

BOOK I

Chapter 1

We see that every CITY-STATE is a COMMUNITY of some sort, and that every community is established for the sake of some GOOD (for everyone performs every ACTION for the sake of what he takes to be good). Clearly, then, while every community aims at some good, the community that has the most AUTHORITY of all and encompasses all the others aims highest, that is to say, at the good that has the most authority of all. This community is the one called a city-state, the community that is political.¹ 1252^a
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Those,² then, who think that the positions of STATESMAN, KING, HOUSEHOLD MANAGER, and MASTER of slaves are the same, are not correct. For they hold that each of these differs not in kind, but only in whether the subjects ruled are few or many: that if, for example, someone rules few people, he is a master; if more, a household manager; if still more, he has the position of statesman or king—the assumption being that there is no difference between a large household and a small city-state. As for the positions of statesman and king, they say that someone who is in charge by himself has the position of king, whereas someone who follows the principles of the appropriate SCIENCE, ruling and being ruled in turn, has the position of statesman. But these claims are not true. What I am saying will be clear, if we examine the matter ac- 10
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1. *kuriōtatē koinonia*: the most sovereign community, the one with the most authority, is the city-state, because all the other communities are encompassed (*periechein*) by it or are its parts, so that the goods for whose sake they are formed are pursued in part for the sake of the good for which it is formed (see I.2). These subcommunities include households, villages, religious societies, etc. The good with the most authority is HAPPINESS, since everything else is pursued in part for its sake, while it is pursued solely for its own sake. The science with the most authority, STATESMANSHIP, directs the entire city-state toward happiness. A more detailed version of this opening argument is given in *NE* I.1–2. Here it is being adapted to define what a city-state is.
2. Plato, *Statesman* 258e–261a. Compare Xenophon, *Memorabilia* III.iv.12, III.vi.14.

20 cording to the method of investigation that has guided us elsewhere. For as in other cases, a composite has to be analyzed until we reach things that are incomposite, since these are the smallest parts of the whole, so if we also examine the parts that make up a city-state, we shall see better both how these differ from each other, and whether or not it is possible to gain some expertise in connection with each of the things we have mentioned.³

Chapter 2

25 If one were to see how these things develop naturally from the beginning, one would, in this case as in others, get the best view of them. First, then, those who cannot exist without each other necessarily form a couple, as [1] female and male do for the sake of procreation (they do not do so from DELIBERATE CHOICE, but, like other animals and plants, because the urge to leave behind something of the same kind as themselves is natural), and [2] as a natural ruler and what is naturally ruled do 30 for the sake of survival. For if something is capable of rational foresight, it is a natural ruler and master, whereas whatever can use its body to labor is ruled and is a natural SLAVE. That is why the same thing is beneficial for both master and slave.⁴

1252^b There is a natural distinction, of course, between what is female and what is servile. For, unlike the blacksmiths who make the Delphian knife, nature produces nothing skimpily, but instead makes a single thing for a single TASK, because every tool will be made best if it serves to perform one task rather than many.⁵ Among non-Greeks, however, a 5 WOMAN and a slave occupy the same position. The reason is that they do not have anything that naturally rules; rather their community consists of a male and a female slave. That is why our poets say “it is proper for Greeks to rule non-Greeks,”⁶ implying that non-Greek and slave are in nature the same.

The first thing to emerge from these two communities⁷ is a house-

3. That is to say, do household managers, masters, statesmen, and kings each employ a different type of technical expertise in ruling? Expertise (*technikon*) is technical knowledge of the sort embodied in a CRAFT or SCIENCE.

4. This claim is qualified at 1278^b32–37 and elaborated upon in I.5–7.

5. A Delphian knife seems to have been a multipurpose and cheaply made tool of some sort. See 1299^b10 and note.

6. See Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis* 1266, 1400.

7. The communities of husband and wife, master and slave.

hold, so that Hesiod is right when he said in his poem, “First and foremost: a house, a wife, and an ox for the plow.”⁸ For an ox is a poor man’s servant. The community naturally constituted to satisfy everyday needs, then, is the household; its members are called “meal-sharers” by Charondas and “manger-sharers” by Epimenides the Cretan.⁹ But the first community constituted out of several households for the sake of satisfying needs other than everyday ones is a village. 10 15

As a COLONY or offshoot from a household,¹⁰ a village seems to be particularly natural, consisting of what some have called “sharers of the same milk,” sons and the sons of sons.¹¹ That is why city-states were originally ruled by kings, as nations still are. For they were constituted out of people who were under kingships; for in every household the eldest rules as a king. And so the same holds in the offshoots, because the villagers are blood relatives.¹² This is what Homer is describing when he says: “Each one lays down the law for his own wives and children.”¹³ For they were scattered about, and that is how people dwelt in the distant past. The reason all people say that the gods too are ruled by a king is that they themselves were ruled by kings in the distant past, and some still are. Human beings model the shapes of the gods on their own, and do the same to their way of life as well. 20 25

A complete community constituted out of several villages, once it reaches the limit of total SELF-SUFFICIENCY, practically speaking, is a city-state. It comes to be for the sake of living, but it remains in existence for the sake of living well. That is why every city-state exists by NATURE,¹⁴ since the first communities do. For the city-state is their end, and nature is an end; for we say that each thing’s nature—for example, that of a human being, a horse, or a household—is the character it has when its coming-into-being has been completed. Moreover, that for the 30

8. *Works and Days* 405.

9. Charondas was a sixth-century legislator from Catana in Chalcidice in the southern part of Macedonia. Epimenides was a religious teacher of the late sixth and early fifth century. The works from which Aristotle is quoting are lost.

10. See Plato, *Laws* 776a–b.

11. Plato, *Laws* 681b.

12. A somewhat different explanation is given at 1286^b8–11.

13. *Iliad* X.114–15. To lay down the law (*themisteuein*) is to give judgments in particular cases about what is right or fitting (*themis*).

14. This claim and the argument Aristotle is about to give for it are discussed in the Introduction xlviiii–lix.

1253^a sake of which something exists, that is to say, its end, is best, and self-sufficiency is both end and best.

It is evident from these considerations, then, that a city-state is among the things that exist by nature, that a human being is by nature a political animal,¹⁵ and that anyone who is without a city-state, not by luck but by nature, is either a poor specimen or else superhuman. Like the one Homer condemns, he too is “clanless, lawless, and homeless.”¹⁶

5 For someone with such a nature is at the same time eager for war, like an isolated piece in a board game.¹⁷

It is also clear why a human being is more of a political animal than a bee or any other gregarious animal. Nature makes nothing pointlessly,¹⁸
 10 as we say, and no animal has speech except a human being. A voice is a signifier of what is pleasant or painful, which is why it is also possessed by the other animals (for their nature goes this far: they not only perceive what is pleasant or painful but signify it to each other). But speech is for making clear what is beneficial or harmful, and hence also what is
 15 just or unjust. For it is peculiar to human beings, in comparison to the other animals, that they alone have perception of what is good or bad, just or unjust, and the rest. And it is community in these that makes a household and a city-state.¹⁹

The city-state is also PRIOR in nature to the household and to each of
 20 us individually, since the whole is necessarily prior to the part. For if the whole body is dead, there will no longer be a foot or a hand, except homonymously,²⁰ as one might speak of a stone “hand” (for a dead hand will be like that); but everything is defined by its TASK and by its capacity; so that in such condition they should not be said to be the same things but homonymous ones. Hence that the city-state is natural and
 25 prior in nature to the individual is clear. For if an individual is not self-sufficient when separated, he will be like all other parts in relation to the

15. See Introduction xxvi, xlvii–xlvi, li–lv, lvii–lxv.

16. *Iliad* IX.63–64. Homer is describing a man who “loves fighting with his own people.”

17. A piece particularly vulnerable to attack by an opponent’s pieces, and so needing constantly to fight them off.

18. The idea is that features are present in a thing’s nature in order to promote its end, not that nature is an agent (a kind of god, say) that makes things for a purpose. See Introduction xxvii–xxxv.

19. Explained at 1280^b5–12.

20. That is to say, a foot or a hand that shares no more than a name with a living, functioning foot or hand. See *Cat.* 1^a1–2.

whole. Anyone who cannot form a community with others, or who does not need to because he is self-sufficient, is no part of a city-state—he is either a beast or a god. Hence, though an impulse toward this sort of community exists by nature in everyone, whoever first established one was responsible for the greatest of goods. For as a human being is the best of the animals when perfected, so when separated from LAW and JUSTICE he is worst of all. For injustice is harshest when it has weapons, and a human being grows up with weapons for VIRTUE and PRACTICAL WISDOM to use, which are particularly open to being used for opposite purposes.²¹ Hence he is the most unrestrained and most savage of animals when he lacks virtue, as well as the worst where food and sex are concerned. But justice is a political matter; for justice is the organization of a political community, and justice²² decides what is just. 30 35

Chapter 3

Since it is evident from what parts a city-state is constituted, we must first discuss household management, for every city-state is constituted from households. The parts of household management correspond in turn to the parts from which the household is constituted, and a complete household consists of slaves and FREE. But we must first examine each thing in terms of its smallest parts, and the primary and smallest parts of a household are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children. So we shall have to examine these three things to see what each of them is and what features it should have. The three in question are [1] mastership, [2] “marital” science (for we have no word to describe the union of woman and man), and [3] “procreative” science (this also lacks a name of its own). But there is also a part which some believe to be identical to household management, and others believe to be its largest part. We shall have to study its nature too. I am speaking of what is called WEALTH ACQUISITION.²³ 1253^b 5 10

21. The weapons referred to are presumably various human capacities, such as intelligence, that can be used for good or bad purposes.
22. Reading *dikē* with Dreizehnter and the ms. Here to be understood, perhaps, as the judicial justice administered by the courts. See 1322^a5–8, 1326^a29–30.
23. “Marital” science (*gamikē*) and “procreative” science (*teknopoiētikē*) are shown at work in VII.16. Rule over wives, which is an exercise of the former, and rule over children, of the latter, are discussed in I.12–13. Mastership is discussed in I.4–7 and wealth acquisition in I.2, 8–11.

15 But let us first discuss master and slave, partly to see how they stand
 in relation to our need for necessities, but at the same time with an eye to
 knowledge about this topic,²⁴ to see whether we can acquire some better
 ideas than those currently entertained. For, as we said at the beginning,
 some people believe that mastership is a sort of science, and that master-
 ship, household management, statesmanship, and the science of king-
 20 be a master (for it is by law that one person is a slave and another free,
 whereas by nature there is no difference between them), which is why it
 is not just either; for it involves force.

Chapter 4

Since property is part of the household, the science of PROPERTY ACQUI-
 SITION is also a part of household management (for we can neither live
 nor live well without the necessities). Hence, just as the specialized
 25 crafts must have their proper tools if they are going to perform their
 tasks, so too does the household manager. Some tools are inanimate,
 however, and some are animate. The ship captain's rudder, for example,
 is an inanimate tool, but his lookout is an animate one; for where crafts
 30 are concerned every assistant is classed as a tool. So a piece of property
 is a tool for maintaining life; property in general is the sum of such
 tools; a slave is a piece of animate property of a sort; and all assistants are
 like tools for using tools. For, if each tool could perform its task on com-
 mand or by anticipating instructions, and if like the statues of Daedalus
 35 or the tripods of Hephaestus—which the poet describes as having “en-
 tered the assembly of the gods of their own accord”²⁶—shuttles wove
 cloth by themselves, and picks played the lyre, a master craftsman would
 not need assistants, and masters would not need slaves.

1254^a What are commonly called tools are tools for production. A piece of
 property, on the other hand, is for ACTION. For something comes from a

24. The discussion of the theoretical aspects of wealth acquisition occupies I.4–10 (see 1258^b9–10, which advertises this fact). I.11 is devoted to its practical aspects.

25. For example, Alcidas (a pupil of the sophist Gorgias), who says that “nature never made any man a slave.”

26. *Iliad* XVIII.376. Daedalus was a legendary craftsman and inventor, who made the maze for the Minotaur and the thread for Ariadne. His statues were so life-like that they ran away unless they were tied down (*DA* 406^b18–19; Plato, *Meno* 97d). Hephaestus was blacksmith to the gods.

shuttle beyond the use of it, but from a piece of clothing or a bed we get
 only the use. Besides, since action and production differ in kind, and
 both need tools, their tools must differ in the same way as they do. Life
 consists in action, not production. Therefore, slaves too are assistants in
 the class of things having to do with action.²⁷ Pieces of property are spo-
 ken of in the same way as parts. A part is not just a part of another thing,
 but is *entirely* that thing's. The same is also true of a piece of property.
 That is why a master is just his slave's *master*, not his simply, while a
 slave is not just his master's *slave*, he is entirely his.

It is clear from these considerations what the nature and capacity of a
 slave are. For anyone who, despite being human, is by nature not his own
 but someone else's is a natural slave. And he is someone else's when,
 despite being human, he is a piece of property; and a piece of property is a
 tool for action that is separate from its owner.²⁸

Chapter 5

But whether anyone is really like that by nature or not, and whether it is
 better or just for anyone to be a slave or not (all slavery being against na-
 ture)—these are the things we must investigate next. And it is not diffi-
 cult either to determine the answer by argument or to learn it from ac-
 tual events. For ruling and being ruled are not only necessary, they are
 also beneficial, and some things are distinguished right from birth, some
 suited to rule and others to being ruled. There are many kinds of rulers
 and ruled, and the better the ruled are, the better the rule over them al-
 ways is;²⁹ for example, rule over humans is better than rule over beasts.
 For a task performed by something better is a better task, and where one
 thing rules and another is ruled, they have a certain task. For whenever
 a number of constituents, whether continuous with one another or dis-
 continuous, are combined into one common thing, a ruling element and
 a subject element appear. These are present in living things, because this
 is how nature as a whole works. (Some rule also exists in lifeless things:

27. A hammer is the tool of a producer or craftsman. A slave is a tool of a head
 of household, a free agent who engages in action, not production.

28. Unlike our bodies, which are tools or instruments of our souls, but not
 slaves, because not separate from us (*DA* 415^b18–19, *PA* 642^a11). See
 1255^b11–12.

29. See 1315^b4–7, 1325^a27–30, 1333^b26–29.

for example, that of a harmony.³⁰ But an examination of that would perhaps take us too far afield.³¹)

35 Soul and body are the basic constituents of an animal: the soul is the natural ruler; the body the natural subject. But of course one should examine what is natural in things whose condition is natural, not corrupted. One should therefore study the human being too whose soul and body are in the best possible condition; one in whom this is clear. For in depraved people, and those in a depraved condition, the body will often
1254^b seem to rule the soul, because their condition is bad and unnatural.³²

At any rate, it is, as I say, in an animal that we can first observe both rule of a master and rule of a statesman. For the soul rules the body with
5 the rule of a master, whereas understanding rules desire with the rule of a statesman or with the rule of a king.³³ In these cases it is evident that it is natural and beneficial for the body to be ruled by the soul, and for the affective part to be ruled by understanding (the part that has reason), and that it would be harmful to everything if the reverse held, or if these elements were equal. The same applies in the case of human beings with
10 respect to the other animals. For domestic animals are by nature better than wild ones, and it is better for all of them to be ruled by human beings, since this will secure their safety.³⁴ Moreover, the relation of male to female is that of natural superior to natural inferior, and that of ruler
15 to ruled. But, in fact, the same holds true of all human beings.³⁵

Therefore those people who are as different from others as body is from soul or beast from human, and people whose task, that is to say, the best thing to come from them, is to use their bodies are in this condi-

30. The reference is to the *mesē* or *hēgemōn* (leader), which is the dominant note in a chord (*Pr.* 920^a21–22, *Metaph.* 1018^b26–29).

31. *exōterikōteras*: see 1278^b31 note.

32. The difference between depraved people and those in a depraved condition is unclear. The former are perhaps permanently in the condition that the latter are in temporarily; the former incorrigibly depraved, the latter corrigibly so. In any case, both make poor models.

33. Both statesmen and kings rule willing subjects; in the virtuous desires obey understanding “willingly.” See Introduction xxv–xxxviii.

34. Alternatively: “It is better for all of the tame ones to be ruled.” But the distinction between tame and wild animals is not hard and fast: “All domestic (or tame) animals are at first wild rather than domestic, . . . but physically weaker”; “under certain conditions of locality and time sooner or later all animals can become tame” (*Pr.* 895^b23–896^a11). Presumably, then, it is better even for wild animals to be ruled by man.

35. For example, it is natural for Greeks to rule non-Greeks.

tion—those people are natural slaves. And it is better for them to be subject to this rule, since it is also better for the other things we mentioned. For he who can belong to someone else (and that is why he actually does belong to someone else), and he who shares in reason to the extent of understanding it, but does not have it himself (for the other animals obey not reason but feelings), is a natural slave. The difference in the use made of them is small, since both slaves and domestic animals help provide the necessities with their bodies. 20 25

Nature tends, then, to make the bodies of slaves and free people different too, the former strong enough to be used for necessities, the latter useless for that sort of work, but upright in posture and possessing all the other qualities needed for political life—qualities divided into those needed for war and those for peace. But the opposite often happens as well: some have the bodies of free men; others, the souls. This, at any rate, is evident: if people were born whose bodies alone were as excellent as those found in the statues of the gods, everyone would say that those who were substandard deserved to be their slaves. And if this is true of the body, it is even more justifiable to make such a distinction with regard to the soul; but the soul's beauty is not so easy to see as the body's. 30 35 1255^a

It is evident, then, that there are some people, some of whom are naturally free, others naturally slaves, for whom slavery is both just and beneficial.³⁶

Chapter 6

But it is not difficult to see that those who make the opposite claim³⁷ are also right, up to a point. For slaves and slavery are spoken of in two ways: for there are also slaves—that is to say, people who are in a state of slavery—by *law*. The law is a sort of agreement by which what is conquered in war is said to belong to the victors. But many of those conversant with the law challenge the justice of this. They bring a writ of illegality against it, analogous to that brought against a speaker in the assembly.³⁸ Their 5

36. A more complex conclusion than we might expect. The idea is perhaps this: being a slave might not be just or beneficial for a natural slave who has long been legally free; similarly, being legally free might not be just or beneficial for a naturally free person who has long been a legal slave.

37. That slavery is unjust.

38. A speaker in the Athenian assembly was liable to a writ of illegality or *graphē paranomōn* if he proposed legislation that contravened already existing law; i.e., the “war” rule would not be allowed in a civil context.

supposition is that it is monstrous if someone is going to be the subject and slave to whatever has superior power and is able to subdue him by force. Some hold the latter view, others the former; and this is true even among the wise.

The reason for this dispute, and for the overlap in the arguments, is this: virtue, when it is equipped with resources, is in a way particularly adept in the use of force; and anything that conquers always does so because it is outstanding in *some* good quality.³⁹ This makes it seem that force is not without virtue, and that only the justice of the matter is in dispute. For one side believes that justice is benevolence,⁴⁰ whereas the other believes that it is precisely the rule of the more powerful that is just. At any event, when these accounts are disentangled, the other arguments have neither force nor anything else to persuade us that the one who is more virtuous should not rule or be master.⁴¹

Then there are those who cleave exclusively, as they think, to justice of a sort (for law is justice of a sort), and maintain that enslavement in war is just. But at the same time they imply that it is not just. For it is possible for wars to be started unjustly, and no one would say that someone is a slave if he did not deserve to be one;⁴² otherwise, those regarded

39. Virtue together with the necessary external goods or resources are what enable someone to do something well, including use force. If someone is able to conquer his foes, this at least suggests that he has the virtues needed for success. See 1324^b22–1325^a14.

40. Reading *eunoia* with Dreizehnter and the mss.

41. The two parties to the dispute share common ground because they both believe that “force never lacks virtue.” But they disagree in their accounts of justice, and hence about whether the enslavement of conquered populations is unjust. Those who believe that justice is the rule of the more powerful believe that such enslavement is just, because justice (by definition) is always on the side of the conqueror, since his victory shows him to have the greater power. Those who believe that justice is benevolence (i.e., that it is the good of another) believe that enslavement is unjust because not beneficial for the slaves. Both accounts are canvassed by Thrasymachus in Book I of Plato’s *Republic* (338c, 343c). Once their accounts are disentangled it is readily apparent that their contrasting positions do nothing to confute Aristotle’s own view that the one who is more virtuous *should* rule (I.13).

42. Aristotle is assuming that even an unjust war will be undertaken in accordance with the laws governing declarations of war, and so will be “legal.” Thus by admitting that a person enslaved by the victor in an unjust war has been unjustly but legally enslaved, the proponent of the view here in question denies both that enslaving is always just and that what is legal is always just.

as the best born would be slaves or the children of slaves, if any of them were taken captive and sold. That is why indeed they are not willing to describe *them*, but only non-Greeks, as slaves. Yet, in saying this, they are seeking precisely the natural slave we talked about in the beginning. For they have to say that some people are slaves everywhere, whereas others are slaves nowhere. 30

The same holds of noble birth. Nobles regard themselves as well born wherever they are, not only when they are among their own people, but they regard non-Greeks as well born only when they are at home. They imply a distinction between a good birth and freedom that is unqualified and one that is not unqualified. As Theodectes' Helen says: "Sprung from divine roots on both sides, who would think that I deserve to be called a slave?"⁴³ But when people say this, they are in fact distinguishing slavery from freedom, well born from low born, in terms of virtue and vice alone. For they think that good people come from good people in just the way that human comes from human, and beast from beast. But often, though nature does have a tendency to bring this about, it is nevertheless unable to do so.⁴⁴ 35 40 1255^b

It is clear, then, that the objection with which we began has something to be said for it, and that the one lot are not always natural slaves, nor the other naturally free. But it is also clear that in some cases there is such a distinction—cases where it is beneficial and just⁴⁵ for the one to be master and the other to be slave, and where the one ought to be ruled and the other ought to exercise the rule that is natural for him (so that he is in fact a master), and where misrule harms them both. For the same thing is beneficial for both part and whole, body and soul; and a slave is a sort of part of his master—a sort of living but separate part of his body. Hence, there is a certain mutual benefit and mutual friendship for such masters and slaves as deserve to be by nature so related.⁴⁶ When their relationship is not that way, however, but is based on law, and they have been subjected to force, the opposite holds. 5 10 15

43. Nauck 802, fr. 3. Theodectes was a mid-fourth-century tragic poet who studied with Aristotle. Helen is Helen of Troy.

44. See 1254^b27–33.

45. Reading *kai dikaion*.

46. "Every human being seems to have some relations of justice with everyone who is capable of community in law and agreement. Hence there is also friendship between master and slave, to the extent that a slave is a human being" (NE 1161^b1–8).