suffers from a number of serious shortcomings in various areas.

Lack of a clearly defined research intent

The thesis' title suggests an intention to concentrate on comparing the "Functions of the State" as understood by Plato and Aristotle. Nonetheless, the resulting text appears as an attempt of providing a comprehensive comparison of both authors' political theories in the context of both their philosophical

thought (i.e. with regard to their ontological and epistemological positions) and the political system of the city-state, in which (and in reaction to which) they wrote their works, i.e. ancient Athens. Moreover, the author at least declares an intention to relate his discussion of Plato and Aristotle's political theories to "contemporary debates on politics and governance" (p. 9). This, however, appears as a too ambitious task for a (relatively short) BA Thesis.

Selection and use of sources

The chapter entitled "Literature Review" in fact does not contain any review of existing literature on the topic or, for that matter, explanation of the selection of either primary or secondary sources. Elsewhere in the text (p. 11) the author mentions his intention to rely primarily on "Plato's Republic, Plato's Constitution" (sic!) as well as Aristotle's Politics, Nicomachean Ethics and Metaphysics. Nonetheless, he does not stop to explain the selection of these particular works. (Especially in the case of Plato, it would be advisable to include also *The Statesman* and *The Laws*). The lack of an explanation of the selection of the primary sources is nonetheless only a marginal issue.

Much greater problem is the fact that the author fails to use the declared sources in any meaningful way. Indeed, the thesis contains only a handful of textual references to Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics* (none of which is properly cited). The author does not even attempt to analyse Plato's or Aristotle's arguments, to engage in a dialogue with them. Much of his text rather consists of (often repetitive and/or confusing) presentation of some of the basic tenets of their respective doctrines, which could have been drawn from some secondary sources or e.g. author's own lecture notes. The text also includes duly cited citations from a random selection of secondary sources, which include scholarly articles as well as entries from various online encyclopaedias.

My suspicion that the author is not familiar with the texts that he purportedly comments upon is based on two reasons:

(i) Some of author's confusing or outright misleading claims have apparently no grounding in the primary sources – e.g. his description of Aristotle's polity as a mixture of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy (p. 7) or, alternatively, as the "rule of the best qualified people" (p. 32) or his claim, that the "ruler, according to Aristotle, must be philosopher king" (p.13).

(ii) The author is apparently confused even about the very titles of Plato's and Aristotle's texts related to politics. Above, I have already noticed his confusing reference to "Plato's Republic and Constitution", which appears on pages 11 and 17. While the reference to Plato's non-existing work entitled "Constitution" could be easily explained by the fact that his *Politeia* (in English known as *The Republic*) is known in Czech as "Ústava" (i.e. Constitution). Nevertheless, the repeatedly used expression "Republic and Constitution" implies that the author is referring to two separate works. Does he perhaps mean *The Laws*? Or, does he, rather, mistakenly assume that the book published in Czech under the title "Ústava" and in English under the title "The Republic" are translations of two separate dialogues? Interestingly enough, he displays similar confusion in relation to names (or identity) of Aristotle's works when he refers to "Aristotle's Constitution, also known as *The Politics* or *The Athenian Constitution*..."

Argumentative depth and formal aspects of the thesis

From my comments above, it is obvious that the present thesis is lacking in argumentative depth. Moreover, given that the author's intention is to compare Plato's and Aristotle's political philosophies, it is rather striking that he devotes only very small part of his text to actual comparison of the two authors' ideas. Apart from that, when he does so, he focuses largely on their epistemological and ontological positions rather than their moral and or political theories. Those comments that attempt to Plato's and Aristotle's political ideas or positions in turn suffer from the fact that the author does not take into account Plato's later political dialogues – i.e. *The Statesman* and *The Laws*.

As a whole, the text strikes the reader as a rather rushed draft rather than a finished thesis. I am not referring only to repeated changes in the font or paragraph formatting but also, and more importantly, to

the fact that some chapters (e.g. chapter 1.1, 2 or 3) appear as author's private "to do lists" rather than parts of a finished thesis that is ready for submission.

Conclusion

I am afraid that the reviewed thesis does not meet the minimum requirements expected from a BA Thesis at Charles University.

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): F

Suggested questions for the defence are:

I do not recommend the thesis for final defence.

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.