

Political Theories-1



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Political Theory

- It is **anything** about **politics** or relevant to politics.
- It is the **disciplined investigation of political problems**- George Sabine
- A **network of concepts and generalization about political life**-David Held.
- It also involves **application of *the methods* of science in order to develop descriptive and explanatory knowledge**

Political theorist and their works

- Plato's Republic,
- Aristotle's Politics,
- Hobbes' Leviathan, or
- Rawls' A Theory of Justice

Types

□ Nature based

- ▣ **Normative political theory** offers explicit arguments and proposes answers to the significant “**should**” **questions** in the political world. Example: Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Karl Marx, and John Stuart Mill’s theory
- ▣ **Empirical political theory**, which relies upon observation and analysis of real-world data as it attempts to apply the methods of science in order to **develop descriptive and explanatory knowledge** claims about the political world. Example: Inglehart and Welzel

Types(Contd.)

- Time based
 - ▣ Classical: Plato, Aristotle
 - ▣ Enlightenment-contractualist: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke
 - ▣ Contemporary/Modern: John Rawls, David Easton



□ Do you know what is 'SPA'?

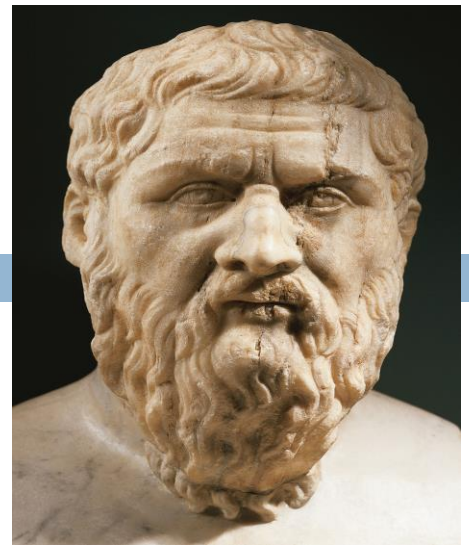
□ Socrates

□ Plato

□ Aristotle

Plato

- Greek philosopher.
- His famous work is '***The Republic***'.
- He seeks to rationalize, spiritualize, and universalize the ideal life for the **polis** (the Greek city-state).



Plato

- **Aristocracy** is government by the **best**.
- **Timocracy** is government by people of **honor and ambition**.
- **Oligarchy**—government by the **rich and lovers of money** (what we could also call **plutocracy**)
- **Democracy**- government by the **many poor**.
- It emerges “**after the poor have conquered their [oligarchic] opponents.**” It is based on everyone’s having “an equal share of freedom and power.”
- Democracy, however, is also unstable. It **degenerates** into **tyranny**, which emerges when democratic people, preoccupied with “liberty and equality,” **lose a sense of law and order**, a sense of discrimination, and turn to a “champion” to protect them against the rich.
- **Tyranny**, the lawless rule of one individual, is the worst form of government and receives Plato’s harshest criticism.

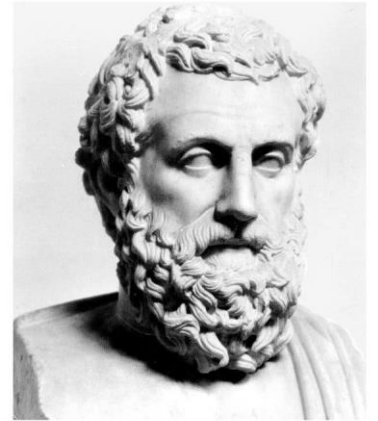
Plato

- He seeks to **establish the polis on sound principles**, suffuse it with excellence, and help it endure- **a republic**.
- **Justice**, Plato argues, is the **harmonious ordering of the functional classes in the polis: philosophers ruling, soldiers defending, and farmers and artisans providing the necessary food, clothing, and utensils for everyday life**.
- In this fashion, the wise would rule, the brave would defend, and those with basic appetites and talents would sustain the polis with their labor. Plato believes that the **philosopher-kings should order** the life of the polis in accordance with a vision of the good that their superior intellect allows them to perceive.

Plato

- Criticism : Plato's critics attack him as an enemy of the **open society, hostile to democracy, a proponent of censorship**, and an advocate of a rigid-class society.

Aristotle



- Aristotle criticizes key features of Plato's *Republic* as unrealistic, especially his advocacy for the class of philosopher-kings.
- Aristotle seeks to adjust Plato's **severely aristocratic principles** to the actualities of life in Greek political communities.
- Greek philosopher and taught by Plato
- Founder of the **Lyceum – school of philosophy**.
- The **remains** of the Lyceum were discovered in modern **Athens** in 1996

Aristotle

- Aristotle's answer is the **polity**, or constitutional government—a **mixture of democracy and oligarchy**.
- Such a government would rest most securely on a **well-educated, reasonably virtuous, sufficiently wealthy, moderate middle class**.
- The middle class is more likely to represent a “**golden mean**” **between poverty and riches**. It would not be envied by the poor or feared by the rich.
- Members of this class would be **interested in politics and good government** but would **not be overly ambitious**. Moreover, the middle class would be able to maintain the rule of law and justice.

Aristotle's Classification of Government

Number Ruling	Rule in Accord With the Common Good	Rule Motivated by Individual or Class Self-Interest
One	Monarchy (government by a virtuous ruler)	Tyranny (government by one lawless person)
The few	Aristocracy (government by the virtuous few)	Oligarchy (government by the rich and noble)
The many	Polity (constitutional government—a mixture of democracy and oligarchy)	Democracy (government by the poor and free)

Plato and Aristotle

Plato- Idealist

Aristotle- Realist



Raphael's School of Athens

Plato and Aristotle

Plato	Aristotle
Idealism	Realism
Republic	Politics
The 'ideal state'	A working government
Transcend human selfishness	Acknowledge human selfishness
Social unity	Balance

Suggested readings

- Simon, D. W., Romance, J., & Riemer, N. (2018). *The Challenge of Politics: An Introduction to Political Science*. CQ press., pp 245-250

Q?