INFLUENCE OF ARISTOTLE'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY ON MODERN GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

Aristotle's political philosophy has had a significant impact on modern governance. It is a foundational work for comprehending the ideas of justice, citizenship, and the organisation of government. His work, especially Politics, highlights the significance of a mixed government that balances monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, as well as the function of the state in promoting human development. These concepts have had a major impact on contemporary constitutional frameworks, especially with regard to the importance of checks and balances, the rule of law, and civic engagement. Aristotle's theory of the "polis" emphasises the importance of the community in accomplishing the common good, which is similar to modern ideas about social contracts and participatory government. In addition, his categorisation of governments and insights into the dangers of tyranny and mob rule have helped shape the architecture of democratic institutions that place a high priority on stability and accountability. This study investigates the continued importance of Aristotle's concepts in today's political systems, looking at how they are incorporated into democratic government, legal frameworks, and civic ethics. Aristotle's philosophy continues to provide useful insights into solving difficulties such as inequality, corruption, and the role of technology in politics by linking classical ideas with current government.

Keywords: *Aristotle's, Political, Philosophy, Governance*

introduction

Aristotle, a prominent philosopher from ancient Greece, established the groundwork for political philosophy by thoroughly investigating the nature and purpose of governance. Politics, his most important book, is still a key reference for understanding how societies are organised, the role of governments, and the ideas that make governance efficient. Aristotle's ideas on justice, citizenship, and the balance of power create a timeless framework that continues to impact current political philosophy and institutional architecture. The concept of the "polis," or city-state, is central to Aristotle's philosophy. He believed that the polis was a natural and necessary part of living a decent life. His philosophy of government placed a strong emphasis on the necessity of communal well-being and the ethical obligations of both rulers and citizens. Aristotle's taxonomy of governments—monarchy, aristocracy, and polity, along with their corrupt counterparts—provides a more detailed knowledge of political systems and the dynamics of power. His assertion that the middle class is a stabilising factor in society has been reflected in modern views of democracy and social fairness. Modern government, which is based on democratic ideals, constitutional frameworks, and the rule of law, is greatly influenced by the ideas of Aristotle. Aristotle is the philosopher whose ideas are the foundation of the checks and balances in government, the significance

of civic involvement, and the pursuit of justice as a cornerstone of policy-making. This study examines how Aristotle's political theory has had a significant impact on modern government, emphasising its importance in dealing with current issues including inequality, corruption, and global collaboration. Aristotle's views continue to provide guidance for the development of political institutions that are both robust and ethical by connecting the past with the present.

Aristotle's political philosophy is notable for its practical and observational approach, which is based on the facts of human behaviour and the dynamics of society. Aristotle, in contrast to his master Plato, who imagined a perfect paradise in The Republic, concentrated on what is possible given the limitations of human nature and the political circumstances that now exist. Because of this practical viewpoint, his views may be applied to a variety of political situations, from ancient city-states to current nation-states. Aristotle's idea of "eudaimonia," which means human flourishing, is one of his most important contributions. He believed that it should be the ultimate purpose of governance. He maintained that a well-governed state must create circumstances for people to realise their greatest potential, combining personal liberties with communal obligations. This notion is reflected in contemporary democratic principles, in which governments work to guarantee that all citizens have access to individual rights, social fairness, and economic opportunity. In addition, the architecture of many current political systems is influenced by Aristotle's support for a hybrid constitution, which incorporates parts of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. His belief that concentrating power in one organisation leads to corruption and despotism is consistent with the idea of the separation of powers, which is a fundamental principle of democratic administration. His cautions concerning the perils of high inequality and the destabilising impacts of income imbalance continue to inspire policy debates in current democracies. Furthermore, Aristotle's belief that education and civic virtue are necessary for a stable and just society is similar to contemporary initiatives that aim to foster civic education and participatory government. Aristotle's views promote active citizenry and ethical leadership, which helps political institutions become more resilient and adaptable when faced with changing difficulties in society. This study examines how Aristotle's political philosophy continues to have an impact on current government. It looks at how this philosophy is used in democratic ideals, institutional architecture, and policy-making. It also looks at how Aristotle's ideas might be used to create a framework for dealing with urgent global problems like climate change, inequality, and the ethical use of technology in government. This investigation makes it clear how important Aristotelian thinking is in moulding today's political scene, highlighting its significance throughout history.

Aristotle's View of Politics

Political science examines the responsibilities of politicians and statesmen (politikos) in a manner similar to how medical science investigates the job of physicians (see Politics IV.1). In reality, it is the corpus of knowledge that these practitioners, if they are genuinely experts, will also use to carry out their work. The politician's most significant responsibility is to create a constitution for the city-state in their capacity as a lawmaker (nomothetês). This includes the citizens' ability to endure laws, norms, and institutions, which also includes a system of moral education. After the constitution is established, the politician must take the required steps to uphold it, implement revisions when he deems them essential, and avoid any events that might undermine the democratic system. According to Aristotle, legislative science is more significant than politics as it is practiced in everyday political action, such as the issuance of decrees (see EN VI.8).

Aristotle often draws a comparison between the politician and the artisan. The parallel is not accurate since politics, when defined as legislative science, is a type of practical knowledge, whereas a skill like architecture or medicine is a type of producing knowledge. However, the parallel is relevant to the degree that the politician establishes, operates, and maintains a legal system according to universal principles (EN VI.8 and X.9). To understand this parallel, it is useful to note that Aristotle describes the creation of an object, like a drinking cup, by referring to four causes: the material cause, the formal cause, the efficient cause, and the ultimate cause (Phys. II.3 and Met. A.2). For instance, a potter (efficient or moving cause) shapes clay (material cause) into a roughly cylindrical shape that is closed at one end (formal cause) so that it may hold a drink (final cause). (For a discussion of the four causes, see the section on Aristotle's physics.)

The four factors can also be used to explain the existence of the city-state. It is a type of community (koinônia), which is to say, a group of sections that share some functions and interests (Pol. II.1.1261a18, III.1.1275b20). As a result, it is composed of components, which Aristotle refers to in a variety of ways depending on the circumstances. For example, he identifies them as families, economic classes (such as the wealthy and the impoverished), or demes (which are local political entities). However, in the end, the city-state is made up of individual individuals (see III.1.1274a38–41), who, along with natural resources, constitute the "material" or "equipment" out of which the city-state is fashioned (see VII.14.1325b38–41). The constitution (politeia) is the official cause of the city-state. According to Aristotle, the constitution is "a certain ordering of the inhabitants of the city-state" (III.1.1274b32–41). He also refers to the constitution of a community as "the form of the compound" and argues that whether or not the community remains the same across time depends on whether or not it has the same constitution (III.3.1276b1–11). The constitution is not a written document; it is an organising concept that is inherent to the constitution, similar to how the soul is inherent to an organism. As a result, the constitution is sometimes referred to as "the way of life" for the citizens (IV.11.1295a40–b1, VII.8.1328b1–2). The citizens are the small group of people who live in the area and have complete political rights (III.1.1275b17–20). In addition, the existence of the city-state needs an efficient cause, which is its ruler. According to Aristotle, a society of any kind can only have order if it contains a governing element or authority. The constitution defines this underlying concept and establishes the requirements for political positions, especially the sovereign office (III.6.1278b8–10; cf. IV.1.1289a15–18). However, on a deeper level, there must be an efficient reason to explain why a city-state acquired its constitution in the first place. According to Aristotle, "the person who first established [the city-state] is the cause of very great benefits" (I.2.1253a30–1). This individual was clearly a lawgiver (nomothetês), similar to Solon of Athens or Lycurgus of Sparta, who were responsible for establishing the constitution. Aristotle compares the lawmaker, or the politician in general, to a craftsman (dêmiourgos), such as a weaver or shipbuilder, who takes raw materials and turns them into a finished product (II.12.1273b32–3, VII.4.1325b40–1365a5).

From the very first words, the idea of final cause is the most important concept in Aristotle's Politics: Every city-state is a type of community, and every community is formed for the purpose of achieving some good. This is because everyone does everything for the sake of what they believe to be good. Therefore, it is clear that every community has some good as its goal, and the community that has the most authority of all and includes all the others has the highest goal, which is the good with the most authority. This is referred to as a city-state or a political community. [I.1.1252a1–7]

Shortly after that, he says that the city-state is created for the sake of life, but it exists for the purpose of the good life (2.1252b29–30). The idea that the city-state's ultimate goal is to achieve a decent life or happiness is a recurring subject in the Politics (III.6.1278b17–24, 9.1280b39; VII.2.1325a7–10).

In summary, the city-state is a hylomorphic composite made up of a specific people (the citizen-body) in a certain area (the material cause) and a constitution (the formal cause). The lawmaker creates the constitution, and politicians, who are similar to artisans (efficient cause), are in charge of it. The constitution also outlines the purpose of the city-state (ultimate cause, IV.1.1289a17–18). Aristotle's hylomorphic analysis has significant practical implications for him. For example, a craftsman should not try to impose a form on materials that are not suited for it (for example, building a house out of sand). Similarly, a legislator should not create or change laws that go against the nature of the citizens. As a result, Aristotle dismisses utopian plans like the one proposed in Plato's Republic, which states that all children and property should be owned collectively by all residents. This goes against the reality that "people give most attention to their own property, less to what is communal, or only as much as falls to them to give attention" (Pol. II.3.1261b33–5). Aristotle is especially cautious of casual political innovation since it might have the negative side effect of eroding the people' habit of observing the law (II.8.1269a13–24). If you would want to learn more about the theoretical basis of Aristotle's politics, please refer to the following additional document:

Supplement: Presuppositions of Aristotle's Politics

In this way, Aristotle views the fundamental normative issue of politics to be the following: What kind of constitution should the lawmaker create and maintain, and what materials should they use to do so, in order to achieve what goal?

General Theory of Constitutions and Citizenship

According to Aristotle, "The politician and lawgiver is wholly occupied with the city-state, and the constitution is a certain way of organising those who inhabit the city-state" (III.1.1274b36–8). Politics III contains his overall theory of constitutions. He starts by defining the citizen (politês) since the city-state is, by its very essence, a communal entity made up of many citizens. Citizens are different from other people who live in a place, such resident aliens and slaves. Even youngsters and elders are not considered citizens, nor are most regular labourers. After doing more study, he defines a citizen as someone who possesses the right (exousia) to engage in deliberative or judicial office (1275b18–21). In Athens, for example, people had the right to attend the assembly, the council, and other bodies, or to sit on juries. The Athenian system was different from a current representative democracy since the citizens were more directly involved in the ruling process. Citizens of the Greek city-states had a greater degree of political participation than those in current representative democracies since they were more actively involved in the governing process. However, full citizenship was limited in the Greek city-states, as it excluded women, slaves, foreigners, and several other groups. Aristotle's definition of a citizen (without qualifier) is an example of this. Additionally, he defines the city-state (in the unqualified meaning) as a large number of residents who are sufficient for a self-sufficient living (1275b20–21).

According to Aristotle, the constitution (politeia) is a method of arranging the various offices of a city-state, especially the sovereign office (III.6.1278b8–10; compare. IV.1.1289a15–18). As a result, the constitution establishes the ruling body, which can take several forms. For example, in a democracy, the

governing body is the people, whereas in an oligarchy, it is a chosen few (the affluent or well-born). Before he tries to identify and assess different constitutions, Aristotle thinks about two problems. To begin with, what causes a city-state to be established? He remembers the concept that was advanced in Politics I.2, which states that human beings are political animals by nature and have a natural desire to live together. If you would want to discuss this issue further, please refer to the following additional document:

Supplement: Political Naturalism

Aristotle goes on to say, "The common advantage also brings them together insofar as they each attain the noble life." This is above all the end for everyone both in common and separately" (III.6.1278b19–24). Second, what are the different types of rule that allow one person or group to have power over another? Aristotle identifies a number of different forms of rule, which are determined by the characteristics of the ruler's soul and the subject's soul. He initially thinks of dictatorial control, which is illustrated by the master-slave connection. Aristotle believes that this type of control is permissible in the case of natural slaves, who he claims (without providing any proof) do not have the ability to deliberate for themselves and hence require a natural master to guide them (I.13.1260a12; slavery is defended at detail in Politics I.4–8). Even if a natural slave is said to gain from having a master, dictatorial authority is nevertheless mostly for the master's interest and only secondarily for the slave's benefit (III.6.1278b32–7). (Aristotle does not offer any reasoning for this: if certain people are unable to govern themselves from birth, why shouldn't they be controlled primarily for their own benefit?) Next, he considers paternal and marital rule, which he also believes can be justified: "the male is by nature more capable of leadership than the female, unless he is constituted in some way contrary to nature, and the elder and perfect [is by nature more capable of leadership] than the younger and imperfect" (I.12.1259a39–b4).

When Aristotle argues that children require adult supervision because their logic is "imperfect" (ateles) or immature, he makes a convincing case. However, when he claims (without any evidence) that women have the ability to think critically but that this ability is "without authority" (akuron), he is not persuasive to contemporary readers. He goes on to say that women need to be supervised by men (I.13.1260a13–14). Some observers find Aristotle's arguments concerning slaves and women to be so poor that they think he is being humorous. However, it is not essential to assume that Aristotle's debate is insincere, because what is evident to a modern reader may not have been obvious to an ancient Greek. However, it is important to highlight that paternal and marital rule are performed correctly for the benefit of the people being governed (the kid and the wife, respectively), just as arts such as medicine or gymnastics are practiced for the benefit of the patient (III.6.1278b37–1279a1). In this regard, they are comparable to political rule, which is the type of rule that is acceptable when the ruler and the subject have identical logical powers and are equal to each other. This is demonstrated by citizens who are inherently equal and take turns ruling for each other's benefit (1279a8–13). This lays the groundwork for the main assertion of Aristotle's theory of constitutions: "Constitutions which aim at the common advantage are correct and just without qualification, whereas those which aim only at the advantage of the rulers are deviant and unjust, because they involve despotic rule which is inappropriate for a community of free persons" (1279a17–21). The difference between a proper constitution and a deviant constitution is linked with the fact that a government can be made up of one person, a small number of people, or a large number of people. Hence, there are six conceivable constitutional forms (Politics III.7):

	Correct	**Deviant**
One Ruler	Kingship	Tyranny
Few Rulers	Aristocracy	Oligarchy
Many Rulers	Polity	Democracy

This six-fold categorisation, which is certainly based on Plato's Statesman 302c–d, lays the groundwork for Aristotle's investigation into the ideal constitution, even if it is altered in a number of ways throughout the Politics. For instance, he notes that the wealthy are usually the dominant class in an oligarchy (which literally means "rule of the few"), while the poor are typically the dominant class in a democracy (which literally means "rule of the people"). Therefore, these economic classes should be included in the definitions of these forms of government. For alternative accounts, see Politics III.8, IV.4, and VI.2. Additionally, polity is subsequently described as a type of "mixed" constitution that is characterised by the control of the "middle" group of people, which is a moderately wealthy class that falls between the rich and the poor (Politics IV.11).

Aristotle's idea of justice, which is explained in Book V of Nicomachean Ethics, provides the foundation for his constitutional theory. In his theory of the constitution, Aristotle makes a distinction between two separate but related meanings of the word "justice": universal and specific. Both of these meanings are crucial in his theory. First of all, "justice" in the broadest sense is "lawfulness" and is concerned with the common good and enjoyment of the political community (NE V.1.1129b11–19, cf. Pol. III.12.1282b16–17). The idea of universal justice is the foundation for the difference between constitutions that are accurate (just) and those that are aberrant (unjust). However, there is a scholarly debate on what the term "common advantage" (koinê sumpheron) actually means. Certain texts suggest that justice requires that all people benefit; for instance, every citizen under the best constitution has a fair right to an education and to private property (Pol. VII.9.1329a23–4, 13.1332a32–8). However, Aristotle also acknowledges that it may be "in a way" reasonable to ostracise strong citizens even if they have not been found guilty of any crimes (III.13.1284b15–20). The extent to which Aristotle believes that the common advantage is the protection of the interests of all citizens has an impact on whether he predicts what modern people would consider a theory of individual rights. (For other readings, see Fred Miller and Richard Kraut.)

Aristotle and his classification of governments and constitutions

Because he used empirical inquiry as his approach, the person who is known as the father of the science of politics is the one who is credited with the title. The governments of Greek city-states were unstable, and this was a source of concern for Aristotle. He sent his pupils to produce case studies of different constitutions, and he investigated more than 158 case histories of various city-states. He examined about 160 case histories. To be more specific, it is thought that he examined 158 case histories. Athens' case history is a significant resource for comprehending his categorisation of the constitutions. This truth may be understood by considering two variables:

1. The number of people who govern the state: whether it is one person, a small group of people, or a large group of people who govern the state.

2. The ruler's intentions: whether the ruler is governing in the best interest of the state (known as a normal form of government) or whether the monarch is governing in his own self-interest (known as a perverted type of government).
3. If the rule of ONE is in place, then the ideal form of government would be a monarchy or kingship. The corrupted form of governance would be despotism or tyranny.
4. If the rule is by FEW, it would be ARISTOCRACY in an ideal form of governance or OLIGARCHY in a twisted form.
5. If the ruling is by MANY, then the optimum form of governance would be POLITY or a constitutional government, and curiously, DEMOCRACY in a distorted form.

Aristotle believed that a government would not be stable if there were no sufficient constraints on the authority of the king. He thinks that it is impossible for power and virtue to exist at the same time. He has given an account of how governments have changed over the years. Kingship is a common type of administration, but it can become tyrannical if the monarch's authority is not kept in check. When a small group of people establishes an aristocracy, it is a sign that tyranny has led to a rebellion or revolution. An aristocracy can decline and become an oligarchy, which is a corrupt version of an aristocracy. Over time, more and more people will rebel against oligarchy and replace it with a government that is run by the people. When the several rulers begin to pursue their own self-interest, the polity deteriorates even further in a democracy. Ultimately, a single person who appears to be virtuous becomes the monarch, and the cycle of ideal form and twisted form continues to repeat itself.

(Source: politicalsciencereview.com)

Conclusion

Aristotle's political theory, which was stated over two thousand years ago, continues to be relevant in modern government, proving that it is still applicable today. His practical way of thinking about the nature of the state, the purpose of government, and the dynamics of power provides a basic framework that influences modern political systems. The ideals that form the foundation of modern democracies, such as constitutionalism, the rule of law, and participatory government, have been greatly influenced by Aristotle's focus on justice, the common good, and the balance of power. Aristotle's ideas remain relevant because they may be applied to changing social situations. His support for a government that is fair and inclusive is in line with current attempts to establish systems that are both fair and strong. In addition, his observations on the threats of dictatorship, the need of the middle class in maintaining stability in society, and the ethical obligations of leaders are still very important when it comes to dealing with today's global issues, including inequality, corruption, and governance in the digital era. Aristotle's views provide useful direction for the creation of equitable and successful political institutions by encouraging a thorough grasp of human nature and the relationship between individual and communal well-being. His idea of government as a way to help people thrive acts as a moral guide, motivating today's leaders and politicians to put the well-being of their population first. In conclusion, Aristotle's political philosophy is not just an outdated way of thinking; it is a living tradition that continues to influence the principles and practices of governing in the present period. Its incorporation into modern political discussions highlights the enduring wisdom of Aristotle's theories and their ability to help mankind move towards a future that is more fair and wealthy.

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