

## Q.No: 2: 1. What is the Aristotelian Classification of State?

### 1. Introduction:

Aristotle was an ancient Greek philosopher, who is still considered one of the greatest thinkers in politics, psychology and ethics.

When Aristotle turned 17, he was enrolled in Plato's Academy.

In 338 he began tutoring Alexander the Great. In 335 he founded his own school, the Lyceum, in Athens, where he spent rest of his life. Studying, teaching and writing. Aristotle provides the most lasting classification of state which is even today regarded as the most valid basis for differences of one government from the other.

### 2. Identification of State with Constitution:

Aristotle identifies 'state' with

constitution, the same classification which is valid for the former is also valid for the latter. In Aristotle's own words "Constitution and the government have the same meaning". We do make distinction between government and the state.

### Basis of Classification:

There are two major basis of Aristotle's classification: first one is mere in number called quantity which have the sovereign power whether one, few or many. Second one is few in number called quality, they are the elite class to whom the government seeks to serve. If the government works for the common interest of all that is the pure form of government but if it works for the interest of private or self then it becomes

perverted or corrupt.

## Classification of State:

According to Aristotle pure form of government are Monarchy, Aristocracy and Polity.

Monarchy: If one performs for common interest all, under law, the government in Monarchy and it is the best form of government.

### Aristocracy:

If few people rule for the good of all that is Aristocracy government. They work for the interest of public as a whole.

### Polity:

If many people rule for the good of all that is the Polity form of government. In this government citizens at large administer for the common interest. This government unite

the freedom of poor and the wealth of rich, without giving either of them predominant position. It is best practical because it is ruled by the middle class and the moderate qualities.

### 5 Perversion form of Government:

Each form of government has its perversion form, which are Tyranny, Oligarchy, Democracy.

#### Tyranny:

Tyranny is the perverted form of monarchy, where one person rules for the selfish interest of his own.

#### Oligarchy:

Oligarchy is the perverted form of Aristocracy where few (wealthy) people rule for the private class interest rather than for the whole. Wealth is the basis for selection in Oligarchy.

Democracy:

Democracy is the Perverted form of Polity where few people (Poor) rule for their interest, not the interest of all. It is the government for the poor by the poor.

Number of ruler	pure form of government	Perverted form of government
One	Monarchy	Tyranny
Few (5-50-200)	Aristocracy	Oligarchy
Many	Polity	Democracy

S: Aristotle's Cycle of State:

According to the State-Cycle of Plato Aristotle, governments are not static but dynamic.

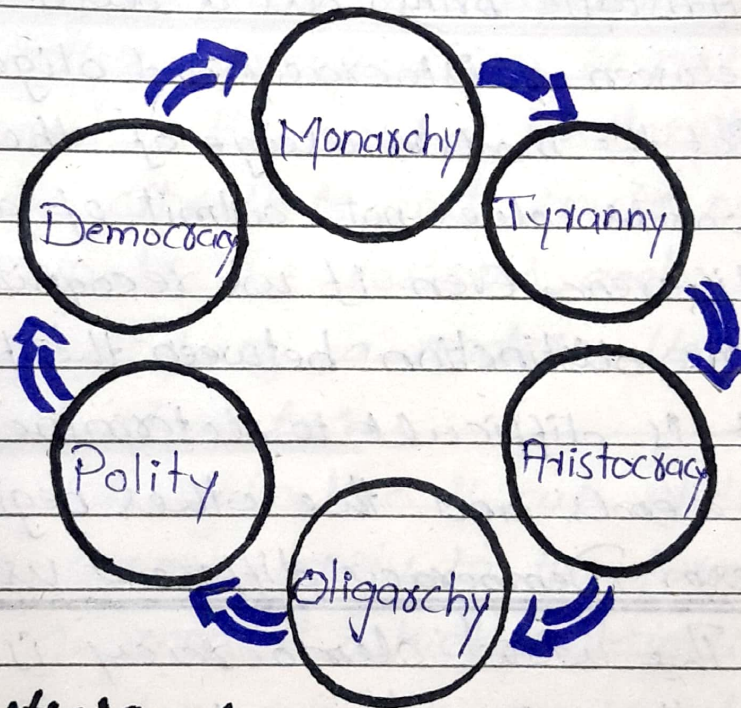
The first form of government to come into being was <sup>monarchy</sup> Democracy. In this ty of government one person ruled for the interest of all. He was not corrupt and he ruled for the honour and interest of public.

Having tested the power, the monarch was bound to become greedy, selfish and corrupt and got degenerated to Tyranny.

Tyranny ruled for sometimes but few people overthrew <sup>it</sup> and it was succeeded by Aristocracy. It ruled for the interest of all. Aristocracy too got perverted as those few people started working only for their own class interest rather than interest of all. That government was Oligarchy.

Oligarchy was also overthrown by the many patriotic persons who governed for the interest of all. That form of government was Polity. Polity too in its turn got corrupt and the many poor people captured the power and started ruling for poor people's interest only. That is called Democracy.

Democracy continued for some time. At a time came when democracy was overthrown by one perfect, benevolent, virtuous person. He established Monarchy and started ruling for the good of all and thus the cycle order of government goes on.



### Criticism:

Aristotle's classification of state has been subjected to following criticism:

1: No distinction between state and government:

In the first place, it is pointed out that Aristotle make the distinction between the government and state but afterwards his classification is a classification of government rather than state.

## 2. Distinction between Aristocracy and Oligarchy misleading:

Aristotle brings out a distinction between aristocracy and oligarchy. But the modern usage of these words does not admit of any difference. Even if we recognize the fine distinction between the two, it is difficult to determine where one ends and the other begins.

## 3. Term Democracy different used

The word democracy is used in the sense of mobocracy.

Modern writers, however, do not regard democracy as a perverted form of people's rule

According to Aristotle, polity is:



the rule of citizens. His conception of citizenship did not include traders, farmers, artisans and slaves. It was in reality a rule of owners or aristocrats. He disliked rule of real democracy where all people ruled and called it a perverted form of government.

#### 4: In exhaustive classifications:

Aristotle's classification is not exhaustive. He was a philosopher of the city-state and could not anticipate the vastness and complexity of a modern state.

#### 5: Out of date:

His classification is out of date and cannot apply to the forms of government which obtain in the modern era. Like ~~no~~ limited monarchy, totalitarian government, dictatorship, representative democracy, parliamentary system, federation and so on.

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### 6: Classification unscientific:

Aristotle's classification of States is unscientific as it is based on number of persons in whom the powers are vested and then it lays too much emphasis on ethics which is a matter of individual judgement.

### 7: States are classified differently:

Aristotle obliterated the distinction between State and Governments. He classifies only government of his own time while he talked of State. In fact States can be classified as National States or Multi-national States; Secular States or Theocratic States; Unitary or Federal States.

### 7: Conclusion:

In his classification of state Aristotle ~~plato~~ classified forms of government based on pure and perverted forms. Which shows government is not static but dynamic. His classification is valid even today with few amendments.