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The Politics of Aristotle

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## THE POLITICS OF ARISTOTLE.

### I. *Method and Character of The Politics.*

THE capital significance of Aristotle, in the history of political theories, lies in the fact that he gave to politics the character of an independent science. He differs from his master, Plato, much more in the form and method than in the substance of his thought. Most of the ideas which seem characteristically Aristotelian are to be found in Plato.<sup>1</sup> But the Platonic expression of them is generally suggestion or allusion or illustration ; while in Aristotle they appear as definite, clean-cut dogmas, bearing an unmistakable relation to the general system of scientific doctrine. This contrast is rooted in the respective intellectual peculiarities of the two philosophers. Plato is imaginative and synthetic ; Aristotle is matter-of-fact and analytic. Ideas present themselves to Plato more through metaphor and analogy ; to Aristotle more through the processes of exact logic. Plato is more impressed by the unity pervading phenomena ; Aristotle, by the diversity. In ethics and politics, accordingly, while Plato, working deductively from his philosophic conceptions of virtue and the good, blended inextricably the two bodies of doctrine, Aristotle, proceeding by extensive observation and minute analysis of objective facts, marked out for each science an independent field.

The foundation of his political theory was laid by Aristotle in a detailed study of practically all the existing governmental systems, both Hellenic and barbarian. More than one hundred and fifty polities are said to have been embraced in a work which is quoted in ancient literature as *The Constitutions* (*αἱ πολιτεῖαι*). Of these the only one known at present by more

<sup>1</sup> Susemihl notes seventy-two places in *The Politics* that are paralleled to a greater or less extent in Plato. — Aristoteles Politik (Leipzig, 1879), Introduction, p. 11, note.

than slight fragments is the recently discovered *Constitution of Athens*.<sup>1</sup> From this it is clear that the author studied governments both in their history and in their contemporary working, and that his method was in the fullest sense objective and scientific. In his systematic work, *The Politics*, Aristotle draws abundantly from the great store of facts accumulated in *The Constitutions*. It is not exact, however, to say that the principles of *The Politics* are strictly generalizations from these facts. To a less extent than Plato, but yet to a very great extent, Aristotle depends for the categories and broad outline of his philosophy upon the ideas that characterized contemporary Hellenic thought. The results of his study of other ages and other peoples are employed more in the correction and illustration than in the foundation of his political science. His method is inductive, but not purely inductive. The intimate relations which he enjoyed with the half-barbarian court of Macedon<sup>2</sup> seem never to have moved him from the conviction that in the pure Greek society and government was to be found the political ideal. That Aristotle, while not like Plato idealizing, nevertheless was often determined in his philosophy by an ideal, will appear clearly enough in what is to follow.

The creation of an independent science of politics by Aristotle was accomplished by the disentanglement of political from ethical conceptions. In Plato's thought the two were completely blended. The separation effected by Aristotle was not so much the conclusion of a deliberate logical process as the unconscious outcome of the analytic method which he applied with such rigor to the solution of ethical problems.<sup>3</sup> Rejecting Plato's conception of a single universal abstract "good," Aristotle considers that "good" is relative to each species of being. What, he asks, is the science which treats of the highest "good" of man? His answer is: political science. For the good of man is the perfect development and activity

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Aristotle on the Constitution of Athens. Translated, with introduction and notes, by F. G. Kenyon. London, George Bell & Sons, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> His father was court physician to King Amyntas, and he himself was the tutor of Alexander the Great.

<sup>3</sup> Grant, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, I, 335.

of all the powers that are in him, and this result is impossible to the individual without the association of his fellows — that is, without the πόλις. Therefore, the good of the individual is merged in that of the state. But the state he conceives as αὐτάρκης, or self-sufficing — that is, as dependent on no more ultimate form of being for the realization of the good which is its end. Therefore the science of the state, politics, is the dominant, “architectonic” science, embracing within itself, as a part, that which treats of man as an individual.

From the abstract point of view, thus, ethics is a subdivision of politics. But Aristotle’s treatment of ethics never partook so much of abstract and ultimate philosophy as of practical wisdom. The principle of morality which he consistently set forth was that of a rational choice of the mean between two extremes of conduct.<sup>1</sup> The application of this principle involved the fullest recognition of human free will and led Aristotle often to ascribe to the self-conscious, rational intelligence of the individual the character of self-sufficiency which he had ascribed to the state. Thus, from the practical point of view, at least, ethics was impressed with the character of an independent science. But Aristotle himself was not clear at this point. He often refers to ethics as politics, sometimes intimates that the two are distinct, and in at least one case seems to refer to ethics as a different science.<sup>2</sup> His uncertainty is illustrated also in the repeated consideration in *The Politics*<sup>3</sup> of the question whether the virtue of the good citizen is the same as that of the good man. His conclusion seems to be, after much vacillation, that the answer is negative in the practical, but affirmative in the ideal or perfect state. Other evidence unites with this conclusion to indicate that Aristotle conceived of politics in a double sense : first, with Plato, as a pure science (σοφία), concerned with the absolute good of man and the absolute perfect state ; second, as a practical science

<sup>1</sup> For a charming exposition of Aristotle’s Ethics, see Janet, *Histoire de la Science Politique*, I, 103 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> The Politics, VII, i, 13, ἐτέρας σχολῆς. The peculiar usage of σχολῆς here has caused the passage to be suspected. Cf. Susemihl, note 709.

<sup>3</sup> III, iv ; v, 10 ; xviii, 1. IV, vii, 2. VII, xiv, 8.

(φρόνησις), treating of the constitutional and legal relations of actual men in actual societies. In the order of thought, then, politics in the first sense would be prior both to ethics and to politics in the second sense: pure political science would embody the abstract theory of which ethics and practical political science would be two distinct applications.<sup>1</sup> While such seems to have been the thought of the philosopher, his treatment of politics, at least in the works that have come down to us, was almost exclusively, like that of ethics, on the practical side. Hence, whether or not he fully realized the outcome of his work, the separation of the two sciences was definitely accomplished. The abstract ideal politics, in which the norms of individual and social excellence were identical, received only scanty attention and exercised little influence on later thought. But the keen, cold analysis to which he subjected the forms and motives of practical social and political activity gave to reflection on this subject an individuality, a mould and a technique that it was never again to lose.

In the Aristotelian works on ethics are to be found expositions of many of the principles which lie nearest the border line of politics. Justice is defined, and the distinction between distributive and corrective justice, already noticed by Plato, is carefully worked out.<sup>2</sup> The relation of justice to law is examined, and natural (τὸ φυσικόν) is marked off distinctly from legal right (τὸ νομικόν). Equity also (ἡ ἐπιείκεια) is clearly defined as corrective of law. But it is in *The Politics* that the full and rounded exposition of these principles is to be found, as applied in the operations of state life. There are indications that this work embodied originally a comprehensive and well-proportioned plan. As the treatise has come down to us, however, the plan is far from clear and the execution is confused and defective. The text abounds in repetitions, contradictions, obscurities and obvious gaps. This result is probably due, not only to accidents and errors in the transmission of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Nichomachean Ethics*, VI, 8, and the note of Grant, *op. cit.*, II, 169. In the *Rhetoric*, I, 4, 5, Aristotle uses the expression ἡ περὶ τὰ ἥθη πολιτική, which is very significant.

<sup>2</sup> *Nichomachean Ethics*, Bk. V.

manuscript through the centuries, but also to the fact that the work never received a final revision by its author. The difficulty of ascertaining Aristotle's views has further been increased by the very zeal of the modern commentators, who, with the praiseworthy purpose of making the philosopher's work worthy of his reputation, have emended, conjectured, transposed, elided and inserted with an energy and a diversity that leaves the reader only the impression of hopeless confusion. But without radical editing the treatise as it stands, with all its imperfections, is as impressive an embodiment of scientific genius and political insight as is the mutilated Vatican torso of the sculptor's art.<sup>1</sup>

## II. *The Nature of the State and of the Household.*

In the first book of *The Politics* the philosopher sets forth the fundamental characteristics of the state (πόλις). It is an association—an association of human beings—and the highest form of human association. In the order of time it is preceded by the household (οἰκία) and the village (κώμη); in the order of thought it is prior to both. The household has its source in the association of male and female for the propagation of the race and the association of master and slave for the production of subsistence. The village has its source in the association of households for the better satisfaction of their wants. The state springs from the union of villages into an association of such size and character as to be self-sufficing. It is the last and the perfect association. Originating in the bare needs of living, it exists for the sake of complete life.<sup>2</sup> And because the individual can fulfill the end of his existence—can live a complete life—only in the state, Aristotle

<sup>1</sup> The most annoying form of editorial modification is that which consists in transposing the order of paragraphs, chapters and books. No reference can be good for more than a single one of the really erudite editions of *The Politics*. Without any reference to the relative merits of the various arrangements before the world, I have followed here the order of Jowett, *The Politics of Aristotle* (Oxford, 1885), to which all references have been made to apply.

<sup>2</sup> No mere translation can express all that is contained in the famous dictum of Aristotle: "Γινομένη μὲν τοῦ ζῆν ἕνεκεν, ὅσα δὲ τοῦ εὖ ζῆν."

declares that man is by nature a political animal.<sup>1</sup> This dogma leaves no room for such discussion as has figured in later political theory, of a "state of nature" in which the individual lives a life of blissful isolation from his kind. The being who cannot live in association with his fellows, or who has no need to do this, is, Aristotle says, either on the one hand, a beast, or on the other, a god. There is no place in the philosophy of human phenomena for the consideration of such a being.

This conception of the state in its essential character does not, however, preclude the investigation of the less ultimate forms of association which prevail among men. Historically the πόλις was preceded by conditions in which the household, ruled by the patriarch, was the typical community. In this fact is to be found the explanation of the monarchic government of the earliest states; for the primitive king merely retained through custom the authority of the patriarch. But Aristotle insists that this historical relation of household to state must not be allowed to distort our conception of their logical relation. It is one of his numerous charges against Plato that the latter represented the state to be merely a large household and the ruler of the state to be essentially the head of a family. Such a conception Aristotle holds to be false; state and household differ, not in degree, but in kind. To prove this he enters upon an exhaustive analysis of the household, in the course of which are set forth the philosopher's views upon many of the fundamental questions of economics.<sup>2</sup>

The main argument is summarily as follows: The household consists of an individual holding dominion over wife, children and property, including slaves. The relation of the head of the household to these three elements is not one, but various. He rules the wife, not as absolute despot, but as constitutional adviser; he rules the children not as absolute despot, but as the king, who looks to their good rather than his own; while

<sup>1</sup> Ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον. "Nature" here means, as Aristotle explains, that condition in which all potentialities are fully developed — where everything fulfills its τέλος, or true end. He sometimes uses "nature" in the sense of primitive or undeveloped condition.

<sup>2</sup> The science of the household he designates οἰκονομία.

property, both slaves and other, he rules in full despotism, for the exclusive advantage of himself. In this manifold relation of the head of the household to the subordinate elements lies the essential distinction between the household and the state; for in the latter, according to Aristotle, the relation of the ruler to each of the citizens is precisely the same.

This argument, in itself, is not especially striking; it adds nothing to the force of the distinction made in the primary principle, that the household exists for the sake of the physical needs of life, the state for the moral and intellectual needs. But the detailed discussion of the nature and the function of the various elements of the household embodies much that is of high significance in social and economic history and theory. At the very outset he is confronted by the necessity of finding a rational justification for slavery. The slaves constitute one of the natural elements of the household, as he analyzes it. "But some contend," he says, "that the distinction between slave and freeman is a fact only of law and not of nature, and that it is rooted not in justice but in violence."<sup>1</sup> To meet this contention he presents the first scientific discussion of the institution in extant literature. He concedes that the relation of master and slave is rational, only if it corresponds to some universal principle of nature. Such a principle is that which requires the combination of command and obedience for the attainment of any human purpose. Men differ from one another in capacity for the one or the other of these functions. There are those whose high endowment of reason fits them to command and direct; there are those whose slight endowment fits them only to comprehend and carry out orders. The former are by nature masters; the latter are by nature slaves. Intellectual strength is the chief characteristic of the former; physical strength, of the latter. The combination of the two is essential to the realization of those purposes for which the household exists; therefore slavery is in accordance with nature. Aristotle is quite aware that the actual institution does not correspond to this rational foundation. He admits

<sup>1</sup> I, iii, 4.



that in fact many slaves are superior to their masters in intellect. This, however, does not affect the reasoning; it is more or less accidental, due in some degree to the absence of any clearly discernible outward mark by which the natural slave is to be distinguished from the natural master. The common practice of enslaving prisoners of war, Aristotle points out, can find justification only so far as the fact of success in battle can be taken as evidence of the superior intellectual endowment of the victors; but a judgment on this point is subject to many qualifications. Finally, the principle he lays down is the logical foundation of the widespread feeling among the Greeks that they ought to hold in slavery only persons of other races; for the inherent intellectual superiority of Hellenes over barbarians was one of the primary and universal axioms of Greek thought.<sup>1</sup>

As to its animate elements, then, the household is organized with reference to the gradation of intellectual capacity. This capacity exists in the woman in a weaker form and in the child in a less developed form than in the man. In the slave it has no existence whatever. Hence arise the three varieties of paternal dominion, all working for the realization of the highest good of the whole household. As to the inanimate possessions of the household, there is no question of the absolute dominion of the father. Aristotle assumes without examination the validity of the principle of private property. As to methods of acquisition, however, he finds room for much reflection, in the course of which he develops many familiar principles of political economy. The production of wealth has for him no high philosophical significance. He regards it as a more or less disagreeable necessity incidental to the maintenance of life, and as such a function of the household, but the lowest of its functions.<sup>2</sup> From this point of view he distinguishes between natural and unnatural methods of acquiring wealth. The natural methods, which alone fall within the scope

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *The Republic*, V, 469; Aristotle, *The Politics*, I, vi, 6; VII, vii, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Household management (*oikonomia*) has for its purpose rather to make the members of the family virtuous than to make them rich. — I, xiii, 1.

of true economic science (*ἡ οἰκονομική*), are those through which mere necessary subsistence is procured. Among these he enumerates cattle-raising, agriculture and hunting, the last including as subordinate species, fishing, the chase of land animals and — oddly enough — brigandage (*λῆστεία*).<sup>1</sup> The unnatural methods of acquisition are those which aim, not at the mere maintenance of life, but at endless accumulation of wealth. These fall within the field of a distinct science, chrematistics (*ἡ χρηματιστική*). Of these methods trade, whether in the form of barter or in that of sale for money, may be natural, when pursued merely with a view to procuring necessities of life, and not as an end in itself. But through the use of money to facilitate exchange men have been led to see in money itself the end of trade; and hence has arisen, among other evils, the lending of money at interest. In this practice money is made to reproduce itself instead of being applied to the procurement of the needs of life. Such a mode of acquisition, therefore, has no logical justification and is, he concludes, wholly unnatural.

This discussion of economics is on the whole as remarkable for its weak as for its strong features. The keen analytical faculty which is so characteristic of Aristotle achieves excellent results in shaping the questions that are to be solved. The elementary ideas of production and exchange are fairly presented. He sees clearly enough the distinction between value in use and value in exchange, and the primary function of money has never been better elucidated than by him. But he fails entirely to grasp the notion of capital, and accordingly does not rise above the very primitive and absurd conception of interest. His glaring weakness at this point, and the no less remarkable freak of including brigandage in the normal methods of acquiring wealth, both may be traced back to an inexplicable shifting in his conception of nature (*φύσις*). This term has, throughout the history of political theory, proved a

<sup>1</sup> I, viii, 7 and 8. The philosopher further notes that war, also, is a species of hunting, and is allied to economic science so far as it aims to bring into servitude men who, being slaves by nature, are unwilling to submit. — I, viii, 12.

stone of stumbling to philosophers. Aristotle, however, at the beginning of *The Politics*,<sup>1</sup> assigns to the word a clear and unambiguous meaning, namely, a condition of perfect development of all potentialities. But here at the end of the first book he evidently thinks of it as denoting a primitive and undeveloped condition. In the one place man is political by nature, because the state is characteristic of fully developed humanity. In the other place brigandage is a natural method of obtaining wealth, because it is a practice of undeveloped men, and the taking of interest is not natural because, apparently, it is not found among undeveloped men.

### III. *Organization of the State: Constitution, Citizenship, Government.*

In approaching the consideration of the constitution which shall most faithfully embody the true principles of political science, Aristotle first examines critically those systems, whether actual or theoretical, which have attained a general reputation for excellence. In the second book of *The Politics*, the constitutions of Sparta, Crete and Carthage, and the actual or projected legislation of distinguished thinkers, like Hippodamus, Phaleas and Solon, are described and their most conspicuous features commented upon. But the first place in the book is devoted to a severe and at times distinctly unfair criticism of Plato's ideas, as embodied in *The Republic* and *The Laws*. From the standpoint and with the method adopted by Aristotle it is a matter of no great difficulty to exhibit many weaknesses in the Platonic theories. But probably the most significant feature of the critique is the attack on the philosophic supports of communism. Aristotle concedes that unity is of fundamental importance in any conception of the state, but the means advocated by Plato for attaining it he holds to be destructive of the end in view. Thus, Plato says that, if a man does not know his own children, he will feel an equally high affection for all the children

<sup>1</sup> I, ii, 8.

in the state. But, answers Aristotle, the sense of personal possession is the whole basis of affection ; therefore the result will be, not great love for all, but no love for any. Again, the degree of harmony to be expected from community of property is less than that from a régime of individual ownership ; for the disputes that arise among persons having joint interests are notoriously frequent and distressing, and without private property there would be no room for the establishment of those valuable social bonds which accompany the exercise of liberality, in accordance with the saying that all things are in common among friends.<sup>1</sup> The Platonic reasoning is, in fact, vitiated from the outset by an erroneous conception of the unity that is essential to the state. It is not a unity which consists in the obliteration of all diversities in individuals. Such a conception is fatal to the idea of the state, as identity in musical tones is fatal to the idea of harmony. The unity of the state is that which arises out of the proper organization of relations among individuals who differ from one another as rulers and ruled.

From this point of view Aristotle proceeds to the positive presentation of constitutional relations.<sup>2</sup> A state, objectively considered, is an assemblage of citizens. What is a citizen ? This question is answered primarily on a basis of fact — and of purely Hellenic fact. The citizen, he says, is one who participates in the functions of juror and legislator (*δικαστῆς καὶ ἐκκλησιαστής*), either or both. In other words, citizenship signifies merely the enjoyment of political rights, and a state is a group of persons exercising these rights. No part of the community not possessing such rights comes within the purview of politics proper. But Aristotle raises the further question, Who ought to be citizens ? Especially, Are mechanics and laborers fit for inclusion in this class ? His answer is negative. The prime qualification for citizenship is capacity both to rule and to be ruled, and the cultivation of this two-fold capacity is indispensable. But those who must labor in

<sup>1</sup> Both Plato and Aristotle attached much importance to friendship (*φιλία*) as a social virtue.

<sup>2</sup> In Book III.

order to live are too dependent on the commands of others ever to develop the capacity themselves to command.<sup>1</sup> Freedom from concern about the necessities of life is indispensable to the proper performance of political duties.<sup>2</sup> The working classes are, indeed, essential to the state's existence ; but this does not constitute them citizens. While in practice they have been admitted to citizenship in many states, this, Aristotle thinks, has been justified only by the regrettable lack of true material.

The state, then, which the philosopher must consider consists in a self-sufficing body of such citizens as he has defined. The general system of authority through which the functions of the state are performed is the constitution (*πολιτεία*). In the constitution are determined the number and interrelationship of the various organs of government, the methods through which they are manned and particularly the abode of the supreme or sovereign power (*τὸ κύριον, ἡ κυρία ἀρχή*).<sup>3</sup> On this last point depends the difference between constitutions ; for the governing body (*πολίτευμα*) is sovereign, and makes the constitution what it is. Accordingly, where the people is the governing body the constitution is a democracy ; where the few govern, it is oligarchy.<sup>4</sup>

Aristotle employs this conception of the constitution in determining when the identity of a state changes. With logic that has not been confined to ancient times and European lands, Greek governments had sought to repudiate debts on the ground that they had been contracted not by the state, but by the oligarchy or the tyrant. What, the philosopher asks, is the essence of the state, and when does it cease to be itself and become another ? And he answers : The essence of the state is the constitution, and the state changes its identity when the constitution changes, *e.g.*, when from democracy it becomes oligarchy or tyranny. But, he hastens

<sup>1</sup> III, iv and v.<sup>2</sup> II, ix, 2.<sup>3</sup> IV, i, 10.

<sup>4</sup> III, vi, 1. Aristotle says : *κύριον πανταχοῦ τὸ πολίτευμα* ; but he does not appear to mean what would be conveyed to modern minds by the literal rendering : "The sovereign is everywhere the government." Cf. *ad loc.* Jowett, Zeller, Susemihl.

to add, "it is quite another question whether the state should or should not fulfill engagements when it changes its constitution." This very impotent conclusion is perplexing, especially as *The Politics* contains no further discussion of the matter. From his identification of the state with its constitution the obvious inference would be that a democracy, for example, is not responsible for the engagements of a tyrant whom it has displaced. Either Aristotle here means by constitution something more than what he says in defining the term, or, not wishing to commit himself to the approval of the repudiation of contracts, he deliberately evades the logical dilemma.<sup>1</sup>

From the nature of the state and of the constitution as defined above, the philosopher draws one conclusion as to the normal, or natural, organization of government. Though the state arises from man's impulse to association with his kind, rather than from a deliberate search for mutual assistance, yet the advantages springing from political organization have a great influence in the maintenance of the social bond. These advantages, then, should be common to all the citizens. All alike should profit by the capacity of each in either ruling or being ruled. Hence the constitution should provide for the service in office of each of the citizens in his turn. Such at least should be the rule where the state is really a society of equal citizens. Quite different, the philosopher sententiously observes, is the actual practice; for, through selfish craving for the emoluments of public service, men seek for and cling to office as if their lives depended on it.<sup>2</sup>

#### IV. *The Sovereign Power.*

Conceiving the essence of the state to be expressed in the constitution, and the crucial feature of the constitution to be the supreme or sovereign authority (τὸ κύριον), the question at once arises: On what rational principle is the abode of this

<sup>1</sup> A third alternative, always to be presumed in *The Politics*, is that the text is corrupt or defective. But there is no indication of such a condition in this passage. — III, iii, 9.

<sup>2</sup> III, vi, 10.

sovereignty to be determined? Controversy is particularly keen, Aristotle notes, between those who favor the principle of mere numbers and those who favor that of wealth and intelligence. The former, advocating democracy, claim that all who are equal in respect to freedom should be recognized as equal in political power, and that, accordingly, the sovereignty should rest in the general body of citizens. Against these the advocates of oligarchy contend that superiority in wealth, or intelligence, or birth, should carry superiority in power and that the supreme authority should therefore rest in the few. Both these arguments, Aristotle declares, miss the precise criterion, which is to be found only after reaching a correct conception of the nature and end of the state. The state is not an association for the acquisition of wealth, or for the mere maintenance of life, or, like an international alliance, for the promotion of definite political and commercial interests of the contracting parties. The end of the state is not that certain persons shall have a common dwelling-place, and shall refrain from mutual injury and shall be in habitual intercourse with one another. The state embraces within itself associations for all these and other purposes, but such associations are based on friendship (*φιλία*) and look merely to living together. On the other hand, the state has for its end living well — living happily and nobly : it is an association not for mere life, but for noble actions.<sup>1</sup>

From this point of view, the greater share in political power should belong to those who contribute most to the perfect life. Virtue, especially that species called justice, is to be the criterion, rather than freedom or birth or wealth. Must sovereign power, then, be ascribed to the mass of the people, or to some limited class, or to some individual? Primarily, Aristotle answers, to the mass of the people. For the aggregate virtue <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> III, ix.

<sup>2</sup> Virtue (*ἀρετή*) must always be understood in its ancient philosophical sense. It connotes much more than strict moral excellence. "Ability" would be perhaps nearer to the Greek idea, though defective as connoting no moral quality whatever. Custom has confirmed the translation of *ἀρετή* by virtue, and I shall adhere to this, subject to the caution here noted.

of the whole people exceeds that of any particular part. The same answer, indeed, would follow from a rigid application of the principle of wealth; for the whole is wealthier than any of its parts. But popular sovereignty, as thus conceived, is subject to an important qualification.

In the controversies of Hellenic politics over oligarchy and democracy the underlying thought was that the people (*ὁ δῆμος*) and the few (*οἱ ὀλιγοί*) in any given community constituted in fact two states, each existing or ceasing to exist, as the one or the other faction gained control. This idea had much justification in the facts of the conflict. Democratic triumph in most cases meant the actual physical expulsion of the oligarchs from the community; while oligarchic triumph meant the exclusion of the mass of the people from all political rights, and hence from the state, in the sense in which Aristotle defined it.<sup>1</sup> The unsatisfactory character of Aristotle's discussion as to the identity of the state<sup>2</sup> illustrates how prone he was to adopt the popular conception, and regard sovereignty as inhering in the dominant faction of the community. But more commonly he conceives the sovereign power rather as the highest authority in the administrative hierarchy, or as that part of the administrative organization which deals with the most important questions of policy. In other words, he thinks of the sovereign as subordinate to the state, and of the state as existing apart from any particular possessor of the chief governmental power.

The latter conception of sovereignty is that which the philosopher employs in deciding that the mass of the people must be sovereign. This does not imply that either the people as a whole or every individual alike is best adapted to administer all the offices of the state; but that the greatest and most ultimate questions must be finally passed upon by the whole people. In practice this would mean, he explains, that the function of the popular body should be chiefly the election and censure of the officers of administration. For such functions the people as a whole is eminently fitted. It may, indeed, be

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 284.



argued that statesmen of eminent wisdom and experience would give a better judgment than the mass—that the few, rather than the many, are the logical sovereign in this sense. But Aristotle rejects this contention. The verdict of the general public is valid in politics, just as it is in musical contests and in banquets; not the musician and the cook, but they who hear the music and eat the dinner are best qualified to render judgment.

The sovereignty of the whole people, therefore, subject to the qualification that it be manifested in the election of magistrates and in holding them to account for their conduct in office, is the primary solution of the problem as to the location of ultimate power in the state. This solution presumes, however, that the citizens are on the whole not far from the same general level of virtue. Suppose, on the contrary, that among them is a small number, or even a single individual, whose virtue overwhelmingly exceeds that of all the rest, whether taken individually or collectively. In such a case, there can be, Aristotle holds, but one answer: the preëminently virtuous few or one is the logical sovereign. It is a consciousness of this fact, he explains, that has led democracies to devise the institution of ostracism. An actual popular sovereign cannot tolerate in the body politic an individual who in any way embodies the possibility of becoming the ideal sovereign.

Finally, above every form of personal sovereignty, whether of the one, the few or the whole people, must be placed, according to Aristotle, the sovereignty of the law (*νόμοι*). Only where the law is uncertain or incomplete may the authority of man be conclusive. Granting that, as some contend, the rigidity of law works frequent injustice; yet less injustice will spring from the prescriptions of customary law (*οἱ νόμοι οἱ κατὰ τὸ ἔθος*) than from the unchecked will of any man. For such law is free from the influence of human passions. The rule of law, Aristotle finely says, is the rule of god and reason only; in the rule of man there appears in addition something of the brute.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> III, xvi, 5.

V. *The Forms of Constitution.*

Aristotle primarily classifies constitutions, first, according to the mere number of those in whom sovereign power is vested and, second, according to the end to which the conduct of government is directed. The latter principle distinguishes pure from corrupt forms, for the end of the state is the perfection of all its members. When the government is administered with this end in view, the state is pure; when the administration aims at the interest, not of all the citizens, but of the governing body alone, the state is corrupt. The classification of constitutions then assumes this form<sup>1</sup>:

SOVEREIGNTY OF	PURE FORM	CORRUPT FORM
The one . . . .	Royalty . . . .	Tyranny.
The few . . . .	Aristocracy . . . .	Oligarchy.
The whole people.	Polity. . . . .	Democracy.

In respect to this classification it is to be observed that the pure forms are based on an ideal which belongs to political science in its broadest and most abstract sense;<sup>2</sup> while the corruptions (*παρεκβάσεις*), so called because they deviate from the ideal, are what fall strictly within the field of politics in its practical and independent character. Aristotle's conceptions of royalty and aristocracy are hardly less idealistic and fanciful than Plato's. Royalty is substantially the rule of the one perfect man; aristocracy is the rule of the few perfect men, not easily to be distinguished in their attributes from Plato's "guardians." If Aristotle had confined himself to an abstract and idealistic treatment of these various constitutions, his work would have exhibited little divergence from Plato's. But in *The Politics*, as we have it,<sup>3</sup> the discussion is of an eminently

<sup>1</sup> III, vii. Cf. also Nich. Eth., V, 10, where a somewhat different nomenclature is employed.

<sup>2</sup> *Ante*, p. 275.

<sup>3</sup> The text of Books IV, VI, VII and VIII, which cover this subject, is in a condition of such corruption as to render the precise order of thought which Aristotle intended to follow hopelessly uncertain. By transposition of the order of the books and by high-handed rearrangement of paragraphs, various plausible schemes have been devised in which coherency of development is pre-

practical character, and the ideal constitutions, while cropping out from time to time, are quite overwhelmed in the mass of historical and critical commentary on the perversions, which alone are in vogue among actual men. Only in the case of the polity is an ideal brought into close relation with a possible constitution. The term *πολιτεία*, which means constitution in general, is applied by Aristotle also to the special form of democratic constitution. And polity, in this narrow sense, he views in some places as an abstract ideal, but in others as a system quite susceptible of realization through a proper tempering of actual democracy.

For monarchy the philosopher can find a rational justification only in the purely ideal case of an individual absolutely preëminent in virtue. To such an ideally perfect man may be ascribed the right to rule,<sup>1</sup> unrestrained by law. But for actual states the best possible law has a better ground for supremacy than the best possible man. And for the work of government subject to law, the capacity of an individual can never equal that of an aggregation of individuals. The many is less easily corrupted than the one; and even though the one may have nominal supremacy, the physical impossibility of conducting the administration single-handed renders necessary a plurality in government which is not different in kind from a plurality immediately under the constitution. Aristotle's conclusion is, in fact, that monarchy not only is illogical, but also is practically impossible.<sup>2</sup> Tyranny, the corrupt form of royalty, Aristotle regarded as resting purely on force, and therefore as having no place in a purely rational system of politics.

For his detailed examination of the non-monarchic constitutions, Aristotle points out that the different forms rest upon a deeper foundation than that of mere number in the sovereign body. Oligarchy and democracy signify, respectively, the dom-

served. These are all ingenious, and most of them are scientific. Whether any of them is Aristotelian, no one can say.

<sup>1</sup> But Aristotle points out that not even here could the principle of hereditary succession be recognized.

<sup>2</sup> He considers only Greek states. The great barbarian monarchies do not lie within his category of state (*πολιτεία*).

ination of the rich and that of the poor; while practically these classes are the few and the many, the greater importance lies in the economic, not in the arithmetical, fact. But these two forms again require, according to Aristotle, further subdivision. Democracies differ from one another, and the same is true of oligarchies; here again the various shades,<sup>1</sup> of which he enumerates four under each form, have a close relation to social and economic facts.<sup>2</sup> The form, amount and diffusion of wealth play a large part in the peculiar adjustments of political organization.

In the detailed treatment of aristocracy and polity, the original character of the two is almost entirely lost sight of by Aristotle. Their relation to oligarchy and democracy appears no longer as that of the pure to the corrupt, dependent upon the end to which government is directed. On the contrary, the distinctions are made to turn upon the characteristic principle that determines participation in political functions. The principles that are in conflict for supremacy in every community, Aristotle says, are liberty, wealth, virtue and good birth (*εὐγένεια*). Where the conduct of the government is assigned on the basis of liberty (and equality, which is an essential element in liberty), the constitution is democratic; where on the basis of wealth, it is oligarchic; where on the basis of virtue, in the strictly ideal sense, it is aristocratic.<sup>3</sup> Polity is the constitution that embodies a blending (*μίξις*) of the two principles, liberty and wealth. When with these two virtue also is combined, the resulting form is entitled to, and generally receives, the name of aristocracy. But this mixed aristocracy he carefully distinguishes from the pure and ideal aristocracy of which the principle is virtue alone.

<sup>1</sup> The distinction between these varieties is made to turn partly upon the extent to which government is subject to law. This criterion had been used by Plato.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the four varieties from most moderate to most extreme democracy correspond in general to the predominance of agricultural, mechanical, mercantile and maritime pursuits among the mass of the people. — IV, iv, 21 and vi, 1–6.

<sup>3</sup> Good birth Aristotle disregards; for, he says, it is merely long-standing wealth and virtue. *ἡ εὐγένειά ἐστιν ἀρετὴ καὶ πλοῦτος ἀρχαῖος*. — IV, viii, 9.

The full application of Aristotelian analysis thus gives a rather formidable aggregate of forms of constitution; and it is doubtful if the philosopher in his best estate could have assigned an actual government clearly and categorically to any one particular class. Certainly *The Politics*, as we have it, is very far from clear in distinguishing each from all the rest. Polity and the mixed aristocracy are especially difficult to disentangle,<sup>1</sup> and various shades of democracy and oligarchy approach perplexingly near to both. But there can be no doubt as to the success of the philosopher in detecting the broad underlying influences, historical, social and economic, through which the manifold variety in political organization is determined. It is his realization of the diversity in these influences that leads him more or less unconsciously to shift from time to time the basis of his classification.

The practical significance of the distinction between constitutions on the basis of principle is best revealed in his refined analysis of the three elements essential to every government.<sup>2</sup> These necessary elements are: first, a deliberative organ (*τὸ βουλευόμενον*); second, a system of magistracies (*τὸ περὶ τὰς ἀρχάς*); and, third, a judicial organ (*τὸ δικάζον*). On the divergencies of form and function in these three elements depends the character of the various constitutions. It is because these divergencies are practically infinite in number that the forms of constitution shade imperceptibly from one to another of the prominent types. In extreme and unquestionable democracy the deliberative organ would be an assembly of all the people, determining directly all questions pertaining to this organ;<sup>3</sup> the magistracies would be filled by lot, and all citizens would be eligible for all offices; the administration of justice would be in the hands of a jury court, chosen by lot from the general body of citizens and exercis-

<sup>1</sup> Sparta is given in different places as an example of each of these forms. Cf. IV, vii, 4 and ix, 6-10.

<sup>2</sup> IV, xiv *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle enumerates as such: peace, war and alliances; legislation; infliction of penalties in cases punishable with death, exile and confiscation of property; election of magistrates and review of their official conduct.

ing jurisdiction over all kinds of cases. In extreme oligarchy, the deliberative organ would be a close corporation of very wealthy citizens, with unlimited powers ; the magistracies would be based on a high property qualification for eligibility ; and the jury court, with general jurisdiction, would consist of a small body, elected on a high property qualification. Polity would exhibit some such combination as this : for the deliberative organ, a body of citizens, with at most a moderate property qualification, exercising jurisdiction over only a part of the subjects normal to this organ ;<sup>1</sup> the magistracies filled through election, either alone or in combination with the lot, but with a property qualification for eligibility ; the administration of justice divided among a number of courts and magistrates, the jurors, like the magistrates, being chosen by a combination of lot and election, and with a moderate property qualification. Practically, the most conspicuous characteristics of the various forms are conceived to be : in democracy, concentration of important functions in the general body of citizens, assignment of offices by lot, as the guaranty of perfect equality, and compensation for public services ; in oligarchy, concentration of functions in a narrow body of the wealthy, assignment of offices on a property qualification and unpaid public services ; in polity, diffusion of functions among various organs, assignment of offices by a combination of lot and election. Practical or mixed aristocracy would be determined by the employment of oligarchic forms, subject to a primary regard for fitness, rather than for wealth, in the ruling body.

## VI. *The Best State.*

In approaching the question as to which form of constitution is the best, the same analytical method which so minutely distinguished the different varieties is applied, with the result that no categorical answer is recognized. We must consider, Aristotle declares, not only what form is the best absolutely (*τὴν ἀρίστην ἀπλῶς*), but what is the best attainable by actual

<sup>1</sup> The other subjects would be in charge of various magistrates.

men and on the average (*μάλιστα πάσαις ταῖς πόλεσιν ἀρμόζουσιν*), and what is the best under given conditions (*ἐκ τῶν ὑποκειμένων*).

As to the absolute or ideal state, there is no room to doubt that the dominion of absolute and ideal virtue or fitness must determine. That is, the best must rule ; if one man is pre-eminent in excellence (*ἀρετῇ*), the form will be royalty ; otherwise, pure aristocracy. Leaving these aside and considering actual men, the criterion of preference among constitutions is the same as in respect to individual conduct : the mean (*τὸ μέσον*) must control. In human society extremes of wealth and poverty are the main sources of evil. The one brings arrogance and a lack of capacity to obey ; the other brings slavishness and a lack of capacity to command. Where a population is divided into the two classes of very rich and very poor, there can be no real state ; for there can be no real friendship between the classes, and friendship is the essential principle of all association.<sup>1</sup> That state, therefore, will be the best in which the middle class is stronger than either or both of the extremes. In such a state the influences which make for peace and order will wholly prevail and stability will be insured. The constitution which in all respects embodies the principle of the mean is polity. This constitution, therefore, must be on the average the best.<sup>2</sup>

But it is not to be understood that this form, which is on the average the best, is necessarily the best for every people and under every set of conditions. Circumstances, Aristotle holds, may make any form the best. The general principle here is that the element which desires the existing constitution to stand shall be stronger than those which desire change. In other words, stability is the criterion ; and that constitution is best which under the circumstances will last the longest. In this sense, democracy is best where the poor greatly exceed

<sup>1</sup> ἡ κοινωνία φιλικόν. — IV, xi, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Mixed aristocracy is not clearly enough distinguished by Aristotle from polity to warrant giving it a preferential position. Theoretically, it would apparently stand first of the two.

the rich in numbers ; oligarchy, where the superiority of the rich in resources and power more than compensates for their inferiority in numbers ; polity, where the middle class is clearly superior to all the rest.

So far as it is possible to arrange an order of excellence with reference to all the various points of view from which Aristotle considers the different forms of constitution, the following<sup>1</sup> would convey his ideas : 1, ideal royalty ; 2, pure aristocracy ; 3, mixed aristocracy ; 4, polity ; 5, most moderate democracy ; 6, most moderate oligarchy ; 7, the two intermediate varieties of democracy and oligarchy, the former having preference over the corresponding grades of the latter ; 8, extreme democracy ; 9, extreme oligarchy ; 10, tyranny.

The plan of *The Politics* includes a comprehensive discussion of the conditions essential to the best constitution. It is not clear whether this feature of the work was intended by Aristotle to deal primarily with the best absolutely or with the best on the average.<sup>2</sup> There is much in his treatment that is wholly abstract and idealizing, Platonic in both method and substance, and suggestive of the pure aristocracy ; there is also very much of the characteristic Aristotelian practicality, suggestive of the polity. But in the text of *The Politics*, as it has come down to us, the details of constitutional organization are wholly lacking ; and attention is confined to the determination of the most favorable external conditions for the state and the most effective methods of character-building for the people.<sup>3</sup> A preliminary discussion, devoted to a nearer definition of the true end of the state, develops the conclusion that for the state, as for the individual, the best life lies in the pursuit of virtue, rather than of power or wealth. As there is nothing noble or exalted in the ruling of slaves by an individual, so there is nothing noble or exalted in the exercise of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Susemihl, note 1305.

<sup>2</sup> III, end. Here the discussion is announced in general terms. The specific purpose is a moot question in the controversies of the commentators as to the order of the books.

<sup>3</sup> The best state is the subject of Bks. VII and VIII, the latter being a fragment.



despotic dominion by a state.<sup>1</sup> Conquest, therefore, through aggressive war is not to be recognized as an end to be kept in view by the philosophic legislator.<sup>2</sup> A peaceful career, devoted to self-perfection, through the harmonious and unceasing activity of all the elements of political and social organization, is the true ideal, and that which involves complete happiness for both state and people.

The realization of this ideal depends partly upon external conditions, which must be more or less determined by chance, but to a far greater extent upon the character and culture of the people, which may be fixed through scientific legislation. Aristotle's treatment of both branches of the subject strongly suggests that of Plato in *The Laws*. He aims to present the desirable features of a city state, without exceeding the limits of the possible, and he employs constantly the doctrine of the mean. The size of the population and the extent of territory must be sufficiently great to make the state self-sufficing. But the number of people must not exceed what can be well supervised (*εὐσύνοπτος*); the community must be a city (*πόλις*) and not a people (*ἔθνος*).<sup>3</sup> The city should be situated near enough to the sea to procure what is necessary from abroad, but not near enough unduly to stimulate commerce and the seafaring class. In natural endowments the population should resemble the Greeks, who combine the spirit and courage of the northern races with the intellectual keenness of the Asiatics.<sup>4</sup> The elements essential to make the state self-

<sup>1</sup> But Aristotle recognizes the justice of non-despotic dominion, *i.e.*, that which is directed to the good of the subject rather than of the master state. — VII, xiv, 21.

<sup>2</sup> In strict accordance with his theory of slavery, Aristotle intimates that aggressive war is just when directed against those who are by nature slaves. — *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> "What commander," he asks, "could marshal so huge a host, or what herald, save with the voice of Stentor?" That is, the limit of the number of citizens depends upon the possibility of conducting a public assembly at which all should be present. — VII, iv, 11.

<sup>4</sup> The Hellenes, he observes, are in a particular sense fitted for political life and could, if united in a single government, rule the world. (VII, vii, 2, 3.) Several philosophers since Aristotle have adopted his principle, and have applied it so as to show that their own particular people, because lying south of some nations and north of others, are especially qualified for dominion. So Bodin.

sufficing are agriculturists, artisans, warriors, well-to-do people, priests and administrators (*κριταὶ τῶν δικαίων καὶ συμφερόντων*). Of these the first two, on principles already mentioned, while *in* the state cannot be *of* it. The other classes are as to *personnel* one. They must constitute the citizens proper, must own the land (in severalty, save a part owned by the state) and must perform at successive periods of life the functions of warriors, administrators (participants in all forms of purely political life) and priests. Performing thus in succession the various duties of citizenship, they will maintain that equality which is distinctive of the free citizen and will round out the civic character by experience in both ruling and being ruled. Supported by the produce of their land, they will enjoy that leisure without which true virtue is impossible.

In addition to these important considerations Aristotle discusses many minor features of the internal ordering of the city, and devotes particular attention to the arrangements for defense against attack. His ideal city is not contemplated as remote from the contingencies of foreign war. The topography of the site, the water supply, the arrangement of the streets—all must have reference to a possible siege; and fortifications, both walls and citadel, he regards as indispensable. Clinging firmly to his principle that aggressive war is excluded from the purposes of the ideal state, he maintains that a full provision of all the latest improvements in warlike equipment must be made as the surest guaranty against attack.

As to the means through which the ideal character is to be developed in the citizens of the state, Aristotle finds it, as did Plato, in scientific education (*παιδεία*). The ultimate function of the state is pedagogic. For the perfection of the community depends upon the perfection of its constituent members, and the perfection of the latter can be achieved only through the cultivation of moral and intellectual excellence. Hence a system of uniform, compulsory, public education is the first essential of the best state, and the administration of such a system is the most important function of government. Aristotle's project of educational legislation is of the same general

character as that of Plato. It aims at mental culture rather than practical utility, lays due stress upon the physical side of the training,<sup>1</sup> and attaches to music a moral significance and a character-making influence that are quite incomprehensible to the modern mind. The full application of this system is to begin in the case of each citizen at the age of seven. But no less important to Aristotle than to Plato seems governmental supervision of life from its very inception. We find in *The Politics* provision for a rigid regulation of the times and conditions of marriage and procreation and of the care of the young.<sup>2</sup> Thus will be insured the ideal basis for the later training, the finished product of which will be a matured manhood of physical grace and beauty, combined with a moral and intellectual fitness for the lofty thought and noble action worthy of the free man's leisure.

## VII. *Revolutions.*

Ideally, the stability of a constitution would be insured by the system just described. From this point of view, Aristotle made no important advance over Plato. Practically, however, instability and transformation had been a most characteristic feature of Hellenic constitutional life, and as such it afforded a particularly appropriate field for the application of the Aristotelian method. Plato's systematic treatment of the subject was limited to a fanciful sketch of the evolution of existing constitutions from his ideal form;<sup>3</sup> Aristotle devoted to it a whole book of *The Politics*, embodying an enormous mass of historical facts and a masterly exhibition of scientific analysis. The general trend of development, from royalty through oli-

<sup>1</sup> In connection with this, Aristotle inveighs even more strongly than Plato against the undue attention given by the Spartans to merely military exercises, and declares that the decline of Sparta proves that the system has been a failure.

<sup>2</sup> The physical integrity of the population is to be maintained by the exposure of defective infants, and the legal limit of its size by the practice of abortion. — VII, xvi, 15.

<sup>3</sup> The Republic, VIII, 546. Aristotle's criticism of this part of Plato's work is unmerciful, and also to a considerable degree unfair. — *Politics*, V, xii, 7-18. Cf. Jowett's Notes *ad loc.*

garchy and tyranny to democracy, was explained by Aristotle as a concomitant of social and economic progress in Hellas.<sup>1</sup> A more specific determination of the sources of constitutional transformation was imperatively required, not only to complete the system of rational political speculation, but also to explain the chronic insurrection and revolution<sup>2</sup> which made the reality of Hellenic politics so far different from the calm and orderly existence of the philosophic ideal. Indeed, the ideal doubtless took its character largely from the aversion which the violent and ignoble features of actual politics inspired in the reflecting mind.

The most general cause of revolutionary movements (*στάσεις*) Aristotle finds to be the craving of men for equality. As already noticed, equality has a double character—absolute and proportional. The masses are ever seeking for absolute equality—for the same privileges and power that are possessed by the few; the few strive for proportionate equality—for a superiority in privilege and power corresponding to their superior wealth, or ability, or birth.<sup>3</sup> By this one broad principle, thus, may be explained the manifold phenomena of the conflicts for the establishment of monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy and democracy. Of the particular causes which are operative in revolutions the philosopher enumerates a large number, grouping them according as they lie more in the sphere of human passions (jealousy, arrogance, fear, *etc.*) or in that of impersonal facts. His remarks under the latter head exhibit his insight at its best, tracing, as he does, political transformation to obscure social and economic sources.<sup>4</sup> Particular stress is laid upon the fact that the causes of revolutions are to be regarded as quite distinct from the occasions. The latter may be and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. III, xv, 11-13; IV, xiii, 9-12.

<sup>2</sup> The political history of Hellas during the two centuries preceding the Macedonian conquest was, from this standpoint, not unlike the history of Latin America since 1800.

<sup>3</sup> But noble birth, he explains again, signifies merely inherited wealth and virtue. Cf. *supra*, p. 291, note 3.

<sup>4</sup> V, iii. For example, he notes how an oligarchy based on a property qualification may be converted into democracy by a mere rise in values. Cf. V, vi, 17.

often are incidents of trifling character ; the former are always profound. Thus the private quarrel of Harmodius and Aristogiton with the Pisistratidæ, while undoubtedly the occasion, was by no means the cause, of the downfall of the tyranny at Athens.

These doctrines as to the causes of revolutions are applied by Aristotle to each of the special forms of constitution. Democracy, oligarchy, polity and aristocracy are subjected in turn to a searching examination, through which the manner of their undoing is laid bare.<sup>1</sup> This investigation duly sets forth the influences which produced the broad trend of government from monarchy to democracy, but at the same time explains all the manifold deviations from this general order. Democracy has not always been the last term of the series, but has often passed into oligarchy and tyranny. For both these transformations the demagogues have been responsible. In the early days the fighting demagogue, by posing as the friend of the people, made himself tyrant ; in later days the talking demagogue, ever assailing the rich, drives them to oligarchic revolution in self-defense. More common, however, is the transformation of democracy from the more moderate to the extremest variety, through the conviction impressed by the demagogues upon the masses that the people are above even the law. Oligarchy, Aristotle finds, falls chiefly through dissensions and ambitions in the privileged classes themselves. Where the rulers are harmonious, he says, an oligarchy is not easily overturned. But this form of constitution may, like democracy, be transmuted, not into a wholly distinct form, but into another variety of itself ; and this often happens. As to the mixed constitutions, aristocracy and polity, revolutions may most often be traced to an inexact adjustment of the different principles which are combined in them. Aristocracy tends to become oligarchy, through the undue encroachment of the

<sup>1</sup> This investigation is an almost perfect example of the application of the historical method in political science. The facts adduced by Aristotle as the basis of his reasoning constitute a valuable body of sources for Greek history, and at the same time throw a rather lurid light on Hellenic politics.

richer; polity to become democracy, through the undue aspiration of the poorer classes of the people. Stability can be maintained only by proportionate equality and by giving to each his own. It is in these mixed constitutions in particular that transformations are apt to take place unnoticed, through the imperceptible modification of social and economic conditions.

Aristotle follows up his elaborate array of the causes that produce revolutions by an equally impressive array of means for preventing them.<sup>1</sup> The character of the particular causes suggests at once the character of the corresponding remedies. In the mixed constitutions especial care must be taken to detect the obscure beginnings of new conditions making for political change. In aristocracy and oligarchy the inferior classes must be well treated, and the principles of democratic equality must be strictly applied among the privileged classes.<sup>2</sup> The body of citizens interested in political stability must often be roused by the cry that the constitution is in danger.<sup>3</sup> No single man should be permitted to attain to power either suddenly or in a disproportionate degree. "Men," the philosopher reflects, "are easily spoiled, and not every one can bear prosperity." Access to positions of power should be made gradual and slow, and undue influence on the part of any individual should be met, if necessary, by ostracism. In every state, further, the utmost care should be taken to exclude the officers from all opportunity of pecuniary gain. Especially important is this in oligarchy; for while the masses may be contented to leave political office to others and devote themselves to money-making, they will always resent being excluded from positions that bring not only honor but also profit. The surest way to satisfy both the classes and the masses is to throw the offices open to all, but without salaries. This will insure in practice the manning of the offices chiefly by the well-to-do. But every care must be taken, by public statements as to the condition and conduct of the finances, to inspire confidence

<sup>1</sup> V, viii.

<sup>3</sup> V, viii, 8.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, offices must be held for short terms so that all may participate in them.

that the treasury is not being exploited by the officials. It is desirable, moreover, that no class should have a monopoly of the offices. In oligarchy the poor, and in democracy the rich, should be encouraged to share in those administrative functions which do not affect the sovereign power.<sup>1</sup> This corresponds to the broad dictate of good policy, not to push to extremes the principle of any particular form. Extremes provoke resistance; the mean should be observed; for, whatever element may rule, all the other elements are valuable to the state. Finally, the most efficient of means for the preservation of the state from revolution is that which is in general the least considered — a system of education in the spirit of the constitution. Legislation is likely to avail little unless the youth of the city are trained to appreciate what is truly essential to the maintenance of their particular system. But this does not mean that oligarchic training is to involve merely what is agreeable to the wealthy, and democratic training what is agreeable to the masses. That would only emphasize the evils which already exist. For in oligarchies the aristocratic youth pass their time in idleness and profligacy, while the masses are left to toil and plot rebellion; and in democracies distorted notions of liberty and equality lead to license and to the overthrow of all constitutional restraint.<sup>2</sup>

Aristotle's discussion of the monarchic constitutions is particularly noteworthy for his finished exposition of tyranny as an art. Royalty, as a practical institution, is in his eyes only a more or less interesting survival from archaic times and conditions. It was essentially the unchecked rule of a super-eminent individual or family over willing subjects. But with general enlightenment the preëminence of any one man has become impossible, and the passing of royalty cannot be pre-

<sup>1</sup> The qualities demanded by Aristotle in those who fill the supreme offices of the state are strikingly suggestive of Jefferson's triad of test questions. Aristotle enumerates: "(1) loyalty to the established constitution; (2) the greatest administrative capacity; (3) virtue and justice proper to each form of government." Jefferson asked: "Is he honest? Is he capable? Is he faithful to the constitution?" — *The Politics*, V, ix, 1; *Jefferson's Works* (1854), IV, 405.

<sup>2</sup> V, ix, 15.

vented; for when the subjects cease to yield the monarch willing obedience, whatever absolute power he retains must rest on force, and he is therefore no king, but a tyrant; and if, on the other hand, he submits to limitations on his power, he may remain king in name, but is no longer a monarch in fact. As distinct from royalty, tyranny is to Aristotle a political phenomenon sufficiently modern to demand the same scientific consideration as actual constitutions.<sup>1</sup> Of all the species of government it is as a rule the least permanent; therefore the causes which lead to its downfall require special attention. In general these causes are the same as those which operate in the extremest varieties of democracy and oligarchy. The inherent likeness of these forms to tyranny is, in fact, the theme of reiterated comment by Aristotle.<sup>2</sup>

To counteract the influences working against him and to maintain his power, the tyrant has, the philosopher points out, the choice between two diametrically opposite policies. That most commonly adopted is one of ruthless and unqualified repression: the best citizens are slain or banished; whatever makes for a noble and exalted life among the people is suppressed; association for intellectual or social purposes is forbidden; espionage renders dangerous all freedom of intercourse; vast enterprises, whether of peace<sup>3</sup> or of war, are devised to keep the people occupied and poor; and the tyrant himself, surrounded by a servile crowd of foreigners, lives a life of undisguised luxury and selfishness. The more rare, but in Aristotle's opinion the more effective, policy is that according to which the tyrant keeps a firm hold on the essence of power, but disguises the reality of the tyranny by the semblance, at least, of beneficent rule. The administration is ostentatiously economical; the public interest is made a subject of the ruler's grave concern; those who come in contact with him are inspired with respect, rather than with fear; he patronizes genius,

<sup>1</sup> Tyranny was not a *πολιτεία* in the Aristotelian sense of the term. Cf. *supra*, p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., "The people likes to be a monarch. Wherefore, the parasite is esteemed by both, . . . for the demagogue is the parasite of the people." — V, xi, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle cites the Egyptian Pyramids, among other examples of this.



shows constant respect for the things of religion and avoids all public displays of sensuality or luxury. It is essential to this policy, however, that the tyrant shall win a reputation for at least the military virtues; that he shall select his subordinates from men of plodding, rather than enterprising character; and that while inspiring the rich and the poor with distrust of each other and confidence in him, he shall, when choice must be made between them, side always with the stronger.<sup>1</sup> In short, the characteristics of monarchic rule of this kind are that it be rather paternal than despotic, that it be based on moderation rather than excess, and that it be popular — winning the classes by friendship and the masses by the arts of the demagogue. On such principles, the tyrant's rule will be better for the subjects, will be more lasting and will tend to have a beneficial influence on the character of the ruler himself.

#### VIII. *The Hellenic and the Universal in Aristotle.*

The foregoing sketch of Aristotle's work should at least suggest the importance of the purely Hellenic elements in his political philosophy. His historical research went far beyond the confines of Hellas, but the system which he framed was determined in its most essential characteristics by the conditions that prevailed within those confines. The postulates of his thought, as of Plato's, were: the general superiority of the Greeks over other races; the inherent necessity and justice of slavery as the basis of social organization; the typical character of the city state in political organization; the incompatibility of bread-winning pursuits with the moral and intellectual attributes of good citizenship; the supreme importance of state-directed education and training in the maintenance of political virtue; and, finally, the subordination of all personal motives and conduct to the dictates of law — conceived either as the purely impersonal and more or less mystic product of

<sup>1</sup> Another and very famous dictate of policy suggested by Aristotle is, that all the rewards and honors of state should be bestowed by the ruler in person, while the punishments and disgraces should flow through other channels. — V, xi, 26.

divine or natural forces, or as the formulated wisdom of some individual of almost superhuman sagacity.<sup>1</sup> Most of these ideas have in the course of the ages either passed entirely out of consideration or have been so modified as to lose the significance which Aristotle attached to them. But when we look further into his philosophy, beneath the general outlines determined by these Hellenic dogmas, we find a long series of principles which are as ultimate as human nature itself, and which, in almost the exact shape in which Aristotle formulated them, are features of political science at the present day.

Prominent among these is the distinct and unequivocal conception of the ultimate problem of politics — the reconciliation of liberty and authority. The primary fact of the state he represents to be the distinction between rulers and ruled. That is, political organization is inconceivable without the submission of one human will to another. The anarchist's conception of liberty and equality, incompatible with this doctrine, is denounced by Aristotle. Describing the tendencies of extreme democracy, he says :

Equality is held to signify the rule of the majority, and liberty and equality to mean that each may do as he will. Hence, in democracies each follows his own inclinations. But this is evil. For life in subjection to the constitution is not to be regarded as slavery, but as the highest welfare.<sup>2</sup>

This view as to the relation between the individual and the state is duly supplemented by the doctrine as to the qualifications under which the personal authority in government is manifested. The most characteristic function of the officer is, indeed, declared to be the issuing of orders.<sup>3</sup> But above the officer he insists must be the impersonal factors in the constitution — namely, public opinion and customary law. The latter force he describes with perfect clearness ; the former, though less distinctly defined, is undoubtedly what he has in view in

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, while ascribing law in general to the slow working of custom, manifests at times the influence of the common Hellenic idea, that a perfect code may be, as it has been, projected into operation by an all-wise legislator.

<sup>2</sup> V, ix, 15.

<sup>3</sup> IV, xv, 4.

ascribing to the people as a whole the function of final judgment on official conduct and in defending the thesis that the opinion of the mass is preferable to that of the expert.<sup>1</sup>

In respect to the ultimate idea of sovereignty Aristotle discerns, rather than adopts, the theories of modern times. He realizes the importance of a determinate human superior, whose undoubted will is final; but he recurs again to the thought of a law controlling even this sovereign. He prefers that this ultimate human superior should be the whole people; but he qualifies this solution, first, by limiting it to a society in which the general level of virtue — *i.e.*, of moral and intellectual attainment — is high, and second, by limiting the field of sovereign legislative activity to the region not previously occupied by law. Aristotle cannot, in fact, think of the sovereign as essentially legislator. The normal function of the supreme organ is administration; but, almost without being aware of it, the philosopher resigns the key to his whole position by assuming that it is the duty of the sovereign to legislate when on any point "the law is either inadequate or improper."<sup>2</sup> Nothing more than this was needed to justify the proceedings of the popular assembly in extreme democracy, which Aristotle wholly abhors; for the substitution of decrees of the assembly for law would be merely a judgment by the sovereign that the law was either inadequate or improper.<sup>3</sup>

The doctrine of *The Politics* as to the three elements necessary in the organization of constitutional government is another example of striking insight. In this case, however, the relation of his theory to the modern theory of the separation of powers may easily be mistaken. Aristotle distinguishes three essential organs, which he designates as the deliberative, that pertaining to the offices and the judicial. Each of these has something in common with, respectively, the legislative, the executive and the judicial departments of modern analysis. But he contemplates no such distinction in respect to functions as has been made the basis of the latter. His deliberative

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 288.

<sup>3</sup> *Cf.* IV, iv, 31.

<sup>2</sup> "Ὅσα δὲ μὴ δυνατόν τὸν νόμον κρίνειν ἢ ὅλως ἢ ἐδ. — III, xv, 6.

organ is, indeed, legislative, but only to the extent indicated above—that, namely, of supplementing the preëxisting law ; his officers are executive, but scarcely more so than the deliberative organ ; and his judicial organ differs from the deliberative rather in constitution and procedure than in function.

Finally, the permanent and universal side of Aristotle's philosophy is peculiarly illustrated by the importance which he attaches to economic influences in political organization and activity. From the theoretical point of view the validity of private property is maintained, and from the practical point of view the eternal friction between those who have and those who have not is made to explain many of the most conspicuous phenomena of government. On this turn his classification of forms, his adjustment of administrative machinery and, to a very large extent, his explanation of revolutions. And from this is derived that doctrine which has been so impressively confirmed by later history, that stability and prosperity are most to be found where extremes of wealth and poverty are unknown and the middle class is the strongest.

If *The Laws* of Plato leaves in one's mind the vague but unmistakable suggestion of an Atticized Sparta, *The Politics* of Aristotle leaves somewhat more distinctly the impression of a Spartanized Athens. This corresponds to the success of the later philosopher in combining in his thought the Hellenic and the universal. For no other Hellenic state was so universal as Athens. In both things material and things of the spirit she sounded the depths and crowned the heights of human nature. A genius peculiarly susceptible to Athenian inspiration must necessarily be in many respects as universal as humanity itself. Such a genius was Aristotle's, and such was the character of his philosophy. And hence it is that we find, in systems so diverse as those of military Rome, of the theological Middle Age and of the materialistic modern era, the essential features of political organization and activity explicable, and actually explained, on the lines of the Aristotelian analysis.

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