Western Political Thought - Aristotle
Aristotle was a tireless scholar, whose scientific explorations were as wide-ranging as his philosophical speculations were profound; a teacher who inspired – and who continues to inspire – generations of pupils; a controversial public figure who lived a turbulent life in a turbulent world. He bestrode antiquity like an intellectual colossus. No man before him had contributed so much to learning. No man after could hope to rival his achievement.

Life history

• Aristotle (384 - 322 BC), was a Greek philosopher, logician, and scientist.
• Born in northern Greece, and his father was a court physician to the king of Macedon.
• He was the disciple of Plato and attended his school at the age of 17.
• He was teacher of Alexander the great.
• Came back to Athens, after alexander succeeded his father, and established his school and library at Lyceum.
Works of Aristotle

• Considered as Father of Political Science.
• Aristotle wrote extensively on subjects like metaphysics, psychology, poetry, biology, moral sciences, politics, etc.
• The most notable of his works on political science were *Politics*, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics*.
• He also made certain notes on numerous constitutions but most of it was lost.
• The two books on ethics discussed the nature of individual happiness or well being.

• *Politics* described the role of State to ensure individual happiness.

• It explained the ideal city where happiness could be achieved and the means to do so, in speculative and practical manner.
Aristotle’s Political view

- He regarded political science to be a master science and state as highest of all communities aiming at highest good.
- His approach was scientific and practical:
  a) Study based on facts
  b) Evaluating the facts
  c) Respecting traditions
  d) Comparative analysis
State as a natural institution

- Rejected Sophists view that political society is the product of convention.
- Man is political and social animal, hence State is natural - as it reflects both the aspects.
- Three arguments to prove the aforesaid
  a) natural instincts argument
  b) Teleological argument
  c) ‘state as an organism’- argument.
Classification of State

• Aristotle, classified states on the basis of two principles:
  
  • (1) In whom the sovereign powers are vested?
  
  • (2) Whether it is exercised for the good of the community or for the good of the ruler?

• If it is good for the community then it is a pure or correct state. If it is good for the ruler it is a deviant state
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One Ruler</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Deviant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kingship</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyranny</td>
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<tr>
<td>Few Rulers</td>
<td>Aristocracy</td>
<td>Oligarchy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Many Rulers</td>
<td>Polity</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
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Aristotle on Property

• Defends system of private property as opposed to Plato’s views of community property.
• Every citizen should possess property of optimum size.
• Natural and unnatural forms of property.
• Continuance of fixed amount of property for generations by birth control.
Aristotle on Slavery

• He defended and justified slavery (household).
• He declared slavery to be an institution of nature. A superior would rule over inferior.
• A slave belongs to a free man and as such he exists only for the sake of latter.
• However, he insists on the humanitarian treatment of the slaves.
Aristotle on Citizenship

• not to be determined by residence
• citizen as a person who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration.
• A good citizen would have the intelligence and the ability to rule and be ruled
• young and the old could not be citizens, for one was immature and the other infirm.
• Women were also not regarded as citizens.
Aristotle on Distributive justice

- Aristotle thought that justice is the core of the state. It is a complete virtue.
- He also introduced the concept of Distributive justice.
- ‘Just’ has two meanings- abiding to legal rules and using fair means.
- Distributive justice consists of proper allocation to each person according to his worth.
Aristotle on Education

- He believed that education should be designed to train man in a certain type of character suitable to the state.

- Three stages of schooling:
  - Primary- Ages 7-14 years.
  - Secondary- Ages 14-21 years.
  - Higher education- 21 above.

- Higher education was for males only as Aristotle believed women were not capable of such complex studies.
Aristotle on Women and Family

• Family is the first unit of state.
• There is a natural friendship between man and a woman for a human thrives to live in pairs.
• It was a relation between husband and wife; and parents and children.
• He believed that marriages without children would dissolve easily, for they create necessary bond.
• He did not believe in gender equality.
• He criticized Spartans for giving their women excessive freedom.
• Women by nature cannot have virtue of courage and also they don’t have intellect to participate in administration.
• Woman should be part of the city but left out of political process.
• A husband is head of the family and wife must obey to his commands.
Eudaimonia

- It means nature of happiness.
- He identified good as happiness.
- Happiness represented quest for excellence.
- A life of sufficiency and self reliance would be a happy one.
- Two qualities of soul: rational and irrational.
- The aim of State is to ensure happiness of community.
Revolution

- According to Aristotle, "If any change occurs in the existing system or constitution of the state, it means the revolution.

- Different types of measure of revolution:
  - A revolution may take the form of a change of constitution of state.
  - The revolution may try to grasp political power without changing the constitution.
  - A revolution may be directed against not the inter system of government, but a particular institution or set of persons in the state.
Causes of revolution

General Causes:

- Psychological motives or the state of mind.
- The objectives in mind.
- The occasions that gave rise to political upheaval and mutual strife.

Other causes:
Dishonour, profit at the expense of public, negligence on part of administrators, Fear of sanctions, Poverty, disproportionate increase in power.
• **Prevention of Revolution**
  maintaining law and order for even smallest of matters.
• Not taking people for granted.
• The principle of democratic equality must be followed and liberty of expression must be accorded.
• Holders of offices should not be able to make private gain.
• too much power should not be allowed to one man or one class of men
• Honours should be awarded to people of worth.
• Effective education should be provided.
Rule of law and Constitution

- Aristotle had the idea of constitutionally based order.
- Rightly constituted law was the final authority.
- Constitutional Rule had 3 main elements:
  - Common interest
  - General regulations to carry out Government.
  - Subjects were ruled by consent.
“A constitution can be described as an organisation of offices in state, by which the method of their distribution is fixed, the sovereign authority is determined and the nature of the end to be pursued by a community.”

• Constitution has two aspects:
  • Ethical and Institutional

• Three elements of constitution:
  • Deliberative, Official and Magisterial
Differences with Plato

• Plato was an idealist while Aristotle a realist.
• The main focus of Plato is a perfect society. Aristotle wanted to improve on the existing one.
• Aristotle rejected the idea of select persons holding the power.
• Plato pursued political truth while Aristotle was concerned with the citizen and the design of political institutions.