

Q2) What is the Aristotelian classification of state?

1) Introduction:

Aristotle is one of the most globally acclaimed philosophers who is particularly known for his theories pertaining to ideal states, Politics, ethics and classification of states. Aristotle was a Greek philosopher born in 384 BC in Stagira, Greece.

2) Concept of classification of state?

Aristotle viewed the state as a highest form of community, hence he classified the state on the basis of its purpose and the number of rulers it had. The purpose was further divided into two categories, i.e. pure state and perverted state, the former works for the well-being of its citizens while the latter exploits citizens at large. Similarly, the number of rulers is further separated in three divisions, i.e. monarchy, aristocracy and polity. Monarchy being ruled by one, aristocracy, rule by few and polity denotes ruled by many. Further more, Aristotle also laid down the cycle of life, where in he mentions that a state emanates from monarchy, transitions through tyranny, aristocracy, oligarchy, polity and ultimately ends up at democracy.

3) Concept of state:

Aristotle defines a state as a community of persons, where each community has a definitive purpose that is nothing but good. He also asserts that state is not an ordinary community but the highest kind of community that should aim at the highest good.

4) Principle of classification of state:

Aristotle classified the state on the following two principles:

- 1) Number of rulers
- 2) Purpose of state

The former is associated with the number of people that can exercise the supreme authority in the state. The latter entails the objective for exercising such authority, whether it is for the betterment of citizens or only constrained to the ruler's personal interests.

4.1) Purpose of state:

Aristotle classified the state on the basis of the purpose of the state into the following two categories:

- 1) Pure state
- 2) Perverted state

Pure state aims at the common and collective good which works for the betterment of the citizens. On the contrary, a Perverted state aims at perserving the inters interests of the ruling elite at the expense of forsaking well-being of the common masses.

4.2) Number of Rulers:

Aristotle classified the state into three sub-divisions based on the number of rulers

- 1) Monarchy
- 2) Aristocracy
- 3) Polity

Aristotle states, in a monarchy, a single person rules the state, and that ruler works for the betterment and welfare of the citizens. He deems ~~the~~ monarchy the best form of government as in thereof, ruler prioritises national-interest of self-interest. He also asserts that in such a system the King should not boast absolute power and the law must restrain him.

It is when a monarch, according to Aristotle, grows selfish and corrupt, the system ~~converts~~ converts to tyranny, a perverted form of state.

In an aristocracy, the state is governed by a small group of people comprised of wealthy and virtuous people who work for the betterment of citizens. The state under them is a welfare state. According to Aristotle, such a state is a pure state, so long as the ruling elite work in aligned with the national interest.

It is when the ruling class shuns national interest for selfish motives, & does the system converts to oligarchy, a perverted state.

In Polity, the state is governed by middle class citizens who are elected by the common masses. Their aim is to uphold the interests of people and run the state with respect to peoples' desire.

Polity changes to democracy when the elected representative grow ~~to~~ corrupt. ~~to~~ Democracy is also deemed as a perverted form of state, which, according to Aristotle is the worst kind of system as it can be changed into tyranny.

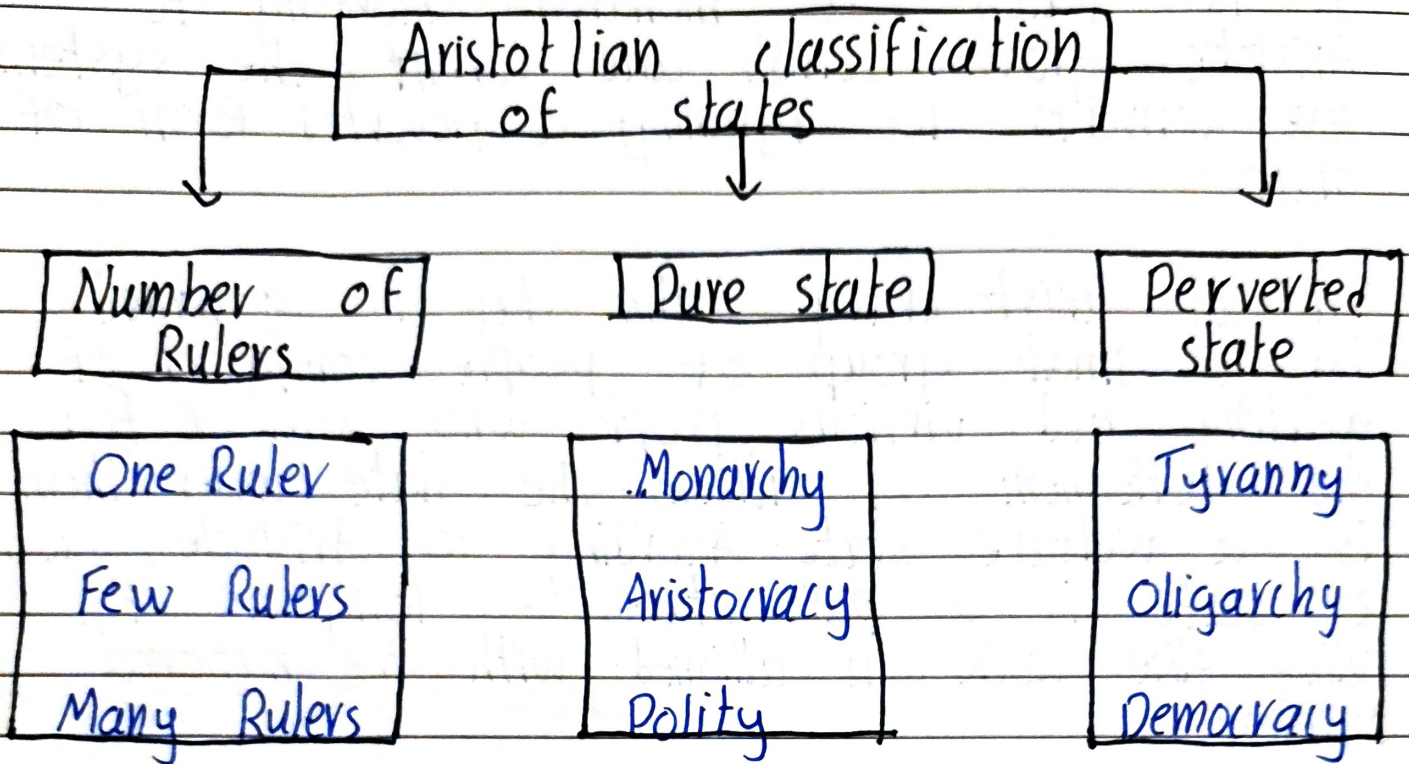


Fig 1: Aristotle's classification of state

5) Aristotle's cycle of state:

According to Aristotle, all states undergo a cycle of change. A state originates with the establishment of monarchy, which is a single virtuous man ruling the state. When monarchy transitions to tyranny, it is inevitably superseded by aristocracy. When aristocrats grow corrupt, it turns into oligarchy. Popular uprising converts it into polity, from there onwards the system degenerates into a democracy. Ultimately, a virtuous

man arises and restores law and order. This is how the perpetual cycle continues.

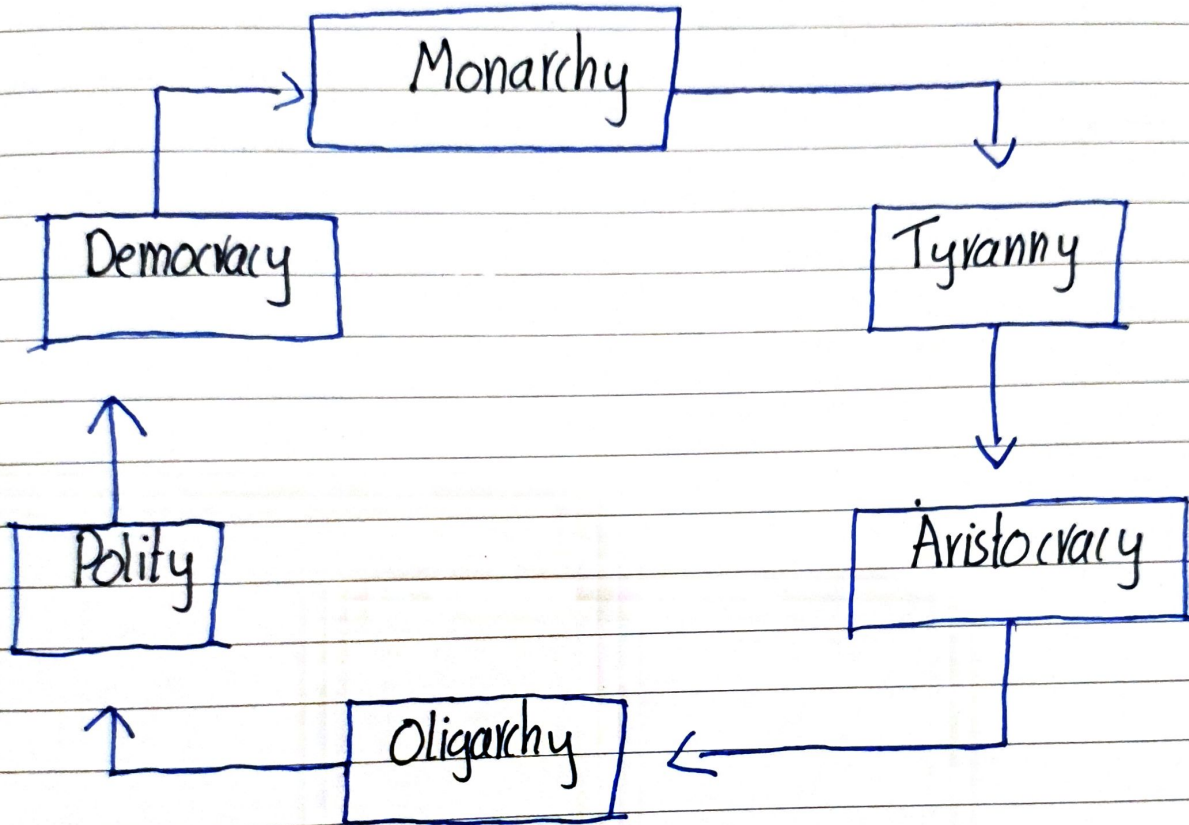


fig 2: Illustration of Aristotle's cycle of state

6) Critical Analysis:

Aristotle's classification was a mile stone in the history of political science and an cornerstone for many forthcoming philosophers. Albeit classification accurately surmises the cycle of state in few cases, it is still far-fetched

in the case of majority, particularly the modern state systems.

Classification of state

Purpose of state	Number of Rulers
Pure state → well being of citizens	One Ruler: Monarch Few Rulers: Aristocracy Many Rulers: Polity
Perverted state → driven by personal interests	One Ruler: Tyranny Few Rulers: Oligarchy Many Rulers: democracy

fig 3: Overview of Answer

3) Conclusion:

In a nutshell, despite marked as an important landmark for political sciences, the classification of state laid down by Aristotle does not accurately sum up the modern political structures. The fact that monarchy was deemed to be

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the ideal state governance by Aristotle, speaks volumes of ~~the~~ his inability to envision the future political era, wherein monarchy is viewed an obsolete system and democracy being globally acclaimed.