

## 12.1. The political system

*‘For the constitution of a state is in a sense the way it lives.’*

Aristotle

**Synopsis:** *The political system is the set of rules applied by the government while it is controlling the state (1–2); Two basic questions: who and how (3); Morality in the system (4–5); The response to the who: monarchy, oligarchy or democracy (6); The response to the how: the tacit assumption behind monarchy, oligarchy and democracy (7–8); The most basic assumption of all: the analogue world (9).*

### 1. \*

The political system is the set of rules applied by the government while it is controlling the state. It is the government’s rules of processing specifically for the state, that is, the way in which the government exercises its control over the state.

Because the question of how a Being exercises control over a dataset (regardless of whether in a haphazard or a rules-based way) is beyond the scope of this analysis,<sup>431</sup> here only the fact is noted that rules<sup>432</sup> on how governments control the state do exist.

Why is this fact important? Why should these processing rules be exceptional, of special interest? Why should they have a specific name, after all? Are they not similar to any other rules in place when a Being is controlling a dataset (e.g. the owner of a house or a company), which, as noted, are of no concern here?

It is the importance of the dataset concerned, that is, the state, that sets these rules apart. In other words, this set of rules (the political system) determines how the information platform that is the state functions in practice each time—how it runs, that is, what processing operations are

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431 See Chap. 6, par. 6.

432 This does not mean that the rules preceded the actual exercise of control, i.e. chieftains and kings (and, presumably, democracies) existed long before Plato categorised them.

allowed on it and by it. In other words, the political system is, basically, the state system, if one replaces the word 'polis' with the word 'state', as per the former's original use.<sup>433</sup> (Similarly, in computing terms a political system can be visualised as an operating system: it includes, and provides, the rules under which any information processing happens.)

While the government, as a Being, interacts with other Beings (significantly, the citizens on the same platform, that of their state) and Things as well, it is only this specific relationship, the relationship of a government with its state, that is examined here.

## 2. \*

Although political systems were applied as soon as governments (and thus the state) emerged,<sup>434</sup> their forms varied widely, challenging categorisations even as broad as Plato's distinction among monarchies, oligarchies and democracies.<sup>435</sup> How else can the hybrid systems of modern constitutional monarchies, the presidential system, or representative democracies be interpreted?

In other words, writing (and political philosophy) merely formalised (and continue to do so—in modern times, in constitutions<sup>436</sup>) what was, and is, practiced in the analogue world by governments in order to control the(-ir) states according to need and opportunity.<sup>437</sup>

## 3. Two basic questions\*

The government may be the Being controlling the (dataset, the information platform that is the) state, but nothing has been said so far about who (which Being(s)) control(s) the government. Because it is itself an organisation, it is subject to control by the humans that participate in or created it.<sup>438</sup> This can be anything from a single person to a large group of individuals (rotating into and out of roles of control or not)—broadly aligning with the concepts of monarchy, oligarchy and democracy.

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433 See note 0/1/7. On the use of 'system' in this analysis, see Chap. 1, par. 4.

434 See Chap. 12, par. 7.

435 The rule of one, of a few or of all, thus covering any conceivable alternative in the analogue world.

436 See also Chap. 22, par. 3.

437 See Chap. 5.

438 See Chap. 2, par. 7.

The humans controlling the government, as individuals, need to augment their information processing through the organisation they control. Although in the case of the government, because it controls the state, the advantages for 'its' individuals are plain for everyone to see,<sup>439</sup> the way in which it accomplishes this matters (because it is human nature to compare<sup>440</sup>) as this ultimately affects how a state is run by its government.

Political systems, therefore, basically address two questions: the question of *who* (who controls the government, i.e. who participates in it), and the question of *how* (how is control over the state exercised)—with political philosophy frequently adding a *should* to the mix, a mistake that will nevertheless be avoided here.

Obviously, these are not the only questions a political system needs to address. Because it formalises the most complex relationship on the information platform that is the state (that of the state and its government), a wide array of issues may, and do, occur. The list is long. For example, with platform rights being a given,<sup>441</sup> a political system needs to address the question of whether platform rights are to be respected and, if so, in what manner.

#### 4. Morality in the system

Political systems are inherently and unavoidably moral;<sup>442</sup> they reflect and are the result of a certain morality because they include a choice (in terms of which processing is allowed and which is prohibited).

As such, the ways in which any political system provides the answers to the above two basic questions (as well as to related questions, e.g. who drafts the regulations, and how and why), with the exception of the few observations below, are of no concern here.

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439 Therefore, the question of whether to keep or dissolve a government has never been an issue, as is the case for any other organisation, see Chap. 2, par. 7.

440 See Chap. 5.1, par. 9.

441 See Chap. 22, par. 5.

442 On whether morality can be avoided altogether see Chap. 23, par. 3.

## 5.

Although a political system should be considered natural,<sup>443</sup> the actual ways in which it responds on any given occasion to the questions of who and how<sup>444</sup> are anything but. All political systems are invented. They are the product of the human intellect, of human ideas and thoughts. While the existence of a political system is necessary for any state, the ways in which it responds to the above two questions are not predetermined, and nor do such systems make linear progress towards any preordained end—but are simply the result of need and opportunity.

Having said that, while addressing the questions of who and how, any political system necessarily takes into account the basics of an informational approach, which comprises the following elements:

- each and every individual (i.e. each one of a state’s citizens) needs to augment its information processing;<sup>445</sup>
- governments are Beings that need ‘their’ individuals to augment their information processing through them;<sup>446</sup>
- states are omnipresent, that is, they know everything because they are the necessary party to an(y) information processing on their platform,<sup>447</sup> but they have no purpose<sup>448</sup> (or rather any purpose ascribed to a state is artificially given to it by its government); and
- states need their citizens to augment their information processing.<sup>449</sup>

The way the above are taken into account (basically, whether preference is given to the individuals’ or to the government’s needs) determines the content of a political system.

An important point concerns the natural conflict between the needs of a government and those of its state’s citizens, which can never be reconciled.<sup>450</sup>

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443 See par. 2.

444 See par. 3.

445 See Chap. 5.1.

446 See Chap. 2, par. 7.

447 See Chap. 7, par. 3.

448 See Chap. 11, par. 7.

449 See Chap. 10.

450 See also pars. 7 and 8.

## 6. The response to the who: monarchy, oligarchy or democracy

A political system's way of dealing with the question of who comprises the government has given us the distinction between monarchy (one person), oligarchy (a few people) and democracy (all the people). Little has changed since Plato put these distinctions in writing (himself classifying what was already known to humans by that time)—but, of course, in reality, in the analogue world at least, no other conceivable options are possible.

## 7. The response to the how: the tacit assumption behind monarchy, oligarchy and democracy\*

A political system's way of responding to the *how* of government is not as straightforward as it is to the *who* (most likely because it is not as visible, and thus not as easy to confirm). A tacit assumption is made instead: whichever Being controls the government, it will use the state to serve its need to augment its information processing to the detriment of that state's citizens, given that information in the analogue world is finite. In the case of a monarchy this control is exercised by a single individual (the king or queen); in oligarchies by the (limited number of) individuals involved; and, in the case of democracy, by those in government at any given time.

This assumption has been vindicated time and again throughout human history. Although it may be easy to see in the various cases of monarchies and oligarchies (less so in constitutional monarchies), it is no less true in cases of democracies: although anyone could potentially participate in government, the fact remains that few actually do.

## 8.

Throughout human history a number of political systems have been devised to address the natural conflict between the government and its citizens, among which should be counted constitutional monarchies, systems following natural rights theories or theories of power separation, and systems of 'checks and balances', as well as political liberalism or individualism.<sup>451</sup> (On the other hand, political systems of communism/socialism or fascism, or those based on religion, have felt no need to apply any one of

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451 On its inherent conundrum, see Chap. 26, par. 5.

these models because they are based on ascribing a purpose to the state, to the government and, thus, also to the people; in a single-purpose state (a unity) no conflict is imaginable—or tolerated.)

### 9. The most basic assumption of all: the analogue world

Notwithstanding all of the above assumptions, theories and findings formulated over the thousands of years of (recorded) human history, what is important to note is that the most fundamental underlying assumption is that the political system is designed for, and will operate in, the analogue world. The digital world having a history of only a few decades, every system or thought humans have ever had about governance has been in relation to the analogue world. This includes not only those concepts relevant to the state and governance, such as borders and locality,<sup>452</sup> but also, more importantly, the idea that information is finite. In other words, whatever objectives these political systems had, be they liberal or not, and whatever premises they were built on, there was always the assumption that information is finite, and that therefore one's (e.g. the government's) information processing increase would lead to another's (in the same example, its state's citizens') decrease.

The creation of the digital world has overturned everything that the political systems of today are built on. Indicatively, information is infinite in the digital world;<sup>453</sup> digital (state) territories are eroding traditional notions of state sovereignty;<sup>454</sup> and a new kind of artificial Being, the computer program (on par with language and money), has entered the scene.<sup>455</sup>

With all humans' basic assumptions overthrown, the digital world is expected to put everything, all the political systems created and political thoughts had by humans so far, to the test. Everything will have to be re-thought and reassessed in view of the new reality.

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452 See Chap. 17, par. 4.

453 See Chap. 1, par. 16.

454 See Chap. 17, par. 8.

455 See Chap. 2, par. 12.