

BA(H)1st year
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Aristocracy as the best form of Government to maintain Justice, according to Plato

Aristocracy is the form of government (*politeia*) advocated in Plato's Republic. This regime is ruled by a philosopher king, and thus is grounded on wisdom and reason. The aristocratic state, and the man whose nature corresponds to it, are the objects of Plato's analyses throughout much of The Republic's books, as opposed to the other four types of states/men, that are studied primarily in Book VIII.

The aristocratic state that Plato idealizes is composed of three caste-like parts: the ruling class, made up of the aforementioned philosophers-kings (who are otherwise identified as having souls of gold); the auxiliaries of the ruling caste, made up of soldiers (whose souls are made up of silver), and whose job in the state is to force on the majority the order established by the philosophers; and the majority of the people (souls of either bronze or iron), who, in contrast to the first two classes, are allowed to own property and produce goods for themselves, but are also obliged to sustain with their own activities their rulers' — who are forbidden from owning property in order to preclude that the policies they undertake be tainted by personal interests.

The aristocratic man is better represented by Plato's brand of philosopher: a man whose character and ambitions have been forged into those ideal for a just ruler through a rigorous education system designed to train intellectuals that are selfless and upright, and whose souls have been made calm and aware of the absolute Good by learning the Truth based on the Platonic Ideas. Plato envisages for this philosopher a disposition and ability that makes him the ideal governor of any state precisely because his soul knows the Idea of the Good, which is the metaphysical origin of all that is good, including happiness itself. Wealth, fame, and power are just shadows of the Good and provide only hollow and fleeting satisfaction. It is only the knowledge of the Good in itself that gives man enduring and real happiness. Thus, the philosopher who is exposed to metaphysical contemplation is not tempted to abuse his power in his pursuit of material goods, and his state policies are therefore dedicated to establishing only the Good in the state, not his personal interests.

In contrast to historical aristocracies, Plato's resembles a meritocracy or proto-technocracy of sorts. In it, a big government state keeps track of the innate character and natural skills of the citizens' children, directing them to the education that best suits those traits. In this manner, a child with a gold soul born to parents with silver, bronze or iron souls will not be held back by his inferior birth and will be educated to levels above his kin according to his golden qualities. Conversely, from parents with gold and silver souls, a child born with a bronze or an iron soul is educated to only the level earned by his natural aptitudes.