

ARISTOTLE

ARISTOTLE was born in Stagira, in northern Greece, in 384 BCE. His father, Nichomachus, was court physician to Amyntas III, king of Macedon, and thus Aristotle was brought up mainly in Macedonia. At seventeen, however, Aristotle was sent to Athens, the cultural centre of the Greek world, to pursue his education. Very quickly he became primarily associated with Plato's Academy, where he remained for more than twenty years. Plato himself was nearly sixty when Aristotle joined the Academy yet he clearly recognized the young man's precocity and very soon Aristotle became a favored pupil – and leading disciple. However, on Plato's death in 347 BCE Aristotle left Athens. It is often supposed he left Athens because Plato's nephew, Speusippus, was appointed *Scholarch* – head of the Academy – when he thought the position should have gone to him. However, as a metic – a non-Athenian-born resident of Athens – Aristotle could not own property in Athens and since the buildings and possessions of the Academy were transferred to Speusippus as well as the headship, it is unlikely that Aristotle had any expectations in that regard. By all accounts, he also got on well with Speusippus, at least personally. In any event, there were more personal reasons for leaving Athens. This was the time when Philip II of Macedon was gradually bringing all of Greece under the Macedonian sphere of influence and anyone with a strong Macedonian connection was likely to be suspect, especially in Athens. Thus, for the next few years Aristotle traveled, becoming at one point tutor to a number of the sons of the Macedonian aristocracy, including Philip II's young son Alexander, later to be known simply as Alexander the Great! There is also some evidence that Aristotle acted, on occasion, as emissary for the Macedonian court, thus gaining first-hand knowledge of the politics and international affairs of his own day. Eventually, however, Aristotle returned to Athens and established his own school, called the Lyceum – often called also the *peripatos*, because of Aristotle's habit of lecturing while striding up and down (and hence our term peripatetic) – and composed most of the *Corpus Aristotelicum* (the works of Aristotle) as we have it today, including those most to do with politics and international affairs: the *Nichomachean Ethics* (so called because they were dedicated to Aristotle's son, called Nichomachus after Aristotle's father), *The Politics*, and the *Rhetoric*. However, Aristotle clearly retained his links with Macedon – Antipater, Alexander's regent in Greece when he embarked on the Persian war, was a close friend – and when, in 323, Alexander died, there was a general anti-Macedonian uprising throughout

Greece, and especially in Athens, Aristotle prudently withdrew to the city of Calchis on the island of Euboa, remarking, in a reference to Athens' execution of Socrates, that he did not wish Athens to sin twice against philosophy. He died there the following year, at the age of sixty-two.

From *The Politics*

Book 1, chs. 1-6

1 . Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for everyone always acts in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.

Some people think that the qualifications of a statesman, king, household, and master are the same, and that they differ, not in kind, but only in the number of their subjects. For example, the ruler over a few is called a master; over more, the manager of a household; over a still larger number, a statesman or king, as if there were no difference between a great household and a small state. The distinction which is made between the king and the statesman is as follows: When the government is personal, the ruler is a king; when, according to the rules of the political science, the citizens rule and are ruled in turn, then he is called a statesman.

But all this is a mistake, as will be evident to any one who considers the matter according to the method which has hitherto guided us. As in other departments of science, so in politics, the compound should always be resolved into the simple elements or least parts of the whole. We must therefore look at the elements of which the state is composed, in order that we may see in what the different kinds of rule differ from one another, and whether any scientific result can be attained about each one of them.

2 . He who thus considers things in their first growth and origin, whether a state or anything else, will obtain the clearest view of them. In the first place there must be a union of those who cannot exist without each other; namely, of male and female, that the race may continue (and this is a union which is formed, not of choice, but because, in common with other animals and with plants, mankind have a natural desire to leave behind them an image of themselves), and of natural ruler and subject, that both may be preserved. For that which can foresee by the exercise of mind is by nature lord and master,

and that which can with its body give effect to such foresight is a subject, and by nature a slave; hence master and slave have the same interest. Now nature has distinguished between the female and slave. For she is not niggardly, like the smith who fashions the Delphian knife for many uses; she makes each thing for a single use, and every instrument is best made when intended for one and not for many uses. But among barbarians no distinction is made between women and slaves, because there is no natural ruler among them: they are a community of slaves, male and female. That is why the poets say, —

It is meet that Hellenes should rule over barbarians;

as if they thought that the barbarian and the slave were by nature one.

Out of these two relationships the first thing to arise is the family, and Hesiod is right when he says, —

First house and wife and an ox for the plough,

for the ox is the poor man's slave. The family is the association established by nature for the supply of men's everyday wants, and the members of it are called by Charondas, 'companions of the cup-board', and by Epimenides the Cretan, 'companions of the manager'. But when several families are united, and the association aims at something more than the supply of daily needs, the first society to be formed is the village. And the most natural form of the village appears to be that of a colony from the family, composed of the children and grandchildren, who are said to be 'suckled with the same milk'. And this is the reason why Hellenic states were originally governed by kings; because the Hellenes were under royal rule before they came together, as the barbarians still are. Every family is ruled by the eldest, and therefore in the colonies of the family the kingly form of government prevailed because they were of the same blood. As Homer says:

Each one gives law to his children and to his wives.

For they lived dispersedly, as was the manner in ancient times. That is why men say that the Gods have a king, because they themselves either are or were in ancient times under the rule of a king. For they imagine not only the forms of the Gods but their ways of life to be like their own.

When several villages are united in a single complete community, large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing, the state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life. And therefore, if the earlier forms of society are natural, so is the state, for it is the end of them, and the nature of a thing is its end. For what each thing is when fully developed, we call its nature, whether we are speaking of a man, a horse, or a family. Besides, the final cause and end of a thing is the best, and to be self-sufficing is the end and the best.

Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity; he is like the Tribeless, lawless, hearthless one,

5 whom Homer denounces – the natural outcast is forthwith a lover of war; he may be compared to an isolated piece at draughts.

Now, that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal who has the gift of speech. And whereas men's voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals (for their nature attains to the perception of pleasure and pain and the intimation of them to one another, and no further), the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state.

Further, the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except homonymously, as we might speak of a stone hand; for when destroyed the hand will be no better than that. But things are defined by their function and power; and we ought not to say that they are the same when they no longer have their proper quality, but only that they are homonymous. The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state. A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and yet he who first founded the state was the greatest of benefactors. For man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all; since armed injustice is the more dangerous, and he is equipped at birth with arms, meant to be used by intelligence and excellence, which he may use for the worst ends. That is why, if he has not excellence, he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals, and the most full of lust and gluttony. But justice is the bond of men in states; for the administration of justice, which is the determination of what is just, is the principle of order in political society.

1253^b1 3 . Seeing then that the state is made up of households, before speaking of the state we must speak of the management of the household. The parts of household management correspond to the persons who compose the

household, and a complete household consists of slaves and freemen. Now we should begin by examining everything in its fewest possible elements; and the first and fewest possible parts of a family are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children. We have therefore to consider what each of these three relations is and ought to be: – I mean the relation of master and servant, the marriage relation (the conjunction of man and wife has no name of its own), and thirdly, the paternal relation (this also has no proper name). And there is another element of a household, the so-called art of getting wealth, which, according to some, is identical with household management, according to others, a principal part of it; the nature of this art will also have to be considered by us.

Let us first speak of master and slave, looking to our needs of practical life and also seeking to attain some better theory of their relation than exists at present. For some are of the opinion that the rule of a master is a science, and that the management of a household, and the mastership of slaves, and the political and royal rule, as I was saying at the outset, are all the same. Others affirm that the rule of a master over slaves is contrary to nature, and that the distinction between slave and freeman exists by convention only, and not by nature; and being an interference with nature is therefore unjust.

Property is a part of the household, and the art of acquiring property is a part of the art of managing the household; for no man can live well, or indeed live at all, unless he is provided with necessaries. And as in the arts which have a definite sphere the workers must have their own proper instruments for the accomplishment of their work, so it is in the management of a household. Now instruments are of various sorts; some are living, others lifeless; in the rudder, the pilot of a ship has a lifeless, in the look-out man, a living instrument; for in the arts the servant is a kind of instrument. Thus, too, a possession is an instrument for maintaining life. And so, in the arrangement of the family, a slave is a living possession, and property a number of such instruments; and the servant is himself an instrument for instruments. For if every instrument could accomplish its own work, obeying or anticipating the will of others, like the statues of Daedalus, or the tripods of Hephaestus, which, says the poet,

of their own accord entered the assembly of the Gods;

in like manner, the shuttle would weave and the plectrum touch the lyre, chief workmen would not want servants, nor masters slaves. Now the instruments commonly so called are instruments of production, whilst a possession is an instrument of action. From a shuttle we get something else besides the use of it, whereas of a garment or of a bed there is only the use. Further, as production and action are different in kind, and both require

1254^a1

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instruments, the instruments which they employ must likewise differ in kind. But life is action and not production, and therefore the slave is the minister of action. Again, a possession is spoken of as a part is spoken of; for the part is not only a part of something else, but wholly belongs to it; and this is also true of a possession. The master is only the master of the slave; he does not belong to him, whereas the slave is not only the slave of his master, but wholly belongs to him. Hence we see what is the nature and office of a slave: he who is by nature not his own but another's man, is by nature a slave; and he may be said to be another's man who, being a slave, is also a possession. And a possession may be defined as an instrument of action, separable from the possessor.

.5 . But is there any one thus intended by nature to be a slave, and for whom such a condition is expedient and right, or rather is not all slavery a violation of nature?

20 There is no difficulty in answering this question, on grounds both of reason and of fact. For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule.

25 And there are many kinds both of rulers and subjects (and that rule is the better which is exercised over better subjects – for example, to rule over men is better than to rule over wild beasts; for the work is better which is executed by better workmen, and where one man rules and another is ruled, they may be said to have a work); for in all things which form a composite whole and which are made up of parts, whether continuous or discrete, a distinction between the ruling and the subject element comes to light. Such a duality exists in living creatures, originating from nature as a whole; even in things which have no life there is a ruling principle, as in a musical mode. But perhaps this is matter for a more popular investigation. A living creature consists in the first place of soul and body, and of these two, the one is by nature the ruler and the other the subject. But then we must look for the intentions of nature in things which retain their nature, and not in things which are corrupted. And therefore we must study the man who is in the most perfect state both of body and soul, for in him we shall see the true relation of the two: although in bad or corrupted natures the body will often appear to rule over the soul, because they are in an evil and unnatural condition. At all events we may firstly observe in living creatures both a despotal and a constitutional rule; for the soul rules the body with a despotal rule, whereas the intellect rules the appetites with a constitutional and royal rule. And it is clear that the rule of the soul over the body, and of the mind and the rational element over the passionate, is natural and expedient; whereas the equality of the two or the rule of the inferior is

1254^b1

always hurtful. The same holds good of animals in relation to men; for tame 10
 animals have a better nature than wild and all tame animals are better off
 when they are ruled by man; for then they are preserved. Again, the male is
 by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is
 ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind. Where then there 15
 is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and an-
 imals (as in the case of those whose business is to use their body, and who
 can do nothing better), the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better 20
 for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master.
 For he who can be, and therefore is, another's, and he who participates in
 reason enough to apprehend, but not to have, is a slave by nature. Whereas
 the lower animals cannot even apprehend reason, they obey their passions.
 And indeed the use made of slaves and of tame animals is not very different; 25
 for both with their bodies minister to the needs of life. Nature would like
 to distinguish between the bodies of freemen and slaves, making the one
 strong for servile labour, the other upright, and although useless for such
 services, useful for political life in the arts both of war and peace. But the 30
 opposite often happens – that some have the souls and others have the bodies
 of freemen. And doubtless if men differed from one another in the mere
 forms of their bodies as much as the statues of the Gods do from men, all 35
 would acknowledge that the inferior class should be slaves of the superior.
 And if this is true of the body, how much more just that a similar distinction
 should exist in the soul? But the beauty of the body is seen, whereas the
 beauty of the soul is not seen. It is clear, then, that some men are by nature 1255^a1
 free, and others slaves; and that for these latter slavery is both expedient
 and right.

6. But that those who take the opposite view have in a certain way right on
 their side, may be easily seen. For the words slavery and slave are used in two 5
 senses. There is a slave or slavery by convention as well as by nature. The con-
 vention is a sort of agreement – the convention by which whatever is taken in
 war is supposed to belong to the victors. But this right many jurists impeach,
 as they would an orator who brought forward an unconstitutional measure:
 they detest the notion that, because one man has the power of doing vio-
 lence and is superior in brute strength, another shall be his slave and subject. 10
 Even among philosophers there is a difference of opinion. The origin of the
 dispute, and what makes the views invade each other's territory, is as follows: in
 some sense excellence, when furnished with means, has actually the greatest
 power of exercising force: and as superior power is only found where there is 15
 superior excellence of some kind, power seems to imply excellence, and the
 dispute to be simply one about justice (for it is due to one party identifying
 justice with goodwill, while the other identifies it with the mere rule of the

20 stronger). If these views are thus set out separately, the other views have no
 force or plausibility against the view that the superior in excellence ought
 to rule, or be master. Others, clinging, as they think, simply to a principle of
 justice (for convention is a sort of justice), assume that slavery in accordance
 with the custom of war is just, but at the same moment they deny this. For
 25 what if the cause of the war be unjust? And again, no one would ever say that
 he is a slave who is unworthy to be a slave. Were this the case, men of the
 highest rank would be slaves and the children of slaves if they or their parents
 chanced to have been taken captive and sold. That is why people do not like
 to call themselves slaves, but confine the term to foreigners. Yet, in using this
 30 language, they really mean the natural slave of whom we spoke at first; for it
 must be admitted that some are slaves everywhere, others nowhere. The same
 principle applies to nobility. People regard themselves as noble everywhere,
 and not only in their own country, but they deem foreigners noble only when
 35 at home, thereby implying that there are two sorts of nobility and freedom,
 the one absolute, the other relative. The Helen of Theodectes says:

Who would presume to call me servant who am on both sides sprung from the stem
 of the Gods?

1255^b1 What does this mean but that they distinguish freedom and slavery, noble
 and humble birth, by the two principles of good and evil? They think that
 as men and animals beget men and animals, so from good men a good man
 springs. Nature intends to do this often but cannot.

5 We see then that there is some foundation for this difference of opinion,
 and that all are not either slaves by nature or freemen by nature, and also that
 there is in some cases a marked distinction between the two classes, rendering
 it expedient and right for the one to be slaves and the others to be masters:
 the one practising obedience, the other exercising the authority and lordship
 which nature intended them to have. The abuse of this authority is injurious
 10 to both: for the interests of part and whole, of body and soul, are the same,
 and the slave is a part of the master, a living but separated part of his bodily
 frame. Hence, where the relation of master and slave between them is natural
 they are friends and have a common interest, but where it rests merely on
 15 convention and force the reverse is true.

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Book 3, chs. 6–12

6 . Having determined these questions, we have next to consider whether
 there is only one form of government or many, and if many, what they are,
 and how many, and what are the differences between them.

A constitution is the arrangement of magistracies in a state, especially of the highest of all. The government is everywhere sovereign in the state, and the constitution is in fact the government. For example, in democracies the people are supreme, but in oligarchies, the few; and, therefore, we say that these two constitutions also are different: and so in other cases.

First, let us consider what is the purpose of a state, and how many forms of rule there are by which human society is regulated. We have already said, in the first part of this treatise, when discussing household management and the rule of a master, that man is by nature a political animal. And therefore, men, even when they do not require one another's help, desire to live together; not but that they are also brought together by their common interests in so far as they each attain to any measure of well-being. This is certainly the chief end, both of individuals and of states. And mankind meet together and maintain the political community also for the sake of mere life (in which there is possibly some noble element so long as the evils of existence do not greatly overbalance the good). And we all see that men cling to life even at the cost of enduring great misfortune, seeming to find in life a natural sweetness and happiness.

There is no difficulty in distinguishing the various kinds of rule; they have been often defined already in our popular discussions. The rule of a master, although the slave by nature and the master by nature have in reality the same interests, is nevertheless exercised primarily with a view to the interest of the master, but accidentally considers the slave, since, if the slave perish, the rule of the master perishes with him. On the other hand, the government of a wife and children and of a household, which we have called household management, is exercised in the first instance for the good of the governed or for the common good of both parties, but essentially for the good of the governed, as we see to be the case in medicine, gymnastic, and the arts in general, which are only accidentally concerned with the good of the artists themselves. For there is no reason why the trainer may not sometimes practise gymnastics, and the helmsman is always one of the crew. The trainer or the helmsman considers the good of those committed to his care. But, when he is one of the persons taken care of, he accidentally participates in the advantage, for the helmsman is also a sailor, and the trainer becomes one of those in training. And so in politics: when the state is framed upon the principle of equality and likeness, the citizens think that they ought to hold office by turns. Formerly, as is natural, everyone would take his turn of service; and then again, somebody else would look after his interest, just as he, while in office, had looked after theirs. But nowadays, for the sake of the advantage which is to be gained from the public revenues and from office, men want to be always in office. One might imagine that the rulers, being sickly, were only kept in health while they continued in office;

in that case we may be sure that they would be hunting after places. The conclusion is evident: that governments which have a regard to the common interest are constituted in accordance with strict principles of justice, and are therefore true forms; but those which regard only the interest of the rulers are all defective and perverted forms, for they are despotic, whereas a state is a community of freemen.

7 . Having determined these points, we have next to consider how many forms of government there are, and what they are; and in the first place what are the true forms, for when they are determined the perversions of them will at once be apparent. The words constitution and government have the same meaning, and the government, which is the supreme authority in states, must be in the hands of one, or of a few, or of the many. The true forms of government, therefore, are those in which the one, or the few, or the many, govern with a view to the common interest; but governments which rule with a view to the private interest, whether of the one, or of the few, or of the many, are perversions. For the members of a state, if they are truly citizens, ought to participate in its advantages. Of forms of government in which one rules, we call that which regards the common interest, kingship; that in which more than one, but not many, rule, aristocracy; and it is so called, either because the rulers are the best men, or because they have at heart the best interests of the state and of the citizens. But when the many administer the state for the common interest, the government is called by the generic name – a constitution. And there is a reason for this use of language. One man or a few may excel in excellence; but as the number increases it becomes more difficult for them to attain perfection in every kind of excellence, though they may in military excellence, for this is found in the masses. Hence in a constitutional government the fighting-men have the supreme power, and those who possess arms are the citizens.

Of the above-mentioned forms, the perversions are as follows: – of kingship, tyranny; of aristocracy, oligarchy; of constitutional government, democracy. For tyranny is a kind of monarchy which has in view the interest of the monarch only; oligarchy has in view the interest of the wealthy; democracy, of the needy: none of them the common good of all.

8 . But there are difficulties about these forms of government, and it will therefore be necessary to state a little more at length the nature of each of them. For he who would make a philosophical study of the various sciences, and is not only concerned with practice, ought not to overlook or omit anything, but to set forth the truth in every particular. Tyranny, as I was saying, is monarchy exercising the rule of a master over the political society; oligarchy is when men of property have the government in their hands; democracy, the

opposite, when the indigent, and not the men of property, are the rulers. And here arises the first of our difficulties, and it relates to the distinction just drawn. For democracy is said to be the government of the many. But what if the many are men of property and have the power in their hands? In like manner oligarchy is said to be the government of the few; but what if the poor are fewer than the rich, and have the power in their hands because they are stronger? In these cases the distinction which we have drawn between these different forms of government would no longer hold good.

Suppose, once more, that we add wealth to the few and poverty to the many, and name the governments accordingly – an oligarchy is said to be that in which the few and the wealthy, and a democracy that in which the many and the poor are the rulers – there will still be a difficulty. For, if the only forms of government are the ones already mentioned, how shall we describe those other governments also just mentioned by us, in which the rich are the more numerous and the poor are the fewer, and both govern in their respective states?

The argument seems to show that, whether in oligarchies or in democracies, the number of the governing body, whether the greater number, as in a democracy, or the smaller number, as in an oligarchy, is an accident due to the fact that the rich everywhere are few, and the poor numerous. But if so, there is a misapprehension of the causes of the difference between them. For the real difference between democracy and oligarchy is poverty and wealth. Wherever men rule by reason of their wealth, whether they be few or many, that is an oligarchy, and where the poor rule, that is a democracy. But in fact the rich are few and the poor many; for few are well-to-do, whereas freedom is enjoyed by all, and wealth and freedom are the grounds on which the two parties claim power in the state.

9. Let us begin by considering the common definitions of oligarchy and democracy, and what is oligarchical and democratic justice. For all men cling to justice of some kind, but their conceptions are imperfect and they do not express the whole idea. For example, justice is thought by them to be, and is, equality – not, however, for all, but only for equals. And inequality is thought to be, and is, justice; neither is this for all, but only for unequals. When the persons are omitted, then men judge erroneously. The reason is that they are passing judgement on themselves, and most people are bad judges in their own case. And whereas justice implies a relation to persons as well as to things, and a just distribution, as I have already said in the *Ethics*, implies the same ratio between the persons and between the things, they agree about the equality of the things, but dispute about the equality of the persons, chiefly for the reason which I have just given – because they are bad judges in their own affairs; and secondly, because both the parties to the

argument are speaking of a limited and partial justice, but imagine themselves to be speaking of absolute justice. For the one party, if they are unequal in one respect, for example wealth, consider themselves to be unequal in all; and the other party, if they are equal in one respect, for example free birth, consider themselves to be equal in all. But they leave out the capital point. For if men met and associated out of regard to wealth only, their share in the state would be proportioned to their property, and the oligarchical doctrine would then seem to carry the day. It would not be just that he who paid one mina should have the same share of a hundred minae, whether of the principal or of the profits, as he who paid the remaining ninety-nine. But a state exists for the sake of a good life, and not for the sake of life only: if life only were the object, slaves and brute animals might form a state, but they cannot, for they have no share in happiness or in a life based on choice. Nor does a state exist for the sake of alliance and security from injustice, nor yet for the sake of exchange and mutual intercourse; for then the Tyrrhenians and the Carthaginians, and all who have commercial treaties with one another, would be the citizens of one state. True, they have agreements about imports, and engagements that they will do no wrong to one another, and written articles of alliance. But there are no magistracies common to the contracting parties; different states have each their own magistracies. Nor does one state take care that the citizens of the other are such as they ought to be, nor see that those who come under the terms of the treaty do no wrong or wickedness at all, but only that they do no injustice to one another. Whereas, those who care for good government take into consideration political excellence and defect. Whence it may be further inferred that excellence must be the care of a state which is truly so called, and not merely enjoys the name: for without this end the community becomes a mere alliance which differs only in place from alliances of which the members live apart; and law is only a convention, 'a surety to one another of justice', as the sophist Lycophron says, and has no real power to make the citizens good and just.

This is obvious; for suppose distinct places, such as Corinth and Megara, to be brought together so that their walls touched, still they would not be one city, not even if the citizens had the right to intermarry, which is one of the rights peculiarly characteristic of states. Again, if men dwelt at a distance from one another, but not so far off as to have no intercourse, and there were laws among them that they should not wrong each other in their exchanges, neither would this be a state. Let us suppose that one man is a carpenter, another a farmer, another a shoemaker, and so on, and that their number is ten thousand: nevertheless if they have nothing in common but exchange, alliance, and the like, that would not constitute a state. Why is this? Surely not because they are at a distance from one another; for even supposing that

such a community were to meet in one place, but that each man had a house
of his own, which was in a manner his state, and that they made alliance with
one another, but only against evil-doers; still an accurate thinker would not
deem this to be a state, if their intercourse with one another was of the same
character after as before their union. It is clear then that a state is not a mere
society, having a common place, established for the prevention of mutual
crime and for the sake of exchange. These are conditions without which a
state cannot exist; but all of them together do not constitute a state, which
is a community of families and aggregations of families in well-being, for
the sake of a perfect and self-sufficing life. Such a community can only be
established among those who live in the same place and intermarry. Hence
there arise in cities family connexions, brotherhoods, common sacrifices,
amusements which draw men together. But these are created by friendship,
for to choose to live together is friendship. The end of the state is the good
life, and these are the means towards it. And the state is the union of families
and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and
honourable life. 25 30 35 40 1281^a1

Our conclusion, then, is that political society exists for the sake of noble
actions, and not of living together. Hence they who contribute most to such
a society have a greater share in it than those who have the same or a greater
freedom or nobility of birth but are inferior to them in political excellence;
or than those who exceed them in wealth but are surpassed by them in
excellence. 5

From what has been said it will be clearly seen that all the partisans of
different forms of government speak of a part of justice only. 10

There is also a doubt as to what is to be the supreme power in the state:—
is it the multitude? Or the wealthy? Or the good? Or the one best man? Or a
tyrant? Any of these alternatives seems to involve disagreeable consequences.
If the poor, for example, because they are more in number, divide among
themselves the property of the rich — is not this unjust? No, by heaven (will be
the reply), for the supreme authority justly willed it. But if this is not extreme
injustice, what is? Again, when in the first division all has been taken, and the
majority divide anew the property of the minority, is it not evident, if this goes
on, that they will ruin the state? Yet surely, excellence is not the ruin of those
who possess it, nor is justice destructive of a state; and therefore this law of
confiscation clearly cannot be just. If it were, all the acts of a tyrant must of
necessity be just; for he only coerces other men by superior power, just as
the multitude coerce the rich. But is it just then that the few and the wealthy
should be the rulers? And what if they, in like manner, rob and plunder the
people — is this just? If so, the other case will likewise be just. But there can
be no doubt that all these things are wrong and unjust. 15 20 25

30 Then ought the good to rule and have supreme power? But in that case everybody else, being excluded from power, will be dishonoured. For the offices of a state are posts of honour; and if one set of men always hold them, the rest must be deprived of them. Then will it be well that the one best man should rule? That is still more oligarchical, for the number of those who
35 are dishonoured is thereby increased. Someone may say that it is bad in any case for a man, subject as he is to all the accidents of human passion, to have the supreme power, rather than the law. But what if the law itself be democratic or oligarchical, how will that help us out of our difficulties? Not at all; the same consequences will follow.

11 . Most of these questions may be reserved for another occasion. The principle that the multitude ought to be in power rather than the few best might
40 seem to be solved and to contain some difficulty and perhaps even truth. For the many, of whom each individual is not a good man, when they meet together may be better than the few good, if regarded not individually but
1281^b1 collectively, just as a feast to which many contribute is better than a dinner provided out of a single purse. For each individual among the many has a
5 share of excellence and practical wisdom, and when they meet together, just as they become in a manner one man, who has many feet, and hands, and senses, so too with regard to their character and thought. Hence the many are better judges than a single man of music and poetry; for some understand one part, and some another, and among them they understand the whole.
10 There is a similar combination of qualities in good men, who differ from any individual of the many, as the beautiful are said to differ from those who are not beautiful, and works of art from realities, because in them the scattered elements are combined, although, if taken separately, the eye of one person or some other feature in another person would be fairer than in the picture. Whether this principle can apply to every democracy, and to all bodies
15 of men, is not clear. Or rather, by heaven, in some cases it is impossible to apply; for the argument would equally hold about brutes; and wherein, it will be asked, do some men differ from brutes? But there may be bodies of men about whom our statement is nevertheless true. And if so, the difficulty which has been already raised, and also another which is akin to it – viz. what
25 power should be assigned to the mass of freemen and citizens, who are not rich and have no personal merit – are both solved. There is still a danger in allowing them to share the great offices of state, for their folly will lead them into error, and their dishonesty into crime. But there is a danger also in not
30 letting them share, for a state in which many poor men are excluded from office will necessarily be full of enemies. The only way of escape is to assign to them some deliberative and judicial functions. For this reason Solon and certain other legislators give them the power of electing to offices, and of

calling the magistrates to account, but they do not allow them to hold office singly. When they meet together their perceptions are quite good enough, and combined with the better class they are useful to the state (just as impure food when mixed with what is pure sometimes makes the entire mass more wholesome than a small quantity of the pure would be), but each individual, left to himself, forms an imperfect judgement. On the other hand the popular form of government involves certain difficulties. In the first place, it might be objected that he who can judge of the healing of a sick man would be one who could himself heal his disease, and make him whole – that is, in other words, the physician; and so in all professions and arts. As, then, the physician ought to be called to account by physicians, so ought men in general to be called to account by their peers. But physicians are of three kinds: – there is the ordinary practitioner, and there is the master physician, and thirdly the man educated in the art: in all arts there is such a class; and we attribute the power of judging to them quite as much as to professors of the art. Secondly, does not the same principle apply to elections? For a right election can only be made by those who have knowledge; those who know geometry, for example, will choose a geometrician rightly, and those who know how to steer, a pilot; and, even if there be some occupations and arts in which private persons share in the ability to choose, they certainly cannot choose better than those who know. So that, according to this argument, neither the election of magistrates, nor the calling of them to account, should be entrusted to the many. Yet possibly these objections are to a great extent met by our old answer, that if the people are not utterly degraded, although individually they may be worse judges than those who have special knowledge, as a body they are as good or better. Moreover, there are some arts whose products are not judged of solely, or best, by the artists themselves, namely those arts whose products are recognized even by those who do not possess the art; for example, the knowledge of the house is not limited to the builder only; the user, or, in other words, the master, of the house will actually be a better judge than the builder, just as the pilot will judge better of a rudder than the carpenter, and the guest will judge better of a feast than the cook.

This difficulty seems now to be sufficiently answered, but there is another akin to it. That inferior persons should have authority in greater matters than the good would appear to be a strange thing, yet the election and calling to account of the magistrates is the greatest of all. And these, as I was saying, are functions which in some states are assigned to the people, for the assembly is supreme in all such matters. Yet persons of any age, and having but a small property qualification, sit in the assembly and deliberate and judge, although for the great officers of state, such as treasurers and generals, a high qualification is required. This difficulty may be solved in the same manner as the preceding, and the present practice of democracies may be really

defensible. For the power does not reside in the juryman, or counsellor, or
 35 member of the assembly, but in the court, and the council, and the assembly
 of which the aforesaid individuals – counsellor, assemblyman, juryman – are
 only parts or members. And for this reason the many may claim to have a
 higher authority than the few; for the people, and the council, and the court
 40 consist of many persons, and their property collectively is greater than the
 property of one or of a few individuals holding great offices. But enough of
 this.

1282^b1 The discussion of the first question shows nothing so clearly as that
 laws, when good, should be supreme; and that the magistrate or magistratus
 should regulate those matters only on which the laws are unable to speak
 5 with precision owing to the difficulty of any general principle embracing
 all particulars. But what are good laws has not yet been clearly explained.
 The old difficulty remains. The goodness or badness, justice or injustice
 of laws varies of necessity with the constitutions of states. This, however
 10 is clear, that the laws must be adapted to the constitutions. But, if so, true
 forms of government will of necessity have just laws, and perverted forms of
 government will have unjust laws.

15 12. In all sciences and arts the end is a good, and the greatest good and in the
 highest degree a good in the most authoritative of all – this is the political
 science of which the good is justice, in other words, the common interest. All
 men think justice to be a sort of equality; and to a certain extent they agree
 20 with what we have said in our philosophical works about ethics. For they say
 that what is just is just *for* someone and that it should be equal for equals.
 But there still remains a question: equality or inequality of what? Here is a
 difficulty which calls for political speculation. For very likely some persons
 will say that offices of state ought to be unequally distributed according to
 superior excellence, in whatever respect, of the citizen, although there is
 25 no other difference between him and the rest of the community; for those
 who differ in any one respect have different rights and claims. But, surely, if
 this is true, the complexion or height of a man, or any other advantage, will
 30 be a reason for his obtaining a greater share of political rights. The error here
 lies upon the surface, and may be illustrated from the other arts and sciences.
 When a number of flute-players are equal in their art, there is no reason why
 those of them who are better born should have better flutes given to them;
 for they will not play any better on the flute, and the superior instrument
 should be reserved for him who is the superior artist. If what I am saying is
 35 still obscure, it will be made clearer as we proceed. For if there were a superior
 flute-player who was far inferior in birth and beauty, although either of these
 40 may be a greater good than the art of flute-playing and may excel flute-
 playing in a greater ratio than he excels the others in his art, still he ought to

have the best flutes given to him, unless the advantages of wealth and birth 1283^a1
 contribute to excellence in flute-playing, which they do not. Moreover, upon
 this principle any good may be compared with any other. For if a given height
 may be measured against wealth and against freedom, height in general may 5
 also be measured. Thus if A excels in height more than B in excellence, even if
 excellence in general excels height still more, all goods will be comparable;
 for if a certain amount is better than some other, it is clear that some other
 will be equal. But since no such comparison can be made, it is evident that
 there is good reason why in politics men do not ground their claim to office 10
 on every sort of inequality. For if some be slow, and others swift, that is no
 reason why the one should have little and the others much; it is in gymnastic
 contests that such excellence is rewarded. Whereas the rival claims of candi- 15
 dates for office can only be based on the possession of elements which enter
 into the composition of a state. And therefore the well-born, or free-born,
 or rich, may with good reason claim office; for holders of offices must be
 freemen and tax-payers: a state can be no more composed entirely of poor 20
 men than entirely of slaves. But if wealth and freedom are necessary ele-
 ments, justice and valour are equally so; for without the former qualities a
 state cannot exist at all, without the latter not well.

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Book 7, chs. 1-3

He who would duly inquire about the best form of a state ought first to 15
 determine which is the most eligible life; while this remains uncertain the
 best form of the state must also be uncertain; for, in the natural order of
 things, those men may be expected to lead the best life who are governed
 in the best manner of which their circumstances admit. We ought therefore
 to ascertain, first of all, which is the most generally eligible life, and then 20
 whether the same life is or is not best for the state and for individuals.

Assuming that enough has been already said in discussions outside the
 school concerning the best life, we will now only repeat what is contained
 in them. Certainly no one will dispute the propriety of that partition of
 goods which separates them into three classes, viz. external goods, goods 25
 of the body, and goods of the soul, or deny that the happy man must have
 all three. For no one would maintain that he is happy who has not in him
 a particle of courage or temperance or justice or practical wisdom, who is
 afraid of every insect which flutters past him, and will commit any crime, 30
 however great, in order to gratify his lust for meat or drink, who will sacrifice
 his dearest friend for the sake of half a farthing, and is as feeble and false
 in mind as a child or a madman. These propositions are almost universally

35 acknowledged as soon as they are uttered, but men differ about the degree
 or relative superiority of this or that good. Some think that a very moderate
 amount of excellence is enough, but set no limit to their desires for wealth,
 property, power, reputation, and the like. To them we shall reply by an appeal
 40 to facts, which easily prove that mankind does not acquire or preserve the
 excellences by the help of external goods, but external goods by the help of the
 1323^b1 excellences, and that happiness, whether consisting in pleasure or excellence
 or both, is more often found with those who are most highly cultivated in
 their mind and in their character, and have only a moderate share of external
 5 goods, than among those who possess external goods to a useless extent but
 are deficient in higher qualities; and this is not only a matter of experience,
 but, if reflected upon, will easily appear to be in accordance with reason. For
 whereas external goods have a limit, like any other instrument, and all things
 useful are useful for a purpose, and where there is too much of them they
 10 must either do harm, or at any rate be of no use, to their possessors, even
 good of the soul, the greater it is, is also of greater use, if the epithet useful
 as well as noble is appropriate to such subjects. No proof is required to show
 that the best state of one thing in relation to another corresponds in degree
 15 of excellence to the interval between the natures of which we say that these
 very states are states: so that, if the soul is more noble than our possessions
 or our bodies, both absolutely and in relation to us, it must be admitted that
 the best state of either has a similar ratio to the other. Again, it is for the sake
 of the soul that goods external and goods of the body are desirable at all, and
 20 all wise men ought to choose them for the sake of the soul, and not the soul
 for the sake of them.

Let us acknowledge then that each one has just so much of happiness
 as he has of excellence and wisdom, and of excellent and wise action. The
 gods are a witness to us of this truth, for they are happy and blessed, not
 by reason of any external good, but in themselves and by reason of their
 25 own nature. And herein of necessity lies the difference between good for-
 tune and happiness; for external goods come of themselves, and chance is
 the author of them, but no one is just or temperate by or through chance.
 30 In like manner, and by a similar train of argument, the happy state may be
 shown to be that which is best and which acts rightly; and it cannot act
 rightly without doing right actions, and neither individual nor state can
 do right actions without excellence and wisdom. Thus, the courage, jus-
 35 tice, and wisdom of a state have the same form and nature as the qualities
 which give the individual who possesses them the name of just, wise or
 temperate.

Thus much may suffice by way of preface: for I could not avoid touching
 upon these questions, neither could I go through all the arguments affecting
 them; these are the business of another science.

Let us assume then that the best life, both for individuals and states, is the life of excellence, when excellence has external goods enough for the performance of good actions. If there are any who dispute our assertion, we will in this treatise pass them over, and consider their objections hereafter.

There remains to be discussed the question, whether the happiness of the individual is the same as that of the state, or different. Here again there can be no doubt – no one denies that they are the same. For those who hold that the well-being of the individual consists in his wealth, also think that riches make the happiness of the whole state, and those who value most highly the life of a tyrant deem that city the happiest which rules over the greatest number; while they who approve an individual for his excellence say that the more excellent a city is, the happier it is. Two points here present themselves for consideration: first, which is the more desirable life, that of a citizen who is a member of a state, or that of an alien who has no political ties; and again, which is the best form of constitution or the best condition of a state, either on the supposition that political privileges are desirable for all, or for a majority only? Since the good of the state and not of the individual is the proper subject of political thought and speculation, and we are engaged in a political discussion, while the first of these two points has a secondary interest for us, the latter will be the main subject of our inquiry.

Now it is evident that that form of government is best in which every man, whoever he is, can act best and live happily. But even those who agree in thinking that the life of excellence is the most desirable raise a question, whether the life of business and politics is or is not more desirable than one which is wholly independent of external goods, I mean than a contemplative life, which by some is maintained to be the only one worthy of a philosopher. For these two lives – the life of the philosopher and the life of the statesman – appear to have been preferred by those who have been most keen in the pursuit of excellence, both in our own and in other ages. Which is the better is a question of no small amount; for the wise man, like the wise state, will necessarily regulate his life according to the best end. There are some who think that while a despotic rule over others is the greatest injustice, to exercise a constitutional rule over them, even though not unjust, is a great impediment to a man's individual well-being. Others take an opposite view; they maintain that the true life of man is the practical and political, and that every excellence admits of being practised, quite as much by statesmen and rulers as by private individuals. Others, again, are of the opinion that arbitrary and tyrannical rule alone makes for happiness; indeed, in some states the entire aim both of the laws and of the constitution is to give men despotic power over their neighbours. And, therefore, although in most cities the laws may be said generally to be in a chaotic state,

still, if they aim at anything, they aim at the maintenance of power: thus in Lacedaemon and Crete the system of education and the greater part of the laws are framed with a view to war. And in all nations which are able to gratify their ambition military power is held in esteem, for example among the Scythians and Persians and Thracians and Celts. In some nations there are even laws tending to stimulate the warlike virtues, as at Carthage, where we are told that men obtain the honour of wearing as many armlets as they have served campaigns. There was once a law in Macedonia that he who had not killed an enemy should wear a halter, and among the Scythians no one who had not slain his man was allowed to drink out of the cup which was handed round at a certain feast. Among the Iberians, a warlike nation, the number of enemies whom a man has slain is indicated by the number of obelisks which are fixed in the earth round his tomb; and there are numerous practices among other nations of a like kind, some of them established by law and others by custom. Yet to a reflecting mind it must appear very strange that the statesman should be always considering how he can dominate and tyrannize over others, whether they are willing or not. How can that which is not even lawful be the business of the statesman or the legislator? Unlawful it certainly is to rule without regard to justice, for there may be might where there is no right. The other arts and sciences offer no parallel; a physician is not expected to persuade or coerce his patients, nor a pilot the passengers in his ship. Yet most men appear to think that the art of despotic government is statesmanship, and what men affirm to be unjust and inexpedient in their own case they are not ashamed of practising towards others; they demand just rule for themselves, but where other men are concerned they care nothing about it. Such behaviour is irrational; unless the one party is, and the other is not, born to serve, in which case men have a right to command, not indeed all their fellows, but only those who are intended to be subjects; just as we ought not to hunt men, whether for food or sacrifice, but only those animals which may be hunted for food or sacrifice, that is to say, such wild animals as are eatable. And surely there may be a city happy in isolation, which we will assume to be well-governed (for it is quite possible that a city thus isolated might be well-administered and have good laws); but such a city would not be constituted with any view to war or the conquest of enemies – all that sort of thing must be excluded. Hence we see very plainly that warlike pursuits, although generally to be deemed honourable, are not the supreme end of all things, but only means. And the good lawgiver should inquire how states and races of men and communities may participate in a good life, and in the happiness which is attainable by them. His enactments will not be always the same; and where there are neighbours he will have to see what sort of studies should be practised in relation to their several characters, or how the measures appropriate in relation to each are to be

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adopted. The end at which the best form of government should aim may be properly made a matter of future consideration.

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3. Let us now address those who, while they agree that the life of excellence is the most desirable, differ about the manner of practising it. For some renounce political power, and think that the life of the freeman is different from the life of the statesman and the best of all; but others think the life of the statesman best. The argument of the latter is that he who does nothing cannot do well, and that acting well is identical with happiness. To both we say: 'you are partly right and partly wrong'. The first class are right in affirming that the life of the freeman is better than the life of the despot; for there is nothing noble in having the use of a slave, in so far as he is a slave; or in issuing commands about necessary things. But it is an error to suppose that every sort of rule is despotic like that of a master over slaves, for there is as great a difference between rule over freemen and rule over slaves as there is between slavery by nature and freedom by nature, about which I have said enough at the commencement of this treatise. And it is equally a mistake to place inactivity above action, for happiness is activity, and the actions of the just and wise are the realization of much that is noble.

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But perhaps someone, accepting these premises, may still maintain that supreme power is the best of all things, because the possessors of it are able to perform the greatest number of noble actions. If so, the man who is able to rule, instead of giving up anything to his neighbour, ought rather to take away his power; and the father should care nothing for his son, nor the son for his father, nor friend for friend; they should not bestow a thought on one another in comparison with this higher object, for the best is the most desirable and 'acting well' is the best. There might be some truth in such a view if we assume that robbers and plunderers attain the chief good. But this can never be; their hypothesis is false. For the actions of a ruler cannot really be honourable, unless he is as much superior to other men as a man is to a woman, or a father to his children, or a master to his slaves. And therefore he who violates the law can never recover by any success, however great, what he has already lost in departing from excellence. For equals the honourable and the just consist in sharing alike, as is just and equal. But that the unequal should be given to equals, and the unlike to those who are like, is contrary to nature, and nothing which is contrary to nature is good. If, therefore, there is anyone superior in excellence and in the power of performing the best actions, he is the man we ought to follow and obey, but he must have the capacity for action as well as excellence.

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If we are right in our view, and happiness is assumed to be acting well, the active life will be the best, both for every city collectively, and for individuals. Not that a life of action must necessarily have relation to others, as some

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persons think, nor are those ideas only to be regarded as practical which are
pursued for the sake of practical results, but much more the thoughts and
20 contemplations which are independent and complete in themselves; since
acting well, and therefore a certain kind of action, is an end, and even in the
case of external actions the directing mind is most truly said to act. Neither,
again, is it necessary that states which are cut off from others and choose to
25 live alone should be inactive; for activity, as well as other things, may take
place by sections; there are many ways in which the sections of a state act
upon one another. The same thing is equally true of every individual. If this
were otherwise, the gods and the universe, who have no external actions over
30 and above their own energies, would be far enough from perfection. Hence
it is evident that the same life is best for each individual, and for states and
for mankind collectively.

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