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The Historical Conditions for the Forming of Aristotle's Political Thought

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Abstract---When studying the entire history of philosophy, K. Marx wrote: "All genuine philosophy is the spiritual quintessence of its time"(Marx & Engels, 2002). It is understood that the birth of philosophy was conditioned by contemporary socio-historical conditions and other theories and ideas that contribute to the spiritual appearance of that era. Not outside the above rule, the process of arising and developing Greek philosophy in general and of Aristotle's political thought, in particular, is a reflection and is maintained by historical, economic, and political conditions - Ancient Greek society. F. Engels wrote: "Without slavery, there would be no Greek state, no Greek art, and science" (Marx & Engels, 2002). Therefore, the study of Aristotle's political thought must be placed in the historical conditions of its formation. Within the scope of the article, the author focuses on analyzing historical conditions for the forming of Aristotle's political thought in terms of natural, economic - social, and cultural-political conditions.

Keywords---ancient Greece, Aristotle, cultural-political, history, politics.

Introduction

Natural and socio-economic conditions

History has gone through many stages of development with ups and downs with civilizations born one after another. Right at the dawn of mankind, many civilizations of the Eastern peoples such as India, China, Egypt, Babylon... signaled the endless creative ability of mankind. All the quintessence of that beginning seems to have been gathered to prepare for the birth of a new civilization - the Greek civilization. Although born later, it developed more

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brilliantly and became the cradle of Western civilization (Luong, 1998).

Like other ancient countries, natural conditions have had a significant impact on the economic development trend and the state institutions of the nation. Due to complex topographical conditions, ancient Greece was dispersed into many areas, divided by valleys and surrounding hills, and coastal islands. That has scattered the formation of small states, everywhere. Polis (πόλις), ie, city or city-state, was the type of state of the ancient Greeks (Dinh, 1999). The ancient Greeks lived in city-states, and these city-states were ruled in different ways, leading to a state of hostility and conflict, so often between the city mutual-states happened war of annexation. This situation occurs even within a city-state (Brinton et al., 1960). It was these factors that dominated the formation, development, and disintegration of the city-state. No city-state, except Athens, has survived the events of history long. Athens always has to confront its neighbor, the powerful and warlike Sparta, to compete for hegemony.

The city-state of Athens was located on the Attica plain in central Greece. This is an area; the plains are few and narrow, the land is not fertile, the climate is arid, the annual rainfall is insignificant... so it is not favorable for the development of agriculture. But in return, there are many products here (precious stones, iron mines, silver mines, high-quality clay...); Especially in Athens, there is a long coastline with many bays and ports that are favorable for the maritime development of an industrial, commercial and economy (Vu, 2008). Thanks to that, the monetary systemization here developed early and quickly. In addition, the geographical proximity to the ancient Eastern countries with long civilizations has created favorable conditions for East-West cultural exchanges.

The formation and development of slavery along with the economic development and exchange of trade of the Greek city-states created a class of free citizens. these citizens became the new owners of Greek civilization. Besides, the development of the division of labor has made society appear a class of mental labor, coming from the wealthy slave-owner class, who have more and more free time, think about the times, have the conditions to study, research in many fields... so that philosophical and political thought can arise. These are the socio-economic conditions for Athens to become the cultural center of ancient Greece and the cradle of European philosophy with famous philosophical schools that are famous to this day (Setyastrini et al., 2021; Ryan, 2020).

Thus, geographical conditions, economic development, existence, development and replacement of city-states; the interweaving of forms of rule, territorial expansion and cultural exchange... has created the diversity and complexity of political life (Do, 2019). That is reflected by Aristotle in his political thought. In 5th century BC, after the war between Greece and Persia, ended, in Greek city-states on the Balkan peninsula, especially located many handicrafts developed, production of goods increased rapidly, trade relations were expanded agriculture, shifted sharply from the cultivation of cereals to the cultivation of grapes and olives to export more wine, olive oil; and at the same time re-import enough essential goods from other countries (Luong, 1998). In particular, there was one commodity that was of interest to Athens, which was slaves. The port of Pire was the place where slaves were imported and exported. It became the busiest market

to buy slaves in the ancient world (Vu, 2008). Athens became the wealthiest city-state in Greece with a developed commodity production, strong merchant fleet, mastery of the vast ocean area, and enhanced cultural and economic exchanges with countries in the region and Eastern countries. This created Athens with excellent income and increased the role and prestige of Athens in the Hellenistic world. Also, during this time, the 5th - 4th centuries B.C, in the most advanced urban countries such as Athens, Megara, Corinth, Miletus, the slave-owning production method has reached its most complete and highest level (Vu, 2008).

Cultural - political conditions

This was also a period in which human history saw an extraordinary explosion of intellectual, cultural, and artistic achievement. This creative outburst is concentrated across time and space to a degree never seen before. During the last decades of the fourth century B.C., after losing independence, the Greeks followed the larger world of Alexander's empire, which brought them into contact with other ethnicities. It was followed by a series of intellectual experiences, especially in literature, art, philosophy, science, etc. In V-IV BC, it was the "ancient" period of Greek culture, centered on Athens with its diversity, diversity, human tendency, and freedom (Dinh, 1999).

In terms of literature, the Greeks modified and created the Greek alphabet system. The Greek alphabet reached a high level, capable of perfecting and generalizing the system of symbols to express thinking. Thanks to this alphabetical system, the Greeks have left posterity an extremely rich literary legacy with many different genres such as myths, poems, poetic, plays. "Greek mythology not only constitutes a storehouse. treasure of Greek art, but also the soil that nourished Greek art." (Marx & Engels, 1984). Besides, poetry is a fairly popular and very successful literary genre. The largest and earliest poetry collection is "The Iliad" and "the Odyssey" by Homer (Butler, 1900). Those are two volumes of epics, two valuable epics in Greek literature.

Historically, from the 5th century BC, the Greeks began to have written histories and professional historians. Greek history is considered the source of Western history with famous historians such as Thucydides (460 - 395 BC) , Herodotus (484 - 424 BC) (Stunkel, 2012), - "the father of history", because he was the first to write a lengthy account of political events. Regarding the natural sciences, Greece is considered the home of many different fields of natural sciences such as: astronomy, geography, mathematics, physics, biology, medicine learn; is the birthplace of giants with erudite knowledge with great achievements left for human history.

The one who laid the foundation for astronomy in Greece was the philosopher Thales of Miletus (634-546 BC). He was not only able to predict solar and lunar eclipses but he was also the oldest map maker of the world in the history of the Western world. Thales' most important invention was the proportions of consciousness. Based on that formula, he calculated the height of the pyramid by measuring its shadow. Thales was also a numerologist. He took the knowledge of geometry that the Egyptians had applied to the measurement of land, generalizing

it into abstract and universal mathematical theorems (Kronfeldner, 2017; Arnawa et al., 2019; Deori, 2015).

Pythagoras (570 – 496 BC) was a philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer. He formulated the theorem that bears his name on the relationship between the three sides of a right triangle. He also distinguishes between even, odd, and non-divisible numbers. In astronomy, he was more advanced than Thales because he realized that the earth was spherical, moving in a certain orbit and that invention was widely spread among contemporary intellectuals. Archimedes (287 – 212 BC) (Chondros, 2007), was a mathematician and physicist. He discovered the law that bears his name: an object immersed in a liquid is pushed vertically by the liquid with a force equal to the mass of the liquid displaced by the object. His most important invention was in force, the most important being the principle of levers, used to lift large weights, and he is said to have declared "give me a fulcrum and I will lift the earth" (Benvenuto, 1991).

Hippocrates (460 - 370 BC) systematized the medical knowledge of that time, brought the art of healing to a higher level and was considered "the father of the medical profession" (Wilner, 1986). In terms of art, architecture, sculpture and painting, the Greeks created perfect art, bold realism, national character. "Greek art, epic, continues to give us an aesthetic satisfaction, and in a way. In some respects, they are also used as standards, as models that we cannot achieve." (Marx & Engels, 1984). During these years, the Greeks wrote the greatest plays and appeared famous playwrights such as Sophocles (tragedy), Aristophanes (The father of Comedy). Thus, ancient Greek sciences has achieved great achievements. Those achievements laid the foundation for the development of modern science and at the same time an important premise for the development of Greek philosophy, solid support for the field of thought, philosophy.

Living in an era when all the achievements of the fields were advanced developed, Aristotle brought together all these quintessence and was the summing up of the history of "classical" Greece (Do, 2019). He observed, experienced and drew lessons from historical events unfolding before his eyes. It is this that makes his political thought were more realistic than Plato's political thought. The development of economy and culture has led to profound changes in socio-political life, the first bright mark in the history of mankind is the birth of democracy. It appeared first in Chios and then spread to many other places, culminating in the state of Athens.

Democracy* as a method of organizing political life, a form of state, and at the same time a human value, appeared very early in history. The concept of "democracy" is a political invention of the Greeks. It was formed in the 6th century BC, associated with many reforms of Solon (638 – 558 BC) (Ellis & Stanton, 1968), reached its peak development and was institutionalized in the second half of the 5th century BC, under Pericles (495 – 429 BC). It stipulates a number of inalienable rights of the individual as an indispensable basis of life

* The Greek word δημοκρατία, a Greek-Latin translation of Demokratia, merged and reduced from δῆμος (demos - people) with the word κράτος (kratos - power), meaning "power of the people", the English version is democracy.

activities, in which, they have the right to choose their representatives to the legislature, the right to receive the education and physical training, the right and obligation to participate in the defense of the state, a number of other rights and obligations of the people of their own freedom. The political reforms of this period have gone down in history as the first breakthrough, meaningful in the process of perfecting the way of organizing human life. Slavery democracy reached its fullest perfection, the pinnacle of ancient civilization, the source of European civilization, the pride and experience of mankind (Luong, 1998).

Therefore, if in Eastern philosophy there is Confucianism's view of "the concept of minben (people-as-root)" (Yong, 2011), or the thought of "belonging to the people", "respecting the people", the Greeks have reached the point of view of "democracy". On the one hand, the Greeks are passionate about conquering nature, exploring the universe, but on the other hand, they showed interest in people, honoring the noble values of people. Hence, in establishing a good socio-political regime for people, they invented democracy. For the ancient Greek philosophers, the image of man was a combination of reason with virtue, wisdom, decency, aspiration for freedom, and civic responsibility. But after half a century of existence and development, Athenian democracy, right at the ripe time, gradually revealed serious shortcomings that led to the inevitable collapse (Schelkunov et al., 2021; Bitros & Karayiannis, 2010).

"On the one hand, the Greeks discovered or invented democracy, drama, and philosophy, but on the other hand, they clung to ancient rituals, beliefs, and inevitably civil war. The Athenians loved freedom but they executed Socrates. Although they offer the theory of neutrality, realize perfect and balanced architecture, and their education comprehensively develops people physically as well as intellectually, they often show scorned people [...] arrogance brought punishment upon them" (Dinh, 1999).

Athenian democracy, although it has created certain prosperity in social life, is still a limited, narrow, closed political system that is only open to citizens (free people). The Acts in 451 B.C, stipulate that only liberals who meet all three criteria (male, 18 years of age or older, and both Athenian parents) can attend the people's congress to exercise their democratic rights. In fact, the number of free Athenian citizens who meet the above three criteria does not exceed 30% of the total number of citizens of Athens. Women, children under the age of 18, the elderly, infirm, and young people who are 18 years old but whose parent is not Athenian make up a high proportion, but by law they are not entitled to citizenship (Luong, 1998). Moreover, political activities and elections take place only in the capital city of Athens, so in fact only free (qualified) citizens living in Athens and some surrounding areas can participate regularly in democratic activities. Thus, Athenian democracy, which was a democracy of a minority among the inhabitants of Athens, became even more of the minority (Luong, 1998).

Athenian democracy is a democracy without freedom. If the essence of democracy is to create a free political space in which people can exercise their civil rights and participate in the affairs of the state, then the freedom in Athenian democracy is extremely narrow and closed. It is just freedom

according to an established pattern, citizens must show their absolute allegiance, otherwise, the government will force them to conform with quite harsh, even cruel measures. In the era of slave democracy, Anaxagoras (510 – 428 B.C.) was “banished from the city [Athens]” (Curd, 2007), Socrates was forced to drink poison to commit suicide (Warren, 2001; Nails, 2005), and similarly, Aristotle was also not immune to a tragic fate. Those are the witnesses to the ruthless rigidity of a political space without freedom.

The birth and development of ancient democracy in Athens is an inexhaustible source of inspiration for contemporary political thought as well as in later times. The values that it brings such as equality, freedom, respect for law and justice... have profoundly influenced political thinking in the West. Even then, however, Athenian democracy was always the object of criticism of ancient Greek thinkers. From Socrates to Plato have shown an aversion to democracy. While Aristotle did not criticize democracy as extreme as his predecessors, he also saw the shortcomings of democracy and advocated replacing it with an ideal state, which combines the best ideas of the existing polities. The harsh criticism of democracy from within heralds its inevitable end (Touwaide, 2019; Van Praagh & Van Praagh, 1983).

Along with the crisis and weakening of slave democracy - the first demonstration of a democratic state in human history - in the heart of ancient Greek society lurked sharp contradictions between the towns and cities, different states, forces, classes are manifested in the struggle between slave owners and slaves, between the rich and the poor, between democratic and anti-democratic forces, between the oligarchs and the common people, between the native Greeks and the immigrants (Bredillet et al., 2015; Persson & Tabellini, 1999). Even within the states, there was a fierce political struggle between the various slave-owners corporations and among the various slave-owners, classes and classes also arise conflicts that become more and more profound.

Among the free population classes, conflicts also arose in the division of property, slavery and power struggles. The aristocracy criticized the current system for its unprincipled limitations, its tendency to be average, and discourage people from getting rich. Immigrants also add a voice to the tense situation in society. By the V-IV BC, this force plays a significant role in economic life, but politically, immigrants are treated unfairly. They expressed their desire to become equal citizens like local people. However, such aspiration touched the pride of the Greeks, who did not like the "exile" to be equal to them in every aspect. Waves of discontent and violence spread vastly so that dictatorship was restored as the only solution to the crisis in many city-states (Chaniotis, 2018; Botha, 2014; Perrotta, 2011). The people's experience at the beginning of history, due to its social nature and narrow framework, gradually morphed, in many cases becoming a democratic game.

In addition, successive wars also made Greece weaker and contributed to the crisis of Athenian democracy. The development of ancient Greece was an alliance between city-states, including the two most powerful city-states, Athens and Sparta. Athens is a country - city with many ports, convenient for trade, so it soon became the economic and cultural center of ancient Greece (Andreev et al., 2021; Heikkurinen et al., 2019). This is where the democratic state institution of

slavery was formed. Sparta is a politically conservative city-state, economically and culturally backward, but militarily powerful. With that advantage, Sparta forced the neighboring city-states to become vassals and formed an alliance led by Sparta, called the Peloponnesian League for the purpose of gaining hegemony over Greece. The conflict between the two factions of democratic slave owners and aristocratic slave owners arose, and led to a fierce struggle between Athens and Sparta. After the Peloponnesian War (431 - 404 BC) (Nails, 2005), ended with the defeat of Athens, Sparta took control of the Greek world in place of Athens, opening the beginning of the decline of Athens' democracy. In addition, constant war broke out in many other Greek city-states.

Slavery in the West is typical, because of the large number of slaves in society and especially the important role of slaves in the production industries, the relationship between the slave-owner class and the slave class was the dominant exploitation relationship in society. They are not considered human, but just working tools that speak human language, a type of commodity for exchange between slave owners. Therefore, slaves were the most despised class, had the lowest living standards. Meanwhile, the Athenian state was based on an economy that depended mainly on the labor of slaves and expatriates. They are the people who make up the vast majority of the population and are the basic productive force that feeds the entire city-state of Athens, but they do not enjoy citizenship, do not have the right to determine their own destiny. So, from the 5th century BC onwards, these "speaking tools" organized many uprisings (Do & Vo, 2016). They waged a struggle against harsh oppression, a brutal invasion of human dignity. That is also the reason why society always contains conflicts and instability. However, the struggle of the slaves, far-reaching movements of disempowerment, and poverty greatly influenced political ideology.

It was these sharp contradictions that created polarization, showing the complexity in the political life of the Greek city-states. The reality of the struggles between these different social forces and groups has created the need to find ways to resolve conflicts, reconcile polarization, choose between democracy or oligarchy, or remove them completely from political life [...] That influenced Aristotle's "neutral" political views (Do, 2015).

The 30s of the fourth century B.C, Alexander the Great (356 - 323 BC) - a student of Aristotle (Shields & Shields, 1986), occupied all of Greece and placed Athens under the protection of Macedonia. In about ten consecutive years of war (334 - 325 BC), he established a vast empire, including many territories of many regions, many countries with economic level, political organization various, many centers of the ancient world. Alexander's expedition facilitated economic and cultural exchanges between East and West; while at the same time making the traditions of the whole Greek civilization preserved and widespread. Because of its close relationship with Macedonia, during the marches to conquer distant lands, Alexander the Great sent his soldiers to collect a lot of extremely rich resources and support his teacher in many aspects in the research process. This is favorable for Aristotle to create a massive knowledge system for mankind, including his political ideas (Do, 2014).

As an eyewitness to the Greek history of Alexander, and as a friend and advisor to the young Great Alexander, Aristotle was interested in the expeditions and spread of Greek civilization throughout the region. The young Great Alexander had great merit in bringing the "soul" of Greece around and contributing to the success of Aristotle's studies (Do, 2013). Thus, Aristotle made no secret of his support and praise for Alexander's world claim. The move toward a "world-state" for the Greeks in the form of Alexander influenced Aristotle, forming the idea of a Greater Greece that encompassed the region, dominating other ethnicities. In 323 B.C, Alexander's sudden death brought the situation of the Macedonian empire into a state of crisis. This is also a milestone marking the stalemate on the political path of Aristotle (Do, 2012). Finally, both Greece and Macedonia were conquered and annexed by the Romans in 146 B.C (Mark, 2018). Rome dominated Greece militarily and politically but culturally, Greece had the opposite influence; Therefore, this period is called the Hellenistic period in history books.

Conclusion

Aristotle's political thought in particular as well as his philosophical system in general was formed in the conditions of ancient Greek slavery with profound changes in social life, especially the crisis of slave democracy; Therefore, it contains thoughts and concerns about a socio-political reality with aspirations towards an ideal state that brings good things to people. The analysis of the historical, social, and political conditions of ancient Greece through the rise and fall of slave democracy and the rise and fall of the Macedonian empire helps us to understand the origin and nature of Aristotle's political thought. It was in that historical condition that Aristotle's political thought was formed, which is deeply and systematically expressed in Politics.

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