

Aristotle on Citizenship as Sharing (*Koinōnein*) in the Political Community: A Matter of Degree?

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that Aristotle's conception of citizenship as sharing (*koinōnein*) in the political community admits no degrees. *Politics* 1-3 develops a conceptually unitary argument: whoever belongs to the *koinōnia politikē* must rule (*archein*) through the collective sovereign bodies of the *polis*. Citizenship admits no internal gradations: one either belongs or does not; what defines sharing in the political community is not quantity of power but quality of belonging: collective *archein*. Grounded in contrast with the household (*oikos*), the principle is tested against failures of Plato and Hippodamus on citizenship, and finds its confirmation in the Solonian constitution, where *thētes*, exercising sovereign functions, were citizens, not citizens in a diminished sense, nor *archomenoi*.

KEYWORDS: Aristotle; *Politics*; definition of the citizen; Solon; *thētes*; *archomenoi politai*.

1. Introduction: citizenship as the measure of political sharing

What must a political community share to achieve genuine unity? Aristotle raises this problem in the opening chapter of *Politics* 2, asking whether it is better for the well-governed city “to share in all things, or in some things but not others”.¹ The question concerns citizens specifically,² and since unity serves the *polis*'s preservation, the point is crucial: what must citizens share to preserve the city?³ The city should be “as far as possible entirely one”, Aristotle admits, yet

1 Arist. *Pol.* 2.1.1261a 2-4: ἀλλὰ πότερον ὅσων ἐνδέχεται κοινωνῆσαι, πάντων βέλτιον κοινωνεῖν τὴν μέλλουσαν οἰκῆσθαι πόλιν καλῶς, ἢ τινῶν μὲν τινῶν δ' οὐ βέλτιον;

2 That citizens are at issue is clear from *Pol.* 2.1.1260b 36-39: ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἦτοι πάντας πάντων κοινωνεῖν τοὺς πολίτας, ἢ μηδενός, ἢ τινῶν μὲν τινῶν δὲ μή. See §3.

3 Newman 1902, 233ff.; Schütrumpf 1980, 61-66; 1991b, 149ff.; 2019, 165-166; Simpson 1998, 72ff.; Pezzoli, Curnis 2012, 171ff., 2025, 155 n. 11, 158. On political unity and diversity: Rosen

excessive unity destroys it.⁴ Against Plato's communism of property, women, and children, Aristotle identifies what citizens must genuinely share: political functions, the capacity to exercise equal judgment on matters of common concern through deliberation and adjudication. Sharing in the perception of justice creates the political bond, holding the city together sufficiently to act as a whole. Unity arises through reciprocal equality (*to ison to antipeonthos*), which preserves (*sōzei*) cities by granting equal access to this shared judgment.⁵ This is what Aristotle in Book 3 terms *to isōs orthōn*, the "correct form of equality" whereby citizenship achieves unity within diversity.⁶

Without institutional arrangements giving this principle concrete expression, the community risks dissolution into *stasis* or oppressive uniformity. This raises the question of how such sharing is realised at the institutional level. The answer lies in Aristotle's conception of the citizen as one who exercises on an equal basis the functions of deliberation and judgment. "Political rule is rule over free and equal persons" (1.6.1255b 16-20; 3.4.1277b 7-9), and this seemingly simple proposition has profound implications for what counts as genuine sharing. The sharing distinctive of the *koinōnia politikē* is realised when citizens exercise equal judgment on matters of common concern, for it is through such deliberation and judgment that "reciprocal equality" finds expression (3.11.1281b 29-31; 3.13.1283b 34-35; cf. 2.2.1261a 30-34). Political equality, however, is not arithmetical sameness. Citizens differ in wealth, virtue, and social position, yet they participate as equals in sovereign functions. This is possible through reciprocal equality or "proportional exchange" (*to ison to antipeonthos*). Aristotle's expression captures a precise idea: reciprocal equality accommodates difference while achieving genuine *koinōnein*. As Aristotle insists, the exchange must be proportional, not arithmetically equal, and through this proportional exchange the just measure of sharing is realised.

The present analysis addresses Aristotle's central question: how does citizenship secure the just measure of sharing in the political community? The inquiry discloses a governing principle: there is no belonging to the *koinōnia politikē*

1975; Schütrumpf 1991a, 166-67; Saunders 1995, 109ff.; Schofield 1999, 89ff.; Danzig 2000; Lockwood 2006, forthcoming; Deslauriers 2013; Santucci 2014, 107-08; Brill 2020, 86-127.

4 Arist. *Pol.* 2.1.1261a 15-16, 16-18, 22-24: λέγω δὲ τὸ μίαν εἶναι τὴν πόλιν ὡς ἄριστον ὃν ὅτι μάλιστα πᾶσαν [...] καίτοι φανερόν ἐστιν ὡς προϊούσα καὶ γινομένη μία μᾶλλον οὐδὲ πόλις ἔσται [...] οὐ μόνον δ' ἐκ πλειόνων ἀνθρώπων ἐστὶν ἡ πόλις, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ εἰδὲ διαφερόντων. οὐ γὰρ γίνεται πόλις ἐξ ὁμοίων. Hansen's dichotomy between perfect equality within the political community and inequality without appears overly rigid (Hansen 1993, 16-17; 2013, 20-31). I return to this point § 2.1.

5 Arist. *Pol.* 2.2.1261a 30-31: οὐ γὰρ γίνεται πόλις ἐξ ὁμοίων. ... διόπερ τὸ ἴσον τὸ ἀντιπεπονθὸς σφίξει τὰς πόλεις. Schütrumpf 1991a, 166-67. See §3.

6 Arist. *Pol.* 3.13.1283b 34-35: τὸ δ' ἴσως ὀρθὸν πρὸς τὸ τῆς πόλεως ὅλης συμφέρον καὶ πρὸς τὸ κοινὸν τὸ τῶν πολιτῶν. On the relationship between τὸ δ' ἴσως ὀρθόν and τὸ ἴσον τὸ ἀντιπεπονθός of Book 2: Schütrumpf 1991a, 166-67; 1991b, 524.

without access to *archein*. Whoever lacks such access is not a citizen. The formula *archein kai archesthai*—what Barnes calls “a staple of the *Politica*”⁷—articulates this condition, which is not to be understood, at least in Book 1, as referring to rotation in office.⁸ *Archein* does not designate exclusively individual magistracies; were it so, all those barred from such offices would count as non-citizens or half-citizens—as some scholars hold the *thētes* were under Solon (see §4). *Archein* is also, and indeed primarily, expressed through the exercise of *krisis* and the *boulentikon*, invariably conceived as collective (see §2). On this point, Books 1 and 2 prove entirely compatible with Book 3’s definition of the citizen *haplōs*. To demonstrate this conceptual unity is the aim of the present essay.

Aristotle articulates a consistent conception across Books 1-3. Book 1 characterises political sharing in terms of collectively exercised functions (see §2). Book 2 examines how the *polis* preserves itself through reciprocal equality, embodied in institutions that extend to all citizens those sovereign functions Aristotle there first terms *archai kyriotatai* (see §3). Book 3 provides the clearest expression: the citizen is defined as one who possesses the effective capacity (*exousia*) to share in *archē boulentikē kai kritikē*. As Aristotle puts it, “one who has the right to participate in deliberative or judicial office is a citizen of the state in which he has that right”.⁹ To be a citizen is to exercise this capacity and, in so doing, to be “a deliberating equal among his fellow citizens”¹⁰ (see §4.1).

The content of Book 3’s definition has been widely discussed;¹¹ I have engaged with that debate and examined questions of method and context

7 Barnes 2005, 192: “This notion is a staple of the *Politica*: in Book I it defines political rule”. See also Mayhew 2013; Farena 2015, 107, 119.

8 Cf. Salkever 1990, 185: “The rotation in office that ordinarily characterizes political rule is absent here”. See also Nagle 2006, 168. Below §2.1.

9 Arist. *Pol.* 3.1.1275a 19-22: “the citizen in an unqualified sense is defined by no other thing so much as by partaking in decision and office” (πολίτης δ’ ἀπλῶς οὐδενὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὀρίζεται μᾶλλον ἢ τῷ μετέχειν κρίσεως καὶ ἀρχῆς). Aristotle has in mind (1275a 25-26) offices that “are indefinite, such as that of juror or assemblyman” (ὁ ἀόριστος ἄρχων ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἐστὶ καὶ δικαστικῆς). For democratic regimes, “citizens are those who share in these offices” (1275a 32-33: τίθεμεν δὴ πολίτας τοὺς οὕτω μετέχοντας); the general definition, however, identifies as citizen (1275b 18-20) “one who has the right to participate in deliberative or judicial office” (ὅς γὰρ ἐξουσία κοινωνεῖν ἀρχῆς βουλευτικῆς ἢ κριτικῆς): he is “a citizen of the state in which he has that right” πολίτην ἥδη λέγομεν εἶναι ταύτης τῆς πόλεως).

10 Ober 1993, 136. See also Ober 2009, 78: “all citizens are expected to participate in making decisions as responsive members of the judging audience of voters. This means that voters are not passive recipients of public speakers’ rhetorical performances; rather they are active judges in their own and the public interest”. See §§4.1, 4.3.

11 Johnson 1984, 1990; Lévy 1980, 1993; Delia 1988; Schütrumpf 1991b, 391-96, 442; Nichols 1992; Simpson 1998, 134-48; Morrison 1999; Frede 2005; Schofield 2011; Accattino, Curnis 2013, 150-54, 166-69; Garsten 2013; Woods 2014; Samaras 2015; Fröhlich 2016; Preus 2016; Riesbeck 2016, 193-217; Blok 2017, 13-41; Bertelli 2018b; Mindus 2018; Natali 2020; Faraguna 2025a.

elsewhere.¹² The present inquiry takes a different approach: it traces the conceptual coherence across Books 1–3, seeking to show that Aristotle’s reflection on the measure of *koinōnein* finds its most systematic expression in his conceptualisation of citizenship in Book 3.

Two questions guide this inquiry. The first concerns the relationship between Book 1’s political rule and Book 2’s principle of proportional equality: how do these complementary analyses illuminate Book 3’s definition of the citizen? The second asks how a community whose members differ in kind can integrate difference through institutional arrangements enabling equal sharing in sovereign functions.

I argue that Aristotle conceives citizenship as the measure of political sharing. Citizenship does not measure gradations of political power; it measures belonging. The distinction is one of kind rather than degree: one either belongs to the *koinōnia politikē* through access to *archein*, or one does not.

The prevailing line of interpretation reads Aristotle differently, as theorising degrees of civic membership. This theory of graded citizenship rests on interconnected assumptions sharing a common matrix, namely the thesis that Aristotle distinguishes a citizen *haplōs* (in the full sense) from a citizen in a reduced sense. From this master argument the others derive: that Aristotle offers two distinct definitions of citizenship, one in 3.1 based on collective functions and another in 3.5 based on individual magistracies; that the formula *archein kai archesthai* distinguishes citizens who access high offices from those permanently confined to *archesthai*; that the discussion of *archomenoi* in 3.5 provides theoretical legitimation of graded civic status; and that the Athenian *thētes* under Solon are to be identified as *archomenoi*, citizens of inferior status excluded from genuine rule. Mossé (1967, 1979) and Johnson (1984) first attributed to Aristotle a conception of graduated citizenship, with reference to the *banausoi* in oligarchic Thebes (see below §4.2). Subsequent scholarship has found in sixth-century Athenian history evidence of Aristotle’s interest in theorising “half-citizenship”, identifying the Solonian *thētes* as the paradigmatic case: Bravo (1996), Duploux (2011, 2014, 2016), and Preus (2009, 2016) have developed this line of interpretation.¹³ What unites these approaches is the premise that Aristotle’s

12 Poddighe 2023, 2024, 2025.

13 The most radical version is Duploux’s (2011, 2014, 2016): *thētes* were not citizens at all, but men denied citizenship entirely, assimilated to resident foreigners—free peasants lacking sufficient land for hoplite equipment. On this view, Aristotle “constructed” the report of *thētes* citizenship to demonstrate that archaic communities recognised “half-citizenship” for the poorest (2016, 63). Bravo (1996, 541) argues that Aristotle’s report of *thētes* receiving from Solon the right to participate in the assembly must be discarded as unreliable. Preus (2016, 131) argues the *demos* granted minimal power in *Pol.* 2.12.1274a 16ff. must be the *zeugitai*, not the *thētes*. Other scholars accept the report but hold that *thētes* citizenship sits uneasily with Book III’s definitions: Schütrumpf (1991b, 393, 438), Robinson (1995, 18), Samaras (2015).

framework accommodates, or requires, graduated citizenship.¹⁴ Philosophers, in turn, have focused on a paradox first identified by Newman (1892) and developed by Morrison (1999). If the citizen is defined as one who shares in office, then in a monarchy only the monarch would count as citizen; Morrison's solution, a theory of degrees of citizenship, seeks to resolve the difficulty.¹⁵ This paradox, however, dissolves once we attend to Aristotle's distinction between those "called" citizens and those who "are" citizens *haplōs*. The subjects of a king are indeed called citizens (3.14.1285a 26-29), but they are not citizens in the proper sense if they do not exercise political functions and do not stand in the condition of *archein kai archesthai* defining political rule (Woods 2014, 406-408). Sparta illustrates the point, for the dual monarchy does not prevent citizens from exercising decisional functions (2.9.1270b 6-35).¹⁶ The principle is clear: where deliberative functions are not exercised, Aristotle does not recognise citizenship in the proper sense.

The present analysis critically re-examines the theory of graded citizenship by testing its founding assumption: that Aristotle's treatment of political sharing—belonging to the political community—accommodates, or requires, graduated citizenship. The test is what Aristotle actually claims across Books 1-3 about the meaning of *archein* and the functions in which it is embodied. Books 1 and 2 address these questions through sustained inquiry into the nature of political rule and the conditions of proportional equality; Book 3 provides the formal definition of citizenship. Though dispersed across books of disputed compositional order (Besso, Curnis 2011; Lord 2013²),¹⁷ these discussions con-

14 Mossé 1967, 17-26; 1979; Johnson 1984, 85-86; Bravo 1996, 535-41; Duploux 2011, 90-91; 2014; 2016; Preus 2009, 158; 2016, 131. *Contra*: Morrison 1999, 148, 163 n. 12; Gallo 2004.

15 Morrison 1999; Khan 2005. Cf. Riesbeck 2016.

16 Luraghi (2013a, 142) rightly observes that in Aristotle's overview of historical cases "the Spartan double monarchy is quickly discarded as being essentially a lifelong military command, and later on Aristotle points out that it is no form of rule at all, since it exists within another form of political order: Sparta was an oligarchy, not a monarchy (*Pol.* 3.1286a2-3)". Equally apt is his reminder that "after all, Aristotle is clear that, among men of comparable skills and intelligence, monarchy is unjust and counterproductive (*Pol.* 3.1288a1-2)". When Aristotle does consider the only good form of monarchy—what he calls *pambasileia*, "total monarchy"—he "describes it as the autocratic rule of the best and most virtuous man, who rules over the political community as a good and competent master over his household. Aristotle goes out of his way to stress the exceptional nature of this ruler, infallibly guided by knowledge and wisdom, like a god among mortals" (Luraghi 2013a, 143). On the theoretical character of this political model, see also Cambiano 2016, 67; Poddighe 2024b, 9-12. For a different view, denying the utopian nature of this monarchical model and maintaining that Aristotle regarded subjects of a monarchy as citizens "in the proper sense"—without this generating any paradox with respect to the definition of citizenship—see Riesbeck 2016, 25-30; Giorgini 2019, 8-9, 11.

17 The *Politics* most likely integrates diverse yet thematically related lecture materials (Schütrumpf 1980, 287-326; 1991a, 39-67; 1991b, 89-108, 114-18; Lord 1981; Bertelli 2025; Faraguna 2025a, 216). On compositional history: Besso, Curnis 2011, 3-47; Viano 2002, 9-15; Lord 2013²,

verge in a single theoretical framework whose central principle is that the political community cannot admit merely *archomenoi* among its members.

Book 1 establishes that whoever belongs cannot be merely *archomenos* but must *archein kai archesthai*, a principle developed through contrast with the *oikos* and the condition of slaves, women, and children (§2). Book 2 tests this principle against constitutional models. Plato's *Laws* and Hippodamus's project create merely nominal citizenship for those excluded from sovereign political functions: formally designated as citizens, they remain *archomenoi* rather than full members of the political community. Solon's *politeia*, by contrast, grants all citizens, including the *thêtes*, the indispensable functions through which reciprocal equality is realised (§3). Book 3's definition of citizenship *haplôs* is fully consistent with this framework: the *thêtes* who deliberate and judge are full citizens, not citizens of lesser degree (§4). The fundamental contrast throughout is between citizens and non-citizens, not between grades of citizens. Aristotle's account leaves no conceptual space for graduated citizenship, for what defines political rule is not the "quantity" of political power but the "quality" of belonging.¹⁸

A tension nonetheless remains. If proportional equality governs the distribution of political prerogatives, and if those who contribute more deserve greater recognition, does citizenship itself not admit of degrees? The question is sharply put in 3.13, where nobles and wealthy citizens claim to be *mallon politai*, citizens "to a higher degree" (3.12.1283a 34–35). Aristotle's response turns on a fundamental distinction between contribution and condition. Contribution may legitimately vary; the condition of citizenship does not. The criterion is to *isôs orthon*, the right form of equality (3.13.1283b 40), "correctness in an equal spirit" (Lord 20132, 85), serving the interest of the entire city: τὸ δ' ἴσως ὀρθὸν πρὸς τὸ τῆς πόλεως ὅλης συμφέρον καὶ πρὸς τὸ κοινὸν τὸ τῶν πολιτῶν. This is the proportional fairness underlying reciprocal equality: not identical shares for all but equal standing within a framework recognising differential merit.¹⁹

XX–XXVII; Canevaro, Zizza 2025, 27–30. The present approach does not rest on accepting the transmitted order as definitive—though every attempt to rearrange Books 1–8 has failed to yield coherent results (Besso, Curnis 2011, 44; Lord 2013², XXVI–XXVII). As Canevaro and Zizza rightly observe, while the *Politics* lacks unity at the level of compositional organisation, it nonetheless exhibits coherence in its recurring problems and shared theoretical premises (2025, 30). On conceptual unity in the *Politics*, see also Pellegrin 1987, 129–159. Simpson 1998, 2013; Knoll 2011; Lord 2013², XXVI–XXVII; Giorgini 2019; Oliveira 2019; Rapp 2020. A consistent conception of citizenship as the foundation of the political community remains discernible throughout, independently of disputed textual sequence.

18 Arist. *Pol.* 1.13.1259b 37–38: οὐδὲ γὰρ τῷ μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον οἷόν τε διαφέρειν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἄρχεσθαι καὶ ἄρχειν εἶδει διαφέρει, τὸ δὲ μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον οὐδέν. See §2.1.

19 Arist. *Pol.* 3.13.1283b 34–40. The well-born claim to be "more" citizens (πολιταὶ γὰρ μᾶλλον οἱ γενναῖότεροι τῶν ἀγεννῶν, ἢ δ' εὐγένεια παρ' ἐκάστοις οἶκοι τίμιος)—a claim Aristotle condemns as incompatible with political unity, which rests on the "correct" conception of equality (τὸ δ' ἴσως ὀρθὸν πρὸς τὸ τῆς πόλεως ὅλης συμφέρον καὶ πρὸς τὸ κοινὸν τὸ τῶν πολιτῶν) that citizenship realises. See §4.3.

According to this equality the *politēs* is one who shares in ruling and being ruled: *πολίτης δὲ κοινή μὲν ὁ μετέχων τοῦ ἄρχειν καὶ ἄρχεσθαί ἐστι* (3.13.1283b 42-1284a 1). When Aristotle denies that some citizens can be “more citizens” than others, he has in mind the political rule defined in Book 1 (§2.1). The distinction is binary. One either belongs to the *koinōnia politikē* through access to *archein*, or one stands outside it as *archomenos*, a condition akin to that of the *metoikos*. No intermediate status exists.

2. Book 1: The political rule of sharing: why citizens cannot be exclusively *archomenoi*

Book 1’s discussion of the distinctive rule governing the political *koinōnia* has rightly attracted scholarly attention (Schofield 1999; Deslauriers 2006; Mayhew 2013; Frank 2015).²⁰ Aristotle examines how individual contribution to the common good relates to the community’s *eu zēn*—a connection expressed through the collective exercise of the *boulentikon* and the *krisis tou dikaion*. He brings this rule into focus by examining the condition of the *archomenos*, the figure he selects for comparing different forms of *koinōnia*. The principle is unequivocal: whoever belongs to the political community cannot be merely *archomenos* but must *archein kai archesthai*²¹. This “staple” of the *Politics* constitutes a central thesis of Book 1, together with the collective dimension—expressed through the *krisis tou dikaion*—within which this capacity for rule is exercised.

The principle is first articulated at *Pol.* 1.1.1252a 7-16, where Aristotle criticises those who hold that political, royal, household, and despotic rule are the same, differing only in the number of those ruled: for Aristotle, by contrast, the distinction is qualitative, not quantitative, determined by the nature of ruler and ruled.²² From this critical observation, Aristotle proceeds to characterise

20 What the first book of the *Politics* is about has generated a great deal of discussion. For a useful survey going back to the nineteenth century, see Natali 1979; Deslauriers 2006, 48ff. See also Schütrumpf 1991a; Saunders 1995, 55ff.; Davis 1996, 15ff. Schofield 1999, 89-90; Barnes 2005, 192ff.; Nagle 2006, 19ff.; Besso, Curnis 2011, 59-86; Mayhew 2013; Frank 2015, 19ff.; Oliveira 2019. Davis aptly observes that “Book I of the *Politics* is about the fact that political life begins when men think about the good—that is, they think about justice” (1996, 44). See Frank 2015, 19ff.; Brill 2020, 94ff.

21 Notably, the same principle operates in Book 7, where Aristotle outlines the best city: there too, grades of citizenship within the *koinonia politikē* are excluded (see Viano 1982, 298). Aristotle refuses to divide citizens into classes. The only divisions admissible in the ideal city are those distinguishing citizens from those who always and only obey (*archomenoi*)—who stand outside the political community altogether.

22 1.1.1252a 7-16: ὅσοι μὲν οὖν οἰόνται πολιτικὸν καὶ βασιλικὸν καὶ οἰκονομικὸν καὶ δεσποτικὸν εἶναι τὸν αὐτὸν οὐ καλῶς λέγουσιν (πλήθει γὰρ καὶ ὀλιγότητι νομίζουσι διαφέρειν ἀλλ’ οὐκ εἶδει τούτων ἕκαστον). Viano 2002, 71; Besso, Curnis 2011, 141; Lord 2013², 1; Saunders 1995, 251; Mayhew 2013, 530ff.; Bertelli 2017, 45ff.

political rule through three elements: the end of the political community; the means through which members contribute by exercising their proper function; and the specific quality (*eidos*) of the *archomenos*—who in the political *koinōnia* alone must also be *archōn*, sharing in the determination of what is advantageous and just for the common good. Only once these three elements are recognised can we assess the significance of political rule in Book 1.

2.1. The political rule: end, means and quality (*eidos*)

The first element is the end toward which the political community is directed. Opening Book 1, Aristotle employs *koinōnia* technically, designating the political community as the perfect form of human society: since every community aims at some good, the community that is most authoritative and embraces all others aims at the most authoritative good—this is the *polis* or *koinōnia politikē* (1.1.1252a 1-7). The political *koinōnia* aims at the good that is most *kyrios* because the political community is itself the most *kyria* of communities. Aristotle returns to this point: the complete community, arising from several villages, reaches full self-sufficiency; while coming into being for the sake of living, it exists for the sake of living well (1.2.1252b 28-31). The realisation of the *eu zēn* constitutes the end of the political community, and to this end must be directed the contribution of each member, who possesses the *dynamis* for *koinōnein* precisely insofar as they fulfil their function (*ergon*), thereby becoming part of the community (1.2.1253a 23-29).²³

When Aristotle reflects on the political community in Book 1, citizens are evidently in view. Hansen's claim (1993; 2013) that "Book I has nothing to say about the citizen" must be rejected.²⁴ He is right that the term *politēs* does not occur; this, however, holds only at the lexical level. Those who belong and participate by exercising the *dynamis tou koinōnein* and fulfilling their *ergon* are precisely those whom Aristotle elsewhere defines as *koinonoi tēs politeias* (1.13.1260b 19-20). They exercise this capacity through the means at their disposal, thereby contributing to the *eu zēn*. These means define political rule.

If the end of the political community is the *eu zēn*, through what means do citizens realise it? Each member contributes through the *bouleutikon* (1.13.1260a 12; Guéguén 2019, 380-382)—the "capacity to reason along with others regarding common goods" (Ober 1998, 299), a faculty specific to those possessing the *dynamis tou koinōnein.koinōnein*. By contrast, the slave lacks the *bouleutikon*

23 Natali 2020, 339, 335, 362; Poddighe 2025, 47ff.

24 Hansen 1993, 16: "Book 1... there is not discussion whatsoever of the concept of citizen (*polites*) and constitution (*politeia*)"; "In Book One there is not a single occurrence of the term *polites*" (1993, 16, 27 n. 94; 2013, 20-31). The observation holds only at the lexical level. When Aristotle affirms that from children derive those who *koinonoi ginontai tēs politeias* (1260b 20), he evidently speaks of citizens; no reason exists to judge this "not an integral part of Book One" (Hansen 1993, 27 n. 94).

altogether, the woman possesses it but without authority (*akeyron*), the child only incompletely (*ateles*) (1.13.1260a 12-14; Deslauriers 2003). Whoever belongs to the political community, analogously, contributes through the *krisis tou dikaion*.²⁵ Aristotle establishes this connection in two passages. First, whoever exercises this *krisis*, being able to judge what is just and unjust, contributes to the very existence of the *polis*: “For it is peculiar to man as compared to the other animals that he alone has a perception of good and bad and just and unjust and the other things of this sort; and community in these things is what makes a household and a city” (1.2.1253a 14-18). Shortly thereafter, Aristotle affirms that the *krisis tou dikaion* defines the order of the political community—a judgment expressed collectively by its members: “Justice (*dikaiosisynē*) is a thing belonging to the city. For adjudication (*dike*) is an arrangement of the political community, and justice is judgment as to what is just (*krisis tou dikaion*)” (1.2.1253a 37-39). Prior to the exercise of individual magistracies, prior to the rotation of offices, the condition of *archein kai archesthai* is identified in the faculty of deliberation—in contrast to whoever is *archomenos* in the *oikos* as economic unit (slave/master) or as family nucleus (father/mother/children). Here the first idea of political freedom and equality takes shape: the capacity to deliberate on the common good.

Two aspects of participation require attention. The first concerns its collective character. Aristotle emphasises the collective dimension of judgment: the individual who contributes to determining what is just and useful “makes” the city. The specific quality of human beings lies in the capacity to perceive (*aisthēsis*) the just and the unjust, and to indicate through *logos* what is advantageous and harmful; the sharing (*koinōnia*) of this capacity is what “makes” the city (1.2.1253a 15-18).²⁶ Notably, Aristotle gives expository priority to the communicative function of *logos*—the act of making manifest to others what is useful—even though it logically presupposes *aisthēsis*: speech serves to “reveal” the advantageous and the harmful, hence also the just and the unjust. The emphasis falls on the collective context in which this disclosure can be shared. As

25 Arist. *Pol.* 1.2.1253a 14-18, 37-39. Brill (2020, 94): “Sharing in the perception of justice creates the political bond, holding the city together sufficiently for it to act as a whole”. See also Yack 1993, 75-76: “Aristotelian political community exists where individuals hold each other accountable to standards of political justice”.

26 1.2.1253a 15-18: ὁ δὲ λόγος ἐπὶ τῷ δηλοῦν ἐστὶ τὸ συμφέρον καὶ τὸ βλαβερὸν, ὥστε καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἀδίκον: τοῦτο γὰρ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ζῶα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἴδιον, τὸ μόνον ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ καὶ δικαίου καὶ ἀδίκου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἰσθησὶν ἔχειν: ἡ δὲ τούτων κοινωνία ποιεῖ οἰκίαν καὶ πόλιν. See Nagle 2006, 154 n. 5 “This is what citizens choose, in effect, by deciding to live in a political community, which requires their active participation. It is this choice that creates the public realm and the political community”. See Frank 2015, 23: “Disclosing what is advantageous and what is harmful against the backdrop of plural and conflicting interests, *logos* [...] is able to orient those interests toward a “common thing” (*Pol.* 1254a 28), and thus to the constitution of a shared political association (*Pol.* 1253a18), capable of taking into account the good of the whole”; *ibid.* on the *logos* “which receives its authority by way of the simultaneous active and passive speaking and listening”.

Saunders rightly observes, “the use of *logos* to ‘make clear’ the just and the unjust implies deliberation and persuasion” (Saunders 1995, 70; Frank 2015, 11ff.; Brill 2020, 50ff., 94ff.). “What is useful” is clearly to be understood as collective advantage: *dike*, as the order of justice, is the *taxis* of the political *koinōnia*, and *dikaíosynē* is nothing other than the *krisis tou dikaion*. Those who belong to this community contribute collectively to determining the conception of political justice and the order deriving from it (Brill 2020, 51, 94). The second aspect concerns the specific quality (*eidos*) of participants. The definition of political justice from *Eth. Nic.* 5 (1134a 26-29) confirms that the collective exercise of the *krisis tou dikaion* presupposes a distinctive quality: the politically just “exists among those who share in a life aimed at self-sufficiency, (who are) free and equal, either proportionally or numerically. Consequently, for those for whom this does not exist, there is no political justice among them, but only a certain justice by analogy. Justice exists only among those whose mutual relations are governed by law”. The capacity to decide in common what is just is the distinctive trait of the political community—a community of those who are free and equal, who live together to achieve self-sufficiency, and whose reciprocal relations are characterised by political justice. Political justice does not exist in the household, because this kind of justice exists only between persons who “share equally in ruling and being ruled” (1134b 1).²⁷ The point confirms what emerged above: political freedom and equality are grounded in the capacity to deliberate on the common good and consent to its rules. This is the substance of political rule.

A further point clarifies Aristotle’s treatment. “Everything is defined by its function and its capacity”, he affirms, “and if it is no longer the same in these respects it should not be spoken of in the same way, but only as something similarly termed” (1.2.1253a 23-25).²⁸ The corollary follows: those who belong to the political community must be defined by the *ergon* and *dynamis* proper to them.

The analysis of end and means leads to the third defining element: the specific quality (*eidos*) of rulers (*archontes*) and ruled (*archomenoi*). Identifying this *eidos* is essential for recognising the distinctive rule of the political community, in which, unlike other *koinōniai*, the *archōn* is also *archomenos*. To establish this specificity, Aristotle proceeds through his characteristic method of decomposition: the composite must be analysed into its simplest parts, for “by examining the parts of which the city is composed, we shall better see how they differ from one another” (1.1.1252a 16-23; Mayhew 2013, 526; Natali 2020, 344ff.; Poddighe 2025, 46ff.); observing how things develop from their origin

27 For fuller discussion of this comparison with *Eth. Nic.* 5.1134a 26-29: Lockwood 2003; Nagle 2006, 153ff., 187ff.; Eich 2019, 11-12; Schütrumpf 2019, 155ff.

28 Arist. *Pol.* 1.2.1253a 23-25: πάντα δὲ τῷ ἔργῳ ὄρισται καὶ τῇ δυνάμει, ὥστε μηκέτι τοιαῦτα ὄντα οὐ λεκτέον τὰ αὐτὰ εἶναι ἀλλ’ ὁμόνομμα. Poddighe 2025, 47.

(*ex archēs*) is the appropriate method for thorough investigation (1252a 24-26; 1253b 4-6; Berrón 2020; Natali 2020, 344-345, 350).²⁹ This approach enables Aristotle to move beyond his predecessors. Against those who treated differences among types of rule as merely quantitative, he introduces the criterion of specific quality (*eidos*) as determinative of political rule. What distinguishes one form of *koinōnia* from another is not how many are ruled but the *eidos* of those who rule (1.1.1252a 6-13). This first appearance of *eidos* in its technical sense is decisive. Yet Aristotle swiftly advances: the *archomenoi* themselves must also be qualified, and hence distinguished, according to their *eidos*. Indeed, it becomes progressively clear that his attention fixes upon the *eidos* of the *archomenoi* in order to define the specificity of political rule. The relationship between *archōn* and *archomenos* is thus placed on the plane of qualitative difference: *eidos* distinguishes who rules, who is ruled, and their reciprocal relationship. Yet at the heart of Aristotle's reflection lies the *eidos* of the *archomenoi*.

This is Aristotle's central insight: each form of *koinōnia* is qualified by the *eidos* of its governed members. In the *oikos*, the *archomenos* is merely *archomenos*: the slave entirely so, the woman and child in different degrees. In the political *koinōnia*, by contrast, the *archomenos* must also be *archōn*. The formula *kata meros* indicates here not rotation of offices but that members share in both conditions, ruling and being ruled (Salkever 1990, 185; Nagle 2006, 168). The *eidos* of the *archomenoi* distinguishes the political community: they deliberate and are therefore *kyrioi*. Aristotle analyses this quality both vertically, within the *oikos*, and horizontally, across types of governed in different *koinōniai*. His focus lies on the ruled, not the ruler (Schütrumpf 1991a).³⁰

Chapter 13 closes Book 1 by confirming that *archontes* and *archomenoi* differ in kind, not degree: "between ruling and being ruled there is a difference in kind, and difference of degree is not difference in kind".³¹ The ruler possesses not more of the same virtue, but a differently qualified virtue in relation to the ruled. Why does Aristotle insist that qualitative rather than quantitative differences must distinguish rulers and ruled alike, and govern their mutual relations? Scholars have puzzled over this question.³² A plausible answer is that without this distinction, Aristotle cannot undermine the notion that exercising different degrees of power constitutes a qualifying criterion for either. It is no obstacle

29 1.1.1252a 16-22. "What I am saying will be clear, if we examine the matter according 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". See Deslauriers 2006, 50-51.

30 The reading *archomenōn* at 1.13.1260a 4 must be retained (Saunders 1995, 19, 99); Ross's emendation to *archontōn* misses the point. Cf. Besso, Curnis 2011, 318-319.

31 1.13.1259b 37-38: οὐδὲ γὰρ τῷ μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον οἷόν τε διαφέρειν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἄρχεσθαι καὶ ἄρχειν εἶδει διαφέρει, τὸ δὲ μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον οὐδέν.

32 Saunders 1995, 99-100.

that members of the political community assume both conditions, for political institutions permit this passage within collective decision-making bodies (below §4.1).

That Aristotle's attention centres on the *eidos* of the *archomenos* in order to qualify political rule is confirmed by chapter 13. The chapter specifies this *eidos* through the *bouleutikon*: the slave lacks it entirely; the woman possesses it without authority (*akuron*); the child incompletely (*ateles*). In the political *koinōnia*, by contrast, the citizen possesses the *bouleutikon* with authority, and through its collective exercise citizens share equally in the community. The *bouleutikon* thus defines the *eidos* of the political *archomenos*: whoever exercises it is both ruled and ruler; whoever lacks it cannot belong to the political *koinōnia*. These elements characterise the citizen in Book 1. Political freedom and equality emerge as the capacity to deliberate on the common good (Guéguén 2019, 381-382).

In summary, Book 1 establishes the following principles. The political community exists for the *eu zen* of its members, and sharing is expressed through collective judgment (*krisis*) on justice (*to dikaion*). Political participation requires access to both judgment and sovereign authority; *koinōnein* is reserved for those who form integral parts of the *polis* (*merē tēs poleōs*) by performing their proper *ergon* (1.2.1253a 27-29; Natali 2020, 339, 355, 362).³³

The principle of political rule is clear: whoever belongs cannot be merely *archomenos* but must *archein kai archesthai*. The definitional principle—that all things are defined by their function (*ergon*) and capacity (*dynamis*)—applies to the citizen no less than to the slave, the woman, and the child. It follows that whoever lacks the *dynamis* for *koinōnein* is not part of the city. Political membership is qualified not by the “quantity” of power but by the capacity for sharing. The fundamental contrast established in Book 1—between whoever possesses the faculty to deliberate and is therefore *archōn*, and whoever lacks it and is therefore *archomenos*—finds confirmation in the analysis of 3.5 (§4.2 below). In its concluding section, Book 1 establishes that those who share in the *politeia* are citizens (1.13.1260b 20); Aristotle speaks of children who, once grown, become *koinōnoi tēs politeias* (ἐκ δὲ τῶν παίδων οἱ κοινωνοὶ γίνονται τῆς πολιτείας). Here emerges the theme of the *politeia* as the comprehensive order through which the city attains its highest good, passing from the minimal units to the whole, and thus to the *politeia* as constitutional arrangement. This theme finds its counterpart in Book 2's evaluation of constitutional projects.³⁴ The collective dimension of decision-making proves significant: the *polis* must provide a space for political action where *koinōnein* is realised through *krisis* and the reciprocal exercise of rule, both of which presuppose institutions for collective

33 Arist. *Pol.* 1.2.1253a 27-29: ὁ δὲ μὴ δυνάμενος κοινωνεῖν ἢ μὴδὲν δεόμενος δι' αὐτάρκειαν οὐθὲν μέρος πόλεως.

34 That Book 1 serves as an introduction not only to the *Politics* but to Book 2's analysis of constitutional models has been argued by Lord 1981, 472.

deliberation. The problems concerning the extent of political participation in Book 2 are thus directly addressed in relation to the institutional spaces within which these functions must be exercised. Which *politeia* realises them best? And why censure those models that fail to provide such spaces adequately?

3. Book 2: institutional spaces for political sharing

The principle of political rule established in Book 1 here finds institutional application, for the political community requires that its members share in *archein* rather than remain merely *archomenoi*. The inquiry thus assumes constitutional form: which arrangements create genuine spaces for the exercise of sovereign functions? Aristotle addresses this by focusing on the condition of the *archomenoi*, evaluating each constitutional model according to whether it creates or excludes a class of permanently ruled citizens. Two questions govern the analysis: what must citizens share, and according to which principle? Aristotle poses the first directly (2.1.1260b 36–1261a 4):

ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἥτοι πάντας πάντων κοινωνεῖν τοὺς πολίτας, ἢ μηδενός, ἢ τινῶν μὲν τινῶν δὲ μή. τὸ μὲν οὖν μηδενός κοινωνεῖν φανερόν ὡς ἀδύνατον (ἡ γὰρ πολιτεία κοινωνία τίς ἐστι). ἀλλὰ πότερον ὅσων ἐνδέχεται κοινωνῆσαι, πάντων βέλτιον κοινωνεῖν τὴν μέλλουσιν οἰκίσσεσθαι πόλιν καλῶς, ἢ τινῶν μὲν τινῶν δ' οὐ βέλτιον;

For all citizens must share (*koinōnein*) everything, or nothing, or some things but not others. It is evidently impossible for them to share nothing—for a constitution is a sort of community (*koinōnia*). But is it better for a city-state that is to be well managed to share everything possible? Or is it better to share some things but not others?

Sharing nothing is impossible; sharing everything is destructive. Plato's *Republic* proposes that the city share everything possible: property, women, children. Yet this pursuit of perfect unity destroys what it seeks to preserve. A city forced into homogeneity ceases to be a city (Deslauriers 2013; Santucci 2014). The *polis* is constitutively plural: it comprises individuals who differ in nature, function, and capacity. What holds such a community together cannot be the elimination of difference but must be something else entirely. Aristotle's answer to the first question is thus clear: citizens must share some things but not others. The second question concerns the rule of sharing: according to what principle must citizens be equal in political participation? The answer is “equality according to reciprocity” (*ison to antipeponthos*). This is what saves the city (*sōzei*, 2.1.1261a 30) and holds it together (*summenei*, *Eth. Nic.* 5.8.1132b 33). This criterion governs the comparison of constitutional models, both theoretical and

historical. The review serves to verify whether they have established adequate institutional arrangements to realise genuine *koinōnia*.

3.1 The principle of reciprocal equality

“Equality according to reciprocity” in *Politics* 2.2 addresses the problem of political unity: how to combine necessary diversity with the equality required for genuine *koinōnia*. Aristotle invokes this principle as that which preserves the city (2.2.1261a 31-32), then demonstrates its significance through analysis of constitutional models: theoretical proposals that failed to apply it, historical regimes that succeeded. Book 2 is organised around a single question: which institutional arrangements realise the reciprocal equality that political sharing demands? Aristotle’s reference to the treatment of this concept in his ethical works (2.2.1261a 30: “as was said earlier in the *Ethics*”) allows him to presuppose rather than redefine it. This cross-reference, however, should not be taken, as Frede (2013, 91) suggests, to indicate merely cursory deployment.³⁵ The contrary is the case. The reference is immediately followed by an explicit invocation of political rule and the condition of *archein kai archesthai*: “it is necessary that this equality obtain also among free and equal persons, since not all can rule at the same time, but each for a year or some other period” (2.2.1261a 32-b 3). The juxtaposition is significant. The principle that political community requires the capacity to rule and be ruled finds institutional expression in the alternation made possible by reciprocal equality. Rosen (1975), Danzig (2000), Lockwood (2006) and Eich (2019) have rightly emphasised the political value this concept assumes when transposed from the economic domain (central to *Eth. Nic.* 5, where it governs exchange) to the constitutional (where it determines the distribution of sovereign functions).³⁶ Schütrumpf (1991b, 524) recognised the connection: reciprocity in *Eth. Nic.* 5.8 is introduced as a form of justice (1132b 21ff.), yet treated as proportional equality (1133a 11); the same principle is presupposed in *Politics* 2.2, where it “preserves” the community. He likewise emphasises the conceptual link with the “correct” form of equality governing the analysis of citizenship in Book 3. Reciprocal equality reappears there as *isōs orthōn*, “what is correct in an equal manner” (3.13.1283b 40-42). Whether translated as “equally right” (Ross) or “correctness in an equal spirit” (Lord 2013², 85), the meaning is plain: what is correct is “equally” correct in the

35 Frede 2013, 91 “For though Aristotle refers to *antipeponthos* once in the *Politics* (2.2.1261a 30-b 5), there is actually only a superficial resemblance between the political regulations and the three uses of *antipeponthos* in *Eth. Nic.* 5.5 [...]. That reference only shows that he does not regard the use of that expression as immediately intelligible”. Cf. Eich 2019.

36 Rosen 1975, 237-39; Danzig 2000; Lockwood 2006, 211-12; Farenga 2015, 105, 107, 119; Vegetti 2017. See Eich (2019, 9-10 ff.), for whom Aristotelian reciprocity “emerges not as a separate kind of justice but as a fundamental aspect of all political justice”. Allen (2004, 135) similarly places reciprocity at the centre of her reading, arguing that Aristotelian citizenship revolves around “a developed discourse of reciprocity”.

form citizenship realises within regimes modelled on Solon's *politeia* (Accattino, Curnis 2013, 210).³⁷ We shall return (below §4.3) to this decisive connection between the problem posed abstractly in Book 2—how diverse members can share equally in political community—and Aristotle's reflection on competing claims to civic standing in 3.13. But it is worth first considering the role that the appeal to reciprocal equality assumes in Book 2. Lockwood (2006) provides the most sustained analysis of this function, rightly connecting the principle to the problem of *mixis*, the institutional blending Solon achieved in sixth-century Athens. He identifies reciprocal equality as the distinctive trait of the *politeia* or mixed regime: what Solon accomplished in historical fact (Lockwood 2006, 211). Before turning to the salient points of this analysis, it should be noted that the same principle provides the criterion against which Aristotle evaluates each constitutional model, theoretical no less than historical. The question is whether a constitution has established adequate institutional *mixis* without excluding citizens from *archai kyriotatai*. Plato's *Laws* institutionalises exclusion through oligarchic mechanisms. Hippodamus's tripartite division reserves sovereign functions for the military class alone. Each failure is measured against the standard of *ison to antipeponthos*: the political community must create spaces where all citizens exercise sovereign functions of deliberation and judgment. Models failing this test cannot achieve genuine *koinōnia*. Solon's constitution demonstrates that the principle is institutionally realisable.

3.2. The critique of Plato and Hippodamus: nominal inclusion without *mixis*

The critique of the *Republic* in chapters 1-5 targets common property and the community of women and children. Chapter 6 turns to the *Laws*, addressing more directly the distribution of political prerogatives; this enables us to compare Plato's model with Solon's *politeia*. Aristotle identifies a specific limitation obstructing effective *koinōnia*: Plato's regime tends toward oligarchy untempered by democratic institutions (Saunders 1995, 134-135, 171), showing no interest in extending to the *plethos* the right to exercise political functions. The fundamental defect is Plato's failure to assign a genuine political role to the mass of citizens, who remain permanently excluded from *koinōnia*. As Schütrumpf rightly observes, Aristotle criticises this arrangement for granting only nominal

37 Newman 1902, 240, discerns this connection between Solon and reciprocal equality. On the Solonian model realising reciprocal equality (2.2) and thus exemplifying *isōs orthōn* (3.13): Lockwood 2006; Accattino, Curnis 2013, 209-10. Ober (1998, 60-66) aptly situates Solon's citizenship model within a constitutional reform that balanced ordinary people's demands with a "sociopolitical compromise" tying access to individual offices to wealth: necessary political prerogatives extended to all Athenians, individual magistracies reserved for the propertied. Aristotle takes a similar view: Solon achieved political unity through a *politeia* capable of establishing a just equilibrium or *isopoliteia* (Poddighe 2014, 174ff., 208ff.)—likely an isolated case among those surveyed in the *Politics* (cf. Weil 1965, 167; Cambiano 2016, 151).

inclusion to individuals confined to the condition of the ruled (*archomenoi*), a status incompatible with genuine membership in the *koinōnia politikē*. In Plato's framework, the *archomenoi* are citizens in name only, since no institutional mechanism integrates them with the *archontes*. These groups remain distinct, precluding the *mixis* essential for a well-functioning *polis*.

The *Laws* institutionalise exclusion through oligarchic mechanisms (2.6.1266a 8-23):

μᾶλλον δ' ἐγκλίνειν βούλεται πρὸς τὴν ὀλιγαρχίαν. δῆλον δὲ ἐκ τῆς τῶν ἀρχόντων καταστάσεως· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐξ αἰρετῶν κληρωτοὺς κοινὸν ἀμφοῖν, τὸ δὲ τοῖς μὲν εὐπορωτέροις ἐπάναγκες ἐκκλησιάζειν εἶναι καὶ φέρειν ἄρχοντας ἢ τι ποιεῖν ἄλλο τῶν πολιτικῶν, τοὺς δ' ἀφεῖσθαι, τοῦτο δ' ὀλιγαρχικόν.

For the most part it tends to incline towards oligarchy. This appears from the regulations for the appointment of the magistrates: the compulsion put upon the richer citizens to attend the assembly and vote for magistrates or perform any other political function, while the others are allowed to do as they like, is oligarchical.

Plato's constitution, Aristotle observes, inclines toward oligarchy because the wealthy are compelled to attend the assembly and vote (*ekklesiaizein, pherein archontas*) while the rest may abstain, so that the *plethos* receives nominal inclusion without effective participation. Most *archai* are chosen from the highest property classes; deliberative and electoral mechanisms remain under elite control. The mass of citizens is barred from meaningful *koinōnein*, its status reduced to a legal fiction: citizens in name, but without agency or responsibility. Those who abstain become *archomenoi* de facto, permanently ruled even if nominally enfranchised. This pattern exhibits the same conceptual form as the analysis of the *archomenos* in Book 1: the condition is incompatible with genuine membership in the *koinōnia politikē* (above §2). When Plato claims in *Republic* 8 (551d) that oligarchy constitutes “not one but two cities”, Aristotle's refutation is pointed. In *Politics* 5, he declares the claim “absurd” (*atopon*): “For what has happened to this state rather than to the Spartan or any other where all do not own an equal amount of wealth?” (5.12.1316b 6-9). The *polis* remains one because citizenship transcends economic differentiation: citizens may differ in wealth while sharing equally in sovereign functions. For Aristotle, there are not two ways of being a citizen. Phaleas of Chalcedon fails for analogous reasons. The first to introduce equality of possessions (2.7.1266a 40-41), Phaleas concerns himself with property, not sovereign functions. Aristotle observes that equality in goods does not prevent sedition (2.7.1267a 39-40); discord arises from inequality of honours no less than of wealth. Large portions of the citizenry “remain subordinate and suffer abuses” (2.7.1267b 5-9). Decisive is the failure to integrate artisans

as full members of the citizen body.³⁸ What defines belonging is not material condition but political sharing. Constitutional arrangements that neglect access to *archai kyriotatai* cannot produce genuine *koinonia*.

The failure to establish political spaces of equality underpins Aristotle's analysis of Hippodamus of Miletus.³⁹ The case is central to understanding the contradictions that arise when those who formally belong to the community lack access to genuine political functions, when citizenship fails as a means of civic integration. Aristotle criticises Hippodamus's project for providing only apparent union of the city's parts. The error lies in how political functions are defined for each segment of the citizen body (2.8.1268a 15-17). Artisans, farmers, and soldiers should all possess political rights in common, yet no adequate instruments are established to realise this condition. The arrangement remains formal. The system virtually ensures that artisans, dominated by other groups, will not participate in sovereign offices (2.8.1268a 24: τὰς κυριωτάτας ἀρχάς). The institutional contradiction is striking: all groups are nominally included, yet the regime lacks mechanisms enabling political agency (2.8.1268a 14-29).

οἱ τε γὰρ τεχνῖται καὶ οἱ γεωργοὶ καὶ οἱ τὰ ὅπλα ἔχοντες κοινωνοῦσι τῆς πολιτείας πάντες, οἱ μὲν γεωργοὶ οὐκ ἔχοντες ὅπλα, οἱ δὲ τεχνῖται οὔτε γῆν οὔτε ὅπλα, ὥστε γίνονται σχεδὸν δοῦλοι τῶν τὰ ὅπλα κεκτημένων. μετέχειν μὲν οὖν πασῶν τῶν τιμῶν ἀδύνατον (ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἐκ τῶν τὰ ὅπλα ἐχόντων καθίστασθαι καὶ στρατηγοὺς καὶ πολιτοφύλακας καὶ τὰς κυριωτάτας ἀρχάς ὥς εἰπεῖν)· μὴ μετέχοντας δὲ τῆς πολιτείας πῶς οἶόν τε φιλικῶς ἔχειν πρὸς τὴν πολιτείαν;

The artisans, the farmers and the military class all participate in the government, though the farmers have not got arms and the artisans neither arms nor land, which makes them almost the slaves of those who possess the arms. Therefore for them to share in all the offices is impossible (for it is inevitable that both military commanders and civic guards and in general the most important offices should be appointed from those that have the arms); but if they do not share in the government, how is it possible for them to be friendly towards the constitution?

The “most important offices” (*archai kyriotatai*) are reserved exclusively for the soldiers, relegating artisans and farmers to de facto non-citizenship.⁴⁰ Artisans,

38 Newman 1887, 283-95; Bertelli 1977, 53-57; 1982, 529-32; 2017, 50-53; Schütrumpf 1991a, 253-56; Saunders 1995, 137-40; Pezzoli, Curnis 2012, 261-75.

39 Bertelli 1977, 59-60; 1982, 507-20; 2017, 50-53; Schütrumpf 1991a, 266-68; Saunders 1995, 140-48; Pezzoli, Curnis 2012, 285-89; Santucci 2014, 117ff.; Gastaldi 2018, 71. n. 27; Ferrucci 2017, 47-51.

40 Rhodes (2009, 61): Aristotle first objects to including farmers and craftsmen as citizens, then distinguishes farmers who maintain soldiers from those farming for private benefit—the latter being residents but not members of the community. Pezzoli (Pezzoli, Curnis 2012, 286-89) emphasises that no political *koinonia* exists in Hippodamus' city. Ferrucci (2017, 49)

who lack arms and land, and farmers, who lack arms, remain materially dependent on the military class; *technitai* and *geōrgoi* become “almost slaves” (*schedon douloi*) of those who possess weapons (Guéguén 2019, 380–382). Deprived of access to sovereign institutions, these classes develop no political attachment, and the *polis* cannot achieve unity. The *schedon douloi* occupy a position analogous to those merely ruled in the household, a status incompatible with political community (above §2). The passage marks the first explicit occurrence of the expression *archai kyriotatai* in the *Politics*, preceding its systematic deployment in Books 3, 5, and 6. The terminology is Aristotle’s own, not Hippodamus’s, as the parenthetical *hōs eipein* (so to speak) indicates. This warrants attention. What are these *archai kyriotatai*? Examination of the text reveals that the expression generally designates collective functions: deliberation (*to bouleuesthai*), judgment (*to krinein* / *to dikazein*), and election of magistrates and official audits.⁴¹ These correspond to the core functions of the citizen defined in Book 3 (3.1.1275a 22–33), where citizenship is rooted in sharing in *krisis* and *archē*, the prerogative of *tous kyriotatous*: those who hold the most authoritative power (below §4.1).

Aristotle exposes the tension between Hippodamus’s professed aim of including all citizens in the political community and the exclusion his constitution actually imposes. The question is pointed: “How can those who do not share in the politeia feel political affection for it?” (μη μετέχοντας δὲ τῆς πολιτείας πῶς οἷόν τε φιλικῶς ἔχειν πρὸς τὴν πολιτείαν;). He presses further: “These groups, granted the power to elect the archontes, why should they desire to participate in the politeia when all sovereign offices remain in the hands of the soldier class?”. The nominal power to elect rulers does not compensate for exclusion from sovereign authority.⁴² The central point is not whether the *technitai* qualify as *meros poleōs* with full right of citizenship, but the absence of adequate measures for realising effective *koinōnia*. It is a decisive failure that Hippodamus, while formally extending to all citizens the possibility of political participation, provides no means for its realisation (Rhodes 2009, 61). Aristotle emphasises the intrinsic instability of this constitution: exclusion from sovereign functions undermines *koinōnia*, destroying the constitutional loyalty on which the regime depends. The critique exposes a constitutive contradiction: while proclaiming universal citizenship through sharing (*koinōnein*), Hippodamus’s framework denies institutional access to the offices that define citizenship in substance. Such access must be institutionalised as substantive political capacity, not reduced to nominal inclusion. The critique establishes a principle operative throughout the

differs: Hippodamus advances beyond Solon by admitting artisans without land as full citizens, severing citizenship from property and military function. At Athens the *thētes* faced formal limitations under Solonian legislation; Hippodamus’ constitution exhibits no such restrictions.

41 See Woods 2017 for a survey and analysis of the occurrences.

42 Ferrucci (2017, 53): access to election, and probably eligibility, for all classes indicates a democratic orientation in Hippodamus’ *politeia*.

Politics: authentic *koinonein* requires effective mechanisms for exercising sovereignty. For Aristotle, the sovereign functions constitute citizenship *haplōs*, and these are the functions Solon granted to the *thētes*. The contrast is illuminating: Hippodamus’s framework, like Plato’s *Laws*, fails to create institutional spaces where all citizens can exercise sovereignty. Solon’s *politeia* succeeds where these models fail (Lockwood 2006, 211-212).

3.3 The paradigm of Solon

In chapter 12, Aristotle evaluates Solon’s *politeia* as an example of effective political and legislative practice for realising *koinōnia*. The problems addressed are directly relevant to Book 2’s concerns and consonant with its structure. The inclusion of the *thētes* through popular courts exemplifies an institutional measure establishing political equilibrium without the defects of other models. Solon, a wise legislator, achieved a synthesis of regimes, counteracting oligarchic tendencies. He eliminated the “untampered” character of the preceding oligarchy and ended the enslavement of the *dēmos*. The reforms established the earliest Athenian democracy. The instrument was optimal combination of institutional components distinctive of different regimes (1273b 35-1274a 3).

Σόλωνα δ’ ἔνιοι μὲν οἴονται νομοθέτην γενέσθαι σπουδαῖον· ὀλιγαρχίαν τε γὰρ καταλῦσαι λίαν ἄκρατον οὔσαν, καὶ δουλεύοντα τὸν δῆμον παῦσαι, καὶ δημοκρατίαν καταστήσαι τὴν πάτριον, μείζαντα καλῶς τὴν πολιτείαν· εἶναι γὰρ τὴν μὲν ἐν Ἀρείῳ πάγῳ βουλὴν ὀλιγαρχικόν, τὸ δὲ τὰς ἀρχὰς αἰρετάς ἀριστοκρατικόν, τὰ δὲ δικαστήρια δημοτικόν.

Solon is considered by some to have been a good lawgiver, as having put an end to oligarchy when it was too unqualified and having liberated the people from slavery and restored the ancestral democracy with a skilful blending of the constitution—the Council on the Areopagus being an oligarchic element, the elective magistracies aristocratic and the law-courts democratic.

The passage is central. Solon’s solution incorporates the *thētes* into the political community through popular courts. The Council of the Areopagus and elective offices constitute oligarchic and aristocratic components; the popular courts are democratic (*ta de dikastēria demotikon*). Solon permits all citizens, including the *thētes*, to access the courts, recognising the sovereignty of the *dēmos*: in its entirety, the citizen body is *kyrios* of the *politeia*. The decisive innovation was institutional: Solon “founded the ancestral democracy by constituting the jury-courts from all the citizens” (*ta dikastēria poiesas ek pantōn*, 1274a 3).⁴³ Solon granted the *dēmos* more than this (1274a 15-18):

ἐπεὶ Σόλων γε ἔοικε τὴν ἀναγκαιοτάτην ἀποδιδόναι τῷ δήμῳ δύναμιν, τὸ τὰς

43 On Solon’s judicial reform in Aristotle’s account: Poddighe 2014, 171-209. On its importance in Athenian democratic culture: Laddo 2018b.

ἀρχὰς αἰρεῖσθαι καὶ εὐθύνειν (μηδὲ γὰρ τούτου κύριος ὢν ὁ δῆμος δοῦλος ἂν εἴη καὶ πολέμιος).

Solon appears to bestow the most necessary power upon the people: the function of electing the magistrates and of calling them to account (for if even this were not under the control of the populace it would be a mere slave and a foreign enemy).

The “most necessary power” (*anankaïotatē dynamis*) is indeed the essential one. To the *thētes* as part of the *dēmos*, Solon grants an indispensable prerogative: election of magistrates and their oversight. Without control over election and audit, the *dēmos* would be a “slave” (*doulos*), precisely the condition of *archomenoi* whom genuine *koinōnia* excludes (above §2). The language anticipates 3.5’s assertion that whoever lacks *timai* is “like a *metoikos*”, residing in the city without access to political functions (below §4.2). Lockwood (2006, 211) observes that Solon’s constitution exemplifies the principle that *politeia* suits a people capable of “ruling and being ruled under law” (below §4.3). Aristotle’s achievement, in this reading, is “to find a way to combine the egalitarian notion of random rotation of office with the aristocratic notion of justifying a claim to rule on the basis of ability”. The mechanism of election and audit “allows the citizen body to share in ruling without exercising mob rule such as that found in democracy where the people rather than the law rule”. Solon’s reform thus “shows how *politeia* is a regime in which political justice mixes elements of ruling (having a say in who runs the government) and being ruled (since one is nonetheless subject to the law and to the decisions of one’s officials)” (Lockwood 2025). In Book 2, Aristotle introduces the Athenian *thētes* for the first time: the lowest of the four census classes (*to thētikon*) into which Athenian society was divided (1274a 21). He does not dwell on their socioeconomic condition, the historical origins of their poverty (treated in the *Athēnaion Politeia*), or their material dependence. At the heart of the analysis lies the *politeia* through which Solon fully integrated the *thētes* into the political community, achieving civic unity. The dominant theme is the extension of fundamental political rights to the poorest. The *thētes* were excluded from individual magistracies (*Ath. Pol.* 7.3; *Pol.* 1274a 20–21) but possessed full access to *archai kyriotatai*: sovereign functions exercised collectively through assembly and courts. Through these offices, they became sovereign participants rather than subjects (Lane 2013; Raaflaub 2017; Lockwood, forthcoming). Solon’s reforms demonstrate the point: by extending *keris* to the poorest citizens, he achieved genuine *koinōnia*. His *politeia* constitutes Book 2’s conclusive case study. Book 2 does not mention participation of *thētes* in the popular assembly; this appears in Book 3 (below §4.1), where extension of deliberation to the *plēthos* is central. The model is once more Solon’s constitution. The *thētes* exercise sovereign functions: the right to deliberate and judge in assembly and

courts. The coincidence with the definition of citizen *haplōs* deserves emphasis (below §4.1). A thesis frequently maintained holds that the *thētes*, because excluded from individual magistracies, possessed “incomplete” or “halved” citizenship. Against this interpretation, the present inquiry argues that Aristotle’s reflection on the *thētes* in Solonian Athens delineates a *politeia* achieving genuine *koinōnia* by extending *archai kyriōtatai* to all citizens. This explains why Aristotle evaluates Solon positively against arrangements admitting citizenship in name only. The status of the *thētes* is conceptually compatible with 3.1 and 3.11 (§4.1). In sum, Book 2 establishes that *koinōnein* requires institutional means for exercising sovereignty. The Aristotelian *koinōnia* incorporates differences within reciprocal equality: different persons held together through reciprocal relations, not enforced homogeneity. Members must deliberate on the attribution of honours, achieve consent (*homologeîn*), exercise powers of decision and vote. The principle of Book 1—no belonging without access to *archein*—remains operative throughout Book 2’s analysis of constitutional models.

4. Book 3: The definition of the citizen and the rejection of graded citizenship

4.1. The definition of the citizen *haplōs*

Book 3 addresses citizenship through three interconnected problems: who should be called a citizen and who is one; which political body assumes responsibility for political acts; and whether the multitude should exercise sovereignty in deliberation, a theme Aristotle explores in light of Solon’s decision to extend fundamental political rights (*timai*) to the *thētes*. The second problem I have addressed elsewhere.⁴⁴ The present analysis concentrates on the first and third, demonstrating the compatibility between the definition of 3.1, the analysis of political rule in Book 2 (§2), and the principle of reciprocal equality examined in Book 2 (§3).

3.1 opens with the definitional question. The methodological framework is that of Book 1: all things are defined by their function; lacking the same function, they merely share a name (1.2.1253a 23–25). The definition must identify the distinctive *ergon* of whoever possesses the *dynamis* to participate in the *polis* as one of its constituent parts.⁴⁵ Book 1 concluded that *koinōnein*, political belonging, means sharing in *archein*. The implication for citizenship is immediate: “the citizen *haplōs* is defined by nothing other than sharing in judgment (*krisis*) and office (*archê*)” (1275a 22–23). Participation in *krisis* extends beyond judging to include scrutiny (*euthynai*) of magistrates’ conduct. Participation in *archê* is

44 Poddighe 2024a; 2025.

45 On the methodological requirement that political inquiry proceed from particulars to universals (1274b 38–41) as applied to the citizen: Natali 2020, 339, 355, 362; Poddighe 2025, 47ff.

bound to activities within decisional bodies charged with deliberating, judging, and issuing commands. The emphasis falls on offices held without temporal limitation: assembly and courts. The citizen is whoever possesses the capacity to share in *archē bouleutikē* and *archē kritikē*, the functions defining sovereign authority within the *koinōnia politikē*.⁴⁶ As Faraguna (2025a, 218) rightly observes, political participation is characterised not through the exercise of magistracies but through deliberative and judicial functions; the magistracy in the strict sense remains outside the definition. This coheres with Book 1's analysis: *politikē archē* is exercised over free and equal persons who share in ruling and being ruled, distinguished from despotic rule by reciprocity and the collective character of its functions (above §2).

The force of *haplōs* warrants attention. On the reading defended here, the term qualifies the definition as complete and universally valid; it does not designate a category of citizens “in the full sense” as distinguished from lesser grades. The point is methodological: Aristotle seeks a definition identifying what it is to be a citizen without remainder, the condition obtaining wherever the name applies with propriety.⁴⁷ As he observes, “the citizen so defined is above all the citizen who fits all those called citizens” (1275a 33-34: ὁ μὲν οὖν μάλιστα ἂν ἐφαρμόσας πολίτης ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς λεγομένους πολίτας σχεδὸν τοιοῦτός ἐστι). The formulation proves central: the definition provides a unified answer to the question “who should be called a citizen and who is one?”. The *legein* and the *einai*, being called citizen and being citizen, correspond. The definition *haplōs* thus represents not a privileged species within the genus “citizen” but the genus itself, specified according to its essential function.

Subsequent refinements confirm the definition's universal scope. The formulation—participation in assembly and courts without temporal limitation—fits democracy “above all” (*malista*); in other constitutions the relevant functions may be exercised by determinate bodies or for fixed terms (1275b 13-17). Sparta divides jurisdiction over contracts among ephors, homicide cases among the *gerontes*; Carthage assigns all causes to specific magistracies. The sovereign functions are the same; the institutions realising them vary. Hence the concept of *exousia*, the capacity to exercise the relevant functions: “whoever has the faculty to share in deliberative or judicial office” is a citizen (1275b 18-19: ὃ γὰρ ἐξουσία κοινωνεῖν ἀρχῆς βουλευτικῆς ἢ κριτικῆς). Citizenship requires the capacity to exercise power, not its actual exercise. The shift from organs (assembly, courts) to functions (deliberation, judgment) secures a principle valid across constitutions. The definition retains its essential content across constitutional forms: citizenship is the *exousia* to exercise the *archai kyriōtatai*.⁴⁸

46 On this point see Poddighe 2025, 60-77.

47 On the methodological significance of *haplōs* in 3.1: Poddighe 2025, 61ff., 69ff.

48 On the shift from institutional organs to functions: Mulgan 1977, 55; Johnson 1984, 89; Simpson 1998, 135-36; Bertelli 2018b, 131; Poddighe 2025, 72-74.

This connects 3.1 with 3.11. In 3.1, those exercising sovereign office are defined as *kyriotatous*, “holding the greatest power” (1275a 28). In 3.11, the same principle emerges from the Solonian model: “sovereignty in the most important matters belongs to the multitude” (1282a 38-39). Schofield (2011, 289) rightly identifies 3.1’s valorisation of collective offices without temporal limitation as the starting-point for Book 3’s theoretical discussion. The coherence is evident: the definition of citizenship through deliberation and judgment finds confirmation in the analysis of sovereign functions. What qualifies the citizen is not tenure of individual offices but the capacity to share in collective bodies where political responsibility is exercised.⁴⁹

The correspondence between this definition and the citizenship extended to the *thētes* under Solon has not escaped notice. Newman (1902, 140) observes that “a man may be a full citizen without access to αἱ ἀρχαί strictly so called”; Mayhew (2013, 532) clarifies that “holding office includes serving on a jury and going to the assembly”. The *thētes*, though barred from higher offices, exercised *krisis* and collective *archē* through voting in assembly and courts, thus satisfying Aristotle’s criterion for citizenship *haplōs*. The correspondence is complete. The functions exercised in fourth-century assembly and courts were not identical to those of sixth-century Athens; yet Aristotle explicitly states that election and scrutiny of magistrates belonged to the functions Solon extended to the *thētes*, and in them resided sovereign prerogative (*Ath. Pol.* 43).

The extension of sovereign functions to the *thētes* instantiates the principle of reciprocal equality that Aristotle identifies as the bond of the *koinōnia politikē*, confirming the analysis of Book 2.2 (above §§3.1, 3.3). The definition of citizenship in 3.1 is thus universally valid, qualified by the condition that whoever is *archomenos* is also *archōn*; the collective *archai* to which the *thētes* have access are the most sovereign. The notion of *archein kai archesthai* as the condition proper to the citizen—a “deliberating equal” and a voter—acquires full significance in this context. The principle distinguishes political rule from rule over those who are merely *archomenoi*: slave, woman, child in the *oikos* (§2). In defining what qualifies the citizen as the minimal unit of the *polis*, Aristotle emphasises the priority of collective over individual *archai*.

Collective *archai* identify citizenship in ordinary understanding (*koinē*).⁵⁰ Hence the distinction of individual *archai* as “highest”, “high”, or “the other offices”: these do not qualify citizenship as such.⁵¹

3.11 clarifies how judges and assemblymen qualify as magistrates. The title belongs not to the individual judge, councillor, or assemblyman, but to the

49 Ober 2009, 574: participation need not mean holding office at any particular time. Mayhew 2013, 532.

50 Woods 2014, 433; Poddighe 2024a, 146ff.

51 *Arist. Pol.* 3.11.1281b 24-34, 1282a 41; cf. *Ath. Pol.* 7.3 (τὰς μὲν ἄλλας ἀρχάς); Rhodes 1981, 138-39; Poddighe 2024a, 146ff.

court, council, and people as collective bodies; each individual is a member of these bodies. Sovereignty in the most important matters thus belongs to the multitude (1282a 34–39). The context bears emphasis: 3.11 addresses whether it is just for political sovereignty to belong to the multitude, and answers affirmatively. Solon’s decision to extend sovereign functions to the poorest, calling them to share in collective responsibility, is recalled as paradigmatic.⁵² Collective offices receive greater weight because their functions are sovereign, and this is as it should be.

The definition of the citizen thus bears directly on the question of political sovereignty: who holds supreme power in the *polis*. At 1275a 28 the multitude exercising *archē* is accordingly described as *kyriotatous*, those holding the greatest power. The emphasis falls on collective decision-making organs as political spaces where actions (*praxeis*) are initiated and validated, where citizens learn through practice what it means to rule and be ruled. The formula *archein kai archesthai* extends beyond its literal sense: it describes one who advises and is advised, who stands at both origin and end of political initiative.⁵³ What is at stake is not merely the capacity to assume different political functions, individual and collective, but the more fluid condition citizens experience in the popular assembly, where roles interchange within a single session: speaker becoming listener, listener becoming speaker. Civic virtue finds expression in collective decisional organs where this exchange occurs.⁵⁴ The citizen’s condition is defined by participation: listening, voting, scrutinising magistrates. Through *archein* and *archesthai* political responsibility is assumed. In assembly and courts *archein* is exercised; individual magistracies are not required. 3.1 and 3.11 are explicit: these collective functions are *archai*. The terminology of 3.10 and 3.11 confirms this analysis. The prerogatives of the poorest citizens are designated *timai*—honours, prerogatives—and their deprivation *atimia*. Those lacking wealth and virtue resemble *atimoi* when denied *timai* (1281a 28ff.); “if the same persons are always in office, the rest must necessarily be excluded from *timai*”

52 Arist. *Pol.* 3.11.1281b 24–38. Raaffaub 2017; Poddighe 2024a. The exclusion of *thētes* and *banansoi* from the best city and ideal *politeia* (Frede 2005; Samaras 2015) throws into relief Aristotle’s quite different approach when he addresses actual regimes. Stabilizing real *politeiai* is another matter. The fundamental requirement of political unity demands that the poor, who are many, not be *atimoi*. This may explain Aristotle’s different assessment of *banansoi*—often wealthy—among the citizen body (Ober 1998, 315; Nagle 2006, 120). See Poddighe forthcoming. See also Yack 1993, 77, on the distance between the positions Aristotle adopts “in his utopian speculation” and “when he discusses actual political communities”: as for poor citizens, “Aristotle would disenfranchise them in his best regime, but he does not recommend doing so in ordinary political communities” (*ibid.* p. 77).

53 Myres (1927, 80ff): the function of a citizen is “to start and be started”, *archein* expressing the exercise of initiative on the one side, the voluntary response to such initiative on the other.

54 Myres 1927, 80–97; Barker 1948, LXVII–LXVIII; Rosler 2005, 112–15; Wohl 2009, 164–166; Aubenque 2011; Schofield 2011, 288–89; Garsten 2013, 330ff.; Mayhew 2013; Rhodes 2015, 144; Cammack 2020, 514; Poddighe 2024a, 142ff.

(1281a 31-32). The *timai* in question are the sovereign, indefinite functions—*archai kyriotatai*—available to the propertyless. The group affected is the *plēthos*: “from the lowest assessments” (1282a 29), “neither wealthy nor possessing virtue” (1281b 23), “common” (1282a 25). The terminology proves significant: the *timai* traditionally denied by *atimia* are precisely the rights of *ekklesiazēin* and *dikaizēin*.⁵⁵ That *timai* designates the sovereign offices attributed to the *plēthos*, including its poorest part, refutes the thesis that the term applies only to individual *archai*. The citizen exercising these functions is a citizen without qualification; exclusion constitutes not diminished citizenship but exclusion from citizenship altogether.

4.2. Citizenship without degrees: *Politics* 3.5

As noted in §1, the theory of graded citizenship rests on a master assumption: that Aristotle distinguishes in Book 3 a citizen *haplōs* (in the full sense) from a citizen in a reduced sense. From this premise the subsidiary claims derive. Some scholars maintain that two distinct definitions of citizenship are offered, one in 3.1 based on collective functions and another in 3.5 based on individual magistracies; the formula *archein kai archesthai* is accordingly taken to distinguish citizens accessing high offices from those permanently confined to *archesthai*. The discussion of *archomenoi politai* in 3.5 is then read as theoretical legitimation of graded civic status, and the Athenian *thētes* under Solon identified as *archomenoi*, citizens of inferior status excluded from genuine rule.⁵⁶ What unites these approaches is the premise that Aristotle’s framework accommodates or requires graduated civic membership. The thesis that *archein* designates exclusively access to individual magistracies, and its corollary that the *thētes* were *archomenoi*, have been critically examined in §§2-3. What remains is the master assumption: that 3.5 offers a definition of citizenship distinct from 3.1.

This claim requires direct examination of the passage in its entirety (1278a 15-40):

ἐπεὶ γὰρ πλείους εἰσὶν αἱ πολιτεῖαι, καὶ εἶδη πολίτου ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πλείω, καὶ μάλιστα τοῦ ἀρχομένου πολίτου, ὥστ’ ἐν μὲν τινὶ πολιτείᾳ τὸν βάνανσον ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι καὶ τὸν θῆτα πολίτας, ἐν τισὶ δ’ ἀδύνατον, οἷον εἴ τις ἐστὶν ἦν καλοῦσιν ἀριστοκρατικὴν καὶ ἐν ἧ κατ’ ἀρετὴν αἱ τιμαὶ δίδονται καὶ κατ’ ἀξίαν· οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τ’ ἐπιτηδεῦσαι τὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς ζῶντα βίον βάνανσον ἢ θητικόν. ἐν δὲ ταῖς ὀλιγαρχίαις θῆτα μὲν οὐκ ἐνδέχεται εἶναι πολίτην (ἀπὸ τιμημάτων γὰρ μακρῶν αἱ μεθέξεις τῶν ἀρχῶν), βάνανσον δὲ ἐνδέχεται· πλουτοῦσι γὰρ καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν τεχνιτῶν. ἐν Θήβαις δὲ νόμος ἦν τὸν διὰ δέκα ἐτῶν μὴ ἀπεσχημένον τῆς ἀγορᾶς μὴ μετέχειν ἀρχῆς. ἐν πολλαῖς δὲ πολιτείαις προσεφέλκει τινὰς καὶ τῶν ξένων ὁ νόμος· ὁ γὰρ ἐκ πολίτιδος ἐν τισὶ δημοκρατίαις πολίτης ἐστίν, τὸν

⁵⁵ Cairns 2019, 78.

⁵⁶ These assumptions have developed within distinct scholarly traditions among historians and philosophers (above §1).

αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον ἔχει καὶ τὰ περὶ τοὺς νόθους παρὰ πολλοῖς. οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ δι' ἔνδειαν τῶν γνησίων πολιτῶν ποιοῦνται πολίτας τοὺς τοιούτους (διὰ γὰρ ὀλιγανθρωπίαν οὕτω χρῶνται τοῖς νόμοις), εὐποροῦντες δὴ ὄχλου κατὰ μικρὸν παραιροῦνται τοὺς ἐκ δούλου πρῶτον ἢ δούλης, εἴτα τοὺς ἀπὸ γυναικῶν, τέλος δὲ μόνον τοὺς ἐξ ἀμφοῖν ἀστῶν πολίτας ποιοῦσιν. ὅτι μὲν οὖν εἶδη πλείω πολίτου, φανερόν ἐκ τούτων, καὶ ὅτι λέγεται μάλιστα πολίτης ὁ μετέχων τῶν τιμῶν, ὥσπερ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἐποίησεν ὡς εἴ τιν' ἀτίμητον μετανάστην ὥσπερ μέτοικος γάρ ἐστιν ὁ τῶν τιμῶν μὴ μετέχων. ἀλλ' ἐστὶν ὅπου τὸ τοιοῦτον ἐπικεκρυμμένον ἐστίν, ἀπάτης χάριν τῶν συνοικούντων ἐστίν.

As there are several forms of constitution, it follows that there are several kinds of citizen, and especially of the citizen in a subject position; hence under one form of constitution citizenship will necessarily extend to the artisan and the hired labourer, while under other forms this is impossible, for instance in any constitution that is of the form entitled aristocratic and in which [20] the honours are bestowed according to goodness and to merit, since a person living a life of manual toil or as a hired labourer cannot practise the pursuits in which goodness is exercised. In oligarchies on the other hand, though it is impossible for a hired labourer to be a citizen (since admission to office of various grades is based on high property-assessments), it is possible for an artisan; for even the general mass of the craftsmen are rich. At Thebes there was a law that no one who had not kept out of trade for the last ten years might be admitted to office. But under many constitutions the law draws recruits even from foreigners; for in some democracies the son of a citizen-mother is a citizen, and the same rule holds good as to base-born sons in many places. Nevertheless, inasmuch as such persons are adopted as citizens owing to a lack of citizens of legitimate birth (for legislation of this kind is resorted to because of under-population), when a state becomes well off for numbers it gradually divests itself first of the sons of a slave father or mother, then of those whose mothers only were citizens, and finally only allows citizenship to the children of citizens on both sides. These facts then show that there are various kinds of citizen, and that a citizen in the fullest sense means the man who shares in the honours of the state, as is implied in the verse of Homer "Like to some alien settler without honour", since a native not admitted to a share in the public honours is like an alien domiciled in the land. But in some places this exclusion is disguised, for the purpose of deceiving those who are a part of the population.

The analysis will focus first on the concluding definition, then turn to the passage as a whole. The conclusion reads:

ὅτι μὲν οὖν εἶδη πλείω πολίτου, φανερόν ἐκ τούτων, καὶ ὅτι λέγεται μάλιστα πολίτης ὁ μετέχων τῶν τιμῶν, ὥσπερ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἐποίησεν · «ὡς εἴ τιν' ἀτίμητον μετανάστην» · ὥσπερ μέτοικος γάρ ἐστιν ὁ τῶν τιμῶν μὴ μετέχων (1278a 35-38).

It is clear from these considerations that there are several kinds of citizen, and that he is most fully a citizen who shares in the honours, as Homer wrote: “like some dishonoured stranger”; for he who does not share in the honours is like a resident alien.

A persistent line of interpretation has sought to identify here an alternative definition introducing a graded conception. The passage asserts that “he is *malista* a citizen who shares in the *timai*” and that “whoever does not share in the *timai* is like a resident alien” (ὥσπερ μέτοικος γάρ ἐστιν ὁ τῶν τιμῶν μὴ μετέχων, 1278a 37). On a widespread scholarly reading, the *timai* here denote individual magistracies, and *malista* identifies a superior grade of citizen by contrast with those exercising only collective functions.⁵⁷ This interpretation, however attractive to proponents of graded citizenship, proves untenable upon examination. The first difficulty is logical. This reading entails that Aristotle failed to notice a glaring contradiction in the course of his discussion. To maintain that only one who exercises individual magistracies can truly be called a citizen means denying the definition of 3.1, which does not identify such magistracies as criteria qualifying the *haplōs* condition. Although Aristotle proceeds through corrections and refinements, it is difficult to believe he could have committed such an error: ignoring his characterisation of political participation as sharing in deliberative and judicial functions (formulated in chapter 1 and reaffirmed through chapter 11), while offering in chapter 5 a different definition qualifying the citizen as individual magistrate. A second difficulty is grammatical. Just as *haplōs* qualifies the definition rather than the species of citizen (§4.1), so *malista* indicates the degree to which a formulation captures what citizenship essentially involves. The adverb modifies the predicate, not the subject: to say that someone is *malista* a citizen is to say that the definition applies to him par excellence, not that he occupies a higher rank within a differentiated citizenry. Reading *malista* as qualifying a form of citizenship different from that defined *haplōs* leaves unexplained why one lacking access to *timai* (understood as individual magistracies) should be “like a *metoikos*”. A third difficulty concerns the *timai* themselves. No compelling grounds exist for restricting the term to individual magistracies. In 3.5 *timai* denotes prerogatives comprehensively qualifying the status of citizen, distinguishing him from non-citizens. Cairns (2019, 78) rightly observes that attention is directed to the complex of prerogatives distinguishing citizens from those excluded from sovereign functions; Simpson (1998, 147) clarifies that *timai* may include both fixed-term magistracies and collective functions.⁵⁸ The decisive refutation comes from 3.10-11, where *timai* is explicitly

57 Schütrumpf 1991b, 442 (cf. 393, 438); Lévy 1980, 239; Robinson 1995, 18; Nagle 2006, 120-21; Duploux 2011, 90-91; Accattino, Curnis 2013, 166-69; Samaras 2015, 132, 141 n. 11; Faraguna 2025a, 216. *Contr.* Whitehead 1991, 139-40; Simpson 1998, 147; Cairns 2019, 78.

58 Nothing in the text demands the narrower reading.

applied to the sovereign prerogatives of the propertyless, those “from the lowest assessments” possessing only the right to deliberate and judge. If *timai* designated exclusively higher magistracies, the warning that the poor risk *atimia* through exclusion from deliberative and judicial functions would be incoherent.⁵⁹ Newman (1902, 140) is right: “a man may be a full citizen without access to αἱ ἀρχαί strictly so called”. A final difficulty is contextual. 3.5 considers the condition of those lacking capacity to exercise sovereign functions: the *archomenoi*. They are the exact reverse of citizens *haplōs*: excluded from the *koinōnia politikē*, barred from sovereign political functions, assimilable to *metoikoi*. Regimes that formally include such individuals among citizens without recognising political rights are condemned. The expected comparison is between those who cannot exercise sovereign functions (not definable *haplōs* as citizens) and those who exercise them (definable as citizens in the full sense). Introducing a third model—citizenship corresponding only to holders of magistracies in the strict sense—would be incoherent. Such offices are not the object of particular interest throughout the discussion and do not qualify *haplōs* the condition of citizen. The contextual argument requires closer examination of what 3.5 intends to clarify. The distinction between citizens and *archomenoi* confirms the analysis of Book 1: the *archomenos* in the political community occupies a position analogous to those merely ruled in the *oikos* (slave, woman, child) and is excluded from the reciprocity defining political rule (§2). The purpose is explicit: to recognise the diversity of conditions among *archomenoi*. While the definition of citizen displays relative uniformity across regimes—the qualifying functions being relatively comparable across constitutional forms (above §4.1)—the condition of the *archomenoi* varies far more dramatically; hence the emphatic *malista* (1278a 16-17), which refers to the condition of those ruled. The survey of *archomenoi* serves not to theorise grades of citizenship but to expose the diversity of exclusion criteria across non-democratic regimes. Attention naturally falls on the *thētes* and *banausoi* because their condition in non-democratic regimes reveals the criterion of exclusion operative in each constitution. The structure of the passage is systematic: in aristocracies exclusion operates through virtue, since those living a banausic or thetic life cannot practise the pursuits in which goodness is exercised; in oligarchies through wealth, since participation in offices requires high property-assessments (though the *banausos* may qualify if wealthy); at Thebes through occupation, since a law barred from office anyone who had not abstained from trade for ten years. Each constitutional form applies a distinct principle determining who stands outside the political community.

The *archomenoi* emerge from this analysis with three defining characteristics: exclusion from the political community; exclusion from *archē*; conceptual assimilation to non-citizens. As Gallo (2004) demonstrates, they possess no political

59 Poddighe 2025, 65-66.

capacity: barred from the *ekklesia*, excluded from courts, denied any share in sovereign functions. This is not diminished citizenship; it is the absence of citizenship. When such individuals are called “citizens”, the practice is condemned as deliberate deception (*apate*), falsification designed to pacify the disenfranchised (1278a 38-40: “when they seek to conceal this exclusion from honours, it is for the purpose of deceiving the inhabitants”). They are never qualified as citizens of inferior grade. The *politēs* must be able to be *kyrios* of common affairs (1278b 3-4); rights falling short of this are not political rights. What lies outside *politeia* and *politeuma* holds little political relevance; the *polis* coincides with its *politeia*. The distinction between being called a citizen and being one *haplōs* proves decisive. When the citizen who is *archōn* and *archomenos* is said to differ in each constitution, the implication is that whoever is only *archomenos*, without reciprocal capacity to *archein* through sovereign functions, is not a citizen at all.

A crucial asymmetry structures the analysis of constitutional forms. In democracy, manual labourers and the poor (*banausoi* and *thētes*) are fully integrated as citizens, enjoying participation in *archai* (collective and fixed-term) and embodying the principle of widespread inclusion; the *archomenos* condition, where it occurs, is temporary and fluid. In aristocracy, exclusion is definitive: political agency is reserved for those endowed with *aretē*, and the *banausoi* and *thētes* are not citizens at all. Oligarchy presents a more stratified case. Where the criterion is census alone, the situation may change as requirements are met.⁶⁰ The case of Larissa is instructive: when participation is extended to those previously excluded, the expression is “to give the *politeia*” (*didonai tēn politeian*), not to grant a fuller degree of citizenship already partially possessed.⁶¹ A different pattern emerges where census combines with professional qualification.

The Theban case proves particularly instructive, permitting distinction between categories of excluded: total exclusion for the *thētes*, partial for the *banausoi*. The evidence merits close examination. Thebes granted wealthy *banausoi* nominal citizenship while excluding them from *archē* (1278a 25-26). A law prevented participation in government for those who had not abandoned artisanal activity for ten years. The criterion, independent of census, highlights a distinction from citizenship *haplōs*: the *banausoi* were formally recognised as citizens yet excluded from sovereign functions. Which functions could a *banausos* still engaged in manual activity exercise? Duploux (2011) maintains he could not access the assembly; such a condition constitutes negation of citizenship—citizenship in name only, since it does not permit exercise of sovereign functions. Lupi argues that only access to fixed-term magistracies was forbidden;⁶² but had those *banausoi* been members of the assembly, Aristotle would have

60 Arist. *Pol.* 5.6.1306b 9-15; 5.8.1308a 35-b 10.

61 Arist. *Pol.* 5.6.1306a 25-30.

62 Lupi (1996, 70-71) distinguishes full-right from “imperfect citizenship”: these classes were not excluded from citizenship but denied access to magistracies.

judged them citizens. The meaning of the transformation becomes clearer in Book 6 (6.7.1321a 28–29), where the Theban case is revisited. The evolution is inclusive, not exclusive: the *banausos*, citizen by census but excluded from the *politeuma*, could demonstrate abstention from manual work for at least ten years, obtaining access to government offices previously precluded.⁶³ This interpretation coheres with the theoretical framework. The problem addressed concerns oligarchies regulating broadening of government functions to the *plēthos* without excessively altering oligarchic character. Three attested systems are examined: a double census system (low census for “necessary” offices, higher for “more important”); the Theban system adding temporal criteria to census; the Massalian system selecting the “worthy” whether inside or outside the *politeuma* (6.7.1321a 27–32). The analysis confirms the principle: oligarchies should not make sovereign offices easily accessible to the people. Those offices represent fixed-term functions internal to the *politeuma*. To avoid popular resentment, disincentivising measures must be introduced; otherwise the oligarchy transforms into democracy. It is fundamental for the oligarchy to preserve the principle that government remains in the hands of the few, maintaining the *plēthos* that accesses the *politeia* in a condition deprived of sovereign functions. When the *Politics* distinguishes between *politeia* and *politeuma* and intends to recognise as citizens even those outside the *politeuma*, it says so explicitly, distinguishing the census levels granting access to different offices. Discussing the first and most well-blended oligarchy, very close to the so-called *politeia*, Aristotle states: “In this there should be a distinction among assessments, some being lesser and others greater; on the basis of the lesser they will take part in the necessary offices; on the basis of the greater, in the more authoritative; it should be open to anyone possessing the assessment to take part in the *politeia*, bringing in through the assessment as many of the people” (6.5.1320b 21–29). The *archai kyriotatai* are restricted to highest census. Which functions qualify as such remains uncertain; Newman’s hypothesis—*kerisis* within a *boulē*—lacks empirical support. Lower-census citizens retain “necessary *archai*”; which functions these are is equally uncertain (Newman suggests magistrate election in the assembly).⁶⁴ Crucially, those without *archē* are not citizens. Admission at minimum census constitutes “entry into citizenship”. All citizens *koinōnousin* and *metechousin* by sharing *archē*, with no internal hierarchy. The language is precise: *τοσούτου εἰσαγομένου τοῦ δήμου πλήθους διὰ τοῦ τιμήματος*, “bringing in through the assessment as many of the people” (5.5.1320b 25–26). The verb *eisagō* denotes entry from outside; it is the standard term for admitting new members to a body from which they were previously excluded. Those admitted are *tous koinōnous*, “the sharers”.

63 See Moggi 2010; 2017, 58–59, who dates the provision to post-Coronea (447/6 BCE): beneficiaries were merchants and artisans admitted to the political class upon reconverting their status and “homogenising” with the oligarchs. See also De Luna *et al.* 2016, 618–19.

64 On the hypotheses concerning census-class functions, see Newman 1902, 545ff.

The language presupposes a threshold: before admission one stands outside; after it one shares. No intermediate condition of partial sharing exists.

Which functions were reserved for those outside the *politeuma* remains unclear; whether participation in assembly and courts was among these cannot be determined with certainty. In the historical cases better known—the oligarchies established at Athens and Cyrene from 322 BCE—citizenship for those excluded from the *politeuma* certainly did not include judicial functions, in all likelihood not even the right to participate in the assembly.⁶⁵ Such a condition would constitute negation of citizenship. Citizenship without political functions is frustrated citizenship, devoid of essential content. The *archomenos* is not a citizen of lesser rights; he is not a citizen, and when defined as such, it is deception. The theoretical lesson is unambiguous: Aristotle's framework admits no graded citizenship. 3.5 surveys exclusion criteria across constitutions, not alternative definitions; absence of access to sovereign functions places the *archomenos* outside the *koinonia*, with no intermediate status. The distinction is binary: one either belongs to the *koinonia politikē* through access to sovereign functions, or stands outside entirely.

4.3 Concluding remarks: citizenship as sovereign participation

Lockwood (2006, forthcoming) has rightly observed that having a say on who rules is itself a mode of ruling. This principle operates with particular clarity in democratic regimes, where effective rotation in office, unconstrained by census, ensures that all citizens govern in turn: when not exercising a magistracy, they nonetheless govern by controlling those who do.⁶⁶ Even in conditions of perfect equality, differentiation arises between the magistrate exercising office and those scrutinising his conduct.⁶⁷ Within collective bodies citizens rotate between speaker and listener, proposer and voter, experiencing the ruling-and-being-ruled condition that distinguishes political from despotic rule (§1). These institutions cultivate political responsibility through habitual practice: listening, debating, voting, auditing.⁶⁸ The citizen emerges as “a deliberating equal among his fellow citizens”, sharing in *archē bouleutikē kai kritikē*.⁶⁹ Yet the principle extends beyond democracy to regimes that do not realise absolute equality. The *politeia*, valorised through the treatment of the Solonian model as the constitution most closely approximating the theoretical ideal, exemplifies this structure:

65 On suspension of courts at Athens: Bearzot 1985a; Poddighe 2002. Whether participation in the assembly was permitted remains debated: Simonton 2017, 130 n. 87; *contra* Gallo 2004, 218. The Cyrenaean *diagramma* (SEG 9.1) assigned judicial functions to a limited number of *politeuma* members; *dēmos* does not appear in the stele.

66 On this principle as central to Aristotle's conception of citizenship across constitutional forms, see Mayhew 2013, 534ff.

67 Cf. 1.12.1259b 7-8; 3.4.1277b 7-16; 7.14.1332b 35-41. Mayhew 2013, 534.

68 See Lane 2013; Lane 2016; Lane 2023; Poddighe 2024a; Lockwood forthcoming.

69 Ober 1993, 136; 2009, 574.

all citizens govern by controlling access to office, even when legal criteria restrict eligibility to the wealthy and virtuous. Solon's constitution, as analysed in *Politics* 2.12 (§3), achieves the unity of the political community through balanced integration of aristocratic, oligarchic, and democratic elements: aristocratic in merit-based office-holding; oligarchic in roles qualified by wealth; democratic in shared sovereignty in assembly and courts. The inclusion of the *thētes* proved decisive. Granted access to judgment (*krisis*) and deliberation (*bouleuesthai*), they were transformed from subjects into sovereign participants. The *dynamis* of citizenship was embedded within institutions where sovereign functions became concrete rights.

The passage at *Pol.* 3.17.1288a 12-15 proves instructive. The *plēthos* of the *politeia* is characterised as capable of ruling and being ruled under a law that distributes offices to the wealthy in accordance with merit (πλήθος πολιτικὸν δυνάμενον ἄρχεσθαι καὶ ἄρχειν κατὰ νόμον τὸν κατ'ἄξίαν διανέμοντα τοῖς εὐπόροις τὰς ἀρχάς). The passage has generated interpretive difficulty, but Simpson (1998, 191) cuts through it: "here it is significant that ruling and being ruled are shared (some ruling in the offices, some ruling through membership in the assembly)".⁷⁰ Not all members of a *politeia* are wealthy and virtuous: the wealthy constitute a subset of the citizen body, not its totality.⁷¹ Were it otherwise, all hoplites would be rich—which manifestly they are not. Ruling in this context encompasses judging, voting, and deliberating in assembly. The *plēthos* exercises *archein kai archesthai* through collective functions while census-restricted magistracies remain the preserve of the propertied. The citizens who deliberate and judge are *archontes* through proposing, voting, and deciding; they are *archomenoi* through accepting procedural constraints and majority outcomes. The reciprocity is complete: validation of political action through *krisis* constitutes *archein*, not merely *archesthai*.⁷² This analysis illuminates the Solonian constitution. The extension of citizenship *haplōs* to all, including the poorest, emerges as a model endorsed because it distributes significant *timai* to all who bear the name of citizen. These *timai* are not ceremonial honours but responsibilities: participation in political decisions through assembly and courts. Solonian

70 Newman (1902, 305) observes that the law in the *politeia* gives office to the well-to-do, and asks whether *kata axian* implies that offices will be elective; Robinson (1995, 65) concurs. Schütrumpf (1991b, 455) notes that rotation between ruling and being ruled occurs here through the fact that all equals have the right to participate in government. Accattino (Accattino, Curnis 2013, 237) confirms that the *politeia* is here presented as the regime in which the distribution of power occurs through the alternation of the multitude in the roles of ruler and ruled.

71 Elsewhere Aristotle describes this regime as a mixture of the wealthy and the poor (*Pol.* 4.8.1293b 33-34; 4.9.1294a 16-17); see Giorgini 2019, 12 n. 76. See also Yack 1993, 77 "Within ordinary conditions the best regime available is a mixed regime in which the poor participate to some extent (*Pol.* book 4)".

72 Lane 2013; 2016; 2023; Poddighe 2024a; Lockwood forthcoming.

citizenship instantiates the principle of reciprocal equality (*ison antipeonthos*): whoever belongs to the political community cannot be merely *archomenos* but must *archein kai archesthai*. The citizen, qua participant in deliberation and judgment, is always *archōn*; sharing in sovereign functions constitutes an exercise of rule, even without fixed-term magistracy. The definition of the *thētes* citizenship in 2.12 coincides with the definition of the citizen *haplōs* in 3.1—a correspondence duly emphasised from Newman (1892) to Bertelli (2018b, 130 n. 13).⁷³

What Aristotle affirms at *Pol.* 3.9.1280b 40–1281a 8 deserves attention in this connection. Discussing justice as proportional equality, Aristotle affirms that the political community exists for the sake of noble actions, not merely for living together; consequently, those who contribute most possess a greater share in the *polis* (διόπερ ὅσοι συμβάλλονται πλείστον εἰς τὴν τοιαύτην κοινωνίαν, τούτοις τῆς πόλεως μέτεστι πλείον). Joyce (2023b) has rightly identified this as central to the reflection on citizenship. The principle, however, should not be construed as aristocratic in orientation. Proportional equality relative to contribution represents the standard criterion for justice as reciprocity—a principle valid across constitutional types.⁷⁴ What varies across regimes is the measure of merit; what remains constant is that differential recognition of contribution does not create differential grades of citizenship. If greater contribution merits greater honour, and political participation is the highest honour, does citizenship admit of degrees? Aristotle's answer distinguishes the measure of participation from the recognition of merit. One is a citizen equally with all others; access to *timai*, honours rewarding differential contribution, is differentiated.⁷⁵ The principle is proportional equality: equal standing as citizens, graduated recognition of merit within shared citizenship. Citizenship consists not in receiving equal honours but in participating equally in the processes as-signing them—the *krisis tou dikaion*. This participation admits no graduation: one exercises judgment in assembly and courts, or one does not. The content of judgment may recognise differential merit; the act of judging is exercised equally by all citizens. This interpretation illuminates the position at *Pol.* 3.13, which continues directly from the discussion of Solon's constitution at 3.11.⁷⁶ When those who claim to be *mallon politai* on grounds of nobility or virtue are censured (1283a 34–35; 1283b 25–42), the meaning is clear: such claims possess relative validity only within contexts where the relevant principle is accepted

73 Gastaldi 2018, 71.

74 Accattino, Curnis (2013, 191): Aristotle formulates a general principle applicable across constitutional forms, on which oligarchs and democrats alike can agree. Farenga (2015) and Mosconi (2021): the criterion operates as a trans-constitutional norm directed toward the common good.

75 Athenian democracy claims *isonomia* and *isegoria*, not *isotimia*. The term is notably absent from Athenian democratic rhetoric and ideology.

76 Accattino, Curnis 2013, 210.

and faces no competing claims. They cease to hold absolutely when confronted with competing claims—wealth against virtue, arithmetic equality against both. The concern is practical: how to accommodate rival claims within a single city. There cannot be two cities within one, as the critique of Platonic oligarchies has shown (cf. §3.2). The solution lies in political rule, whereby all must share the condition of ruling and being ruled. This condition is understood *koinēi*—in common—as the condition proper to the citizen.⁷⁷ The criterion connecting correct (*orthon*) with equal (*isōs*) emerges at 1283b 40: *isōs orthon* serves the interest of the entire city—a formulation echoing the moderate democracy of 3.11⁷⁸. More particularly, the Solonian *politeia* is implicitly invoked as a positive model. Even in a constitutional framework where offices are subject to census requirements, all citizens must exercise control over those who govern: having a say on who rules is itself a form of ruling. The conception of the citizen as deliberating equal connects 3.11 and 3.13.

If citizenship is constituted by participation in sovereign functions, and the correct constitution exercises power for the common good, then the citizen body bears collective responsibility for maintaining constitutional order. Access to *archai kyriōtatai* enables genuine *koinōnein*: responsible participation through *krisis* in legitimising the *taxis tēs politeias*. Even when offices are restricted by wealth, capacity to exercise *krisis* within collective bodies allows citizens to assent to governing principles and ratify the distribution of power. *Koinōnein* imparts active co-responsibility in shaping rules of political engagement—logically prior to *metechein*, sharing in predefined rights. *Krisis* defines *koinōnein* more essentially than holding fixed-term *archai*: through sovereign functions citizens validate the political order itself. Differential recognition of merit remains compatible with democratic equality “as long as the *demos* is still fully in control of the means and ideology underpinning the system”.⁷⁹ The democratic significance of this principle lies in recognising that legitimate authority flows from collective endorsement. One final consideration merits emphasis. At 3.13.1283b 40–42, political rule must be exercised for the common good. Citizens contribute to this end both as magistrates and within collective bodies; the goal remains the same. The passage distinguishes, however, between the common good of the city as a whole—where *archomenoi* are certainly in view—and the common good of the citizens.⁸⁰ The *archomenoi* stand in the background as those who must enter the sphere of governing interests, who must be benefited by those who rule. The citizen, by contrast, participates in the common good not merely as beneficiary but as active agent in its realisation. This marks a decisive difference: the *archomenos* receives benefit without contributing to its determination;

77 Schofield 2011; Woods 2014.

78 Accattino, Curnis 2013, 210. See also Yack 1993, 170–71.

79 Canevaro 2025, 121.

80 Ober 1998, 298–299 n. 23 has drawn attention to this distinction. See also Khan 2005.

the citizen deliberates, judges, and decides. The trajectory from 2.2 through 3.17 confirms conceptual unity. *Ison to antiþeponthos*, reciprocal equality enabling citizens differing in wealth, virtue, and social position to participate as equals in sovereign functions, finds institutional realisation in Solon's mixed constitution. *To isōs orthōn* provides the criterion for adjudicating competing claims without admitting graduated citizenship. The *thētes* sharing in *archai kyriōtatai* through assembly and courts are citizens without qualification, exercising sovereign functions through which the political community governs itself for the common good. Contributions vary; citizenship does not. What matters is that the *dēmos* approve the political order determining criteria for access to offices. The citizen participating in *krisis* validates, and shares responsibility for, the constitutional arrangement structuring political life. Citizenship is not a matter of degree but of kind: one shares in the sovereign capacity to determine and endorse the common good, or one does not. This is the substance of political rule.

In conclusion: what qualifies membership in the political community—and hence the citizen—proves coherent across *Politics* 1–3. Book 1 establishes the principle: political rule is rule over free and equal persons who share in ruling and being ruled. Book 2 tests this principle against institutional models, finding it realised in Solon's extension of sovereign functions to the poorest citizens and violated in constitutions that proclaim sharing while denying access to *archai kyriōtatai*. Book 3 confirms the principle definitionally: the citizen *haplōs* participates in deliberation and judgment; the *archomenos* stands outside the political community, not within it as a citizen of lesser grade. This is not to underestimate Aristotle's acute awareness of historical reality. As empirical observer of Greek constitutional practice, he recognises that individuals formally designated citizens were often denied access to decisional functions; the evidence throughout the *Politics* is too abundant to ignore.⁸¹ Yet to acknowledge such conditions is one thing; to endorse graduated citizenship as normatively valid for the *koinōnia politikē* is quite another. Aristotle's condemnation of regimes that mask exclusion through deceptive terminology leaves no doubt on this point. Citizenship is not a status admitting of degrees but the assumption of political responsibility through participation in sovereign functions. One either shares in the capacity to deliberate and judge, or one does not. This is the substance of political rule, and it admits no intermediate condition.

81 Woods (2014) provides a careful survey of the relevant evidence. See also Lévy 1980, 1993; Samaras 2015.