

Aristotle's Politics, Books 1-2

In order to achieve the good life it is essential to serve as an active participant in a political community since we are by nature social beings.

334 B.C.

Book 1: Polis exists by natural forms of association in response to natural human needs; there is an interdependency. Therefore the purpose is to see different kinds of rule and what scientific conclusion can be drawn from the study.

Book 2: What form of political community is best of all for those who are most able to realize their ideal of life? What are the underlying principles of good and bad elements of different theoretical and actual regimes?

(1) Thesis: Look at the elements of which the state is composed, in order that we see in what the different kinds of ruler differ from one another, and whether any scientific result can be attained about each one of them."

(2) family is the assoc. by nature for the supply of men's every day wants; several families unite the association aims at something more than the supply of daily needs; several villages unite, they are large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficient, they are states which which originated in the bare needs of life and continue in existence for the sake of a good life. 1253:28-32

(3). Household involves 3 types of rule: master-slave, marital, and parental. Master-slave rule is a political rule but others suggest slavery is unjust.

(4) Slave is an instrument of action and belongs to completely to master. A slave by nature is one who does not belong to himself by nature.

(5) Natural slave is does not have full use of reason because he does not have reason. Thus slavery is both advantageous & just.

(6) Slavery is unjust because "legal slavery" is the result of military conquest; thus it is unjust because not all the conquered people are slaves by nature. Enslavement by force is disadvantageous both to master and slave.

(7) Master-slave and political rule are not the same because political rule is over those who are free & equal.

(8) Businesses supply, households consume. There are several ways of life based on self-generated work (as opposed to trade and commerce): the life of the nomad, the farmer, the pirate, the fisher, the hunter, or a combination of several. Everything in nature is made for a purpose; thus other creatures are made for the sake of human beings. Household management is a type of expertise for the acquisition of life's necessities. Household management is a type of expertise for the acquisition of life's necessities.

(9) Business expertise is also a type of acquisitive expertise whereby expertise in commerce involves exchange and business expertise there is no limit because the amount of wealth continually increases.

(10). Expertise in household management is necessary but expertise in exchange is not because it involves usury & taking from others.

(11) Useful types of wealth-getting or business expertise are experience regarding livestock, farming methods, & raising of animals. There are three parts of expertise in exchange: marketing and transport, money-lending, & wage labor. Philosophers are often poor because they red not concerned with finance, not because they could not become wealthy. Political rulers need to know business because cities need revenues.

(12) Household management has three parts: rule of a master over slaves, rule of father, and rule of husband. Husband rules over wife and children, both free, but the rule differs, the rule over children being royal (love & respect), over his wife a constitutional rule. Male is by nature fitter for command than the female.

(13) Household management is concerned with human beings and their virtuousness. How can one justify ruling over women and children? The female, unlike the slave, does have reason, but lacks authority; the child has reason, but is immature. Thus, the virtues of men, women, & slaves are different. Women & children need to be educated with a view to the polis because women make up half of free persons in the city & children are future citizens.

1. Aristotle uses reason inductively to discern a thing's purpose by looking at its origin & characteristic in order to determine the end for which it exists.
2. The ultimate good for a human being is as life lived according to virtue and in contemplation of the highest truths of the universe.
3. Aristotle contends that the city naturally comes into being as a result of physical necessity, as the natural completion of smaller villages/households.
4. Because man is naturally social, he is also naturally political.
5. Freedom presupposes a correct use of reason.; it is right reason which directs people to the ultimate ends of their existence; right reason leads to virtue.

(1). Because we want to consider what form of political community is best for all, we must consider whether members of a state must have (a) all things in common, (b) nothing in common, (c) or some things in common and some not. Which is better...property all in common as laid down in Plato's *Republic*.

(2) Socrates proposes a city of unity. He is wrong because a city is made up of many different kinds of people and thus what is necessary is not a unity, but rather a reciprocal equality in which citizens are free and each have a share in ruling. A city must also be self-sufficient, which requires a multitude of differing people.

(3) Socrates is incorrect when he desires that people in a city will hold all things in common, even their wives and children. Not only is it impossible to implement but in actuality, such a policy is harmful because people tend to care better for things that personally belong to them.

(4) Socrates is incorrect when he desires that all people in a city hold all things in common because it may increase violence by taking away family ties since a person is less likely to harm a relative, incest, and decrease for affection for the state because people feel affection for what is their own and for what is dear to them.

(5) Socrates is incorrect regarding the city possessing complete unity in correct because people may have difficulty working together (if private property, people will take care of their own possessions and share them among friends; best option is to have private possessions which are for common use), the city will end up being divided because he separates the guardian class from the farming/artisan class, and you always have the same rulers which can cause factional conflict. Moreover, the guardians themselves are not happy because their aim is the happiness of the city as a whole. Thus, happiness cannot exist in the whole if it doesn't exist in individual parts. Through education, the city should foster unity within diversity.

(6) Plato's Laws gives similar unrealistic, impractical prescriptions. In enacting laws, the legislator needs to take into account the territory and its inhabitants; in regard to possessions it is good for citizens to live "with moderation and liberally." His view may breed poverty which is the "parent of revolution and crime." The Laws also do not discuss how the rulers are different from the ruled. Finally, the regime Socrates institutes is a polity, a mix between democracy & oligarchy which is not best.

(7) Phaleas asserted that all should have equal possessions because he believed that property was the cause of factional conflict. However, making property simply equal does not solve the problem because the legislator will need to take into account the different needs and circumstances of different citizens. Phaleas is also incorrect in supposing that property disputes are the only cause of conflict. Much conflict is out of honor. Crime is committed out of desire for luxuries. Thus, to remedy these difficulties, each have a sufficient amount of property and work, and live according to moderation. Those who want to be self-sufficient should pursue philosophy, for that is the only type of enjoyment which requires no external things or people. Phaleas also forgets that people engage in factional conflict because property is equal. Some will think that they merit more than others and consider equality to be unjust because human desires are by nature limitless and insatiable, and the majority of people live trying to satisfy their desires. Preventing conflict requires that the respectable and virtuous people not wish for their own aggrandizement, while the common people simply lack the means for such aggrandizement.

(8). Hippodamus attempted to establish a regime whereby he wanted to compose a city of 10,000 people divided into three parts—one of artisans, one of husbandmen, and defenders; land is divided into three parts: (1) sacred for worship of Gods, (2) public for support of warriors, and (3) private for husbandmen?; lawsuits divided into three kinds: (1) insult; (2) injury; (3) homicide. Single supreme court and a law rewarding innovation. Problems involve classes becoming slaves to warrior class; if two other classes have no share in govt., how can their be loyal citizens. Dividing citizens will cause faction and strife; laws rewarding innovation promotes strife. Particular laws are needed to be changed if the situations demands it esp. since laws by nature have to be general and universal.

(9) A well governed city should allow the rulers to have a certain amount of leisure from the necessities of life, but it is difficult to determine how this is to be done in practice. In Sparta, the laxness of laws concerning women is harmful because women live in vice, women control a great deal of property, and property is in the hands of a few. The board of overseers are poor men who are easily bribed, and the office is so powerful that the king has to bow to their wishes. The regime has become more like a democracy than an aristocracy. Corruption is widespread among govt. offices ruled by less than intelligent people. The poor cannot afford food and so people are required to pay for it; creation of a warlike virtue to the exclusion of all others. They know no leisure. Common funds are poorly handled because tax-collection is not well-enforced.

(10). The Cretans regime is similar to the Spartan regime. They have both common messes and a slave class which does all farming. They have a similar arrangement with overseers and senators. The Cretans handle the matter of common mess better than Sparta because money is taken from common treasury. The office of order, similar to Spartan office of overseer has many of the similar problems as in Sparta. Human desires are not a standard for law

(11). Carthaginians have excellent elements; the superiority of their constitution is excellent, and other too in that people are committed to it. Kings and senators are chosen among the families that seem to be distinguished (not chosen by seniority). Problems with the regimes mentioned is that they tend too much toward democracy and others too much toward oligarchy. The Carthaginian regime tends toward aristocracy in that officials are unpaid and not chosen by lot. It tends toward oligarchy in that the officials are not elected on the basis of merit alone but also on the basis of wealth. This deviation from aristocracy makes wealth more honored than virtue, and therefore leads the city to be greedy. The regime seems to avoid some of the negative effects of oligarchy because new people can become wealthy relatively easy.

(12) Solon may have been an excellent legislator because he dismantled oligarchy, est. democracy and gave a proper mid of regimes with the council oligarchic and the elective offices were aristocratic and courts were popular. However, these were in place before Solon. In fact, he may have hurt regime by giving too much authority to the court. But this did not happen. In fact, Solon gave only a minimal power to the people.