ARISTOTLE

Politics

Translated,
with Introduction and Notes,
by
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Hackett Publishing Company
Indianapolis / Cambridge

Aristotle: 384–322 B.C.

Printed in the United States of America

09 08 07 06 4 5 6 7 8 9

Cover and interior design by Dan Kirklin

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Aristotle
[Politics. English]
Politics/Aristotle; translated, with introduction and notes, by C.D.C. Reeve.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
ISBN 0-87220-389-1 (cloth). ISBN 0-87220-388-3 (pbk.)
1. Political science—Early works to 1800. I. Reeve, C.D.C., 1948– . II. Title.
JC71.A41R44 1998 97-46398
320'.01'1—dc21 CIP

ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-389-1 (cloth)
ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-388-4 (pbk.)

BOOK VII

Chapter 1

Anyone who intends to investigate the best constitution in the proper way must first determine which life is most choiceworthy, since if this remains unclear, what the best constitution is must also remain unclear. For it is appropriate for those to fare best who live in the best constitution their circumstances allow—provided nothing contrary to reasonable expectation occurs. That is why we should first come to some agreement about what the most choiceworthy life is for practically speaking everyone,[1] and then determine whether it is the same for an individual as for a community, or different.

Since, then, I consider that I have already expressed much that is adequate about the best life in the "external" works,[2] I propose to make use of them here as well. For since, in the case of one division at least, there are three groups—external GOODS, goods of the body, and goods of the soul—surely no one would raise a dispute and say that not all of them need be possessed by those who are BLESSEDLY HAPPY. For no one would call a person blessedly happy who has no shred of courage, temperance, justice, or practical wisdom, but is afraid of the flies buzzing around him, stops at nothing to gratify his appetite for food or drink, betrays his dearest friends for a pittance, and has a mind as foolish and prone to error as a child's or a madman's. But while almost all accept these claims, they disagree about quantity and relative superiority. For they consider any amount of virtue, however small, to be sufficient, but seek an unlimitedly excessive amount of wealth, possessions, power, reputation, and the like.

We, however, will say to them that it is easy to reach a reliable conclusion on these matters even from the facts themselves. For we see that the

1. At 1324^{a}18–19 it is allowed that participating in a city-state may not be most choiceworthy for *absolutely* everyone.
2. See 1278^{b}31 note.

40 virtues are not acquired and preserved by means of external goods, but the other way around,[3] and we see that a happy life for human beings,
1323b whether it consists in pleasure or virtue or both, is possessed more often by those who have cultivated their characters and minds to an excessive degree, but have been moderate in their acquisition of external goods, than by those who have acquired more of the latter than they can possi-
5 bly use, but are deficient in the former. Moreover, if we investigate the matter on the basis of argument, it is plain to see. For external goods have a limit, as does any tool, and all useful things are useful for something; so excessive amounts of them must harm or bring no benefit to their possessors.[4] In the case of each of the goods of the soul, however,
10 the more excessive it is, the more useful it is (if these goods too should be thought of as useful, and not simply as noble).

It is generally clear too, we shall say, that the relation of superiority holding between the best condition of each thing and that of others corresponds to that holding between the things whose conditions we say
15 they are. So since the soul is UNQUALIFIEDLY more valuable, and also more valuable to us, than possessions or the body, its best states must be proportionally better than theirs. Besides, it is for the sake of the soul that these things are naturally choiceworthy, and every sensible person
20 should choose them for its sake, not the soul for theirs.

We may take it as agreed, then, that each person has just as much happiness as he has virtue, practical wisdom, and the action that expresses them. We may use GOD as evidence of this. For he is blessedly happy, not because of any external goods but because of himself and a certain qual-
25 ity in his nature.[5] This is also the reason that good luck and happiness are necessarily different. For chance or luck produces goods external to the soul, but no one is just or temperate as a result of luck or because of luck.[6]

30 The next point depends on the same arguments. The happy city-state is the one that is best and acts nobly. It is impossible for those who do not do noble deeds to act nobly; and no action, whether a man's or a city-state's, is noble when separate from virtue and practical wisdom. But the

3. The point is probably not that virtue invariably makes you rich, but that, without virtue, wealth and the rest can do you as much harm as good.
4. See 1256b35–36, 1257b28.
5. See Introduction xliii–xlv. Luck (*tuchē*) and chance (*to automaton*) and the difference between them are discussed in *Ph.* II.4–6.
6. See *NE* 1153b19–25.

courage, justice, and practical wisdom of a city-state have the same capacity and are of the same kind as those possessed by each human being who is said to be just, practically wise, and temperate.

So much, then, for the preface to our discussion.[7] For we cannot avoid talking about these issues altogether, but neither can we go through all the arguments pertaining to them, since that is a task for another type of study.[8] But for now, let us assume this much, that the best life, both for individuals separately and for city-states collectively, is a life of virtue sufficiently equipped with the resources[9] needed to take part in virtuous actions. With regard to those who dispute this, if any happen not to be persuaded by what has been said, we must ignore them in our present study, but investigate them later.

Chapter 2

It remains to say whether the happiness of each individual human being is the same as that of a city-state or not. But here too the answer is evident, since everyone would agree that they are the same. For those who suppose that living well for an individual consists in wealth will also call a whole city-state blessedly happy if it happens to be wealthy. And those who honor the tyrannical life above all would claim that the city-state that rules the greatest number[10] is happiest. And if someone approves of an individual because of his virtue, he will also say that the more excellent city-state is happier.

Two questions need to be investigated, however. First, which life is more choiceworthy, the one that involves taking part in politics with other people and participating in a city-state, or the life of an alien cut off from the political community? Second, and regardless of whether participating in a city-state is more choiceworthy for everyone or for most but not for all, which constitution, which condition of the city-state, is best? This second question, and not the one about what is choiceworthy for the individual, is a task for political thought or theory. And since that is the investigation we are now engaged in, whereas the former is a further task, our task is the second question.[11]

7. VII.1–3 is all prefatory, as 1325^{b}33 makes clear.
8. Namely, ethics.
9. That is, external GOODS.
10. Presumably, the greatest number of other city-states.
11. See Introduction xlvi–xlviii.

It is evident that the best constitution must be that organization in which anyone might do best and live a blessedly happy life. But the very people who agree that the most choiceworthy life is the life of virtue are the ones who dispute about whether it is the political life of action that is worthy of choice or rather the one released from external concerns—a contemplative life, for example, which some say is the only life for a philosopher. For it is evident that almost all of those, past or present, with the greatest love for the honor accorded to virtue have chosen between these two lives (I mean the political life and the philosophic one). And it makes no small difference on which side the truth lies, since anyone with sound practical wisdom at least must organize his affairs by looking to the better target—and this applies to human beings individually and to the constitution communally.

Some people think that ruling over one's neighbors like a master involves one of the greatest injustices, and that rule of a statesman, though it involves no injustice, does involve an impediment to one's own well-being. Others think almost the opposite, they say that an active, political life is the only one for a man, since the actions expressing each of the virtues are no more available to private individuals than to those engaged in communal affairs and politics. Some give this reply, then, but others claim that only a constitution that involves being a master or tyrant is happy.

For some people, indeed, the fundamental aim of the constitution and the laws just is to rule their neighbors like a master. That is why, even though most customs have been established pretty much at random in most cases, anywhere the laws have to some extent a single aim, it is always domination. So in Sparta and Crete the educational system and most of the laws are set up for war. Besides, all the nations that have the power to be ACQUISITIVE honor military power—for example, the Scythians, Persians, Thracians, and Celts. Indeed, some of them even have laws designed to foster military virtue. It is said that in Carthage, for example, they receive armlets as decorations for each campaign in which they take part. There was once a law in Macedonia too that any man who had not killed an enemy must wear a halter for a belt. Among the Scythians, when the cup passes around at a feast, those who have not killed an enemy are not permitted to drink from it. And among the Iberians, a warlike race, they place small obelisks in the earth around a man's tomb to show the number of enemies he has killed. And there are many other similar practices among other peoples, some prescribed by law, others by custom.

Yet to anyone willing to investigate the matter, it would perhaps seem quite absurd if the task of a statesman involved being able to study ways to rule or master his neighbors, whether they are willing or not. For how could this be a political or legislative task, when it is not even lawful? But to rule not only justly but also unjustly is unlawful, whereas it is quite possible to dominate unjustly. Certainly, this is not what we see in the other sciences; for it is not the doctor's or captain's task to use force on his patients or passengers if he cannot persuade them. Yet many seem to think that statesmanship is the same as mastership,[12] and what they all say is unjust or nonbeneficial when it is done to them, they are not ashamed to do to others. For they seek just rule for themselves, but pay no attention to justice in their dealings with others. It is absurd to deny, however, that one thing is fit to be a master and another not fit to be a master.[13] So, if indeed one is that way, one should not try to rule as a master over everyone, but only over those who are fit to be ruled by a master. Similarly, one should not hunt human beings for a feast or sacrifice, but only animals that are fit to be hunted for these purposes: and that is any wild animal that is edible.

Furthermore, it is possible for even a single city-state to be happy all by itself, provided it is well governed, since it is possible for a city-state to be settled somewhere by itself and to employ excellent laws. And *its* constitution will not be organized for the purposes of war or of dominating its enemies (for we are assuming that it has none).

It is clear, therefore, that all military practices are to be regarded as noble, not when they are pursued as the highest end of all, but only when they are pursued for the sake of the highest end. The task of an excellent legislator, then, is to study how a city-state, a race of men, or any other community can come to have a share in a good life and in the happiness that is possible for them. There will be differences, of course, in some of the laws that are instituted, and if there are neighboring peoples, it belongs to legislative science to consider what sorts of military training are needed in relation to which sorts of people and which measures are to be used in relation to each.

But the question of which end the best constitution should aim at will receive a proper investigation later.[14]

12. See 1252^{a}7–16 and note.
13. Reading *despozon* with Lord and the mss.
14. VII.13–15.

Chapter 3

We must now reply to the two sides who agree that the virtuous life is most choiceworthy, but disagree about how to practice it. For some rule out the holding of political office and consider that the life of a free person is both different from that of a statesman and the most choiceworthy
20 one of all. But others consider that the political life is best, since it is impossible for someone inactive to do or act well, and that doing well and happiness are the same. We must reply that they are both partly right and partly wrong. On the one hand, it is true to say that the life of a free person is better than that of a master. For there is certainly nothing
25 grand about using a slave as a slave, since ordering people to do necessary tasks is in no way noble. None the less, it is wrong to consider that every kind of rule is rule by a master. For the difference between rule over free people and over slaves is no smaller than the difference between being naturally free and being a natural slave. We have adequately
30 distinguished them in our first discussions.[15] On the other hand, to praise inaction more than action is not correct either. For happiness is ACTION, and many noble things reach their end in the actions of those who are just and temperate.

Perhaps someone will take these conclusions to imply, however, that
35 having authority over everyone is what is best. For in that way one would have authority over the greatest number of the very noblest actions. It would follow that someone who has the power to rule should not surrender it to his neighbor but take it away from him, and that a father should disregard his children, a child his father, a friend his friend, and pay no attention to anything except ruling. For what is best is most choiceworthy, and doing well is best.
40

What they say is perhaps true, if indeed those who use force and com-
1325[b] mit robbery will come to possess the most choiceworthy thing there is. But perhaps they cannot come to possess it, and the underlying assumption here is false. For someone cannot do noble actions if he is not as superior to those he rules as a husband is to his wife, a father to his chil-
5 dren, or a master to his slaves. Therefore, a transgressor could never make up later for his deviation from virtue. For among those who are similar, ruling and being ruled in turn is just and noble, since this is equal or similar treatment. But unequal shares for equals or dissimilar ones for similars is contrary to nature; and nothing contrary to nature is

15. I.4–7.

noble. Hence when someone else has superior virtue and his power to do the best things is also superior, it is noble to follow and just to obey him. But he should possess not virtue alone, but also the power he needs to do these things.

If these claims are correct, and we should assume that happiness is doing well, then the best life, whether for a whole city-state collectively or for an individual, would be a life of action. Yet it is not necessary, as some suppose, for a life of action to involve relations with other people, nor are those thoughts alone active which we engage in for the sake of action's consequences; the study and thought that are their own ends and are engaged in for their own sake are much more so. For to do or act well is the end, so that ACTION of a sort is the end too. And even in the case of actions involving external objects, the one who does them most fully is, strictly speaking, the master craftsman who directs them by means of his thought.[16]

Moreover, city-states situated by themselves, which have deliberately chosen to live that way, do not necessarily have to be inactive, since activity can take place even among their parts. For the parts of a city-state have many sorts of communal relationships with one another.[17] Similarly, this holds for any human being taken singly. For otherwise GOD and the entire universe could hardly be in a fine condition; for they have no external actions, only the internal ones proper to them.

It is evident, then, that the same life is necessarily best both for each human being and for city-states and human beings collectively.

Chapter 4

Since what has just been said about these matters was by way of a preface, and since we studied the various constitutions earlier,[18] the starting point for the remainder of our investigation is first to discuss the conditions that should be presupposed to exist by the ideal city-state we are about to construct. For the best constitution cannot come into existence without commensurate resources. Hence we should presuppose that many circumstances are as ideal as we could wish, although none should

16. See $1253^{b}27$–$1254^{a}8$.
17. Normally, however, a city-state is politically active when it exercises leadership over other city-states or has other sorts of political relations with them (see $1327^{b}4$–6).
18. In Book II.

tracts, legal indictments, summonses, and other administrative matters of that sort, as well as those that deal with marketplace management and so-called town management, they should have buildings near the marketplace or in some public meeting place in the vicinity of the "necessary" marketplace. For the upper marketplace is intended for leisurely activities, the lower, for necessary ones.

The organization of the country areas should mimic the one just described. For the officials that some call foresters and others country managers must have messes and guard houses in order to promote security. Moreover, some temples dedicated to gods and others to heroes have to be distributed throughout the countryside.

It would be a waste of time, however, to speak about such things in detail here. For they are not hard to think out, just hard to do. Speaking about them is a task for ideal theory; the task of good luck is to bring them about.[61] Hence any further discussion of them may be set aside for the present.

Chapter 13

But we must now discuss the constitution itself, and from which and what sorts of people a city-state should be constituted if it is to be a blessedly happy and well governed. In all cases, well-being consists in two things: setting up the aim and end of action correctly and discovering the actions that bear on it. These factors can be in harmony with one another or in disharmony. For people sometimes set up the end well but fail to achieve it in action; and sometimes they achieve everything that promotes the end, but the end they set up is a bad one. Sometimes they make both mistakes. For example, in medicine it sometimes happens that doctors are neither correct in their judgment about what condition a healthy body should be in, nor successful in producing the condition they have set up as their end. In the crafts and sciences both of these have to be under control, the end and the actions directed toward it. It is evident that everyone aims at living well and at happiness. But while some can achieve these ends, others, whether because of luck or because of something in their nature, cannot. For we also need resources in order to live a good life, although we need fewer of them if we are in a better condition, more if we are in a worse one. Others, though they could

61. See 1332[a]28–32 for a more careful statement.

achieve happiness, search for it in the wrong place from the outset. But since we are proposing to look at the best constitution, and this is the one under which a city-state will be best governed, and since a city-state is best governed under a constitution that would above all make it possible for the city-state to be happy, it is clear that we should not overlook the question of what happiness actually is.

We say, and we have given this definition in our ethical works (if anything in those discussions is of service), that happiness is a complete activation or use of virtue, and not a qualified use but an unqualified one.[62] By "qualified uses" I mean those that are necessary; by "unqualified" I mean those that are NOBLE. For example, in the case of just actions, just retributions and punishments spring from virtue, but are necessary uses of it, and are noble only in a necessary way, since it would be more choiceworthy if no individual or city-state needed such things. On the other hand, just actions that aim at honors and prosperity are unqualifiedly noblest. The former involve choosing[63] something that is somehow bad, whereas the latter are the opposite: they construct and generate goods. To be sure, an excellent man will deal with poverty, disease, and other sorts of bad luck in a noble way. But blessed happiness requires their opposites. For according to the definition established in our ethical works, an excellent man is the sort whose virtue makes *unqualifiedly* good things good *for him*. Clearly, then, his use of them must also be unqualifiedly good and noble. That is why people think that external GOODS are the causes of happiness. Yet we might as well hold that a lyre is the cause of fine and brilliant lyre playing, and not the performer's craft. It follows, then, from what has been said, that some goods must be there to start with, whereas others must be provided by the legislator. That is why we pray that our city-state will be ideally equipped with the goods that luck controls (for we assume that luck does control them). When we come to making the city-state excellent, however, that is no longer a task for luck but one for scientific knowledge and deliberate choice. A city-state is excellent, however, because the citizens who participate in the constitution are excellent; and in our city-state all the

62. See *NE* 1098ª7–20, 1101ª14–17, 1102ª5–7.

63. Reading *hairesis* with the mss. Alternatively (Ross, Dreizehnter, and others): "destruction (*anairesis*)." Both punishment and retribution involve choosing to do bad things to someone in order to bring about a good or just end. These things must be done if justice is to be served, but no just person would choose to do them simply for their own sake.

CITIZENS participate in the constitution. The matter we have to investi-
35 gate, therefore, is how a man becomes excellent. For even if it is possible for all the citizens to be collectively excellent without being so individually, the latter is still more choiceworthy, since if each is excellent, all are.

But surely people become excellent because of three things. The three
40 are nature, habit, and reason. For first [1] one must possess a certain nature from birth, namely, that of a human, and not that of some other animal. Similarly, one's body and soul must be of a certain sort. But in the case of some of these qualities, there is no benefit in just being born with
1332b them, because they are altered by our habits. [2] For some qualities are naturally capable of being developed by habit either in a better direction or in a worse one. The other animals mostly live under the guidance of nature alone, although some are guided a little by habit. [3] But human beings live under the guidance of reason as well, since they alone have
5 reason. Consequently, all three of these factors need to be harmonized with one another.[64] For people often act contrary to their habits and their nature because of reason, if they happen to be persuaded that some other course of action is better.

We have already determined[65] the sorts of natures people should have if it is to be easy for the legislator to take them in hand. Everything thereafter is a task for EDUCATION. For some things are learned by habit-
10 uation, others by instruction.

Chapter 14

Since every political community is composed of rulers and ruled, we must investigate whether rulers and ruled should be the same or differ-
15 ent throughout life. For clearly their education must correspond to this division. Now if they differed from one another as much as gods and heroes are believed to differ from human beings, if the former were so greatly superior, first in body and then in soul, that their superiority was
20 indisputable and manifest to those they ruled—it would clearly be altogether better if the same people always ruled and the others were always ruled. But this is not easy to achieve, and there are not, as Scylax[66] says there are in India, kings that are so superior to the ruled. Evidently,

64. See 1334b6–28 for further explanation.
65. At VII.7.
66. Scylax of Caryanda in Caria was a geographer of the late sixth century. See Herodotus 4.44.

then, and for many different reasons, it is necessary for all to share alike in ruling and being ruled in turn. For equality consists in giving the same to those who are alike,[67] and it is difficult for a constitution to last if its organization is contrary to justice. For the citizens being ruled will be joined by those in the surrounding territory who want to stir up change, and the governing class cannot possibly be numerous enough to be more powerful than all of them.

Surely it is indisputable, however, that the rulers should be different from the ruled. Hence the legislator should investigate the question of how this is to achieved, and how they should share with one another. We discussed this earlier,[68] for nature itself settled the choice by making part of the same species younger and part older, the former fit to be ruled and the latter to rule. For young people do not object to being ruled, or think themselves better than their rulers, particularly when they are going to be compensated for their contribution[69] when they reach the proper age. We must conclude, therefore, that rulers and ruled are in one way the same and in another different. Consequently, their education too must be in one way the same and in another different. For if someone is going to rule well, as the saying goes, he should first have been ruled.[70]

As we said in our first discussions,[71] however, there is a kind of rule that is for the sake of the ruler and a kind that is for the sake of the ruled. The former, we say, is rule by a master, the latter rule over free people. Now some commands differ not with respect to the tasks they assign but with respect to that for the sake of which they are done. That is why it is noble even for free young men to perform many of the tasks that are held to be appropriate for slaves. For the difference between noble and shameful actions does not lie so much in the acts themselves as in their ends, on that for the sake of which they are performed. Since we say that the virtue of a citizen or ruler is the same as that of the best man,[72] and that the same man should be ruled first and a ruler later, the legislator

67. See 1261^{a}30–^{b}5, 1325^{b}7–10.
68. At 1329^{a}2–17.
69. The contribution (*eranos*) the young make is their obedience to their elders; they are compensated when they are older by being obeyed in turn.
70. See 1277^{b}11–13 note.
71. At 1277^{a}29–1277^{b}16, 1278^{b}30–1279^{a}21.
72. True because Aristotle is discussing the best constitution. See III.4, 1288^{a}37–39, 1293^{b}5–6, 1316^{b}9–10, 1332^{a}32–35.

should make it his business to determine how and through what practices men become good, and what the end of the best life is.

The SOUL is divided into two parts, one of which has reason intrinsically, whereas the other does not, but is capable of listening to it, and we say that the virtues of the latter entitle a man to be called, in a certain way, good. As to the question of which of these the end is more particularly found in, to those who make the distinction we mentioned it is not unclear what must be said. For the worse part is always for the sake of the better, and this is as evident in the products of the crafts as it is in those of nature. But the part that has reason is better; and it, in accordance with our usual way of dividing, is divided in two: for there is practical reason and theoretical reason. So it is clear that the rational part of the soul must also be divided in the same manner. Actions too, we will say, are divided analogously, and those that belong to the naturally better part must be more choiceworthy to anyone who can carry out all or only two of them.[73] For what is most choiceworthy for each individual is always this: to attain what is highest. But the whole of life too is divided into work and leisure, war and peace, and of actions some are necessary or useful, others noble. And the same choice must be made among these as among the parts of the soul and their actions. War must be chosen for the sake of peace, work for the sake of leisure, necessary and useful things for the sake of noble ones.

A statesman must, therefore, look to all these things, particularly to those that are better and those that are ends, and legislate in a way that suits the parts of the soul and their actions. And he should legislate in the same way where life and the divisions[74] of actions are concerned. For one should be able to work or go to war, but even better able to remain at peace and leisure; able to perform necessary or useful actions, but better able to perform noble ones. These then are the aims that should be kept in view when educating citizens, both when they are still children and whenever else they need education.

It is evident, however, that those Greeks who are currently held to be best governed, and the legislators who established their constitutions, did not organize the various aspects of their constitutions to promote the best end. Nor did they organize their laws and educational system to promote all the virtues, but instead were vulgarly inclined to promote

73. See Introduction xlvi–xlvii.
74. Reading *diaireseis* with Newman and the mss. The divisions are those referred to in the opening sentence of the paragraph.

the ones held to be more useful and more conducive to acquisition.[75] Some later writers have expressed the same opinion in the same spirit. For they praise the Spartan constitution and express admiration for the aim of its legislator, because his entire legislation was intended to promote conquest and war. What they say is easy to refute by argument, and has now been refuted by the facts too. For most human beings are eager to rule as masters over many because it provides a ready supply of the goods of luck. And Thibron and all these other writers[76] are no different: they admire the Spartan legislator because by training the Spartans to face danger he enabled them to rule over many. And yet it is clear, now that their empire is no longer in their hands at any rate, that the Spartans are not a happy people, and that their legislator is not a good one. Moreover, it is absurd if it was by keeping to his laws and putting them into practice without impediment that they lost their fine way of life. They are also incorrect in their conception of the sort of rule a legislator should be seen to honor. For rule over free people is nobler and more virtuous than rule by a master. Besides, one should not consider a city-state happy or praise its legislator because he trained it to conquer and rule its neighbors, since such things involve great harm. For clearly any citizen who is able to should also try to acquire the power to rule his own city-state.[77] Yet this is precisely what the Spartans accused their king, Pausanias, of doing, even though he held so high an office.[78]

Arguments and laws of this sort are not worthy of a statesman, then, nor are they beneficial or true. For the same things are best both for individuals and for communities, and it is these that a legislator should implant in the souls of human beings. Training in war should not be undertaken for the sake of reducing those who do not deserve it to slavery, but, first, to avoid becoming enslaved to others; second, to pursue a position of leadership in order to benefit the ruled, not to be masters of all of them; and, third, to be masters of those who deserve to be slaves.

Both facts and arguments testify, then, that the legislator should give more serious attention to how to organize his legislation, both the part that deals with military affairs and the part that deals with other matters,

75. The constitutions held to be best governed include Sparta and Crete. The same criticism of them is leveled at 1271^{a}41–^{b}10, 1334^{a}2–^{b}5, 1324^{b}5–11.
76. Thibron is otherwise unknown. The other writers referred to presumably include Xenophon.
77. See 1325^{a}34–41.
78. See 1307^{a}2–5.

for the sake of peace and leisure. For most city-states of the sort described remain secure while they are at war, but come to ruin once they have acquired empire. Like an iron sword, they lose their edge when they remain at peace. But the one responsible is their legislator, who did not educate them to be able to be at leisure.

Chapter 15

Since it is evident that human beings have the same end, both individually and collectively, and since the best man and the best constitution must of necessity have the same aim, it is evident that the virtues suitable for leisure should be present in both. For, as has been said repeatedly, peace is the end of war, and leisure of work. Some of the virtues useful for leisure and LEISURED PURSUITS accomplish their task while one is actually at leisure, but others do so while one is at work. For many necessities must be present in order for leisure to be possible.[79] That is why it is appropriate for our city-state to have temperance, courage, and endurance. For as the proverb says, there is no leisure for slaves, and people who are unable to face danger courageously are the slaves of their attackers. Courage and endurance are required for work, philosophy for leisure, and temperance and justice for both, but particularly for peace and leisure. For war compels people to be just and temperate, but the enjoyment of good luck and the leisure that accompanies peace tend to make them arrogant. Much justice and temperance are needed, therefore, by those who are held to be doing best and who enjoy all the things regarded as blessings; people like those, if there are any, who live in the isles of the blessed,[80] as the poets call them. For they will be most in need of philosophy, temperance, and justice the more they live at leisure amidst an abundance of such goods. It is evident, then, why a city-state that is to be happy and good should share in these virtues. For it is shameful to be unable to make use of good things, but it is even more shameful to be unable to make use of them in leisure time—to make it plain that we are good men when working or at war, but slaves when at peace and leisure. That is why one should not cultivate virtue as the city-state of the Spartans does. For the difference between the Spartans and

79. And the acquisition and proper use of these goods requires the virtues connected with work.
80. See Hesiod, *Works and Days* 168–73.

others is not that they consider different things to be the greatest goods, but that they believe that these goods are obtained by means of a particular virtue. And because they consider these goods and the enjoyment of them to be better than the enjoyment of the virtues, [they train themselves only in the virtue that is useful for acquiring them, and ignore the virtue that is exercised in leisure.] But it is evident from what we have said, that [the latter virtue should be cultivated] on its own account. We must now study how and through what means this will come about.[81] *1334b*

We distinguished earlier[82] three requirements: nature, habit, and reason. We have already determined[83] the natural qualities our citizens should have. It remains to study whether they are to be educated through reason first or through habits. For the harmony between those should be the best kind of harmony. For it is possible for someone's reason to have missed the best supposition[84] and for him to be led similarly astray by his habits.

This much at least is evident. First, procreation, like the production of any other kind of thing, has a starting point, and some starting points have ends that are the starting points of further ends. But reason and understanding constitute our natural end.[85] Hence they are the ends that procreation and the training of our habits should be organized to promote. Second, just as soul and body are two, so we see that the soul has two parts as well, one that is nonrational and one that has reason. Their states are also two in number, desire and understanding. And just as the development of the body is prior to that of the soul, so the nonrational part is prior to the rational. This too is evident. For spirit, wish, and also appetite are present in children right from birth, whereas reasoning and understanding naturally develop as they grow older.[86] That is why supervision of the body comes first and precedes that of the soul; then comes supervision of appetite or desire. But supervision of desire should be for the sake of understanding, and that of the body for the sake of the soul.

81. There is a gap in the text at 1334[b]4. The bracketed material is conjectural.
82. At 1332[a]38–[b]11.
83. At VII.7.
84. The correct supposition about what happiness is.
85. See Introduction §4–6.
86. See Plato, *Republic* 441a–b.

released from procreating for the community. If they have sex after that, it should be evident that it is for the sake of health, or for some other such reason.

As to having sex with another man or another woman when one is a husband or referred to as such, it should be regarded as shameful to be openly involved in any form of it with anyone. If a man is discovered doing something of this sort during his period of procreation, he should be punished with a loss of honor[98] appropriate to his offense.[99] *40* *1336a*

Chapter 17

It should be recognized that the sort of nourishment children are given once they are born makes a large difference to the strength of their bodies. It is evident to anyone who investigates the other animals or those nations concerned to cultivate a military disposition that the nourishment particularly suited to children's bodies has a lot of milk in it but very little wine, because of the diseases it produces.[100] Furthermore, it is also beneficial for them to make whatever movements are possible at that age. But to prevent curvature of the limbs, due to softness, there are certain mechanical devices, which some nations already employ, to keep their bodies straight. It is beneficial, too, to habituate children to the cold right from the time they are small, since this is very useful both from the point of view of health and from that of military affairs. That is why many non-Greeks have the custom of submerging newborn children in a cold river, whereas many others—for example, the Celts—dress them in light clothing. For whenever it is possible to create habits, it is better to create them right from the start, but to do so gradually. *5* *10* *15*

98. *atimia*: here used in the legal sense to refer to the loss of the rights and privileges possessed by citizens.
99. Athenian law *required* a man to divorce an adulterous wife. Since Aristotle thinks that *all* adultery is wrong (*NE* 1107a9–17), he probably agreed that this sort of legal sanction was appropriate. But on the topic of male adultery, which is the only kind under discussion here, his views are more unconventional. Male adultery was unregulated in Athens; Aristotle criminalizes it, at least during the period in which the male is procreating as a public service. No doubt the intention of the law is to restrict the number of illegitimate children. Presumably, then, a man who commits homosexual adultery during this period will suffer a smaller loss of honor. Other reasons for a male to avoid adultery are given in *Oec.* III.2.
100. See *HA* 588a3–8.

And because their bodily condition is hot, children are naturally suited
20 to being trained to bear the cold.[101]

In the first stage of life, then, it is beneficial to adopt this sort of supervision as well as any other similar to it. During the next stage, which lasts until the age of five, it is not a good idea to have children engage in any kind of learning or any necessary tasks, lest it interfere with their
25 growth. But they should engage in enough exercise to avoid physical laziness, and this should be provided to them through play and other such activities. But the games they play should not be either unfit for free people or exerting or undisciplined. As for the kinds of stories and
30 fables children of this age should listen to, the officials called child supervisors should deal with that issue. For all such things should pave the way for their later pursuits. Hence many of the games they play should imitate the serious occupations of later life. Those in the *Laws* who prevent children from screaming and crying[102] are wrong to prohibit such
35 things, for they contribute to growth, since they are a sort of exercise for the body. For holding the breath gives strength to those who are exerting themselves,[103] and this is just what occurs in children when they are screaming their lungs out.

The child supervisors should pay attention to the way the children
40 pursue leisure. In particular, they should ensure that they pursue it as little as possible in the company of slaves. For, at this age, and until they
1336[b] are seven, children must be educated in the household. So it is reasonable to expect that they will pick up some taint of servility from what they see and hear even at that early age. The legislator should altogether outlaw shameful talk[104] from the city-state, as he would any other
5 shameful thing, since by speaking lightly of a shameful activity one comes closer to doing it. He should particularly outlaw it among children, so that they neither say nor hear anything of the sort. If it happens, none the less, that any free man who is not yet old enough to have been given a seat at the messes is found saying or doing something for-
10 bidden, he should be punished by being dishonored or beaten. But if he is older than this, he should be punished with those dishonors usually

101. The natural heat of children is discussed at *Rh.* 1389[a]18–20 and *Pr.* 872[a]3–8. See Plato, *Laws* 664e, 666a.
102. Plato, *Laws* 791d–792e.
103. See *GA* 737[b]36–738[a]1.
104. *aischrologia*: obscene but also abusive language of various sorts (*NE* 1128[a]9–32, *Rh.* 1405[b]8–16).

reserved for the unfree, because he has acted in a manner characteristic of slaves.

Since we are outlawing shameful talk, it is evident that we should also outlaw looking at unseemly pictures or stories. The officials should ensure, therefore, that there are no statues or pictures representing unseemly acts, except those kept in the temples of those gods at whose festivals custom permits even mockery to occur.[105] Custom allows men of suitable age to pay this sort of honor to the gods on behalf of themselves and of their wives and children. But younger people should not be permitted to witness iambus or comedy[106] until they have reached the age when it is appropriate for them to recline at the communal table and drink wine, and their education has rendered them immune to the harm such things can do.[107]

Our present discussion of this issue has been cursory. Later we must stop and determine it at greater length, first raising the problem of whether the attendance of the young at such performances should or should not be prohibited, and if so how it should be handled.[108] It was right to touch on it at this juncture, however, but only to the extent necessary for present purposes. Perhaps Theodorus,[109] the tragic actor, put the point rather well. He said that he never allowed any other actor, not even an incompetent one, to play a part before he did, because audiences become accustomed to the voice they hear first. The same is true of our relationships with people and things; whatever we encounter first we like better. That is why everything bad or vulgar should be alien to the young, particularly if it involves vice or malice.

When children reach the age of five, they should spend the two years till they are seven as observers of the lessons they themselves will eventually have to learn. There are then two stages in their education that should be distinguished, from age seven to puberty and from puberty to age twenty-one. For those who divide the stages of life into seven-year periods are for the most part correct. But one should be guided by a

105. Ritualized obscenity and mockery played a role in certain religious festivals honoring Dionysus, Demeter, and other gods.
106. Iambus is the name given to the mocking songs sung at certain religious festivals. Comedy, especially the so-called old comedy of such writers as Aristophanes, was often abusive and obscene.
107. Probably, at the age of twenty-one (1336^{b}40).
108. A promise unfulfilled in the remainder of the *Politics*.
109. A famous actor of the fourth century the quality of whose voice is praised at *Rh.* 1404^{b}22–24.

1337[a] natural division, since every craft and every sort of education is intended to supplement nature. First, then, we should investigate whether some organization should be established to deal with the children; second, whether it is beneficial for their supervision to be established by the
5 community or arranged on a private basis (as is the case in most city-states nowadays); and third, what sort of supervision it should be.

BOOK VIII

Chapter 1

No one would dispute, therefore, that legislators should be particularly concerned with the education of the young, since in city-states where this does not occur, the constitutions are harmed. For education should suit the particular constitution. In fact, the character peculiar to each constitution usually safeguards it as well as establishes it initially (for example, the democratic character, a democracy; and the oligarchic one, an oligarchy), and a better character is always the cause of a better constitution. Besides, prior education and habituation are required in order to perform certain elements of the task of any capacity or craft. Hence it is clear that this also holds for the activities of virtue.

Since the whole city-state has one single end, however, it is evident that education too must be one and the same for all, and that its supervision must be communal, not private as it is at present, when each individual supervises his own children privately and gives them whatever private instruction he thinks best. Training for communal matters should also be communal.

At the same time, one should not consider any citizen as belonging to himself alone, but as all belonging to the city-state, since each is a part of the city-state.[1] And it is natural for the supervision of each part to look to the supervision of the whole. For this reason one might praise the Spartans, since they pay the most serious attention to their children, and do so as a community.

Chapter 2

It is evident, then, that there should be legislation regarding education, and that education should be communal. But the questions of what kind

1. See 1253ª18–29, 1254ª9–10, Introduction lxix–lxxii.

of education there should be and how it should be carried out should not
35 be neglected. In fact, there is dispute at present about what its tasks are. For not all consider that the young should learn the same things, whether to promote virtue or the best life; nor is it evident whether it is more appropriate for education to develop the mind or the soul's character.[2]

Investigation of the education we see around us results in confusion,
40 since it is not at all clear whether people should be trained in what is useful for life, in what conduces to virtue, or in something out of the ordinary. For all of these proposals have acquired some advocates. Besides, there is no agreement about what promotes virtue. For, in the first place,
1337[b] people do not all esteem the same virtue, so they quite understandably do not agree about the training needed for it.

That children should be taught those useful things that are really necessary, however, is not unclear. But it is evident that they should not be taught all of them, since there is a difference between the tasks of the
5 free and those of the unfree, and that they should share only in such useful things as will not turn them into vulgar craftsmen. (Any task, craft,
10 or branch of learning should be considered vulgar if it renders the body or mind of free people useless for the practices and activities of virtue. That is why the crafts that put the body into a worse condition and work done for wages are called vulgar; for they debase the mind and deprive it of LEISURE.)

Even in the case of some of the sciences that are suitable for a free
15 person, while it is not unfree to participate in them up to a point, to study them too assiduously or exactly is likely to result in the harms just mentioned. What one acts or learns *for* also makes a big difference. For what one does for one's own sake, for the sake of friends, or on account of virtue is not unfree, but someone who does the same thing for others
20 would often be held to be acting like a hired laborer or a slave.

Chapter 3

The subjects that are now established tend in two directions, as was mentioned earlier.[3] But generally speaking there are four that are customarily taught: reading and writing, gymnastics, music, and fourth (but

2. Aristotle's own answer is that education must develop both (1323[b]1–3).
3. In the mss. this sentence concludes VIII.2. Following Lord I have transposed it to the beginning of the present chapter. The subjects customarily taught

only occasionally), drawing. Reading, writing, and drawing are taught because they are useful for life and have many applications; gymnastics is taught because it contributes to courage; but in the case of music a problem immediately arises. Nowadays, most people take part in music for the sake of pleasure. But those who originally included it as a part of education did so, as has often been said, because nature itself aims not only at the correct use of work but also at the capacity for noble leisured activity.[4] Since this is the starting point for everything else,[5] I propose to discuss it once again.

If both are required, but leisured activity is more choiceworthy than work and is its end, we should try to discover what people should do for leisured activity. For surely they should not be amusing themselves, otherwise amusement would have to be our end in life. But if that is impossible, and if amusements are more to be used while one is at work (for one who exerts himself needs relaxation, relaxation is the end of amusement, and work is accompanied by toil and strain), then we should, for this reason, permit amusement, but we should be careful to use it at the right time, dispensing it as a medicine for the ills of work.[6] For this sort of motion of the soul is relaxing and restful because of the pleasure it involves.

Leisured activity is itself held to involve pleasure, happiness, and living blessedly. This is not available to those who are working, however, but only to those who are engaged in leisured activity. For one who is working is doing so for the sake of some end he does not possess, whereas happiness *is* an end that everyone thinks is accompanied not by pain but by pleasure. This pleasure is not the same for everyone, however, but each takes it to be what suits himself and his condition, and the best person takes it to be the best pleasure, the one that comes from the noblest things.[7] It is evident, then, that we should learn and be taught certain things that promote leisured activity. And these subjects and

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presumably do not include anything out of the ordinary (1337ª42), so that the two directions referred to are (1) being useful for life and (2) conducing to virtue (1337ª41–42).

4. See 1271ª41–ᵇ10, 1333ª30–ᵇ5, 1334ª2–ᵇ28, *NE* 1177ᵇ2–18.
5. Noble leisured activity is a starting point (*ARCHĒ*) because it is happiness, the end for the sake of which we pursue all our other ends. Hence, until we have it in view, we cannot know what the best political system is, or what sort of education should be part of that system (see 1323ª14–21).
6. Compare *NE* 1176ᵇ9–1177ª11.
7. See *NE* 1176ª15–19.

studies are undertaken for their own sake, whereas those relating to work are necessary and for the sake of things other than themselves.

It is for this reason that our predecessors assigned music a place in education. They did not do so because they supposed: that it is necessary
15 for life (for it is nothing of the sort); or that, like reading and writing, it is useful for making money, managing a household, acquiring further learning, or for a large number of political activities; or that, like gymnastics, it promotes health and vigor, for we see that neither of these re-
20 sults from music. What remains, then, is that music is for pursuit in leisure, which is evidently the very reason our predecessors included it in education. For they give it a place among the LEISURED PURSUITS they considered appropriate for free people. Hence Homer's instruction to
25 "call the bard alone to the rich banquet." And he goes on to mention certain others who "call the bard that he may bring delight to all."[8] Elsewhere, Odysseus says that the best leisured pursuit is when men are enjoying good cheer and "the banqueters seated in due order throughout the hall, give ear to the bard."[9] It is evident, then, that there is a certain
30 kind of education that children must be given not because it is useful or necessary but because it is noble and suitable for a free person. But the number of subjects involved (whether one or many), what they are, and how they should be taught—these are questions that must be discussed later on.[10] But as things stand, a certain amount of progress has been
35 made, because we have some evidence from the ancients about the educational subjects they established, music being an obvious case in point.

Furthermore, it is clear that children should be taught some useful subjects (such as reading and writing) not only because of their utility, but also because many other areas of study become possible through
40 them. Similarly, they should be taught drawing not in order to avoid making mistakes in their private purchases or being cheated when buy-
1338[b] ing or selling products,[11] but rather because it makes them contemplate the beauty of bodies. It is completely inappropriate for magnanimous and free people to be always asking what use something is.[12]

8. *Odyssey* XVII. 382–5. The first line is not in the poem as we have it but seems to have followed line 382 in Aristotle's version.
9. *Odyssey* IX. 7–8.
10. This promise is not fulfilled in our *Politics*.
11. For example, so as to be able to understand an architect's plan, or sketch a piece of furniture one was commissioning.
12. Magnanimity is discussed in *NE* IV.3.

Since it is evident that education through habituation must come before education through reason, and that education of the body must come before education of the mind, it clearly follows that children must be put in the hands of physical trainers who will bring their bodies into a certain condition, and coaches who will teach them to do certain physical tasks.

Chapter 4

At present, the city-states that are thought to be most concerned with children turn them into athletes, and thus distort the shape and development of their bodies; whereas the Spartans, though they do not make this mistake, none the less brutalize their children through rigorous exertion, thinking that this will greatly enhance their courage. Yet, as we have said many times,[13] the supervision of children should not aim to promote just one virtue, especially not this one. But even if this one were the aim, the Spartans do not succeed in producing it. For in other animals or in non-Greek nations, we do not find that courage goes along with the greatest savagery, but that it goes along with a tamer, lionlike character.[14] Many of these nations think nothing of killing and cannibalizing people—for example, the Achaeans and Heniochi, who live around the Black Sea. And there are similar peoples on the mainland, and others who are even worse. These nations are skilled in raiding, to be sure, but of courage they have no share.

Besides, we know that even the Spartans, who were superior to others as long as they alone persisted in their devotion to rigorous exertion, are now inferior to others in both gymnastic and military contests. They were superior to others not because they trained their young people in that rigorous way, but only because they had training, while their adversaries had none.

So nobility, not brutality, should play the leading role here. For no wolf or other wild beast faces danger when it is noble to do so, but a good man does. Those who throw the young into too much of this sort of rigorous exertion and leave them without training in what is necessary produce people who are truly vulgar. For they make them useful to states-

13. At 1271^{a}41–^{b}10, 1333^{b}5–10, 1334^{a}2–^{b}28.
14. According to Aristotle, lions are "free, courageous, and nobly-bred" (*HA* 488^{b}16–17), dangerous while feeding, but gentle when no longer hungry (629^{b}8–9).