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

Chapter 2

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

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

The first thing to emerge from these two communities 7 is a house-

3. That is to say, do household managers, masters, statesmen, and kings each employ a different type of technical expertise in ruling? Expertise (technikon) is technical knowledge of the sort embodied in a craft or science.
4. This claim is qualified at 1278a32–37 and elaborated upon in 1.5–7.
5. A Delphian knife seems to have been a multipurpose and cheaply made tool of some sort. See 1299a10 and note.
6. See Euripides, Iphigenia in Aulis 1266, 1400.
7. The communities of husband and wife, master and slave.
hold, so that Hesiod is right when he said in his poem, “First and foremost: a house, a wife, and an ox for the plow.” For an ox is a poor man’s servant. The community naturally constituted to satisfy everyday needs, then, is the household; its members are called “meal-sharers” by Charondas and “manger-sharers” by Epimenides the Cretan. But the first community constituted out of several households for the sake of satisfying needs other than everyday ones is a village.

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

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

8. Works and Days 405.
9. Charondas was a sixth-century legislator from Catana in Chalcidice in the southern part of Macedonia. Epimenides was a religious teacher of the late sixth and early fifth century. The works from which Aristotle is quoting are lost.
10. See Plato, Laws 776a–b.
12. A somewhat different explanation is given at 1286b8–11.
13. Iliad X.114–15. To lay down the law (themistuein) is to give judgments in particular cases about what is right or fitting (phemis).
14. This claim and the argument Aristotle is about to give for it are discussed in the Introduction xlviii–lix.
sake of which something exists, that is to say, its end, is best, and self-
1253* sufficiency is both end and best.

It is evident from these considerations, then, that a city-state is
among the things that exist by nature, that a human being is by nature a
political animal,15 and that anyone who is without a city-state, not by
luck but by nature, is either a poor specimen or else superhuman. Like
the one Homer condemns, he too is “clanless, lawless, and homeless.”16
For someone with such a nature is at the same time eager for war, like an
isolated piece in a board game.17

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

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

16. Iliad 1X.63—64. Homer is describing a man who “loves fighting with his
own people.”
17. A piece particularly vulnerable to attack by an opponent’s pieces, and so
needing constantly to fight them off.
18. The idea is that features are present in a thing’s nature in order to promote
its end, not that nature is an agent (a kind of god, say) that makes things for
a purpose. See Introduction xxvii—xxxv.
19. Explained at 1280b5—12.
20. That is to say, a foot or a hand that shares no more than a name with a living,
functioning foot or hand. See Cat. 1*1—2.
whole. Anyone who cannot form a community with others, or who does not need to because he is self-sufficient, is no part of a city-state—he is either a beast or a god. Hence, though an impulse toward this sort of community exists by nature in everyone, whoever first established one was responsible for the greatest of goods. For as a human being is the best of the animals when perfected, so when separated from law and justice he is worst of all. For injustice is harshest when it has weapons, and a human being grows up with weapons for virtue and practical wisdom to use, which are particularly open to being used for opposite purposes. Hence he is the most unrestrained and most savage of animals when he lacks virtue, as well as the worst where food and sex are concerned. But justice is a political matter; for justice is the organization of a political community, and justice decides what is just.

Chapter 3

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

21. The weapons referred to are presumably various human capacities, such as intelligence, that can be used for good or bad purposes.
22. Reading dikē with Dreizehnter and the ms. Here to be understood, perhaps, as the judicial justice administered by the courts. See 1322.5–8, 1326.29–30.
23. "Marital" science (gamikē) and "procreative" science (teknoπoιετικē) are shown at work in VII.16. Rule over wives, which is an exercise of the former, and rule over children, of the latter, are discussed in I.12–13. Mastership is discussed in I.4–7 and wealth acquisition in I.2, 8–11.