

Aristotle's Politics Today: A Study of Contemporary Challenges

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Abstract

Aristotle's political philosophy, most notably articulated in his work *Politics*, continues to offer profound insights into the nature of governance and the functioning of contemporary political systems. This study explores the enduring relevance of Aristotelian thought in the context of modern democratic societies, with particular emphasis on key concepts such as the state as a moral and ethical community, the supremacy of the rule of law, the importance of active and responsible citizenship, and the stabilizing role of a strong middle class. By examining these ideas, the paper seeks to demonstrate how Aristotle's theoretical framework can still contribute to a deeper understanding of current political institutions and practices. At the same time, the study critically engages with the limitations inherent in Aristotle's political theory. His restrictive definition of citizenship, which excluded women, slaves, and non-property holders, stands in stark contrast to modern democratic ideals of equality and universal participation. His acceptance of hierarchical social structures and his focus on the city-state (polis) as the ideal political unit appear incompatible with the realities of contemporary nation-states and the interconnected global order shaped by globalization. These limitations necessitate a careful reinterpretation of Aristotelian ideas to ensure their relevance in the present context. The paper also analyzes how several pressing contemporary challenges as political inequality, declining levels of civic engagement, ethical concerns in political leadership, and the far-reaching effects of globalization can be better understood through an Aristotelian lens. By revisiting his emphasis on virtue, moral responsibility, and the common good, the study highlights the potential of Aristotle's thought to inform current debates on governance and public life. However, it also underscores that such application requires adaptation rather than direct adoption. This study argues that while Aristotle's political philosophy cannot be applied uncritically to modern conditions, it remains a foundational and intellectually rich resource for analyzing and interpreting present-day political challenges. His ideas continue to be both relevant and contested, offering valuable perspectives that must be reinterpreted in light of contemporary values such as human rights, inclusivity, and democratic equality.

Keywords: City-state, modern governance, political changes, political equality, political challenges.

1. Introduction

Aristotle was born in 384 B.C. in a small Greek town called Stagira. His father, Nicomachus, was a doctor in the royal court of the King of Macedonia. Because of this, Aristotle grew up in an environment connected to science and royal life, which influenced his thinking. At the age of 18, Aristotle went to Athens and joined Plato's Academy, which was the most famous educational

institution in Greece. He stayed there for about 19 years and was deeply influenced by his teacher Plato. Plato also considered Aristotle one of his best students. After Plato's death in 347 B.C., Aristotle left Athens. He spent the next several years traveling and working in different places. He lived under the protection of Hermeias, the ruler of Atarneus, and later became the teacher of Alexander the Great, the future king of Macedonia. His experience at the Macedonian court influenced his ideas about monarchy and government. In 335 B.C., Aristotle returned to Athens and started his own school called the Lyceum. This became an important center of learning. He taught there for about 12 years and wrote many of his important works during this time. After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C., political tensions increased in Athens. Because Aristotle was connected to Macedonia, he feared for his life and left Athens. He moved to Chalcis, where he died in 322 B.C. at the age of 62.

Aristotle's life can be divided into three main periods:

- a) Period of Learning (Apprenticeship) – When he studied at Plato's Academy in Athens.
- b) Period of Travel (Journey-man stage) – When he traveled, worked, and taught Alexander.
- c) Period of Teaching (Master stage) – When he founded the Lyceum and developed his own ideas.

Aristotle's contribution to political science is very great so that he is often called the father of political science. This is because he made politics a separate and systematic field of study. Unlike Plato, who focused more on ideal ideas, Aristotle studied real governments and societies. His method was scientific, logical, and based on observation. He collected information about many different constitutions and compared them. This made his approach practical and realistic. He believed that politics should not only study the ideal state but also understand real states, both good and bad. According to him, political science teaches how to govern properly and improve society. His methods and writing style is often difficult to understand. His works can be repetitive and sometimes unclear. However, his method is very important. He used the following ideas:

- Observation and experience
- Logical analysis
- Comparison of different systems

Unlike Plato, who used imagination and idealism, Aristotle focused more on facts and reality.

Then his main ideas in politics and he believed that:

- The state is a natural institution.
- Humans naturally live in society.
- The purpose of the state is to achieve the good life.

He defined a citizen as someone who takes part in the administration of justice and government. However, his idea of citizenship was limited. He excluded women, slaves, and workers, which is not acceptable in modern society. He also emphasized the importance of law, education, and a strong middle class for a stable state. Aristotle is often considered both a realist and a conservative thinker. He believed in stability, order, and gradual change rather than sudden revolution. He supported the role of the middle class because he thought it brought balance to society. However, some of his ideas, such as support for slavery and limited citizenship, show that he was influenced by the conditions of his time. Aristotle made a great contribution to political thought by developing politics as a scientific and independent subject. His ideas about the state, law, and citizenship continue to influence modern political systems. Even though some of his views are outdated and important. His practical and analytical approach remains valuable. By studying Aristotle, we can better understand both ancient and modern political life.

Aristotle studies both real governments and ideal systems, which makes his work very balanced and useful. According to Ernest Barker, Aristotle's *Politics* can be divided into three main parts:

1. Foundation of Political Science (Books I–III)

This part explains:

- How the state develops from family and village
- The concept of slavery
- The meaning of citizenship
- The nature of the state

2. Study of Constitutions (Books IV–VI)

This section deals with:

- Different types of governments
- Democracy, oligarchy, monarchy, etc.
- Causes of political instability and revolutions
- Ways to maintain stability in the state

This part is more practical and realistic.

3. Ideal State (Books VII–VIII)

This section explains:

- The best form of government
- Ideal life for citizens
- Importance of education

This part is more idealistic and influenced by Plato. Plato himself regarded Aristotle as the most gifted of his disciples. His most important treatise is his politics which is one of the most valuable works on political science. Therefore, his politics today is also really a contemporary challenges and remains importance forever.

Aristotle is one of the most important thinkers in the history of political philosophy. His famous book *Politics* gives a detailed study of the state, citizenship, government, and the purpose of political life. He wrote during the time of ancient Greek city-states, but his ideas are still useful today. According to Aristotle, the state is not just a political system. It is a moral community that exists to help people live a good and meaningful life. He believed that human beings are political animals. This means that people naturally live together in society and take part in political activities. Without society and participation, a human life is incomplete. In today's world, we see democracy, globalization, technology, and cultural diversity. Even in such a modern context, Aristotle's ideas remain important. His views on the rule of law, constitutional government, good citizenship, and the importance of a strong middle class are still relevant. However, there are also differences. Modern society believes in equality, human rights, and inclusive citizenship, while Aristotle's ideas were limited to his time. This study tries to understand how Aristotle's ideas can still help us deal with modern political problems. It also examines the limitations of his ideas in today's changing world. By studying Aristotle, we can connect ancient political theory with modern issues of governance and leadership. His works are foundational in many fields not only politics but also western philosophy, science, ethics, logic and reasoning is mentorship of Alexander the Great.

2. Objectives of the Study

This study on the contemporary relevance of Aristotle's political thought is guided by the following objectives:

- a) To analyze Aristotle's political philosophy as presented in his work *Politics*, focusing on key concepts such as the state, citizenship, justice, and the common good.
- b) To examine the relevance of Aristotelian ideas in modern political systems, particularly in relation to democracy, rule of law, and constitutional governance.
- c) To explore the role of ethics in politics by evaluating Aristotle's emphasis on virtue, moral leadership, and civic responsibility in contemporary governance.
- d) To identify the major challenges in applying Aristotle's political theory today, including issues of equality, human rights, globalization, and multiculturalism.
- e) To assess the importance of the middle class and political stability in light of current socio-economic inequalities.
- f) To critically evaluate the limitations of Aristotle's views, especially his exclusionary concept of citizenship and acceptance of social hierarchy.
- g) To suggest ways of adapting Aristotelian political thought to suit the needs and realities of the modern world.

These objectives aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how classical political theory can still contribute to analyzing and addressing present-day political challenges.

3. Research Methodology

This study on the contemporary relevance of Aristotle's political thought adopts a qualitative and analytical research methodology. The focus is on interpreting classical texts and relating them to present-day political realities. The following are closely related such as:

a) Research Design

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature. It seeks to describe Aristotle's political ideas and critically analyze their relevance in addressing contemporary political challenges.

b) Sources of Data

The research is based entirely on secondary sources, including such as:

- Classical texts, especially Aristotle's *Politics*
- Books on political philosophy and Western political thought
- Scholarly articles, journals, and research papers
- Reliable online academic resources

c) Method of Analysis

- Textual Analysis: Careful examination of Aristotle's original arguments and concepts.
- Comparative Analysis: Comparing Aristotelian ideas with modern political systems and practices.
- Critical Analysis: Evaluating both the strengths and limitations of his political theory in the present context.

d) Theoretical Approach

The study follows a normative and interpretative approach, focusing on such as:

- Ethical dimensions of politics
- Concepts of justice, equality, and governance
- The relationship between classical theory and modern practice

e) Scope of the Study

The research is limited to such as:

- Key political ideas of Aristotle relevant to modern governance
- Contemporary challenges such as democracy, inequality, globalization, and citizenship

It does not include empirical fieldwork or statistical analysis.

f) Limitations of the Study

- The study relies on secondary data, which may limit originality in interpretation.
- Aristotle's ideas are context-specific to ancient Greece, making direct application to modern society challenging.
- The absence of empirical data may restrict practical validation of arguments.

Overall, this methodology enables a systematic and critical understanding of how Aristotle's political philosophy can be interpreted and adapted to analyze contemporary political issues.

4. Review of Literature

The political philosophy of Aristotle has been widely studied and interpreted by various scholars across different periods. His work *Politics* serves as a foundational text in understanding the nature of the state, citizenship, and governance. Over time, both classical and modern thinkers have engaged with his ideas, either to extend, reinterpret, or critique them in light of changing political realities. Classical interpretations of Aristotle's political thought are largely derived from the works of Plato and Xenophon, who preserved and transmitted Greek philosophical traditions. While Plato emphasized idealism and the concept of a perfect state, Aristotle adopted a more practical and empirical approach, focusing on real political systems and constitutions. This distinction has influenced later scholars in analyzing the applicability of Aristotle's ideas to real-world governance. In the modern period, scholars such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke engaged indirectly with Aristotelian ideas while developing their own theories of the state and social contract. Although they moved away from Aristotle's teleological view of the state, they retained his concern for political order, stability, and the role of governance in human life. Similarly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau reflected Aristotelian themes in his emphasis on the general will and civic participation. Contemporary political theorists have revisited Aristotle to address modern challenges. For instance, Hannah Arendt emphasized active citizenship and public participation, echoing Aristotle's idea of humans as political animals. Likewise, Alasdair Macintyre reinterpreted Aristotelian ethics and virtue theory, highlighting the importance of moral values in political life. These contributions demonstrate the continued relevance of Aristotle's integration of ethics and politics. At the same time, critical perspectives have emerged. Feminist scholars have pointed out Aristotle's exclusion of women from citizenship, while modern democratic theorists criticize his acceptance of social hierarchy and limited notion of equality. Scholars focusing on globalization argue that Aristotle's polis-based framework is insufficient for addressing transnational issues such as climate change, migration, and global governance. Overall, the literature reveals that while Aristotle's political philosophy remains a cornerstone of political theory, it is continuously reinterpreted to suit contemporary contexts. The

existing body of work highlights both the enduring relevance and the limitations of his ideas, forming a strong foundation for analyzing present-day political challenges.

5. Importance of the Study

The study of Aristotle's political thought in the context of contemporary challenges is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it helps in understanding the foundations of modern political theory. Aristotle's ideas on the state, citizenship, justice, and governance continue to influence present-day political systems, especially democratic institutions and constitutional frameworks. Examining his work provides a deeper insight into the origins and development of political concepts still in use today. Secondly, the study is important for analyzing current political issues through a classical lens. Problems such as political instability, inequality, corruption, and declining civic participation can be better understood by applying Aristotelian concepts like the common good, rule of law, and civic virtue. This connection between past and present enriches our understanding of modern governance. Thirdly, it highlights the role of ethics in politics. Aristotle's emphasis on moral leadership and virtue remains highly relevant in an era where ethical concerns in governance and public life are increasingly debated. The study encourages a value-based approach to politics rather than a purely power-oriented one. Another important aspect is that it enables a critical evaluation of classical theories. By examining the limitations of Aristotle's thought, such as his exclusionary idea of citizenship and acceptance of social hierarchy, the study promotes a more inclusive and modern interpretation of political theory aligned with human rights and equality. Furthermore, the study contributes to bridging the gap between classical and contemporary political thought. It demonstrates how ancient ideas can still provide guidance in addressing modern challenges like globalization, diversity, and democratic governance, while also requiring adaptation. Finally, this research is valuable for students and scholars of political science, as it enhances analytical thinking, encourages comparative study, and deepens the understanding of how enduring philosophical ideas can be applied to present-day realities. The importance of this study lies in its ability to connect Aristotle's timeless political insights with the evolving demands of the modern world, making it both academically and practically relevant.

6. Statement of the Problem

The political philosophy of Aristotle, as articulated in *Politics*, has long been regarded as a foundational framework for understanding the nature of the state, citizenship, and governance. However, the rapidly changing dynamics of the modern world that characterized by democracy, globalization, technological advancement, and increasing social diversity, pose significant challenges to the direct application of his ideas. One of the central problems lies in the tension between Aristotle's classical framework and contemporary democratic values. His conception of citizenship was limited and exclusionary, denying political participation to women, slaves, and non-citizens, which contradicts modern principles of equality, human rights, and inclusive governance. This raises the question of how far his ideas can be adapted to suit present-day political systems. Another key issue is the relevance of the city-state model in a globalized world. Aristotle's political theory was designed for small, homogeneous communities, whereas modern states are large, complex, and diverse. Contemporary challenges such as globalization, migration, environmental crises, and international cooperation extend beyond the scope of his original framework. Additionally, there is a problem concerning the ethical dimension of politics. While Aristotle emphasized virtue and moral leadership, modern politics often

appears driven by power, economic interests, and political competition. This creates a gap between ideal political conduct and practical realities, raising concerns about the applicability of Aristotelian ethics in current governance. Furthermore, increasing economic inequality and political instability challenge Aristotle's idea that a strong middle class ensures stability. In many societies today, widening gaps between rich and poor have led to social unrest and weakened democratic institutions. Therefore, the core problem addressed in this study is how Aristotle's political philosophy be critically reinterpreted and applied to understand and address contemporary political challenges while overcoming its inherent limitations. This study seeks to explore this problem by examining both the enduring relevance and the practical constraints of applying Aristotle's ideas in the modern world.

7. Different facets of his political philosophy

7.1 His views on politics

Our main interest in Aristotle is mostly based on his famous book *Politics*. However, this is only one of many important works that made him one of the greatest thinkers in history. Even though *Politics* is not complete and has some imperfections, its importance cannot be denied.

Many scholars have praised this work:

- Eduard Zeller said that it is “*the richest treasure that has come down to us from antiquity and the greatest contribution to political philosophy.*”
- Another scholar described it as the *most influential and profound book on politics*, which must be studied before any other work.
- Charles Howard McIlwain explained that *Politics* and *Ethics* are practical guides. They help constitution-makers understand the state, citizens, and human behavior in society.
- Ernest Barker considered it the *classical representation of Greek political thought*.

Politics is about the science and art of government. Aristotle wrote on many subjects like logic, science, ethics, and philosophy, but his political ideas are closely connected with his ideas on ethics.

He believed that:

- The main goal of life is happiness.
- The state helps individuals achieve happiness.

So, the state is not just a political system which is a moral institution.

Aristotle's *Politics* is both:

- Practical based on real life, and
- Theoretical based on ideas and reasoning.

According to Barker, the book can be divided into three main parts such as:

1. Basic Foundation (Books I–III)

These explain the origin of the state, family, slavery, and citizenship.

2. Types of Constitutions (Books IV–VI)

These describe different forms of government and how they change. They are more practical and based on real examples.

3. Ideal State (Books VII–VIII)

These discuss the best possible state and ideal life.

In some parts, Aristotle is practical and realistic, while in others he is more idealistic, similar to his teacher Plato. Aristotle's *Politics* is divided into eight books such as:

- Book I: Introduction; discusses family, property, and slavery.

- Book II: Criticism of ideal states, including Plato's ideas.
- Book III: Explains citizenship and classification of governments.
- Book IV: Studies different forms of government.
- Book V: Explains revolutions of their causes and solutions.
- Book VI: Continues discussion on democracy and oligarchy.
- Book VII: Talks about the ideal state.
- Book VIII: Discusses education in the ideal state.

Werner Jaeger believed that *Politics* was written in two stages:

1. First Stage (Ideal Theory)

Includes Books II, III, VII, and VIII. These focus on ideal political ideas and are influenced by Plato.

2. Second Stage (Practical Study)

Includes Books IV, V, and VI. These focus on real political systems like democracy and oligarchy.

So, *Politics* has two main parts:

- Political ideas (theory)
- Political realities (practice)

The book probably took around 15 years to complete.

Although *Politics* is very important, it is not a fully finished book.

George H Sabine said that it cannot be considered a complete work written for the general public. Some scholars praise it highly, while others criticize it. For example, A E Taylor felt that some parts are too simple for such a big subject.

This reputed book is sometimes confusing because of the following reasons:

1. Unclear Arrangement

It is not certain whether Aristotle himself arranged the book or if it was compiled later by his students or editors.

2. Mixed Structure

Some scholars believed that it is made from different lecture notes. For example:

- Barker says it combines three lectures.
- David Ross calls it a combination of five different treatises.

3. Too Many Cross-References

Aristotle often refers to topics that are not fully explained later.

4. Improper Order of Books

The books are not arranged in a smooth or logical order.

Even though Aristotle's *Politics* is incomplete and sometimes difficult to understand, it remains one of the most important works in political philosophy. It combines both theory and practice and provides deep insights into the nature of the state, government, and human life. Its value lies not in perfection, but in the richness of ideas it offers. Aristotle's *Politics* is one of the most important and influential works in political philosophy. Even though it is incomplete and sometimes confusing, it provides deep insights into:

- Nature of the state
- Forms of government

- Role of citizens
- Importance of ethics and education

Its greatest strength lies in combining ideal theory with practical reality. Because of this, it continues to be relevant even today.

7.2 Plato and Aristotle: A Comparative Study

Plato and Aristotle are two of the greatest philosophers in the history of Western political thought. Many scholars believe that they represent two different and even opposite schools of thinking. However, this is only partly true. In reality, Aristotle was deeply influenced by Plato, even though he later developed his own independent ideas. Aristotle spent about twenty years in Plato's Academy. During this time, he absorbed many of Plato's teachings. Because of this close connection, scholars like M. B. Foster have described Aristotle as the greatest of all Platonists. This means that although Aristotle disagreed with Plato on many issues, his philosophy was still strongly shaped by Plato's ideas. As scholars like Sabine and Dunning have pointed out, Aristotle's writings clearly show the influence of Plato. Many ideas that Plato only suggested or hinted at were later developed more clearly and systematically by Aristotle. Although they had differences, Plato and Aristotle shared many important ideas:

a) Concern about Greek Political Life:

Both philosophers were worried about the instability and disorder in Greek political life. They believed that society was suffering from moral decline.

b) Importance of Education:

Both believed that proper education was the key to improving society and creating good citizens.

c) Ideal of the City-State:

They believed that a good life could only be achieved in a small and well-organized citystate.

d) Limited citizenship:

Both thinkers supported limiting citizenship only to certain qualified people.

e) Role of labour:

They believed that manual labour should be done by slaves or non-citizens so that citizens could focus on higher activities.

f) State for the good life:

Both rejected the Sophists' idea that the state exists only for survival. Instead, they believed the state exists to promote the good life.

g) State as a moral institution:

They viewed the state not just as a political organization, but as a moral and ethical community.

h) Unity of ethics and politics:

For both, ethics and politics were closely connected. Politics was about achieving moral goodness.

i) Moral approach:

They approached political problems from a moral point of view rather than just practical concerns.

j) Criticism of democracy:

Both were critical of democracy and did not consider it the best form of government.

k) Aristotle's debt to Plato:

Aristotle's work, especially his book *Politics*, shows a strong influence from Plato's works like *Laws* and *Statesman*. Many ideas in Aristotle's writings are similar to Plato's, such as:

- The supremacy of law

- The idea that rulers should be servants of the law
- The belief that war is for the sake of peace
- The concept of a mixed constitution
- The importance of agriculture

In fact, when Aristotle describes his ideal state, it often looks similar to what Plato called his second-best state. Thus, it is clear that Aristotle borrowed many ideas from Plato, even though he presented them in his own way. Despite many similarities, Aristotle was not a blind follower of Plato. He criticized several of Plato's ideas and developed his own approach.

a) Theory of ideas:

Plato believed in abstract Ideas or Forms as the ultimate reality. Aristotle rejected this and focused on real, observable things. He was more practical and realistic.

b) Ideal state:

Plato's ideal state was based on the rule of philosopher-kings. Aristotle, however, preferred a constitutional government where law is supreme.

c) Unity of the state:

Plato wanted extreme unity in the state, even suggesting common property and family. Aristotle thought this was unrealistic and harmful.

d) Criticism of communism:

Aristotle strongly opposed Plato's idea of common property, wives, and children. He believed private property and family are necessary for a stable society.

e) Role of lower classes:

Plato focused mainly on the guardian class. Aristotle criticized him for ignoring the majority of people.

d) Method of study:

Plato used imagination and philosophical reasoning. Aristotle used observation, logic, and scientific analysis.

e) Practical vs ideal:

Plato's philosophy is more idealistic and theoretical. Aristotle's approach is more practical and based on real-life experience.

f) Style of writing

Plato wrote in a literary and artistic style, often using dialogues. Aristotle wrote in a direct and logical manner.

g) Individual vs state

Aristotle gave more importance to individuals compared to Plato, who emphasized the unity of the state.

7.3 Views of Scholars

Scholars like Dunning argue that the main difference between Plato and Aristotle lies in their method rather than their ideas. Plato expresses ideas through imagination and examples, while Aristotle presents them in a clear and systematic way. Another scholar, Bowle, explains that Plato builds an ideal state based on theory, while Aristotle constantly tests his ideas with real facts. In conclusion, Plato and Aristotle share many similarities, especially in their belief that the state exists to promote a moral and good life. However, they differ greatly in their methods and approach. Plato is more idealistic and imaginative, while Aristotle is more practical and scientific. Even though Aristotle criticized Plato, he was deeply influenced by him. In fact, many of Aristotle's ideas are rooted in Plato's philosophy. Thus,

Aristotle can be seen both as a follower and a critic of Plato. Their combined contributions have laid the foundation of political philosophy and continue to influence modern political thought. Plato and Aristotle are two of the most important philosophers in the history of Western political thought. Their ideas have deeply influenced political theory, philosophy, and even modern systems of governance. Although many scholars consider them to represent two opposite schools of thought, this view is only partially correct. In reality, Aristotle was greatly influenced by Plato, even though he later developed his own independent and critical approach. Aristotle spent nearly twenty years studying in Plato's Academy. During this long period, he absorbed the teachings of his master deeply. Because of this, some scholars have described Aristotle as the "greatest of all Platonists." His writings clearly show the lasting impact of Plato's ideas. However, Aristotle was not a blind follower. He critically examined Plato's philosophy and modified it according to his own understanding and practical experience. The relationship between Plato and Aristotle is very important for understanding their ideas. Plato was the teacher, and Aristotle was his student. Plato's philosophy was more idealistic and imaginative, while Aristotle's approach was more practical and scientific. Even though Aristotle later disagreed with Plato on many issues, he never completely broke away from his influence. Scholars have pointed out that many ideas which Plato expressed in a vague or suggestive manner were later developed more clearly and systematically by Aristotle. Therefore, Aristotle can be seen as both a continuation and a correction of Plato's thought so that he can play a big role in the field of politics right from the inception till now. Thus, Plato represents idealism, while Aristotle represents realism. Subsequently Plato and Aristotle are closely connected in their political ideas, yet clearly different in their approaches. Both believed that the main purpose of the state is to promote a good and moral life. Both emphasized the importance of education, virtue, and justice. However, Plato was more idealistic and focused on perfect models, while Aristotle was more practical and concerned with real-world application. Aristotle criticized Plato but was also deeply influenced by him. Therefore, Aristotle can be understood as both a follower and a critic of Plato. Their combined contributions form the foundation of political philosophy and continue to influence modern political thought even today.

7.4 As the Father of Political Science

Aristotle is widely regarded as the "Father of Political Science." This title is given to him because he was the first thinker to study politics in a systematic, scientific, and practical way. While earlier philosophers like Plato had discussed political ideas, Aristotle transformed politics into an independent field of study. It is not an exaggeration to say that political science, in its true sense, begins with Aristotle. His great work *Politics* laid the foundation for the scientific study of political institutions, governments, and political behavior.

There are as follows:

i) Separation of Politics from Ethics

One of Aristotle's greatest contributions was that he separated politics from ethics.

- Plato considered politics as a part of ethics. According to him, politics was mainly concerned with moral ideals.
- Aristotle, however, treated politics and ethics as two separate subjects, even though they are related.

He wrote two different books:

- *Nicomachean Ethics* → dealing with moral philosophy

- *Politics* → dealing with political systems and governance

By doing this, Aristotle gave politics an independent identity as a science.

ii) Scientific and Systematic Approach

Aristotle was the first thinker to study politics in a scientific and systematic manner.

- He collected data from different political systems
- He observed real governments
- He analyzed facts before forming theories

It is believed that he studied around 158 constitutions of different Greek city-states. This shows that his conclusions were based on real-life observation, not imagination. Unlike Plato, who imagined an ideal state, Aristotle studied existing states and tried to understand how they function.

iii) Use of Comparative Method

Aristotle used the comparative method in political science.

- He compared different forms of government
- He studied their strengths and weaknesses
- He tried to find which system works best in practice

This method is still used in modern political science today. Because of this, Aristotle is also called a pioneer of comparative politics.

iv) Realistic and Practical Thinker

Aristotle was a realist, unlike Plato who was an idealist.

- Plato focused on “what the state should be”
- Aristotle focused on “what the state actually is”

He believed in studying “things as they are”, not just “things as they ought to be.”

This practical approach made his political philosophy more useful and applicable.

v) Classification of Sciences

Aristotle classified knowledge into different types of sciences:

- Theoretical sciences → like mathematics and physics (concerned with truth)
- Practical sciences → like ethics and politics (concerned with human action)
- Productive sciences → like arts and crafts

He placed political science under practical sciences, showing that it deals with human behavior and real-life situations.

vi) Systematization of Knowledge

Aristotle did not just create new ideas; he also organized and systematized existing knowledge.

- He used history and past experiences
- He respected traditions and customs
- He believed that knowledge should be based on accumulated human experience

Unlike Plato, who often rejected existing systems, Aristotle learned from history and improved upon it.

vii) Belief in Rule of Law

Aristotle strongly supported the supremacy of law.

- He believed that law should rule, not individuals

- According to him, even the wisest ruler should not be above the law

He famously argued that:

- Rule of law = rule of reason
- Rule of man = rule of passion

This idea is still a fundamental principle in modern democracies.

viii) Idea of Separation of Powers

Aristotle also contributed to the idea of separation of powers.

- He identified different functions of government
- This idea later influenced modern political thinkers

Although not fully developed like in modern theory, Aristotle laid the foundation for it.

ix) Moderate View on Property

Aristotle had a balanced view on property.

- He did not support complete communism like Plato
- He also warned against excessive wealth

He believed:

- Private property is necessary
- But it should be used responsibly

This shows his moderate and practical thinking.

x) Economic Basis of Politics

Aristotle was one of the first thinkers to recognize the importance of economic factors in politics.

- He observed that wealth distribution affects government
- Rich and poor classes often come into conflict
- Revolutions occur due to inequality

This idea is very important even in modern political studies.

xi) Political Science as Both Theory and Practice

Aristotle viewed political science as having two parts:

- Political Philosophy → theoretical ideas about the state
- Political Statecraft → practical art of governing

If Plato is called the father of political philosophy, Aristotle is considered the father of political science in practice.

Aristotle deserves to be called the Father of Political Science because:

- He made politics an independent subject
- He used a scientific and practical method
- He relied on observation and comparison
- He emphasized rule of law and constitutional government
- He studied the economic and social basis of politics

His book *Politics* remains one of the most important works in political science even today. While Plato provided ideal theories, Aristotle gave a realistic and systematic foundation to the study of politics.

Thus, political science as a discipline truly begins with Aristotle, and his contribution remains immortal and highly influential.

7.5 Factors Influencing Aristotle's Political Philosophy

i) Influence of Plato

Aristotle studied under Plato for twenty years. Many of his ideas, such as:

- Importance of education
- State as a moral institution
- Criticism of democracy

were influenced by Plato.

ii) Family Background

Aristotle's father was a physician. This influenced Aristotle's interest in:

- Science
- Observation
- Biological and empirical methods

iii) Political Conditions of Greece

The unstable condition of Greek city-states gave Aristotle an opportunity to:

- Observe political systems
- Study their strengths and weaknesses

iv) Association with Alexander the Great

Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander the Great.

This exposed him to practical politics and administration.

v) Influence of City-State/Polis

Greek city-states influenced his idea that:

- The state should be small
- Citizens should actively participate

vi) Personal Life

Unlike Plato, Aristotle had a family life.

This made him support:

- Private property
- Importance of family

He strongly criticized Plato's idea of communism of wives and children. Plato and Aristotle are two of the greatest philosophers in the history of Western political thought. Their ideas have shaped political theory for centuries and continue to influence modern political systems.

Aristotle was a student of Plato and remained in his Academy for nearly twenty years. Because of this long association, Aristotle was deeply influenced by Plato's philosophy. Many scholars even describe him as a true Platonist. However, Aristotle was not a blind follower. His critical and analytical mind did not allow him to accept all the teachings of his master without examination. In his famous work *Politics*, especially in Book II, Aristotle undertakes a detailed and systematic criticism of the ideal states proposed by earlier thinkers, particularly Plato. He critically examines Plato's ideas as presented in *The Republic*, *The Statesman*, and *The Laws*. While he respects Plato, he does not hesitate to point out what he considers to be serious weaknesses in his theories. His main criticisms are directed against:

- a) Plato's concept of extreme unity of the state
- b) Plato's theory of communism (wives, children, and property)
- c) Plato's neglect of the lower classes
- d) Certain ideas presented in *The Laws*

7.6. Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Communism

Plato proposed communism among the guardian class, including:

- Common wives
- Common children
- Common property

He believed that this would remove selfishness and create unity. Aristotle strongly rejects this idea.

Aristotle gives several arguments against this system:

- i. Social Disorder
It will create confusion in family relationships and weaken social structure.
- ii. Neglect of Children
When children belong to everyone, no one will take proper care of them.
- iii. Immorality
People may unknowingly form relationships with close relatives.
- iv. Unrealistic Comparison
Plato compares human society with animals, which Aristotle considers inappropriate.
- v. Impractical System
State-controlled marriages cannot ensure the best results.
- vi. Unhappiness of Guardians
The guardian class, which is supposed to be the best, will become unhappy under such restrictions.

Aristotle's Alternative View

Aristotle strongly supports:

- The family system
- Emotional bonds
- Personal responsibility

He believes that the family is a natural and necessary institution for human development.

Aristotle also criticizes the idea of common ownership of property.

Main Arguments:

- i. Inequality of Effort and Reward
Hardworking people will feel cheated if others get equal benefits without effort.
- ii. Natural Desire for Ownership
Human beings naturally desire to own property.
- iii. Source of Conflict
Common ownership often leads to disputes rather than harmony.
- iv. Moral Development
Private property encourages responsibility, generosity, and moral growth.
- v. Against Human Experience
Historical experience does not support complete communism.

- vi. Neglect of Lower Classes
Plato's system mainly applies to guardians, ignoring the majority.
- vii. Division in Society
It creates a division between rulers and the ruled, weakening unity.

Aristotle's View on Property

Aristotle supports:

- Private property
- But with common use for public benefit

This shows his balanced and practical approach.

Aristotle criticizes Plato for focusing mainly on the guardian class.

- The majority of people (producers) are neglected
- Their role and welfare are not properly considered

Aristotle believes that:

- A state must include and benefit all sections of society
- Ignoring the majority weakens the stability of the state

Aristotle also points out several weaknesses in Plato's *The Laws*:

- i. Excessive Size of the State
Increasing population may make the state difficult to manage.
- ii. Militaristic Character
A large number of soldiers may make the state aggressive.
- iii. Neglect of Foreign Policy
Plato does not clearly explain relations with other states.
- iv. No Population Control
Lack of limits may lead to imbalance and disorder.
- v. Unclear Political Structure
It is not clear how rulers are selected and distinguished.
- vi. Property Regulations
Aristotle questions inconsistencies in property rules.
- vii. Dominance of Wealthy Class
The system may favor the rich.
- viii. Defective Election System
Elections may be controlled by a small elite group. Aristotle's criticism of Plato is both deep and constructive. While he respects his teacher, he does not hesitate to point out weaknesses in his ideas.

Thus, Aristotle refines and improves Plato's philosophy, making political thought more realistic, scientific, and applicable to real life.

7.7 The Origin and Nature of the State

Aristotle is one of the greatest philosophers in the history of Western political thought. Being the son of a physician, he developed a scientific and observational approach to all subjects, including politics. He is often described as the Master of those who know because of his vast knowledge and systematic method of study. Aristotle strongly believed that the state is a natural institution. According to him, the state is not created by force or agreement alone but develops naturally out of human needs and tendencies.

Human beings are social by nature, and they cannot live in isolation. Therefore, they form associations, which gradually develop into the state. Aristotle famously described human beings as political animals, meaning that living in a society and participating in political life is part of human nature. A person who lives outside the state is either above humanity or below humanity. Thus, the state is essential for the complete development of human personality.

i) Origin of the State

Aristotle explains the origin of the state in a gradual and natural manner. According to him, the state develops through different stages of human association.

a) The Family (Household) — The First Stage

The origin of the state begins with the family, which is the smallest and most basic unit of society.

- The family arises from the union of male and female for reproduction.
- It also includes the relationship between master and slave for economic survival.

The family exists to satisfy the basic needs of daily life, such as:

- Food
- Shelter
- Reproduction

Thus, the family is a natural and necessary association.

b) The Village — The Second Stage

When several families come together, they form a village.

- A village is a larger association than the family
- It satisfies more complex needs beyond daily survival
- It is often formed by extended families or groups with common ancestry

The village represents a higher stage of social organization.

c) The State/Polis— The Final Stage

The final stage in the development of human association is the state (polis).

- It is formed by the union of several villages
- It is self-sufficient and complete
- It exists not only for survival but for achieving a good and noble life

Aristotle clearly explains:

- The state comes into existence for the sake of life
- But it continues for the sake of good life

Thus, the state is the highest and most perfect form of human association.

ii) State as a Natural Institution

Aristotle firmly believes that the state is natural.

- Just as the family is natural, the state is also natural
- It develops from human instincts and needs

He argues that:

- Human beings are naturally social
- They cannot live alone
- They need the state for their full development

Therefore, the state is not artificial but a necessary outcome of human nature.

iii) Man as a Political Animal

One of Aristotle's most famous ideas is that:

“Man is by nature a political animal.”

This means:

- Human beings are naturally inclined to live in society
- They have the ability to communicate, reason, and form relationships
- They can distinguish between right and wrong, just and unjust

According to Aristotle:

- Only in the state can humans develop their moral and intellectual capacities
- A person living outside society is either inhuman or superhuman

iv) Nature of the State

1. State as the Highest Form of Association

Aristotle defines the state as:

- An association of families and villages;
- A community aimed at achieving the highest good.

Among all associations, the state is the most comprehensive and supreme.

2. State is prior to the individual.

Aristotle states that the state is prior to the individual such as:

- This does not mean that the state comes first in time.
- It means that the state is more important in purpose such as:
- A whole is more important than its parts
- The state is more important than individuals

Without the state, individuals cannot live a complete and meaningful life.

3. State as a Community/Koinonia

The state is a community/koinonia made up of different individuals.

- People differ in roles, abilities, and functions.
- These differences create cooperation and interdependence.

Thus, diversity leads to unity, and the state functions as a harmonious whole.

vii) State Exists for the Good Life

The main aim of the state is not just survival but the achievement of a good life.

- It promotes virtue and morality.
- It helps individuals live a happy and honourable life.
- It creates conditions for human excellence.

According to Aristotle, the state performs several important functions such as:

- Maintaining Law and Order
- Ensuring Justice.
- Promoting Moral Development
- Providing Security
- Creating Conditions for a Good Life

Thus, the state is both a political and moral institution.

Organic Theory of the State

Aristotle compares the state to a living organism.

- Just as the human body has different organs,
- The state has different parts such as citizens, institutions, classes.

Each part has its own function, but all work together for the survival of the whole.

Key Features:

- The state is a whole, and individuals are its parts
- The whole is more important than its parts
- Individuals cannot exist properly without the state

Aristotle also emphasizes:

- Justice is the foundation of the state.
- Without justice, society becomes chaotic.

Aristotle clearly distinguishes between state and government such as:

- State → the entire body of citizens;
- Government → the group of people who rule;

Important points:

- Government may change;
- The state remains the same unless its constitution changes.

Aristotle identifies different bases of government such as:

a) Government Based on Birth

- Rule by noble families;
- May become weak if successors are not capable;

b) Government Based on Wealth

- Rule by the rich/oligarchy;
- Wealth does not guarantee wisdom or justice;

d) Government based on number such as:

- Rule by the majority/democracy
- People may lack technical knowledge but have practical wisdom

Aristotle supports a moderate form of democracy, where:

- Power lies with the people
- But administration is handled by capable individuals

In conclusion, Aristotle presents a scientific and realistic theory of the origin and nature of the state such as:

- The state develops naturally from family → village → state
- It is the highest form of human association.
- It exists for the good and moral life.
- It is an organic whole, where individuals are parts.
- It is essential for human development.

Aristotle's theory shows that the state is not an artificial creation but a natural and necessary institution. His ideas have greatly influenced political thought and continue to remain relevant even today.

7.8 Classification of Constitutions

The classification of constitutions or forms of government has been an important subject in political thought since ancient times. Early thinkers like Herodotus, Pindar, Thucydides, and Plato had already

recognized that governments differ depending on whether power is held by one, few, or many. However, it was Aristotle who provided the most systematic, scientific, and detailed classification of constitutions. His classification is considered one of the earliest and most important contributions to political science. Aristotle classifies constitutions on the basis of two main principles such as:

a) Number of Rulers

This refers to how many people hold political power such as:

- Rule by one person
- Rule by a few people
- Rule by many people

b) Purpose (End) of Government

This refers to the aim of the government:

- Whether it works for the common good.
- Or for the self-interest of the rulers;

By combining these two principles, Aristotle develops a six-fold classification of governments. Aristotle divides governments into two categories:

c) Good (Pure) Forms of Government

These forms aim at the common good of all citizens such as:

1. Monarchy/Rule of One

- Government by a single ruler;
- The ruler governs in the interest of the entire society.
- It is the best form in theory, if the ruler is wise and just.

2. Aristocracy/Rule of Few

- Government by a small group of virtuous and capable people;
- These rulers govern for the welfare of all;
- It is based on merit and virtue.

3. Polity/Rule of Many

- Government by the majority of citizens;
- It aims at the common good.
- It is a moderate and practical form of government.

d) Bad/Corrupt Forms of Government

These forms serve the self-interest of the rulers:

1. Tyranny/Corrupt form of Monarchy

- Rule by one person for personal benefit;
- The ruler is selfish and oppressive.
- It is the worst form of government.

2. Oligarchy/Corrupt form of Aristocracy

- Rule by a few wealthy people;
- They govern in their own interest.
- It ignores the welfare of the majority.

3. *Democracy/Corrupt form of Polity*

- Rule by the majority, especially the poor;
- Government works for the interest of one class only;
- It may lead to injustice and instability.

7.9 Classification of governance it is shown at a glance such as:

| Number of Rulers | Good Form/Common Good | Bad Form/Self-Interest |
|------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| One | Monarchy | Tyranny |
| Few | Aristocracy | Oligarchy |
| Many | Polity | Democracy |

Aristotle believed that Monarchy and Aristocracy are the best forms in theory but they are difficult to maintain in practice. Therefore, considering human weaknesses, he preferred to Polity as the best practical form of government. Polity is a balanced system that combines both elements of democracy and elements of oligarchy. It ensures stability and avoids extremes.

Aristotle clearly explains the dangers of bad forms of government such as:

- Tyranny → works only for the ruler’s interest;
- Oligarchy → serves the rich;
- Democracy (extreme form) → serves the poor only;

Thus, all corrupt forms create division and injustice in society.

Aristotle’s classification is influenced by Plato, but there are important differences.

Plato divided governments into such as:

- Law-abiding states
- Lawless/arbitrary states

Plato’s law-abiding states are similar to Aristotle’s good forms. Plato’s lawless states are similar to Aristotle’s corrupt forms. However Plato focused more on obedience to law and Aristotle focused on purpose common good vs self-interest Plato considered philosopher-king rule is the best. While Aristotle considered monarchy and aristocracy are best in theory but he preferred polity as the best practical system. Aristotle’s classification of constitutions is logical, scientific, and practical. He not only classified governments based on the number of rulers but also emphasized their purpose. His six-fold classification helps us understand such as:

- The difference between good and bad governments;
- The importance of ruling for the common good;
- The dangers of selfish rule;

Aristotle’s preference for polity shows his practical wisdom and understanding of human nature. His classification remains one of the most important contributions to political science and continues to influence modern political thought.

8. Conclusion

The political philosophy of Aristotle continues to hold a significant place in the study of political theory, offering enduring insights into the nature of the state, citizenship, justice, and governance. His vision of the state as a moral community aimed at achieving the common good, along with his emphasis on the rule of law, civic participation, and the importance of a stable middle class, remains highly

relevant in understanding modern political systems. However, this study has also shown that Aristotle's ideas cannot be applied uncritically in the contemporary world. His exclusionary concept of citizenship, acceptance of social hierarchy, and focus on the city-state present clear limitations when viewed against modern principles of equality, human rights, and globalization. These differences highlight the need for careful reinterpretation rather than direct adoption of his theories. Despite these challenges, Aristotle's integration of ethics and politics provides a valuable framework for addressing present-day issues such as political instability, inequality, and ethical concerns in governance. His emphasis on virtue and moral responsibility serves as an important reminder of the ethical foundations necessary for a just and stable political order, Aristotle's political thought remains both relevant and contested. Its true value lies not in rigid application but in its ability to inspire critical thinking and guide the adaptation of classical ideas to meet the evolving demands of contemporary political life.

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