



## A (Re)View of the Notions of Citizen and Citizenship in the Athens of Aristotle

'Goke Akinboye<sup>[a],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Department of Classics, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.  
 \*Corresponding author.

Received 24 January 2015; accepted 15 April 2015  
 Published online 26 May 2015

### Abstract

The notions of citizen and citizenship have been understood in different senses. When Barack Obama was campaigning for his presidential election some years back, many conservatives peddled conflicting stories about his US citizenship. Some of the stories alleged that: his birth certificate was forged, he had dual citizenship in both the US and Britain and his country of birth was either Kenya or Indonesia, not Honolulu in Hawaii where he was actually born. Thus citizenship today denotes a link between a person and his state of birth with the rights to work, trade, reside and participate in the civic life of the community.

Compared with the ancient world, citizenship, with regard to the state, conveyed deeper meaning. The ancient Greeks believed that the state is a creature of nature. By nature, man himself is a political animal, only capable of relating to humanity through his rights to participate in the affairs of the state. The state is a multifaceted entity, made up of citizens. Therefore, without the citizens, there is no state and without the state, no citizens. It then follows that the extent to which a state is good is proportional to the nature of its citizens and vice versa. For the Greeks, like Aristotle, the city-state should be the only proper setting for man's greatest good (*summum bonum*).

In view of the above and in the face of contemporary realities in African states, it becomes imperative to look again at the roots of citizenship in order to understand both its historical and cultural context. Using Aristotle's *Politics* as a template, this paper reviews the concept of citizenship by providing insights into the workings and attitudes of the citizens of the state of Athens, the city that served as "education to all Hellas". Simultaneously, the

paper presents a view into the civic mind of Aristotle, the greatest scholar of the Socratic school whose clinical and critical study of his society has continued to influence the modern thought.

**Key words:** Citizen; Citizenship; Rights; Obligations; Aristotle

Akinboye, 'G. (2015). A (Re)View of the Notions of Citizen and Citizenship in the Athens of Aristotle. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 11(5), 1-7. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/6894>  
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/6894>

### INTRODUCTION

Who is a citizen? What does it mean to be an ideal citizen as opposed to just a free inhabitant of a state? What requirements, characteristics or attributes should an ideal citizen possess and what rights should determine his citizenship? These are some questions that have elicited unending debates since antiquity. Today, a citizen is simply described as "a legally recognized subject or national of a state or commonwealth, either native or naturalized", or "an inhabitant of a particular town or city"<sup>1</sup>. Merriam-Webster adds that he is "one entitled to the rights and privileges of a freeman"<sup>2</sup>. Being a citizen then is a condition that involves having specific rights, privileges and duties. Thus, citizenship is often associated with the rights to work, trade and live in a country and to participate in its political life. It follows then that an individual who does not possess these rights is disenfranchised, and so he may be regarded as a stateless

<sup>1</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/citizen>; *American English Dictionary*. Retrieved from [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/citizen](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/citizen)

<sup>2</sup> *Merriam-Webster Dictionary: An Encyclopaedia Company*. Retrieved from <http://Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/citizen>

citizen. And so, citizenship has been understood as a “right to have rights” because it is the basis for a bunch of other rights (Heinemann, 2004; Somer, 1994).

In modern times also, many factors may determine citizenship and these include naturalization, birth within a state (*jus soli*), marriage to a citizen (*jus matrimonii*) and right of blood (*jus sanguinis*) where either of the parents or both are citizens. In the US, there are two primary sources of citizenship: birthright citizenship and naturalization (Messe et al., 2005). On the basis of the former, conservatives had wanted Barack Obama to be disqualified from contesting for office. They had relied on Section 1, Clause 5 of the Article 2 of the Constitution which created the executive arm of the government that comprised the president, vice president and other executive officers chosen by the president. It reads:

No person except a natural born citizen or a citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of the President, neither shall any person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty-five years, and been fourteen years a Resident within the United States<sup>3</sup>.

The whole idea of citizenship began in antiquity with the Greeks for whom politics was both an art and a science<sup>4</sup>. It was an idea that arose in the city-states during the teething period of colonisation and the stirring times of the Persian wars out of the Greeks’ desire and appreciation for liberty and cultural freedom. Geoffrey Hosking argued that:

...the growth of slavery was what made the Greeks particularly conscious of the value of freedom. After all, any Greek farmer might fall into debt and therefore might become a slave, at almost any time.... When the Greeks fought together, they fought in order to avoid being enslaved by warfare, to avoid being defeated by those who might take them into slavery. And they also arranged their political institutions so as to remain free men. (Hosking, 2005)

The socio-political atmosphere of the city-states, especially Athens, allowed the citizens to participate in public life (Ibid.). The institution of slavery enabled free citizens to have all the time to share in the judicial and deliberative administration of the state (Aristotle, 1962, pp.94-95). Greek citizenship was remarkably exclusive. The *poleis* was sharply stratified along aristocratic lines and different categories of people inhabited them. They had varying statuses. Some were citizens and others were not (Herbert & Wilkinson, 2002; Pocock, 1998). Both however, had different obligations and functions. A man did not become a citizen simply because he was born of citizen parents or lived within a state, after all, non-citizens such as resident aliens and slaves shared same place of abode with the real citizens (Stumpf, 1989, p.93). The ideal citizen had a status even over the citizen

women and children. The citizen man was identified by his obligations of citizenship. There was no distinction between a Greek’s public and personal life because both were intertwined. The citizen’s obligations were connected to his everyday life in the *polis* and this seems alien to the modern western notion where everyone minds his business (Hosking, 2005).

Generally, the Greeks believed that for a man to be truly human, he had to be a proactive citizen in and to the state. He must be a good man, who possessed the knowledge, temperance, capacity and justice to rule and be ruled, the total of which embraced the performance of his civic duties (Aristotle, 1962, p.101, 102, 106). Aristotle impressed that, “to take no part in the running of the community’s affairs is to be either a beast or a god” (Aristotle, 1962, Bk. I. 11.). The great Athenian statesman, Pericles adds:

Our citizens are interested in both private and public affairs; concern over personal matters does not keep them from devoting themselves also to the community. In fact, we regard the man who does no public service, not as one who minds his business, but as worthless. All of us share in considering and deciding public policy, in the belief that action is sure to fail when it is undertaken without full preliminary discussion. (Thucydides, 1954)

The Greeks therefore, believed that citizenship should be based on obligations to the state rather than on the rights given to the individual as we have it today. Indeed for the 5<sup>th</sup> century Greeks, and particularly in *poleis* such as Athens and Sparta, where the evidences are strong, loyalty of the citizens lay first with their respective states (Hosking, 2005). The destiny of the state was indeed seen as their very destiny and truly, when a state is made up of ideal patriotic citizens, they feel greater commitment to the community. Contrary to the Greeks’ experience, civic participation is no longer required for citizenship in many countries of the world today. For instance, in the US, there is no requirement to attend town meetings, belong to any party, vote in or run for elections. Civic participation is purely voluntary. Thus, the idea of citizen and citizenship today is dynamic, transformative and endlessly expanding, metamorphosing in nature from the Greek exclusivity to contemporary inclusivity, from closed to open and from unitary to being diffused<sup>5</sup>.

---

## 1. CITIZEN AND CITIZENSHIP: SOME SCHOLARS’ UNDERSTANDINGS

---

In Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates, asserts that an ideal state would consist of three classes of citizens: the guardians, the soldiers and the common people (Omeregbe, 1989, p.101). These respectively correspond to the tripartite nature of the soul in Plato’s Psychology: the rational,

---

<sup>3</sup> Article 2, Section 1, Clause 5 of the United States Constitution.

<sup>4</sup> Brumbaugh, Robert, “Aristotle “Microsoft(R) Student 2008(DVD).

---

<sup>5</sup> Yvonne M. Herbert & Lori Wilkinson (op.cit), p.3.

spirited and appetitive parts<sup>6</sup>. The guardians are to rule the state, the soldiers are to defend its sovereignty and the common people, such as farmers, merchants and artisans, are to provide the material needs of the state<sup>7</sup>. The guardians, who are the rulers of the state, are seen by philosophers as kings (Plato, 1881, p.183). They are to undergo long and rigorous educational programme until they are thirty-five years old before taking up any official assignment (Ibid., p.112). They are to own no private property but to live in communities together like monks and practice common possession of things with nobody claiming anything as his own, at least while they lasted in office. All their children belong to the state which would be responsible for their education. In other words, Plato proposes, not only the elimination of private properties, but also of family (Cross & Woodzey, 1966, p.102). This would enable the guardians to be completely dedicated to the service of the state. Since the guardians double as rulers and decision makers of the state, it becomes imperative for them to acquire or possess *sophia*, the quality or virtue of wisdom for only the wise, indeed the philosopher-kings, have the reasoning capacity to grasp reality, draw conclusions and administer justice.

Similarly, the ruled, especially the soldiers, should not have private properties. They should live communal lives and undergo educational, physical and military training to enable them to be completely dedicated to the state. Because the primary duty of the soldiers is to defend the state and protect its citizens from any internal and external aggression, they require the basic virtue of courage (*andreia*), so as to willingly take orders from their rulers and face dangers. Courage recognises and maintains the truth as a natural order and the commonest way to exhibit fortitude is by reasonable endurance of ordinary difficulties of life. The rest of the citizens should also undergo some certain level of educational, physical and military training to enable them meet up with the both material and economic needs of the state. As the ruled in the state, they must follow their leaders instead of pursuing private interests and exhibit the virtue of moderation (*sophrosyne*), the subordination of personal desire to a higher purpose.

Among Romans, the idea of virtue in citizen or virtuous citizen was detached from the robust theory of moral requirement offered by Greeks. The Romans saw the crowning of the ideal citizenship theory in the practice of courageous military heroism in defence of a free state. The Roman drive for glory, honour and power to defend the liberties of collective, aristocratic self-rule was highly regarded even by one of the great Christian fathers, St. Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430), who described it as double-edged. He had praised the Romans in his *City*

*of God* for establishing a long-lasting and glorious state. Because he viewed concept of citizenship from a religious perspective, Augustine then called upon Christians and those who believed that they are future citizens of heaven to take care of the pride evident in the Roman ideals of citizenship with a view to knowing the ultimate futility of all earthly ambitions (Augustine, 1950). Thus, those whose future citizenship is not of the world but of heaven, should, like Jesus Christ, embrace absolute humility and extricate themselves from political convolutions. Noting specifically the ensuing decline of the grandeur of Rome in his days, Augustine submitted that humanity would also ultimately fail. The assured enterprise then was to embrace humility, accept the will of God and delight in citizenship of heaven.

Between the Medieval and Renaissance period, the concept of citizen or citizenship shifted slightly from socio-political considerations to other socio-cultural European traditions, pointing to deeper historical pedigrees in the ties between the language of citizenship and the struggle for communal independence. For instance after the Renaissance, Niccolo Machiavelli, most renowned and controversial as an advocate of citizen liberties (Machiavelli, N. 2007), was stirred by the model of civic virtue practiced by the Romans. Machiavelli, since his conception of the citizen-body remains definitely patriarchal, called for a new ethos of devotion to the political community sealed by a practice of collective self-rule and self-defence (Ibid.).

John Locke's, *Two Treatises of Government*, attaches the idea of individual rights to a notion of collective sovereignty (Locke, 1963, p.338). He notes that with the advent of the commercial society, unlike those of the Graeco-Romans, promotion of individual liberties should be fused with a form of government that would require very limited participation on the part of all citizens. It then means that in the contemporary times, accountability towards the citizens should constitute an essential ingredient of democratic government and herein lies the quality of citizenship. Should accountability be assured, the actual form government and degrees of popular participation becomes secondary (Ibid.). Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Social Contract* treats the theme of citizenship by drawing more on ancient accounts of citizen virtue to criticize the lack of active participation in collective self-rule. The dearth of public participation negates the essence of true popular liberties or government (Appadoria, 1963, p.28). At the core of Rousseau's political philosophy is the idea that modern citizens should be judged by the suitably high standards of the ancient experience of citizenship in which citizens collectively make decisions that affect them as practised in ancient Athens.

David Hume and Adam Smith view citizenship purely from an economic perspective. They contend that, unlike the contemporary times, there were hardly free markets in

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.102.

<sup>7</sup> *Republic* (Literature), Microsoft (R) Student 2008 (DVD), Redmond W.A: Microsoft Corporation, 2007.

antiquity; oligarchic governments and their citizens were therefore, compelled to be dependent on slave-labour to cultivate their large estates while they concentrated on politics and leisure to serve the state. To command the obedience of slaves and maintain his economic position, it required that the ancient man be rigid and harsh. With the development of the market however, the rigid and fragile virtue of the antique man was replaced by the greater flexibility of manner. In all, for Hume and Smith, commercial activities in this modern era made citizenship flexible and easily attainable.

We can conclude with T.H. Marshall's classic, *Citizenship and Social Class* which offers an explanation for the successive growth of citizenship rights in the context of the development, course and consequence of the capitalist mode of production. It is known that Marshall's scholarship was a ground-breaking exposition which embraced social and economic rights and questioned the concept of citizenship with an explanation different from the solely narrow theory of formal individual liberties (Ibid., p.63). And so, he defined citizenship as "a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community, which includes civil, political and social rights and obligations" (Marshall, 1950). While civil rights are associated with formal individual liberties - *habeas corpus*, political liberties are participatory. While the former are liberty rights such as the right of association, the right to mortgage one's labour on a free market, and right to justice in the courts of law and so on, the latter are participatory rights which include the right to vote, to elect representatives and so on. Moreover, Marshall identifies social rights as the "consumer rights of the modern welfare". In all, these categories of rights are paradigms of citizenship and they belonged to, or rather, are given to the citizen through what Marshall termed the "status of citizenship" (Somers, 1964, p.67).

## 2. CITIZEN, CITIZENSHIP AND THE STATE: THE ARISTOTELIAN PERSPECTIVE

Aristotle is generally regarded as the founder of the scientific approach to politics. He treated politics as a way of life or an organized system of behavior, operative in a political community (Aristotle, 2007, p.xxxv). His perspective on the notion of citizen and the state are gleaned from his *Politics*. Here, he answers the questions of how a state should be organized and what should be the nature or roles of all concerned to ensure the happiness of all. In the Book 3, otherwise called The Third Methodos, the issue of citizenship is discussed against the background of the realities and attitudes in the 4<sup>th</sup> century Athens. Although modern states have significantly

advanced beyond the thoughts of Aristotle, something tangible can still be taken from the prescriptions he gave on the idea of an ideal state and its citizens.

Aristotle, as implied above, believes that man, by nature, is a socio-political being – *politikon zoon* – capable of living the good life only in a political association (*polis*). Yet, not all who live in *polis* can be termed citizens, or rather, ideal citizens. Similarly, it is not every citizen that has equal share of power in government (Aristotle, 1998). As the saying goes: 'all animals are equal, though some are more equal'. And so for Aristotle, an ideal citizen is "a person who has the right (*exousia*) to participate in deliberative or judicial office in a state" (Somers, 1964, p.94). "Whoever is entitled to participate in an office, involving deliberation or decision is a citizen in that state" (Aristotle, 1962, p.171). Aristotle's citizen, therefore, must be someone who partakes in the active deliberations of the state often through its assemblies and in the juries. The state (*polis*) comprises different categories of citizens, sufficient enough to ensure and assure a sovereign and self-sufficient polity. To ensure the self-sufficiency and assure sovereignty, participation of all citizens in conduct of the *polis* is incontestable. And when Aristotle speaks of about participation, he infers that the ideal citizen should participate and deliberate directly in the assembly; for him, voting for representatives was simply not just enough. He must be available and willing to serve on juries to sustain justice and help uphold the law. This is in contrast with the contemporary realities in many states where there are very few opportunities to participate directly in politics. Nigeria, for instance, operates an indirect system of citizen participation in government. Nevertheless, Aristotle's suggestion can be accommodated today through the inclusion of public opinion bills (called Private Members' Bill previously used in Ghana), which seek to understand the minds of the non-elected citizens. For Aristotle, participation in deliberation and decision making means that the citizen is a part of a group that discusses both the advantages and disadvantages, the good and bad, and the just and unjust in the state and then passes law as well as reaches judicial decisions, all resulting from robust deliberations earlier made (Nichols, 1992, p.38). This procedure, as was practiced in the Athens of Aristotle, warrants that all citizens should examine the various possible courses of actions and weigh alternatives, primarily on their merits and demerits. By doing so, the citizen participates in reason and speech, thereby fulfilling his purpose and developing his human potentials. Participation, in this process, enables him to attain the virtuous and happy life (*summum bonum*).

Moreover, Aristotle says in a state where citizens are akin and equal by nature, all citizens should be allowed to participate in politics, though not all at once (Aristotle, 2007, p.42). They must take turns, ruling and being ruled



in turn<sup>8</sup> as it was in Athens. He asserts that citizenship is not just a bunch of right and privileges but also a bundle of duties. The citizen has, not only certain freedom that the non-citizen does not have, but also important obligations which include political participation and military service. For him, political requirement of citizenship is entirely in accordance with nature because citizenship is nothing less than the fullest attainment of human potentials in terms of the “good life”, that is, the *summum bonum*. The essence of citizenship therefore, lies in active participation.

The citizen is also not merely a free inhabitant of the state or a member of a political group; he is the essence of the state with the ability to achieve the greatest measure of happiness and virtue as an integral part of the community. For this reason, the citizen must have the leisure to devote himself to the political and socio-cultural pursuits which facilitate the understanding of virtue. It is against this background that Aristotle affirms that the citizen must not live a mechanical or commercial life which is ignoble and militates against the attainment of virtue (Aristotle, 1962, p.415, T. A. Sinclair, trans.). Aristotle recognizes the fact that the picture of citizenship changes as constitution or demography changes. A citizen in democracy may not be so regarded in an oligarchy. But in all, Aristotle holds that a citizen should participate actively in his state affairs and constitution (Aristotle, 1962, p.107, E. Barker, ed.).

---

### 3. CITIZEN AND CITIZENSHIP: PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

---

#### 3.1 Political Participation

As explained above, Aristotle believes that the essence of citizenship rights is to enable citizens to become functioning member of a state, one who should participate actively in the deliberations of the assemblies and in decisions of the juries (Aristotle, 1962, p.103, T. A. Sinclair, trans.). The fundamental requirement for citizenship therefore, is the ability to rule and be ruled in turn. The citizens are those men who are similar in stock, that is, those with freedom and ability to rule over such men who are also equal to them in political affairs<sup>9</sup>. These are the people who should rule the mechanics and labourers, who are almost reliant on the means of expression of the former. Regrettably, this prescription stands in contrast to the principle found in modern societies, including those of Africa, where everyone is not afforded the opportunity to participate in politics even though allowance can be made for that through public opinion bills. There are also no basic criteria for measuring who should rule and who should be ruled.

#### 3.2 Economic Freedom

Aristotle says freedom from economic engagements is essential for appropriate discharge of the citizen's duties. Paradoxically, he notes that the holding of some property should be an important requirement for citizenship<sup>10</sup>. Freedom and property holdings are thus essential qualifications which could ensure leisure as a tool necessary for participation in political and civic functions. To Aristotle, manual work, otherwise called banausic labour, deteriorates the soul and renders the body unfit for political speculation and discharge of civic duties respectively. Working classes therefore, are not eligible as citizens. This is an elitist view cleverly crafted to support aristocratic rule. It is no surprise that Aristotle belonged to the upper class in Athens and he spoke like one. His requirement here would not fit into contemporary times for many obvious reasons. Citizens need to earn a living, not only to keep body and soul together, but also to participate efficiently in the whole business of politics.

#### 3.3 Military Service

According to Aristotle, military service is an essential requirement for citizenship (Ross, 1927, p.303). The deliberative assembly should include serious minded people, men who have had practical experiences as warriors ‘for those who control the weapons also determine whether a constitution will survive or not (Ibid.). This is just, and as such, various governmental functions should be carried out by the elderly or experienced statesmen, while the men of military age should perform the function of defending the state against both internal and external aggression and participate in its political affairs (Ibid., p.314). That is why Aristotle says, “in a constitutional government, the fighting men have the supreme power, and those who possess arms are the citizens” (Ibid., p.303). In all, the emphasis of Aristotle is that a citizen must first participate in military activities of the state before becoming active in its political affairs. In Nigeria as in many countries, military service is not a measure to become a citizen of the state. Several countries however, encourage their youth to participate in all sorts of paramilitary training for one year. In the US history, a policy of conscription of men had been operated at various times, at least, during the Vietnam War. Even now, male citizens are still required to register with the Selective Service System which required of them to be called upon in the event of a future military draft.

#### 3.4 Virtue

Aristotle believes that a citizen has an obligation to obtain virtue in the state. For him, politics is about developing virtue of the citizens, making it feasible for them to live a life of moral wisdom. He explains this with an examination of the virtue of an ordinary good man and that of a good and ideal citizen. The two are not the

---

<sup>8</sup> Stumpf, op. cit, p.104.

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, (C.D.C Reeve), op. cit. 1277b8.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, (Ernest Barker), op. cit, Bk. IV, Chp. VI, p.171.

same. He however, concludes that both of them will be indistinguishable if they both possess virtue (Aristotle, 1962, p.101, E. Barker, trans., ed.). That is, they would be the same if a good man possesses the citizen virtues, required for being a good ruler as well as being a good subject and vice versa. Nevertheless, prudence or practical wisdom, as a type of virtue, is only peculiar to the citizen as a ruler to enable him to rule well. Other qualities, such as temperance, justice and courage belong in different degrees to both rulers and subjects who are both citizens. The types of moral wisdom or virtue common to subjects as citizens are “right opinion” (Ibid., p.106).

Aristotle stresses the duty of the statesman or ruler who is also citizen. He states that he must first have knowledge of virtue if he is to guide the state towards the goal of virtue, “for the true statesman is thought of as a man who has taken special pains to study the nature of virtue, for he wants to make his fellow citizens good and law abiding people”. According to him, ‘legislators make their citizens good by acclimatizing them to virtue; this is the intention of every legislator, and those who do not carry it out fall short in their objective’ (Aristotle, 1962, p.92). He branded the ruled as flute-makers and rulers as flute-players who use what the flute-makers make to make music (Ibid.). Aristotle explains that a citizen is akin to a sailor, one among numbers of sailors on a ship, each with different tasks and functions to perform. Although each has a specific virtue according to his ability and duty on the ship; there is also a common virtue corresponding to them all, which is the safety of the ship. In this parallel way, the good of the citizens should be to obtain virtue. This virtue should then be used in different capacities according to the abilities of the citizens. In the process of acquiring this virtue, the common good of the state should be the chief concern for all citizens since the destiny of the state is the destiny of all.

### 3.5 Age

Aristotle submits that a citizen must be a dynamic member of a state, not just a number needed to fill the demographic quota for the existence of a state. Therefore, he describes the citizen as someone who should be mature and psychologically sound enough to be eligible for the offices in state (Aristotle, 1962, p.168, T. J. Saunders, rev.). This implies that the citizens must not be too young or too old. He should be of sound mind so that he can give sound judgment and participate actively in political and other civic duties, not necessarily old men who have been relieved of military and political duties<sup>11</sup>. The modern world is no longer emphatic on age qualification for citizenship, except in cases of migrants seeking citizenship of another country.

<sup>11</sup> In this regard, the age of the adult Athenian ranged between 18 and 59; men above 60 years are considered unfit to actively participate especially in military duties. Aristotle (E. Barker), op. cit, Bk. III, Chp. I, p.93.

### 3.6 Citizen Rights

There is more to the state and its role than being an association, which only serves the common interests of its people by fulfilling their human desire for communality. In Aristotle’s view, the state has a purpose to enable its citizens to enjoy the greatest degree of happiness and acquire the fullest measure of virtue. Aristotle says the best state will fulfill this purpose by allowing all its citizens to obtain *arête* (goodness) and *phronesis* (moral wisdom) largely through civic participation. Political participation therefore, is an imperative right of a citizen. The citizen has the right to participate in the administration of justice and in legislation in his community (Aristotle, 1962, E. Barker, trans., ed. ). Also, he has the right to serve as a member of the jury in the state. He has the right to rule and be ruled in turn, to vote and be voted for at elections. In fact, a citizen has a right to participate directly in political matters rather than in choosing representatives as we do today.

Aristotle also proposes that the citizen has the right to participate in military activities of the state. The state has the obligation to make available to him weapons of war, if he cannot afford them. He has the right to enroll into the military at a youthful age to enable him to become well trained and protected in case of any internal or external aggression. Aristotle states that on the whole, an ideal citizen should carry out his civic duties, such as obeying the rules and regulations of the state, complying with the rulers’ instructions, paying taxes, supporting national social programmes, helping in the maintenance of the public structures and participating intensely in socio-cultural activities of the state (Aristotle, 1998, 1284a1). The common good and progress of the state should be his primary concern, which includes the ensuring of peaceful co-existence with other citizens. A proper citizen therefore, is equally entitled to the state protection and legal rights (Ibid., p.93). This embraces seeking of justice in the law courts, protection of the state and right to live anywhere within the state. Aristotle summarizes that the state has the obligation to educate all the citizens in such a way that they would support the kind of constitution they practice and the principle that makes it legitimate (Aristotle, 1961, p.81, H. Tredennick, rev.).

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have reviewed the twin notions of citizens and citizenship significantly from the perspective of Aristotle’s *Politics*. On the comparative level, it is apparent that a great distinction exists between Aristotle’s perception of and prescription for citizenship and the contemporary realities. Aristotle’s concept of citizenship is an elitist status relationship and an activity that could only be fully practised in a certain setting like Athens, a

small state compared with any in contemporary times. Of course, he did not expect his views to be gauged by measures appropriate to the modern standards. They are perhaps intended for states that are self sufficient and able to provide for all the basic needs of the citizens. Such citizens are expected to conscientiously and cautiously perform certain obligations to their states such as military and civic duties. Similarly, the citizen has rights which are political, military and civic in nature. He is also under the protection of the state. However, the well-being and interests of the state surpasses citizen's rights just as the state is responsible for the well-being of its citizen.

In Africa today, the grim reality is that, citizens are not concerned about their responsibilities and what they have to give to the advancement of their states. Rather, citizens are desirous of what the state has to offer them. Citizenship is seen just as a free bundle of rights and privileges without any serious responsibilities in return. Responsibilities should include paying of taxes, participating intensely during elections, and acquisition of morals which can help to curb vices and attain the *summum bonum* (greatest happiness).

Aristotle's main emphasis is that, active participation in politics is a fundamental requirement for becoming an ideal citizen. All citizens, in addition to other requirements, are expected to participate, directly or indirectly, in civic matter and contribute to the deliberations in the state assemblies. Aristotle believes that the socio-political responsibilities of the citizen to the state are indispensable since they are in accordance with nature; and it is only through these that the citizen fulfills his human potentials and attains the greatest happiness (*summum bonum*) in life. The citizen then is he who develops his morals or virtues and humanity through his active participation in affairs of his state.

---

## REFERENCES

---

- Appadoria, A. (1963). *The substance of politics* (p.28). London, Oxford Press.
- Aristotle, B. R. (2007). *Microsoft® student 2008 (DVD)*. Redmond W. A. Microsoft Corporation.
- Aristotle. (1961). *Nicomachean ethics*. In J. A. K. Thomson (Trans., ed.), H. Tredennick (rev). Penguin Books, London.
- Aristotle. (1962). *Politics*. In E. Barker (Trans., ed.), pp.94-95. New York, NY, Oxford University Press.
- Aristotle. (1962). *The politics*. In T. A. Sinclair (Trans., ed.), T. J. Saunders (rev). Penguin Books, London.
- Aristotle. (1998). *The politic*. In C. D. C. Reeve (Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company, Cambridge.
- Augustine, St. (1950). *The city of God*. In D. Marcus, G. Wilson, & J. J. Smith (Trans.). New York, Random House, Bk 1. p.12
- Cross, R. C., & Woodzey, A. D. (1966). *Plato's republic: A philosophical commentary*. St Martin's Press, New York.
- Heinemann, R. (2004). Review of *downsizing democracy: How America sidelined its citizens and privatised its public*. Matthew A. Crenson and Benjamin Gingsberg, in the Independent Institute.
- Herbert, Y. M. (Ed.). (2002). *Citizenship in transformation in Canada*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- Herbert, Y. M., & Wilkinson, L. (2002). Conceptual policy, experiential and educational issues in citizenship. In Y. M. Herbert (Ed.), *Citizenship in transformation in Canada* (p.3, 5). Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- Hosking, G. (2005). *The modern scholar: Epochs of European civilisation: Antiquity to renaissance, Lecture 3: Ancient Greece*. The Modern Scholar via Recorded Books, LCC, United Kingdom, ISBN 1-4025-8360-5. Retrieved from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/americanenglish/citizen>
- Locke, J. (1963). Two treatises of government. In P. Laslett (Ed.), *A critical edition with an introduction and apparatus criticu*. Mentor Publishers, New York.
- Marshall, T. H. (1950). *Citizenship and social class*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Nichols, M. (1992). *Citizens and statesmen: A study of aristotle's politics*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Savage, Maryland.
- Messe, E., et al. (2005). *The heritage guide to the constitution*. US: Regnery Publishing.
- Machiavelli, N. (2007). *In microsoft® student 2008 (DVD)*. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation.
- Omoregbe, J. I. (1989). *A simplified history of western philosophy: Ancient and medieval philosophy, Vol. I*. Joja Education Research & Publishers Limited, Lagos.
- Plato. (1881). *Republic*. In B. Jowett (Trans.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Pocock J. G. A. (1998). The idea of citizenship since classical times. In S. Gerson (Ed.), *The citizenship debates*. Minneapolis, The University of Minnesota.
- Ross, W. D. (Ed.). (1927). *Aristotle: Selections*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Somer, M. R. (1994). Right, relationality and membership: Rethinking the making and meaning of citizenship. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 19(1).
- Stumpf, S. E. (1989). *Philosophy: History and problems* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Thucydides. (1954). *The peloponnesian war*. In R. Warner (Ed.). Penguin Classics Books.