# In Praise of Solon: Aristotle on Classical Greek Democracy
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**ABSTRACT**: My chapter explores Aristotle's account of classical Greek democracy in three parts. The first part examines the notion of democracy "taxonomically," namely as a kind of political organization that admits of a number of normatively ranked "species." The second part provides an overview of Aristotle's historical remarks on Athenian democracy and a more focused analysis of his account of the political reforms that Solon introduced to Athens in the early 6<sup>th</sup> C., a form of political organization that Aristotle characterizes as the "ancestral democracy" (δημοκρατίαν τὴν πάτριον [*Pol* 2.12.1273b38]). I argue that Aristotle judges Solon's moderating political reforms—specifically, assigning to the δῆμος or "the people" the roles of electing and auditing (εὐθύναι) magistrates—as a pre-eminent solution to the problem of democratic participation. Finally, in the third part of my chapter I examine Aristotle's evaluation of democracy, especially "democratic justice", and the overlapping ways that he evaluates constitution-types. My analysis of Aristotle's evaluation of justice claims that the features of moderate democracy and polity are very similar to those of the Solonian constitution, which further supports my claim that Aristotle views Solon as the pre-eminent democratic theorist of ancient Greece.

**IN PRAISE OF SOLON: ARISTOTLE ON CLASSICAL GREEK DEMOCRACY**

**INTRODUCTION**

Aristotle provides modern readers with one of the most detailed accounts of the origins and practice of democracy in classical Greece. He lived in Athens during most of his adult life (albeit as a metic or resident-alien who was not allowed to participate in its democracy) and thus provides us with a first-hand account of its 4th century democracy. Aristotle also is familiar with non-Athenian democracies, oligarchies, and monarchies based on his upbringing in a polis within Macedonian control.[1] Aristotle's school, the Lyceum, produced "constitutions"—political histories and analysis—of 158 Greek and non-Greek societies, of which the *Athenian Constitution* (*AP*) is the only surviving example.[2] From an empirical perspective, Aristotle knew as much about classical Greek democracy—its varieties, its offices and institutions, and its practices—as anyone in the ancient world. As a general rule, contemporary historians and scholars who study ancient Greece commend the accuracy and sophistication of his observations on democracy.[3]

Aristotle's observations about democracy survive predominantly in two rather different

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[1] For the geo-political context of Aristotle's life, see B. Strauss, 'On Aristotle's Critique of Athenian Democracy', in C. Lord and D.K. O'Connor (eds), *Essays on the Foundations of Aristotelian Political Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 229–231, and J. Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens. Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 290–295, 312–316, 347–51.

[2] *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN*) 10.9.1181b7–9, Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, V.27.

[3] See A. Lintott, *Aristotle's Political Philosophy in its Historical Context* (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 9–10; P. Cartledge, *Democracy. A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 14–20; E. Robinson, *The First Democracies. Early Popular Government outside Athens* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1997), pp. 35–44. Strauss, 'On Aristotle's Critique', is a rare dissenting voice.

sources, the aforementioned *Athenian Constitution* and his *Politics*. The former is a history and analysis of Athens' political institutions, generally attributed to the "school of Aristotle" (namely, researchers in the Lyceum) rather than Aristotle himself, about which I will say more in Part II of my chapter.[4] The *Politics* conveys Aristotle's "political science" (πολιτικὴ ἐπιστήμη) or the knowledge of a statesman (πολιτικός).[5] As its greatest 19th century commentator, W. Newman puts it, "The object of these books is rather a practical one, to teach statesmen how to frame, amend, and administer each constitution so that it may last."[6] Such political science is inherently evaluative: for Aristotle to call the political organization of a polis a "democracy" is a value-judgement (and indeed, a negative value-judgement) about the political institutions of that polis.[7] Although I agree with Cartledge that Aristotle's evaluative framework is neither that of an "ideological democrat" nor that of an "ideological anti-democrat," the "practical" orientation of his political science differs from that of an historian or even a modern-day political scientist.[8]

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[4] See P.J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 58–63, and P.J. Rhodes, *The Athenian Constitution. Written in the School of Athens* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 1–6.

[5] See, for instance, *Politics* 1.3.1253b18–20, 1.10.1258a22, 7.2.1324b32, 4.1.1288b10–22; cf. *EN* 1.2.1094b11. References without an abbreviated title refer to Aristotle's *Politics*. Translations of the *Politics* are my own, based on W.D. Ross, *Aristotelis Politica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), but with guidance from C.D.C. Reeve, *Aristotle Politics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998).

[6] W.L. Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902), Vol 4, p. vii. See *EN* 2.2.1103b26–32, *EN* 10.9.1181b15; 4.1.1288b21–37.

[7] By contrast, M. Schofield, 'Aristotle and the Democratization of Politics', in B. Morison and K. Ierodiakonou (eds), *Episteme, Etc.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 300, concludes that "Aristotle is a democrat—the sort of democrat with whom John Stuart Mill might have felt some affinity."

[8] Cartledge, *Democracy*, p. 14. R. Mulgan, 'Aristotle's Analysis of Oligarchy and Democracy', in D. Keyt and F. Miller (eds), *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 307–322, criticizes Aristotle for superimposing an *a priori* conceptual schemes (e.g., the parallel opposition of oligarchy and democracy, each with four species) upon the data of Greek political

My chapter explores Aristotle's account of classical Greek democracy in three parts. The first part examines the notion of democracy "taxonomically," namely as a kind of political organization that admits of a number of normatively ranked "species." The second part provides an overview of Aristotle's historical remarks on Athenian democracy and a more focused analysis of his account of the political reforms that Solon introduced to Athens in the early 6th C., a form of political organization that Aristotle characterizes as the "ancestral democracy" (δημοκρατίαν τὴν πάτριον).[9] I argue that Aristotle judges Solon's moderating political reforms—specifically, assigning to the δῆμος or "the people" the roles of electing and auditing (εὐθύναι) magistrates— as a pre-eminent solution to the problem of democratic participation. Finally, in the third part of my chapter I examine Aristotle's evaluation of democracy, especially "democratic justice", and the overlapping ways that he evaluates constitution-types. My analysis of Aristotle's evaluation of justice claims that the features of moderate democracy and polity are very similar to those of the Solonian constitution, which further supports my claim that Aristotle views Solon as the pre-eminent democratic theorist of ancient Greece.

## PART I: TAXONOMY—WHAT IS DEMOCRACY (FOR ARISTOTLE)?

At the heart of Aristotle's political science is the notion of πολιτεία in the sense of "constitution," which he defines as "the organization of a city's various offices, but particularly, of the one that

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experience, but such schemes likely stem from Aristotle's practical approach (a point made by R. Kraut, *Aristotle. Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 446–451).

[9] 2.12.1273b38. See further M.H. Hansen, 'Solonian Democracy in Fourth-Century Athens', *Classica et Mediaevalia* 40 (1989), 75–79.

has authority over everything."[10] Most of the social or political aspects of a polis are determined

by the nature of its constitution: Aristotle claims that the idea of citizenship, the laws, the political

offices, the education, and even the arrangements of the household and models of human

excellence are "relative to the constitution."[11] Aristotle also recognizes that individual

constitutions can be classified under at least six different constitution-types. Thus, for

terminological clarity, although 4th century Athens has a democratic constitution, its constitution

(written and unwritten) is an example of democracy as a constitution-type. Let me examine

Aristotle's distinction between correct and deviant constitution-types and the species of

democracy (along with their democratic features).


## I.1: Correct and deviant constitution-types

Aristotle states his taxonomy of constitution-types (of which democracy is an example) in several

places.[12] The most familiar aspect of Aristotle's theory is his six-fold taxonomy (Table I) that

characterizes constitution-types with respect to normative criterion (whether those in power rule

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[10] 3.6.1278b8–10. See further 3.1.1274b32, 4.1.1289a15–22, 4.3.1290a5–12. For a survey of how Aristotle uses the term πολιτεία in the *Politics*, see J.J. Mulhern, '*Politeia* in Greek literature, inscriptions, and in Aristotle's *Politics*: Reflections on translation and interpretation', in T. Lockwood and T. Samaras (eds), *Aristotle's Politics: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 84–102.

[11] See, for instance: laws relative to the constitution (3.11.1282b10–11, 4.1.1289a17–25, 4.5.1292b15); offices relative to the constitution (4.14.1298a9–32, 4.15.1299b30, 6.2.1317b17–1318a3, 6.8.1323a1–9); education relative to the constitution (5.9.1309a12–14, a20, 7.13.1332b5–10, 8.1.1337a11–15); virtue relative to the constitution (1.13.1260b12–25, 3.4.1276b29, 5.9.1309a35–8).

[12] Aristotle often offers his own taxonomy in criticism of others: see 3.8.1279b16–1280a6, 4.1.1289a8–10, 23–25, 4.3.1290a13–23, 4.4.1290a30–b7, 5.12.1316b25–26. For constitutional theory in Aristotle's predecessors, see J. de Romilly, 'La classement des constitutions d'Hérodote à Aristote', *Revue des Etudes Greques* 72 (1959), 81–99.

in the common interest, and thus are "correct" [ὀρθαί] constitution-types, or in their own

interest, in which case they are "deviations from correct constitutions" [παρεκβάσεις τῶν

ὀρθῶν πολιτειῶν]) and quantitative criterion (namely whether those in power are many, few,

or a single individual).[13] But after *Politics* 3.6 initially distinguishes constitution-types on a

quantitative basis, *Politics* 3.8 revises the taxonomy and bases it on qualitative or socio-economic

**Table I: Aristotle's six-fold taxonomy of constitution-types (*Politics* 3.6)**

|  | Right constitutions (rule in the interest of the common benefit) | Deviant constitutions (rule in the interest of the rulers) |
|---|---|---|
| One person rules | Kingship | Tyranny |
| Few people rule | Oligarchy | Aristocracy |
| Many people rule | Polity or constitutional republic | Democracy |

categories such as whether the rich, the poor, or the middle-class rules.[14] What truly

distinguishes, e.g., democracy, oligarchy, or polity is whether the poor, the rich, or the middle-

class rule. *Politics* 4.8 refines the qualitative analysis slightly: democracy is not simply when a city

is ruled by the poor, but "rather, it is a democracy when the free and the poor (οἱ ἐλεύθεροι καὶ

ἄποροι) who are a majority have the authority to rule, and an oligarchy when the rich and well

born, who are few, do."[15] The "free" are just those native born men of a polis who claim the right

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[13] 3.6.1279a17–21; cf. 4.2.1289a26–29. M.H. Hansen, 'Aristotle's Alternative to the Sixfold Model of Constitutions', in his *Reflections on Aristotle's Politics* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2013), pp. 1–17, calls into question whether Aristotle abandons the Sixfold taxonomy of Politics 3 when he examines their taxonomy in *Politics* 4–6. Although space does not allow a complete analysis of his arguments, D. Riesbeck, 'The Unity of Aristotle's Theory of Constitutions', *Apeiron* 49 (2016), 93–125, supplies a persuasive response (which I support).

[14] 3.8.1279b19–36, 4.4.1290a30–b6.

[15] 4.4.1290b17–20, cf. 4.4.1290a36, 4.4.1290a36, 4.15.1299b27. Aristotle presents freedom as democracy's defining mark (ὅρος [4.8.1294a10]) and underlying principle (ὑπόθεσις [6.2.1317b11, 6.4.1318b40]). For the meaning of Aristotle's terms, see F. Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights in Aristotle's Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 156–159. See further

to participate based solely on their citizenship.

In addition to normative and qualitative criteria, Aristotle's distinction between right and deviant constitution-types also does important work within his taxonomy. *Politics* 4.3 elucidates the model by juxtaposing two kinds of "deviation." Some propose classifying constitutions like the winds: the most common winds are those that blow from the north and south, and the west wind is a "deviation" from the north insofar as both are warm winds, but the west wind is less common; according to such a model, democracy is the most common type of pluralistic constitution and polity is its rarer deviation.[16] By contrast, Aristotle classifies constitution-types like musical forms, in which too tight or too loose forms deviate from (or literally "fall away from" [παρ-εκ-βασις]) a well-blended harmony.[17] Aristotle endorses the latter model because it captures the way that democracy, although more common, is a less well-blended form of pluralistic rule, one best understood insofar as it falls away from "polity."[18] Polity as a constitution-type mixes democratic and oligarchic elements and mitigates antagonism between

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M.H. Hansen, 'Democratic Freedom and the Concept of Freedom in Plato and Aristotle', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 50 (2010), 1–27.

[16] 4.3.1290a13–19; see *Meteorology* 364a18–27.

[17] 1290a22–29. Aristotle uses the language of "tightening" (e.g., ἐπιτείνω, τείνω) to describe more exclusive oligarchies (4.6.1293a26, a30, 6.6.1320b30, 5.9.1309b26, b33). 5.9 claims that deviant constitutions overlook the mean because they are "tightened" towards the extreme (5.9.1309b18–1310a2).

[18] For the frequency of democracy: 3.15.1286b19–22, 4.6.1293a1–3, 4.11.1296a21–37. Aristotle characterizes correct constitution-types as being "prior" to deviant ones (3.1.1274a37–b2); see further W.W. Fortenbaugh, 'Aristotle on Prior and Posterior, Correct and Mistaken Constitutions', in D. Keyt and F. Miller (eds), *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 226–237. To elucidate democracy, I simplify Aristotle's account of polity, including its complex relationship to Aristotle's "middle constitution." For a more nuanced account of polity, see my 'Polity, Political Justice, and Political Mixing', *History of Political Thought* 27 (2006), 207–22, and R. Balot, 'The "mixed regime" in Aristotle's Politics', in T. Lockwood and T. Samaras (eds), *Aristotle's Politics: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 103–122.

the rich and the poor by the presence of a middle class that rules in the interest of the common

good.[19] By contrast, democracy (and oligarchy) are so common

> because the middle class in them is often small. Whichever of the other
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> preponderates (whether the property owners or the people), those who overstep
>
> the middle way conduct the constitution to suit themselves, so that it becomes
>
> either a democracy or an oligarchy.[20]

That democracy (or any deviant constitution) aims at the interest of the rulers is one aspect of its

deviant status; but that democracy falls away from polity also constitutes the structure of

democracy (as distinct from any other deviant constitution).


**I.2: The species of democracy and their democratic features**

Aristotle also claims that constitution-types can be subdivided into species (εἴδη) based on their

parts and organization of offices. He writes that

> there must be several constitutions that differ in kind from one another, since
> these parts themselves also differ in kind. For a constitution is the organization of
> offices, and all constitutions distribute these either on the basis of the power of
> the participants, or on the basis of some sort of equality common to them (I mean,
> for example, of the poor or of the rich, or some equality common to both).
> Therefore, there must be as many constitutions as there are ways of organizing
> offices on the basis of the superiority and varieties of the parts.[21]

By parts, Aristotle has in mind the various functional components of a political community, just

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[19] 4.8.1293b31–33, 4.9.1294b13–15, 4.11.1295b1–13.

[20] 4.11.1296a21–27; see further 3.15.1286b19–22, 4.11.1296a21–37.

[21] 4.3.1290a5–13. Aristotle's claim that constitution-types have sub-species appears to be made in criticism of Socrates (5.12.1316b25–26).

like the parts that differentiate animal species.[22] So, for instance, every polis includes persons devoted to necessary tasks such as agriculture, artisanal labor, and trade/commerce; but the relative size and political incorporation of those sectors—which constitute a city's "people" (δῆμος)—determine the quality of its democracy. Aristotle provides several overlapping accounts of the four different species of democracy, which can be represented as follows(Table II).[23]

**Table II: Species of democracy**

| Species of Democracy | Sovereign part of the community | Institutional organization of the constitution |
|---|---|---|
| Democracy I | Farmer class and class of those with moderate property are sovereign, but farming class participates rarely due to lack of leisure. | Equality between rich and poor. Rule according to law. Offices open to all who meet minimal property qualifications. |
| Democracy II | Uncontested citizens have right to participate in assembly. Multitude lives by herding and thus are well suited to military service. | Rule according to law. Offices open to all who meet minimal property qualifications. City lacks revenue to subsidize participation of the poor. |
| Democracy III | All free men have the right to participate but do so only when they have leisure. Multitude composed of artisans, merchants, and day laborers. | Rule according to law. City lacks revenue to subsidize participation of the poor. |
| Democracy IV or "final" kind (τελευταία)[24] | Multitude of the poor are sovereign and rich do not take part in the assembly or courts. | Rule according to the multitude rather than in accord with law. |

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[22] Aristotle likens partite differentiation of constitutions and animals (4.4.1290b25–38). See further P. Pellegrin, 'Parties de la cité, parties de la constitution', in C. Natali (ed), *Aristotle: Metaphysics and Practical Philosophy. Essays in Honour of Enrico Berti* (Walpole: Éditions Peeters, 2011), pp. 177–199; J. Inamura, 'Scientific Classification and Essentialism in the Aristotelian Typology of Constitutions', *History of Political Thought* 40 (2019), 196–218.

[23] My analysis is based on 4.4.1291b30–1292a12, 4.6.1292b25–39a11, and 6.4.1318b6 ff. I believe that Aristotle identifies four species of democracy, but some scholars have interpreted him as identifying five (due to a manuscript variant). See further C.I. Papageorgiou, 'Four or Five Types of Democracy in Aristotle?' *History of Political Thought* 11 (1990), 1–8.

[24] 4.6.1293a1, 6.4.1319b1–2. Although it goes beyond my chapter, scholars have speculated about whether Aristotle identifies Democracy IV with Athenian democracy. The most prominent feature of Democracy IV is demagogic manipulation, which seems more prominent in Periclean

| | Multitude composed of artisans, merchants, and day laborers. | City's revenue subsidizes the leisure and participation of all citizens. |
|---|---|---|

I will discuss Democracy I and IV further in the next two parts of my chapter, but it is worth noting that although Aristotle posits a categorical distinction between democracy and polity insofar as the rulers of the former benefit themselves and those in the latter benefit the common good, the qualitative distinction between democracy and polity is more a matter of the degree to which the constitution mixes oligarchic and democratic elements. Democratic and oligarchic elements are present in polity but equally visible: polity's defining principle (ὅρος) is that you can "speak of the same constitution both as an oligarchy and as a democracy."[25] But all the species of democracy, except for Democracy IV, exhibit some "oligarchic" features (e.g., property qualifications for office, limits to the role of the assembly).

Although Aristotle thinks that constitutions are prior to other social-political aspects of a polis, he identifies "populist features" (τὰ δημοτικά) that are defined from the democratic "principle" (ὑπόθεσις) of freedom and the democratic notion of equality.[26] He identifies ten

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democracy (2.12.74a10–14, 4.4.1292a7–30, 6.4.1319b11–19), although Aristotle refers to demagogues "nowadays" (2.12.1274a9–11, 6.5.1320a4, a30; cf. 4.14.1298b13–15). See further Strauss, 'Aristotle's Critique of Democracy', pp. 216–219; M. Canevaro and A. Esu, 'Extreme Democracy and Mixed Constitution in Theory and Practice', in C. Bearzot, M. Canevaro, T. Gargiulo, E. Poddighe (eds), *Athenaion Politeiai ra storia, politica e sociologia: Aristotele e pseudo-Senofonte* (Milan: Quaderni di Erga-Logoi, 2018), pp. 105–145.

[25] 4.1294b15–16, 18. Aristotle identifies Sparta as an example (4.7.1293b14–18, 4.8.1294b18–34).

[26] 6.2.1317a40–b17. I translate "δημοτικά" as "populist" since it derives from the word δῆμος or "people." But I do not intend that "populist" means the same thing for Aristotle as it does for contemporary political terminology (which overlaps with, but is not identical with, features of ancient Greek democracy). Identifying the similarities and differences between Athenian and contemporary American populism goes far beyond my chapter. On the "underlying principle" of democracy, see n. 15 supra.

institutional features that can be characterized as "populist," namely:

[1] Having all choose officials from all.
[2] Having all rule each and each in turn rule all.
[3] Having all offices, or all that do not require experience or skill, filled by lot.
[4] Having no or only a low property requirement for running for office.
[5] Having no office (aside from that of a military general) held more than once by the same person.
[6] Having all or most office be short term.
[7] Having all, or bodies selected from all, decide all judicial cases, especially those of inspecting officials.
[8] Having the assembly have authority over everything (or everything that matters).
[9] Having pay provided for everyone for service in the assembly, courts, and magistrates.
[10] Having no office be permanent.[27]

Although democracies (and oligarchies) are differentiated by their parts, they are also differentiated by the presence of democratic and oligarchic "features." The crucial difference between Democracy IV and other species, for example, is the presence of feature [9], namely the subsidization of political participation for the poor.

**PART II: HISTORIA—THE NATURE OF ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY**

In addition to being an analyst of Greek democracy, Aristotle (and perhaps his school) provide historical information about the nature of Athenian democracy. As noted in Part I.2 of my chapter, scholars debate whether Aristotle identified Athens (and if so, which Athens) with Democracy IV. Although Aristotle is deeply critical of *some* moments in Athenian democracy (e.g., during Periclean Athens), there are other moments (e.g., during Solonian Athens) that Aristotle

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[27] 6.2.1317b17–1318a3. Aristotle also discusses democratic offices (4.14.1298a9–32, 4.16.1301a10–15, 6.5.1320a4–16, 6.7.1321a10–15, 6.8.1323a1–4) and democratic military branches (6.7.1321a5–20; cf. 4.3.1289b30–33, 4.14.1293b16–29).

finds praiseworthy. Let me examine that history generally in the *Athenian Constitution* and the *Politics*, and then more narrowly in his account of the Solonian "ancestral democracy."

**II.1: Athenian democracy in the *Athenian Constitution* and the *Politics***

The *Athenian Constitution* is organized into two parts: (1) A linear historical account from the 7th to the 4th C. that chronicles eleven different changes (μεταβολή) to the Athenian Constitution (Ch. 1–41) and (2) an analysis of the council, magistrates, and jury courts of Athenian democracy in the mid-4th C. (Ch. 42–69).[28] By contrast, although the *Politics* mentions the Athenian democracy approximately twenty times, many are, as Lintott notes, "little more than references, which today would be footnotes."[29] Nonetheless, there are three discussions in the *Politics* that provide substantive accounts of features of Athenian democracy that are far more than footnotes: Aristotle's account of the democratic notion of citizenship in *Politics* 3.1, the critique of Athenian ostracism in *Politics* 3.14, and his analysis of the Solonian Constitution in *Politics* 2.12. As Schofield notes, Aristotle "conceptualize(s) the whole domain of politics in terms he himself explicitly acknowledges as democratic."[30]

The third book of the *Politics* notes that a polis is a multitude of citizens and thus seeks a definition of citizenship; but within Aristotle's framework, any notion of citizenship is embedded within a constitution, namely what it means to be a citizen is what it means to be a citizen in an oligarchy or a democracy.[31] Aristotle's analysis of citizenship is ambivalent: On the one hand, he

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[28] Rhodes, *The Athenian Constitution*, pp. 8–21, provides an overview of *AP*.
[29] Lintott, *Aristotle's Political Philosophy*, p. 9.
[30] Schofield, 'Democratization of Politics', p. 286.
[31] 3.1.1274b41; cf. 3.1.1275a2–5, 3.1.1275b5–6.

recognizes that the most capacious notion of citizenship—which he identifies as "someone who is eligible to participate in deliberative and judicial office"—is above all the notion of a citizen in a democracy. On the other hand, Aristotle is critical of Cleisthenes' expansion of citizenship in 507 BCE, the Periclean citizenship law of 451 BCE (which defined citizenship solely with respect to descent from maternal and paternal citizens), and in general, the practice within extreme democracies of opening citizenship to "vulgar craftsman" (οἱ βάναυσοι).[32]

One finds similar ambivalence in Aristotle's analysis of the practice of ostracism, namely the vote to banish a citizen for a fixed term without loss of citizenship rights or property, which Cleisthenes introduced in the early 5th C.[33] On the one hand, Aristotle offers a qualified endorsement of the egalitarianism that seeks to remove a community member of outstanding power (he likens such an overwhelmingly powerful person to the painting of an animal with a disproportionately large foot or a chorus with a disproportionately gifted singer). On the other hand, he notes that ostracism in deviant constitutions is usually practiced for private benefit and that in the case of the best constitution, a person of such overwhelmingly superior virtue should not be ostracized, but instead everyone should "obey such a person gladly, so that those like him will be permanent kings in their cities."[34] The justice of egalitarianism is at odds with the justice of excellence, especially in the case of extraordinary excellence.

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[32] Democratic definition of citizenship: 3.1.1275b17–19, 3.1.1275b3–4. Criticism of Periclean, Cleisthenic, and banaustic notions of citizenship: 3.2.1275b21–22, 3.2.1275b33–36, 3.5.1277b35, 3.5.1278a6–11.

[33] *AP* 22.1–3. On the practice of ostracism, see Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, pp. 5, 35.

[34] 3.13.1284b32–34. Qualified endorsement of the democratic egalitarianism: 3.13.1284b8–12; criticism of ostracism in deviant constitutions: 3.14.1284b4–5.

**II.2: A Test-case: Aristotle's view of the Solonian Constitution**

Overlap between the *Politics* and the *Athenian Constitution* invites exegetical comparisons.[35]

Most intriguing for my chapter are the ways that the two works depict the Solonian constitution,

namely the social and political reforms that Solon established in the early 6th C. BCE. The *Athenian*

*Constitution* depicts Solon as a transitional figure between oligarchic and tyrannical rule who

faced the predicament that "the majority were the slaves of the few, and the people (δῆμος)

opposed the notables" due to the debt bondage that poor citizen-farmers had accrued on their

own persons.[36] The *Athenian Constitution* records Solon's reforms and notes that they amounted

to a revolutionary new constitution: both loans on a person and the outstanding debt were

eliminated (the so-called *seisachtheia*, which *AP* explicitly notes was a democratic reform) and

Athenian citizens were divided into four property classes, the lowest of which—"day-laborers"

(θῆτα)—were ineligible to hold office but could participate in the assembly and the law courts.[37]

The work also adduces selections from Solon's poetry in order to characterize his constitution

more generally, including his claim that

> I gave the demos as much prerogative (γέρας) as would suffice
> Not distracting from its honour or reaching out for it;
> While, as for those who had power and were admired for their possessions,
> I pronounced to them also that they should have nothing unseemly.
> I stood holding my stout buckler against both,
> And did not allow either an unjust victory (νικᾶν...ἀδίκως).[38]

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[35] On the relationship between *AP* and the *Politics*, see L. Bertelli, 'The *Athenaion Politeia* and Aristotle's Political Theory', in C. Bearzot, M. Canevaro, T. Gargiulo, E. Poddighe (eds), *Athenaion Politeiai ra storia, politica e sociologia: Aristotele e pseudo-Senofonte* (Milan: Quaderni di Erga-Logoi, 2018), pp. 71–86 (which focuses on the account of μεταβολή in each), and Ober, *Political Dissent*, pp. 352–363.

[36] *AP* 5.1. Translations of *AP* derive from Rhodes, *The Athenian Constitution*.

[37] *AP* 7.1, 9.1, 7.3–4; cf. 2.12.1274a16–23.

[38] *AP* 12.1, Rhodes trans.

The Solon of the *Athenian Constitution* provides a revolutionary solution that fails to satisfy either the rich or the poor (and in its immediate aftermath led to turmoil, including years in which no Archon was elected due to *stasis*).[39]

The second book of Aristotle's *Politics* is devoted to the analysis of those constitutions, either existing or theoretical, that are thought to be superlatively good.[40] Within such a framework, *Politics* 2.12 provides an account of the Solonian Constitution that is evaluative and far less detailed than that found in the *Athenian Constitution*. Indeed, the main question of *Politics* 2.12 is whether one should think of Solon as an excellent lawgiver (νομοθέτην...σπουδαῖον) or rather as the first (mis)step on the path to Democracy IV. The text is presented as a debate: on the one hand, some suppose (ἔνιοι μὲν οἴονται) that Solon is an excellent lawgiver because he ended the slavery of the demos and established a well-mixed ancestral democracy (δημοκρατίαν τὴν πάτριον), with an oligarchic council (the Areopagus), aristocratic election of magistrates, and democratic courts.[41] On the other hand, some claim that when Solon gave law courts, selected by lot from all citizens, authority over all legal cases, he empowered the demos such that "those who flattered the common people like a tyrant changed the constitution to the democracy we have now"; on this account, Solon's empowerment of the

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[39] *AP* 11.2, 13.1.

[40] 2.1.1260b29–31. See further T. Lockwood, '*Politics* II: Political Critique, Political Theorizing, Political Innovation', in T. Lockwood and T. Samaras (eds), *Aristotle's Politics: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 64–83.

[41] 2.12.1273b35–41; cf. 5.6.1305a29. *Politics* 2.12 is Aristotle's sole discussion of Athenian ancestral democracy. Correa notes that *AP* 2–17 includes several such rhetorical "debates" designed to uphold Solon's reputation against sources critical of him. See further D. Correa, 'The Aristotleian Athenaion Politeia as "poor history"? Historiography, rhetoric, and the controversies about Solon in the fourth century', Histos 13 (2019), 129–45.

demos brought about Democracy IV in Athens with Cleisthenes, Ephialtes, and Pericles playing

minor roles.[42]

Ultimately, *Politics* 2.12 sides with those who praise Solon. Aristotle notes that Athenian

naval supremacy in the 5th century radically empowered the people (all of whom could serve in

the triremes, regardless of their wealth) and produced radical Periclean democracy, an

unintended consequence of Solon's reforms.[43] Rather,

> Solon seems to have given the people only the minimum power necessary, that of
> electing and inspecting (εὐθύνειν) officials (since if they did not even have
> authority in these, the people would have been enslaved and hostile). But he drew
> all the officials from among the notables and rich…the fourth class, the thetes, did
> not participate in any office.[44]

The *Politics* absolves Solon of the claim that his constitution led to demagoguery. Both the

*Athenian Constitution* and the *Politics* note Solon's four-fold property class, but whereas the

*Athenian Constitution* adduces that detail to show the change in the constitution, the *Politics*

adduces it to justify the practical claim that Solon's reforms were moderate rather than extreme.

As Melissa Lane notes, Aristotle makes the case that "the *plethos* or popular *demos* can

safely be made *kurios* in relation to the *archai* by controlling the most important ones through

election and inspection."[45] The exercise of εὐθύναι—inspection, auditing, literally

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[42] 2.12.1274a9–11. Cleisthenes, Ephialtes, and Pericles in fact play minor roles in Aristotle's *Politics*: Cleisthenes he mentions twice (2.12.1275b36, 6.4.1319b21), and Ephialtes and Pericles only once (2.12.1274a8–9; but cf. *EN* 6.5.1140b8–10).

[43] 2.1274a12–15. See further 4.4.1291b24, 5.4.1304a17–24, 6.7.1321a13, 7.6.1327a40; cf. 3.141284a39, 5.3.1303a8, 5.7.1307b22–25.

[44] 2.12.1274a15–19, 21. Hansen, 'Solonian Democracy', pp. 95–96, notes that the claim that Solon empowered the demos to elect and audit magistrates is found only in the *Politics* and Isocrates.

[45] M. Lane, 'Popular Sovereignty as Control of Office-Holders', in R. Bourke and Q. Skinner (eds), *Popular Sovereignty in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p.

"straightening"—consisted in the annual review, by judicial courts, of the acts and financial

accounts of members of the council or other magistrates, and as Hansen notes, even of "envoys,

priests, trierarchs, and members of the Areopagus."[46] Aristotle not only attributes the creation

of the office as Solon's way of enfranchising the poor, but he also praises the office as a form of

"best practice" in Democracy I:

> It is both beneficial and customary for all the citizens to elect and inspect officials
> and sit on juries, but for the holders of the most important offices to be elected
> from those with a certain amount of assessed property…or alternatively for
> officials not to be elected on the basis of property assessment at all, but on the
> basis of ability. People governed in this way are necessarily governed well; the
> offices will always be in the hands of the best, while the people will consent and
> will not envy the decent; and this organization is necessarily satisfactory to the
> decent and reputable people, since they will not be ruled by their inferiors, and
> will rule justly because the others have authority over the inspection of officials.[47]

Lest one think that Aristotle is simply placating the demos, his account of the superiority of

collective judgment in *Politics* 3.11—about which political theorists have written at great

length—is the basis for his praise of inspection. *Politics* 3.11 notes that both allowing members

of the multitude to hold office and disenfranchising them are problematic. He concludes that

> the remaining alternative, then, is to have them participate in deliberation and
> judgment (βουλεύεσθαι καὶ κρίνειν), which is precisely why Solon and some other
> legislators arrange to have them elect and inspect officials, but prevent them from
> holding office alone.[48]

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66. Although I arrived at my opinions about Aristotle's view of Solon independent of Lane's chapter, we share a number of the same conclusions.

[46] M.H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), p. 222; see further pp. 222–224. See also 4.14.1298a6–25, 1298b6, 4.16.1300b19, 6.2.1317b27, 6.8.1322b11, *AP* 48.4–5, 54.2.

[47] 6.4.1318b27–38; for the claim that inspection enfranchises the poor, see 2.12.1274a17, 3.11.1281b33.

[48] 3.11.1281b31–34. See further Schofield, 'Democratization of politics', pp. 292–299, and Lane, 'Popular Sovereignty', pp. 59–62.

Inspection takes the form of a jury evaluating the actions and accounts of a magistrate rather than the form of an assembly publicly deliberating upon a matter of technical expertise (for instance, whether it should pursue a specific naval strategy in an engagement with a specific enemy). Allowing juries to exercise such oversight is not only epistemically superior to having a single individual do so, it also insures the inclusion of the people into the political process in a way that takes advantage of their collective deliberative excellence. The *Politics* highlights the practice of election and inspection as one of Solon's greatest contributions to "democratic" theory.

**PART III: EVALUATION—THE JUSTICE AND STABILITY OF DEMOCRACY**

One can distinguish at least three different frameworks in the *Politics* that Aristotle uses to evaluate democracy: that of partisan conceptions of justice, that of the common good or the concept of justice in general, and that of stability.[49]

**III.1 The democratic conception of justice**

*Politics* 3.9–13 is a dialogical examination of the defining marks (ὄροι) and conceptions of justice within different constitution-types, most prominently what Aristotle calls "oligarchic and democratic justice." Calling a conception of justice "democratic" or "oligarchic" appears to mean

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[49] The English word "justice" can describe either the characteristic of a person or an institutional arrangement; Aristotle's Greek, by contrast, distinguishes between δικαιοσύνη (the human virtue of justice) and δίκαιον (the concept of justice). See further E. Schütrumpf, 'Little to do with justice: Aristotle on distributing political power', in T. Lockwood and T. Samaras (eds), *Aristotle's Politics: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 163–183.

two things: First, that such a conception specifies the arrangements of participation and offices within its constitution-type.[50] Secondly, that "partisans" within a city advocate inclusion and exclusion based on their conception of justice. As Aristotle puts it initially,

> all grasp justice of a sort, but they go only to a certain point and do not discuss the whole of what is just in the most authoritative sense. For example, justice seems to be equality, and it is, but not for everyone, only for equals. Justice also seems to be inequality, since indeed it is, but not for everyone, only for unequals.[51]

The later position—that justice is inequality—Aristotle elsewhere identifies as the oligarchic conception of justice which excludes the poor from political participation.[52] Thus, oligarchic constitutions establish property qualifications that limit participation in the assembly or the various offices of the magistrates to the wealthy.[53] The former position—that justice is equality— is the democratic of justice which includes in political participation all free-born men in a city, without reference to wealth, lineage, or virtue. Thus, democratic constitutions abolish property qualifications not only for participation in the assembly, but for all offices.

Problems arise in the form of στάσις—"faction" or civil unrest—between the rich and the poor in cities in which democratic and oligarchic partisans insists upon their different conceptions of justice to the exclusion or marginalization of each other.[54] Indeed, *Politics* 5—Aristotle's systematic analysis of faction—shows the practical ramifications of the oligarchic and democratic

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[50] 6.2.1317b1–16 characterizes such a principle as a "hypothesis"; see note 15 supra.

[51] 3.9.1280a10–13; cf. 5.1.1301a25–30, 6.3.1318a16–26

[52] 3.13.1283a31–33, 5.1.1301a31–35, 6.3.1318a21–25.

[53] 4.5.1292a39–b3, 4.6.1293a12–25, 4.14.1298a35–40.

[54] Two recent volumes offer far more detailed accounts of this point than my chapter can explore. See E. Rogan*, La Stásis dans la politique d'Aristote* (Paris : Classiques Garnier, 2018) and S. Skultety, *Conflict in Aristotle's Political Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019).

conceptions described in *Politics* 3:

> For democracy arose from those who are equal in some respect thinking
> themselves to be unqualifiedly equal; for because they are equally free, they think
> they are unqualifiedly equal. Oligarchy, on the other hand, arose from those who
> are unequal in some respect taking themselves to be unqualifiedly unequal. The
> result is that the former claim to merit an equal share of everything, on the
> grounds that they are all equal, whereas the latter, being unequal, seek to get
> more (for a bigger share is an unequal one). All these constitutions possess justice
> of a sort, then, although unqualifiedly speaking they are mistaken. And this is why,
> when one or another of them does not participate in the constitution in
> accordance with their assumption, they start faction.[55]

Democratic (and oligarchic) partisans are thus mistaken on two levels. First, unlike kingship,

aristocracy, or polity, they ground claims to political participation on the basis of non-relevant

criteria, namely on the basis of free-birth or wealth rather than on the basis of virtue, education,

or ability.[56] But secondly, on a more practical level, Aristotle faults democratic and oligarchic

partisans because they fail to recognize that every city includes necessary parts, parts that their

conceptions of justice exclude or marginalize.[57] Every coastal Greek city requires wealthy families

whose liturgies pay for and outfit the triremes that ensure the safety of their commerce and the

autonomy of their poleis. But every coastal Greek city also requires individuals who can serve as

rowers in those triremes. Aristotle criticizes democratic (and oligarchic) notions of justice not

only because of their mistaken conceptualization of equality and inequality but also because of

the myopic or self-serving political activity the conceptions inspire. Democratic and oligarchic

partisans are both factually and practically wrong because their "judgments concern themselves,

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[55] 5.1.1301a28–39 ; cf. 5.1.1301b26–39, 5.3.1303b3–6, 5.6.1305a42–45, 6.3.1318a17–22.

[56] For discussions of the "criterion problem," see: 3.9.1281a2–7, 3.12.1282b26–1283a2, 3.13.1283a30–39, 4.7.1293b7–20, 4.8.1294a9–25.

[57] For discussions of the "exclusion problem," see: 3.9.1280a16–23, 3.13.1283a30–39, 5.9.1309b18–1310a2.

and most people are pretty poor judges about what is their own."[58]


### III.2 Democracy and the common good

Oligarchic and democratic conceptions of justice elucidate Aristotle's notion of the common good

that distinguishes correct and deviant constitutional-types. According to *Politics* 3.6:

> It is evident, then, that those constitution-types that look to the common benefit
> turn out, according to what is unqualifiedly just, to be correct, whereas those
> which look only to the benefit of the rulers are mistaken and are deviations from
> the correct constitutions. For they are like rule by a master, whereas a polis is a
> community of free people.[59]

Immediately before articulating his distinction, Aristotle juxtaposes despotic or master rule from

household rule.[60] Whereas a master rules a slave for the master's own benefit (even if that may

involve beneficial treatment of a slave), a household head exercises rule for the benefit of the

household. As a member of the household, the household head shares in the benefit of the

household, but only indirectly and not exploitatively. The household head shares in his household

community's common good without selfishly seeking only his own good (but also without

selflessly depriving himself of his community's good).

Presumably the same model is at work in the distinction between correct and deviant

constitution-types (for instance, between polity and democracy). The democratic partisan claims

that it is just for the democracy to benefit the poor, even if it means exploiting the rich (for

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[58] 3.9.1280a13–15; Aristotle repeats the point at 3.13.1283a30, 3.16.1287a41–b3.
[59] 3.6.1279a16–21. See further 3.12.1282b16–18, 3.13.1283b39–42, 3.17.1287b37–1288a1, 4.10.1295a20–21.
[60] 3.6.1278b15–1279a8. As *Politics* 3.6 notes, the differentiation of kinds of rule was the pre-eminent subject of *Politics* Book 1 (e.g., 1.1.1252a7–17, 1.3.1253b15–20, 1.7.1255b11–20).

instance, through the redistribution of their property). But such justice is like the rule of a master who exploits the slave: although such acts are allegedly for the benefit of all, they are detrimental only to those who hold property and beneficial only to those who are poor. By contrast, in the constitution-type of polity, those in power rule in order to benefit those whom they rule, which incidentally includes themselves. To use a contemporary example: Raising property taxes to improve the schools in one's town comes at a cost: Property owners (including those without school-age children) in the town will pay a higher tax bill. But the results of such a tax increase, prudentially disbursed, will produce educated individuals whose education benefits all town-members, even childless ones. A town needs first responders, nurses, doctors, and business owners, and those members of the community will perform their roles better if they are well-educated. Thus, a town council that passes a property-tax increase to improve schools rules the town like a head of household rules the family, making decisions that promote the common good of the town. Democratic partisans fail to see (or fail to care) that their decisions benefit only themselves. Their myopia leads them to think that if property redistribution is beneficial to them, then it must be just, even if it is detrimental to property owners. Indeed, in the middle of Aristotle's discussion of partisan notions of justice, he reproduces a short dialogue—not unlike a Platonic dialogue—that illustrates the antagonism between democratic and oligarchic partisans over such redistribution:

>  **Oligarch**: If the poor, because they are the greater number, divide up the property
>
>  of the rich, isn't that unjust?
>
>  **Democrat**: No, by Zeus, it isn't, since it seemed just to those in authority.

**Oligarch**: If this is not extreme injustice, what is?[61]

Aristotle ultimately evaluates the democratic conception of justice as the justification for a despotic rule or exploitation that benefits only the poor and not the community. Democracy as a constitution-type deviates from polity because it exploits community members and is unconcerned with the distribution of benefits and costs to the community as a whole.

**III.3 The constitutional stability of democracy**

Aristotle also evaluates constitution-types in terms of their stability (ἀσφαλής). No doubt, the evaluative categories of justice and stability overlap: Aristotle praises the Solonian practice of allowing the poor to elect and inspect officials precisely because "to give them no share and not to allow them to participate at all would be cause for alarm. For a state in which a large number of people are excluded from office and are poor must of necessity be full of enemies."[62] Nonetheless, Aristotle also recommends how to make an unjust constitution more stable, which suggests that justice and stability may not overlap.[63] Aristotle's political science includes the study of what preserves and destroys different constitution-types and constitutional stability is primarily a function of removing the destructive causes and establishing the preservative causes.[64] Aristotle endorses two iterations of a general rule of stability: (1) For a constitution to endure, all parts of the polis must want the constitution to remain and (2) for a constitution to

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[61] 3.10.1281a14–20, with slight adaptation and insertion of roles (cf. 3.11.1281b18–20). I follow Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights*, p. 281, in presenting this passage as a dialogue.

[62] 3.11.1281b27–30.

[63] 4.1.1288b30, 4.2.1289b23–26. 5.11 offers guidance to tyrants, 6.5 to democratic partisans, and 6.6–7 to oligarchic partisans.

[64] 4.1.1288b28–33, 4.2.1289b22–26, 5.1.1301a20–24, 6.5.1319b37–40.

endure, the multitude that wants the constitution to remain must be larger than those that do not want it to remain.[65] Simply because the multitude in democracies is generally in the majority (since in most constitutions, the poor outnumber the rich), Aristotle notes that democracy is a stable constitution-type.[66]

Nonetheless, Aristotle recognizes that what one might call the "democratic ethos" is more than simply majority rule. In an extended reflection on how to preserve aristocracies and oligarchies, Aristotle claims that they ensure stability

> because those in office treat well both those outside the constitution (ἔξω τῆς πολιτείας) and those in the governing class. They do this by not being unjust to the nonparticipants and by bringing their leading men into the constitution; by not being unjust to those who love honor by depriving them of honor, or to the many by depriving them of profit; and by treating each other, the ones who do participate, in a populist manner (δημοτικῶς). For what democrats seek to extend to the multitude, namely, equality, is not only just for those who are similar but also beneficial (συμφέρον). That is why, if the governing class is large, many democratic legislative measures prove beneficial.[67]

Both to those included in and those excluded from a non-participatory constitution, there is a measure of democratic equality that is beneficial precisely because it is prudential or preservative of the constitution. Insofar as the constitution-type of democracy embodies a form of respect or inclusivity as such, the ethos of democracy is a salutary form of governing that Aristotle praises.

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[65] For rule (1), see 2.9.1270b20–22, 4.9.1294b34–40, 6.5.1320a14–17). For rule (2), see 4.12.1296b14–16, 4.13.1297b4–6, 5.9.1309b16–18, 6.6.1320b26–28. 4.9.1294b37–38 seems to suggest that the rule (1) applies only to correct constitutions and rule (2) applies to both deviant and correction constitutions. Miller labels (1) the "maxim of unanimity" and (2) the "maxim of superiority," (*Nature, Justice and Rights*, pp. 269–75, 285–93).
[66] 4.11.1296a12–15, 5.1.1302a6–15; polity is also more stable than aristocracy for the same general reason (5.7.1307a15–19).
[67] 5.8.1308a5–13.

**III.4 The ranking of deviant constitutions**

In several places Aristotle ranks deviant constitution-types. According to his most comprehensive

statement

> It is evident which of these deviations is worst and which second worst. For the
> deviation from the first and most divine constitution must of necessity be the
> worst….Hence tyranny, being the worst, is furthest removed from being a
> constitution; oligarchy is second worst (since aristocracy is very far removed from
> this constitution); and democracy the most moderate (μετριωτάτην).[68]

A parallel passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* helps unpack Aristotle's reasoning: "democracy is

the least bad of the deviations because it is only a very small deviation from the form of polity."[69]

Deviant constitution-types fall away from their correct archetypes, but the "fall" from polity to

democracy is significantly less precipitous than the fall from kingship to tyranny or from

aristocracy to oligarchy (Table III). Whereas the absolute king rules with a superhuman virtue,

**Table III: Right constitutions and their deviations with respect to virtue**[70]

| |
|---|
| **Kingship**: Rule of a person with super-human virtue |
|     **Aristocracy**: Rule of a small group or family of persons with human virtue |
|     **Polity**: Rule of a multitude with military/hoplite virtue |
|     **Democracy**: Rule of a multitude lacking military or civic virtue |
|     **Oligarchy**: Rule of a small group or family of persons on the basis of wealth or lineage |
| **Tyranny**: Rule of a person by means of force and injustice |

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[68] 4.2.12489a38–b5. See also 3.17.1287b39–41, 4.8.1293b23–29.

[69] *EN* 8.12.1160b20.

[70] Table III is inspired by Ober, *Political Dissent*, p. 311. Its textual basis for kingship virtue: 3.13.1284a3–11, 1284b30–34, 3.17.1288a6–9, a14–29; for aristocratic virtue: 3.17.1288a9–13, 4.7.293b2–11; for military virtue in a polity: 3.7.1279a36–b3, 3.17.1288a12–15; for basis of democracy and oligarchy ruling, see 4.12.11296b24–33; for the basis of tyranny ruling, see 4.10.1295a18–23, 5.10.1311a23–31; cf. 5.11.1314a31–39.

the tyrant rules with fear and terror. Although the spatial representation of Table III is imperfect,

the Table illustrates Aristotle's point: The gap between polity and democracy is significantly

smaller than that between kingship and tyranny.

By contrast, a polity mixes well oligarchic and democratic features, whereas democracy

is more one-sided.[71] Consider the following comparison:

**Table IV: Polity and Democracy I**

|  | Sovereign part of the community | Institutional organization of the constitution |
|---|---|---|
| Polity | "Hoplite class" or middle class is sovereign.[72] Antagonism between rich and poor minimized due to presence of middle class. | Rule according to law. Variable property requirements for office. Poor share in judiciary. Participation in the assembly based on minor property assessments; assembly meets infrequently and deliberates only on war/peace and inspection of magistrates.[73] |
| Democracy I | Farmer class and class of those with moderate property are sovereign, but farming class participates rarely due to lack of leisure. | Equality between rich and poor. Rule according to law. Offices open to all who meet minimal property qualifications. |

Comparison between polity and Democracy I is complicated because although Aristotle identifies

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[71] 4.7.1293b31–35; 4.9.1294b13–15. Aristotle notes that historically polities used to be called democracies (4.13.1297b25) and that democracy is more like polity than any other deviation (5.1.1302a13–15).

[72] Hoplite class: 3.7.1279b4, 4.1297b1–2; middle class: 4.11.1295b34–37; rich and poor: 4.11.1296a7–10. The "hoplite class" consists in those individuals who can afford heavy infantry armor and corresponds with Solon's second lowest property classification.

[73] Property assessments for office: 4.9.1294b10–11; poor share in judiciary: 4.9.1294a36–42; assembly: 4.9.1294b1–5, 4.14.1298b4–10, 6.4.1319a32–35.

different mixtures within a polity, he fails to identify species of polity (like he does with every other constitution-type). Nonetheless, the fall from polity to Democracy I is minimal and Democracy I is closer to polity than it is to Democracy IV. First, with respect to the sovereign part of the community: In both Democracy I and polity, a reliance upon a middle or moderate property owning class defuses antagonism between the rich and poor.[74] Second, with respect to eligibility to serve as a magistrate: In both Democracy I and polity, office is limited to those who meet specific property qualifications[75] Third, with respect to judiciary: in Democracy I and polity, all (including the poor) are eligible to serve in the courts.[76] Fourth, with respect to the assembly: In both Democracy I and polity, members of the multitude are eligible to participate in the assembly, but it meets infrequently and/or the questions they can deliberate on are limited—and in the case of polity, most deliberation will concern inspection. As we should expect from Aristotle's analysis of right and deviant constitutions (see Table III), Democracy I and polity are in fact quite similar. Somewhat less expected: the second, third, and fourth similarities between Democracy I and polity concern institutional details that are also found in the Solonian Constitution. In his discussion of polity, Aristotle provocatively, but enigmatically, claims that "only one man has ever been persuaded to introduce" the middle constitution; but Aristotle fails to identify this person; I suspect Lintott is correct to suggest it was Solon, whom I believe is Aristotle's pre-eminent democratic theorist.[77]

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[74] 4.4.1291b31–34, 4.6.1292b25–27.
[75] 4.4.1291b39–41, 4.6.1292b30–31, 6.4.1318b34–37; cf. 2.12.1274a19–21.
[76] 2.12.1273b40–1274a3.
[77] 4.1296a38–39. See A. Lintott, 'Aristotle and Democracy', *Classical Quarterly* 42 (1992), 126–127; Hansen, 'Solonian Democracy', pp. 90–97; Papageorgiou, 'Four or Five Types', pp. 7–8. Ober,

**RECOMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER READING**

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