

ARISTOTLE

Politics

Translated,  
with Introduction and Notes,  
by  
C.D.C. Reeve

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# BOOK I

## Chapter 1 *Politics*

We see that every CITY-STATE is a COMMUNITY of some sort, and that every community is established for the sake of some GOOD (for everyone performs every ACTION for the sake of what he takes to be good). Clearly, then, while every community aims at some good, the community that has the most AUTHORITY of all and encompasses all the others aims highest, that is to say, at the good that has the most authority of all. This community is the one called a city-state, the community that is political.<sup>1</sup>

Those,<sup>2</sup> then, who think that the positions of STATESMAN, KING, HOUSEHOLD MANAGER, and MASTER of slaves are the same, are not correct. For they hold that each of these differs not in kind, but only in whether the subjects ruled are few or many: that if, for example, someone rules few people, he is a master; if more, a household manager; if still more, he has the position of statesman or king—the assumption being that there is no difference between a large household and a small city-state. As for the positions of statesman and king, they say that someone who is in charge by himself has the position of king, whereas someone who follows the principles of the appropriate SCIENCE, ruling and being ruled in turn, has the position of statesman. But these claims are not true. What I am saying will be clear, if we examine the matter ac-

1. *kuriōtatē koinonia*: the most sovereign community, the one with the most authority, is the city-state, because all the other communities are encompassed (*periechein*) by it or are its parts, so that the goods for whose sake they are formed are pursued in part for the sake of the good for which it is formed (see I.2). These subcommunities include households, villages, religious societies, etc. The good with the most authority is HAPPINESS, since everything else is pursued in part for its sake, while it is pursued solely for its own sake. The science with the most authority, STATESMANSHIP, directs the entire city-state toward happiness. A more detailed version of this opening argument is given in NE I.1–2. Here it is being adapted to define what a city-state is.
2. Plato, *Statesman* 258e–261a. Compare Xenophon, *Memorabilia* III.iv.12, III.vi.14.

20 cording to the method of investigation that has guided us elsewhere. For as in other cases, a composite has to be analyzed until we reach things that are incomposite, since these are the smallest parts of the whole, so if we also examine the parts that make up a city-state, we shall see better both how these differ from each other, and whether or not it is possible to gain some expertise in connection with each of the things we have mentioned.<sup>3</sup>

## Chapter 2

25 If one were to see how these things develop naturally from the beginning, one would, in this case as in others, get the best view of them. First, then, those who cannot exist without each other necessarily form a couple, as [1] female and male do for the sake of procreation (they do not do so from DELIBERATE CHOICE, but, like other animals and plants, because the urge to leave behind something of the same kind as themselves is natural), and [2] as a natural ruler and what is naturally ruled do  
30 for the sake of survival. For if something is capable of rational foresight, it is a natural ruler and master, whereas whatever can use its body to labor is ruled and is a natural SLAVE. That is why the same thing is beneficial for both master and slave.<sup>4</sup>

1252<sup>a</sup> There is a natural distinction, of course, between what is female and what is servile. For, unlike the blacksmiths who make the Delphian knife, nature produces nothing skimpily, but instead makes a single thing for a single TASK, because every tool will be made best if it serves to perform one task rather than many.<sup>5</sup> Among non-Greeks, however, a  
5 WOMAN and a slave occupy the same position. The reason is that they do not have anything that naturally rules; rather their community consists of a male and a female slave. That is why our poets say "it is proper for Greeks to rule non-Greeks,"<sup>6</sup> implying that non-Greek and slave are in nature the same.

The first thing to emerge from these two communities<sup>7</sup> is a house-

3. That is to say, do household managers, masters, statesmen, and kings each employ a different type of technical expertise in ruling? Expertise (*technikon*) is technical knowledge of the sort embodied in a CRAFT or SCIENCE.

4. This claim is qualified at 1278<sup>b</sup>32–37 and elaborated upon in I.5–7.

5. A Delphian knife seems to have been a multipurpose and cheaply made tool of some sort. See 1299<sup>b</sup>10 and note.

6. See Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis* 1266, 1400.

7. The communities of husband and wife, master and slave.

hold, so that Hesiod is right when he said in his poem, "First and foremost: a house, a wife, and an ox for the plow."<sup>8</sup> For an ox is a poor man's servant. The community naturally constituted to satisfy everyday needs, then, is the household; its members are called "meal-sharers" by Charondas and "manger-sharers" by Epimenides the Cretan.<sup>9</sup> But the first community constituted out of several households for the sake of satisfying needs other than everyday ones is a VILLAGE. 15

As a COLONY or offshoot from a household,<sup>10</sup> a village seems to be particularly natural, consisting of what some have called "sharers of the same milk," sons and the sons of sons.<sup>11</sup> That is why city-states were originally ruled by kings, as nations still are. For they were constituted out of people who were under kingships; for in every household the eldest rules as a king. And so the same holds in the offshoots, because the villagers are blood relatives.<sup>12</sup> This is what Homer is describing when he says: "Each one lays down the law for his own wives and children."<sup>13</sup> For they were scattered about, and that is how people dwelt in the distant past. The reason all people say that the gods too are ruled by a king is that they themselves were ruled by kings in the distant past, and some still are. Human beings model the shapes of the gods on their own, and do the same to their way of life as well. 20 25

A complete community constituted out of several villages, once it reaches the limit of total SELF-SUFFICIENCY, practically speaking, is a city-state. It comes to be for the sake of living, but it remains in existence for the sake of living well. That is why every city-state exists by NATURE,<sup>14</sup> since the first communities do. For the city-state is their end, and nature is an end; for we say that each thing's nature—for example, that of a human being, a horse, or a household—is the character it has when its coming-into-being has been completed. Moreover, that for the 30

8. *Works and Days* 405.

9. Charondas was a sixth-century legislator from Catana in Chalcidice in the southern part of Macedonia. Epimenides was a religious teacher of the late sixth and early fifth century. The works from which Aristotle is quoting are lost.

10. See Plato, *Laws* 776a–b.

11. Plato, *Laws* 681b.

12. A somewhat different explanation is given at 1286<sup>b</sup>8–11.

13. *Iliad* X.114–15. To lay down the law (*themisteuein*) is to give judgments in particular cases about what is right or fitting (*themis*).

14. This claim and the argument Aristotle is about to give for it are discussed in the Introduction xlviii–lix.

sake of which something exists, that is to say, its end, is best, and self-sufficiency is both end and best.

1253<sup>a</sup>

It is evident from these considerations, then, that a city-state is among the things that exist by nature, that a human being is by nature a political animal,<sup>15</sup> and that anyone who is without a city-state, not by luck but by nature, is either a poor specimen or else superhuman. Like the one Homer condemns, he too is "clanless, lawless, and homeless."<sup>16</sup>

5 For someone with such a nature is at the same time eager for war, like an isolated piece in a board game.<sup>17</sup>

It is also clear why a human being is more of a political animal than a bee or any other gregarious animal. Nature makes nothing pointlessly,<sup>18</sup> as we say, and no animal has speech except a human being. A voice is a signifier of what is pleasant or painful, which is why it is also possessed by the other animals (for their nature goes this far: they not only perceive what is pleasant or painful but signify it to each other). But speech is for making clear what is beneficial or harmful, and hence also what is just or unjust. For it is peculiar to human beings, in comparison to the other animals, that they alone have perception of what is good or bad, just or unjust, and the rest. And it is community in these that makes a household and a city-state.<sup>19</sup>

The city-state is also PRIOR in nature to the household and to each of us individually, since the whole is necessarily prior to the part. For if the whole body is dead, there will no longer be a foot or a hand, except homonymously,<sup>20</sup> as one might speak of a stone "hand" (for a dead hand will be like that); but everything is defined by its TASK and by its capacity; so that in such condition they should not be said to be the same things but homonymous ones. Hence that the city-state is natural and prior in nature to the individual is clear. For if an individual is not self-sufficient when separated, he will be like all other parts in relation to the

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15. See Introduction xxvi, xlvii–xlvi, li–lv, lvii–lxv.

16. *Iliad* IX.63–64. Homer is describing a man who "loves fighting with his own people."

17. A piece particularly vulnerable to attack by an opponent's pieces, and so needing constantly to fight them off.

18. The idea is that features are present in a thing's nature in order to promote its end, not that nature is an agent (a kind of god, say) that makes things for a purpose. See Introduction xxvii–xxxv.

19. Explained at 1280<sup>b</sup>5–12.

20. That is to say, a foot or a hand that shares no more than a name with a living, functioning foot or hand. See *Cat.* 1<sup>st</sup>1–2.

whole. Anyone who cannot form a community with others, or who does not need to because he is self-sufficient, is no part of a city-state—he is either a beast or a god. Hence, though an impulse toward this sort of community exists by nature in everyone, whoever first established one was responsible for the greatest of goods. For as a human being is the best of the animals when perfected, so when separated from LAW and JUSTICE he is worst of all. For injustice is harshest when it has weapons, and a human being grows up with weapons for VIRTUE and PRACTICAL WISDOM to use, which are particularly open to being used for opposite purposes.<sup>21</sup> Hence he is the most unrestrained and most savage of animals when he lacks virtue, as well as the worst where food and sex are concerned. But justice is a political matter; for justice is the organization of a political community, and justice<sup>22</sup> decides what is just.

## Chapter 3

Since it is evident from what parts a city-state is constituted, we must first discuss household management, for every city-state is constituted from households. The parts of household management correspond in turn to the parts from which the household is constituted, and a complete household consists of slaves and FREE. But we must first examine each thing in terms of its smallest parts, and the primary and smallest parts of a household are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children. So we shall have to examine these three things to see what each of them is and what features it should have. The three in question are [1] mastership, [2] “marital” science (for we have no word to describe the union of woman and man), and [3] “procreative” science (this also lacks a name of its own). But there is also a part which some believe to be identical to household management, and others believe to be its largest part. We shall have to study its nature too. I am speaking of what is called WEALTH ACQUISITION.<sup>23</sup>

21. The weapons referred to are presumably various human capacities, such as intelligence, that can be used for good or bad purposes.
22. Reading *dikē* with Dreizehnter and the ms. Here to be understood, perhaps, as the judicial justice administered by the courts. See 1322<sup>5</sup>–8, 1326<sup>29</sup>–30.
23. “Marital” science (*gamikē*) and “procreative” science (*teknopoietikē*) are shown at work in VII.16. Rule over wives, which is an exercise of the former, and rule over children, of the latter, are discussed in I.12–13. Mastership is discussed in I.4–7 and wealth acquisition in I.2, 8–11.

- 15 But let us first discuss master and slave, partly to see how they stand in relation to our need for necessities, but at the same time with an eye to knowledge about this topic,<sup>24</sup> to see whether we can acquire some better ideas than those currently entertained. For, as we said at the beginning, some people believe that mastership is a sort of science, and that mastership, household management, statesmanship, and the science of kingship are all the same. But others<sup>25</sup> believe that it is contrary to nature to
- 20 be a master (for it is by law that one person is a slave and another free, whereas by nature there is no difference between them), which is why it is not just either; for it involves force.

## Chapter 4

- Since property is part of the household, the science of PROPERTY ACQUISITION is also a part of household management (for we can neither live nor live well without the necessities). Hence, just as the specialized
- 25 crafts must have their proper tools if they are going to perform their tasks, so too does the household manager. Some tools are inanimate, however, and some are animate. The ship captain's rudder, for example, is an inanimate tool, but his lookout is an animate one; for where crafts
- 30 are concerned every assistant is classed as a tool. So a piece of property is a tool for maintaining life; property in general is the sum of such tools; a slave is a piece of animate property of a sort; and all assistants are like tools for using tools. For, if each tool could perform its task on command or by anticipating instructions, and if like the statues of Daedalus
- 35 or the tripods of Hephaestus—which the poet describes as having “entered the assembly of the gods of their own accord”<sup>26</sup>—shuttles wove cloth by themselves, and picks played the lyre, a master craftsman would not need assistants, and masters would not need slaves.
- 1254 What are commonly called tools are tools for production. A piece of property, on the other hand, is for ACTION. For something comes from a

24. The discussion of the theoretical aspects of wealth acquisition occupies I.4–10 (see 1258<sup>9</sup>–10, which advertises this fact). I.11 is devoted to its practical aspects.

25. For example, Alcidas (a pupil of the sophist Gorgias), who says that “nature never made any man a slave.”

26. *Iliad* XVIII.376. Daedalus was a legendary craftsman and inventor, who made the maze for the Minotaur and the thread for Ariadne. His statues were so life-like that they ran away unless they were tied down (*DA* 406<sup>18</sup>–19; Plato, *Meno* 97d). Hephaestus was blacksmith to the gods.

shuttle beyond the use of it, but from a piece of clothing or a bed we get only the use. Besides, since action and production differ in kind, and both need tools, their tools must differ in the same way as they do. Life consists in action, not production. Therefore, slaves too are assistants in the class of things having to do with action.<sup>27</sup> Pieces of property are spoken of in the same way as parts. A part is not just a part of another thing, but is *entirely* that thing's. The same is also true of a piece of property. That is why a master is just his slave's *master*, not his simply, while a slave is not just his master's *slave*, he is entirely his.

It is clear from these considerations what the nature and capacity of a slave are. For anyone who, despite being human, is by nature not his own but someone else's is a natural slave. And he is someone else's when, despite being human, he is a piece of property; and a piece of property is a tool for action that is separate from its owner.<sup>28</sup>

## Chapter 5

But whether anyone is really like that by nature or not, and whether it is better or just for anyone to be a slave or not (all slavery being against nature)—these are the things we must investigate next. And it is not difficult either to determine the answer by argument or to learn it from actual events. For ruling and being ruled are not only necessary, they are also beneficial, and some things are distinguished right from birth, some suited to rule and others to being ruled. There are many kinds of rulers and ruled, and the better the ruled are, the better the rule over them always is;<sup>29</sup> for example, rule over humans is better than rule over beasts. For a task performed by something better is a better task, and where one thing rules and another is ruled, they have a certain task. For whenever a number of constituents, whether continuous with one another or discontinuous, are combined into one common thing, a ruling element and a subject element appear. These are present in living things, because this is how nature as a whole works. (Some rule also exists in lifeless things:

27. A hammer is the tool of a producer or craftsman. A slave is a tool of a head of household, a free agent who engages in action, not production.

28. Unlike our bodies, which are tools or instruments of our souls, but not slaves, because not separate from us (DA 415<sup>b</sup>18–19, PA 642<sup>a</sup>11). See 1255<sup>b</sup>11–12.

29. See 1315<sup>b</sup>4–7, 1325<sup>a</sup>27–30, 1333<sup>b</sup>26–29.



for example, that of a harmony.<sup>30</sup> But an examination of that would perhaps take us too far afield.<sup>31</sup>)

35 Soul and body are the basic constituents of an animal: the soul is the natural ruler; the body the natural subject. But of course one should examine what is natural in things whose condition is natural, not corrupted. One should therefore study the human being too whose soul and body are in the best possible condition; one in whom this is clear. For in depraved people, and those in a depraved condition, the body will often  
125<sup>4</sup> seem to rule the soul, because their condition is bad and unnatural.<sup>32</sup>

At any rate, it is, as I say, in an animal that we can first observe both rule of a master and rule of a statesman. For the soul rules the body with  
5 the rule of a master, whereas understanding rules desire with the rule of a statesman or with the rule of a king.<sup>33</sup> In these cases it is evident that it is natural and beneficial for the body to be ruled by the soul, and for the affective part to be ruled by understanding (the part that has reason), and that it would be harmful to everything if the reverse held, or if these elements were equal. The same applies in the case of human beings with  
10 respect to the other animals. For domestic animals are by nature better than wild ones, and it is better for all of them to be ruled by human beings, since this will secure their safety.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the relation of male to female is that of natural superior to natural inferior, and that of ruler  
15 to ruled. But, in fact, the same holds true of all human beings.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore those people who are as different from others as body is from soul or beast from human, and people whose task, that is to say, the best thing to come from them, is to use their bodies are in this condi-

30. The reference is to the *mesē* or *hēgemōn* (leader), which is the dominant note in a chord (*Pr.* 920<sup>a</sup>21–22, *Metaph.* 1018<sup>b</sup>26–29).

31. *exōterikōteras*: see 1278<sup>b</sup>31 note.

32. The difference between depraved people and those in a depraved condition is unclear. The former are perhaps permanently in the condition that the latter are in temporarily; the former incorrigibly depraved, the latter corrigibly so. In any case, both make poor models.

33. Both statesmen and kings rule willing subjects; in the virtuous desires obey understanding “willingly.” See Introduction xxv–xxxviii.

34. Alternatively: “It is better for all of the tame ones to be ruled.” But the distinction between tame and wild animals is not hard and fast: “All domestic (or tame) animals are at first wild rather than domestic, . . . but physically weaker”; “under certain conditions of locality and time sooner or later all animals can become tame” (*Pr.* 895<sup>b</sup>23–896<sup>a</sup>11). Presumably, then, it is better even for wild animals to be ruled by man.

35. For example, it is natural for Greeks to rule non-Greeks.

tion—those people are natural slaves. And it is better for them to be subject to this rule, since it is also better for the other things we mentioned. For he who can belong to someone else (and that is why he actually does belong to someone else), and he who shares in reason to the extent of understanding it, but does not have it himself (for the other animals obey not reason but feelings), is a natural slave. The difference in the use made of them is small, since both slaves and domestic animals help provide the necessities with their bodies.

Nature tends, then, to make the bodies of slaves and free people different too, the former strong enough to be used for necessities, the latter useless for that sort of work, but upright in posture and possessing all the other qualities needed for political life—qualities divided into those needed for war and those for peace. But the opposite often happens as well: some have the bodies of free men; others, the souls. This, at any rate, is evident: if people were born whose bodies alone were as excellent as those found in the statues of the gods, everyone would say that those who were substandard deserved to be their slaves. And if this is true of the body, it is even more justifiable to make such a distinction with regard to the soul; but the soul's beauty is not so easy to see as the body's.

It is evident, then, that there are some people, some of whom are naturally free, others naturally slaves, for whom slavery is both just and beneficial.<sup>36</sup>

## Chapter 6

But it is not difficult to see that those who make the opposite claim<sup>37</sup> are also right, up to a point. For slaves and slavery are spoken of in two ways: for there are also slaves—that is to say, people who are in a state of slavery—by *law*. The law is a sort of agreement by which what is conquered in war is said to belong to the victors. But many of those conversant with the law challenge the justice of this. They bring a writ of illegality against it, analogous to that brought against a speaker in the assembly.<sup>38</sup> Their

36. A more complex conclusion than we might expect. The idea is perhaps this: being a slave might not be just or beneficial for a natural slave who has long been legally free; similarly, being legally free might not be just or beneficial for a naturally free person who has long been a legal slave.

37. That slavery is unjust.

38. A speaker in the Athenian assembly was liable to a writ of illegality or *graphē paranomōn* if he proposed legislation that contravened already existing law; i.e., the “war” rule would not be allowed in a civil context.

supposition is that it is monstrous if someone is going to be the subject and slave to whatever has superior power and is able to subdue him by force. Some hold the latter view, others the former; and this is true even among the wise.

The reason for this dispute, and for the overlap in the arguments, is this: virtue, when it is equipped with resources, is in a way particularly adept in the use of force; and anything that conquers always does so because it is outstanding in *some* good quality.<sup>39</sup> This makes it seem that force is not without virtue, and that only the justice of the matter is in dispute. For one side believes that justice is benevolence,<sup>40</sup> whereas the other believes that it is precisely the rule of the more powerful that is just. At any event, when these accounts are disentangled, the other arguments have neither force nor anything else to persuade us that the one who is more virtuous should not rule or be master.<sup>41</sup>

Then there are those who cleave exclusively, as they think, to justice of a sort (for law is justice of a sort), and maintain that enslavement in war is just. But at the same time they imply that it is not just. For it is possible for wars to be started unjustly, and no one would say that someone is a slave if he did not deserve to be one;<sup>42</sup> otherwise, those regarded

39: Virtue together with the necessary external goods or resources are what enable someone to do something well, including use force. If someone is able to conquer his foes, this at least suggests that he has the virtues needed for success. See 1324<sup>b</sup>22–1325<sup>a</sup>14.

40. Reading *eunoia* with Dreizehnter and the mss.

41. The two parties to the dispute share common ground because they both believe that “force never lacks virtue.” But they disagree in their accounts of justice, and hence about whether the enslavement of conquered populations is unjust. Those who believe that justice is the rule of the more powerful believe that such enslavement is just, because justice (by definition) is always on the side of the conqueror, since his victory shows him to have the greater power. Those who believe that justice is benevolence (i.e., that it is the good of another) believe that enslavement is unjust because not beneficial for the slaves. Both accounts are canvassed by Thrasymachus in Book I of Plato’s *Republic* (338c, 343c). Once their accounts are disentangled it is readily apparent that their contrasting positions do nothing to confute Aristotle’s own view that the one who is more virtuous *should* rule (I.13).

42. Aristotle is assuming that even an unjust war will be undertaken in accordance with the laws governing declarations of war, and so will be “legal.” Thus by admitting that a person enslaved by the victor in an unjust war has been unjustly but legally enslaved, the proponent of the view here in question denies both that enslaving is always just and that what is legal is always just.

as the best born would be slaves or the children of slaves, if any of them were taken captive and sold. That is why indeed they are not willing to describe *them*, but only non-Greeks, as slaves. Yet, in saying this, they are seeking precisely the natural slave we talked about in the beginning. For they have to say that some people are slaves everywhere, whereas others are slaves nowhere. 30

The same holds of noble birth. Nobles regard themselves as well born wherever they are, not only when they are among their own people, but they regard non-Greeks as well born only when they are at home. They imply a distinction between a good birth and freedom that is unqualified and one that is not unqualified. As Theodectes' Helen says: "Sprung from divine roots on both sides, who would think that I deserve to be called a slave?"<sup>43</sup> But when people say this, they are in fact distinguishing slavery from freedom, well born from low born, in terms of virtue and vice alone. For they think that good people come from good people in just the way that human comes from human, and beast from beast. But often, though nature does have a tendency to bring this about, it is nevertheless unable to do so.<sup>44</sup> 35 40 1255<sup>a</sup>

It is clear, then, that the objection with which we began has something to be said for it, and that the one lot are not always natural slaves, nor the other naturally free. But it is also clear that in some cases there is such a distinction—cases where it is beneficial and just<sup>45</sup> for the one to be master and the other to be slave, and where the one ought to be ruled and the other ought to exercise the rule that is natural for him (so that he is in fact a master), and where misrule harms them both. For the same thing is beneficial for both part and whole, body and soul; and a slave is a sort of part of his master—a sort of living but separate part of his body. Hence, there is a certain mutual benefit and mutual friendship for such masters and slaves as deserve to be by nature so related.<sup>46</sup> When their relationship is not that way, however, but is based on law, and they have been subjected to force, the opposite holds. 10 15

43. Nauck 802, fr. 3. Theodectes was a mid-fourth-century tragic poet who studied with Aristotle. Helen is Helen of Troy.

44. See 1254<sup>b</sup>27–33.

45. Reading *kai dikaion*.

46. "Every human being seems to have some relations of justice with everyone who is capable of community in law and agreement. Hence there is also friendship between master and slave, to the extent that a slave is a human being" (NE 1161<sup>b</sup>1–8).

# BOOK III

## Chapter 1

When investigating constitutions, and what each is and is like, pretty well the first subject of investigation concerns a city-state, to see what the city-state is. For as things stand now, there are disputes about this. Some people say, for example, that a city-state performed a certain action, whereas others say that it was not the city-state that performed the action, but rather the oligarchy or the tyrant did. We see, too, that the entire occupation of statesmen and legislators concerns city-states. Moreover, a constitution is itself a certain organization of the inhabitants of a city-state. But since a city-state is a composite, one that is a whole and, like any other whole, constituted out of many parts,<sup>1</sup> it is clear that we must first inquire into citizens. For a city-state is some sort of multitude of citizens. Hence we must investigate who should be called a citizen, and who the citizen is. For there is often dispute about the citizen as well, since not everyone agrees that the same person is a citizen. For the sort of person who is a citizen in a democracy is often not one in an oligarchy.

We should leave aside those who acquire the title of citizen in some exceptional way; for example, those who are made citizens.<sup>2</sup> Nor is a citizen a citizen through residing in a place, for resident aliens and slaves share the dwelling place with him. Again, those who participate in the justice system, to the extent of prosecuting others in the courts or being judged there themselves, are not citizens: parties to treaties can also do that (though in fact in many places the participation of resident aliens in the justice system is not even complete, but they need a sponsor, so that their participation in this sort of communal relationship is in a way

1. Composites are always analyzed into their parts (1252<sup>a</sup>17–20). A whole (*holon*) is a composite that is a substance possessing an essence or nature (*Metaph.* 1041<sup>b</sup>11–33). See Introduction xxvii–xxxv.

2. Presumably, honorary citizens and the like.

incomplete).<sup>3</sup> Like minors who are too young to be enrolled in the citizen lists or old people who have been excused from their civic duties,<sup>4</sup> they must be said to be citizens *of a sort*, but not UNQUALIFIED citizens. Instead, a qualification must be added, such as "incomplete" or "superannuated" or something else like that (it does not matter what, since what we are saying is clear). For we are looking for the unqualified citizen, the one whose claim to citizenship has no defect of this sort that needs to be rectified (for one can raise and solve similar problems about those who have been disenfranchised or exiled).

The unqualified citizen is defined by nothing else so much as by his participation in judgment and office. But some offices are of limited tenure, so they cannot be held twice by the same person at all, or can be held again only after a definite period. Another person, however, holds office indefinitely, such as the juror or assemblyman. Now someone might say that the latter sort are not officials at all, and do not, because of this,<sup>5</sup> participate in any office as such. Yet surely it would be absurd to deprive of office those who have the most authority.<sup>6</sup> But let this make no difference, since the argument is only about a word. For what a juror and an assemblyman have in common lacks a name that one should call them both. For the sake of definition, let it be indefinite office. We take it, then, that those who participate in office in this way are citizens. And this is pretty much the definition that would best fit all those called citizens.

We must not forget, however, that in case of things in which what underlies differs in kind (one coming first, another second, and so on), a common element either is not present at all, insofar as these things are such, or only in some attenuated way.<sup>7</sup> But we see that constitutions dif-

3. Resident aliens in Athens had to have a citizen "sponsor" (*prostatēs*), but they could represent themselves in legal proceedings. Elsewhere, it seems, their sponsor had to do this for them.
4. At the age of 18, young Athenians were enrolled in the citizen list kept by the leader of the *deme*. Older men were released from having to serve in the military, and perhaps also from jury duty and attendance at meetings of the assembly.
5. Because of being jurors, assemblymen, and the like.
6. As jurors and members of the assembly do in certain sorts of democracies (1273<sup>b</sup>41–1274<sup>a</sup>11).
7. Exercise is healthy, a complexion is healthy, and a certain physical condition is healthy. Each of them underlies the property of being healthy, or is the subject of which that property is predicated. But exercise is healthy because it

fer in kind from one another, and that some are posterior and others prior; for mistaken or deviant constitutions are necessarily posterior to those that are not mistaken.<sup>8</sup> (What we mean by “deviant” will be apparent later.)<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the citizen in each constitution must also be different. 1275<sup>a</sup>

That is precisely why the citizen that we defined is above all a citizen in a democracy, and may possibly be one in other constitutions, but not necessarily. For some constitutions have no “the people” or assemblies they legally recognize, but only specially summoned councils and judicial cases decided by different bodies. In Sparta, for example, some cases concerning contracts are tried by one overseer, others by another, whereas cases of homicide are judged by the senate, and other cases by perhaps some other official. It is the same way in Carthage, since there certain officials decide all cases.<sup>10</sup> None the less, our definition of a citizen admits of correction. For in the other constitutions,<sup>11</sup> it is not the holder of indefinite office who is assemblyman and juror, but someone whose office is definite. For it is either to some or to all of the latter that deliberation and judgment either about some or about all matters is assigned. 15

It is evident from this who the citizen is. For we can now say that someone who is eligible to participate in deliberative and judicial office is a citizen in this city-state, and that a city-state, simply speaking, is a multitude of such people, adequate for life's self-sufficiency. 20

## Chapter 2

But the definition that gets used in practice is that a citizen is someone who comes from citizens on both sides, and not on one only—for exam-

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*causes* a certain bodily condition: health; a complexion is healthy because it *signifies* that condition; and a bodily condition (having a temperature of 98.4° etc.) is healthy because it *is* that condition. Here the bodily condition is healthy in the primary way, because it figures in the *different* accounts of why a complexion and exercise are healthy. See NE 1096<sup>a</sup>17–23, EE 1218<sup>a</sup>1–10.

8. The correct constitution is PRIOR to the deviant because the latter is defined in terms of the former.

9. See III.6–7.

10. See 1273<sup>a</sup>18–20 and note.

11. The nondemocratic ones.

being ruled, just as one learns to be a cavalry commander by serving under a cavalry commander, or to be a general by serving under a general, or under a major or a company commander to learn to occupy the office. Hence this too is rightly said, that one cannot rule well without having been ruled.<sup>31</sup> And whereas the virtues of these *are* different, a good citizen must have the knowledge and ability both to be ruled and to rule, and this is the virtue of a citizen, to know the rule of free people from both sides.

—In fact, a good man too possesses both, even if a ruler does have a different kind of justice and temperance. For if a good person is ruled, but is a free citizen, his virtue (justice, for example) will clearly not be of one kind, but includes one kind for ruling and another for being ruled, just as a man's and a woman's courage and temperance differ. For a man would seem a coward if he had the courage of a woman, and a woman would seem garrulous if she had the temperance of a good man,<sup>32</sup> since even household management differs for the two of them (for his task is to acquire property and hers to preserve it). Practical wisdom is the only virtue peculiar to a ruler; for the others, it would seem, must be common to both rulers and ruled. At any rate, practical wisdom is not the virtue of one who is ruled, but true opinion is. For those ruled are like makers of flutes, whereas rulers are like the flute players who use them.<sup>33</sup>

So then, whether the virtue of a good man is the same as that of an excellent citizen or different, and how they are the same and how different, is evident from the preceding.

## Chapter 5

But one of the problems about the citizen still remains. For is the citizen really someone who is permitted to participate in office, or should vulgar craftsmen also be regarded as citizens? If, indeed, those who do not share in office should be regarded as citizens, then this sort of virtue<sup>34</sup> cannot belong to every citizen (for these will then be citizens). On the

31. A saying to this effect, "Learn to obey before you command," is attributed to Solon. See Diogenes Laertius I.60.

32. See 1260<sup>a</sup>28–31. Greek women were expected to say very little, whereas being a good speaker was a male virtue.

33. See 1282<sup>a</sup>17–23; Plato, *Republic* 429b–430c, 433c–d, 473c–480a, 601d–602b.

34. The virtue that enables one to rule and be ruled well.





other hand, if none of this sort is a citizen, in what category should they each be put?—for they are neither resident aliens nor foreigners.

1278<sup>a</sup> Or shall we say that from *this* argument, at least, nothing absurd follows, since neither slaves nor freed slaves are in the aforementioned classes either? For the truth is that not everyone without whom there would not be a city-state is to be regarded as a citizen. For children are not citizens in the way men are. The latter are unqualified citizens, whereas the former are only citizens given certain assumptions: they are  
 5 citizens, but incomplete ones. Vulgar craftsmen were slaves or foreigners in some places long ago, which is why most of them still are even today. The best city-state will not confer citizenship on vulgar craftsmen, however; but if they too are citizens, then what we have characterized as a citizen's virtue cannot be ascribed to everyone, or even to all free people,  
 10 but only to those who are freed from necessary tasks. Those who perform necessary tasks for an individual are slaves; those who perform them for the community are vulgar craftsmen and hired laborers.

If we carry our investigation a bit further, it will be evident how things stand in these cases. In fact, it is clear from what we have already said.<sup>35</sup> For since there are several constitutions, there must also be several  
 15 kinds of citizens, particularly of citizens who are being ruled. Hence in some constitutions vulgar craftsmen and hired laborers must be citizens, whereas in others it is impossible—for example, in any so-called aristocracy in which offices are awarded on the basis of virtue and merit.

20 For it is impossible to engage in virtuous pursuits while living the life of a vulgar craftsman or a hired laborer.<sup>36</sup>

In oligarchies, however, while hired laborers could not be citizens (since participation in office is based on high property assessments), vulgar craftsmen could be, since in fact most craftsmen become rich (though in Thebes there used to be a law that anyone who had not kept  
 25 away from the market for ten years could not participate in office).<sup>37</sup>

In many constitutions, however, the law even goes so far as to admit some foreigners as citizens; for in some democracies the descendant of a citizen mother is a citizen, and in many places the same holds of bastards too. Nevertheless, since it is because of a shortage of legitimate citizens that they make such people citizens (for it is because of underpop-  
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35. At III.1.

36. Explained somewhat at 1260<sup>a</sup>38–<sup>b</sup>1, 1337<sup>a</sup>4–21.

37. Aristotle thinks that oligarchies *should* impose restrictions of this sort on vulgar craftsmen (1321<sup>a</sup>26–29).

ulation that they employ laws in this way), when they are well supplied with a crowd of them, they gradually disqualify, first, those who have a slave as father or mother, then those with citizen mothers, until finally they make citizens only of those who come from citizens on both sides.

It is evident from these considerations, therefore, that there are several kinds of citizens, and that the one who participates in the offices is particularly said to be a citizen, as Homer too implied when he wrote: "like some disenfranchised alien."<sup>38</sup> For people who do not participate in the offices *are* like resident aliens. When this is concealed, it is for the sake of deceiving coinhabitants.<sup>39</sup> 35

As to whether the virtue expressed by a good man is to be regarded as the same as that of an excellent citizen or as different, it is clear from what has been said that in one sort of city-state both are the same person, while in another they are different. And that person is not just anyone, but the statesman, who has authority or is capable of exercising authority in the supervision of communal matters, either by himself or with others. 40 1278<sup>a</sup> 5

## Chapter 6

Since these issues have been determined, the next thing to investigate is whether we should suppose that there is just one kind of constitution or several, and, if there are several, what they are, how many they are, and how they differ.

A constitution is an organization of a city-state's various offices but, particularly, of the one that has authority over everything. For the governing class has authority in every city-state, and the governing class is the constitution.<sup>40</sup> I mean, for example, that in democratic city-states the people have authority, whereas in oligarchic ones, by contrast, the few have it, and we also say the constitutions of these are different. And we shall give the same account of the other constitutions as well. 10

First, then, we must set down what it is that a city-state is constituted for, and how many kinds of rule deal with human beings and communal life. In our first discussions, indeed, where conclusions were reached 15

38. *Iliad* IX.648, XVI.59. Achilles is complaining that this is how Agamemnon is treating him.

39. See 1264<sup>a</sup>19–22.

40. Aristotle is relying on his doctrine that "a city-state and every other composite system is most of all the part of it that has the most authority" (*NE* 1168<sup>b</sup>31–33).

about household management and rule by a master, it was also said that a human being is by nature a political animal.<sup>41</sup> That is why, even when they do not need one another's help, people no less desire to live together, although it is also true that the common benefit brings them together, to the extent that it contributes some part of living well to each. This above all is the end, then, whether of everyone in common or of each separately.<sup>42</sup> But human beings also join together and maintain political communities for the sake of life by itself. For there is perhaps some share of what is NOBLE in life alone, as long as it is not too overburdened with the hardships of life. In any case, it is clear that most human beings are willing to endure much hardship in order to cling to life, as if it had a sort of joy inherent in it and a natural sweetness.

But surely it is also easy to distinguish at least the kinds of rule people talk about, since we too often discuss them in our own external works.<sup>43</sup> For rule by a master, although in truth the same thing is beneficial for both natural masters and natural slaves, is nevertheless rule exercised for the sake of the master's own benefit, and only coincidentally for that of the slave.<sup>44</sup> For rule by a master cannot be preserved if the slave is destroyed. But rule over children, wife, and the household generally, which we call household management, is either for the sake of the ruled or for the sake of something common to both. Essentially, it is for the sake of the ruled, as we see medicine, physical training, and the other crafts to be, but coincidentally it might be for the sake of the rulers as well. For nothing prevents the trainer from sometimes being one of the athletes he is training, just as the captain of a ship is always one of the sailors. Thus a trainer or a captain looks to the good of those he rules, but when he becomes one of them himself, he shares coincidentally in the benefit. For the captain is a sailor, and the trainer, though still a trainer, becomes one of the trained.

Hence, in the case of political office too, where it has been established on the basis of equality and similarity among the citizens, they think it right to take turns at ruling. In the past, as is natural, they thought it

41. See Introduction xlviii–lix.

42. Aristotle argues for this in VII.1–3.

43. The reference may be to lost works of Aristotle intended for a wider audience than the *Politics*. See, e.g., *EE* 1217<sup>a</sup>22–23.

44. The master has a reason to keep his slaves alive and healthy, but only because it is in his own interest as a master to do so (1252<sup>a</sup>31–34, 1254<sup>b</sup>15–1255<sup>a</sup>3, 1255<sup>b</sup>5–15).

right to perform public service when their turn came, and then to have someone look to *their* good, just as they had earlier looked to his benefit when they were in office. Nowadays, however, because of the profits to be had from public funds and from office, people want to be in office continuously, as if they were sick and would be cured by being always in office. At any rate, perhaps the latter would pursue office in that way. 15

It is evident, then, that those constitutions that look to the common benefit turn out, according to what is unqualifiedly just, to be correct, whereas those which look only to the benefit of the rulers are mistaken and are deviations from the correct constitutions. For they are like rule 20 by a master, whereas a city-state is a community of free people.

## Chapter 7

Now that these matters have been determined, we must next investigate how many kinds of constitutions there are and what they are,<sup>45</sup> starting first with the correct constitutions. For once they have been defined, the deviant ones will also be made evident.

Since "constitution" and "governing class" signify the same thing,<sup>46</sup> 25 and the governing class is the authoritative element in any city-state, and the authoritative element must be either one person, or few, or many, then whenever the one, the few, or the many rule for the common benefit, these constitutions must be correct. But if they aim at the private benefit, whether of the one or the few or the MULTITUDE, they are deviations (for either the participants<sup>47</sup> should not be called citizens, or they should share in the benefits). 30

A monarchy that looks to the common benefit we customarily call a kingship; and rule by a few but more than one, an aristocracy (either because the best people rule, or because they rule with a view to what is 35 best for the city-state and those who share in it). But when the multitude governs for the common benefit, it is called by the name common to all CONSTITUTIONS, namely, *politeia*. Moreover, this happens reasonably. For while it is possible for one or a few to be outstandingly virtuous, it is difficult for a larger number to be accomplished in every virtue, but it can be so in military virtue in particular. That is precisely why the class 40 1279

45. See 1274<sup>b</sup>32–33 and note.

46. See 1278<sup>b</sup>11 and note.

47. Rejecting with the mss. the insertion of *mē*.

of defensive soldiers, the ones who possess the weapons, has the most authority in this constitution.<sup>48</sup>

Deviations from these are tyranny from kingship, oligarchy from aristocracy, and democracy from polity. For tyranny is rule by one person for the benefit of the monarch, oligarchy is for the benefit of the rich, and democracy is for the benefit of the poor. But none is for their common profit.

## Chapter 8

We should say a little more about what each of these constitutions is. For certain problems arise, and when one is carrying out any investigation in a philosophical manner, and not merely with a practical purpose in view, it is appropriate not to overlook or omit anything, but to make the truth about each clear.

A tyranny, as we said, exists when a monarchy rules the political community like a master; in an oligarchy those in authority in the constitution are the ones who have property. A democracy is the opposite; those who do not possess much property, and are poor, are in authority. The first problem concerns this definition. Suppose that the MAJORITY were rich and had authority in the city-state; yet there is a democracy whenever the majority has authority. Similarly, to take the opposite case, suppose the poor were fewer in number than the rich, but were stronger and had authority in the constitution; yet when a small group has authority it is said to be an oligarchy. It would seem, then, that these constitutions have not been well defined. But even if one combines being few with being rich in one case, and being a majority with being poor in the other, and describes the constitutions accordingly (oligarchy as that in which the rich are few in number and hold the offices, and democracy as that in which the poor are many and hold them), another problem arises. For what are we to call the constitutions we just described, those where the rich are a majority and the poor a minority, but each has authority in its

48. The constitution is a POLITY, which is governed by the HOPLITE class. It is the correct form of government by the many because its governing class are as virtuous as possible, since they possess military virtue, which is the one virtue that is broadly sharable. That is why Aristotle agrees that it is reasonable to call the correct form of government by the many a polity. On military virtue, see 1271<sup>a</sup>41–2.

own constitution—if indeed there is no other constitution besides those just mentioned?<sup>49</sup>

What this argument seems to make clear is that it is a coincidence that the few have authority in oligarchies and the many in democracies, a result of the fact that everywhere the rich are few and the poor many. That is why, indeed, the reasons just mentioned are not the reasons for the differences. What does distinguish democracy and oligarchy from one another is poverty and wealth: whenever some, whether a minority or a majority, rule because of their wealth, the constitution is necessarily an oligarchy, and whenever the poor rule, it is necessarily a democracy. But it turns out, as we said, that the former are in fact few and the latter many. For only a few people are rich, but all share in freedom; and these are the reasons they both dispute over the constitution.<sup>50</sup>

## Chapter 9

The first thing one must grasp, however, is what people say the defining marks of oligarchy and democracy are, and what oligarchic and democratic justice are. For [1] they all grasp justice of a sort,<sup>51</sup> but they go only to a certain point and do not discuss the whole of what is just in the most authoritative sense. For example, justice seems to be EQUALITY, and it is, but not for everyone, only for equals. Justice also seems to be inequality, since indeed it is, but not for everyone, only for unequals.<sup>52</sup> They disregard the “for whom,” however, and judge badly. The reason is that the judgment concerns themselves, and most people are pretty poor judges about what is their own.<sup>53</sup>

So since what is just is just for certain people, and consists in dividing things and people in the same way (as we said earlier in the *Ethics*),<sup>54</sup> they agree about what constitutes equality in the thing but disagree about it in the people. This is largely because of what was just mentioned, that they judge badly about what concerns themselves, but also

49. Presumably, the six listed in the previous chapter.

50. See 1290<sup>a</sup>30–b<sup>20</sup>.

51. As the remainder of the chapter will establish. The inserted numbers help reveal the structure of what is, even for Aristotle, a rather complexly structured argument.

52. Democrats give the first definition; oligarchs the second (1266<sup>b</sup>38–1267<sup>a</sup>2, 1267<sup>a</sup>37–41). See Introduction lxv–lxviii.

53. See 1287<sup>a</sup>41–b<sup>3</sup>.

54. NEV.3.

because, since they are both speaking up to a point about justice of a sort, they think they are speaking about what is unqualifiedly just. For one lot thinks that if they are unequal in one respect (wealth, say) they are wholly unequal, whereas the other lot thinks that if they are equal in one respect (freedom, say) they are wholly equal. But about the most authoritative considerations they do not speak.

For suppose people constituted a community and came together for the sake of property; then their participation in a city-state would be proportional to their property, and the oligarchic argument would as a result seem to be a powerful one. (For it is not just that someone who has contributed only one mina to a sum of one hundred minas should have equal shares in that sum, whether of the principal or of the interest, with the one who has contributed all the rest.) But suppose [2] they do not do so only for the sake of life, but rather for the sake of living well, since otherwise there could be a city-state of SLAVES or animals, whereas in fact there is not, because these share neither in HAPPINESS nor in a life guided by DELIBERATIVE CHOICE.

And suppose [3] they do not do so for the sake of an alliance to safeguard themselves from being wronged by anyone, nor [4] to facilitate exchange and mutual assistance, since otherwise the Etruscans and the Carthaginians, and all those who have treaties with one another would virtually be citizens of one city-state. To be sure, they have import agreements, treaties about refraining from injustice, and formal documents of alliance, but no offices common to all of them have been established to deal with these matters; instead each city-state has different ones. Nor are those in one city-state concerned with what sort of people the others should be, or that none of those covered by the agreements should be unjust or vicious in any way, but only that neither city-state acts unjustly toward the other. But those who are concerned with good government give careful attention to political virtue and vice.<sup>55</sup> Hence it is quite evident that the city-state (at any rate, the one truly so called and not just for the sake of argument) must be concerned with virtue. For otherwise the community becomes an alliance that differs only in location from other alliances in which the allies live far apart, and law becomes an agreement, "a guarantor of just behavior toward one another," as the sophist Lycophron<sup>56</sup> said, but not such as to make the citizens good and just.

55. See 1281<sup>a</sup>4–8, 1340<sup>b</sup>41–1341<sup>a</sup>3, and 1254<sup>b</sup>27–32 with 1334<sup>a</sup>11–40.

56. Lycophron is known only from the writings of Aristotle. He may have belonged to the school of Gorgias.

It is evident that this is right. For even if [5] one were to bring their territories together into one, so that the city-state of the Megarians was attached to that of the Corinthians by walls, it still would not be a single city-state. Nor would it be so if their citizens intermarried, even though this is one of the forms of community characteristic of city-states. Similarly, if there were some who lived separately, yet not so separately as to share nothing in common, and had laws against wronging one another in their business transactions (for example, if one were a carpenter, another a farmer, another a cobbler, another something else of that sort, and their number were ten thousand), yet they shared nothing else in common besides such things as exchange and alliance—not even in this case would there be a city-state.

What, then, is the reason for this? Surely, it is not because of the non-proximate nature of their community. For suppose they joined together while continuing to share in that way, but each nevertheless treated his own household like a city-state, and the others like a defensive alliance formed to provide aid against wrongdoers only. Even then this still would not be thought a city-state by those who make a precise study of such things, if indeed they continued to associate with one another in the same manner when together as when separated.

Evidently, then, a city-state is not [5] a sharing of a common location, and does not exist for the purpose of [4] preventing mutual wrongdoing and [3] exchanging goods. Rather, while these must be present if indeed there is to be a city-state, when all of them *are* present there is still not yet a city-state, but [2] only when households and families live well as a community whose end is a complete and self-sufficient life. But this will not be possible unless they do inhabit one and the same location and practice intermarriage. That is why marriage connections arose in city-states, as well as brotherhoods, religious sacrifices, and the LEISURED PURSUITS of living together. For things of this sort are the result of friendship, since the deliberative choice of living together constitutes friendship. The end of the city-state is living well, then, but these other things are for the sake of the end. And a city-state is the community of families and villages in a complete and self-sufficient life, which we say is living happily and NOBLY.

So political communities must be taken to exist for the sake of noble actions, and not for the sake of living together. Hence those who contribute the most to *this* sort of community have a larger share in the city-state than those who are equal or superior in freedom or family but inferior in political virtue, and those who surpass in wealth but are surpassed in virtue.



It is evident from what has been said, then, that [1] those who dispute  
 10 about constitutions all speak about a *part* of justice.

## Chapter 10

There is a problem as to what part of the state is to have authority, since surely it is either the multitude, or the rich, or decent people, or the one who is best of all, or a tyrant. But all of these apparently involve difficulties. How so? If the poor, because they are the greater number, divide up  
 15 the property of the rich, isn't that unjust? "No, by Zeus, it isn't, since it seemed just to those in authority." What, then, should we call extreme injustice? Again, if the majority, having seized everything, should divide up the property of the minority, they are evidently destroying the city-state. But virtue certainly does not ruin what has it, nor is justice something  
 20 capable of destroying a city-state. So it is clear, then, that this law<sup>57</sup> cannot be just. Besides, everything done by a tyrant must be just as well; for he, being stronger, uses force, just as the multitude do against the rich.

25 But is it just, then, for the rich minority to rule? If they too act in the same way, plundering and confiscating the property of the multitude, and this is just, then the other case is as well. It is evident, therefore, that all these things are bad and unjust.

But should decent people rule and have authority over everything? In that case, everyone else must be deprived of honors by being excluded from  
 30 political office. For offices are positions of honor, we say, and when the same people always rule, the rest must necessarily be deprived of honors.

But is it better that the one who is best should rule? But this is even more oligarchic, since those deprived of honors are more numerous.

Perhaps, however, someone might say that it is a bad thing in general  
 35 for a human being to have authority and not the LAW, since he at any rate has the passions that beset the soul. But if law may be oligarchic or democratic, what difference will that make to our problems? For the things we have just described will happen just the same.

## Chapter 11

As for the other cases, we may let them be the topic of a different discussion.<sup>58</sup> But the view that the multitude rather than the few best peo-

57. The law requiring wealth to be divided up.

58. See III.12–13.