

HS0.301: Classical Text Readings-1

Short Assignment-3

**Q:**

Note the main points with respect to Aristotle's critique of Plato's *Republic* as laid out in *Politics*, Book II, Chapters 1-5 (pp. 38-51 in Ernest Barker's translation).

Word Limit: 500 Words

**Ans:**

As there is no absolute definition of a perfect government, in Book II, Aristotle presents a new theory on how a government should be. Before presenting his theory on a perfect government, he examines the preexisting theories and critiques them at various points to support his theory in the future.

In Plato's Republic, Plato aimed to achieve the most remarkable unity among the masses for the city's best interests. He argued that the citizens living in a city often share common characteristics. As a political association is a sharing, citizens in a city should share everything among themselves to achieve the utmost unity. He further proposed, *"women, children, and property should be held in common"*.

Aristotle agreed that it is impossible for the citizens to share nothing among themselves, so he agrees that the basis of a political association is sharing; he asks, *"How much should be shared?"*. Should the citizens share everything or to a limited extent only? Where does the limit of sharing exist? He critiques Plato for proposing that *"women, children, and property should be held in common"*.

Plato aimed to achieve unity among the masses, but Aristotle argued that such a setting is impractical. In contrast to a military alliance, a city itself represents plurality. Aristotle argued that stability and self-sufficiency come only from the involvement of different people and everyone making different contributions. He argued that a city exists when different individuals are assigned roles and expected to fit into various social classes.

Further, Aristotle argued on the concept of individuality, claiming that one tends to take better care of his belongings and has a personal attachment with his relatives. He claimed that unity could be seen in the animal world, where everything is ordinary, but he noted that animals don't have a household to maintain or a city to function in.

Affection with other individuals is one of the goods, and one is expected to protect his loved ones. Still, if everything is shared, then many people claiming the same thing as their personal would result in a chaotic situation, such as increased crime, incest, homicides, etc., because of one's greed. Moreover, sharing women and children would make children devoid of proper parental care and raising them in nurseries won't transfer various values such as love, compassion, and friendship.

Then he questioned whether the property in a city should be familiar to all or belong to individuals just as individual relations between humans. The idea of joint possession may increase the unity among citizens to work for the best of the city, but it can not guarantee the same as greed in some individuals would create a terrible working space. In contrast, people tend to take better care of a property if it belongs to them, work harder, and share it with their loved ones.

Aristotle claimed that the whole idea of treating the city as a single unit is problematic because it is correct only in some particular cases, not in every whole situation. He argued that happiness and trust among everyone are necessary for stability and self-sufficiency. Still, it will exist as a whole only if it exists in individual parts.