

# [Ancient everything, or nothing, or some things but](https://assignbuster.com/ancient-everything-or-nothing-or-some-things-but/)

Ancient Political ThoughtThroughout the Republic it becomes obvious that Plato believes that the best city-state has the highest level of sharing and unity while in thePolitics, Aristotle believes that too much unity can deunify a city-state. The “ unity” argument is a prime example of Platos way of thinking aboutthe nature of a community, and Aristotles criticism of this unity gives insight into Aristotles way of thinking about his views on the nature of thecommunity. In order to understand Aristotles attack on Platos “ unity,” it must be understood that for Aristotle, unity is synonymous with the levelof sharing in a community. In Politics II 1, Aristotle begins his assessment by stating that, “ We must begin, at the natural starting point of thisinvestigation. For all citizens much share everything, or nothing, or some things but not others” (Pol.

1260b36-39). There are three possibilities in Aristotles argument regarding how much citizens should share in common: Nothing, everything, and some thingsbut not others. Similar to Platos style of forming an argument, Aristotle states the problem and all the possible outcomes. He then proceeds todisprove two of them, thereby making the last remaining possibility the correct one by means of deduction. Aristotle argues that it would be “ evidently impossible” for a community to have nothing in common (1260b39-40). A communitys citizens allshare the same location, and they are all organized by a common constitution. Therefore, the first possibility can be ruled out. Aristotle attacksthe two remaining possibilities simultaneously.

He asks, “ is it better for a city-state that is to be well managed to share everything possible? Oris it better to share some things but not others” (1261a2-4)? Plato would argue that it is best for a city-state to share everything, including womenand children, with all members of a society. In addressing the remaining possibilities, Aristotle questions if Plato was right in the Republic toassert that “ children, women, and property should be communal” in society (1261a6-7), or is having too much unity (sharing) a bad thing. In the Republic, Socrates explains to Adeimantus the importance of having a communist-like society where everything is shared by thecommunity. He states that “ If a sound education has made our children into reasonable men, they will easily see their way through all thesemattes, as well as others which we will pass over for the moment, such as the possession of wives, marriage, and child-bearing, and theprinciple that here we should follow, as far as possible, the proverb which says that friends have all things in common” (423e-424a). Aristotle cannot simply dismiss the possibility of sharing everything, because it can, in theory, take place in a community.

All members of acommunity, if they so desired, could raise and educate their children together, and share all of their wives amongst their friends and neighbors. However, Aristotle would like to prove that although it is possible to bring up children in a communal setting, it would undermine that citys unity, rather than support it. It is important to note that Socrates says that the principle of sharing children should, as far as possible, be followed. Inorder for Aristotles to make his argument, it must be assumed that Plato means that once a child is born, he is given over to the community, andtherefore, does not know who his parents are, and his parents do not know who their child is. Aristotles first argument centers on the statement that what is common and shared, by nature, is given the least amount of care and attention. When a large number of people share something in common, they tend to neglect that something. “ What is common to the most people gets theleast care since they are concerned more of all with their own things, but less with common things” (1261b33-35).

Aristotle compares sharingchildren with an entire community to a master who employs too many servants. A servant will be less motivated to perform specific actions, because he very well might assume that another servant has already taken care of that task. Furthermore, if the servant knows that the task hasnot been competed but fails to perform the task himself, if he is caught slacking off, he can simply exonerate himself by making the claim that hethought that task was already competed. If,