

Q What is Aristotelian classification of state?

### Introduction

The ideas of Aristotle have significantly influenced western philosophy, politics and ethics. He studied over 158 constitutions of various city states by sending his students to prepare the case studies of various constitutions. One of the numerous contributions made by Aristotle to these fields was the development of classification of states based on the number of rulers and the nature of their power. He believed that state came into existence for the satisfaction of basic needs of people and it continued for the good life of people. He regarded state as natural organization which is the result of growth and evolution. According to Aristotle's classification of states, the only legitimate governmental structures are monarchy, aristocracy and polity. He opposed monarchy because he believed a single ruler could not attain virtue. Like the aristocracy, which only selects few morally upright and intelligent people could join, he rejected it. Furthermore, Aristotle recognized that tyranny, oligarchy and democracy were three additional corruptions and rejected

them. According to Aristotle, the ideal form of government is a polity or constitutional system, in which the majority rules while keeping the interest of entire community in mind.

### Features of Aristotle state:

Features of Aristotle state are as follow:

- o State is Natural Entity: Unlike Plato's Ideal state, Aristotle's state was not structured or manufactured - It is a result of gradual evolution. According to needs of individuals, family came into being, families led to the formation of villages and villages turned into the state.

- o State is prior to human beings:

Aristotle believed that state is prior to family and human beings, as a whole is prior to the parts of body. According to him, It is the destiny of a man to live in the state. Chronologically man is prior to state, but logically state is prior to man.

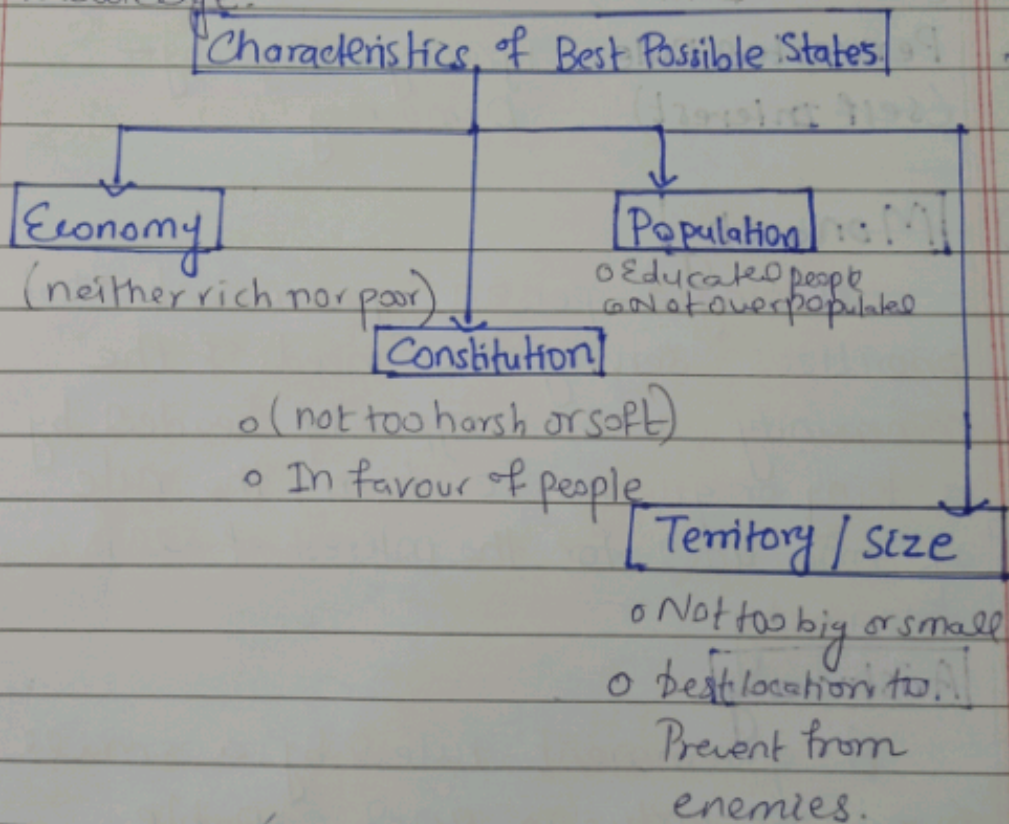
- o State is association of associations:

The associations are not as large as the state. The state has general and common purposes and has larger concerns as compare to other associations. He regarded state as an organism and individual as its body parts. When

individual is separated from body state then he has no importance.

### o state is self-sufficing:

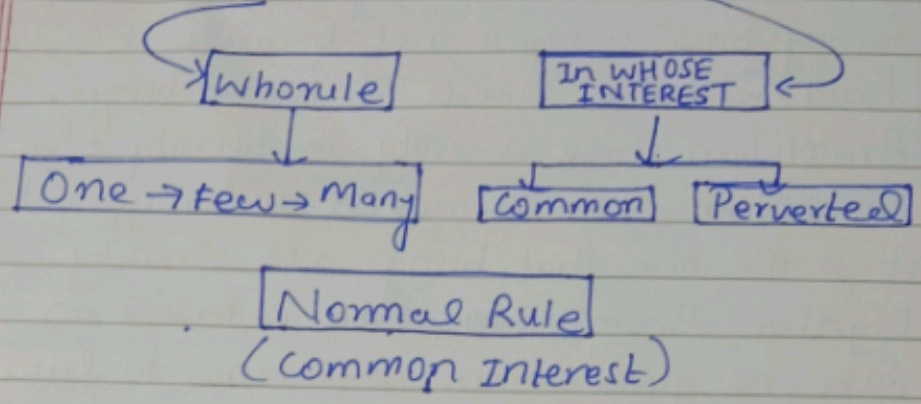
State is self-sufficing institute while family and village is not because it fulfils all the needs of human beings. Aristotelian state is unity in diversity, for human him state is not a uniformity but it is the one that brings all diversity together. Aristotelian state is based on rule, he gave more importance to law as it is result of collective wisdom, he did not believe in rule of philosophy or knowledge.



## 3) Aristotle Classification on state

Aristotle classified states based on the number of rulers and the purpose of rule.

Aristotle's classification of state



- o Normal Rule (Common Interest) Monarch - Aristocracy - Polity
- o Perverted Rule (Self Interest) Tyranny - Oligarchy - Democracy

1) Monarchy

A single-person government that prioritizes serving the needs of the community and is typically headed by a king or queen. For him, the rule of one and for the interest of all is monarchy.

2) Aristocracy

A government ruled by a small group of virtuous and capable individuals, who rule with their interest of the community in mind.

3) Oligarchy

When the small group of rulers become selfish and rule in their own interest rather than the interest of community, it is oligarchy.

4) **Polity**

A government ruled by the majority of the citizens, who have an equal say in the government. In Polity, the relationship between the ruler and the ruled is of equality rather than of master and slave.

5) **Tyranny**

When the monarch becomes selfish and rules in his own interest rather than the interest of the community.

6) **Democracy**

When the majority becomes selfish and starts ruling in their own interest rather than the interest of community is called democracy.

The legitimate forms of state	Corresponding forms of corruption
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MONARCHY

TYRANNY

ARISTOCRACY

OLIGARCHY

POLITY

DEMOCRACY

## o Polity → The best Practicable form of Government

Aristotle thought that a polity, or constitutional government, where the majority ruled with the good of the community in mind was the best type of Government. As polity is the rule of middle class where no difference between ruler and ruled. Also, there is no distinction between master and slave.

If things continue in this manner, it would not be the best political term.

## o Bad form of Government

Aristotle rejected oligarchy, tyranny and democracy because they all have a master-slave relationship as their fundamental basis of power. This indicates that there is a dominance and exploitation relationship between the ruler and the subject. There is distinction between master and slave. If things continue in this manner, it would be the bad political system.

## Aristotle theory of Justice

Aristotle uses the "Golden Mean" theory to mediate between the two extremes as a result of class conflict. According to this theory, virtue lies halfway between two extremes. So

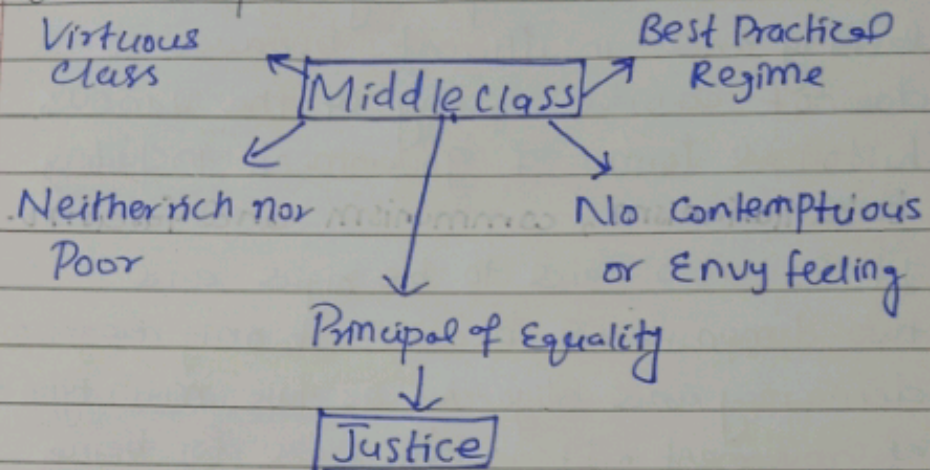
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he was interested in studying the middle position. He admired a system in which there is neither an excessively rich nor poor population. As a result, the middle class is a class that is neither excessively wealthy nor impoverished. This class was devoid of feelings of envy or contempt.



### o Application in the Modern world

Aristotle's classification of states offers an insightful framework for comprehending various governmental structures in the contemporary world. For instance: Saudi Arabia, North and South Korea, UK and other countries continue to practice monarchy. The same is true of the aristocracy which is practiced under a constitutional monarchy in number of countries around the world. Similarly, democracy exists in Pakistan, India, USA etc. In addition, China and Russia both have oligarchies. This is how system of classifying states applies in

the contemporary world.

## Critical Analysis

The way in which Aristotle categorized states in his well-known work "politics" has received a lot of criticism over the years. Aristotle's classification of the state is frequently regarded as lacking and insufficient because it does not consider many of the various historical forms of government including totalitarianism, communism and fascism. It is also said to be rigid and two-dimensional because it only recognizes democracy and oligarchy as two main types of government. It is criticized for being biased. It was only in favor of the Greek polis and might not be applicable to other societies.

## Conclusion

To sum up, Aristotle proposed the idea of a mixed constitution to avoid unpredictability and establish a long-lasting system of governance in the Greek city state. He developed a middle class by utilizing his theory of Golden mean which was completely virtuous. Thus, in his view, the state is necessary for a good life.

"The People are as good as the people, even though they might be individually worse Judges than those who have special knowledge."  
(Aristotle → The Politics)