

For free & virtuous citizens
 A public read aloud of Plato & Aristotle
 Hosted by Joey Lipp

“Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters.” — Benjamin Franklin

Practices & Promises

1. We voluntarily unite to seek wisdom and truth together.
2. We acknowledge oneness: we’re on the same team here.
3. We read, listen, and converse beautifully.
4. We debate ideas, not people.
5. We aim to be philosophically productive on our own selves.

Opening Curiosities

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word *politics*?
2. Are there ways of organizing ourselves that aren’t *political*?
3. Should some humans be freer than others?
4. What’s the difference between *natural* rights and *civil* rights?

Politics by Aristotle: Some Details & Terms

Aristotle 384—322BC

- polymath, relentlessly curious about everything¹
- longtime student in Plato’s school in Athens, called the Academy
- founder of his own school in Athens, called the Lyceum
- we refer to his philosophical tradition as the “Peripatetic” school of philosophy

Greek	Transliteration	Translations	
πόλις	<i>polis</i>	citizen-state	—> city
πολιτικά	<i>politika</i>	polis-things	—> politics
πολίτης	<i>polites</i>	polis-person	—> citizen
πολιτεία	<i>politeia</i>	polis-form	—> constitution, government

Politics by Aristotle: Outline²

	Bekker pages ³
Book 1 The natural basis of the <i>polis</i>	1252A — 1260B
Book 2 Previous opinions about the best <i>polis</i>	1260B25 — 1274B
Book 3 Citizenship and political rule	1274B30 — 1288B
Book 4 The spectrum of democratic and oligarchic forms of government	1288B10 — 1301A
Book 5 Factions and changes of government	1301A20 — 1316B
Book 6 How democracies and oligarchies can be made more effective and enduring	1316B30 — 1323A
Book 7 Characteristics of the best <i>polis</i>	1323A15 — 1337A
Book 8 Education of citizens	1337A10 — 1342B

On Reverse: Relevant Comparanda

Second Treatise of Government by John Locke

America’s Founding Documents by various American thinkers

¹ A partial list: logic, argumentation, physics, meteorology, souls, memory, sleep, dreams, zoology, botany, biology, ethics, politics, economics, rhetoric, poetry.

² We’ll be using Joe Sach’s translation in Civic Quest.

³ The Bekker pagination, from a 19th century German editor, allows everyone to follow along, not matter what translation folks are using.

Second Treatise of Government by John Locke (1689)

A Few Excerpts

Of the State of Nature

II.4. To understand political Power, right, and derive it from its Original, we must consider, what State all Men are naturally in, and that is, a *State of perfect Freedom* to order their Actions, and dispose of their Possessions, and Persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the Will of any other Man. A *State also of Equality*, wherein all the Power and Jurisdiction is Reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident, than that Creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same Faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without Subordination or Subjection...

II.6. But though this be a *State of Liberty*, yet it is not a *State of Licence*; though man in that State have an uncontrolable Liberty, to dispose of his Person or Possessions, yet he has not Liberty to destroy himself, or so much as any Creature in his Possession...The *State of Nature* has a Law of Nature to govern it, which obliges every one: And Reason, which is that Law, teaches all Mankind, who will but consult it, that being all *equal and independent*, no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Possessions...And being furnished with like Faculties, sharing all in one Community of Nature, there cannot be supposed any such *Subordination* among us, that may authorize us to destroy one another, as if we were made for one another's Uses...

II.14—15. 'Tis not every Compact that puts an end to the state of Nature between Men, but only this one of agreeing together mutually to enter into one Community, and make one Body Politick ... But I moreover affirm, That all Men are naturally in that State, and remain so, till by their own Consents they make themselves Members of some politick Society; and I doubt not in the Sequel of this Discourse, to make it very clear.

Of the Beginning of Political Societies

VIII.95. Men being, as has been said, by Nature, all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this Estate, and subjected to the political Power of another, without his own Consent. The only Way whereby one devests himself of his natural Liberty, and puts on the Bonds of Civic Society is by agreeing with other Men to joyn and unite into a Community, for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable Living one amongst another, in a secure Enjoyment of their Properties and a greater Security against any, that are not of it. This any number of Men may do, because it injures not the Freedom of the rest; they are left as they were in the Liberty of the State of Nature. When any number of Men have so consented to make one Community or Government, they are thereby presently incorporated, and make one Body politick, where

Of the Ends of Political Society and Government

IX.123. If Man in the State of Nature be so free, as has been said; if he be absolute Lord of his own Person and Possessions, equal to the greatest and subject to no Body, why will he part with his Freedom? ... To which 'tis obvious to answer, that though in the state of Nature he hath such a Right, yet the Enjoyment of it is very uncertain, and constantly exposed to the Invasion of others ... And 'tis not without Reason, that he seeks out, and is willing to joyn in Society with others, who are already united, or have a Mind to unite, for the mutual Preservation of their Lives, Liberties and Estates, which I call by the general Name, *Property*.

IX.124. The great and *chief End* therefore, of Mens uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, is the *Preservation of their Property*. To which in the state of Nature there are many things wanting.

America's Founding Documents

A Few Excerpts

Declaration of Independence: In Congress, July 4, 1776 The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America: When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness ... When a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

The Constitution of the United States (1787): We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.