

According to
aristotles account in
book 4 of the politics,
what is the
importance...

[Law](#), [Constitution](#)



When studying the ways humanity has tried to organize itself politically, one must start by reading what the ancient Greeks wrote. They gave a good account on how life ought to be conducted in their city-states. Aristotle's ideas gave foot to many of today's modern theories, such as the constitution, the separation of powers and democracy. But he, like many of his contemporaries, seemed to be more interested in the quality of the rulers than in the quality of the rules. This paper will describe what should be the best configuration of the state according to Aristotle and the importance of what he called the middle class.

Aristotle was certain that men could only achieve a noble life by living in community as men were naturally political animals. He stated that " a constitution is a certain way of organizing those who inhabit the city-state", and he was convinced that there were at least three ways a society could be organized, each one having a deviant counterpart. The first one was the kingship, in which all the power would reside in a single man. Aristotle thought it was the best way to rule, but this form could easily be turned into a tyranny. So Aristotle preferred an aristocracy, the rule of the few. This would be an elite chosen among the best of citizens according to their virtue. The last kind of rule proposed by Aristotle was the rule of the many. He described variations of this last kind of constitution considering the quality of the people who conformed the ruling class. Since the other ideal forms of government were too hard to maintain or too easy for them to deviate to their corrupted forms, polity was then considered the most stable of the three.

The Stagirite often insisted that moderation was important since a middle

course could lead to a happy life or eudamonia. It can be seen then how Aristotle favored any vision that meant the inclusion of a middling group or an equilibrium between two opposed extremes. It is not surprising that he insisted that the group most fit to rule had to be constituted by a mixture of individuals who were moderately wealthy or between the rich and the poor. He would call this form of government a polity.

The reasons why he favored the middle class were many. He said that “ it is manifest that the middle amount of all of the good things of fortune is the best amount to possess. For this degree of wealth is the readiest to obey reason”. He insisted that the causes of all wrongdoing were either malice or insolence. For the philosopher, those who possess great wealth are prone to be arrogant and insolent, do not know how to be governed and would not respect authority since they never have. Those who are poor, on the other hand, would soon fall prey of malice or wickedness, and so not know how to govern turning out to be too humble and servile. A government of poor or rich, or both, is devoid of political partnership and “ the result is a state consisting of slaves and masters, not of free men, and of one class envious and another contemptuous of their fellows”.

The middle class is the only social group that does not have these flaws and is the most homogeneous, making it less prone to divide into factions. So it is best for a State that the middle class be more numerous and stronger than the other two classes, or at least than one of them “ for by throwing in its weight it sways the balance and prevents the opposite extremes from coming into existence”.