The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

***PHRONĒSIS* IN THE *POLITICS*:**

THE EDUCATION OF THE *POLIS*

A Dissertation in

Philosophy

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2011

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a reading of Aristotle's *Politics* with special attention to his use of the concept *phronēsis*. It proceeds in three distinct parts: First, the *Nicomachean Ethics* is mined to establish the understanding and importance of *phronēsis*. Second, the *Politics* is read in light of this, reworking the traditional definitions of that which constitutes "healthy" or "sick" regimes. Third, three distinct moments from Aristotle's ethico-political dialectic are isolated and discussed to examine their rhetorical force: the God Among Men, slavery, and nobility.

The thesis is that Aristotle uses rhetoric in order to present a politically revolutionary doctrine regarding the perfection and completion of the *polis* as a natural kind. The best *polis* is revealed as an aristocratic polity wherein the government and citizens rule each other in turn. The *aristoi* or "best" are chosen by the people on the basis of their possession of *phronēsis*, as it is described in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The logistical structure of government is inconsequential to the criterion of rule by and through *phronēsis*. All other *poleis* are shown to be different forms of despotism, whereas this is the sole government that is both possible via human artifice and properly called a "healthy" *polis*. The ultimately best government, which requires the assistance of nature, is that ruled by an individual whom Aristotle calls the God Among Men, a person who exceeds all others in his possession of philosophical and phronetic ability. The aristocratic polity would recognize the emergence of this individual by willingly ceding power to him, whereas all others would either exile or kill him. The significance of Aristotle's rhetoric is reinforced by a rereading of his account of slavery in the *Politics* and that of nobility in *On Noble Birth*. Both of these are shown to be *ad absurdum* arguments, proving the invalidity of the institutions rather than their proper or natural implementation.

In this manner Aristotle is allowed to mean what he says, removing the generally accepted impression of the latter two issues as inconsistent or problematic. Rather, when read literally with the *Ethics* as the constant backdrop, Aristotle's account remains both consistent and remarkably prescient. As seen in the conclusion, not only does his anatomy of the *polis* as a natural entity survive scrutiny, it also provides a cipher for examining contemporary ethico-political issues while it predicts a great deal of the future ethico-political history of the West. By misreading Aristotle on these issues, the West has enacted some of the more common and heinous examples of despotism, particularly by biologizing the political in a manner disguised as a remedy for the sake of the many.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest thanks to those who have made this project possible. My debt to my committee chair Véronique Fóti, and the committee members is inestimable, particularly to Dan Conway, who has acted as a constant advocate, mentor, and friend since I began my graduate career. I would like to thank all of my colleagues during my time at Penn State, who breathed truth into the cliché that one learns more from one's fellow students than from anyone else. Most notable among these are Eric Anderson, Ömer Aygün, Ryan Drake, and Michael Schleeter. In addition, I must mention The College Diner and the Oasis Hookah Bar, the locations, clientele, employees, and late hours without which this project would never have come to fruition. I also owe thanks to those who have assisted me during my time outside of Happy Valley: Mitchell Aboulafia, Doug Anderson, Richard Dagger, Mindy Harwood, Paul Haught, Leigh Johnson, Richard Kearney, Meghan Lisi, Mitch Miller, Gregory Pappas, Matthew Pelletier, David Rasmussen, Daniel Scarborough, and Eileen Sweeney. Most of all I owe my gratitude to Kitten Grace, who acted as a constant mirror for my flaws and a pillar for my weakness, and who revealed to me that the true meaning of the word "partner" entails the Aristotelian concept of complete friendship: someone who at all times and in every way makes you better. All that is worthwhile in what follows I attribute to their mutual influence, support, and acumen. All shortcomings are my own.

I Introduction: (Re)educating the polis

When one peruses the critical apparatus surrounding Aristotle's *Politics*, one is struck by the variety of approaches that it encompasses. Aristotle is read as the sober scientist who always means what he says, yet there is as much disagreement about the text as one finds among readers of Plato. Aristotle is regarded as a purely historical source, reflecting ancient Greek views of theoretical and practical politics, rather than providing contemporary political purchase. Or Aristotle is mined for responses to liberalism and contemporary political theory. The *Politics* is the preeminent model for the elitist, arguing for virtuous oligarchy. Or it ultimately presents the supporters of radical democracy, the communitarians and the feminists with their most august proponent. The justification for slavery found in the *Politics* is Aristotle's great shame, showing that even The Philosopher is human and subject to the prejudices of his times. Or it is restructured in order to excuse him from his own apparent inconsistencies, or it is even found to be ironic. The text is seen as the paradigm for all future attempts to examine the complex intricacies of human community in a scientific fashion. Or it is always dialectical, proceeding to teach the reader how to deal with that part of nature which completely resists scientific certainty and scrutiny. Aristotle is the great critic of Socrates in the *Republic*, charging the philosopher to be directly invested in politics. Or he ambiguously allows for the philosopher to remain apolitical, failing to present a sufficient argument for the philosopher's participation (and, thereby, failing to provide a sufficient alternative to the *Republic*).

While these commentaries contain a wealth of useful perspectives, the approach is often myopic; by approaching Aristotle as the sober scientist one forgets his stated maxim which informs his ethical and political works—that one cannot expect scientific certainty when

confronting the complex ends of humanity. Many readers of the *Politics* do not pay sufficient attention to its inextricable link with the *Ethics*, hinging on the concept of *phronēsis*. Traditionally translated as practical wisdom or prudence, *phronēsis* is the ability to recognize alternatives and to choose after deliberation. As the capacity to change in the face of necessity, it is arguably that which makes humans unique and separates them from beasts and gods: for beasts are incapable of change, and the gods are untouched by necessity. Most importantly, it is the basis for knowing when to rule and when to be ruled. Although it is contrasted with theoretical wisdom—and thereby the man of action or *phronimos* is contrasted with the man of thought or the philosopher—without this ability to discern and choose it is difficult to see how the philosopher could exist, let alone be capable of virtue.[1] Indeed, *phronēsis* is both form and function for Aristotle's ethical and political works: for just as Aristotle states that one cannot seek absolute certainty in such inquiries, it is *phronēsis* which allows him—and his readers—to discuss varied human ends in the face of the exigencies of human life, and to embrace rather than deny or despair at life's ambiguity.

I intend to provide this reading of Aristotle by tracing *phronēsis* in the *Ethics* and *Politics*. His use of the term throughout each text shows it to be constitutive of being human, both with relation to ourselves and to the larger communities in which we live. Insofar as Aristotle defines political rule (in contrast to despotism) as ruling and being ruled in turn, *phronēsis* provides the condition for the possibility of political rule. Indeed, from his examination of the parts of the individual soul, to his examination of the parts of the city, it is *phronēsis* which allows human beings to actualize their freedom—because of, rather than in spite of, their recognition of that which limits their freedom. And when one remembers that the primary function of the rulers in a *polis* is the education of the citizens in *phronēsis*, one can

finally take seriously Aristotle's description of the "best regime"—the *polis* ruled and reflected by the God Among Men—rather than regarding it as an unrealistic utopia which even Aristotle ultimately rejects. Without such a reading, Aristotle's *Politics* threatens not only to confound the elitist and the egalitarian alike in their respective searches for an endorsement of virtue and liberty, but also to condemn Aristotle to inconsistencies that must either be explained away or ignored. In short, it is this focus on *phronēsis* which allows Aristotle to mean what he says.

In recent years Aristotle has received particular attention not just from historians of philosophy but from political theorists who would have the *Politics* act as a cipher for answering the problems within contemporary liberalism. On the one hand, there are those who would have Aristotle support a participatory or community approach to politics which is absent from liberalism's traditional preoccupation with protecting liberty while forsaking community.[2] Aristotle's conception of political rule, which is at its heart a response to any and all forms of despotism, certainly requires the participation of parts in a larger whole in order to be manifest. Whether one considers the claims of the appetites which must be honored as much as those of the mind, or the claims of the poor which must be honored as much as those of the rich, political give-and-take is always necessary if the respective body is to maintain a healthy constitution. Indeed, Aristotle encourages such comparisons when he famously calls human beings by nature political. This statement does not simply refer to his assertion that the *polis* is a natural entity, and that human beings must live in a proper *polis* in order to fully realize their *ergon* or function. The statement also refers to the manner in which human beings order their own parts.

On the other hand, Aristotle's preoccupation with virtue and his insistence on recognizing hierarchies—from the parts of the soul, to the parts of the *polis*, to the parts throughout nature—gives the elitist interpreter a basis for reclaiming inequality in the community as both natural and

good.[3] That is, Aristotle obviously is concerned with if not insistent upon such discernment in the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, and goes so far as to call the individual or the *polis* who would attempt to ignore such differences as woefully despotic.[4] More importantly, discerning greater and lesser is at the heart of that which allows human beings to achieve their potential individually *and* in community. It is this discernment that forms the basis of education in virtue, and that allows for a *polis* to be ruled by those most fitted to rule. Recognizing and choosing the good—or, one might equally say, allowing that which is better to compel one's choice—is the foundation of politics.

Between the egalitarian and the elitist are those who read Aristotle as providing support for both camps, and resisting exclusive ownership by either.[5] Rather, Aristotle's endorsement of political rule is the means by which the democrat and the oligarch can both get what they want—thereby providing the *sine qua non* for the happiness that is sought in humanity's participation in a *polis*. Political rule is the sole form of rule which can account for the equally valid claims of the many and of the few. Aristotle's presentation, critique, and rejection of different regimes is in each case based on this or that group's inability to address the complex relations and needs within the human community. That is, all attempts to rigidly structure politics reduce to so many forms of tyranny and despotism. Political rule, by contrast, embraces mixed structures. To rule and be ruled in turn is to define government as compromise: to respect the immediate claims of the quotidian as well as to honor timeless tradition and custom—all the while remaining open to change in the face of necessity. It is only in this regime of political rule—which, interestingly enough, Aristotle refers to with the generic name for "regime" in Greek, *polity*—where the oligarch and the democrat, the egalitarian and the elitist, both find expression. For such thinkers Aristotle's *Politics* is no more concerned with describing a utopia than it is with providing a blueprint. It is a dialectical investigation of politics *per se* which enacts political rule as it

describes it, convoking citizen and statesman alike to understand that freedom is only recognized by confronting its limitations in an uncertain world. Politics is messy and filled with conflict, but it only becomes tragic when one forgets or ignores this fact. Only by embracing such complexity can politics become the realm wherein happiness is achievable.

Nevertheless, in calling a truce between the elitist and egalitarian, the middle-way approach to Aristotle's political philosophy can fail to account for many of the text's most controversial, yet fundamental, statements. Central among these is Aristotle's unequivocal assertion that the best *polis* would be that ruled by the individual of outstanding virtue, the God Among Men.[6] On the one hand, this individual embodies terrible necessity in a way only comparable to a god. First, Aristotle describes him as so fitted for rule, so exceptional in virtue, so incommensurable with any individual—or even the sum of all individuals—that his rule would be unquestionable. It is not only unjust for the *polis* to deny him his right to rule as an absolute monarch, it is unjust even to deem oneself his equal. He is so different in kind that Aristotle can only describe him via allusions outside of the human realm: he is a God Among Men, a lion among lambs, Heracles among mortals. On the other hand, he seems in every way to disrupt that which Aristotle has built. He precludes deliberation and choice, as the people must simply cede power to him. His rule would of necessity be despotic, for although his exceptional virtue would seem to negate this as a possibility, Aristotle refers to him as a "law unto himself" for whom shared status under the law would be laughable and contradictory. He would seem therefore to be the only citizen in his *polis*, for Aristotle defines citizenship as participation in ruling and governing. But if such participation is necessary for human beings to be happy—Aristotle states at the outset of the *Politics* that this is why human beings live in community—then the God Among Men would seem to preclude the happiness of all his subjects. His very

existence as a godlike terrible necessity limits the freedom of all others to a point where Aristotle's allusions are not exaggerations or poetic license, but his only rhetorical option: the best man in the best regime rules as Zeus rules the cosmos.[7] But his own happiness must be forfeit in the process: if happiness is predicated on friendship and community, the God Among Men is alone in the world and without equal. Indeed, even his description as "possessing an excess of virtue" is presumably a contradiction in terms, for in the *Ethics* Aristotle calls this impossible (as virtue is always a mean and vice always an extreme).[8] In short, the God Among Men is a paradox without explanation: he is simultaneously the best and the wretched, the full realization of humanity and its complete frustration, the most fitted to rule and the fugitive who, according to Aristotle, the human community would kill or ostracize—with a type of justice.[9]

Related paradoxes arise with regard to the best state (aristocracy or polity), the best life (contemplation or action), the proper role of the philosopher (political or apolitical) and the place of slavery (necessary, or just, or neither). However, when one places *phronēsis* at the center of the two texts, tracing its definition through the *Ethics* and its vital importance throughout the *Politics*, these paradoxes obtain coherence.

In this book I will reread the *Politics* through the lens of *phronēsis*, in order to show that the only *polis* which is not called such equivocally is a constitutional and aristocratic polity whose preeminent purpose is the education of the citizens in *phronēsis*. I will illustrate how, for Aristotle, the logistics of the best government are inconsequential, supplanted by the essential necessity that those who govern possess *phronēsis*. "Aristocracy" will be shown to be distinct from and opposed to any and all systems of oligarchy, elitism, heredity, plutarchy, etc., insofar as it literally refers to the rule of those who are elected on the basis of their superior possession of *phronēsis*. This reading solves many of the paradoxical difficulties traditionally associated with

the *Politics*, most notably with regard to the (literal, rather than hereditary or absolute) monarchy of the God Among Men. I will conclude that the God Among Men is not a utopian vision which Aristotle humors yet ultimately rejects. Rather, while the exile or murder of the God Among Men in a "sick" regime illustrates the greatest corruption for the *polis*, the emergence and rule of the God Among Men in a phronetic polity manifests the highest possibility of the *polis*.

The following project can be divided into three distinct sections. The first section, which constitutes the bulk of the project, explores the *Ethics* and *Politics* directly, mining the concept of *phronēsis* from the former in order to read the latter with this as its key. The second moves to Aristotle's support of the God Among Men while seeming to undermine him, concluding that this is the "best" *polis* in an absolute sense. The third addresses Aristotle's ability to use subtle rhetoric in presenting—and enacting—his practical thought , and how this answers additional ostensible paradoxes found within the *Politics*: most notably, the issue of slavery and nobility. The project will close by noting historical and continuing instances of political biologizing which have their basis in misunderstanding and misappropriating these aspects of Aristotle's practical thought.

In my second Chapter, I will explore the *Ethics* with the express purpose of reclaiming *phronēsis*. The *Ethics* famously begins as an inquiry into the end or good of being human, and quickly determines this to be *eudaimonia* or happiness. The pursuit of happiness is the text itself: Aristotle determines that happiness is not obtained but maintained as an active condition of the soul lived in accordance with virtue.[10] Virtue is not the birthright of human beings, but is cultivated through actions which become habit and inform character. Therefore, the education which Aristotle outlines in the *Ethics* has as its overarching goal the production and maintenance of virtue in those who would undergo it, as their means of achieving happiness.[11] However,

happiness does not exist in isolation, for according to Aristotle to have one virtue is to have them all, and included amongst the virtues are many that require community in order to be realized. Most notably, Aristotle states that friendship between likes is necessary for true happiness. Although debate continues as to whether the ultimate goal of the *Ethics*—or, to put it another way, whether the ultimate end of being human—is the life of action or the life of thought, this misses a crucial aspect of their relationship: just as happiness requires friendship and community within which to perform virtuous acts such as courage and philanthropy, *theōria* requires the discerning deliberation constitutive of *phronēsis* in order to exist. Although all involved in political rule may not rise to the level of philosophy, all philosophers must participate in a type of political rule in order to be philosophers—let alone in order to be happy. In short, while the *Ethics* teaches that participation in the political may not complete fulfillment of human potential, it also shows that it is necessary and sufficient for happiness—lest something happen contrary to nature.[12]

In Chapter III, I will use the concept of *phronēsis* from the *Ethics* to reread the *Politics*. The *Politics* has long been recognized as the second volume which, along with the *Ethics*, constitutes a two volume work focused on a single inquiry.[13] This is evident not only in form but in content, for Aristotle begins the *Politics* by telling us that the *polis* is a natural entity, that humans are by nature political, and that the happiness of human beings is contingent upon their participation in such a community. Further, Aristotle defines the proper purpose of rule, the primary concern of political authority, as the maintenance of the education of the citizens. Although readers often regard the *Ethics* as a text solely intended for the privileged class, a close reading of the *Politics* belies this assumption. On the one hand, the *Ethics* refers to virtue and happiness as things that cannot easily be obtained or lost, and gives nature a role in their

acquisition and deprivation. The more well-known examples are Aristotle's statements that it is much more difficult to be happy if one is born hideous, poor, lower class, etc. On the other hand, Aristotle is clear that, while these slings and arrows of outrageous fortune can facilitate a person's achievement of happiness or strip him of it, they are not otherwise integral to the existence of happiness.[14] What *is* necessary is an education in virtue with *phronēsis* as its fundamental basis, and life in a community that fosters rather than impedes the use of *phronēsis*. Put another way, as natural animals living in a natural association, human beings must be capable of actualizing their freedom through political rule in order to be happy. But if this actualization is the very practice of *phronēsis*, and *phronēsis* requires education in order to be maintained,[15] then all citizens—all humans who would obtain happiness from their natural association in the *polis*—would need to participate in a phronetic education like that laid out in the *Ethics*. Therefore, the *polis* wherein human beings may realize their freedom in such a manner that allows for virtue and happiness is that which Aristotle calls polity. If the primary role of government is the production of virtuous citizens via education in *phronēsis*, and if polity is called the best possible regime specifically on the basis of the citizens ruling and being ruled in turn, then a true polity would be one wherein all citizens participated in government and received education in *phronēsis*.

At this point it is crucial to remember that Aristotle chooses to name the best regime with an unnecessarily ambiguous term: *politeia* or "polity."[16] Polity is the generic word for regime as well as Aristotle's name for the best practicable regime. Although this is traditionally regarded as the "healthy" government which stands in opposition to "sick" democracy, Aristotle's choice of name implies that the best regime is in some sense the *only* regime, or the mold from which all other regimes are cast. This ambiguity is mirrored in Aristotle's description of the unqualifiedly

best regime which would be ruled by the God Among Men, for in that discussion he states that if someone, or some family or group, or the many arose in a *polis* possessing such outstanding virtue, then his or their rule would not only be best for himself or themselves and the rest, but would constitute the best possible polis.[17] When describing how other regimes fail to live up to their potential in the middle books of the *Politics*, in each case Aristotle diagnoses their respective problems as symptomatic of the same disease: they have chosen some form of despotism over its alternative, political rule. And when discussing the best regime in the later books, Aristotle is less concerned with the actual structuring of the government than the manner in which the government succeeds in implementing political rule. In short, the best regime is not so much defined by Aristotle as being ruled by one, or the few, or the many, or everyone, so much as it is defined by its ability to maintain political rather than despotic rule, informed by *phronēsis*.

The ambiguity as to whether the best *polis* is a monarchy, an oligarchy, or a democracy dissolves when one keeps *phronēsis* at the forefront of her reading the *Politics*. The best *polis* is that ruled by the best, regardless of how many this "best" happens to be at a given time or place in the life of the *polis*. On the one hand, the majority of citizens (specifically, the rest; those who are not included in the exceptional few) recognize this authoritative limit on their freedom by an exceptional few not as an expression of despotism, but as a freely chosen position based on their phronetic ability to recognize and choose the best in a given situation. Just as the best general is one who has previously been ruled and therefore knows what it is like, so too the best soldier is one who would defer judgment to another who is seasoned in tactics and who possesses years beyond his own. Political rule *and* citizenship are maintained when the citizens choose their own rulers on the basis of discernment, which requires that they each undergo their measure of

phronetic education and exercise their measure of franchise. In this way all citizens both rule and are ruled in turn, and they all manifest their freedom in the very expression of its limitation by the other. The best regime or polity *is* an aristocracy, regardless of whether the particular exigencies of polity literally constitute a democracy, an oligarchy, or a monarchy.

In Chapter IV, I will address the God Among Men. If we return to the paradoxes surrounding the God Among Men, *phronēsis* again provides the key. If someone arose who genuinely possessed such preeminent virtue so as to be called a God Among Men, then that person would be the most suited to rule. But if this person arose in a *polis* which was a true polity—which is to say a constitutional aristocracy, the governors of which are chosen on the basis of their own superior possession of *phronēsis*—then the citizen-rulers of such a *polis* would willingly cede power to this individual. Further, for those who claim that the individual of outstanding virtue would of necessity demand absolute power, and of necessity that this person would not be subject to the laws because Aristotle calls him "a law unto himself," they do not take seriously Aristotle's claim that such an individual is truly the possessor of preeminent virtue.[18] For such a virtuous one would be no more capable of the despotic demand for rule attributed to him by readers—notably, this is never directly stated in Aristotle, but interpolated into his account—than he would be of usurping the laws he prescribes for others due to his royal prerogative.[19] On the contrary: someone who is capable of acting thus is, by Aristotle's definition, *not* the God Among Men.

What, then, of the claim that the God Among Men is only capable of absolute, rather than political, rule? On the one hand, Aristotle does say that this person would have to be given an absolute—though not hereditary—monarchy for justice fully to be accomplished. This would provide him with rule, but would seem to deprive all others of ruling him in turn. Yet it must be

remembered that in a *polis* which did not sufficiently nourish *phronēsis* in its citizens, the God Among Men would be killed or ostracized—and Aristotle calls this a kind of justice. Although this is certainly not just in an absolute sense, it is just insofar as the many and the God Among Men would be incapable of anything like community, given their radically dissimilar natures. By contrast, the *polis* of phronetic citizens provides the ground in which the God Among Men could be possible, let alone thrive. In other words, this *polis* provides an absolute limit on the freedom manifested by the God Among Men: the citizens within the *polis* are the *sine qua non* of his survival, let alone his rule.

Finally, there is the problem of the God Among Men's lack of friendship, which mirrors the *Ethics*' paradox regarding the isolated, apolitical philosopher. Insofar as the God Among Men is different in kind from others, he is incapable of friendship. He is utterly alone. But Aristotle's critiques of oligarchy and tyranny provide a solution. There Aristotle states that the collective virtue of the many has not been considered in a just manner, for it can even outstrip that of the virtuous few—just as a potluck dinner is made better as it increases in participants.[20] Although the God Among Men is described as being incommensurable with the virtue of the collective, the collective in this case is not a *polis* of phronetic education. Rather, the possession of *phronēsis* by all citizens *would* be commensurable with that of the God Among Men, as illustrated in their willing recognition of one another which would lead to their mutual highest expression of freedom—and the highest expression of the *polis qua* natural entity. In other words, if the God Among Men is capable of a type of friendship, it is with one like to himself according to his possession of virtue—a constitutional aristocracy dedicated to *phronēsis*.[21] The God Among Men finds a mirror in the *polis* of phronetic education and vice versa.

Some may remain skeptical regarding this reading for a simple reason, though one not

uncommon in Aristotelian scholarship: if Aristotle thought so, then why does he not say so clearly? Readers of Aristotle often expect him to proceed with a clarity that doesn't allow for such readings. If Aristotle says *both* that the best government is the polity of political rule *and* the absolute monarchy of the God Among Men, then he must reject one or the other rather than commit such an obvious contradiction. In other words, Aristotle cannot mean what he says—rhetorical subtlety is not an option.[22]

In my fifth Chapter, I will examine Aristotle's use of subtle rhetoric. Aristotle's political works provide other excellent examples of such subtlety, which ostensibly compel the reader to choose one side of an apparent paradox. Two examples are slavery in the *Politics* and nobility in the fragments of *Peri eugeneias* or *On Noble Birth*. A great deal has been written on Aristotle's account of slavery. The commentary has taken many different forms, from moral condemnation to conciliatory justification. The majority seems to read Aristotle's discussion of slavery as an unfortunate mistake: even if his intentions were benevolent (i.e., to find a system of slavery that was justifiable on the basis of nature, as required by its apparent necessity for the *polis* and as compelled in order to reform the contemporary, arbitrary, unjust system), and even if his argument was not inconsistent, nevertheless any defense of slavery strikes modern ears as absurd. Given the amount of scholarship devoted to this issue, it is intriguing how little has been said of Aristotle's account of nobility in *On Noble Birth*. For the speakers in that dialogue outline the same problematic conditions for the natural existence of nobility as those specified in Aristotle's argument for natural slavery. In fact, the description of noble birth causes even more bizarre difficulties for one trying to formulate a unified conception of a single human species. Considered together, Aristotle's accounts of nobility and slavery press the reader to consider that "human" is not a single kind, but that similarly-shaped creatures actually constitute three distinct

biological species: *slaves*, *freepersons*, and *nobles*.

In recent years more commentators agree that Aristotle finds the practice of slavery to be unjust, yet they focus on Aristotle's distinction between the question of its justice and that of its necessity.[23] That is, although Aristotle may conclude that actual slavery is unjust, and although his account of natural slavery is fundamentally flawed, he nevertheless says that slavery is necessary for the existence of the *polis*. But if one remembers that the *polis* is a natural entity which is necessary for humanity to achieve its end of happiness via phronetic education and political rule, then the *polis* paradoxically becomes the naturally-ordained source of despotism—the condition for the possibility of humans achieving their end precludes them from achieving their end. This seems to beg the question of Aristotle's uncharacteristic inconsistency when discussing slavery, rather than to solve it.

To concede the possibility that Aristotle is capable of subtle argumentation such as *ad absurdum* solves this difficulty. In the central books of the *Politics* Aristotle ostensibly provides tips for the rulers of "sick" regimes on how best to maintain their unjust, despotic regimes. Some commentators find this to be remarkably out of character with the rest of the text (which is focused on the best regime), and thereby Machiavellian, inexcusable, and unethical. When read carefully, however, the "tips" Aristotle provides would—if implemented—one-and-all turn the despotic "sick" government on the path of reform toward a "healthy" polity.[24] If his arguments in favor of tyranny's preservation subtly turn the tyrant towards political rule, it is hardly inconceivable that his outlandish separate-species arguments for slavery and nobility are meant to be taken at face value. That is, if slavery and nobility require separate species in order to be just, and this is ridiculous, then slavery and nobility are both unnatural and unjust. But if they are unnatural and unjust, and their actual implementation in any *polis* requires the citizens in that

polis to participate in unnatural and unjust institutions, then they should not exist in a natural and just *polis*. Finally, if the naturalness and justice of the *polis* are preconditions of human happiness, and this is the end of being human, then no *polis* which includes these institutions could have happy citizens. This would make both natural kinds—*anthrōpos* and *polis*—incapable of achieving their ends *qua* natural kinds, which would violate not only Aristotle's biological and political writings, but also his *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. In short, if Aristotle's descriptions of slavery and nobility reduce to nonsense, then the appropriateness of slavery and nobility in the *polis* likewise reduces to nonsense. Given the options that Aristotle is capable of subtlety, or that in this particular case he is overcome by contemporary prejudices to the point of thoroughly sacrificing logic to them, Occam's Razor would demand that the reader side with his capacity for rhetoric before choosing an *ad hominem* explanation.[25]

In Chapter VI, I will conclude that to read Aristotle as adept at rhetorical subtlety is the only way to allow him to mean what he says. With these examples in Aristotle's political work before us, the apparent paradox of the two "best" regimes should dissolve. The rejection of the God Among Men polity is no more reasonable than the acceptance of Aristotle's biologizing the political with regard to slaves and nobles. In each case Aristotle would seem to be endorsing a position that is at odds with his stated purposes, in form and content. To biologize the political in the manner required for the accounts of slavery and nobility to be just would not only require separate yet seemingly impossible species, but it would be to pursue certainty in a scientific manner anathema to inquiries into human ends. Indeed, if Aristotle's purpose in the *Ethics* and *Politics* is both to describe and to enact phronetic education in his audience, then such biologizing should immediately make his audience skeptical. The same holds for any determination of the "best" polity which would disqualify the God Among Men as an absolute

tyrant, or solely endorse the egalitarian or elitist's view. The very nature of the inquiry, and of human beings, proscribes such a stark approach.

That is not to say that such disagreements disappear—on the contrary, to seek for some cipher which would turn the *Politics* into a scientific treatise would be to mirror the biological or partisan error just named, and to replace an insufficient reading with a self-contradictory one. Rather, when one concedes the possibility that Aristotle means what he says, reading him with a constant eye on *phronēsis* as defining the form and content of his political works, the paradoxes and disagreements surrounding the best regime are replaced by a coherent account of polity *per se*.

I will close with some observations on more recent examples of political biologizing in a section entitled "Aristotle's Bastard Children." If Aristotle's justification of slavery is ironic, its use (or misuse) has been incomparably tragic. For Aristotle's biologizing of the political in this case forms part of the foundation of staggering social and political movements, from the history of the West up to the present. Two examples are of particular interest. First, the invention of race and its use as a tool of subjugation and justification for slavery during the last several centuries directly and repeatedly cites Aristotle as its philosophical foundation. The most profound example of this is the Valladolid Debate between De Las Casas and Sepulveda, but the effects of such biologizing can be seen throughout the history of the Atlantic Slave Trade and beyond. Second, and more recent, are attempts to legislate biologically, such as controversies surrounding the Human Genome Project. In what late Senator Ted Kennedy called "the first civil rights bill of the 21st century," Congress passed a law in 2008 which prohibited employers from obtaining (either directly or discreetly) their employees' DNA in order to, e.g., make decisions regarding their health premiums on the basis of their genetic propensity for sickness. Such examples raise

the misappropriation of Aristotle to the third power. First, as he states repeatedly, to seek such certainty with regard to human beings will always produce invalid results. Second, they disregard the very basis of the *Ethics*: that humans are not born, as it were, but made by their actions. The habits of a self-destructive person are as likely, if not more likely, to produce cancer as those of someone who has the genetic predisposition, yet who maintains healthy habits throughout life. Third, the resulting injustice of such attempts to biologize individuals and communities are Legion. The perennial purchase of Aristotle's *Politics*, when read not as concerned with producing this or that partisan or biologizing account which endorses a particular type of government, but rather understood as fundamentally invoking the education of human beings toward *phronēsis*, is clear when held up against such continuing examples of misappropriation. The *Politics* has as much to teach the *polis* today as ever.

II Ethics

Our greatest happiness does not depend on the condition of life in which chance has placed us, but is always the result of a good conscience, good health, occupation, and freedom in all just pursuits.

- Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia*, viii, 389

Introduction

In this Chapter, we will undertake to read the *Ethics* in detail. We will illustrate how Aristotle's explicit statement at the beginning of the text—which intimates that the investigation will be one about the end (*telos*) and good (*agathon*) of being human—is operative throughout the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, and foreshadows their shared structure in a demonstrable, yet underappreciated manner. Given that the overarching concern of these texts is the end of being human, and given that this is the proper education of the youth with an eye to both the good of the individual human as well as the community and the *polis* itself, we will avoid going into too much detail regarding the *Ethics*' discussion of the individual virtues. Rather, we will focus primarily on the manner in which the *Ethics* is intimately related to, and sets up the goals completed within, the *Politics*. In our discussion of the education of the soul presented in the *Ethics*, we will outline five steps: (1) First, that education in virtue is the primary goal of the text, insofar as it is the basis for its writing as well as the basis of *politikē*. (2) Second, that education in virtue is, in a very real sense, the *energeia* or "being-at-work" behind the *polis* insofar as this is considered a natural entity.[26] (3) Third, that this education is meant to lead specifically to the (pen)ultimate government of the *aristoi*, with the ultimate goal of revealing the God Among Men. (4) Fourth,

that the God Among Men is revealed in the *Ethics* as the individual who has achieved (both by his preternatural abilities and his association within a properly formed *polis*) the type of contemplative *energeia* described throughout the text, culminating in Book X. (5) Finally, that Aristotle's rhetorical strategy—in both the overall form of the *Ethics* as well as the content of the individual virtues—ineluctably leads the reader to the discussion of the *Politics*, prepared for the politically revolutionary ideas contained therein.

Once this has been shown, in the next Chapter we will proceed to discuss the *Politics*. We will examine the true meaning and purpose behind the *technē* of *hē politikē* in the *Politics*, reading it not as an isolated work but as an extended study constituting the second volume of the *Ethics*.[27] As we proceed, we will redefine the proper *telos* of the *polis*, showing that prior disagreement on this issue may result from a misappropriation of the *teleion* or "complete" *polis* and the *hou heneka* or the "that for the sake of which" of *phronēsis*. A thorough discussion of *phronēsis* as mined from the *Ethics* and as seen in its effects in the different "healthy" and "sick" constitutions will reveal that the true *teleion* of *hē politikē* would be the successful transition to an *aristoi*-led—and possibly a God-Among-Men-led—*polis*.

It is important to emphasize from the outset that our reading of the *Ethics* will not conclude that the production of the God Among Men is its goal any more than our reading of the *Politics* will result in the production of the God-Among-Men-led government. On the one hand, the God Among Men appears to be the embodiment of the *teleion* of *anthrōpos*, and the constitutional monarchy of the God Among Men would be the *teleion* of the *polis*—each considered as a *zōon bion*, a natural animal. On the other hand, the *teleion* of the *Ethics* cannot be the production of the God Among Men, as this does not appear to be something which can be achieved by any human artifice. Rather, the *Politics* will reveal itself to be a work which defines

hē politikē as a type of dual activity: first, preparing the *polis*, through its constant focus on education in *phronēsis*, to recognize the God Among Men, and to successfully and peacefully cede power to this individual; second, in the absence of this individual, to create the best possible *polis*—in the sense of that which is possible via human artifice—which is a constitutional aristocracy of governors chosen by and for their possession *phronēsis*.

As has long been recognized, any examination of the *Politics* of necessity begins with the *Ethics*. This is true not only due to the inextricable relationship between the two fields, but also because Aristotle tells us as much. As he says on multiple occasions, the combination of the two studies is a single work. The *Ethics* is, as it were, the first volume in a two-volume set with the *Politics*. Together they constitute a larger project examining a single inquiry: if human beings are by nature political, then what is the *telos* of the human being? Of course, the short version of the answer to this question is *eudaimonia*, or happiness. The long version—the manner of education (*paideuein*) through which one achieves and maintains this active condition of the soul in community—is the exposition begun in the *Ethics* and furthered in the *Politics*.

To replace the word "furthered" in the last sentence with "finished" technically would be incorrect, insofar as the version of the *Politics* which has reached us is almost certainly incomplete. Also, one arguably could state that this exposition does not begin in the *Ethics*, but in Aristotle's *de Anima* or in even earlier (not in the temporal but in the foundational sense) texts. Without addressing the discussion whether Aristotle's thought undergoes a progression similar to that found in the scholarship which purports to date Plato's dialogues—let alone our ability to determine with accuracy if and when some of Aristotle's books were penned earlier than others—still one can draw a rough line through Aristotle's work beginning in the Organon and ending in the political works.[28] That is, to give a complete exposition of this process would force

us to begin in the *Topics*, moving through the biological works, and only then proceeding to Aristotle's *Ethics*. Although some of these texts will receive mention when appropriate, to give them their due would take the project too far afield.

Aristotle summarizes not only the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, but, in the minds of some, his cosmology, in the first line of the *Ethics*: "Every *technē*, every investigation, and similarly every action and decision seems to aim at some good: hence it has been said beautifully that the good is that toward which all things aim."[29] This claim has been read as having both an august and a pedestrian significance. The august interpretation—the reading of Aristotle which places the *Metaphysics* and the discussion of the ultimate "Good" contained therein at the conceptual center of Aristotle's philosophy—reads this as a direct statement of Aristotle's preoccupation with some divine "Good." The pedestrian version sees this as a commonplace recognition that for Aristotle all things (physical, mental, natural, artificial, etc.) have some *telos* to/for which they quite literally are, and this end is the good in each case. Although these two, august and pedestrian, readings do not necessarily entail each other, they are concomitant: both can be equally valid and mutually confirming. The good or end in each case is specific to that thing in question, in accordance with its nature or *phusis*. The ultimate "Good," which lends its identity to the individual goods in each case via a type of grounding participation roughly similar to Platonic philosophy, is thereby the ultimate source and aim of all other goods.[30]

To investigate this latter claim, to examine how the ultimate "Good" of the *Metaphysics* infects and affects all proximate, specific goods or ends, is far beyond the present project. Regardless of how one understands this relationship, Aristotle begins his inquiry in the *Ethics* by focusing on that natural end for which human beings are, and sees the natural continuation of this project as leading to the *Politics*. Thus, the pedestrian—or one might say provincial—meaning is

our focus, and the starting point is the *Ethics*. Further, Aristotle here uses "good" and "end" (*agathon* and *telos* in this case), commutably. Thus, for the moment, we will follow his lead, using the two commutably until it is necessary to separate them.

Although in each case there is some *telos* which is most suited to the thing/action in question, this is not always clear. On the one hand, there are some things/actions which admit of a single eternal *telos.* Thus, Aristotle tells the reader that "nature makes one thing for one purpose," and "each performs its task best if it has only one task to do."[31] The *telos* is predetermined by the *phusis* of the thing in question, and that thing quite literally *is* most itself when it is complete (*teleion*—when it has the *telos* specific to it) with regard to this preordained *telos*. Shortly after the above quote, Aristotle continues: "What each thing is when its coming into being is complete, whether a human being, a horse, or a household, is its nature."[32] Such specific or definite individual *teloi* may be loosely said to belong to the realm of theoretical knowledge, as the answers sought in studying them are themselves eternal and unchanging. On the other hand, in the realm of contingent and continually changing relationships, Aristotle tells the reader not to expect such certainty. When properly understood, there can be many (indeed, potentially infinite) *teloi* to things and actions. Such is the case in the two-part study of the *Ethics* and *Politics*: Aristotle warns us repeatedly that we cannot expect or attempt the same type of certainty in questions regarding human (inter)actions as we would in theoretical pursuits, such as mathematics or natural science. Rather, in the realm of *phronēsis* or practical knowledge, investigation remains in a type of flux.

Therefore, Aristotle begins his the *Ethics* with a type of warning: the investigation undertaken herein (and furthered in the *Politics*) will produce neither immutable certainty nor cynical *aporia*. Rather, the investigation into the being and end(s) of *anthrōpos* is itself a process

of revealing which is fruitful because of, not in spite of, being continual. Insofar as Aristotle investigates *what* can be known theoretically regarding *anthrōpos*, he concludes that the end and good fall under the same name: *eudaimonia*, or happiness. Insofar as Aristotle seeks to investigate *how* one can practically manifest this knowledge, he concludes that it is (1) an active condition of the soul, (2) maintained by and in accordance with reason, (3) while not immune to nevertheless tempered against the effects of bad fortune (4) preconditioned by a certain amount of good fortune, (5) cultivated (but not created) by proper education, and (6) dependent upon (potentially as a *sine qua non*) a proper community or membership within a proper *polis*. The first two statements are descriptions of the nature and effects of *eudaimonia* on or in the individual *qua* individual, or the individual considered as a natural whole. The middle two are statements which concern the individual insofar as he finds himself in the world, considered both as that which is within his control (e.g., to construct bulwarks against bad fortune) and that which is not (e.g., being born hideous). The latter two are statements about that which literally surrounds the individual *qua* political animal, or the individual considered as a part of a larger natural whole.

Put another way, *eudaimonia* requires a more or less specific set of raw materials and environmental conditions to present and maintain itself in the world.[33] To use a common Aristotelian simile, one who would build a house must cultivate his own knowledge and training regarding architecture, he must collect the proper materials and tools for its construction, and he must consider an appropriate place upon which it will be built. The best home, made of the best available materials, made according to the art of the best craftsman, in southern India would be exceedingly foolish and would not provide much comfort in Siberia. Indeed, in each case the use of the word “best” in the last sentence would be equivocal, as “best” would become an incorrect

description given the circumstances under and for which this house would be built. The same holds true for natural as artificial things. The best cheetah, sustained by the best diet and exercise, produced according to the best pedigree, in Tanzania would be—in Aristotle's conception—equally foolish and equally ephemeral in Brooklyn's Prospect Park Zoo. It is even possible to say that the animal would cease to be a cheetah in these circumstances: having been stripped of its ability to achieve its *telos*, and without the natural possibility of being other than that which is intended by *phusis*, the "cheetah" is only called such equivocally.

The house and the cheetah are each ordered by an *archē*, or an originating and ordering principle which provides the *telos* of the individual being. The word *archē* plays a particularly significant role, given its range of meanings and the usage to which Aristotle puts it. In its most essential sense, *archē* refers to the beginning or origin of a thing or action. This is true whether considered in a causal, temporal, or ordinal sense of beginning, or in the sense of the end for the sake of which something has begun. That is, for Aristotle, everything that *is* is for the sake of something—and this is the thing's good or end which is peculiar to its type. Therefore, *archē* is also the root of the verb *archō*, which means "to rule" or "to govern" something. If everything that is exists for the sake of some end or good, then the end or good peculiar to that thing "rules" its manner of existence in an essential or preordained fashion. The originating and ordering principle of a particular thing (or action) is its *archē*, and this *archē* determines whether the thing (or action) is a beautiful thing (or a thing done beautifully). In natural things, the *archē* arises *sui generis*, concomitant with the existence of the thing, and is both the catalyst of its being a good example of that thing as well as the *sine qua non* of its being that which it is. In the case of artificial production, the *archē* lies within the architect of the thing's creation similar to a compass needle or blueprint, determining the ability of the thing made to be called a beautiful

example of its specific type. There are two primary differences between artificial and natural things with regard to *archē*. First, the *archē* within a natural thing expresses itself with continuous causal power, insofar as it is that which continually compels a thing to be a (good) manifestation of the end particular to its type. Artificial things, by contrast, have their *archai* outside of themselves, in the mind of the architect. In other words, both the initial and the continuous causal relationship between a thing and its *archē* are severed in the case of artificial production, whereas they are coexistent in examples of natural kinds.

However, given that an infinite host of environmental (and, in the peculiar case of humans, willful) factors can intercede between a thing and its directedness, a being can fail to achieve that for the sake of which it is generated/made. In other words, that for which a thing is intended—its *telos*—can be barred from it, regardless of whether its *archē* lies within it or outside of it. When the *telos* particular to an artificial or natural object is removed completely from it, that which was ceases in some sense to be. For example, Cliff Palace of Mesa Verde National Park, originally home to the Ancient Puebloneans in present-day Colorado, has lost its intended function as a domicile and has been transformed into a protected archaeological site. In Aristotle's language it would not necessarily be incorrect to call these sites "dwellings," as they could still serve the *ergon* or work of a dwelling given proper conditions. Nevertheless, they are far from excellent examples of dwellings, not least because no one actually dwells there. By changing the *ergon* of these structures, one has in some sense altered their very being.[34] In the case of the cheetah, the natural entity equally has been precluded from performing its proper *ergon*. Again, it would not necessarily be incorrect to continue calling the animal a "cheetah," as given the proper conditions it could still achieve the end that is proper to it. However, in its present circumstances, it is disallowed from being that for which it was generated. In both cases,

the *archē* or originating and ordering principle unique to the respective entity has been removed or replaced by factors external to the thing in question.

Much has been said in recent years both for and against an understanding of Aristotelian metaphysics according to this production model. On the one hand, Aristotle himself uses such language with great frequency, both when discussing artificial production as well as in reference to natural entities. On the other hand, there are those who see this as a misappropriation of Aristotle's meaning, and one which has had far-reaching consequences for the history of Western metaphysics.[35] Such questions, though of great interest, are beyond the scope of the present inquiry. What concerns us here is that the human being, like other beings—natural or artificial—exists for some *telos* which is proper to it and which belongs to it in a manner that precedes and exceeds all other proximate *teloi*. According to the *Ethics* and *Politics*, this end is happiness. The achievement of this end, as with the aforementioned cheetah and house, requires a consilience of both external and internal factors. Further, human beings are unique in their willful ability—let alone propensity—to go against their *archē* and thereby fail to achieve their *telos*. Humans, therefore, require specific actions in order to counteract both the external factors which would retard their progress toward and possession of happiness, and the internal factors which tend to pull them away from their proper *telos*. The discussion of these factors, and the active education which acts as a bulwark against these retarding elements, is the project of the *Ethics* and *Politics*. Put another way, the survey of human beings *in situ* via a dialectical study of the means by which they respond or fail to respond to their circumstances and inclinations is the text of the *Ethics* and the *Politics*. Any inquiry into *phronēsis* is by nature dialectical, and any conclusions derived therein are likewise by nature without the certainty of mathematics and natural science, for the latter are not subject to circumstance and contingency in the fundamental manner that the former

are.

Educating the Soul

Although the proper purpose of the *Ethics* is, as it states, the examination of human beings, not according to their biology or *phusis* as members of a natural species (e.g., in a manner like *de Anima* or *Parts of Animals*), but according to their *ergon* as they are in themselves and in community, Aristotle begins with a metadiscussion regarding the proper investigation of a *technē*. For some *technai*, the practice itself is the *telos*. For others, there is a *telos* "over and above" or "outside of" the thing itself. In the former case, the praxis and the *telos* are the same. In the latter, the *telos* is "essentially superior in value" to the *praxis*.

With this in mind, Aristotle's decision to call *hē politikē* the "master-craft" near the outset of the *Ethics* is telling: First, one might expect that the "master-craft" would be philosophy. Of course, this is problematic for a number of reasons, most notably because philosophy is itself not a *technē* in any sense similar to other *technai*. Second, Aristotle immediately explains that politics is quite literally master: it determines what types of knowledge and education those within the *polis* will esteem and will pursue. In other words, Aristotle's claim regarding *hē politikē* is both literal and profound, insofar as he here illustrates that politics has an intimate relationship with the pursuit of a good which exceeds all *technai*. Further—and leaving aside for the moment whether philosophy is possible *sui generis*—*hē politikē* is that which actively makes philosophy a possibility in the *polis*. That is, without properly formulated politics, philosophy would have to be random and natural; it would of necessity "spring up in" (*eggignomai*) an individual without any causal relationship to those around it. Yet politics is the sole art which, if properly formulated, can allow for, encourage, and protect the advent of philosophy in the *polis*.

To put these different ideas together, the first few pages of the *Ethics* prefigure the progression of the entire project, from the individual to the God-Among-Men-led *polis*. While philosophy may be a greater end for an individual, understood in this manner *hē politikē* is truly the *malista architektonikēs*. Aristotle says this directly, as he calls *hē politikē* by this name when he asks about that *technē* which seeks the good of human beings as its natural end.

> And it would seem to belong to the one that is most governing and most a master art, and politics appears to be of this sort, since it prescribes which kinds of knowledge ought to be in the cities, and what sorts each person ought to learn and to what extent; also, we see that the most honored capacities, such as generalship, household economics, and rhetorical skill, are under this one. Since this capacity makes use of the rest of the kinds of knowledge, and also lays down the law about what one ought to do and from what one ought to refrain, the end of this capacity should include the ends of the other pursuits, so that this end would be the human good. For even if the good is the same for one person and for a city, that of the city appears to be greater, at least, and more complete both to achieve and to preserve; for even if it is achieved for only one person that is something to be satisfied with, but for a people or for cities it is something more beautiful and more divine. So our pursuit aims at this, and is in a certain way political.[36]

Human beings, insofar as they are capable of choosing to follow their *telos* and insofar as they are capable of disclosing new and different *teloi* in natural kinds, are fittingly capable of admitting dual *teloi* in themselves as natural kinds. While philosophy may be the highest pursuit

for human beings, the greatest *technē* for humans is *hē politikē*. And this dual-structure for ends holds for the *polis* as well—again, fittingly, given that the *polis* is itself something like a human writ-large.[37] The *polis*, as will be shown, seeks to engender *phronēsis* as its highest pursuit, although this in a preliminary manner which *both* achieves the natural *telos* of the survival and perpetuation of the *polis*, as well as the potential *telos* of the best government. Aristotle intimates this when he strongly reiterates the meaning of *hē politikē*: "the utmost good of all goods of practical action."[38]

Even at this early stage Aristotle implies that aristocracy is preeminent among that which is subject to choice. This arises from his discussion of the youth being incapable of, and precluded from, knowledge of ethics and politics. The argument is as follows: youths are not capable of ethical knowledge for two reasons. First, such knowledge requires experience, which youths naturally lack by definition. Second, such knowledge is a guide to conduct (which is pursued not for the sake of itself, but for the sake of its application), but youths are still led by their passions and appetites (which are pursued neither for the sake of knowledge nor for application, but solely for the sake of the self and for the pleasure they provide).Therefore, the argument is not really about youth (in the immediate next phrase Aristotle says that it makes no difference whether one consider youths in age or in maturity; "for the insufficiency is not a question of time"), but about those who are led by the passions and appetites.[39] As we will see in the next Chapter, when Aristotle describes healthy and sick governments, the basis upon which he calls them such mirrors this description of pursuing passion as opposed to pursuing knowledge for the sake of action. Indeed, the sole government which can lay claim to health is that of the *aristoi*: that which bases its governing on *phronēsis*, and that whose rulers are chosen on the basis of their possession of *phronēsis*. Insofar as an individual *or* a government fails to

educate itself in *phronēsis*, the individual or government follows his or its passions—and is correspondingly sick or healthy. The health of the individual or government is predicated upon and proportionate to its active commitment to *phronēsis*.

Aristotle continues this foreshadowing when he quotes Hesiod. After mentioning that the topic of ethics and politics, *hē politikē*, is only competently pursued by he who has long been accustomed (via habit) to ethical action, Aristotle says,

> the person of good moral training knows first principles already, or can easily acquire them. As for the person who neither knows nor can learn, let him hear the words of Hesiod: "Best is the man who can himself advise; He too is good who hearkens to the wise; But who, himself being witless, will not heed Another's wisdom, is a fool indeed."[40]

Again, the tripartite distinction maps on to both the three aspects of the ideal *polis* and the three individuals discussed in the *Ethics*. The first individual is the philosopher (and, as will be shown, the God Among Men), who has (either) a learned (or a preternatural) access to *phronēsis*. The second, the person who does not have these principles but is capable of acquiring them, is the target of the *Ethics* considered as a manual for education. This individual has both the chance conditions for the possibility of learning *phronēsis* and, if he receives this phronetic education and excels in it, is rightly placed at the top of the political order (along with the first individual) as a member of the *aristoi* of the *polis*. That is, the second "individual" is actual a spectrum of individuals. What binds them together is that all of them receive education in *phronēsis*, and thereby possess the capacity to recognize those who are more properly "wise" than they. What

separates them is their individual capacity for and maintenance of *phronēsis*. Therefore, in this second group are located everyone from the *phronimos* (who, as will be seen later, is the *megalopsuchia* or "great-souled" individual to be encountered later in the text) to the citizens (who choose the rulers, and therefore require their own measure of *phronēsis* to teach them discernment). The third individual—the one to whom Aristotle recommends Hesiod—is more complex. At first glance, this person might appear to be a member of the *hoi polloi* in the pejorative sense of this term. The quote, in Aristotle's context, certainly seems unflattering; no one would consider it a compliment to be called "witless."[41] Yet upon closer inspection, this individual is also necessarily a recipient of phronetic education, insofar as they are able. In the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, Aristotle defines *phronēsis* in a number of ways, but the most sustained and informative statement regarding this type of wisdom is that it is the ability to lead *and* the ability to follow. That is, *phronēsis* is the ability, through a certain type of educational experience which over time becomes habit, to discern when an individual should trust his own wisdom, and when that same individual should defer to the wisdom of another. In the best *polis*, considered as a natural entity, the *hoi polloi* does not follow the *aristoi* because they are kept under the thumb of the powerful, or because of some reverence for tradition or superstition, or any other reason which retards discernment. On the contrary: they *elect* the *aristoi* because the latter truly *are* the "best" of men, in the same manner that the *aristoi* would of necessity follow the God Among Men because he is "best" in an absolute sense. Therefore, if an individual "neither knows nor can learn," if he is "witless," and "will not heed another's wisdom," then he truly is "a fool indeed." Far from being pejorative, the statement is simply a fact: this completely person lacks *phronēsis*.

In this way, Hesiod's quote undergoes a double reworking in Aristotle's use. First, whereas it seems to be an insult or a quip, Aristotle uses it to show the phronetic education that is

ideal for the best citizen who is—by his own recognition—not himself worthy of and/or capable of leadership. Just as an otherwise skilled, intelligent lawyer does not attempt to fix his own pipes or carburetor but defers to the expertise of a plumber or mechanic (respectively), so too the otherwise skilled, intelligent citizen defers to the expertise of the *aristoi*. Or, to use Aristotle's example from the *Politics*, just as the best military officer is best specifically because he has followed orders in the past in addition to studying strategy, so too the best citizen is one who recognizes the appropriateness of deference to authority when available. Aristotle is not passing judgment upon the individuals he is describing. He is describing them according to their possession of *phronēsis*. Second, Aristotle uses the quote as an excellent illustration of the nature of *phronēsis*. It could not be more fitting as an introduction to the *Ethics* and *Politics*, insofar as it describes the nature and character of *phronēsis* in individuals. Nevertheless, Hesiod remains correct in his potentially condescending tone, from Aristotle's perspective, regarding those who—whether due to some self-chosen folly (e.g., pride or envy), or due to some external factor (e.g., a despotic *polis* or tragic misfortune)—lack *phronēsis*. These are the "youths"—regardless of whether they are old or young—described at the outset of the *Ethics*, who pursue their passions at the expense of theoretical and practical knowledge. Failing to recognize when they should rule and when they should be ruled, such persons or governments are incapable even of recognizing their own lack of knowledge. In a denotatively pathetic sense they are fools.

Aristotle continues to avail of tripartite divisions in the passage that follows, wherein he divides humans into three types. There are those who believe that life is lived according to (i.e., that happiness is achieved via) enjoyment (*hēdon*), political concerns (*politikē*), and contemplation (*theoretikē*). He pauses for a moment regarding the political man to distinguish between a healthy regard for *phronēsis* and a misconceived, yet quite common, preoccupation

with *tīmē* or honor. While it is true that "refined and active people choose honor, for this is pretty much the goal of political life," nevertheless this is "too superficial for what is sought." Although the pursuit of *tīmē* is presumably a good thing, it often belies the character of the individual pursuing it. First, if *tīmē* is a good, and this good must be bestowed by another, this entails that the individual who pursues it does not himself possess it. Likewise, those who pursue it seem just as often to need it: the recognition is necessary for the individual "in order to be convinced that they themselves are good."[42] By contrast, the individual who is virtuous would pursue *tīmē* for its own sake; recognition would be accidental to the individual action or overall pursuit.

This is an important passage for several reasons, each of which foreshadows other vital tripartite divisions in the *Ethics* and *Politics*. First, the life of *hēdon* is that pursued by most individuals, including children. Indeed, Aristotle describes most individuals as essentially children insofar as they lack both *phronēsis* and *theōria*: the person who lives solely for pleasure and who does not see beyond his own benefit is arguably no different than a child. The second, politically minded individual who pursues *tīmē* for its own sake is the *phronimos* (or the *phronimos*-in-training), the individual who looks beyond himself to the *polis* via his phronetic lens. The third individual is, of course, the philosopher. But as will be shown in greater detail in Chapters IV and VI, this early description of the philosopher mirrors Aristotle's later descriptions of the God Among Men. Second, this tripartite structure maps on to the three types of government as Aristotle describes them.[43] The *polis* called democracy is run by the majority. Although Aristotle will state that it is possible (though unlikely) that the many could themselves be true *aristoi*, nevertheless he uses the term "democracy" to refer to that government which is ruled by the *hoi polloi*. This government consists of a group of individuals who are the "youths" of Aristotle's earlier description, motivated primarily if not exclusively by their own self-interest,

and incapable of knowing when to rule or when to be ruled. An aristocracy, by contrast, is run by those who do not conceive of themselves as best due to birth or wealth or any other traditional or monetary measurement. Rather, they are truly *aristoi* because they are those most capable and willing to consider the affairs of the *polis*. These men seek *tīmē* not in order to increase their own stature, but because it is a natural consequence of political life. And the *polis* which finds itself most closely aligned with contemplation is an aristocratic monarchy—as will be shown below, that which is run by the God Among Men. Finally, when Aristotle pauses to distinguish between the individual who pursues political life for its own sake as opposed to pursuing it for selfish reasons, he indicates a distinction which will be vital for the *Politics* regarding that which determines the relative "health" or "sickness" of a given *polis*. Democracy (and, as will be shown below, all forms of government save true aristocracy and the God-Among-Men-led monarchy) operates on the basis of the self-interest of those who are in power. Self-preservation is the *telos* of both the *polis* itself as well as the individuals running it, which necessarily results in despotic rule. The "healthy" aristocratic *polis* shares this self-interest and self-preservation, but only in a provisional or accidental sense. That is, the *true* aristocratic *polis* is only motivated by these factors in the absence of the God Among Men. As will be seen below, the *aristoi* act as stewards: they prepare the *polis* and all those in it for the God Among Men via phronetic education. Once/If this individual arises, they cede power to him. And the third *polis* indicated via this tripartite structure is the God-Among-Men-led "healthy" monarchy. This *polis* is run by an individual who possesses a perfect sense of self-interest and self-preservation, insofar as the concerns of the *polis* and the concerns of the individual are indivisible.

In what follows, Aristotle again solidifies the intuition that the *Ethics* is but the first volume in a larger project which includes the *Politics*. After stating that that which is complete in

itself is chosen for itself as an end, and is thereby more complete insofar as it is not chosen or pursued on account of something else, he concludes that this could only be happiness. Yet he impresses upon the reader that complete happiness so-defined must be a community possession rather than an aspect of self-sufficiency *qua* independence.

> And the same thing appears to follow from its self-sufficiency, for the complete good seems to be self-sufficient. And by the self-sufficient we mean not what suffices for oneself alone, living one's life as a hermit, but also with parents and children and a wife, and friends and fellow citizens generally, since a human being is by nature meant for a city. But one must take some limit for these connections, since by stretching out to ancestors and descendants and friends of one's friends they go beyond all bounds; but this must be examined later. But we set down as self-sufficient that which, by itself, makes life choiceworthy and lacking in nothing, and such a thing we suppose happiness to be.[44]

Anyone familiar with the *Politics* will recognize this as identical to Aristotle's description therein of the first political community. That is, when Aristotle describes, in the *Ethics*, the conditions for the possibility of the possession of that which is the *telos* of being human, he uses the same language as that which describes the first *polis* in the *Politics*.

Having declared that all things exist for some end which is the good for that thing in each case, and having found that for humans this end and good is happiness, Aristotle truly begins his investigation into the whence and whither of happiness itself. The investigation into happiness begins with work, *ergon*. That which follows is worth quoting at length both for its directness

and due to its importance for the rest of the project:

> Now this might come about readily if one were to grasp the work of a human being. For just as with a flute player or sculptor or any artisan... the good and doing well seem to be in the work, so too it would seem to be the case with a human being if indeed there is some work that belongs to one. But is there some sort of work for a carpenter or a leather worker, while for a human being there is none? Is a human being by nature idle? Or, just as for an eye or a hand or a foot or generally for each of the parts, there seems to be some sort of work, ought one also to set down some work beyond all these for the human being? But then what in the world would this be? For living seems to be something shared in even by plants, but something peculiarly human is being sought. Therefore, one must divide off the life that consists in nutrition and growth. Following from this would be some sort of life that consists in perceiving, but this seems to be shared in by a horse and a cow and by every animal. So what remains is some sort of life that puts into action that in us that has articulate speech; of this capacity, one aspect is what is able to be persuaded by reason, while the other is what has reason and thinks things through. And since this is still meant in two ways, one must set it down as a life in a state of being-at-work, since this seems to be the more governing meaning. And if the work of a human being is a being-at-work of the soul in accordance with reason... and it belongs to a man of serious stature to do these things well and beautifully... if this is so, the human good comes to be disclosed as a being-at-work of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if the

> virtues are more than one, in accordance with the best and most complete virtue. But also, this must be in a complete life, for one swallow does not make a Spring, nor one day, and in the same way one day or a short time does not make a person blessed and happy.[45]

First, it should be noted that the passage explicates one of the more important concepts in Aristotle's thought: *ergon*, work. The importance Aristotle attaches to this term cannot be overstated. As he says here, the good of a thing or activity is found in the doing—and doing well—of that work which is constitutive to its very being. Put another way, a thing is defined by its work as much, if not more, than a thing's work is defined by the thing itself. This concept will be examined in great detail in Chapter V, so a more detailed discussion will be left until then. What is important to recognize here is that the *ergon* of a human being is something that is specific to it, insofar as humans are defined by their possession of *logos*. Further, it is something which must be expressed actively rather than tacitly, and it is expressed properly—read: the "doing well" of this activity is found—in or through virtue. Finally, when taken with the preceding passage, human *ergon* is something which cannot be actualized fully save within a *polis*. Second, the passage explicitly links the *Ethics* and the *Politics* to *de Anima*. As readers familiar with that text would note, Aristotle progresses dialectically through the different aspects of being human in the same manner as he does in *de Anima*, proceeding from the nutritive and appetitive aspects of human beings to that which is essentially human, the possession of *logos*. But by linking *de Anima* to the project of the *Ethics* and *Politics*, Aristotle indicates the insufficiency of the former text as a full exposition of what it means to be human. That is, human beings cannot be defined simply according to their biology. To borrow from the *Timaeus*, to fully

understand human beings and the good that is peculiar to them, Aristotle expresses the necessity of seeing them "in motion," struggling as befits their particular work.[46]

The *Ethics* is truly underway with Aristotle's statement that *ergon* is the key to understanding what it means to be human. And before delving into the manner in which human beings acquire and maintain the active condition of the soul which is happiness, Aristotle continues to name conditions for the possibility of happiness. Sachs (2002b) frequently notes that the *Ethics* unfolds in a dialectical method not unlike that characteristic of Aristotle's teacher, and this is an excellent example: Aristotle draws progressively smaller circles around his subject matter as a vulture slowly circles its prey. Here he continues to name that which would preclude an individual from having happiness, or remove it from him once achieved.

Having established the place of *ergon* for a consideration of human happiness, Aristotle turns to the chance and necessity which can preclude, retard, or even strip a human's ability to enact his ergon—thereby precluding, retarding, or stripping his possession of happiness. This is the famous passage on chance and necessity wherein Aristotle cites the misery of Priam. First, he states that beautiful actions (i.e., actions which are virtue made manifest) are "impossible, or not easy" if one does not have the conditions for them: "for happiness was said to be a sort of being-at-work of the soul in accordance with virtue, while all the other good things are either conditions that need to be present for happiness or else things that naturally assist the work and are useful as tools."[47] Among such conditions, Aristotle lists prosperity.[48] This would seem to be a general term to refer to a number of chance conditions: economic stability, political franchise, freedom (v. being born a slave), health, etc. Happiness and virtue require that an individual both be born with certain conditions or the possibility of achieving said conditions, *and* that the individual's experiences not remove these conditions. Therefore, the acquisition and maintenance

of happiness and virtue require two things aside from the individual's education in virtue and the individual's choiceworthy action which produces habit and character, both of which are beyond the individual's control: initial conditions present at birth and sustained conditions throughout life. In short, happiness is impossible without luck, *tuchē*.

Priam becomes the preeminent example of changing fortunes. Before the Achaeans sailed against Troy, all would call him happy: he had power, respect, wealth, wisdom, a prosperous family including many virtuous and heroic sons, and he ruled an impenetrable city. His personal and political lives were unassailable. The Achaean campaign, however, stripped him of everything: he watches his eldest son desecrated, his kin murdered and enslaved, his wealth stolen, his city burned, and lives to witness the gods completely abandoning him. In one of the most famous scenes in Western literature, the broken king prostrates himself before the mercy of Achilles: "I have endured what no one on earth has ever done before—I put my lips to the hands of the man who killed my son." Although hitherto envied, *tuchē* reduces him not just to an object of pity, but to an ageless example of human fragility. As Aristotle says, though Priam seems to be one who has a "complete" life, nevertheless he falls from grace.[49]

But Aristotle seems to negate these considerations directly after stating them, providing a caveat that will be of particular interest when he discusses the philosopher. The figure lurking in the background of these considerations is Socrates. Although he certainly neither enjoys the good fortune nor endures the ill fortune of Priam, nevertheless he faces an ignominious trial and death at the hands of the *polis* which he served and loved his entire life. Yet he does not seem to succumb to the misery of his situation; if we are to believe the accounts of the last days of Socrates as penned by Plato, Socrates is unflappable to the very end. Shortly after mentioning Priam, Aristotle seems to consider this: "Nevertheless, even in these circumstances something

beautiful shines through when one bears many and great misfortunes calmly, not through insensitivity, but through good breeding and greatness of soul." However, in the remainder of this passage Aristotle is ambiguous. He states that if happiness is a way of being-at-work which is not easily changeable by its very nature, then those who were "truly good" would "bear all fortunes gracefully and will always act in the most beautiful way the circumstances permit." Thus, if it is this way, "one who is happy could never become miserable," though in the very next phrase he says the opposite: "though surely one would not be blessed if he were to fall into fortunes like those of Priam." As Aristotle talks out of both sides of his mouth on this issue, one must ask whether he means that Priam's suffering is literally unbearable: impossible for anyone human (and therefore Socrates' suffering was simply less), or if there is something superhuman about Socrates which allows him to endure in spite of such circumstances—even if he faced Priam's fate. This will be particularly important in what follows, when we look directly at the God Among Men, both in his likeness to the philosopher and as a potential biological type.[50]

This tension between the acquisition and maintenance of happiness and virtue via phronetic education, and the specter of the philosopher as both the true end of being human and as something akin to a biological type, will continue throughout the text. Aristotle voices this dual interest, at the end of Book I and the beginning of Book II, when he discusses the difference between virtues of character (which arise from a consideration of *hē politikē*, and are the primary focus of the *Ethics*) and virtues of thinking (which fall under wisdom). However, at the end of Book I and the beginning of II, Aristotle associates practical judgment with the virtues of thinking, and further states that these are a result of teaching rather than habit.

Rather than addressing this ambiguity, Book II turns to the education of character. Aristotle begins by repeating the assertion by some that virtue is a consequence of birth rather

than habit, problematizing the "naturalness" of virtue.

> It is also clear from this that none of the virtues of character comes to be present in us by nature, since none of the things that are by nature can be habituated to be otherwise; for example, a stone, which by nature falls downward, could not be habituated to fall upward, not even if one were to train it by throwing it upward ten thousand times... Therefore the virtues come to be present neither by nature nor contrary to nature, but in us who are of such a nature as to take them on, and to be brought to completion in them by means of habit.[51]

This statement will create problems later, and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters IV through VI. At present, however, the statement will be taken at face value, as it results in a sort of proof of Aristotle's contention that the ultimate end of *hē politikē* is the education of the individual, and that this is the highest good of the community and the *polis qua* natural entity. If happiness is the end of being human, and happiness is an active condition of the soul which must be both acquired and maintained by a type of being-at-work, rather than a birthright, then that education which leads to happiness should be the primary focus of a human being *qua* human. But if those in power within a *polis* have control over the manner and emphasis accorded to education, and this very education is that which leads (or fails to lead) individuals to be virtuous and happy, then the primary concern of those who possess political authority should be the education of the citizenry according to virtue. In short, the goal of *hē politikē* is *paideuein*, and the *sine qua non* of a healthy *polis* is the education discussed in the *Ethics*. "What happens in cities gives evidence of this, for lawmakers make the citizens good by habituating them, and

since this is the intention of every lawmaker, those that do not do it well are failures, and one regime differs from another in this respect as a good one from a worthless one."[52] Indeed, Aristotle could not impress his position—and the import of the *Ethics*—stronger than the following statement: "It makes no small difference to be habituated this way or that way straight from childhood, but an enormous difference, or rather all the difference."

Shortly after this Aristotle makes first mention of one of the most important and well known concepts in the text: *meson*, or "the mean." Given that the present inquiry is concerned less with the *Ethics*' discussion of the individual virtues, and this is the primary purchase of the term *meson* in the *Ethics*, we will only deal with the concept in a truncated manner. Nevertheless, it may serve to reproduce Aristotle's most direct statement defining the mean, as any discussion of the *Ethics* will inevitably involve the term.

> I am speaking of virtue of character, for this is concerned with feelings and actions, and among these there is excess and deficiency, and the mean... but to feel them when one ought, and in the cases in which, and toward the people whom, and for the reasons for the sake of which, and in the manner one ought is both a mean and the best thing, which is what belongs to virtue... Therefore, virtue is a certain kind of mean condition, since it is, at any rate, something that makes one apt to hit the mean.[53]

A deceivingly simple concept, the mean is oft misunderstood or misrepresented. In what follows, Aristotle provides a particularly important addition to this definition: "it is possible to go wrong in many ways… but there is only one way to get something right… so for these reasons excess

and deficiency belong to vice and the mean condition belongs to virtue, 'For the good are good simply, but the bad are bad in every sort of way.'"[54] To illustrate the point visually, Aristotle uses an archery metaphor: while there are infinite ways in which one can miss a target, there is only one possible bull's eye.[55]

The rest of Book II focuses on the mean and its relevance to the specifics of Aristotle's ethical education. Although much of this is extraneous to the present purpose, in Book II Aristotle discusses the distinction between willful and coerced actions. In short, an action is not *per se* beautifully or vulgarly committed, but is only able to be called such on the basis of *both* the principle behind the action *and* the situation to which this principle is applied. Consequently, an education in *phronēsis* is concerned with actions that are willfully chosen on the basis of some consideration of rational thought alongside empirical evidence.

Phronēsis* in the *Ethics

Book III begins by reintroducing the idea of *phronēsis*, though in an oblique manner. Aristotle starts by reminding the reader that "virtue is concerned with feelings and actions, and praise and blame come about for willing actions, but for unwilling actions there is forgiveness and sometimes even pity." Therefore, it is necessary "for those who inquire about virtue to distinguish what is a willing and an unwilling act, and it is a useful thing for lawmakers as well."[56] Of interest here is the additional claim regarding the *polis*: the circumstances under which an action occurs are important for understanding ethical education *and* for governments writing law. The passage continues and leads to another of Aristotle's more famous metaphors: a ship's captain who jettisons his cargo. "For no one simply throws [cargo] away willingly, but all those who have any sense do so for their own safety and that of the rest of the people aboard.

Such actions then are mixed, but they are more like willing acts, since at the time when they are done they are preferred, and the end for which an action takes place is in accordance with its occasion."[57] The action itself is undeserving of either praise or blame without an understanding of the situation within which it took place. The ship's captain who jettisons his cargo randomly would have acted in a manner that is *kakos*, ugly. But he who fails to do so in the aforementioned circumstances, and loses his ship as a result, would likewise be considered to have acted in an ugly manner. By contrast, the one who does it to save the ship would be considered to have acted beautifully. Whereas all virtues have the mean as their goal, *phronēsis* demands this type of thorough consideration of rational principles alongside empirical circumstances in its employment. Further, up to this point much of Aristotle's discussion has been regarding virtues which deal with the self. Here Aristotle has begun discussing situations and actions which have a direct relation to, and consequences for, others.

With this celebrated example Aristotle clearly establishes a dichotomy essential to the future history of law: that concerned with *mens rea* and justification.[58] He finishes the passage by stating, unequivocally, that "since an unwilling act is one that is done by force or on account of ignorance, a willing act would seem to be one of which the source is in oneself, when one knows the particular circumstances in which the action takes place."[59] This reaffirms the parallel concerns of ethics and politics: if determining the ethical worth of an action requires an understanding of the circumstances under which the actor's deliberation takes place, then the law must deal with the actor on the basis of these circumstances. Further, if an action is ugly or beautiful due in part to whether the individual is ignorant or informed, then it is in the state's best interest to have an informed citizenry insofar as this would reduce the number of ugly actions. Put another way—although Aristotle might not use this terminology for reasons that will be seen

in Chapter III—a *polis* that fails to implement an effective and proper ethical education focused on *phronēsis* bears its share of culpability for those ugly actions committed by its citizens. For while in this case ignorance does refer to knowledge of the empirical information available to the deliberating individual, it also, and in a more primary sense, refers to the individual's ability to discern that which must be considered in any instance of deliberation. Thus, giving its citizens a phronetic education serves as the most effective means by which a *polis* can forestall ugly actions.

Continuing his dialectic approach, Aristotle simultaneously proves the necessity of *phronēsis* as the supreme focus of the *polis* while elucidating the meaning of this type of deliberation. He next discusses that which is not the subject of deliberation; e.g., "everlasting things, such as the cosmos, or about the diagonal and the side of the square, that they are incommensurable." These types of questions fall under the category of *theōria*, or that which admits of an eternal and immutable answer. As he stated near the beginning of the *Ethics*, this work is not primarily concerned with *theōria*, whether considered in its raw sense as theoretical knowledge or in its more applicable sense as the intellectual virtues.[60] These "everlasting things" obviously belong to this latter category, and given that they are immutable, deliberation regarding them is quixotic. He includes in this category things that are in motion yet follow definite patterns (e.g., "solstices and the risings of stars"), things which could loosely fall under the category of *force majeure* (e.g., "drought and rain"), chance (e.g., "finding treasure"), the impossible, and wishing. To this list he adds a final item, which is not without some irony: "but not about all human things either, as no Spartan deliberates about how the Scythians should be best governed, for none of these things could happen through us. We deliberate about things that are up to us and are matters of action, and these are the ones that are left." On the one hand,

Aristotle himself was famous for collecting and writing commentaries on 158 different constitutions. Although only the *Constitution of Athens* has survived, in the *Politics* he makes use of these studies to do just what he says in the *Ethics* one does not do. Second, he deliberates about these other constitutions as to their effectiveness given a set of circumstances in order to derive that which would be best in a given *polis* as well as that which would be best in a possible *polis*. Thus, the work in the *Politics* fits his immediately following statement in the *Ethics*, that "we deliberate about things that are up to us and matters of action." In short, the author of the *Politics*—and any lawmaker—would do well to deliberate regarding the better or worse choices made previously by those in other *poleis*, as this will help the former in his study, the latter in his lawmaking.[61] Aristotle's injunction against such deliberation as that named regarding the Spartan concerning himself as to the Scythians is therefore paradoxical: On the one hand, it is true that an individual who does not share in political rule should not concern himself with the affairs of others in other *poleis*, insofar as this would of necessity be a waste of his time. On the other hand, an individual who does share in political rule in his own *polis* can and should concern himself with the manner of rule in other *poleis*, insofar as this can assist him in his own rule. As long as an individual analyses the affairs of other citizens and *poleis* according to their context, and thereby distills that which is relevant to his situation (due to its mutual applicability) from that which is not (due to its unique particularity), the study of others is beneficial to those who would rule.

Aristotle next rules out deliberation regarding ends, as this would be putting the cart before the horse: "for a doctor does not deliberate about whether he will cure someone, nor a rhetorician about whether he will persuade, nor someone holding political office about whether he will produce good order, nor does anyone else deliberate about ends, but having set down the

end, they consider in what way and by what means it would be the case."[62] To deliberate about ends would either be an aspect of *theōria* (i.e., deliberation in this case would involve investigating that which is the end for a given thing), or it would resemble wishing (i.e., deliberation in this case would be a red herring). Rather, one discerns the end in a case, and the individual then places this end against the circumstances of the case, in order to determine that which is necessary given such circumstances to bring about the desired end. In Book II, Aristotle uses the example of Milo of Croton, the famous Olympian wrestler, to illustrate this point: "for it is not the case, if ten pounds is a lot for someone to eat and two pounds a little, that the gymnastic trainer will prescribe six pounds, for perhaps even this is a lot for the one who is going to take it, or a little. For it is a little to Milo, but to someone beginning gymnastic training it is a lot."[63] It would be counterproductive at best for the athletic trainer to assume that the disparate circumstances of the two athletes did not call for proportionately disparate means to achieve what is the same end in each case. Or, to use more appropriately Aristotelian language, the gymnastic trainer's action is beautiful (*kalos*) or shameful (*aischros*) insofar as his deliberation takes into account the specifics of the circumstances.

Of particular interest here is Aristotle's explicit comparison between the individual deliberating regarding ethical action and the individual deliberating regarding a particular skill. Everyone has had the experience of sickness and health, and therefore understands health to a greater or lesser extent. Thus, everyone could be said to have some knowledge of the medical art. Nevertheless, at times everyone requires the leadership of a doctor, an expert in this field. The actual structure of this deference to leadership is the nature of *phronēsis*. That is, one requires *phronēsis* in order to know when to lead and when to follow: in this case, when to recognize that the ailment is beyond the individual and therefore to defer to medical expertise. As Aristotle says

in the middle of the passage, "we take others as fellow deliberators for large issues, not trusting that we ourselves are adequate to decide them."[64]

Further, the implication is that there are "experts" in *phronēsis*, just as there are in health or gymnastic training or rhetoric. Aristotle removes any doubts about this in what follows: "For in accordance with each sort of active condition there are special things that are beautiful and pleasant, and the person of serious moral stature is distinguished most of all, perhaps, for seeing what is truly so in each kind, since such a person is like a rule and measure of what is beautiful and pleasant."[65] This would follow from Aristotle's placement of *phronēsis* with the intellectual virtues as akin to wisdom. Admittedly, Aristotle remains ambiguous regarding the proper placement of *phronēsis*, both in the *Ethics* and elsewhere.[66] On the one hand, as mentioned a few pages prior, the acquisition of *phronēsis* is not a permanent, immutable possession. Rather, it is an active condition of the soul which requires a being-at-work in accordance with constant deliberation and choosing virtuous actions. In short, it is difficult to imagine an individual who had achieved such preeminent possession of *phronēsis* that they fit the description "like a rule and measure of what is beautiful and pleasant"—and it would contradict a good deal of what Aristotle has said regarding the continual need to deliberate, as well as the contingency of happiness based upon proper deliberation. However, it would be consistent to read this passage as stating that there are individuals who, due both to their education in beautiful and ugly or shameful actions, and their experience deliberating in many such situations, are more capable at such deliberation and concomitantly in possession of *phronēsis* to a greater extent than others. These individuals command deference on the basis of their superior possession of *phronēsis*, and thus would be auspicious candidates both for educating others in *phronēsis* and for holding offices which by their nature require such difficult deliberation regarding particulars (e.g.,

government). On the other hand, if there were such an individual who was himself "like a rule and measure of what is beautiful and pleasant," and if others were capable of recognizing him, then his possession of *phronēsis* would so exceed those around him that he would be incontrovertibly qualified to lead all others in questions of ethics and politics. Or, put negatively, his unqualified possession of that which is qualified in all others would command deference from all those who recognized this possession. He would exceed all others as a "god among men." Of course, as Aristotle repeatedly notes, to recognize when one should lead and when one should follow is the basis of *phronēsis*. Therefore, in order to recognize this person one must be in possession of *phronēsis* as well, though to a lesser extent. We might summarize these points to state that, if an individual like the God Among Men were ever to arise, and a *polis* contained a critical mass of citizens in possession of *phronēsis* (i.e., at best, the entire citizenry, though to different degrees; at worst, a phronetic aristocracy which possessed political power), then they would willingly and happily cede power to this individual as most suited to achieve the ends of the *polis*.

Aristotle names pleasure as that which retards the ability of individuals to be such perfect moral agents. "In most people, a distortion seems to come about by the action of pleasure, since it appears good when it is not. So people choose the pleasant as the good, and avoid the painful as bad." Education is reaffirmed in this move, as human beings require *phronēsis* in order to check their natural impulses if they are to have any hope of achieving their end. It is interesting that Aristotle refuses to rule out the possibility of an individual who is immune to the seduction of pleasure; he reserves this distortion for "most people" rather than all.[67] Nevertheless, the influence of pleasure as a force which opposes *phronēsis*—or, one might say the reestablishing of *phronēsis* as a counterintuitive force—leads Aristotle to regain culpability for our actions, and

consequently for our active conditions: "Therefore virtue is up to us, and likewise also vice… But if doing things that are beautiful or ugly is up to us, and likewise refraining from doing them, and this is what it is to be good or bad people, therefore being decent or base is up to us." Yet this seems to beg the Socratic question of how an individual could knowingly and willingly act shamefully. "To say that no one is willingly wretched or unwillingly happy seems to be partly false and partly true, for no one is happy unwillingly, but baseness is something willing." Aristotle seeks to answer this question by restating that human beings are as responsible for listening to their more noble deliberation as they are for succumbing to their baser instincts—to follow either voice still requires the will of the individual actor. "But if these things seem correct, and we are not able to trace our actions back to any other sources besides those that are in us, then those things of which the sources are in us are also up to us and willing acts."[68]

Aristotle recognizes that the argument remains unresolved, and follows the logic of his earlier distinction between willing and knowing actions and those that are unwilling or ignorant to ask whether individuals are themselves responsible for their active conditions. That is, if everyone aims at the good (whether apparent or true), and everyone is likewise responsible for his own active condition, then this active condition helps determine whether or not the person is capable of discerning whether the apparent good is truly good. In short, either "each would be in some way responsible oneself for how things appear," or "no one is responsible for wrongdoing by oneself, but does these things through ignorance of the end, believing that by these means one will secure the highest good for oneself."[69] The consequences of this argument are problematic for a number of reasons. First, it would seem that individuals could no longer be held accountable for their actions, as *mens rea* would no longer apply. Rather, individuals would be the result of their own education and upbringing to such an extent that the *polis* would now bear

complete responsibility for the beautiful or shameful actions of all of its citizens. Second, if education is not to blame, it becomes a moot point—but the individual does not thereby regain responsibility for his actions, whether considered as beautiful or shameful. As Aristotle continues the passage,

> But the targeting of the end is not self-chosen; instead one needs to be born having something like vision, by which to discern rightly and choose what is truly good, and one in whom this is naturally right is of a fortunate nature, for with respect to what is greatest and most beautiful, and which is impossible to get or to learn from anyone else, but which one will have in such a condition as one was born with—to be well and beautifully born in this respect would be the complete and true blessing of nature. But if these things are true, in what way would virtue be any more willing than vice?

If the vicious are not culpable, then neither are the virtuous, and beautiful and shameful acts become entirely the result of nature. Indeed, Aristotle's statements here are so forceful, that they have lead many readers to conclude that they represent proof of Aristotle's elitism based on biology.[70] This creates an insurmountable difficulty regarding the text itself, however. If ethics and politics are simply the result of nature's caprice, then writing a text on the proper education of the soul (the *Ethics*), or claiming that the primary concern of politics is educating the citizenry (the *Politics*) would be indefensible if not contradictory. Aristotle cannot believe in any simple or strong sense that nature determines the actions of individuals, as this would make ethics and politics meaningless terms.

Aristotle has already provided a way out of this dilemma in his earlier comments, although it is important to mention a caveat before continuing. There are at least two individuals or types who would seem to problematize any attempt at ethics and politics. These can be loosely referred to as the insane and the godlike, although in later Chapters they will bear striking resemblance to slaves, nobles, and the God Among Men (respectively). Aristotle frequently mentions the mentally insane in the *Ethics* as a counterexample to his exposition of moral deliberation and habit.[71] That is, he uses insanity to bracket one side of the limits of human capacity. This is a special case in the *Ethics*, insofar as it requires a response from the community of actors and deliberators. Even if the mentally insane person is not predisposed to deviant or criminal behavior, he nevertheless lacks any culpability for his actions according to the above description insofar as he is incapable of discerning the good. The godlike represents an imperfect opposite to the insane. He equally seems to exceed the community, insofar as he is incapable of failing to choose the good in each case. Yet he is also without responsibility for his actions; lacking the ability to choose otherwise, it would seem he is no more deserving of praise than the mentally insane person is subject to blame. Indeed, insofar as the mentally insane—as Aristotle uses the term—must be controlled or removed from the rest of the community (insofar as the insane are incapable of being ruled in the same manner as others, and are equally incapable of ruling others), the godlike person seems to exceed the community (insofar as he is incapable of being ruled in the same manner as others, as he is only capable of ruling others). In short, if the mentally insane individual is possible as a type of deficiency regarding the limits of human deliberation, the godlike seems to represent the opposing, excessive end of the spectrum regarding human possibility. This latter individual, who possesses *phronēsis* to an unnatural or preternatural extent which seems to require a biological explanation, will appear twice more in

the pages that follow: as the God Among Men of the *Politics* (Chapter IV) and the noble *archegos* of *Peri eugeneias* (Chapter V).

But for the moment we must read Aristotle's comparison with other *technai* such as health and gymnastics alongside his over-arching statements regarding the more mundane or human possession of *phronēsis*. This would lead us to take these statements as follows: *phronēsis* is the term for that discerning ability which tells one when he is (in)capable of deliberation regarding a given set of circumstances. This discerning ability comes from experience rather than being an inborn or natural talent, as an individual must continually face situations throughout life which require decision making. Given that this wisdom is acquired through a type of education (whether institutional or not), and given that the young and the undisciplined are without or limited in their possession or *phronēsis*, there are presumably likewise experts in *phronēsis*. However, these experts are to be regarded as similar to a doctor rather than a mathematician, as their field of expertise is always changing and contingent. Just as there is no immutable formula for virtuous action, so too there is no wisdom of *phronēsis* which admits of demonstration via a treatise.

It is worthwhile to comment on the virtue of temperance as it serves as a model for *phronēsis* overall. Sachs provides a helpful note on Aristotle's description: "temperance is not an effort of self-control, nor is it a natural condition of being born without strong desires; it is an active state of character acquired by good upbringing, that lets one see clearly, and feel comfortably, that one doesn't really want to gorge oneself on bodily pleasures that one will regret later."[72] Aristotle calls temperance the most fundamental of the virtues in that it is in many ways his name for the structure of performing beautiful, virtuous actions. But to know this structure—to be both capable of and constantly vigilant to find the mean in a given set of circumstances, to

trust ones judgment and knowledge when appropriate, and to defer to others when ones judgment and knowledge are insufficient—is to have *phronēsis*. Thus, one might say loosely that as one's possession of temperance increases, so does that person's possession of *phronēsis*.

Megalopsuchia

In Book IV, Aristotle introduces the famous term *megalopsuchia*.[73] Often transliterated from the Latin, literal translation "magnanimous," it will be rendered throughout as "greatness of soul" or "great-souledness."[74] Fundamental to Aristotle's description of the great-souled individual is his claim that this person is *both* worthy of great things *and* recognizes that he is worthy of great things. This has led to the misconception that Aristotle is praising pride as a virtue rather than a vice, and there is a long history of Christian response and refutation of this claim.[75] Yet this is undeserved, and it is difficult to find the locus of that which readers misconstrue so strongly. For Aristotle is clear in his introduction of the great-souled individual as to his opposite: "But someone is small-souled who considers his worth to be less than it is, whether he is worthy of great or moderate things, or even if, being worthy of little, he considers himself worthy of still less." The great-souled individual *is* confident and imperious, but someone who is pretentious or arrogant is precluded—by definition—from *megalopsuchia*. By contrast, the small-souled individual is one of three types: either he is a person who is unaware of his potential, or he is consumed by false humility, or he is aware of his potential while failing to actualize it. In short, the great-souled individual is radically self-aware, whereas the small-souled individual is ignorant, vain (i.e., in search of flattery and encouragement), or lazy.

In this sense, the great-souled individual could truly call himself a member of the *aristoi*, when this term is not used equivocally (e.g., based on one's membership in a class or family).

Aristotle illustrates this in his discussion of the great-souled individual's relationship with honor. He states that the great-souled person is properly concerned with the greatest of external goods, "and we would set down as greatest of these the one that we assign to the gods, and at which people of high standing aim most of all, and which is the prize given for the most beautiful deeds." Aristotle names this greatest good honor, and quickly says that "the great-souled person is concerned with honors and acts of dishonor in the way one ought to be." Again, this has led some readers to misunderstand Aristotle's intent when describing the great-souled person, insofar as this would seem to imply an individual who is in need of recognition. But if one remembers Aristotle's comments at the beginning of the text regarding the insufficiency of the person who requires external confirmation of his greatness by seeking honors that must be bestowed upon him, one can take his comment at face value that the great-souled individual is concerned with honor "in the way one ought to be." Further, by stating that this person is honored specifically for "the most beautiful deeds"—Aristotle's common description of virtuous acts—then one can read this as saying that *megalopsuchia* is Aristotle's name for a person who illustrates his possession of virtue by maintaining virtuous character through his beautiful actions.

In what follows Aristotle confirms this reading. After stating that "it is necessary for one who is great-souled in the true sense to be good, and what is great in each virtue would seem to belong to someone who is great-souled," he concludes that greatness of soul is more of a name for the virtuous person than an individual virtue in the manner of those other virtues previously discussed: "Greatness of soul, then, seems to be a certain kind of adornment of the virtues, since it makes them greater, and does not come about without them. For this reason it is difficult to be great-souled in truth, for it is not possible without the beauty that belongs to goodness."[76] As before, Aristotle's language here is a subtle but powerful social commentary. During his time the

Athenian aristocracy enjoyed referring to themselves as *kaloi k'agathoi*, "the beautiful and good."[77] As the name implies, membership in this upper echelon of society entailed the assumption of honor, virtue and goodness by and for its self-appointed participants solely on the basis of their aristocratic blood and wealth. Aristotle's comments regarding the great-souled person reinforce his claim that virtue is no more a natural or perennial possession than honor or goodness are to be assumed. Rather, virtue is acquired and maintained through an individual's continual goodness manifested and proven by that individual's lifelong performance of beautiful actions.

To summarize these points, *megalopsuchia* actually seems to designate two different types of individuals who nevertheless share an essential trait in different degrees. First, the great-souled individual is a person who merits great honor due specifically to his virtuous character. To be called such this individual must possess virtue in a complete sense, and *megalopsuchia* is simply the name for such completion of character. However, throughout the discussion Aristotle occasionally includes caveats regarding the rarity of such perfect virtue, reducing the meaning of *megalopsuchia* to grades rather than simply naming the godlike. This leads to the second designation. If someone is called "small-souled" on the basis of his ignorance (whether genuine or feigned) of his own worth or his unwillingness to live up to his potential, then this implies that greatness of soul has more to do with the commensurability between that which one genuinely can achieve or for which one can hope, and that which one actually achieves or for which one hopes. Put another way, *megalopsuchia* would seem to name the *phronimos*, considered with respect to himself. If *phronēsis* is defined as the ability to discern differences between the greater and lesser with regard to a given situation, then this includes self-appraisal in addition to the appraisal of others. Just as *phronēsis* allows one to recognize when one should be ruled and when

one should rule—whether literally regarding political power or metaphorically regarding an individual's greater or lesser possession of a certain type of knowledge—so too it requires one to be honest regarding one's own possession of virtue and claims to honor. But this would mean that greatness of soul is not perfection of virtue, but instead a proper political relationship within oneself between one's virtue and one's self-estimation. Thus, the prerequisite of *megalopsuchia* is an honest self-appraisal which is ambitious without vanity and humble without deprecation. As we will see in Chapter III, this is the prerequisite of any citizen in the best *polis*.

Dikē

In Book V, Aristotle turns to what in many ways is the central focus of the *Ethics*: *dikē*, or justice. Justice, like great-souledness, is in some sense a meta-virtue, as it is both more complex and more overarching than individual virtues like courage. First, he states that justice is itself an active condition out of which an individual performs just actions and desires just things. And he makes an important distinction which holds equally for justice as for the other virtues *qua* active conditions: justice is unlike both predispositions and knowledges. For knowledges provide for the implementation of both good and bad effects (e.g., a doctor is potentially as effective an assassin as a healer), and predispositions are literally by nature rather than by choice. Therefore justice is exemplary of the difference in kind between active conditions and these others, as to be just does not allow one equally to perform unjust acts.

Yet there is a problem with this early distinction. Aristotle points to the law when defining justice, stating that "since the law-breaker is unjust and the law-abiding person is just, it is clear that everything lawful is in some way just, for the things determined by the lawmaking art are lawful, and we speak of each of these as just."[78] On the one hand, Aristotle continues this

passage to say that laws aim at the happiness of the community—thereby connecting *dikē*, *eudaimonia*, and *hē politikē* as essentially related. On the other hand, this neglects the possibility of laws which are *prima facie* unjust. Aristotle intimates the conflict between natural and positive law in this section by stating *both* that the law is concerned with the happiness of the community *and* that to follow laws is in some sense to be just.

In what follows, Aristotle continues to describe justice in unique terms. He states that the proper, august implementation of justice is lawmaking, and that this is a manifestation of complete virtue. "And for this reason, it often seems that justice is the greatest of the virtues," he says, for justice "alone among the virtues seems to be someone else's good, because it is in relation to someone else." In this passage Aristotle makes two important moves. First, he expands upon the issue of positive and natural law, insofar as Aristotle has obliquely yet clearly endorsed law as that which actively pursues the good of the community. Second, he definitively claims that the proper focus of ethics is not the pursuance of virtue by and for the individual, but for the community as a whole. The goal of virtue is to better those within the political community: "the worst person is one who makes use of vice in relation to himself and toward his friends, while the best person is not the one who makes use of virtue in relation to himself, but the one who does so toward someone else… This sort of justice, then, is not a part of virtue, but the whole of virtue, nor is the sort of injustice opposite to it a part of vice but the whole of vice."[79]

As Aristotle continues, he broaches a number of topics which will only be completely discussed in the *Politics*—most notably the relationship between the good man and the good citizen. After concluding that the true definition of justice is that which is *both* in accordance with the law *and* that which is "ordered from complete virtue, since the law orders one to live in

accord with each virtue," Aristotle moves on to claim that laws which produce virtue are specifically those which "are enacted concerning education for the public." Following his argument, it would seem that the primary concern of the lawgiver is the education of the public through laws which specifically produce virtue, and that the lawgiver who correctly administers justice in this manner would be lauded as one who has "complete" virtue. Yet Aristotle ends the section with a disclaimer: "As for the education for each person, as a result of which each is a good man simply, one ought to distinguish later whether it belongs to politics or some other discipline, for perhaps it is not the same thing to be a good man and a good citizen in every situation." Although the issue regarding the good man and the good citizen must wait until the *Politics* to receive detailed examination, it is unclear why he hesitates to state here that politics is principally concerned with educating the members of the *polis* with a mind to virtue.

For the moment Aristotle leaves these considerations, and continues to discuss the proper administration of justice. Upon providing some comments on proportional and equal justice for all, Aristotle readdresses the relationship between positive and natural law. "What is naturally just has the same power everywhere, and is not affected by whether it seems so to people or not, but what is conventionally just is something that at first makes no difference to do this way or some other way, but when people have established it, does make a difference."[80] For a while Aristotle proceeds rather ambiguously, stating both that everything is changeable (and therefore only conventional justice and positive law exist in the human realm), and that there are some things that are absolute (and therefore endorsing natural law and justice). He gives examples of laws and customs which differ between people, but makes a surprising conclusion which is particularly significant for this examination. He states that there is a perfect form of *polis* which is both natural and superior to all others: "the things that are just not naturally but by human

convention are not the same everywhere, since the kinds of constitution are not the same either, though the only one that is everywhere according to nature is the best kind."[81] This distinction will be of central importance in the *Politics*, as the claim that there is a particular form of *polis* which can be called "best" insofar as it is administered in accordance with nature is one of the more contentious debates among readers of that text. While the full discussion of this best *polis* must wait until Chapter III, it is important to note that already in the *Ethics* Aristotle provides two general frameworks or criteria by which one can examine a *polis*: according to their particular (conventional) laws, and according to their adherence to universal (natural) laws.

Aristotle closes Book V with an example of absolute justice. Several times in the course of the Book Aristotle mentions the question of whether an individual can be unjust towards himself, in each case concluding that either we use the expression equivocally, or that for this to be possible the individual would have to be in some sense mad. In the latter case, Aristotle states that there can only be justice between equals in the *polis*, whereas considerations of justice between unequals are of a different type. Specifically, the *polis* considers claims of (in)justice between citizens, while justice between a household master and his wife, children or slaves is not properly so called—as justice claims require proportionality in order to be addressed, and the difference in these relationships is incommensurable.[82] In the former case, he remembers the reader to Plato's tripartite division of the soul from the *Republic*, and his statement therein that the rational part of the soul rules the irrational part by a type of yoke. This appears to be unjust, although this view is in fact erroneous. Similarly, an injustice towards an individual or part of the *polis* which is performed for the sake of serving the greater justice of or to the whole is a misconception. In both cases (the soul and the *polis*) the ruling part must consider the whole, which at times can permit or require that which would be perceived as an injustice by one of the

parts.[83] What connects these considerations is the relationship established between the individual, the household, and the community: justice is the consideration of the whole not in spite of the self-interest of the part, but their own self-interest is best achieved by the interests of the whole. Therefore, the individual, the household, and the community are each alike in that they are bodies, and justice is only possible insofar as the ruling part of the body acts according to that which is best for the whole *qua* body. Further, to perform in a manner that is properly called unjust towards a part of the body—whether individual, household, or community—would be to act in a manner that is literally *alogismos*, which disregards or goes against proportional consideration of that which the parts require and deserve. In short, for any ruling part to act against the interests of the other parts in such a manner as to harm the whole and therefore properly to be called unjust would require that the ruling part in question is in some sense insane. For just as no sane person would willingly and knowingly harm his own body, so too it would be mad for a household member to act unjustly toward his slaves or for a ruler to act unjustly toward the ruled.

Virtues of Intellection

Aristotle begins Book VI by stating that, the virtues of character having received their due, what remains is to discuss the virtues of intellection or knowing. Whereas the virtues of character relate to or are founded upon the right condition of the emotions or desires, the virtues of intellection are founded upon the right condition of the intellect. Thus, whereas the preceding pages considered the proper expression of the irrational part of the soul, the following pages will consider the proper expression of the rational part of the soul. However, Aristotle reminds us that although the rational part of the soul considers that which cannot be otherwise (which is not the

subject of ethics), it also deals with that which requires calculation and judgment.[84]

For much of Book VI, Aristotle clears the way for his discussion of *phronēsis*. When he finally comes to the topic, he begins characteristically by looking at those who would be said to possess *phronēsis*. He concludes that these individuals are capable of "deliberating beautifully" about that which is good and advantageous to themselves, not in part (e.g., health) but in a way that regards them as wholes. Such individuals are praised for their calculations regarding "some particular serious end, about which there is no art… but no one deliberates about things that are incapable of being otherwise." Therefore, *phronēsis* is a type of knowing different in kind from both art and wisdom; "it is a truth-disclosing active condition involving reason that governs action, concerned with what is good and bad for a human being."[85] In this distinction, Aristotle makes an important point not just for ethics, but for politics as well. While it is obvious that knowledge of *technai* would in no way entail the presence of *phronēsis* in an individual, it might seem that those who are called wise would possess practical wisdom as much as theoretical wisdom. Yet Aristotle is quick to remind the reader that Thales was known both for his wisdom and for lacking any understanding of his own advantage, i.e., as lacking *phronēsis*.[86] The significance of these comments is twofold, although the full implications will not be discussed until much later. First, implicit in this distinction is the separation of two *teloi* for human beings which will be taken up again when Aristotle discusses philosophy: the *telos* of virtuous education (*phronēsis*) and that of philosophy (*sophia*). Second, the political ramification of this statement is to preclude technocracy as a possibility for a legitimate form of government.

In separating *phronēsis* from the type of knowing active in either philosophy or art, Aristotle now can state definitively what has been implicit in the discussion thus far: "the political art is the same active condition as practical judgment." This has been proven

dialectically, particularly in his elucidation of justice in Book V. When considered in an individual, *phronēsis* is the activity of knowing that which concerns beautiful actions in situations regarding the individual which can be otherwise. When considered in a *polis*, *phronēsis* is the activity of knowing that which concerns beautiful actions in situations regarding the citizens which can be otherwise. As Aristotle says, "Applied to the city, *phronēsis* in the overarching sense is the art of lawmaking, while in the sense having to do with particulars it has the common name, politics, and this governs action and deliberation, since a decree is an action to be performed as an ultimate particular thing."[87] Therefore, just as the virtue of justice in an individual was shown to be the same for the *polis* writ large, so too *phronēsis* in the individual is the name for that which we praise in the *polis* writ large.

On the whole, the rest of Book VI does not contribute significantly to the present purpose, and therefore will be passed over. One final comment deserves mention, however. Aristotle states unequivocally that *phronēsis* is necessary for virtue, insofar as good character, good action, and good judgment all mutually entail one another. As stated before, to have virtuous character requires the cultivation of virtuous habits, and virtuous habits can only form via the repeated performance of virtuous actions. But all these are predicated on the decision making activity of *phronēsis*. Therefore, the virtuous education of the *Ethics* has as its goal the production of an individual who possesses *phronēsis*, and when considered with regard to the community this is the name for the individual who is most suited for politics.

VII

Book VII begins with a discussion of godlike and animal-like individuals. Aristotle says that we must "make another start," and this is to address the three things that need be avoided regarding

character: "vice, lack of self-restraint, and an animal-like state."[88] Vice is an active condition of the soul with identical (though mirrored) characteristics to virtue. Lack of self-restraint therefore bears the same relationship to vice (though the two are not identical) as that of self-restraint to virtue (again, not identical). What is of particular interest is the animal-like state. First, after stating that the opposites of the first two are obvious, Aristotle says "it would be most fitting to speak of a virtue that transcends us, something heroic and godlike, as Homer made Priam say about Hector, that he was exceedingly good, 'and even seemed to be not the child of a mortal man but of a god.'"[89] In short, Aristotle says that if the animal-like state is both possible and an extreme, then there must be an opposite extreme. Further, since animals lack vice or virtue (insofar as they are incapable of *praxis* due to their incapacity for *phronēsis*), the opposite of this would seem necessarily to lack capacity for vice and virtue (in a manner similar to excess rather than deficiency). But it was shown earlier that gods are incapable of vice and virtue, insofar as it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of a god as deliberating among possible beautiful or shameful actions according to a human standard. Aristotle continues by saying that animal-like and god-like persons are rare.

This brief description of extremes on both sides of human capacity corresponds to Aristotle's descriptions of slaves and nobles (and the God Among Men) in the *Politics* and *Peri eugeneias*, respectively. The significance of these comments will be fully addressed in Chapter IV and V, but it is important to note that Aristotle has again stated that such persons are possible, if rare. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is Aristotle's claim that the animal-like persons are "found most of all among the barbarians, though some instances occur on account of diseases and defects." Later he goes into more detail, stating that these animal-like individuals seem to be of two types. On the one hand, there are those who fall into this state due to habit. On the other

hand, there are those who are rendered such by nature (either from birth or due to disease or accident). Regardless of the source of the affliction, Aristotle says that such individuals are so unrestrained as make moot the question of their mastering or being mastered by it.[90] Among examples of such extreme cases, he cites those who run from mice and those who wish to eat children.[91] He provides no similar statements as to god-like individuals, save that the Spartans have a similar name for individuals who they admire greatly.[92]

Philía

In his final remarks at the end of Book VII, Aristotle says that no one would live or be considered happy if bereft of pleasure. Although the transition to friendship in Book VIII is somewhat abrupt, Aristotle connects the two discussions by stating at the outset that friendship is equally "most necessary for life. For no one would choose to live without friends, despite having all the rest of the good things." Aristotle names a number of different common uses for friendship, but the most significant for our purposes is his statement that "when people are friends there is no need of justice, but when they are just there is still need of friendship, and among things that are just, what inclines toward friendship seems to be most just of all."[93] The relationship with justice makes sense, in that Aristotle frequently describes friendship as wishing for the good of the other—which was the full expression of justice in Book V. Given that he now says that true friendship replaces any and all considerations of justice between friends, one might say that the greatest *polis*—if possible—would be that in which the citizens were friends with one another and with the rulers.

When Aristotle delineates the three types of friendship, they map onto the tripartite divisions made at the beginning of the *Ethics* regarding the three types of life. Friendship of

pleasure is an obvious corollary to the life of pleasure, but friendship of utility might not immediately appear to be related to the life of honor. Nevertheless, when one remembers that Aristotle's initial discussion of honor and political life is critiqued as actually being concerned with the acquisition of wealth, power, and recognition—rather than the proper concern with these things, the acquisition of which results as an accident of virtuous activity—then the similarity becomes clearer. Just as Aristotle does not chagrin the pursuit of pleasure or honor, so too friendships of pleasure and utility receive qualified approval. The impulse behind them is the same, insofar as their necessity for a complete and happy life is certain. This is true for the individual as well as the *polis*: friendships of pleasure and utility are at the basis of commerce. Such friendships are insufficient in the same manner that such pursuits were insufficient: "the complete sort of friendship is that between people who are good and are alike in virtue, since they wish for good things for one another in the same way insofar as they are good, and they are good in themselves." Indeed, true or complete friendships are pleasurable and useful in addition to exceeding these in quality and durability.[94]

This praise of true friendship comes with a caveat: "such friendships are likely to be rare, for such people are few."[95] Aristotle reiterates that friendship is a virtue, in that it goes beyond mere affection (which can be felt toward inanimate things), and requires choice (which is the result of deliberation regarding goods and that which can be otherwise). More importantly, true friendship is predicated on the equality of those who are friends, "so that each of them loves what is good for himself, and also gives back an equal amount in return to wishing as well as in what is pleasant."[96] Therefore, although presumably the mutual goodwill of a father and son, or that of a wife and husband, or that of the young and old, would seem to resemble complete friendship, these are precluded on the basis of the inequality between the parties. As will be seen

later, this explains Aristotle's statement that one cannot be friends with one's slaves, due to the incommensurable difference between the two. Again, this does not prevent there being species of friendship based on goodwill between these unequal parties, or that their relationships be praiseworthy. In the same way that justice is praiseworthy based on its proper proportionality, so too with friendship: "for in every sort of community there seems to be something just, and also friendship… To whatever extent that they share something in common, to that extent is there a friendship, since that too is the extent to which there is something justice. And the proverb 'the things of friends are common' is right, since friendship consists in community."[97] In this Aristotle intimates his later distinction of the different types of government, in that the types of friendship map on to the gradations of sick and healthy governments. Each is a community which serves a purpose, although it is solely in the complete and true form that the other forms are subsumed fully and beautifully. This is not to say that in the best community all citizens share in complete friendship with one another, as the exacting prerequisites of complete friendship preclude such possibility. Rather, the relationships between friends and the relationships between rulers and ruled will bear strong similarities once we turn to the *Politics*.

Aristotle solidifies this connection by turning to the three types of government for a *polis*—monarchy, aristocracy, and polity—as well as their deviations. After elucidating the similarities and differences between friendship and justice, he shows that the discussion of politics is a natural outgrowth of the discussion of friendship. In healthy governments, the ruler(s) consider the advantage of those who are ruled, whereas the sick types are concerned primarily with their own advantage. "In each form of constitution friendship shows itself, to the extent that justice does." However, he qualifies this friendship in his description of it a couple lines later, saying that a king is a friend of the people "like a herdsman with sheep; hence Homer

calls Agamemnon the shepherd of the people… And a father is by nature suited to rule sons, and forefathers their descendants, and a king his subjects. These friendships consist in superiority… So what is just among these people is not the same but is in accord with worth, and so too is the friendship."[98] The inverse holds for the deviant constitutions, "for in those situations in which there is nothing shared by the ruler and the ruled, there is no friendship, since there is no justice either, as in a craftsman in relation to a tool or in a soul in relation to a body or in a master in relation to a slave." Thus, Aristotle here sets up an analogy that will become much more important in what follows: a healthy constitution is one wherein the rulers are in some strongly qualified sense *true* "friends" of those who they rule, whereas governments are called sick insofar as the rulers regard their subjects solely as a means to their own pleasure. Nevertheless, by comparing the friendship of the healthy ruler to the ruled as akin to that between father and son or shepherd and sheep, he seems to nullify the possibility of a true friendship relation in the very act of establishing it.

In the pages that follow, Aristotle continues to employ the three categories of friendship as a local, interpersonal manifestation of the same relationships between the parts of the soul and the parts of the political community. Thus, the discussion of friendship—which for many is the apex of the *Ethics*—reiterates the inherent link between the *De Anima*, the *Ethics*, and the *Politics*, and the significance of *hē politikē* as operative in all three texts. For example, Aristotle states that a person desires friendship as a desire for self-satisfaction, self-preservation, and a type of friendship with the rational element within the self. A person of "serious worth" wants friendship because it is a type of effluence out of the soul.[99] On the other side, mutual goodwill and like-mindedness are prerequisites of genuine friendship in the same manner that political communities choose things that are mutually beneficial.[100] As Sachs writes, "In Book VIII… a

comparison was made to the kinds of political constitutions which made a friendship seem to be a small version of such a community. Here [in Book IX], Aristotle turns his discussion toward what is central in friendship, and responsible for its unity rather than for its variety. From this standpoint, the life of friendship seems to be an expansion of the soul instead of a contraction of communal life."[101]

And in each case Aristotle lauds that configuration which is a manifestation of the most just relation of the parts. Just after addressing those who would claim that we are naturally (and therefore beautifully) self-serving, Aristotle responds that although this is true in some sense, it needs be tempered.

> But it would seem rather that it is such a person who is a lover of self; at least he takes for himself the things that are most beautiful and most good, and gratifies what is most authoritative in himself, and obeys this in all things. And just as a city, or any other organization, seems to be, most of all, its most authoritative part, so too does a human being; and so the person who loves and gratifies this is most a lover of self. And people are called self-restrained and unrestrained according to whether intellect masters them or not, as though this were each person; and the things people seem most of all to have done themselves and willingly are the things they have done with reason. That, then, this is each person, or is so most of all, is not unclear, nor that a decent person loves this most. Hence such a person would be a lover of self most of all, though in a different form from the one that is reproached, differing as much as living by reason does from living by passion, and as much as desiring either the beautiful or what seems advantageous.

In short, as entities with parts which can be organized in a base (i.e., divided against each other) or beautiful (i.e., unified for the sake of the whole) fashion, the soul, the friendship, and the community are all praised insofar as they organize their parts in adherence to this principle. Love of self in this particular sense is advantageous not just to the entities themselves, but it also illustrates their full actualization of their respective being-at-work. This is reinforced as Aristotle continues: "if they all competed for the beautiful, and strained to the utmost to perform the most beautiful actions, then for all in common there would be what is needful, and for each in particular, there would be the greatest of goods, if indeed virtue is that. Therefore, a good person ought to be a lover of self, since he will both profit himself and benefit the others by performing beautiful actions" [102] Just as the irrational benefits by succumbing to the greater claim of the rational part as to that which will serve the entire soul best, so too the lover of the beautiful in action is more capable of loving himself as well as his friends. The implication for political organizations is that *all* parts of the *polis* are likewise served by this proper combination of self-love and self-control, of ruling and being ruled—specifically by ceding power to that in the organization which has the greatest claim to rule. Of course, if the ability to discern the relative strength or weakness of one's claim to rule is *phronēsis*, then *phronēsis* is the name for the condition of the possibility of organizing all such relationships according to that which is simultaneously advantageous and virtuous for that community. Aristotle uses the exposition of friendship to solidify the claim of *phronēsis* as that which allows human relations—whether considered as relations among parts within a single person, relations among persons, or relations writ large in a *polis*—to achieve *energeia* literally, to have their proper being-at-work within themselves. To be without true friends is to be deficient in some respect, and to have friends of a

lesser type is insufficient. “Therefore, for someone who is going to be happy, there will be a need for friends of serious worth.”[103]

The Philosopher

In Book X, Aristotle turns to the discussion of philosophy as the highest pursuit for a human being. This has been the subject of long-standing debate amongst readers, for a number of reasons. The turn to philosophy strikes many readers as abrupt, and some have even suggested that it was a separate text or a later addition to the *Ethics* as originally penned. Further, by praising the man of contemplation, Aristotle would seem to be reducing or replacing the great-souled individual—the man of action—as the apex of the ethical education outlined in the text. While we will not attempt to answer this debate in what follows, we must examine Aristotle’s understanding of philosophy and its place in the human community in order to consider the relationship between the philosopher and the statesman.

Aristotle begins the discussion of contemplation by returning to the question of pleasure. Although this may seem to be a retrograde motion, Aristotle shows that pleasure has been at play throughout the discussion. He states that anything which is choiceworthy is itself pleasurable, dispelling the potential impression that the rational within us must drown out the irrational by denying its claim to pleasure. On the contrary: “what is most conducive to virtue of character is to enjoy what one what one ought and to hate what one ought.”[104] The implicit argument is quite simple, confirming that which has come before.

> But one might assume that all beings reach out for pleasure because they all desire to live. Life is a certain kind of being-at-work, and each person is at-work in

> connection with those things and by means of those capacities that satisfy him most: a musical person by hearing and with melodies, a lover of learning by thinking and with topics of contemplation, and so too with each of the rest. The pleasure brings the activities to completion and hence brings living to completion, which is what they all strive for. It is reasonable, then, that they also aim at pleasure, since it brings living to fulfillment for each of them, which is worthy of choice. For the present, let the question be dismissed whether we choose to live for the sake of pleasure, or choose pleasure for the sake of living, for these appear to be joined together and incapable of separation. For without being-at-work, no pleasure comes about, and pleasure brings every way of being-at-work to completion.[105]

Ethics (and politics) does not entail or require restraining of desire for pleasure, but relocates and utilizes the motive force of pursuing pleasure—and consequently the activities which are deemed pleasurable. When the irrational element reigns, humans pursue pleasures that are themselves animal or irrational. Life is experienced as pleasant in the gratification of such desires, but such a life is insufficient or incomplete for human beings. However, when the rational element rules, it pursues that which is more proper to human beings *qua* rational beings—and experiences greater pleasure in the satisfaction of desire due to the greater appropriateness of said pleasures for that being.

Indeed, even though there are many types of being-at-work which are not base—and therefore the pleasure which they produce is similarly without blame—nevertheless they are inadequate insofar as they do not constitute the completion of that which is essentially human. To

illustrate this point, Aristotle returns to his fundamental simile involving differences in kind: just as things that differ in kind are brought to completion by different means (i.e., natural things v. those made by art), so too "ways of being-at-work that are different in kind are brought to completion by means that differ in kind… This would be apparent also from the way in which each of the pleasures is bound up with the activity it completes, since the appropriate pleasure contributes to the growth of the activity."[106] Although it is true that entities can achieve ends or perform certain *erga* that are not theirs according to their making, such *erga* always fall short of that which is characteristic to the entity *qua* entity. Further, even those that do belong to an entity *qua* entity, yet fall short of the fundamental or essential *ergon* of that entity, these necessarily pale by comparison. Thus, if Aristotle has found the activity which is most characteristic of human beings, then the pleasure produced by all others will be "pleasures in a secondary and greatly diminished sense, corresponding to their activities."[107]

Aristotle's progression is as clever as it is inescapable. If the rational element within human beings as a natural kind is simultaneously most unique and most characteristic of that kind, then the activity of that element would produce the most pleasure and be the most conducive or productive of happiness for that entity. As Aristotle says, if happiness is the end of all human activities as the ultimate end of being human, then to achieve happiness a human being must desire those activities and experience the corresponding pleasures which arise from the employment of the rational element within human beings. Therefore, "if happiness is being-at-work in accord with virtue, it is reasonable that it would be in accord with the most powerful virtue, and this would belong to the best part." But that part which is best and most constitutive of being human, the employment of which would be the sole means to complete happiness, must be the contemplative within humans. "Now whether this is intellect or some other part that seems

by nature to rule and lead and have a conception about things that are beautiful and divine, and to be either divine itself or the most divine of the things in us, the being-at-work of this part in accord with its own proper virtue would be complete happiness. That this way of being-at-work is contemplative has been said."[108]

When Aristotle begins to describe the contemplative person, his comments threaten to run roughshod over a great deal of that which has come before in his endorsement of virtue. First, he states that the being-at-work of contemplation is "the most powerful (since the intellect is the most powerful thing in us, and the things with which the intellect is concerned are the most powerful of the things that can be known); it is also the most continuous, for we are more able to contemplate continuously than to act in any way whatever."[109] Yet the strength and the stability of philosophy seem to make the other virtues moot. For example, Aristotle states that the wise person exceeds the just person in self-sufficiency, for once they are provided with that which is necessary for living, "a just person still needs people toward whom and with whom he will act justly, and similarly with the temperate and the courageous person and each of the others, but the wise person is able to contemplate even when he is by himself."[110] If one follows this argument to its logical conclusion, by devoting himself to that which is characteristically human (i.e., the use of the rational element in contemplation), the philosopher kicks himself loose of that which is necessary for human beings (i.e., living in community)—in both cases, *qua* human being. The other virtues, as habits which require engaging in actions within a community throughout one's life, provide proof for Aristotle's claim that human beings are by nature political animals and that the *polis* is a natural entity. Nevertheless, contemplation, as the highest being-at-work possible for human beings, releases the philosopher from the necessity of the human community—which would seem to change his very being as a political animal by nature. Indeed, it would seem that

the philosopher is released even from the necessity of friends, as this activity requires no others in order to be enacted. Aristotle furthers this doubt when he compares the life of pure contemplation with the life of politics and war. On the one hand, the comparison is appropriate insofar as these other two are preeminent activities possible for a human being. On the other hand, he determines that these others are particularly without leisure and that they aim at something outside of themselves in addition to themselves, whereas that of contemplation is completely leisured and is done solely for its own sake (but unlike, e.g., play, it is a serious pursuit). Therefore, "this would be the complete happiness of a human being, if it takes in a complete span of life, for none of the things that belong to happiness is incomplete."[111]

The ostensible mutual exclusivity, mutual interdependence, or potential separation between the life of action and the life of contemplation has led to considerable debate among readers of Aristotle. Nevertheless, as Aristotle approaches the end and reflects upon what has been accomplished, he would seem to provide the key. He asks, "Now if what has to do with happiness as well as with the virtues, and also with friendship and pleasure, has been sufficiently discussed in outline, ought one to assume that our chosen task has its end? Or, as has been said, is the end in matters of action not contemplating and knowing each of them but rather doing them?" Book X begins by reiterating the necessity of pleasure, virtue, and friends for a happy life prior to discussing happiness. Each of these must be pursued in accordance with all that has preceded in order for an individual to be prepared, as it were, for the life of contemplation. In short, Aristotle's discussion of the philosopher does *not* entail the disregard of that which has come before, although it may imply it. The experience of pleasure through the activity of virtue among true friends seems to be prerequisite of the life of contemplation. In other words, although to be great-souled in no way implies that one is a philosopher, to be a philosopher seems to

require that one is great-souled.[112] Although it will take until the end of this project to show fully, in these remarks Aristotle has already answered the long debate regarding whether the philosopher is essentially (a)political: the philosopher is political by definition. Aristotle confirms this assumption by reiterating the incompleteness of contemplation considered without virtuous action: "it is not sufficient to know about virtue, but one must try to have it and use it, unless there is some other way we become good."[113]

The Point of View for Aristotle's Work as an Author

If Aristotle is capable of rhetorical subtlety, then the end of the *Ethics* is an excellent example. Aristotle engages in a metadiscussion concerning the entire project of the *Ethics* (and, as we will see, the *Politics*) that is not just self-reflective. His comments here are at the least rhetorically suggestive, at most politically revolutionary. They deserve extensive quotation, as they will be important for the remainder of the discussion:

> Then it is not sufficient to know about virtue, but one must try to have it and use it, unless there is some other way we become good. Now if discourses by themselves were sufficient for making people decent, then justly 'they would take many large fees,' as Theognis says, and one would need to provide them, but as things are, discourses appear to have the power to encourage and stimulate open-natured young people, and would make a well-born character that loves what is truly beautiful be inspired with virtue, but they are unable to encourage most people toward what is beautiful and good. For they are naturally obedient not to respect but to fear, and refrain from base actions not on account of shame but on

> account of penalties. For since they live by feelings, they pursue the pleasures that they are comfortable with and the things by means of which these will come about, and avoid the pains opposed to these pleasures, while they have no notion of what is beautiful and truly pleasant, having had no taste of it. What sort of discourse, then, could reform such people? For it is not possible, or not easy, to change by words things that have been bound up in people's characters since long ago; perhaps one should be content if, when everything is present by which we seem to become decent, we might gain a share of virtue.[114]

Aristotle re-presents the purpose behind the *Ethics* and the *Politics* here in a way that shows his hand. He admits herein that the texts purport not only to analyze ethics and politics *per se*, but also that they aim to change the reader in the very act of description. That is, Aristotle states unequivocally that the primary goal of the *Ethics* and the *Politics* is not to describe how one educates the soul through activities within human communities, but to *effect* this education in the reader by means of the texts themselves. Indeed, Aristotle even employs shame in this moment of reflection; the reader is unlikely to wish to identify himself with the majority of people who "are naturally obedient not to respect but to fear," who "live by feelings," and who "have no notion of what is beautiful and truly pleasant, having had no taste of it." The language here—which alludes back to Aristotle's earlier discussion of immature youths who are incapable of living beautifully—cannot be accidental, particularly the rhetorical question Aristotle uses in the penultimate sentence, and the apparent solution in the ultimate sentence. In short, he answers his own question by describing both his intention and his hope in writing the *Ethics*.

These remarks serve a dual purpose, as they also set up the natural transition from the

Ethics to the *Politics*. If it is very difficult to instill virtue in individuals due to the long time required to shape and/or change character, yet virtue is as important for the individual and the community as has been shown, then one must conclude that the most important and expedient means of inculcating virtue be enacted immediately. "Hence it is necessary to arrange for rearing and exercise by laws, since they will not be painful when they have hit upon the right rearing and discipline when they are young, but also afterward, when they have reached adulthood, they must practice these things and habituate themselves and we would need laws about these things as well, and so, generally, about the whole of life."[115] The proper occupation of the ruler and the proper purpose of the *polis* are thus established as Aristotle draws an ineluctable line between the *Ethics* and *Politics*. "This is why some people think the lawmakers ought to exhort people to virtue and encourage them to act for the sake of what is beautiful, since those who have been guided decently in their habits will be responsive, but must also impose punishments and penalties on those who are disobedient or lacking in natural capacity, and banish altogether from among them those who are incurable." The lawmaker's charge is to create laws always with a mind to the education of the *polis*. Since the education which ensues is education primarily in *phronēsis*, the lawmaker must be one who is himself an expert in *phronēsis*. Indeed, given that Aristotle earlier established the existence of such experts, and given the importance of this for the *polis* as a whole and for each individual to have a hope achieving that which is the end for human beings, the lawmaker should be the individual or individuals who have the greatest expertise in *phronēsis*.

Further, even if the reader has not himself been brought up under such laws and experienced such an education, the argument of the *Ethics is* such an education. It necessarily leads the reader to the inescapable conclusion that there are those who possess *phronēsis* to a

greater and lesser degree, that there are experts in *phronēsis* as in any other field of wisdom or art, that Aristotle is such an expert as illustrated in his ability to write the *Ethics* itself, and that Aristotle would thus be a trustworthy guide as to the choosing of a lawmaker or ruler—that Aristotle himself would thereby be an ideal lawmaker or ruler. Aristotle proves his expertise in writing a text about *phronēsis* while at the same time educating his readers in *phronēsis*, and they prove their possession of *phronēsis* in recognizing that any *polis* requires such experts in *phronēsis* to be principally in charge of the education of the citizens. The reader does not need to be told that the *Politics* is the second volume of that project which is begun in the *Ethics*—the conclusion is self-evident. And the reader no longer needs be convinced that there are those (including most likely the reader himself) who possess *phronēsis* to a lesser degree than someone like Aristotle, and that the latter individuals need to be elevated to the position of rulers if the *polis* is to have any hope of thriving and achieving its goal of creating the conditions for happiness in its citizens—this conclusion is also necessary. Those who know must be given the power to create a system of education for *all* citizens in *phronēsis*, and the greater their possession of *phronēsis*, the more the citizens will be capable of discerning those to whom such power should be given *and* the more they will be happy and willing to cede said power.

III Politics

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.

- Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to W.C. Jarvis, 1820

Introduction

In spite of, or perhaps because of, millennia of *midrashim* which constitute the critical apparatus surrounding the *Politics*, the text remains a tapestry of clarity and obscurity, of scholarly agreement and argument. First, there is broad consensus regarding a number of issues raised in the text; e.g., the three "healthy" forms of government and their "sick" counterparts. These will be sketched in order to provide a working skeleton of the text for this discussion. Second, there are those issues which resist consensus, e.g., the account of slavery. In some cases, consensus seems ineluctably precluded (without further archaeological discovery). Some of this will be addressed in the initial sketch, although other issues (e.g., slavery) will be reserved for a later, more appropriate place. Still others (e.g., the original order and/or unity of the books) will receive only a passing address, for the sake of economy. Finally, as we proceed several issues will arise that, although they may enjoy consensus status, will be problematized or shown to be problematic. At the close of this Chapter I will attempt to collate these potential anomalies to show that the orthodox reading of Aristotle requires augmentation, if not overturning.

Koinoniology: The *polis* of Necessity

Although the *Politics* begins in a similar manner to many of Aristotle's texts, the full significance of Aristotle's introduction to the topic is not truly disclosed until one has proceeded far in this study. Aristotle starts by claiming that every *polis* is a sort of *koinonia*. The word can be translated in a number of ways: community, association, participation, partnership, etc. The root word means simply "common," although *koinonia* was also used of sexual intercourse and other types of relationships between persons (e.g., marriage, fellowship).[116] What is of particular interest here is Aristotle already points to the fact that the *polis* is both divisible into parts and dependent upon the relationship between those parts. Put another way, the *polis*—any *polis*—is always already made up of a series of ratios (*logoi*) between its parts. Aristotle's later statement that the *polis* is a natural entity is thus intimated at the outset; just as in the *de Anima* the reader sees that natural organisms exist, thrive, and fail according to the relationships or ratios between their parts, so too the (life of the) *polis* will be subject to such relationships.

Second, Aristotle tells us that every *polis qua* partnership is put together with a view to some good (*agathon*).[117] Again, the stage is set for the *polis* to be considered like any other natural organism. As he proceeds, the *Politics* bears a close similarity to the introduction to the *Ethics*: every partnership aims at some good, implying that there must be some good for partnerships which is itself supreme above all else and in a sense that to which they all aspire. This is *hē koinonia hē politikē*, literally the "community of the *polis*," the "community of that which pertains to the *polis*," the "community of citizens." If the natural entity model is correct, then the citizens (and their households) are the parts of this organism. The implication is already that the relationships (the *logoi*) between these parts (the citizens) will determine the existence, thriving, and failure of the life of the *polis*.

Aristotle then turns to address the opinions of others regarding what defines proper relationships. Specifically, he addresses those who—mistakenly—believe that the natures of those who head a *polis* and those who head a household are the same. To prove that this is not the case, Aristotle proposes to investigate the issue according to the "normal" or "guiding" method.[118] Since the *polis* is itself a composite (*suntheton*) of parts, and since with every other investigation it is necessary to break such composites into their constitutive parts, so too in this case one must find the atomic elements which constitute it. [119] This, according to Aristotle, will allow the investigating party to discern the proper relationships according to differing types of rule.

But instead of beginning with the *polis* as we find it, Aristotle discovers these atomic parts via a type of anthropology—or, one might say, a type of koinoniology. Aristotle proceeds to ask which relationships pertain to the very outset of any community; i.e., which relationships are necessary from the beginning, from the first community conceivable. Although this may appear at odds with the method of examining any other natural entity, which begins with the natural entity as fully formed and examines its generation and corruption, it actually proves the similarity. Aristotle is no more doing history in the modern sense of the term than he is positing the first community post a "state of nature" like the social contract theorists of the Enlightenment. Rather, he is asking about the *polis qua* natural entity, as he is asking about its necessary appearance at the origin of its life. Put another way, if there is some necessary correspondence and coherence between the *polis* at its very inception and as it is in its full "adult" form, this would lead the investigator further into that which defines the *polis per se*. Aristotle is looking for the *hupokeimenon* of the *polis* in a synchronic *and* diachronic manner: what is that which necessarily always adheres to the *polis*, regardless of its present *morphē* or

shape.

Aristotle continues to use such language of necessity when discerning the *polis*' origins in order to distill its constitutive parts. He states that the first "coupling" (literally: *sunduazesthai*) of people is "necessarily" that between those who cannot exist without one another. To this he naturally attributes the union of male and female, for the species could not continue otherwise. But he adds an intriguing point: this coupling is not an act of deliberation, but rather an act of instinct; it is no different from other animals or plants and thereby does not really distinguish human beings (or the *polis*) as such. What does distinguish us (*pace* those more social creatures like bees and ants, which lack deliberation) is the *second* and apparently equally necessary relationship: the coupling of the *natural* ruler and the *naturally* ruled, "through which both are preserved" (*árchon dè kaì archómenon phúsei, dià tēn sōtērían*).[120]

There are a number of intricacies to the Greek here, some of which hold pregnant possibilities for what follows. First, the brachylogy involved with the latter relationship between the natural ruler and ruled, seems to imply (but does not directly state) that the relationship is properly understood along the same lines as that between male and female—as a type of "coupling" or "intercourse." Second, while the relationship between male and female is one that lacks or precedes deliberation (and thus is determined not insofar as we are "human" but insofar as we are "animal"), that between the natural ruler and ruled is apparently an act which involves a type of choice. On the one hand, this would seem obvious, insofar as human beings—both considered individually and considered insofar as they create communities unlike anything in the rest of the natural world—are different from animals specifically according to the deliberation involved in their associations. That is, the other animals which admit of community-like structures (e.g., bees, ants), do not (apparently) admit of variation (e.g., royal v. aristocratic

rule).[121] In short, the relationship between the ruled and the ruler is an all-too-human act of deliberation in that it is *both* natural *and* possible for it to be different. On the other hand, Aristotle states that this relationship is that which "preserves" human beings.[122] When one considers his use of the term *sōtērian*, the implication is clear: the choices made in this relationship will have ameliorative or degenerative effects on the *polis* as such, both as a natural whole and as a relationship between its deliberative parts. Therefore, Aristotle has proposed both that the human kind admits of natural rulers and natural subjects in the same temporally fundamental sense as the coupling of the sexes, and that this natural and fundamental relationship is contingent upon deliberation. Humans must choose to live in communities which require ruling and being ruled, but the structure of such rule is a choice which admits of better and worse variations.

Unfortunately, rather than provide clarity, Aristotle obscures his meaning by immediately turning to the relationship between natural slaves and natural masters. *Entre* one of the more difficult and contested issues in the *Politics*. It is important to note that the turn to the natural *slave* and natural *master* is not entailed by the naturally *ruled* and natural *ruler*. There may be natural rulers who are (or are not) themselves slavemasters, and there may be natural subjects who are (or are not) themselves slaves. Further, as seen in the *Ethics*, a master's rule over his slave is essentially different than the ruling relationship between the ruler and the ruled, unless the ruler in question is definitively *not* a natural ruler but a tyrant.[123] As will be seen, all four of these individuals and their relations find their place in the *Politics*, though it will remain unclear whether all four of these individuals or groups exist naturally until Chapter V.

Aristotle continues by stating that one who can "foresee" (*proōran*) by means of thought (*dianoia*) is naturally a ruler *and* master (*despozōn*), whereas one who "has the capacity to toil at

these things by means of his body is ruled *and* a slave by nature" (*tò dè dunámenon tōi sōmati taũta poneĩn archómenon kaì phúsei doũlon*).[124] In this initial collision of natural slave and natural subject Aristotle already points to what will remain a constant difficulty in the *Politics*. As we will see in Chapter V, what Aristotle means by his cryptic reference to the natural slave's proper comportment is a source of debate to this day, so much so that some believe he did not actually have anything specific in mind. Regardless, the sentence ends with the statement that, by means of these defining characteristics, the natural slave and natural master are brought together for their mutual interest.[125]

Aristotle completes the passage with an important aside, that the female and the slave are naturally different from one another, for nature—like a master artisan—makes each tool (*organon*) for a single *ergon*.[126] Although offensive to modern ears for obvious reasons, this final comment provides three useful additions to the progression. First, this can be regarded as yet another statement of what has been previously called Aristotle's pedestrian or production cosmology: nature creates all things according to some single purpose that is specific to the thing in question. Second, although there may be female slaves by nature and although the female and the natural slave alike are in some sense deficient (*penichros*) when compared with the male master by nature, nevertheless they are distinct from one another.[127] Thus, although there may be women who are slaves by nature, to be a woman does not mean that one is or should be a slave. Third—and most important—women and natural slaves are *not* deficient *per se*; nature has provided for them as it provides for all its creations. In other words, natural slaves and women must have their own *ergon* which is specific to them, and which is necessarily distinct from the male master by nature.[128]

Aristotle concludes that these relationships constitute the most irreducible, atomic

elements of the *polis*. The genealogy which follows simply reiterates this point: when these relationships are multiplied into a number of households, and these households "couple" for more than merely daily necessities, they form a village (*kome*). From this he derives an aetiological explanation for the initial presence of royal rule in the earliest Hellenic cities: just as every household is ruled royally by its master, so too the expansion and collection of these households leads to royal administration. Indeed, he further interpolates that the religious belief in a hierarchic pantheon—for all races—is due to this initial structure.[129]

In this truncated statement the aetiological explanation is specious at best. If all initial communities were themselves the combinations of many households and many masters, each administering a type of royal rule over their own, then one just as easily could expect the earliest administration of government (and, by the extension Aristotle takes, the earliest ubiquitous conception of the gods) to be a type of oligarchical or aristocratic rule. Nevertheless, Aristotle's claim stands that royal rule is the first form of government for the first community. Further, *pace* the earlier concerns as to the ambiguity in his statements regarding that which "preserves" the atomic elements of this community, it is at least implied that royal rule is most natural, if not literally brutal—read: it exists prior to any sense of deliberation—form of rule. One might say at this early stage (both in Aristotle's historical sense as well as textually, as we are still in the first pages of the *Politics*) that royal rule is the most natural type of rule for human beings; that the rule of the natural ruler over the naturally ruled is the most natural form of association for humans *qua* human, regardless of whether one is considering the community of the family, the household, the *koinonia*, or the *polis*.

In what follows, Aristotle silences any remaining uncertainty as to the naturalness of the *polis* as well as the manner of investigation which will follow:

> Finally, the coupling of a number of villages is a *polis*... while it comes to be for the sake of life, it exists for the sake of the good life. Wherefore every *polis* exists by nature, insofar as the first communities thus exist. For the *polis* is the end [*telos*] of these, and nature is an end: for with regard to each thing we call the fruition of its original generation its nature, as with a human or horse or house. Further, the end for each thing is its perfection [*beltiston*], and self-sufficiency [or self-rule, *autarkeia*] is both an end and a perfection. From these things it appears that the *polis* exists by nature, and that man is a political animal by nature, and that the apolitical man—by nature and not by fortune [*tuchē*]—is either less than a man or superior to him, like the one whom Homer reproaches as 'clanless, lawless, homeless.'[130]

The either/or Aristotle creates here is unmistakable: considered individually, a human is naturally only a part of a whole. Considered together in a self-sufficient community, humans are members of a broader organism which constitutes their ultimate end as a species. This is the natural entity known as the Greek *polis*.[131] In terms of modern biology, the *polis* might better be called a "superorganism" rather than an organism in and of itself, the best contemporary example being the Pando or Trembling Giant aspen superorganism in modern day Utah. Although each individual aspen is itself a specific and differentiated (though genetically identical) member of the species *Populus tremuloides*, they are all connected by a single root system which makes it the largest single living organism on earth.[132] Each individual member is equally an atomic representative of the species, with all of the attendant struggles and advantages provided for it by

nature and chance. Nevertheless, these members naturally function most successfully as a collective, and the collective itself functions as an interconnected, individuated, and single living organism. Just as Aristotle says of the horse or house, so too for the *polis*: this naturally existing discrete entity is the end of being human: it both constitutes the culmination of that for which humans exist and it is constituted as a natural collective of those individual humans living within it.[133]

By reducing human beings to parts of a larger whole, Aristotle has made a profound statement as to the nature of the human type. Rather than being regarded as autonomous, individuated, living organisms, Aristotle has reduced human beings to parts of a larger whole who exist for its sake. In other words, the *Politics* has in some sense taken the discussion of the *Ethics* and returned it to *de Anima*. The reader is led to believe that, whereas the *Ethics* describes human beings in themselves and in their contextual environments, the *Politics* will describe them as parts whose excellence is necessarily dependent upon all the other relevant parts within the larger community. Thus, to use an Aristotelian example, a most excellent and well-formed part not only will function poorly if not found amongst other equally formed excellent parts, but also could potentially hinder the functioning of the whole by exceeding the other parts. As we shall see later when we meet Homer's reviled *doppelgänger*, this early suspicion regarding such potential conflicts between the parts within the organism *polis* proves correct when the *polis* exiles or kills the God Among Men. But even then, the reaction to his appearance acts as further proof that the *polis* is a naturally existing entity.

Aristotle provides additional proof with another appeal to nature's omniscient planning. If nature does nothing in vain, and humans alone have *logos*, then there must be some reason for the presence of *logos*. Other animals possess *phonē*, voice, to be sure, but this only indicates their

experience of pleasure and pain. *Logos*, by contrast, is designed such that it also can express the advantageous and harmful—and, by extension, "good and bad and just and unjust and the others—and community in these things makes a household a *polis*."[134] The *polis* has thereby commandeered the purpose of human possession of the *logos*, and the *logos* seems to be naturally intended for the exercise of *phronēsis* as defined in the *Ethics*. Or, one might say that Aristotle delimits the true meaning and purpose behind humanity's possession of *logos* as predicated upon both the activity of *phronēsis* and life within the *polis*.

From this it is a simple move for Aristotle to declare that the *polis* is metaphysically prior to both the household and the individual human.[135] His elucidation solidifies the above points regarding humans being parts rather than self-sustaining wholes: "For the whole is of necessity prior to the part, for when the whole is destroyed neither foot nor hand will exist save equivocally... and all things are delimited by their work (*ergon*) and capacity (*dunamis*), such that if something is no longer of such a sort then it is not said to be the same thing save equivocally."[136] As he reiterates at the end of this passage, all human beings are, when considered according to nature rather than according to temporal history, subsequent to the *polis* in their essential being. Anything that appears to be human, yet is outside of this relationship of ontological dependence, is so far above or below humans as to be "either a beast or a god."[137]

Considered as a project separate from the *Ethics*, this constitutes the mission statement behind the *Politics*. If the *polis* is ontologically prior to, and thereby in some sense grounds, the being of human beings, then all other aspects of being human are themselves contingent upon the being of this other organism in the same manner as individual organs are contingent upon the whole body. In other words, although it has taken some time to reach this inquiry—which was the stated goal of the *Ethics*—the *Politics* reveals itself now to be the foundational prerequisite of

all prior inquiries into human beings. It might even be correct, from Aristotle's perspective, to say that human beings are quite literally no-thing without a *polis*, as anyone capable of living without such a community is himself only called "human" equivocally.

Although punctuated and characterized by a number of other concerns, the *Politics*, then, is a type of biological investigation into the being of the natural entity *polis*. However, as with its parts, the *polis* is a naturally deliberative organism which in its own way possesses *logos*. Therefore, it is capable of being otherwise, or of manifesting itself in a number of different ways. Aristotle's project is to examine the *polis* both as it is found in the world and as it could be.[138] To accomplish this task is to investigate the *to ti en einai*, or the what-it-was-to-be, of the being *polis*, and to answer this question is to discover the *ergon* specific to that entity.

While in the text Aristotle turns again to the question of slaves and families, this proves highly problematic and will be dealt with in Chapter V. What needs be determined at present—and what provocatively follows after Aristotle's diversion into these two other issues—is that which most defines the *polis*, derived from its *archē* or originating and ordering principle. To answer this one must examine the parts of the *polis* as they function with regard to the whole; in the process the reader will discover the healthy and sick versions of the *polis* as such. Having completed this task, a number of potentially conflicting results will emerge: first, the famous six forms of government (three healthy and three sick) will reduce to two, and these will in turn reduce to a single *polis* properly so called, alongside all others (which are called such only equivocally). This final *polis* will exist solely in the mutually contingent presence of excellent citizens and the *polis* of *phronēsis*.

Anatomy of a *polis*

Book I ends with Aristotle's claim that he will "make another beginning" by discussing views about the best regime.[139] As Nichols (1992) writes, Aristotle has thus shifted from the first communities (which are by necessity, "prepolitical") to the real *polis* (which is by choice). In other words, any discussion of better and worse communities of necessity involves choice—this is proven by the very fact that they can be better or worse.

Choice, *prohairesis*, for Aristotle has a special meaning. Choice is always an act which occurs after deliberation, and therefore is performed only subsequent to a conscious consideration of both appetite and thought.[140] According to Nichols (1992), "Lord translates *prohairesis* as 'intentional choice' to distinguish it from mere taking without previous deliberation (*hairesis*)." *Prohairesis*, therefore, "defines *human* action—for Aristotle animals and children do not choose—and political life as well. The city is an association of human beings rather than of slaves or animals because its members share lives lived 'according to choice' (1280a31-34)."[141] In short, while necessity first *makes* the city, *prohairesis remakes* the city—and *phronēsis*, which is derived from *prohairesis*, makes the city good.

Near the outset of his study Aristotle states that the presence of the *logos* in human beings is naturally intended for their mutual determination of good and evil and just and unjust. Further, this was proclaimed to be a condition of the possibility of the *polis*, such that the possession and usage of the *logos* in this manner are that which constitute the *polis* in its most fundamental sense. Thus, given this reciprocal relationship, it would appear that the *polis* properly so called is constituted of parts whose purpose it is to employ the *logos* accordingly.[142] A *polis* wherein this is not the case is only called such equivocally. To be clear, just as there are (at least potentially) things which appear to be human yet which are only called thus mistakenly (i.e., slaves), so too

there are (at least potentially) things which appear to be *poleis* yet which are only called thus mistakenly.

From this we can derive a number of principles which will guide the present project. First, the *polis* is not simply a community of individual human beings who commingle for the sake of safety, trade, or any other provincial purpose. Rather, a *polis* is defined by its parts—the individuals living within it—and their proper employment of *logos* to determine that which is good and just. Second, given this definition, Aristotle has subtly provided the justification for his own project. That is, Aristotle has self-reflectively stated that that in which he and his readers are engaged is itself the life of the *polis*. As already seen in the *Ethics* and as continued in the *Politics*, by writing these texts Aristotle is in some very real sense performing the *ergon* appropriate to his presence as a part in this entity, and thereby participating in the life to the *polis*. The self-reflective application of Aristotle's rhetoric should not go unnoticed, particularly given that for most of his life Aristotle—as a metic—was technically barred from any direct engagement in the political life of Athens. What he says here proves the injunctions on metics to be specious: in his public activity as a teacher and philosopher Aristotle was constantly participating in *hē politikē*, thus showing (by extension) his proper employment in that which is most human (as a part of the larger organism *polis*).[143] Third, as a natural entity, the *polis* necessarily has an *ergon* which belongs to it ontologically. Although Aristotle has repeatedly stated that the *Ethics* and *Politics* are works of *phronēsis* and not *epistēmē*, and that this thereby bars the investigator from anything like eternal and unchanging knowledge, nevertheless the discovery of this *ergon* will allow the reader to determine that which is good for the *polis qua* natural entity. Fourth, the nature of this *ergon* is already in some sense delimited, insofar as Aristotle has wrapped its determination with the abilities and activities of its parts—the

individual humans living within the *polis*. The citizens *qua* parts must possess the *logos* and they must employ it properly for a *polis* to exist, let alone flourish. In a loose yet informative sense we may summarize this employment of *logos* within the *polis* as *phronēsis*. In other words, the existence and preservation of the *polis* (properly so called) are contingent upon a citizenry which is itself practiced in *phronēsis*. Therefore, the *ergon* of the *polis* must have as its principle concern the production and maintenance of citizens who are adept at *phronēsis*. By contrast, those who are either without *phronēsis* or (in some suggestive yet presently unidentified sense) exceed it are precluded from inclusion in the citizenry—and potentially in humanity. Thus, Aristotle has informed the reader that nothing is as it seems: the reader is to believe that this Macedonian metic is enacting the political life in Athens, that he does so in part specifically because those who ostensibly enact the political are failing to do so, that there are *poleis* which are not in fact *poleis*, citizens who are not citizens, and even human beings who are not human beings. Finally, the existence and preservation of the *polis* seem to have little—if anything—to do with security or economy, whereas they have everything to do with education in *phronēsis*.

As Aristotle makes plain in his rebuttal of certain political ideas from the Platonic school, his intent is neither to introduce impossibilities nor to speak of the *polis* in the abstract.[144] He reminds the reader that politics is the realm of "actions regarding particulars," and thereby resists systematic elucidation.[145] The point here is not to say that security and trade are inconsequential or anything less than indispensible for a *polis*. Rather, it is to say that without properly implemented and maintained education for the citizens, all else within the *polis* is essentially moot. At first glance this statement may appear more profound than intended, and Aristotle's purpose (at least initially) is rather simple. Only with the proper education in place will the citizens of the *polis* understand the laws sufficiently to follow and enforce them. In short, if the

first concern of the *polis*—considered as a natural entity—is its continued existence, then the citizenry must be taught to defend and support the constitution specific to its *polis*. As Aristotle writes immediately upon completing his first aside regarding slavery and women near the end of Book I, since households constitute the parts of the *polis*, since individuals constitute the parts of each household, and since "the virtue (*aretē*) of the whole relies on the virtue of the parts," therefore "the women and children must necessarily be educated with regard to the constitution" (*anagkaĩon pròs tēn politeían blépontas paideúein kaì toùs paĩdas kaì tàs gunaĩkas*).[146] This is necessary because women make up half the population of any *polis*, and it is out of these children that the government finds its future parts. Even if we set aside, for the moment, Aristotle's more august considerations concerning education, and even if this sounds a bit like propaganda to contemporary ears, the point is valid. Without some basic education as to the nature and functioning of the government, the citizens—understood here as those on whom political power falls—will be incapable of administering and executing its defense, its trade, etc. Further, given that education begins at home, the women are as essential to the proper functioning of the *polis* as the men. What remains to be seen, of course, is the nature of this education, and the individuals upon whom such tasks will fall.

Early on in Book II, Aristotle uses his rebuttal of the Platonic political school to declare that the *polis* is in some sense defined by the education of its citizens: "But although a multitude, the first thing for the *polis* is that it be bound together by means of education into a partnership and a unity" (*dià tēn paideían koinēn kaì mían poieĩn*).[147] He repeats this claim often in the *Politics*, going so far as to state that education is requisite for the laws to have any effect. As an example he mentions Phaleas' opinions on political economy, that the *polis* implement a kind of redistribution of wealth.[148] Aristotle objects initially not to the plan or its intended effects, but

rather to its ineffective purpose: for it is not the actual possessions of men but their desire for acquisition which in this case would need be the target of reform.[149] His point is simple: without educational reform the souls remain the same, and this redistribution of wealth would thereby provide little more than a temporary Band-Aid on a festering wound.

These initial comments, when taken alongside the bulk of the *Ethics*, reiterate the importance of education as a preeminent concern of any *polis*. Yet what remains is to discuss the nature of the education to be implemented in a given *polis*. Here again *epistēmē* must give ground to *phronēsis*—at least for now—as any system of education will of necessity be formulated according to the idiosyncratic concerns of its *polis*. Put more directly, since the citizens of a *polis* would seem to differ according to its specific constitution, that which is to be asked and expected of the citizens in differing *poleis* will necessarily be different.

However, this leads to two concomitant and interweaving discussions: the being of the citizen *per se* and the being of the citizen *vis-à-vis* his respective constitution. Aristotle's account does not treat these two topics in isolation, in part because the discussion requires their marriage, in part for what appear to be stylistic reasons. Regardless, in the following section we will reconstruct his arguments in order to consider each divorced from the concerns of the other, rejoining them at the section's close.

Split: Proper and Equivocal States and Citizens

Aristotle spends a great deal of time discussing the citizen *per se* and the citizen with respect to his *polis*. What emerges is a prototypically Aristotelian account, proceeding from the *tode ti* of citizenship to that which is constitutive of the type. The citizen properly so called "for all states" is the seat of political power insofar as he participates in the offices of legislation, judgment and

execution of the laws of the *polis*.[150] Thus, in a literal sense, when the citizenry is considered, there are only three types of states: monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy.[151] The English cognates are literally true, when one defines citizenship as the possession of political power: in the first there is but one citizen, in the second a number (but not the whole; Aristotle elsewhere says that oligarchy simply entails power in the hands of a minority), and in the third citizenship is the shared possession of (a majority or all) the people (*demos*).

It is important to note that this is the barest assessment of the definition of citizenship, and that it admits of many different permutations and complications. But as a working definition, Aristotle has whittled the characteristic activity of that which he will address under the name "citizenship" as simply direct participation in government. Since Aristotle has already determined that the state is a natural entity, and since the citizens that constitute this state are the parts of the larger body, in order to ask what the proper *ergon* of these individual parts is Aristotle must derive a definition of citizenship which is ubiquitous rather than idiosyncratic.

Once achieved, Aristotle has split the discussion in a number of ways. First, there is the question of proper citizens v. equivocal citizens. Since citizenship is synonymous with actual political power, many *poleis* bestow the term upon those who are not, in fact "citizens." Second, if citizenship is political power, then the excellence of citizenship will necessarily be excellence in politics (or, literally, excellence in that which concerns the life of the *polis*, that which pertains to the *polis*). Third, the question as to whether the excellence of the good man is the same as the excellence of the best citizen should be tautological: If citizenship is natural (as the *polis* is natural, and as the active participation in the *polis* by its citizens is as the parts of a body to the whole), then for a person to be a good man (with reference to that which is natural for such beings) he should (have the capacity to) be an excellent citizen. As to whether it is necessary that

a good man also be a citizen, Aristotle at present demurs; what is certain at this point is that the two are contiguous if not mutually contingent. Put another way, the excellence of citizenship must in some sense be related to, or constitutive of, the *ergon* of being a human being, insofar as human beings are natural entities *and* natural parts of the larger entity *polis*. Fourth, the status of the *polis* and the excellence of the citizen *are* mutually contingent insofar as the health of the *polis* is dependent upon the excellence of its citizens. Indeed, one might say that the only *polis* which is called such properly is that in which the citizens are excellent, whereas all others are called *poleis* equivocally. But these last points must be reserved for the discussion of the healthy and sick *poleis*. For now we must delve deeper into Aristotle's comparison of excellent citizens and good men.

Aristotle draws progressively tighter concentric circles around this question, and for good reasons. To ask the question whether that which makes a man good and a citizen excellent is the same is to ask about the overall relationship between the studies of the *Ethics* and the *Politics*. Aristotle begins his discussion using a well-known metaphor: a ship.[152] Just as all members of a crew contribute to the well-being of a ship while performing their individual functions, so too the members of a *polis* perform different functions while keeping the constitution afloat. Their disparate activities are secondary to their primary shared purpose—the maintenance, preservation, and proper functioning of the ship. Thus, the proper referent for their shared excellence is their shared business with regards to the care of the ship. So too for citizens: although they differ in so many ways as to their respective occupations, households, enterprises, etc., their shared purpose *qua* citizens is the preservation of the constitution.

However, as mentioned above, this would seem immediately to fragment the conversation. For just as there are many types of constitution, there would seem to be numerous

types of citizenship, which would seem to entail numerous excellences. Regardless, as Aristotle remarks next, to speak of the goodness of the good man is to speak of a single, complete goodness (*tòn d'agathòn ándra phamèn katà mían aretēn eĩnai tēn teleían*), so if there are many types of citizen *and* excellences respective to the citizen respective to his constitution, then the excellence of the citizen *cannot be* the same as the goodness of the good man.[153] The question has changed from whether they are the same (which they are not, in the sense of a one-to-one correspondence; their relationship and mutual relatedness is still undeciphered) to return to the question of whether there is some unified (excellence of) citizenship.

Aristotle reaffirms this position on numerous occasions, in each of which following the same format. The citizen for all states is he who has "the right to participate in deliberative or judicial office," the state being simply "a collection of such persons sufficiently numerous, speaking broadly, to secure independence of life."[154] Therefore, the best citizen—the one who most manifests the excellence of that which is the citizen's characteristic activity—would be he who is most capable as such a participant. And in the best *polis*, *all* citizens would possess this *aretē* of *hē politikē*—regardless of whether they would or could all likewise possess *agathon* of being human.

In other words, the best *polis* would be that in which all its citizens (whether one, some, or all) possessed *phronēsis*, for *phronēsis* is that which is necessary for the characteristic activity of the citizen. Indeed, it would seem that the citizen properly so called would of necessity possess *phronēsis*. Although Aristotle does not state this explicitly in this section, it is certainly implied in the argument's progression. If the basic definition of the citizen is his participation in deliberative and judicial functions, then a citizen—broadly speaking—would be any being who is included in such activity. There are obvious problems with this definition in its bare form.

Caligula's horse, "Senator" Incitatus, comes to mind: the technical inclusion in the offices of the *polis* entails citizenship in an equivocal sense, but not in an active or proper sense. And one need not cite such hyperbolic examples; Thucydides abounds with historical examples of citizenries that wielded power in name only.[155] Therefore, if one is to investigate citizenship proper, it would require genuine political purchase. And if one were to ask about the excellence of such purchase, the answer would have to be the citizen who possesses *phronēsis*. Aristotle seems to be saying that the proper citizen is the one who possesses *phronēsis* and some measure of real franchise; all others are either *de iure* or—to borrow a term from Aristotle's biology—"mutilated." At this point, the excellent citizen is the *phronimos* who participates in the activity of the *polis* with the express, overarching intent of maintaining its constitution.

Three issues regarding citizenship arise here, although they will only take full shape later. First, if *actual* citizenship is dependent upon the citizen's possession of *phronēsis*, then this requires that all potential citizens be entitled, if not required, to be educated in *phronēsis*. This does not mean that all potential citizens are necessarily students of Aristotle's *Ethics*. It does mean that, insofar as one is properly called a citizen, one has studied or should study the educational system described in the *Ethics* insofar as it teaches one how to be a *phronimos*. Second, given the ostensible prerequisites for education described in the *Ethics*, some might conclude that any consideration of "citizenship" in a polity or democracy seems practically a moot point. Many readers understand the *Ethics* as restricting its audience to the *kaloi k'agathoi*; if the educational system outlined therein is that which engenders *phronēsis*, then this would seem to limit the hopes of those who do not have the prerequisites. However, as was discussed in Chapter II, limitation on this basis is dubious at best—with Socrates constituting the most notable exception to the limited audience of phronetic ability. Nevertheless, the reader might

infer that Aristotle is saying only aristocracy and monarchy are capable of having excellent citizens. Indeed, as will be seen in what follows, Aristotle may be saying that only aristocracy—only a government run by the "best of men" (which practically includes monarchy, for a proper monarchy is itself an aristocracy ruled by a single "best" man)—allows for the possibility of actual citizens rather than a mixture of citizens *properly so-called* and citizens *named equivocally*. Third and related to this last point, if aristocracy (of one or many) is the sole form of government in which the possibility of actual citizens can be made manifest, then it may be the case that aristocracy (of one or many) is the *sole* form of actual government—the sole *polis* properly so called. Again, this will have to wait for the discussion of the six forms of government to receive proper examination, but the concept is already present in this discussion of citizenship. If the *polis* is a natural entity, and the individuals that make up the *polis* are its parts, and these parts necessarily include a certain (as yet undefined) number of citizens (*de facto* and/or *de iure*), then either all *poleis* are always already flawed and "sick" or aristocratic rule is the sole rule by and in which *de facto* citizenship is possible—making it the sole constitution which could be called a *polis*.[156]

Aristotle next turns to the question of whether and how the "leader" or "ruler" (*archon*) differs from the "citizen" or "subject" (*archomenos*). This shift is somewhat abrupt, and it is some time before Aristotle's decision to move to this question—as well as his modified vocabulary during this portion of the discussion—makes sense. For Aristotle speaks as if there is some understood distinction between these three roles—ruler, citizen, and subject. On the one hand, in constitutions like tyranny this would seem to be the case. Here the ruler is he in whom power is invested in a manner radically different from that of his "citizens," who are themselves called such equivocally. They are mere extensions of his autocratic rule, less individuals than

vessels which implement his Leviathan's will. When this is the case, it is certainly true that the excellence of the ruler would differ in kind from that of the citizen-subject. The hyphenated designation is all-too-appropriate, as the "citizens" in this case are subjects *qua* ruled inasmuch as any individual in this *polis* is subject *qua* ruled—the only difference being that some of these citizen-subjects execute the authority invested in them without political deliberation, whereas the pure subject lacks both executive power and political will. On the other hand, this would seem to change the discussion from the former consideration of the excellence of the (*de facto*) citizen in general to the (*de iure*) citizen and his (*de facto*) ruler. Put another way, it is questionable whether, given such stipulations, there are any citizens in a *polis* aside from the ruler(s). Either the citizens in question do participate actively and effectively in the offices of government, or the ruler is the true and sole power of the government and the citizens are no more than magistrates of an Austinian power.[157] If the citizens do participate with purchase, then theirs should be the wisdom and excellence of the ruler. If they do not, then the ruler is the sole citizen within the *polis*.

As the discussion of the ruler continues, Aristotle slowly confirms this initial suspicion. First, in defense of the above distinction between the ruler and the citizen-subject, he cites those like Euripides who say that the education of the ruler should be different in kind from that of other men.[158] In support of this claim, he names riding and military training as knowledges which require specialized education. Yet the latter in particular opens up the discussion, insofar as military rule mirrors civic rule. "It has been well said that he who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander."[159] Those who are most capable generals only excel in giving orders because they previously learned to follow them. Ergo, if the comparison is sound, those who are most praised as citizens are lauded for their ability to rule *and* to be ruled. "The

excellence of the two is not the same, but the good citizen ought to be capable of both; he should know how to govern like a freeman, and how to obey like a freeman—these are the excellences of a citizen."[160] Aristotle's exposition is rather tortuous, but the point is a simple one. That which defines the citizen is the simultaneous presence of three types of discernment, all of which subsumed under the concept of *phronēsis*: the ability to rule, the ability to be ruled, and the discretion to know when the one or the other is most appropriate.

The passage is so strange because of Aristotle's ambiguous statements that the excellence, activity and wisdom of the ruler differ from, and yet are similar to, those of the citizen. It is difficult to see whether Aristotle is splitting hairs, or if these distinctions are meant to be concrete. On the one hand, the differentiation would seem to be true from a technical standpoint. Regardless of the specific constitution, in any *polis* wherein rule changes hands the citizen-subject is alternatively a potential citizen-ruler. While serving in the latter capacity, the excellence, activity, and wisdom requisite for the citizen-ruler would differ from that of the citizen-subject, corresponding to the differences in their occupation. When one changes from the role of ruler to that of subject, the burdens of the citizen—in the technical sense established earlier, of participating in the executive, legislative, and deliberative activities of the government—either dissolve or are suspended. On the other hand, given the specific definition provided by Aristotle earlier, this is to use citizen in an equivocal sense. That is, the citizen only is a citizen insofar as he is participating in government. In other words, regardless of constitution, the citizen in each case *is* a ruler of sorts; all others are subjects of the rule of those who wield power—the citizens. Further, the fact remains that in any *polis* wherein these roles change, all actual citizen-subjects *qua* potential citizen-rulers would of necessity receive the same education and consideration if they are to have any hope of being effective citizen-rulers.

In short, Aristotle's distinction between the two corresponds to their potential for role reversal, not to an essential difference. The distinction is sound, but merely in being contextually descriptive: depending on the constitutional logistics of a given *polis*, the two (citizen-ruler and citizen-subject) are either radically different (i.e., the latter is not a citizen save equivocally, and "ruler" has taken over the former definition of citizen) or merely temporarily distinguished (i.e., every citizen-subject is either actually or potentially a citizen-ruler, and vice versa).[161]

Therefore, regardless of the apparent distinction between the citizen-ruler and the citizen-subject, it would appear that insofar as a person has the potential to wield political power, that person should receive a particular and specialized form of education. The metaphors which Aristotle uses to illustrate this fact—a ship's pilot and an army general—prove his point. Like the members of any given *polis*, although each on a ship or within an army division has his specific role with regard to the whole, nevertheless the education of the individual who is currently or potentially to run things is necessarily different from that of one who has no such expectation. And this education is significantly improved by the experience of having been ruled as well as the understanding of ruling; the most effective leader of men (regardless of that leader's title, regardless of the capacity or context in which that person leads) understands how to lead not simply due to his knowledge of tactics, navigation, etc., but also because he has been ruled by others in the past. On the one hand, those who have worked for or taken orders from lesser persons understand the frustration which accompanies such an experience. In such cases, the rule of an incompetent, practically inexperienced individual is felt quite conspicuously as a burden—regardless of that individual's theoretical knowledge of the field. Further, the education which would assuage this burden is evident to the frustrated party. If a person feels that the leader lacks discernment or that one's own discernment exceeds that of the leader, the absence of proper

education in discernment as a prerequisite of rule is manifest. By contrast, those who have worked for or taken orders from qualified and inspiring leaders have experienced the inspiration which seems to dissolve the sense of being ruled itself. If a person feels that the leader vastly exceeds one in one's ability to discern right and wrong, necessary and unnecessary—as Aristotle would say, if the leader's possession of *phronēsis* allows him to perceive the mean in any given situation—the subject would happily and willingly follow the ruler rather than perceive oneself as a victim of autocratic despotism. But this deduction by the ruled proves their own possession of *phronēsis* (although to a lesser extent) in its very maturity; the aforementioned immature "youth" of the *Ethics* would still feel the imposition of another's will as unjustified. The ruled—whether a foot-soldier, an oarsman, or a citizen-subject—who wishes to and has the possibility of becoming a ruler at some point would best prepare himself for such a position by observing both good and bad rulers, in order to emulate the former and avoid the latter.[162] Finally and no less important, the experience of being ruled irrefutably demonstrates the necessity of following orders regardless of whether the ruled agrees with or understands the dictates of the ruler. Without this obedience, the chain of command completely collapses. Indeed, this holds save in egregious circumstances which call for replacing the leader—again, the conclusion of which requiring the significant presence of *phronēsis* in the ruled.

In sum, the ruler's education is *both* different from *and* similar to the ruled insofar as both must learn *phronēsis* with respect to their roles. The ruler must learn to distinguish right from wrong in any situation against all-comers. The ruled must learn to trust and accept the system of ruling and his place within this system, but he also must have enough discernment to know the difference between a ruler who rules for the common interest as opposed to one who would bring about the common's ruin. If either type of education is lacking, the proper functioning of the

ship, the army, the government, etc., is sabotaged from within.[163]

Aristotle emphasizes the point by recalling the reader to his earlier comments on families and households. "For since every household is a part of the *polis*, and the virtue of the part must look to the virtue of the whole, the education of the women and children within these households must look to the constitution [*politeia*] if the excellence [*spoudaios*] of children and women makes any difference for the excellence [*spoudaios*] of the *polis*." The conditional statement admits of a clear answer, when one considers the preceding discussion of the ruler and ruled as well as the importance of the household as the foundational unit of the *polis*. "And it necessarily makes a difference, for women are half of the freepersons [*eleutherōn*], and children grow up to be partners [*koinonoi*] with the constitution [*politeia*]."[164] Regardless of the form of constitution (and therefore the specific structure of this "partnership," whether the children in question are potential future citizen-rulers or simply future subjects), this education must begin at the earliest stage of development. Aristotle did not consider women to be potential future rulers in any of the constitutions under discussion, but by indoctrinating them in the specific constitution of a given *polis* that *polis* helps ensure its future. If such education begins in the home, it helps ensure the continued survival and sustenance of the *polis* and its constitution, whether those receiving such education are themselves potential future citizen-rulers or not.

To return to the question of the excellence of the citizen and the goodness of the man, and whether or not these two coincide in any or all forms of *polis*, the solution now looks tautological. Insofar as the members of a *polis* are themselves parts of a whole and not responsible for the activity of ruling that *polis*, the excellence is that of the part and therefore distinct from the goodness of the good man (which is itself a type of "perfected" or "completed" excellence, and therefore different in kind).[165] However, in the preceding discussion of the ruler

and ruled the education of *both* was revealed to be education in *phronēsis* which differs only in degree, and the excellence of both is determined on the basis of their possession of *phronēsis*. If this is true, the education of the citizen-ruler is akin to that which Aristotle lays out in the *Ethics*, which would mean that the excellence of the citizen-ruler is the excellence which leads to the goodness of the good man.

Aristotle confirms this directly when he states that *phronēsis* is the only excellence which is peculiar to the ruler, while the excellence of the ruled is specifically not *phronēsis* but true opinion (*he dè phronēsis àrchontos ídios aretē mónē. Tàs gàr állas éoiken anagkaîon eĩnai koinàs kaì tōn archoménon kaì tōn archónton, archoménou dé ge ouk éstin aretē phronēsis, allà dóxa alēthēs*).[166] Further, much like the *Ethics*, Aristotle goes on to state that there are many for whom this citizen-excellence is not possible. Those who are employed in menial work, artisans, those who are naturally slaves, women—a plethora of individuals are singled out as making poor citizens specifically because they are incapable of the leisure and capital that would allow for education in *phronēsis*. And although there are many forms of government, thereby implying that there would be many forms of citizen-excellence, Aristotle repeatedly shows that the excellence most proper to citizenship is *phronēsis*. If this is true, then the government in which this excellence is most likely to be possible, to say nothing of it being fostered, would seem to be the most excellent form of government. But this would mean that the best possible form of government would be that in which the citizens would be those who were in greatest possession of *phronēsis*. On the one hand, this would seem to preclude all of the individuals or groups named above, and all others who did not have the means and leisure requisite for focusing one's attention on cultivating the virtue of virtues. On the other hand, if these individuals are to understand and willingly conceded their position as subjects in a manner which serves the

common interest, this would require that they too received education in *phronēsis*.

Nevertheless, the focus remains on limited access to citizenship as Aristotle provides a number of historical, contemporary, and theoretical examples which illustrate the prerequisites auspicious for the coalescence of the good man and the excellent citizen. And although the definition of the citizen is fluid according to the constitution of the *polis* in question, that which defines a citizen in the most proper sense is that which defines the person commonly understood as he for whom the *Ethics* was written. For example, Aristotle speaks approvingly of a law at Thebes which precluded anyone from holding office (*metechein archē*) unless he had been retired from business for at least ten years, implying that he had both experience (due to age) and great personal means (to support himself without working).[167] He concludes from this that, although there may be as many varieties of citizens as there are of constitutions, those governments in which mechanics and laborers and other such individuals are allowed to be citizens are flawed, "for no man can practice excellence who is living the life of a mechanic or laborer."[168] He contrasts this with "so-called aristocracies, if there are any, in which honors are given according to excellence and merit," for although "he is a citizen in the fullest sense who shares in the honors of the state," this does not entail that the citizen is also a good man. The passage continues:

> As to the question whether the excellence of the good man is the same as that of the good citizen, the considerations already adduced prove that in some states the good man and the good citizen are the same, and in others different. When they are the same it is not every citizen who is a good man, but only the statesman and those who have or may have, alone or in conjunction with others, the conduct of

public affairs.[169]

In other words, although aristocratic and monarchic regimes, due to their constitutional form, do not necessarily contain or produce excellent citizen-rulers who are also good men, they are the most likely governments in which the stage is set for this potentiality to be realized. Democratic (understanding the term as Aristotle uses it) citizens are insufficient to the task of either citizen excellence or human goodness—except accidentally and in spite of their status as democratic citizens.

To put these elements together: that government in which only those who have the prerequisites for *phronēsis* are allowed to be citizens, and in which that education which produces *phronēsis* is required for all such future citizens, would seem to be the best possible government. The best possible government is that which institutes the education outlined in the *Ethics*, and this would only be possible in an aristocracy (literally, as the "best" rule). Indeed, it seems that the *only* government in which the excellence of the citizen is possible is aristocracy. This is true regardless of the question whether the excellence of the citizen is the same as that of the good man. However, in the preceding section Aristotle has shown—through a series of seemingly indirect discussions—that aristocracy is the only government in which the excellence of the citizen is the same as that of the good man, insofar as the condition for both excellence and goodness in this case is the person's possession of *phronēsis*, and insofar as this is the result of an education which uses the *Ethics* as its model. But if the excellence of a thing is considered to be that thing's manifestation of its ownmost activity—the implementation of its *ergon*—then aristocracy would seem to be in some special way the most perfected form of government, or the *telos* of the *polis*.

This bold claim will require a thorough investigation of Aristotle's numerous examples of *poleis* in Books IV-VI to receive complete treatment. But it is important to note that, for the aforementioned reasons, Aristotle has already implied that aristocracy is the best possible form of government. It remains to be seen if this is true, and if so whether what is meant by aristocracy.

On Government(s): The Sick, The Healthy, The Many, The Few—The One

As any summary of the *Politics* must mention, Aristotle outlines six possible forms of government. Of these six, there are three "healthy" and three "sick" forms. However, this is something of a red herring: although part of the goal of the project of the *Politics* is to outline government in general terms, describing the possible forms in their theoretical and practical structure in order to discover that which is best, what emerges thereby are two separate accounts. First, there is the account of that which we see and refer to as temporal governments. But these, as will be shown, are spoken of in an equivocal sense; in a *de facto* sense, there are only two types of *poleis*. Second, there is the account of that which is proper to the *polis qua* natural entity. If the *polis* is actually a natural entity, and this is not simply rhetorical flourish on Aristotle's part, then there should be a single overriding *telos* and *ergon* that is peculiar to the *polis* as a natural kind. In short, there should only be one "good" or "excellent" *polis* in the sense proper to any natural entity; all others should necessarily fall short as sick" or "incomplete" examples of that which is named by the species *polis*.

Aristotle's exposition of the six forms of government follows from simple, practical considerations. He states that the government of a *polis*, the constitution, is synonymous with that which is sovereign. Thus, the *de facto* seat of power determines the government, and thereby makes distinguishing the different types rather easy. Either the people (considered as the many or

as the whole body of citizens) is supreme, or the few (considered as anything less than a majority and anything more than one) is supreme, or the single individual is supreme. The names for these three categories of government are literal, illustrating that the rule (*archō*) in each case belongs either to the people (*demos*), the few (*oligos*), or the one (*monos*). Thus, in these initial designations, there is no consideration as to the appropriateness or criteria through which the rulers are chosen.

Three things emerge from this seemingly simple account. First, the name given to a government refers to that which is ostensibly the sovereign power, which may be different from the *de facto* seat of power. For example, although the constitution might name a *polis* as a democracy, the *demos* in question may be run by a small and influential group of individuals, as seen in Thucydides**.** Second, although there are many different names for differently defined *poleis* which are specific to their logistical power structures, in reality there are only two forms of government. Plutarchy, heredity, tyranny, aristocracy, etc.—all these names speak to the nature of the power in question, not its numerical structure. The reality is that power always necessarily resides in either the few (from a minority to one) or the many (from a majority to all). However these groups are constituted, by whatever criteria or circumstance or context, it is nevertheless true that all possible *poleis* are either some form of oligarchy or some form of democracy. Therefore, although the *Politics* is known for its exposition of six types of government, these are all expansions on the initial two possibilities. As Aristotle says, "But since 'constitution' [*politeia*] and 'government' [*politeuma*] mean the same thing, and the government is the power in a *polis*, this power belongs to one, or to the few, or to the many."[170] Third, as the last quote implies, Aristotle splits the rule of the few into one and more than one, creating three rather than two forms of government. Thus, the multiplication of these three forms into six requires a

consideration external to the constitution of sovereign power. This multiplication, as will be seen, arises from a consideration as to the relative excellence of the *polis*. "When the one or the few or the many rule according to what is appropriate for the common, these constitutions of necessity are right ones. Those that rule according to the private interests of the one or the few or the many are deviations." In short, if the health or sickness of a *polis* is determined insofar as it achieves its proper work or *ergon*, and the work of the *polis* has previously been determined to be rule for the common interest, then a *polis* is healthy or sick with respect to this and without regard for the constitution's administrative logistics.

The nature of the power creates further distinctions beyond the structure of power, and it is easy to see the reasons behind this multiplication of types. When the few rule and they are chosen in some manner according to excellence, the government is properly called an aristocracy (from *aristoi*, meaning "the best"). However, the "best" in this case must be further delineated. First, Aristotle uses the term "aristocracy" to refer to the "healthy" version of oligarchy, distinguishing the two by their attention to the common interest as opposed to self-interest, respectively. The implication is that all aristocracies are oligarchies, but not all oligarchies are aristocracies. Yet it should be noted that there is nothing in the definition of "aristocracy" that entails "oligarchy;" the presence and political power of individuals who are (called) "best" does not necessitate that there are only a few such individuals. Indeed, a government which is ruled by individuals who are (called) best would not cease to be an aristocracy if such individuals actually constituted a majority or even the entire population. It would be *both* an aristocracy *and* a democracy. The same holds for a proper monarchy: if the monarchy is ruled by an individual who is (called) "best," then the monarchy is likewise an oligarchy (as it is ruled by a few by comparison to the many or the whole) and an aristocracy (by definition). Therefore, although

Aristotle uses the designation to refer to a healthy oligarchy, aristocracy is either actual or equivocal; the possession of power by the best in the *polis* determines the name, whereas the number of individuals who deserve to be called *aristoi* is a secondary consideration.

Aristotle passes over these issues for the moment, as his concern is to establish terms for his discussion. He admits that the terms are simply chosen on the basis of common usage and expediency for the present, and that such issues will be dealt with later on. Nevertheless, even at this preliminary stage one can say that the name and the reality of a *polis* may radically differ. Although a *polis* can call itself an aristocracy, the present nature of those who possess power determines whether this is actual or equivocal. And although those within the *polis* can implement certain policies in order to try and stave off the caprice of fortune—in much the same way as that described in the *Ethics*, and intimated in the above section regarding the ruler and the subject as to those individuals who are more or less likely to achieve excellence with regard to *phronēsis*—the reality is that the government is constituted of men, and no man is immune to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Therefore, the existence of an aristocracy is subject to both chance (e.g., the presence of a critical mass of individuals who possess *phronēsis* and political power) and human artifice (e.g., the implementation of a constitution which mandates education in *phronēsis* in order to provide for future rulers of the aristocracy). This is true regardless of how the citizens themselves understand their *polis*. Further, since oligarchy literally names that government ruled by the few, monarchial and tyrannical rule are forms of oligarchy. The same rules apply here as before with aristocracy. Although those within the *polis* may (and should, according to Aristotle) attempt to implement certain considerations which increase the likelihood of an aristocratic monarch, this is always tempered by chance. When these considerations are successful, and *tuchē* permits, the government is actually an aristocratic

monarchy—a government ruled by the best single individual. When not—regardless of whether it is the failure of artifice or the caprice of chance—the government is actually despotic or tyrannical.[171]

From this one can see that democracy and oligarchy, understood respectively as the rule of a majority and the rule of a minority, are the only two types of government that are possible. All other distinctions describe the individuals within one of these two types. Yet if one remembers Aristotle's opening claim that the *polis* is a natural entity, it seems that under the genus of *polis* there are two possible species of government: democracy and oligarchy. In what follows, we will examine and eventually revise this claim. But at present, it will serve as a sufficient model for discussion.

The *ergon* of the *polis* is in some sense the same as the *ergon* of the power within that *polis*. As seen before, this is the common interest which is behind the initial "coupling" that founds any community. The well-known terms for the types of government, "sick" and "healthy" or "true" and "perverted," arise from Aristotle's consideration of the purpose behind the particular government in question. As stated above, the constitution of a government is literally named after the arrangement of sovereign power. However, that which determines the relative "health" of the government is the nature and implementation of that power. The terminology of "healthy" and "sick" might seem strange at first, but it reiterates the status of the *polis* as a natural entity. When one considers that Aristotle begins the *Politics* by claiming that the individuals living within the *polis* constitute the parts of this natural entity, then the analysis of the entity should bear some resemblance to his examination of other natural entities. Principle to the proper functioning—the "health"—of any natural entity is the ordering of its parts. In the case of human beings and *poleis* (possibly the only two natural kinds which admit of a

deliberative capacity) this is particularly true, insofar as the part which is most suited to rule needs to be in charge for the constitution (of the person or the *polis*) to be healthy. That is, the ruling activity which is peculiar to this part must "constitute" all the parts in such a manner (or: according to ratios or *logoi*) that considers the welfare of the whole. If any part fails to recognize itself as a part and focuses solely on its own welfare—the definition of despotic rule—the entire constitution becomes "sick" or "perverted."

This is all the more evident in the case of the body-politic, insofar as the association (as a voluntary-yet-natural "coupling") makes conspicuous. For the *polis* "exists for the sake of a good life, and not for the sake of life only: if life only were the object, slaves and brute animals might form a state, but they cannot, for they have no share in happiness or in a life based on choice."[172] The *polis* as such is not the conglomeration of a number of individuals or families, it is not the land or the walls or the proximity or the economy. The *polis* is, properly speaking, the constitution for which and by which the individuals within it intend something greater than themselves via their association.

In a later protracted passage, Aristotle gives numerous examples to illustrate this point. First, he says that the *polis* is not delimited by its walls or land, "for suppose distinct places, such as Corinth and Megara, to be brought together so that their walls touched, still they would not be one city."[173] Second, a set of common laws does not constitute a *polis*, for

> if men dwelt at a distance from one another, but not so far as to have no intercourse, and there were laws among them... nevertheless, if they have nothing in common but exchange, alliance, and the like, that would not constitute a state... Supposing that a community... made alliance with one another, but only against

> evil-doers; still an accurate thinker would not deem this to be a state *if their intercourse with one another was of the same character after as before their union*.[174]

Both Aristotle's praise and his disapprobation of different *poleis* remain consistent to this principle of defining the *polis* as a coupling for common purpose. If the *polis* is a natural kind, this common purpose constitutes its *telos*. The *ergon* of the *polis* which leads to this *telos* is itself the production of individuals who are both capable and willing to rule the *polis* according to the common purpose, which requires their possession of *phronēsis*. In short, the end of the being human (as defined in the *Ethics*) and the end of the *polis* (as defined in the *Politics*) are the same, and are achieved in a similar manner:

> The end of the state is the good life, and these are the means towards it. And the state is the union of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honorable life. Our conclusion, then, is that political society exists for the sake of noble actions, and not of living together. Hence they who contribute most to such a society have a greater share in it than those who have the same or greater freedom or nobility of birth but are inferior to them in political excellence; or than those who exceed them in wealth but are surpassed by them in excellence.[175]

Thus, the multiplication of different types of government might be represented graphically: the vertical axis representing the ruling government's structure (one, few, or many),

the horizontal representing the regard of those who govern (common- or self-interest). When one remembers that there are technically only two power structures, the multiplication occurs additionally when one separates the rule of a single individual from the rule of a few individuals.

Interest		Common	Self
Structure	Few	Kingship/Monarchy	Tyranny/Despotism
		Aristocracy	Oligarchy
	Many/All	Polity	Democracy

Table 1: Traditional separation of "healthy" and "sick" governments, according to Structure (ruled by Few or by Many/All) and Interest (Common or Self).

However, just as before it was shown that there are in reality only two forms of government (oligarchy and democracy), in what follows Aristotle states that a *polis* "which is truly so called, and not merely enjoys the name," is that in which "excellence must be the care of the *polis*."[176] If this is true, it would seem to reduce the number of possible forms of government. That is, now the column listing those types of government wherein the ruling part considers the interest of the common (which includes the self) are the only "true" forms of government, insofar as their end is the end for which the natural entity exists. The column listing those governments which solely consider the interest of the ruling part are "perverted" forms of that which is intended by (the) nature (of the association or "coupling"). As Aristotle says explicitly, they are only called *poleis* equivocally, "for without this end the community becomes a mere alliance which differs only in place from alliances of which the members live apart; and law is only a convention, 'a surety to

one another of justice,' as the sophist Lycophron says, and has no real power to make the citizens good and just."[177] Thus, the table could be reformulated as follows:

polis		Properly-so-called/True	~~Perverted/Equivocal~~
Structure	Few	Kingship/Monarchy	~~Tyranny~~
		Aristocracy	~~Oligarchy~~
	Many/All	Polity	~~Democracy~~

Table 2: Table 1 (Traditional separation) revised: Interest becomes Properly-so-called/True, or Perverted/Equivocal; Perverted/Equivocal governments are struck regardless of Structure.

When one remembers the initial pair (few or many) which fragments into the six forms, the only actual *poleis*, then, are aristocracy (whether many or one) and polity. Aristotle's language is quite clear: any *polis* in which the ruling part does not concern itself with cultivating and sustaining the good life for the members of the community is *not* a *polis* save in some type of *de iure* manner. But if the end or *telos* of a true *polis* is itself the cultivation of the good life for its citizens, understood insofar as each in his or her individual capacity (i.e., as parts) can achieve such, then the characteristic activity or *ergon* of the *polis* would necessarily be delimited to that which would help bring this about.

Although this activity has not been fully unpacked, the reader is already able to make several conjectures as to its nature. First, it cannot simply be the protection and preservation of the community. This and all other such candidates for the *ergon* of the *polis* are insufficient for a number of reasons. Aside from being required for (but in no way catalyzing) the good life, they

are merely nutritive concerns to use the terminology of the *de Anima*. Second, given that those in power—the deliberative or ruling part of the *polis* as a body-politic—must use their position to work towards the welfare of the whole, this means that the ruling part must itself possess virtue as human beings as well as the excellence of citizens. The ability to discern the good and bad, the right and wrong for the self—let alone the community—is essential to and presupposed by *phronēsis*. "Those who exercise *phronēsis* for good government take into consideration political virtue and vice [*perì d'aretēs kaì kakías politikēs diaskpoũsin hósoi phrontízousin eunomías*]." An individual who wields power for the common good rather than for his own selfish ends, an individual who is capable of discerning the good in each case for himself as well as others, an individual who delegates according to the political ability of those to whom power is entrusted: this individual possesses *phronēsis*. When one remembers that Aristotle calls this the sole virtue of the citizen-ruler, he now seems to be saying that the *polis* properly-so-called is that one in which those who possess *phronēsis* likewise possess power.

If one reconstructs the argument thus far, the following progression emerges: (1) Those best suited to be citizen-rulers are those who possess *phronēsis*, as this is the sole excellence which is peculiar to the citizen-ruler. (2) Those are better suited to be citizen-rulers who have a greater possession of *phronēsis*, and the "best" rulers would be those who were experts in *phronēsis*. (3) A *polis* wherein the rulers are experts in *phronēsis* would properly be called an *aristocracy*, as (2) stated that these would be the "best" men insofar as ruling ability is considered. (4) But given that the *Politics* is a work about the possible, and given that it is (apparently) impossible for all those within a *polis* to possess *phronēsis* (as the prerequisites for such are demanding in a number of ways outlined in the *Ethics*), then democracy would seem to be out of the running as a candidate for a "true" *polis*.[178] Rather, since any *polis* requires a great

number of craftsmen, workers, and other "inferiors" in order to function, and since all such occupations compete for one's attention to the pursuit of the excellence that is prerequisite for education in *phronēsis* and the care of the *polis*, the *polis* properly-so-called would need be oligarchic. (5) Further, Aristotle's *Ethics* is, among other things, a type of pedagogical manual for those individuals capable of achieving *phronēsis*, so it would appear to be the educational guidebook for those eligible to be citizen-rulers in this aristocratic-oligarchic *polis*. However, as also seen in the *Ethics*, this would further solidify the claim that only those of means need apply for citizen-ruler status, making this an oligarchy and plutocracy in addition to an aristocracy. (6) Since the task of government is to consider the welfare of the common (as opposed to the self), and since this is most (if not solely) achievable by those who possess *phronēsis* wielding power, this particular type of aristocracy seems to be that government most capable of achieving the *telos* of the *polis*. Thus, although this regime is literally oligarchic and plutocratic, since these terms are typically used pejoratively (to name the rule of the rich few for their own interest), it is still properly an aristocracy which achieves the goals of the *polis*. (7) In short, the only *polis* not called thus equivocally is that ruled by this particular version of *aristocracy*.

With this progression in place, the earlier discussion regarding the excellence of the excellent citizen and the goodness of the good man—which seemed to interrupt the text—now makes a great deal more sense. As Aristotle says on multiple occasions, in *some poleis* this is the case, but they are not related in any essential or causal way. However, now one can see that they *are* causally and essentially related in an aristocracy, which is the only *polis* which is properly so-called. For it has been shown that that excellence which is peculiar to the citizen-ruler is the same excellence which emerges in the *Ethics* as *telos* of that education: *phronēsis*. Put another way, the eligibility for, let alone possession of, *phronēsis* is apparently rare both due to chance

and due to the education which it would seem to require, but the excellence or "health" of a *polis* depends of the excellence of those who govern. Therefore, one might say that the most proper or "true" or "healthy" *polis* is by definition an aristocracy, and the most proper aristocracy is by definition the most proper or "true" or "healthy" form of the *polis*. Aristocracy emerges as the archetype of the *polis*.

To revise the former tables, these new stipulations again curtail the options that represent viable or actual versions of a *polis qua* natural kind.

polis		Properly-so-called/True	~~Perverted/Equivocal~~
Structure	Few	Kingship (Aristocracy of One	~~Tyranny~~
		Aristocracy (Aristocracy of the Few	~~Oligarchy~~
	Many	NA	~~Polity/Democracy~~

Table 3: Table 2 revised: Properly-so-called/True governments ruled by the Few are amended to show that both are Aristocracies, Kingship (Aristocracy of One) and Aristocracy (Aristocracy of the Few).

Indeed, depending on whether one wishes to divide aristocracy or consider it a single kind, there is but one *polis* which—according to Aristotle—deserves the name. Aristocracy is not just the *best* possible structure for a *polis*, it is the only structure for a *polis*. This is true not only for the reasons stated above regarding the codetermining definitions of aristocracy and *polis*, but it is

also implied if the distinction between polity and democracy is itself specious. That is, the many seem incapable of obtaining and maintaining *phronēsis*, if the prerequisites of this type of wisdom are too exacting to admit of such a possibility. And if one remembers that Aristotle intends to discuss that which is ideal *and* possible, the question of a "true" polity would seem to be a moot point.

In sum, if a proper *polis* is a coupling for the sake of the good life, then the proper citizen of that *polis* concerns himself first and foremost with the administration of the government, which is to say furthering the possibility for the good life—the happiness of all those within that *polis*. This is only possible insofar as that citizen has himself learned how to bring about this happiness or good life, both for himself and others. The name for this wisdom is *phronēsis*. The education which leads to this wisdom is that laid out in the *Ethics*, which proves that there are experts of *phronēsis*. But if this is true, then the better part of the government's administration is itself the proper education of the citizens. In other words, from the earliest age those who are future potential citizen-rulers must themselves undergo an educational program like that of the *Ethics*, in order that they themselves will have the discernment that is proper to the *polis qua polis*.

From this one can truly see why the *Ethics* is the first volume of the *Politics*. The two projects are not just related. They mutually entail one another. The *Ethics* is the *sine qua non* of a *polis* properly-so-called, and any other *polis* that does not implement such an education for its potential citizen-rulers "merely enjoys the name." But given the stipulations laid out in the *Ethics* as to whom such an education is accessible and applicable, this implies that any *polis* which is *not* an aristocratic-oligarchy—both logistically (i.e., ruled by the few) and literally (i.e., ruled by the best)—"merely enjoys the name." Again, aristocracy does not simply emerge as the model of

the best *polis*. Aristocracy emerges as the only *polis* worthy of the name, as the only actual *polis*, and as the type of the *polis* considered as a natural entity. All others are called such only equivocally, as they have "no real power to make the citizens good and just."

Contra

There are several passages throughout the first three Books which would seem to run counter to this definition of the (best) *polis* as that in which the few best rule. In particular, there is a great deal of ambiguity regarding the (un)just claims of the many (*plēthos*) to political purchase, as well as the claim of the individual of outstanding virtue or the God Among Men. While the discussion of the God Among Men will be left to the next Chapter, in this section we will reexamine the form of *polis* which Aristotle calls polity. In the process of unpacking these statements, the proposition that aristocracy is the very type of government—the sole form of government in which the *polis* has the possibility *qua* natural entity of achieving its *telos*—is confirmed. Nevertheless, we will expand the meaning of the term to include polity and monarchy, showing that Aristotle's true concern is to define political rule as a type of elective meritocracy, wherein all individuals within the *polis* must contribute in order for the *polis* to achieve its natural ends.

Aristotle sets up these dissenting claims by meditating on the idea of the *kurios*, or the sovereign.[179] Given that the constitution, the regime, and the sovereign are all in some sense synonymous (insofar as each names the legislative and executive power within a *polis*), Aristotle revisits the question from the *Ethics* so important to subsequent legal philosophy: does the law make something (un)just? He attempts to answer this question by inquiring into who is the most auspicious candidate for sovereignty in the *polis* considered generally. He mentions several

candidates for the position: the many, the rich, the good, the "one who is best of all" (*ē tòn béltiston héna tántōn*), the poor, and the tyrant.[180] He points out that if the poor masses had executive and legislative authority, this would allow them to justify the redistribution of wealth. But "if the poor take advantage of their greater numbers to divide up the property of the rich, is not this unjust? No, it may be said, for it was a resolution made by the supreme authority in just form." Yet Aristotle quickly rejects this claim, for "suppose the majority share out among themselves the property of the minority, it is manifest that they are destroying the state; but assuredly virtue does not destroy its possessor, and justice is not destructive of the state, so that it is clear that this principle also cannot be justice." His next move is quite instructive, as he compares the actions of the impoverished masses directly with that of a single tyrant or of the fortunate minority. "Also, it follows from it that all the actions done by a tyrant (*turannos*) are just, for his use of force is based upon superior strength, as is the compulsion exerted by the multitude against the rich. But is it just that the minority and the rich should rule? Suppose therefore they also act in the same manner and take away the property of the multitude, is this just? If it is, so also is the plunder of the rich by the multitude."[181] This makes explicit Aristotle's point that the source of justice is no more in the law *per se* than it is in the numbers or strength of those who enact and enforce it. His use of *turannos* in the passage, as opposed to *despotēs* or *basileus* erases any uncertainty as to his meaning. Although the terms were often used interchangeably during the period, in the *Ethics* Aristotle specifies that there is "a great difference between them: for *turannos* looks to his own interest, whereas a *basileus* looks to that of the ruled."[182] Therefore, the term *turannos* is appropriate in all of the above cases, as each describes a sovereign power which rules on the basis of its own interest—and, ironically, in such a manner as to undermine the state.

From this it would seem that the clear alternative—the rule of the best for the sake of the ruled—is both just and preserves the *polis*. Yet Aristotle challenges this proposition with a series of examples and similes that appear to undermine it. "Then ought the good to rule and have supreme power? But in that case everybody else, being excluded from power, will be dishonored. For the offices of a state are posts of honor; and if one set of men always hold them, the rest must be deprived of them." If this is true, then it disqualifies the aristocracy of the one (monarchy) in addition to aristocracy of the few. "Then will it be well that the one best man should rule? That is still more oligarchical, for the number of those who are dishonored is thereby increased." Indeed, rather than provide a solution Aristotle completes the passage by casting doubt on the remaining possibilities. "Someone may say that it is bad in any case for a man, subject as he is to all the accidents of human passion, to have the supreme power, rather than the law. But what if the law itself be democratic or oligarchical, how will that help us out of our difficulties? Not at all: the same consequences will follow.[183]

This quote disrupts the progression in several ways. First, it seems to deny outright the claim of aristocracy as the quintessential form of the *polis* as the model of the natural kind. Second, it seems to undercut the very idea of an aristocracy—both that of one and that of many—in that those who are best are specifically not supposed to monopolize rule. Such monopolization, it seems, would dishonor the rest in the very act of honoring the best. Yet it also challenges the alternatives of democracy and oligarchy. In short, it appears that none of the previously named possibilities for government maintain and uphold justice, as either each rules for self-interest (the tyrannical, sick forms of government), or each disregards the just claims of those who are ruled (the aristocratic, healthy forms of government). Although polity, the widespread distribution of political power which is wielded for the sake of the common interest,

seems to offer a potential solution, it still allows for the many to rule over the few who possess much greater virtue and knowledge.

Aristotle has already begun to provide the solution in this passage. When responding to those who would call wealth redistribution just—because willed by the sovereign authority, and therefore implemented according to law—he responds that the final result would be the state's ruin. Immediately afterwards, he says, "Yet surely, excellence is not the ruin of those who possess it, nor is justice destructive of a state; and therefore this law of confiscation clearly cannot be just." If law is not the source of justice, then there must be some other source which can provide the ability to discern just and unjust laws. As seen previously in the *Ethics*, human beings possess this discernment when they adhere to virtuous education, and the implementation of this virtue in the community is to rule for the common interest. In other words, if a system of government could be discerned, and implemented, which would both produce and maintain the greatest possible excellence and justice for all, this would be the best form of government. This is not to turn Aristotle into a utilitarian, but simply to take his earlier claims regarding the purpose of sovereignty, the character of the *polis* as a natural entity, and the intent behind the coupling—in all, the propagation of the good life—seriously. Although it might constitute a dishonor of sorts to keep the honors of the *polis* from some, it remains just to distribute these to the most deserving individuals. Further, this distribution would be contingent upon that individual's desert, and would be redistributed on the basis of such just desert.

Aristotle's statements can be taken at face value only if we keep the dialectic process of the *Politics* constantly in mind. It would be equally unjust for those less deserving to possess political power to receive this honor from the state. Indeed, it would be detrimental in every way to the *polis* to distribute the offices of the state to those lacking *phronēsis* if there are others who

are in greater possession of such. In the same manner that wealth redistribution would be both unjust and detrimental to the state overall, so too would be office and honor redistribution.

In one of the more memorable examples from the *Politics*, Aristotle further problematizes the issue of consolidating political power. This is the potluck feast metaphor, and it would seem to challenge any endorsement of aristocracy insofar as that intends rule by the few. The metaphor is quite simple. Although the many may be constituted of a great number of individuals each of whom is not a good man,

> when they meet together they may be better than the few good, if regarded not individually but collectively, just as a feast to which many contribute is better than a dinner provided out of a single purse. For each individual among the many has a share of excellence and practical wisdom, and when they meet together, just as they become in a manner one man, who has many feet, and hands, and senses, so too with regard to their character and thought. Hence the many are better judges than a single man of music and poetry; for some understand one part, and some another, and among them they understand the whole.[184]

This passage is not only difficult insofar as it runs counter to what was stated before. It seems to run *contra* Aristotle in general. It is quite odd to hear Aristotle say that a number of individuals can exceed the few solely on the basis of their number, regardless of their insufficiency as individuals. If each individual possesses only a small part of *phronēsis*, how could they exceed the expert in *phronēsis* found in the *Ethics*? If numbers somehow trump deficiency, why would not a certain great number of women or barbarians or slaves or animals exceed the many who

exceed the few who possess *phronēsis*? Or, if this is a false analogy insofar as women and barbarians and slaves and animals are supposed to be constitutionally incapable of or deficient in *phronēsis*, it reaffirms Aristotle's comment herein that even the lowest citizens are in possession of some degree of excellence and *phronēsis*, and that their collective addition will eventually exceed that of the single or few individual(s) who possess perfected excellence. Yet it remains to be seen why Aristotle would suggest that the preclusion of honors from the many in any state—even, and particularly, an aristocracy—would be worse than the exclusive possession of such honors by those more capable and more deserving.

The answer is found in a combination of comments made earlier in the *Ethics*, as well as that which follows in the next several pages of the *Politics*. Regarding the former, there is the particular nature of *phronēsis* itself. If one superimposed any other example from other types of knowledge on this potluck simile, it would only beg the question and scuttle the metaphor. A multitude of students who possess little knowledge or training in physics could not possibly exceed the knowledge of the expert physicist, and likewise with the other arts and sciences. Yet if one remembers Aristotle's insistence that *phronēsis* is unlike any of the other arts and sciences, insofar as it does not admit of eternal and immutable knowledge but rather is a discernment tempered by experience and conditioned by nature and context, the inauspicious comparison of the simile to any other type of knowledge actually lends support to its appropriateness for comparison with *phronēsis*.

Aristotle presents an additional piece to the solution in the next passage. He says that although a monopoly of offices and honors by the *aristoi* could work in some *poleis*, it nevertheless creates a potential conflict within the community. If government positions are honors, then they must be shared in order that the many within a *polis* do not feel slighted by

their collective exclusion. Indeed, he states that if they are not accessible to the many, the *polis* will be "full of enemies... the only way of escape is to assign to them some deliberative and judicial functions."

There are two ways to read this statement. On the one hand, it would be wrong to provide exclusive possession of offices and power to the few best individuals, as the each individual has his share of *phronēsis*. Therefore, they should have a share of power proportionate to their share of *phronēsis*, as this is the only just response to their relative possession of *phronēsis*. The answer is thus to establish a type of meritocracy, rather than to force distribution. If these offices are handed to lesser men solely to avoid offense, the result is as counterproductive as the reasoning counterintuitive. For as seen previously in the similes regarding navigation and war, it is neither just nor preferable for all to take turns being the captain/general or grunt/oarsman. The option of meritocracy is only possible if the appropriateness of the office-holders is vigilantly scrutinized and measured according to their worth. Aristotle confirms the prudence of hesitating when conferring offices upon the many: "By Zeus, it is clear that in some cases it is impossible: the same argument would apply to beasts—for what difference is there between some multitudes and beasts?"[185] The allusion to beasts is telling, as the thing that separates human beings from beasts is specifically their capacity for change in the face of necessity—*prohairesis*, the root of *phronēsis*. Therefore, the meritocracy reading is valid, and it further elucidates the superiority of what Aristotle calls political rule: all individuals within the *polis* are eligible for government offices on the basis of their relative possession of *phronēsis*, allowing each to rule and be ruled in turn on the basis of a common standard.

On the other hand, Aristotle may be describing a *realpolitik* expedient rather than a genuine preference. The ostensible inauspicious character of the potluck simile dissolves when

one reads this as a description of a political reality: in order to defuse the potential animosity caused by disenfranchisement, the phronetic citizen-rulers would do well to distribute token honors to lesser men. The statements then maintain their rhetorical force while admitting of a more subtle purpose. In this manner, those who are most suited to run the government can consolidate power without offending the masses. Given that the potential alternatives (either replacing the greater with the lesser to avoid offense or unapologetic consolidation which creates offense) would surely result in dangers for the *polis*, there is some prudence to this alternative reading.

When Aristotle compares political wisdom to medicine and the other arts, he provides further support for the potluck simile and further challenges to aristocracy *qua* rule of the few. He presents three types of physicians: the "ordinary practitioner, and the master of the craft, and thirdly, the man who has studied medicine as part of his general education."[186] It makes sense that the only person who is qualified to judge the skill of a fellow physician is he who is an expert in medicine, as the layperson has no specialized knowledge of the field, and the physician's equals may be prone to the same errors as the physician in question. Aristotle considers that the same might be said of political wisdom. This appears to confirm his earlier statement in the *Ethics* that there are experts in *phronēsis*; these experts would be appropriate judges of the political abilities of any given potential citizen. In practice, this would preclude the masses from political decisions (including popular elections) on the basis of their ignorance, leaving all such decisions up to the aforementioned "experts."

Nevertheless, Aristotle argues against this position for two reasons. First, he reminds the reader of the potluck, in which case it was decided that the many—although made up of individuals who are themselves poor judges due to their limited possession of *phronēsis*—are

capable of judgment due to their numbers. Second, he states that in certain situations the proper judge of an individual's ability and wisdom is *not* the specialist but the consumer. For example, he states that the judgment of a house is most properly made by the houseowner (rather than the builder or a second architect), that of the rudder by the helmsman (rather than the carpenter), that of the banquet by the diner (rather than the cook), that of the flute by the fluteplayer (rather than the flutemaker). With this Aristotle not only challenges the medical simile and its emphasis on the importance of *phronēsis* for the *polis*, he also appears to endorse an indiscriminate democracy over against a meritocratic aristocracy.

Yet two brief comments in this passage belie the specious nature of any conclusion in favor of democracy. First, when Aristotle names the three individuals who could claim capacity in medicine, he establishes a hierarchy of knowledge (the generally educated, the practitioner, and the master), and this entails a hierarchy of judgment. In other words, although the consumer may have some capacity to judge the work of the specialist, it is still the superior judgment of the expert which trumps the other two categories. Second, Aristotle mentions that a population should be capable of choosing its leaders on the basis of their ability *only if* the population is "not exceedingly slavish [*andrapodōdes*] in character."[187] This discussion of the potential collective judgment and political ability of the *demos* reveals itself as, simultaneously, an indictment of the *hoi polloi* and an endorsement of the *plēthos*. Just as one need not be trained in culinary arts to call a meal tasteless, or in architecture to blame the architect for a leaky roof, so too the population which has its share of *phronēsis* can effectively recognize the relative expertise of the candidates for political office. It is this limited possession of *phronēsis* within each member that is added together to create a mass capable of judgment: the greater their mutual possession of *phronēsis*, the greater their capacity for right deliberation.

In all these examples, that which is being discussed is not the individuals considered either *per se* or *en masse*, but the judgment of which they are capable—and this is reaffirmed as contingent upon their relative possession of *phronēsis*. Capacity for judgment is a consequence of political arrangement and education: this determines the ability (of each and collectively) to judge in the first place. As Aristotle says, while there are many factors which demand consideration regarding the existence of the *polis*, "as a means to a good life education and virtue would make the most just claim."[188] Thus, a *polis* properly run will produce constituents who are more capable of possessing *phronēsis*, and thereby who are more capable of determining whom best to invest with political power. If one remembers that *phronēsis* is prerequisite for political rule, as the ability to discern rightly when one should rule and when one should be ruled, then *phronēsis* must also entail the ability to ascertain the greater or lesser possession of *phronēsis* by others.

This is the key to the above passages: the collective are *potentially* dishonored if denied political offices and honors, yet this potential is based upon their possession of *phronēsis*. If they possess *phronēsis* to a degree sufficient to justify offices and honors, then their denial would mean that the rulers decided not on the basis of the common interest, but consolidated power out of self-interest. If they do not possess *phronēsis* to a degree sufficient to justify offices and honors, then they should either be denied such or provided with token alternatives. If both the mass of people and the rulers possess *phronēsis*, then the common interest would justly require that the offices and honors be distributed according to worth—not merely as an expedient to avoid conflict, but as proof of the rulers' own possession of *phronēsis* and implementation of justice. Indeed, as the citizen-rulers themselves would realize, the possession of political power would be elective and contingent on phronetic expertise, and the educational system

implemented by the *polis* would thereby focus primarily on *phronēsis* as the prerequisite training for political life.

Finally, the supremacy of aristocracy is proven directly by the prior definition of *dikē* in the *Ethics*. All men agree that justice is "a sort of equality," and thereby mandates that "for those who are equal [justice] must be equal."[189] If this is true, then the investment and distribution of political power is only just insofar as it is based upon the relative (in)equalities of individuals. Aristotle briefly considers—only to reject—a number of options which might be cited as specious proofs of superiority: complexion, height, noble birth, etc. He concludes that the only just distribution of power is that which is determined solely on the basis of the individual's possession of *phronēsis*.[190] While this solidifies aristocracy's claim as the preeminently just political structure, it reiterates the question of that political structure's logistics. After all, the series of similes with the potluck feast and the other arts reasserted *polity* as a possible aristocratic-democracy to be included with the rule of the best one and that of the best few. If, as Aristotle says, the possession of *phronēsis* is ubiquitous—even potentially, even if admitting of gradations—rather than limited to the few, then polity would seem to solve problems of justice and desert in a way outstripping that of monarchy and aristocracy (traditionally understood). And if political rule is the most just form of rule and the most natural form of rule, then polity would seem to allow for ruling and being ruled in turn to a greater extent than these other consolidated regimes.

Turning Regimes Into Aristocratic Polities[191]

As Aristotle repeatedly says, the *polis* exists "for the sake of a good life, and not for the sake of life only," for "if life only were the object, slaves and brute animals might also form a state, but

they cannot, for they have no share in happiness or in a life based on choice."[192] Given that the *polis* is a rare combination of necessity and deliberation, and given that the purpose of the *Politics* is to derive the most choiceworthy option among the possible arrangements for the necessary community, Aristotle's progression up to this point is remarkably tortuous. He has systematically presented the options for government, only in order to undermine them each in turn. The sick forms of government are one-and-all incapable of fostering the good life, insofar as the rulers of each are despotic *turannoi*, ruling solely for their own self-interest. Although aristocracy would seem the best option on the basis of its name, even if the best rule and they rule for the common interest, the consolidation of power in one or a few individuals is nevertheless unjust with respect to the many. Finally, while polity seems to garner support from the series of similes in Book III, Aristotle's descriptions do not account for the apparent disqualification of the many in both the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, based on the slim likelihood of their possession of excellence and *phronēsis*.

The solution lies in Aristotle's description of the best citizen *per se* as "one who has the capacity and the will to be governed and to govern with a view to the life in accordance with virtue." The best citizen *per se* is he who participates in a *polis* which is ruled politically, i.e., wherein the citizens rule and are ruled in turn by those who possess *phronēsis*. Further, the condition of the possibility of this citizen *choosing* to live this way is his ability to discern that this is the best of all possible options. That is, all citizens in such a *polis* would willingly accept the rule of others only if they themselves possessed *phronēsis* such as to recognize their betters. The *polis* would be a type of meritocracy wherein the leaders are *elected* on the basis of their superior possession of the virtue of the ruler—*phronēsis*. This *polis* is literally an aristocracy, insofar as its rulers are chosen, not because of their money or reputation or nobility or any other

incidental and dubious honor, but because of their being the "best" individuals in the *polis* with respect to *phronēsis*. Such a *polis* would be populated by a people with their eye on the good not in spite of their own self-interest, but rather because they recognize that their own self-interest *is* that of the common. For as Aristotle has thoroughly illustrated, and as he will continue to show in Books IV-VI, when someone rules according to self-interest one ironically scuttles that self-interest. By contrast, the best *polis* would be ruled *both* by those chosen on the basis of their excellence *and* by those who do the choosing. That is, all those within this *polis* would rule and be ruled in turn—Aristotle's definition of political rule. This republican and democratic, meritocratic and aristocratic regime would only be possible if all individuals within it received education in *phronēsis*, as all (the men) within the *polis* are potential rulers, and even those who fail to excel in *phronēsis* nevertheless require the discernment to participate in government by knowingly and willingly exercising their franchise. In this manner justice is truly possible: those who possess *phronēsis* to a lesser degree still obtain enough to recognize this form of rule is that which is most conducive to their own interests (and thus participate willingly), thereby submitting to the rule of the "better" while simultaneously presenting a check on the positions and powers of the elected—ruling their "betters" by choosing to be ruled by them.

What remains to be established is the proper logistical structure and administration of this *polis*. Ironically, Aristotle provides the answer to this question in those places wherein he seems to be the most ambiguous. On a number of occasions throughout the text, Aristotle says that if there is a regime "in which there happens to be a certain person, or a whole family, or a multitude that is preeminent in virtue with respect to all the rest, capable of being ruled and of ruling with a view to the most choiceworthy way of life,"[193] then the rule of such individuals within that *polis* would constitute the *teleion* of the *polis* as a natural entity. This would be the

greatest *polis*, insofar as the best are chosen to be rulers, that they rule in the interests of all, and that the sole criterion by which they are chosen (i.e., the criterion which acts as limit and rule on their power) is their possession of *phronēsis*.

This description of the complete or perfected *polis* says nothing of the logistical structure of the *polis*; Aristotle makes explicit the disregard for considering how many should rule by naming all three possible formulations. Yet this is the logical and necessary conclusion entailed by the nature of the *polis*. On the one hand, by definition an expert is the person most qualified to judge a particular issue. Therefore, it would be right for those who are less qualified to defer to his judgment, and it would prove their possession of *phronēsis* that they recognize this and willingly defer. On the other hand, the presence of more than one expert does not necessarily require that all defer to a single individual. On the contrary, a panel of experts are more capable of judgment due to their combined knowledge *and* shared deliberation. As seen previously with the potluck simile, a feast constituted of meals made by terrible cooks will be no better for their collective contribution, and would certainly be bested by that constituted of moderately able cooks, and possibly by that of a single master chef. Yet a meal made up of dishes from a dozen master chefs would certainly be best of all. Aristotle's ambiguity regarding the best government—stating at different times that monarchy, aristocracy, and polity each have a claim to being the best possible *polis*—need not be ambiguous at all. Rather, the necessary result of his dialectical presentation is that *all* these different forms of government are *potentially* the best, depending on the specific circumstances within the *polis* itself.

The greater presence of experts in *phronēsis* within a *polis*, in addition to a citizenry who possesses some share of *phronēsis* and thereby recognizes the former individuals, would lead to a *polis* with a more distributed power structure—to more rulers. By contrast, the presence of less

experts in *phronēsis* might result in a smaller number of rulers, as long as the populace at large still possesses its share of *phronēsis* and still chooses the rulers willingly on this basis. In other words, the "best" regime is *potentially* a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a polity depending on the individuals within the *polis*, not on some essential determination with regard to those constitutions themselves or with regard to the nature of the *polis*. As Aristotle says, "If then the rule of a majority when these are all good men is to be considered an aristocracy, and that of the one man kingship, aristocracy would be preferable for the states to kingship… if it be possible to get a larger number of men than one who are of similar quality."[194] In more literal terms, the best possible *polis* is simultaneously an aristocracy (insofar as the best rule) and a polity (insofar as the people always possess *phronēsis* and political power, thereby choosing their own rulers, thereby ruling and being ruled in turn). As will be seen in the next Chapter, it is potentially a monarchy, but the rule of the one best individual over all others would only be preferable to the rule of the few or the many in the case of the God Among Men—and even then the people would have to knowingly, willingly cede power to the God Among Men. Therefore, if one were to redraw the table of possible *poleis*, only one form of regime remains which is a "regime" or "*polis*" properly-so-called:

polis	Properly-so-called/True	~~Perverted/Equivocal~~
Structure	Aristocratic Polity	~~Tyranny~~
		~~Oligarchy~~
		~~Democracy~~

Table 4: Table 3 revised: Few and Many/All distinction for Properly-so-called/True governments

are collapsed, as any Properly-so-called/True *polis* is by definition an Aristocratic Polity.

The rule of the best men within the *polis* is simultaneously the best regime and the *only* regime, the best *polis* and the *only polis*—regardless of whether it is ruled by the many or few.

As Aristotle proceeds, he confirms this by establishing a new system for ranking the different regimes. He states that an elected or appointed monarchy would be first, but only insofar as the appointment or election of the leader was "a task for the good men." Aristocracy follows, understood as a republican regime wherein the *aristoi* both rule and are chosen insofar as they are "alike in respect of virtue" and thereby seek a literal "commonwealth" in their rule. Third he ranks oligarchy, though this regime is likely to "become baser" as they "brought wealth into honor" and corrupt the system. Fourth comes tyranny: the constant consolidation of power into a single individual results in less internal strife than the conflict between a number of factional elements. Finally, Aristotle considers democracy to be a natural reactionary response to tyranny—though in reality it has little practical difference from tyranny. In sum, governments are ranked on the basis of their ability to be aristocracies, and to rule for the common interest. This is ruling for the sake of the good life. In lieu of that, Aristotle says, the best that can be hoped for is the state's preservation.[195]

The remainder of Book III discusses the appropriateness of certain regimes to specific groups of people, interspersed with a number of comments regarding the God Among Men. Given that the God Among Men will be examined in detail in the next Chapter, we will turn to Book IV.

Rhetoric and Reform

The transition from Book III to Book IV is abrupt, sparking long debate about the originally intended structure of the text. On the one hand, Book VII and Book VIII seem to follow the end of Book III, whereas Book IV looks like it is the beginning of a new project.[196] On the other hand, in spite of Aristotle's introduction, Book IV does rejoin the former conversation. Aristotle states near the outset that "the good lawgiver and the true statesman must be acquainted with both the form of constitution that is the highest absolutely and that which is best under assumed conditions." Therefore, in Book IV Aristotle turns to the question of regimes *in situ*, reminding the reader that this study is not theoretical or utopian, but a practical examination of the possible. The best lawgiver, therefore, must know *both* the nature and structure of the best possible *polis*, and the nature and structure of those lesser *poleis* which arise in the world. By knowing the former, he may recognize the target at which any individual *polis* should aim. By knowing the latter, he will understand the problems within a given *polis*, and how to fix them. As he says at the end of his introduction, "most of those who make pronouncements about the constitution, even if the rest of what they say is good, entirely miss the point of practical utility."

In Books IV through VI, Aristotle famously advises those who would rule a less than perfect constitution, particularly as to how they should implement and preserve their power. This leads to additional controversy, insofar as it would seem to run counter to his stated purpose. That is, in these Books Aristotle seems to advise all manner of despots in such a way as to help them maintain their status as despots. Yet some readers have recognized that Aristotle's ostensible purpose—to play vizier to lesser men—is not actually what occurs in these Books. That is, Aristotle does provide advice to such regimes, but were they to implement his advice, in each case it would move the despotic regime towards political rule.

Nichols (1992) provides an excellent exegetical account of these three Books which illustrates their subtle rhetorical presentation of polity as the best form of government. She shows how in each case Aristotle recommends that leaders of despotic regimes "preserve" their power by learning to be ruled in turn with ruling, i.e., by turning to political rule. In each case, this makes the rulers and the *polis* as a whole more just. As cited previously from Book III, Aristotle notes that the just cannot be destructive for the state, so by becoming more just a *polis* and its leaders become more healthy. Rather than repeat her account (with which I largely concur), I will make quick work of these three Books, pausing only when it suits the present purpose.

At the end of his discussion of aristocracy, Aristotle returns to a consideration of the best regime. This passage largely confirms what has been asserted above regarding the supremacy of aristocracy and the inclusive nature of the term:

> But what is the best constitution and the best mode of life for most cities, and most of mankind, if we do not judge by the standard of virtue that is above the level of private citizens or of an education that needs natural gifts and means supplied by fortune, nor by the standard of the ideal constitution, but of a mode of life able to be shared by most men and a constitution possible for most states to attain? For the constitutions called aristocracies, of which we spoke just now, in some cases fall somewhat out of the scope of most states, and in others approximate to what is called constitutional government [*polity*], so that it is proper to speak of these two forms as if they were one. And indeed the decision in regard to all these questions is based on the same elementary principles. For if it has been rightly said in the *Ethics* that the happy life is the life that is lived

> without impediment in accordance with virtue, and that virtue is a mean course, it necessarily follows that the mean course of life is the best—such a mean course as it is possible for each class of men to attain. And these same criteria must also necessarily apply to the goodness and badness of a state, and of a constitution—for a constitution is a certain mode of life of a state.[197]

The name of a regime is more a term for the sake of discussion than an eidetic claim regarding the nature of the thing in question. When a regime rules on the basis of the common interest, educates its citizenry in a manner outlined in the *Ethics*, remains within the realm of the possible (e.g., does not unrealistically demand that all citizens be wealthy), and fails to be the absolute best constitution (i.e., that ruled by the God Among Men), then the names "aristocracy" and "polity" are both appropriate determinations of the regime.

Indeed, when one remembers that polity is both Aristotle's name for the healthy form of democracy in which all rule and are ruled in turn and the same word translated from Greek generally as "regime," it appears that this is equally qualified as the name for a *polis* properly-so-called, as opposed to those which are only called thus equivocally. The former diagram yet again might be revised:

Polis	Properly-so-called/True	~~Perverted/Equivocal~~
Structure	Polity: ruling and being ruled in turn, by election/appointment on the basis of *phronēsis*, for the common interest of all	~~Tyranny~~
		~~Oligarchy~~
		~~Democracy~~

Table 5: Table 4 revised: Any Properly-so-called/True *polis* is what Aristotle calls a Polity: ruling and being ruled in turn, by election/appointment on the basis of *phronēsis*, for the common interest of all.

It is important to note that in the above passage wherein Aristotle purports to speak of the best possible *polis*, he does not deny aristocracy in some cases. On the contrary, by eliding polity and aristocracy, Aristotle makes explicit what has been implied for some time. Just as aristocracy is used both to mean the healthy version of oligarchy (i.e., rule by few individuals for the sake of the common good), it also means a *polis* in which the rulers are ruled in turn, and chosen on the basis of their excellence. Therefore, the best aristocracy in the realm of the possible would not entail lifelong hereditary appointment of the "best" individuals, for this is impossible. Rather, it would mean shared political rule among *all* those within the *polis*, according to their individual merits. And by explicitly remembering the reader to the *Ethics* in its function as the first volume of this discussion, Aristotle solidifies the claim that the primary function of the best *polis* is education in *phronēsis* which leads to the best political community that is possible according to human artifice. It is even appropriate to call this the best *polis per se*, insofar as this is the best of those which are by choice; as will be seen in the next Chapter, the best possible *polis per se* requires a combination of choice and necessity to arise.

When Aristotle enumerates the ways in which governing offices may be distributed, he considers many different options. For example, he states that offices may be subject to lot or vote, that eligibility for office may be for all or some, and that eligibility for voting may be for all or some. He states that democracies make all "free" individuals eligible for voting and office, that in oligarchies these are limited to the wealthy (effectively making this a plutocracy), and that

for aristocracies the magistracies are run by the "educated." However, for those who might conflate this last comment as meaning a predetermined *aristoi* possess exclusive rights to voting and ruling—thereby disenfranchising all else in the *polis*—Aristotle elaborates: "And for a certain class to make a preliminary selection from the whole body and then for *all* to appoint from among certain persons thus selected is aristocratic [literally, "is the best rule"]."[198] While "certain class" implies that the government is in the hands of the few, thereby supporting the impression of political disenfranchisement, the earlier definition of aristocracy as drawing from the educated provides the key. Again, polity and aristocracy conjoin in a symbiotic manner: only if *all* are educated in such a manner as to recognize those who are more suited to rule and to submit willingly to them would the *polis* function properly as an aristocracy. Not only is it a misinterpretation of this "preliminary selection from the whole body" as describing back-room deals or *noblesse oblige*, but also such a reading would necessarily result in the opposite of aristocracy. As Aristotle frequently notes throughout the *Ethics* and *Politics*, membership in class or family, commonly designated during his time as *kaloi k'agathoi*, does not in any way entail one's virtue or appropriateness for rule. On the contrary: only those educated in *phronēsis* are suited for rule, but all must receive such education in order to know and choose the best.

In Book V, Aristotle turns from questions of logistics to consider the causes of revolution within and destruction of the *polis*. Again, his stated purpose at the outset is, by understanding the causes of such changes, to identify "the safeguards of constitutions in general and of each form in particular, and what are the means by which the safeguarding of each may best be put into effect."[199] Just after stating his "starting-point," that when constitutions come into existence everyone therein agrees to that which they consider just, Aristotle reiterates the superiority of aristocratic polity via a contrafactual. He states that democracy arose due to men's conclusion

that if they are equal in any respect, most notably with respect to their freedom, they are equal absolutely. Similarly, oligarchies arise as men conclude from their greater share of property that this inequality entails their inequality in an absolute sense. Aristotle goes on to state that this is the most obvious and justified source of factions within a given state, for "of all men those who excel in virtue would most justifiably stir up faction, though they are least given to doing so; for they alone can with the fullest reason be deemed absolutely unequal."

This statement is one of Aristotle's more clear claims regarding the nature of the virtuous *aristoi*. On the one hand, they are incapable of despotically demanding rule, as this would prove that they were not, in fact, virtuous *aristoi*. On the other hand, they "alone" have a claim to rule, as they "alone" are "absolutely unequal" due to their possession of *phronēsis*.[200] Aristotle's immediately following comment is suggestive in its language, as it ambiguously states that there are those *who think* they have rights insofar as they have noble birth, "for persons who have ancestral virtue and wealth behind them *are thought to be noble*." The language is telling: rather than confirm the truth of the statement, Aristotle confirms the truth that there are those who *think* such is the case. As will be seen in the penultimate Chapter, Aristotle is adept at such rhetorical subtlety, particularly when referring to those issues most dangerous and revolutionary for a Macedonian metic—e.g., refuting the claims of the *kaloi k'agathoi* to any superiority contemporarily recognized as the basis for honors and offices.

In further elucidating the proper means of avoiding revolution, Aristotle again proves the preeminence of political rule and the actual coexistence of polity and aristocracy. He states that the real cause of factions—and consequently revolutions—is in each case inequality. Inequality is of two types: numerical (understood as superiority in wealth or superiority in numbers) and worth. But as previously established, although the former type of inequality is real and requires

practical consideration, it is not an "absolute" difference. That is, equality among individuals is, properly considered, a description of their relative possession of virtue. Therefore, in each case wherein Aristotle describes the failures of oligarchy, the counterfactual lends support to aristocracy. Further, when Aristotle discusses the sole case wherein democracy and aristocracy combine, the logistical prerequisite is removal of (monetary) advantage from government offices. The result, he claims, is that no one will want such offices save those who know that they should have them. At this point Aristotle directly states that this arrangement, "if someone could contrive" it, is the very goal of *hē politikē*, for "it would then be possible for the notables and also the multitude both to have what they want; for it is the democratic principle for all to have the right to hold office and the aristocratic one for the offices to be filled by the notables, and this will be the case when it is impossible to make money from office; for the poor will not want to hold office because of making nothing out of it… while the wealthy will be able to hold office because they have no need to add to their resources… so that the result will be that the poor will become will-off through spending their time upon their work, and the notables will not be governed by any casual persons."[201]

Aristotle concludes this discussion by enumerating three necessary requirements for the honor of office: loyalty to the constitution, capacity for the duties of the office, and virtue and justice. He explains the three by anticipating those who would ask why the third is necessary "if both capacity and loyalty to the constitution are forthcoming, as even these two qualities will do what is suitable." His answer is twofold: First, as stated previously, justice differs between *poleis* on the basis of their different constitutions. But absolute justice is the same everywhere, and it supersedes the laws and "justice" of any particular *polis*. If an individual is virtuous, however, he possesses both the virtue of justice and the discerning power of *phronēsis*. Therefore, he would

be capable of recognizing when justice required actions that others might consider anathema to the laws themselves. Indeed, if the first requirement is loyalty to the established constitution, but the constitution itself includes principles that would bring about its own ruin, then the virtuous and loyal executive would use his office for the just preservation of the state rather than servile loyalty to a bad law. Second, he reminds the reader that the loyal and effective state servant is often least likely to cause it harm. For "those who possess these two qualities may possibly lack self-control," and this lack of temperance almost inevitably would lead to the abuse of power once delegated.[202] Again, in the process of elucidating the logistics of proper administration of government, Aristotle continues to validate his conclusions concerning the best possible *polis*.

As Aristotle brings the Book to a close, he enumerates a number of other ways in which a tyranny may "preserve" itself and "secure" its "safety." Yet again, however, his language is revealing and ironic. For example, he states that the tyrant must destroy both the proud and the outstanding, prohibit common meals and club-fellowship, make education illegal, keep close watch on "all things that usually engender the two emotions of pride and confidence," and end familiarity among the population. While all these things might stave off the tyrant's deposition, they make it all the more inevitable. By cutting off the best parts of the state the tyrant undermines its strength; by pursuing his own interest he undercuts it. The only ways one can "preserve" tyranny are either to destroy the state in an attempt to save the tyranny or to destroy the tyranny while attempting to save the state. In both cases, the outcome is the same: sooner or later "preserving" tyranny leads to its destruction. Aristotle holds true to the overall structure of these three Books with his final comments on this topic: a monarchy fails by becoming (or appearing to be) a tyranny, and a tyranny succeeds by becoming (or appearing to be) a monarchy. The meaning at this point is obvious. The preservation of the tyrant is his transformation into a

monarch by accepting political rule, and the monarch's is his abdication of his own virtue in favor of despotism.

Book VI is a catalogue of case studies directly and indirectly justifying the entrusting of offices to individuals who possess *phronēsis*. Aristotle goes into great detail regarding offices required of larger and smaller *poleis*, explaining what is required of each in order for the state to run well. In each case, the primary requisite of the office holder is his ability to perform his duties while resisting corruption. In short, Book VI serves to redouble the status of the *Ethics* and the education described therein as the condition of the possibility of just, efficient, and sustainable government.

Like the details concerning the majority of the individual virtues in the *Ethics*, this Book will be passed over without much comment as it is peripheral to the project. However, a few comments deserve note. First, Aristotle's comments regarding the executor of "judgment upon persons' case in suits," i.e., the executioner, are an indirect proof as to the importance of *phronēsis*. He states that this is particularly irksome and difficult job, as it naturally leads to unpopularity and is desired by no one. More directly, the person who would want this job—a masochist—is specifically a person who should never have it. This appointment requires the greatest care, therefore, as the post can only successfully be filled by an individual who simultaneously recognizes its necessity while loathing its implementation. It is a superb example as to why *phronēsis* is the necessary precondition of properly functioning states, in that it is the precondition of the offices of the state running smoothly and avoiding corruption.

Beginning Again

As Book VI closes and Book VII opens, the reader feels as if Aristotle has just returned to the

topic at hand after a long aside. One need not side with those who distinguish between the middle three "empirical" Books and the rest which do the "theoretical" work to recognize a change in timbre, however.[203] While Books IV-VI often read like a series of dry historical/empirical investigations regarding political minutiae, Book VII grabs the reader with rhetorical force. Now that we are returning to the investigation of the best form of constitution, Aristotle abounds with language of superlatives and necessity: "The student who is going to make an appropriate investigation of the best form of regime must necessarily decide first of all what is the most desirable mode of life."[204] Further, different regimes may be "best" depending on the context in which they arise, but this is only true insofar as we consider them "exceptional circumstances notwithstanding." The tone is clear: now that we have discussed the *polis* of necessity, now that we have outlined that which must be considered regarding the best citizen and state, now that we have seen greater and lesser combinations and permutations of actual *poleis*—now what remains is to combine all of these prior considerations into a cohesive whole which provides a practical way forward based on a combination of these theoretical and empirical truths. In short, what remains is to complete the investigation of *phronēsis* begun at the outset of the *Ethics* by illustrating the best life for humans in the best association possible for them.

Aristotle begins Book VII with a long meditation on what seems a previously established principle: the best life is the life of virtue. After stating that the best state must provide for the best life, he says that one must decide upon that which is the "most desirable life." His description of this life is a summation of that which has been established in both the *Ethics* and the *Politics*: that life which is most choiceworthy is that in which external goods are accounted for yet not excessive, that which is focused on the soul because the body is satisfied, that for

which happiness is possible due to the achievement of both wisdom and virtue, that which is lived in the best state, and that wherein an individual is able to be both a good man and an excellent citizen. In short, the best life is the life of virtue lived within the best *polis* which celebrates and cultivates education in virtue and rewards citizens on the basis of *phronēsis*. "For the present, let us take it as established that the best life, whether separately for an individual or collectively for states, is the life conjoined with virtue furnished with sufficient means for taking part in virtuous actions." But as seen previously, the correspondence of the excellent citizen and the good man is only actualized (save accidentally) in an aristocratic polity. Although it may be the case that the best life could arise without the best state, "exceptional circumstances apart" they mutually entail one another.

Even after conceding, as Aristotle believes most would, that the best regime is necessarily that which allows for and fosters the life of virtue, he says that there is some debate as to what this means with regard to citizenship. Specifically, he says that there is some disagreement as to whether the most virtuous (i.e., happiest) life is "the life of citizenship and activity… or rather a life released from all external affairs, for example some form of contemplative life, which is said by some to be the only life that is philosophic." By turning to this question at this point, Aristotle solidifies the structural similarities between the *Ethics* and the *Politics*. Having discussed that which is necessary and that which is choiceworthy, having examined the individual minutiae of offices—one might say the individual activities which make the *polis* virtuous—Aristotle returns to the question of the contemplative man and the man of action. "For it is manifest that these are the two modes of life principally chosen by the men most ambitious of excelling in virtue, both in past times and at the present day—I mean the life of politics and the life of philosophy."[205] The discussions of the best life and the best *polis* thereby mirror one another, as each is

fundamentally a question of that which fosters the most "beautiful" possibilities for human existence. As will be seen, Aristotle concludes that those who say the life free from political concern is the best life are correct—save a life lived in a *polis* where the man of action and the man of wisdom coincide. In other words, like so many times throughout the *Ethics* and the *Politics* (and much of the Aristotelian corpus), by starting with what people say about a thing, Aristotle proves that they are in a certain sense *both* right.

Aristotle continues by clearing away a number of considerations which, although previously established, nevertheless require restatement in order to proceed. First, he addresses those who would question whether it is better to be a master or simply a freeperson, unfettered by such concerns. He responds that this is misconstrued by some to imply that ruling freepersons is no different than ruling slaves. First, "there is nothing specially dignified in employing a slave, as a slave, for giving orders about menial duties has in it nothing of nobility," and the difference between ruling slaves and ruling free men is as different as the natural distinctions between the two themselves. In other words, "rule" *per se* is not an honor—as the word may be used for both slaves and regimes—so the life of rule is not necessarily better than the life free of such concerns; the comparison is a red herring. Second, he states that it is simply incorrect for anyone to seize power on the assumption that the person is most qualified to rule. This should be more than obvious given what has come before: that which is obtained by deception, thievery, or force can be neither just nor best. Indeed, if an individual is capable of such actions, it proves that their nature is not in fact noble, for "nothing contrary to nature is noble," and to seize power in this manner is contrary to nature.[206] Third, Aristotle mentions that any consideration of the best regime requires the investigator to posit "ideal conditions, although none of these must be actually impossible." He uses the metaphor of a craftsman who, in order to create the best

product, must begin with the best materials possible, not those that are mythical or impossible. "For a state like other things has a certain function to perform, so that it is the state most capable of performing this function is to be deemed the greatest, just as one would pronounce Hippocrates to be greater not as a human being but as a physician, than somebody who surpassed him in bodily size."[207] Thus, the investigation must include only that which is relevant. But if one remembers that the proper function of the state is the production of excellent citizens who have the ability to live a life of happiness, and (as shown in the *Ethics*) that this is the active life of virtue in addition to sharing rule, then Aristotle intends to investigate the means by which an aristocratic polity could exist.

Aristotle clearly illustrates that this is his concern in what follows, though his approach continues to be dialectical and may at first seem oblique. For example, he states that the limit of a properly run state is easily seen due to practical considerations, the most important of which is that everyone is capable of knowing their neighbor's character. Yet the only reason this would be of import is if the state in question is an aristocratic polity in which the republican representatives of the *polis* are elected on the basis of their superior possession of *phronēsis*.[208] Again, the investigation of the best state entails the education of the *Ethics*, and the education of the *Ethics* is validated by its necessity for the best state.

What follows is a particularly difficult discourse on the different character of those born in different places, specifically Europe, Asia, and Greece. The overall import of this passage must wait for the discussion of slavery, so it will only receive brief mention for the moment. Aristotle's comments herein seem to require that an individual's birthplace determines his nature to such a drastic extent as to make the entire account of the *Ethics* and *Politics* suspect. For example, Europe is full of "spirited" folk who are deficient in intellect, which makes them

naturally free but politically handicapped. Asians are intelligent but lack spirit, which makes them natural slaves. Greeks, by contrast, are a combination of both characters, "just as it occupies the middle position geographically." This allows the Greeks to be simultaneously free and political, as they possess spirit and intellect by nature.

If the reader is to take these generalizations as facts, it creates enormous problems for the *Ethics* and the *Politics*. First, it implies that slavery in Greece is always unnatural, and therefore unjust. To be very clear, individuals born in the Hellenic world (and he implies that this means those born in this geographic location, not just those of Greek blood) are by nature precluded from slavery due to their preternatural intellectual and spirited nature. On the one hand, Aristotle states that there is diversity "among the Greek races compared with one another," meaning that there may be those who are naturally slaves and those who are naturally free but apolitical. On the other hand, he does not explain this in any sufficient or satisfying detail, although this has not been addressed previously in the section on slavery. Second, this implies that Asians are the natural choice for slaves. Therefore, if slavery is both natural and just, then slaves should be taken (or, as Aristotle says, "hunted") only from Asian lands. However, this would make an Asian "state" contradictory by definition. Indeed, it would seem that there neither has been nor can be anything like an Asian leader, an Asian country, an Asian people, etc. Third, it is very difficult to understand what these comments mean for Europeans. These characters sound even less human than those described in Aristotle's examination of slavery, as they are seemingly incapable of political life *and* incapable of being ruled—which would make them *neither* natural freepersons *nor* natural slaves. Fourth, it is very odd that Aristotle calls the Asian naturally slavish and the European naturally free, given that the definition of the slaves earlier stated was that they did not possess the *logos* to the extent of use, but only to the extent of understanding

and participating in that of their masters. At best Aristotle has presented an account of Europeans and Asians that results in a type of analogy: Europeans are to Asians as untamable wild animals are to tame ones. At worst the account is contradictory, as the European (due to its lack of intellect) would be the more appropriate slave (as long as its spirit is "broken" like a horse), whereas the Asian simply sounds like a natural freeperson who is characterized by uncanny sloth. Finally, there seems to be an overriding problem regarding the meaning, purpose, and possibility of education—specifically that outlined in the *Ethics*. Even if the education described in the *Ethics* were not for all persons, it is very difficult to reconcile its profound idiosyncratic character. Indeed, it even hearkens to the thought experiments, so popular during the Renaissance, regarding the "wild child" and social contract theory. For example, if an Asian is born and raised in Greece, educated according to the *Ethics*, would he nevertheless remain deficient and a natural slave? If education does not make a human being good, then whence comes the causal power of blood, hearth, soil, climate, some combination, or all of these? What is the natural *ergon* of individuals from Europe, that of Asians, and how are they so different from that of Greeks?

In sum, either Aristotle is being definitive and literal, in which case he is plagued by similarly constituted and similarly devastating problems as seen in his account of slavery, or Aristotle is being rhetorical and subtle, which would undermine these comments but maintain consistency for both the *Ethics* and the *Politics*. Either human beings are everywhere the same, yet "made" through the combined influences of their education and *polis*, or they are everywhere different. Yet if the latter is indeed the case, they must be regarded as separate species, and the *polis* must devise a type of political biology or eugenic calculus to determine their proper place in the *polis*. If the former is the case, Aristotle not only remains consistent, he also is in reality an

astonishingly egalitarian thinker—although he couches his most revolutionary ideas in subtle language.

We will leave these considerations for the moment, and return to Aristotle's dialectical progression. Next to be determined is the mode of life for the individuals who run the offices of the state. He responds that they cannot be mechanics or farmers or laborers, as they must have leisure in order to cultivate virtue and participate in political life. However, they must be the same as the military guardians of the state, although their participation in the one or the other is to be determined according to their age (as is natural). This is another passage cited by those who would consider Aristotle as supporting a fundamentally elitist oligarchic political structure, and it certainly has that sound. Yet given his prior comments regarding the offices of the state having no monetary incentive, it naturally follows that those who would perform the offices of the state of necessity possess wealth and means to perform such functions. Further, those who are independently wealthy will be immune to the charms of bribery, whereas the combination of power and poverty is an obvious recipe for corruption. Aristotle states elsewhere that monetary incentives *are* to be provided for the poor who participate in government, whereas for the wealthy who shirk their responsibilities there are to be fines. In a practical sense an individual cannot be required to participate in government if it will result in the ruin of his business endeavors or the loss of his job—concerns that do not arise for the wealthy. In short, Aristotle's comments here need not imply a plutocracy, but rather practical sensitivity to the fluctuating needs and requirements for diverse individuals within a single *polis*. They continue to illustrate, rather than contradict, Aristotle's attempt throughout to provide for the just claims of the democrat and the oligarch alike. And they serve to confirm, rather than contradict, his guiding principle from the outset, that these questions require discernment based on individual

circumstances, rather than admitting of immutable theoretical declarations.[209]

Aristotle gives direct voice to this in his comments regarding the relationship between fortune and artifice in determining the goodness of the *polis*. On the one hand, he says, "we pray that the organization of the state may be successful in securing those goods which are in the control of fortune, for that fortune does control external goods we take as axiomatic." This reiterates that which was stated in the *Ethics*, that chance and necessity always have a role in the ability of individuals to be virtuous and happy. As seen therein, Priam becomes the paradigm example of an individual who had all the blessings and security for which a happy man could hope—only to have these shattered by forces beyond his control. On the other hand, Aristotle brings this up to provide another proof for his aristocratic polity: "when we come to the state's being virtuous, to secure this is not the function of fortune but of science and policy. But then the virtue of the state is of course caused by the citizens who share in its government being virtuous; and in our states all the citizens share in the government." In short, the difference between democracy and polity is simply that the latter is *also* an aristocracy, wherein all rule and are ruled in turn, and all undergo education in virtue insofar as they are able.

From this Aristotle asks how men become virtuous, and responds that it is a combination of their nature, habit, and reason. The issues arising from nature have been discussed, insofar as they deal with good and ill fortune determining, e.g., being born Asian, hideous, disabled, etc. Beyond those, habit and reason both point to education, insofar as they deal with that which is choiceworthy rather than that which is subject to chance. Therefore, the next thing to consider is the education which the best state would need to implement.

Right after stating that this is the task, Aristotle makes an important comparison. It serves to reproduce this passage in full, as it contains useful claims for the overall project.

> But since every political community is composed of rulers and subjects, we must therefore consider whether the rulers and the subjects ought to change, or to remain the same through life; for it is clear that their education also will have to be made to correspond with this distribution of functions. If then it were the case that the one class differed from the other as widely as we believe the gods and heroes to differ from mankind, having first a great superiority in regard to the body and then in regard to the soul, so that the preeminence of the rulers was indisputable and manifest to the subjects, it is clear that it would be better for the same persons always to be rulers and subjects once for all; but as this is not easy to secure, and as we do not find anything corresponding to the great difference that Scylax states to exist between kings and subjects in India, it is clear that for many reasons it is necessary for all to share alike in ruling and being ruled in turn. For equality means for persons who are alike identity of status, and also it is difficult for a constitution to endure that is framed in contravention of justice.

The either/or created by this passage is clear. The best possible government would be that wherein the difference between the ruler and the ruled is only comparable to that between gods and men—even more than the difference in kind between slaves and freepersons. In such a *polis* everyone would happily and willingly concede the rule of the best as that which would produce the greatest overall happiness for the whole. In short, the common interest would demand that such (an) individual(s) rule absolutely and for life. Yet this is "not easy to secure," so one must seek the second best possibility.

It is important to note that Aristotle does not deny the possibility of this occurrence, but merely that it is difficult to bring about. Regardless, the second best government is that which maintains justice for the equal and the unequal alike, requiring that all rule and be ruled in turn. The nature of such political rule is determined by that government which is said to be the absolute best: if the superiority of the best requires consideration, respect, and greater honors, then the same holds for the regime which institutes political rule. That is, the very principle which determines the regime of the God Among Men to be the best (regardless of its practicality) likewise requires that the second best polity respect and reward the inevitable inequalities within the *polis*. However, it has been shown throughout that the only consideration worthy of greater influence and honor is the individual's possession of *phronēsis*. In short, the polity is necessarily aristocratic, and the aristocracy is necessarily characterized by the political rule of polity: the best regime (*politeia*) is the polity (*politeia*) of elected aristocratic rule. And Aristotle is adamant that the primary concern of the ruler in this regime is education, for "since we say that the goodness of a citizen *and* ruler are the same as that of the best man, and that the same person ought to become a subject first and a ruler afterwards, it will be important for the legislator to study how and by what courses of training good men are to be produced, and what is the end of the best life."[210] The ruler of the best state must therefore implement the project of the *Ethics* for *all* the citizens, as all citizens are potential rulers.

As Aristotle continues, he reinforces this fundamental conclusion. For example, although the following comment is found in the discussion of war and peace, its rhetorical force extends far beyond that discussion: "men have the same end collectively and individually, and since the same distinctive aim must necessarily belong both to the best man and to the best government, it is clear that the virtues relating to leisure are essential."[211] If this is true, then all such

considerations regarding the best state necessarily only apply to that regime wherein virtue is engendered in the population: aristocratic polity. Indeed, at this point in the discussion Aristotle almost takes this as a given. But this is not true due to a fast-and-loose logical syllogism. It is found in the details of the discussion as well. As the passage continues, he states the virtues of leisure are not just useful during leisure, but also in the operation of business. "Therefore it is proper for the state to be temperate, brave, and enduring… therefore courage and fortitude are needed for business, love of wisdom for leisure, temperance and justice for both seasons… those who are deemed very prosperous and who enjoy all things counted as blessings… these will most need wisdom, temperance, and justice, the more they are at leisure and have an abundance of such blessings. It is clear therefore why a state that is to be happy and righteous must share in these virtues." The entire description could just as easily be found in the *Ethics*, insofar as it describes the same character and disposition—cultivated as an active condition of the soul and encouraged via education in *phronēsis*—as an individual in a collective form. And in what follows Aristotle in some sense summarizes the process by which an individual cultivates virtue, particularly insofar as this requires education from the beginning.

The remainder of the Book deals with the minutiae of such education, providing particulars regarding physical education in addition to considerations of the soul. The details of this discussion, e.g., banishing indecent talk, censoring indecent art, prohibiting attendance at comedies, need not be detailed here. What is of significance is that all these injunctions are specific to the relative youth of the individual in question, whether considered literally or as a reference to the individual's phronetic maturity. In general, if such things are forbidden until the individual achieves such maturity, "their education will render all of them immune to the harmful effects of such things." As seen in the *Ethics*, and as now confirmed in the *Politics*, the only way

the individual and the state can combat the deleterious possibilities of chance and necessity is to implement such education for the entire populace.

In Conclusion…

As the first line of Book VIII illustrates, Aristotle's exposition of the importance of education for the *polis* is now a given: "Now nobody would dispute that the education of the young requires the special attention of the lawgiver." Yet Aristotle now speaks with uncharacteristic confidence and unprecedented rhetorical force. "And inasmuch as the end for the whole state is one, it is manifest that education also must necessarily be one and the same for all and that the superintendence of this must be public, and not on private lines, in the way in which at present each man superintends the education of his own children, teaching them privately, and whatever special branch of knowledge he thinks fit." Aristotle's language here is so strong that it almost threatens to obscure the divisions between his understanding of politics and that presented by Socrates in the *Republic*. "But matters of public interest ought to be under public supervision; at the same time we ought not to think that any of the citizens belongs to himself, but that all belong to the state, for each is a part of the state, and it is natural for the superintendence of the several parts to have regard to the superintendence of the whole." Nevertheless, his point is not to confirm the *Republic* and its chthonic lie, but simply to affirm the nature of that entity called the *polis*. Therefore, if the interests of the individual and the *polis* are inextricably tied, and if their symbiosis provides for the possibility of the happiness and flourishing of either individually, then phronetic education is truly the first principle of *hē politikē*. "It is clear then that there should be legislation about education and that it should be conducted on a public system."

Again, the details of the proposed education are in some sense peripheral to the project. The proof of the system and its effectiveness has been established beyond any doubt; the particulars are simply the implementation of what is now a given. Indeed, the solidity of these truths is so firm that it almost encourages doubt. If one remembers Aristotle's statements from the outset of the project—that one cannot expect the certainty of *theōria* for investigations into human affairs—the indisputable nature of his conclusions regarding education and the best regime might give the reader pause. Of course, this would be to mistake Aristotle's timbre for his meaning. While Aristotle has not enumerated immutable programmatics which codify all socio-political affairs in a manner akin to the laws of physics, he has dialectically established what might be called relative absolutes concerning those affairs. That he has established what would be necessary for the best possible *polis* to come into being does not change the fact that those within the *polis* must deal with its day-to-day concerns. How the rulers come by their rule according to justice has been discerned; that they must implement it according to justice in a world of contingency is made no less necessary as a result.

IV The God Among Men: Political Education and the Right to Revolution in Aristotle's Politics

"He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place when all the stars are rotating about it"

- Kongzi, *Analects* II.1[212]

Introduction

The God Among Men presents a problem for readers of the *Politics*. In a sense, the *Politics* is over with the discussion of this occurrence: the appearance and rule of this individual would be the most perfect form of regime, and thereby constitute the *teleion* of the *polis*, or the completion of the state as a natural entity. That is, the monarchial rule of the God Among Men over willing subjects is *both* a more just form of government than the aristocratic polity discussed in the last Chapter, *and* its most complete actualization.

But this is only one half of Aristotle's discussion of the God Among Men. In his other appearance in the *Politics*, the God Among Men does not fare so well. Rather than ceding power to him, the people respond to his existence by exiling or killing him. Aristotle even goes so far as to describe this as just.

How could Aristotle rule in favor of this community, when by its action it destroys the condition for the possibility of its ever achieving perfect government? How could this action ever be just? Or, to ask the question in another way, when would it be the case that this action would be unjust? For if perfect government requires the existence and the rule of the God Among Men, then his exile or execution is surely not just in any absolute sense. What conditions would need

be met such that the God Among Men could both appear and have power handed to him by a willing populace?

In what follows, I will attempt to answer these questions by offering a close reading of the few passages in the *Politics* where the God Among Men makes his appearance. This requires that one grant, for the sake of argument, the possibility of this perfect individual. Though traditionally many have found this to be unlikely or impossible, the reintroduction of the God Among Men into the *Politics* results in a more consistent reading than that which leaves him out.[213] For by taking Aristotle's descriptions of the God Among Men as a serious possibility, one derives a better understanding of the different forms of government, the best of these forms, the ends of the *polis* as such and of *phronēsis* in general. As seen in the last two Chapters, one can draw a line from the discussions of *phronēsis* in the *Ethics* to the conclusion that the aristocratic polity of the *Politics* is the penultimate form of government. As will be seen in this Chapter, aristocratic polity is penultimate insofar as it attempts to produce the God Among Men in order that it might thereby cede power to it (or them). In this analysis, I hope to show that, whereas other forms of government are caught in an unavoidable type of stasis, aristocratic polity aims at a *telos* that is both contained within and yet beyond itself, and whereas in these other governments *phronēsis* functions as an excellence, in aristocratic polity *phronēsis* focuses on the *technē* of education. Further, given that this education takes the form of both/either producing and/or ceding power to the God Among Men, Aristotle understands the final actualization of the *polis* in terms of a right of revolution that will not be recognized in the West for another 1500 years. Finally, the God-Among-Men-led regime will be shown to be the full realization of aristocratic polity *per se*: the Chapter will conclude with an illustration of how the God Among Men and this unique *polis* rule each other in turn according to Aristotle's conception of political

rule and virtuous friendship.

Phronēsis – To the "Extreme"

Who is the God Among Men?[214] If nothing else, the God Among Men is truly singular—so much, in fact, that his introduction in the text constitutes a daunting paradox. The God Among Men is described simultaneously as the ultimate goal of the *polis* and as an imminent threat to the *polis*.

> But if there is some one, or many ones, yet not a number sufficient to make up a *polis*, whose difference according to virtue is so surpassing that the virtue of those [if many] or of him alone [if one] is incapable of comparison to [or: incommensurable with] either the virtue of all others, or their political capacity [*politikēn dunamin*], no longer must one count these a part of the *polis*. For those being so unequal according to virtue and political capacity, will commit injustice if they deem themselves equal. For such a one as this is just like a god among men.[215]

One cannot overlook the emphasis with which Aristotle introduces this individual. The difference that defines the God Among Men is his "surpassing" or "extreme" virtue. Although Aristotle does not provide specifics here with regard to this virtue, he poses it against the "virtue and political capacity" of all-comers with the conclusion that the God Among Men's virtue defies comparison or commensurability. As seen in the last Chapter, Aristotle considers the primary (if not sole) virtue of the ruler to be *phronēsis*, and the passage cited above confirms this collapsing

of the two terms. Therefore, the God Among Men exceeds all other persons specifically with regard to his possession of *phronēsis*, and concomitantly by his unsurpassed political ability.

When Aristotle examines *phronēsis* in the *Ethics*, he first considers its claim to being either a *technē* or an *epistēmē*: "*phronēsis* can be neither *epistēmē* nor *technē*; not *epistēmē* because what is done admits of being otherwise, not a *technē* because something done and something made are different in kind [*allo to genos*]."[216] Instead, he concludes, *phronēsis* should be understood as an excellence: "Therefore, it remains for it to be having a true reasoning ability to act (*héxin alēthē metà lógou praktikēn*) regarding the good and bad with respect to human beings. For the end of making can be other, that of doing cannot: for good acting is itself the end… Clearly then the what it is to be [of *phronēsis*] is some virtue and not *technē*."[217] Thus, though Aristotle often refers to *phronēsis* (and its concomitant use, *hē politikē*) as a *technē*, an *epistēmē*, and even as (a) philosophy, these terms must not be seen as delimiting the nature of *phronēsis*.[218] The important point is that Aristotle devotes this passage to denying the categories of *technē* and *epistēmē* to *phronēsis*, while neglecting to provide any such alternative definition in favor of these categories.

However, it still remains to be seen how Aristotle relates *phronēsis* to political activity or wisdom. Already in the above passage from the *Ethics*, Aristotle connects *phronēsis* to good statesmanship: "On account of this we suppose Pericles and those of his sort to have *phronēsis*, as they are able to see [*dúnantai theōreĩn*] the good with respect to themselves and to human beings: we suppose such a sort to be practiced in household and political affairs."[219] The most obvious distinction between political and practical wisdom is one of focus or scope: whereas those who have practical wisdom "are able to see the good with respect to themselves," political wisdom entails the ability to see what is good for men in general. Thus, Aristotle writes, "It is the

same to have *hē politikē* and *phronēsis*, yet the being is not the same with respect to each other" [*ésti dè kaì hē politikē kaì hē phronēsis hē autē mèn héxis, tò méntoi eĩnai ou t'autòn autaĩs*].[220] And he adds a further proviso to practical wisdom *qua* the individual: "equally the good for one is not possible if either that of the household is lacking [*áneu oikonomías*], or that of the *polis* [*áneu politeías*]."[221] Their distinctness as well as their relatedness, though unformulated at present, form the basis of two further discussions. In the first case, Aristotle separates the virtue of *phronēsis* from the faculty that allows for this virtue, *deinotes*. In the second case, this feeds directly into the *Politics*, where Aristotle considers the distinction (or lack thereof) between being a "citizen of excellence" and a "good man."

In the *Ethics*, Aristotle admits the thin line that separates *phronēsis* from *deinotes*. On the whole, the *Ethics* presents *phronēsis* as a learned disposition or habit that is as difficult to obtain as it is to lose.[222] However, education and experience themselves are not enough for the development of *phronēsis*; one must also have *deinotes*, or "cleverness." Whereas *phronēsis* is acquired through experience, *deinotes* is a natural faculty [*dunamis*]. This faculty allows one "to be able to do those things directing one toward the mark set before oneself, and to hit upon it."[223] Yet though this faculty is surely efficacious, in itself it is not connected to any moral sense: "Now, if the mark is noble, [*deinotes*] is laudable, if vulgar, then it is villainy [*panourgia*]. On this account we declare both the villainous and the *phronimoi* [those in possession of *phronēsis*] to be clever [*deinous*]."[224] *Deinotes* serves its possessors regardless of where they fall on the moral spectrum; it is as essential for great villainy as it is for great nobility. Therefore, as long as *deinotes* remains undeveloped (i.e., without *phronēsis* to guide it), one always runs the risk of villainy. Yet on the other hand, when one has both *deinotes* and *phronēsis*, one is both able to recognize the good in each case and one is equipped to achieve this good. "Indeed, *phronēsis* is

not the *dunamis*, but is not without this *dunamis*. And having this eye of the soul does not arise without excellence." From this, Aristotle determines that there is a direct connection between *phronēsis* and goodness, and that the former is the *sine qua non* of the latter: "it is manifest that someone who is not good is incapable of *phronēsis*."[225]

This last quote may strike the reader as something of a *non sequitur*, and Aristotle unfortunately does not elaborate. Indeed, when one compares this to his comments in the *Politics* regarding the excellence of a citizen and the goodness of a man, it rapidly turns confusing. In order to unpack this convoluted passage, one must first define citizenship for Aristotle, and then turn to its relation to the good man.

Citizenship and Statesmanship

Aristotle defines citizenship in several places by the same formula: "The single citizen is separated from the others in no wise more than with respect to his participating in judging and offices." Even if the nature of the regime determines the particular nature of that regime's citizenship, citizenship proper remains the same. "With respect to power, to have a part in deliberative and judicial offices, we say this person is a citizen of this *polis*, and a *polis* is said to be simply a multitude of such a sort sufficient for independent sustainability."[226]

In Book III of the *Politics*, Aristotle asks whether the excellence of a citizen and the goodness of a man coincide, and in what way, and in which forms of government.[227] As seen previously, Aristotle opens the question by comparing the citizens of any given state to sailors on a ship: although each citizen and each sailor differs with respect to his job and capacity, "the salvation of the community is their work, and the community is the *politeia*." But Aristotle immediately fragments the discussion: since citizenship is relative to the form of the state, "it is

clear that the single *aretē* of the excellent citizen does not admit of being the perfected [or: completed] *aretē*." This constitutes the first divide between the excellent citizen and the good man, for "we call a man good according to his single *aretē* being perfected [or: complete]." Therefore, "that it is possible that the citizen who is excellent not possess the *aretē* according to which a man is excellent, is manifest." Aristotle repeats this proof "by another road," with the same results: "if a *polis* be incapable of being constituted completely of excellent beings, yet each must do well according to his own work, and this from [his possession of] *aretē*, since it is not possible for all the citizens to be alike, the *aretē* of a citizen and a man cannot be one." In a perfect state every citizen would be excellent and possess *aretē*—and if excellence in citizenship entails being a good man, then one must assume the perfect *polis* to be filled with all and only good men.

From these comments it appears that the excellent citizen and the good man do not coincide except accidentally. Yet already a problem arises: though Aristotle admits here as elsewhere that citizenship differs depending on the state, he nevertheless intends to define being a citizen "in the strictest sense." If one takes seriously Aristotle's declaration that "the single citizen is separated from the others in no wise more than with respect to his participating in judging and offices," then citizenship should not differ at all between states. Even if one adds to this the conclusion drawn from his comparison of citizenship to sailors—that citizenship includes "the salvation of the community" in the same manner that all sailors participate in the salvation of the vessel—the definition should remain universal. Eligibility is contingent on logistics predetermined by the regime's constitution, but the job of being a citizen appears fixed.

Nevertheless, Aristotle continues by saying that "the single *aretē* of the excellent citizen does not admit of being the perfected/completed *aretē*." It seems that Aristotle has constructed

something of a paradox. On the one hand, the definition of the job of citizens is fixed regardless of one's state, and the excellence of citizenship should therefore be the same in each case. On the other hand, different states allow for different individuals to be citizens, and the excellence of citizenship should therefore be relative to each case.

Though at first glance this appears to be a paradox, it both admits of resolution and thereby proves fruitful for an understanding of citizenship and the best state. First, it should be evident that the second part of this paradox is invalid. Although it is the case that, e.g., in a democratic state a carpenter may also be a magistrate while in an oligarchy he may be ineligible for this office, it does not follow that the excellence of being a magistrate in a democratic *polis* is different from that of an oligarchy. In both cases the citizen is judged excellent relative to his ability as a magistrate; however, in an oligarchy this may be the citizen's sole job and thus his sole measure of excellence, whereas in the democracy the citizen is also a carpenter and thus is measured twice—whether he has excellence *qua* his *technē* (carpentry), and whether he has excellence *qua* citizenship.

Thus, there remains only one single excellence for citizenship, regardless of one's *polis*. Aristotle's real intent here is to emphasize the inability of citizens within a despotic *polis* to ever be good men (save accidentally), for among the many concerns caused by despotism they are subject to the demands of two separate excellences, and "we call a man good according to his single *aretē* being completed/perfected." In other words, before he even begins to consider the types of *polis* which are despotic, he has indicated the unlikelihood of the inhabitants of such regimes to be simultaneously excellent citizens and good men. Or, to put it more directly, such regimes neither foster nor encourage such a coincidence. One might further speculate that constitutional states by definition fall short of aristocracy (and kingship), for anyone who has

two jobs is less likely to be a good citizen; the concomitant demands of excellence in citizenship and any other *technē* are less likely to be met than by one who is devoted solely to a single excellence. Aristotle would seem to confirm both of these claims, for he says "in some *politeia* it is necessary for citizens to be a mechanic and a laborer, but in any this is impossible… For none of such a sort living as a mechanic or a laborer pursues the life of *aretē*."[228]

As the passage continues, Aristotle further complicates the discussion by introducing the ruler. He asks whether it is ever the case that the excellent citizen and excellent man [*politou te spoudaiou kaì andros spoudaiou*] coincide, and responds as follows: "In fact, we say that the excellent ruler is good and has *phronēsis*, but the citizen does not of necessity possess *phronēsis*." Thus, whereas at first this appears to be a concession—illustrating the occurrence of one who is both an excellent man and an excellent citizen—Aristotle instead separates citizenship from *phronēsis*. That is, it is possible for an excellent ruler to be a good man and to possess *phronēsis*, but the citizen need not possess *phronēsis*. This not only distinguishes the ruler from his citizens, but also claims that one who "has a part in deliberative and judicial offices" need not have *phronēsis*.

But the reader is aware that this cannot be the case save equivocally, for the citizen properly so called *is* a ruler as much as he is a subject. On the one hand, in despotic regimes many individuals are called citizens and they may hold offices in the government such as magistracies. However, by the definition of despotism these positions cannot actually constitute political enfranchisement. Rather, the "citizens" in each case are mere extensions of the tyrant's Leviathan control; their titles are just that, conferring no *de facto* power. On the other hand, Aristotle assuages these distinctions when he admits that in some cases the subject is a citizen as well as the ruler. Even if the *aretē* of a ruler differs from that of a citizen in despotic regimes,

when it so happens that the ruler is also a citizen and is good, the two coincide.[229] This is further emphasized with the comment that "surely it is commendable to be able to rule and to be ruled," as well as his comments that, just as one cannot be a general or commander without having first been a soldier, so, too, "it is beautifully said that it is not possible to rule well without having been ruled." Whereas formerly the line distinguishing ruler from subject/citizen was stark (resembling something akin to the situation of a hereditary monarchy or nobility), Aristotle goes on to blur the lines by praising citizens who become rulers. Indeed, if it is the case that only those who know both how to rule and how to obey—the definition of political rule—are the only true citizens, then the citizen properly so called is *always* (potentially) a ruler. Thus, in despotic governments, the excellent of citizens and the goodness of men do not coincide save accidentally, whereas in political rule they are directly connected and encouraged.

Aristotle's final comments point beyond this passage to a broader statement concerning the best form of government. "The *phronēsis* of the ruler is his own singular *aretē*. For it is fitting that the others are necessarily common for both ruled and rulers; the *aretē* of the ruled is certainly not *phronēsis*, but true opinion [*doxa alēthes*]." This is unproblematic when one considers hereditary kingship. When the ruler is a fixed individual or family, the rule is either true (if the ruler actually possesses *phronēsis* and rules for the common interest) or perverted (if the ruler considers his own interest). But aristocratic polity proves a special case. As seen previously, in a regime wherein the rulers are chosen on the basis of their *phronēsis*, citizenship is defined by the shared ruling and being ruled of the populace. Only in an aristocratic polity is the population at large capable of being constructed of good men and excellent citizens, as this form of regime specifically fosters such construction through its focus on education in *phronēsis*. This is the full meaning of his introduction of the ruler: Aristotle answers the question whether

the excellent citizen and the good man coincide by pointing to an aristocratic polity:

> As to that by which a man is good and a citizen excellent, it is clear from what has been said that of some *poleis* it is the same and of others different. And as for the former [i.e., when they are the same], not all, but the statesman [*politikos*]—the one who possesses sovereign power or is able to possess sovereign power, either by himself or with others, for the care of those things common.[230]

When all rule together by each ruling in turn (the definition of *polity*), the government requires that each of its citizens have *phronēsis* (the definition of aristocracy)—for each of its citizens is potentially or actually a ruler. The logistics of rule—e.g., how many individuals serve on a particular *boulē* or *ekklēsia*—are accidental to the interest of the sovereign power, which must be for the common (which includes the self) rather than for the self alone. In short, from this unique relationship between *phronēsis*, ruler and citizen, aristocratic polity emerges as the best form of government.

It remains to discuss kingship, and why aristocracy thus defined would outstrip this form of government. On the one hand, there is no reason to assume that in a kingship the ruler would lack *phronēsis* and not be a good man. Admittedly, from what has been said about the benefit of learning to obey prior to ruling, one might assume this to be less likely in a purely hereditary monarchy rather than in some form of elected monarchy. Heredity insulates royals from the experience of being ruled in the same manner that nobility of blood placed nobles as officers rather than requiring them to earn such via promotions. On the other hand, when one remembers that Aristotle describes the family as ruled in a manner similar to monarchy, everyone has been

ruled by virtue of having been a child. In other words, the opportunity for individuals to learn from the experience of having been ruled is ubiquitous, though the ability to learn anything from this rule is predicated on the family itself—i.e., the nature of the "monarch" who rules the household, and the nature of the education which begins in the home. Nevertheless, Aristotle does rule in favor of aristocracy against kingship.

> And just as a feast at which each guest contributes is more beautiful than that of one single person, also on this account a throng better decides many things than any one man. Still further, the many are much more uncorrupted—just as it is with the more water, thus also the throng is more incorruptible than the few… But if indeed this is not easy among the many, yet if only the majority are both good men and good citizens, which is the more incorruptible? The one ruler, or much more those who, though their number is many, they are all good? Or is it clear as the many? "But they will form factions, while the one is undisturbed by factions." But one must counter that their excellence with respect to soul is equal to that one. Indeed, if the rule of a majority, all good men, is to be laid down as an aristocracy, and that of one a monarchy, then with respect to the *polis* aristocracy would be more choice-worthy than monarchy… if many of such a sort can be apprehended.[231]

Of all the six general forms of government that Aristotle considers, aristocracy—considered not as an oligarchy of good individuals, but as a regime whose rulers are chosen on their possession of *phronēsis* and who rule according to the political manner of polity—remains the best. The

three sick forms need not even be considered, as each fails to consider what is best for the community and is therefore despotic. Polity as Aristotle describes it is either aristocratic or it is democratic. In the former case, it is essentially identical to aristocracy as described above. Indeed, this is proven by Aristotle's claim that we call a regime an aristocracy wherein the "majority" of people are good men. In other words, aristocracy is a description of the excellence of those within the *polis*, and has nothing to do with the numerical structure of the rulers. In the latter case, a polity becomes a democracy when it does not distinguish between the citizens on the basis of *phronēsis*. Of course, this would make political rule within the polity impossible, as a body of citizen-rulers who rule on the basis of self-interest would necessarily result in despotic governing. In short, polity either *is* aristocracy or it is democracy: it either is the best form of regime (and thereby makes men both good and excellent citizens via education and legislation) or it is despotic (and thereby cannot meet the conditions for the possibility of maintaining good men and excellent citizens within its legislation). And though a kingship *might* result in a ruler of truly admirable virtue, this individual does not outstrip the worth of many such individuals who—as justice demands equal for equals, and as relative desert must be honored with shared offices and political power—deserve an equal share of the honor of ruling.

The God Among Men

Returning to the God Among Men: if *phronēsis*, considered as political capacity, is the ability to see what is good for men in general, and if the God Among Men exceeds all others within the state as to be beyond comparison, then no one could ever legislate for him or see to his good better than he himself. Indeed, no one in the state would be better fitted than he to see what is good for men in general. Thus, he is not only best fitted to rule, but he is incapable of being

ruled. Aristotle emphasizes that "*phronēsis* is the only *aretē* that is the ruler's own," whereas the excellence of the subject is true opinion (*doxa alēthēs*). Yet the God Among Men certainly has *phronēsis*, and to a greater degree than all others. Also, justice entails the common interest, and this further requires that it should be equal for equals. But for him who has no equal, there is no possibility of justice: "Hence it is clear that legislation (*nomothesian*) necessarily concerns equals both with respect to birth and *dunamis*. There is no law upon those of such a sort [as the God Among Men]. For they are themselves a law."[232] The extreme inequality of the God Among Men in relation to other men necessitates an extreme—though just—response to his presence within the state: ostracism. "Wherefore in the case of an agreed upon superiority the *logos* regarding ostracism has some political justice. Hence where there is an acknowledged superiority the argument in favor of ostracism is based upon a kind of political justice." But this obviously cannot be absolutely just. Aristotle's hesitation and qualifying comment regarding the justice of this action belies the reality of the situation. Since there is no justice between such radically unequal individuals, it is potentially better for both the God Among Men and the individuals within this flawed *polis* that they part ways. For other than ostracism there is only one alternative: "Therefore it is left that all gladly obey such a sort [as the God Among Men], as it were according to nature, and that those of such a sort be kings eternally in their *polis*."[233] With this suggestive comment Aristotle quits his truncated discussion of the God Among Men.[234]

The God Among Men does not appear again until the end of Book III—after Aristotle has examined the three "true" forms of government and their three perverted *doppelgängers*. Aristotle returns to the subject where he left off: having considered the justice of exiling the God Among Men, he now considers the justice of investing the God Among Men with absolute power.

> But when at all events a whole family, or some one, happens to surpass all others with respect to so much *aretē* as to hold the *aretē* of that one over all others, then it is just that the family be king and lord of all, or that the one be king. For, as was said earlier, not only as it is according to the just—which all those instituting the *polis*, the aristocratic and the oligarchic and once more the democratic—have been accustomed to think fit to bring to the fore according to preeminence (but not the same preeminence), but also according to that which was earlier said. For nowhere is it fitting either to kill or exile or ostracize such a sort of person, nor is it deemed fit that he be ruled according to a share. For it is not natural that the part rise above [i.e., hold a higher place than] the whole, and this coincides with respect to [his] having such an excess. It is left only as being persuaded by such a sort as being lord, this not according to a share but absolutely.[235]

Aristotle has replaced one dilemma with another in this passage. While he now claims that it is not just to ostracize or kill the God Among Men, he nevertheless says that the *polis* instead must cede him power to the extent that he become something of an absolute monarch. Yet Aristotle offers no clear reasoning for why any government would cede power to the God Among Men rather than exile him. That is, the only way this would be possible would be if the *polis* was itself in search of such an individual, keeping a constant vigil in order that, should such an individual arise, the *polis* would both recognize him and recognize his superior claim to rule as the best possibility for the *polis*.

But how could this occur? What would need be in place for a *polis* to recognize such an

individual for what he was—as the greatest possibility of the *polis* and the greatest servant of the common interest, rather than a threat to their own interests?

In different places Aristotle claims that the polar opposite reactions of the *polis* to the appearance of the God Among Men—ostracizing and killing him or ceding absolute and eternal power to him—both are just. But he provides a clue with his closing words in Book III:

> And after that we say the right [*orthōs*] regimes are three, and of those the best is necessarily that which is ordered [*oikonomoumenēn*] by the best, and of such a sort as is some one or whole family or number who in relation to the rest exceeds all together with respect to *aretē*, the ones capable of being ruled, the others of ruling, toward the most choiceworthy life. And it was exhibited in the beginning of these *logoi* that the *aretē* of the man and that of the citizen of the best *polis* is necessarily the same. Clearly then in the same manner and by the same means through which a man becomes truly good, he will frame a state that is to be ruled by an aristocracy or by a king, and the same education and the same habits will be found to make a good man and a man fit to be a statesman or king.[236]

Book III ends with a lacuna in the text. As mentioned previously, there are those who think that Book VII should follow, as Aristotle there devotes himself to describing the best possible form of government.

The question remains, then, how the God Among Men would ever come to rule a state. The nature of the *polis* in which this would be possible is clear, although for some it exceeds the realm of the possible. The *polis* would necessarily be enlightened enough to recognize the God

Among Men, knowledgeable enough regarding the needs of the state as to see him as the best ruler, and inoculated enough to the seduction of power as to cede power to him. Obviously this would be impossible in any of the perverted regimes—the God Among Men would not last long in any of these governments. From the last Chapter the only likely candidate would be that regime for which education in *phronēsis* is the legislative priority, and in which the entire population rules and is ruled in turn according to the guidelines of an aristocratic polity.

In order to unpack this claim, one must remember all that has been said about citizenship and *phronēsis*. The condition for the possibility of the God Among Men's coming to power lies in the citizens: Aristotle writes that the citizens must turn from whatever government in which they currently find themselves and actively take part and decide to **"**gladly obey**"** this individual.[237] In order for this even to be conceivable, the citizen-rulers must see the God Among Men not as a threat, but as the best possible ruler for the community. They must see him as the highest and most expedient good for the survival and happiness of the community, i.e., as he who would ensure the good life for the *polis* as a natural entity, and for all those within it. In other words, those who would turn to the God Among Men as subjects would of necessity themselves possess *phronēsis*, insofar as this would be necessary for them to recognize the God Among Men as a benefit rather than a threat to the *polis*. Kingship certainly allows for the ruler to have *phronēsis*, but as Aristotle commonly points out, "the many are more incorruptible than the few." Indeed, aside from that government ruled by the God Among Men, Aristotle judges aristocratic polity to be the most secure means of providing the *polis* with the good life. "If we call the rule of many men, who are all of them good, aristocracy, and the rule of one man kingship, then aristocracy will be better for states than kingship… provided only that a number of men equal in excellence can be found." And if any *polis* would be capable of recognizing the superior

excellence of the God Among Men, it would have to be that government which is closest in excellence to the God Among Men. Though his excellence is without comparison to any individual or group of individuals, an aristocratic polity proves itself his mirror by recognizing him, by ceding power to him—by being the condition of the possibility not only of his rule, but also of his very survival.

But there is a further reason why one might find aristocracy to be that government most fitted for rule by the God Among Men. At the end of Book III, Aristotle reminds the reader that "the excellence of the good man is necessarily the same as the excellence of the citizen *of the perfect state*." Further, he states that "the same manner and by the same means through which a man becomes truly good, he will frame a state that is to be ruled by an aristocracy or by a king, and the same education and the same habits will be found to make a good man and a man fit to be a statesman or king." Aristocratic polity, were it to exist, would consist of citizens whose primary concern is the common interest, as mandated by and through their education in *phronēsis*. This is not to suggest a utopian state wherein each citizen would be capable of being a good man, nor a propagandist state wherein the citizens are brainwashed to uphold totalitarianism. On the contrary: it is to say that this is the sole state wherein the pursuit of the good life for the individual and the whole, through serving the affairs of the *polis*, is the goal of each individual. Provided that this were the case, an aristocratic government could truly perform the work of political wisdom: "For it is this that ordains which of the sciences should be studied in a state, and which each class of citizens should learn and up to what point they should learn them."[238] And if this were properly instituted, it would be up to the individual to pursue citizen excellence and personal goodness insofar as they are able—yet the means would be made available to all.

But what does Aristotle mean when he speaks of "framing a state… in the same manner and by the same means through which a man becomes truly good;" what place do these references to "the same education and the same habits" take in a discussion of political wisdom? On the one hand, this passage appears to equate aristocracy and kingship as equally excellent forms of government and thereby equally productive of the good life. Yet we have seen that Aristotle rules in favor of aristocracy throughout—even when he speaks of polity as the best practical form of government. For a healthy version of democracy to exist, it must be run by a citizenry that is both capable and willing to cede power to the best within the population, chosen on the basis of their possession of *phronēsis*. But if this is true, then polity is an aristocracy, and if the God Among Men arose in such a polity/aristocracy, then he would necessarily be the greatest individual capable of ruling the government. On the other hand, he may here be lauding the superior worth of aristocracy—but who, then, is the "king" in this sentence? Is it possible that the king referred to here is the God Among Men? Is it possible that Aristotle points towards aristocracy as the best form of government, but primarily as that which is capable of the *production* of the God Among Men? As we have seen, it is exactly this manner of "framing a state" (as seen in the *Politics*) with a mind to "education and habits" (as seen in the *Ethics*) which is Aristotle's project throughout. This is not merely a statement as to the sole means whereby one may both consider the possibility of the God Among Men as well as how to achieve the conditions required for this possibility. This also is a statement of one of the implicit goals throughout this Two Volume, *Ethics-Politics* project. Aristotle is not just describing what would be necessary for the best regime. He is enacting the process in his readers even as he speaks.

If we take Aristotle at his word regarding the God Among Men, then all those passages wherein Aristotle separates aristocracy and polity from the other forms of government can now

be read as pointing to the rule of the God Among Men as the ultimate goal. Aside from its internal integrity—or rather, because of this—aristocracy is the best form of government as the sole form that would not only raise the God Among Men to the throne, but furthermore strives in its legislation to produce this individual. And we now see that the primary goal of this legislation is not simply education in *phronēsis*, but the concomitant and resulting goal of this education would be providing a framework for revolution in the event of the appearance of the God Among Men.

It is important not to lose sight of the preeminence of aristocratic polity in the process of discussing the God Among Men, however. Aristocratic polity is the best form of government on the basis of its education, legislation, and election—all according to *phronēsis*. On the one hand, it is this which allows the aristocratic polity to recognize and cede power to the God Among Men. On the other hand, in the absence of this individual the regime of *phronēsis* is still the greatest regime possible for human artifice. *Phronēsis qua* political wisdom has as its most basic end the preservation of the community, and as its highest end the good life.[239] Do the means whereby *phronēsis* obtains these ends admit of a parallel split? That is, on the one hand, Aristotle writes that *phronēsis* "does not make men, but takes them from nature and uses them, [just as] nature provides them with earth or sea or the like as a source of food."[240] This sounds very much like the "bare needs of life" in which the community originates, and by which the ruler preserves the *polis*. However, in the case of aristocracy *phronēsis* takes on a higher purpose. Legislation then concerns itself, not just with sustaining life within the *polis*, but further with the means of producing the good life by and in its production of good men and excellent citizens. As stated above, it does this by legislating "which of the sciences should be studied in a state, and which each class of citizens should learn and up to what point they should learn them." In an

aristocracy the rulers—by means of their possession of *phronēsis*—would implement education such that "the same education and the same habits will be found to make a good man and a man fit to be a statesman or king." And *only* in an aristocracy may one hope to achieve this type of education, for it is only in this form of government that "the excellence of the citizen and ruler is the same as that of the good man." Since this is the case, "the legislator has to see that they [the citizens and/or rulers] become good men, and by what means this may be accomplished and what is the end of the perfect life."[241]

In this manner, Aristotle's description of aristocratic polity as the best or most perfect form of government may imply that it is the end of *phronēsis qua* political wisdom, but this does not necessarily mean that is the fully actualized form of the *polis qua* natural entity. Aristocracy is the best of all possible constructed regimes—*both* in spite of and because of its ability to produce and cede power to the God Among Men. By way of achieving this, *phronēsis* within the regime would take on a tripartite role: it would describe the excellence possessed by the citizens, it would be the wisdom of the rulers as well as that which is taught in the state's schools, and it would function as a *technē* whose end is seeking to produce the God Among Men. Aristocratic polity remains the sole form of government capable of such an ambitious goal, and even then only a *true* aristocracy as described in the last Chapter.[242] For whereas in other governments the ruler's *phronēsis* is devoted either to the most menial task of ensuring the state's preservation or to the higher task of seeking the common good, in an aristocracy the ultimate goal and definition of the good life would be the rule of the God Among Men. Its members—each of whom strives to be a good man and each of whom is educated to be an excellent citizen, each of whom shares in the honor of ruling and administration in turn—already possess *phronēsis*, to varying degrees. But what is more, these aristocratic citizens have some higher end to their political activity aside

from managing the essential elements of their society. It is just this which allows the citizens to insulate themselves from the seduction of power in a true aristocracy. If they understand that their rule is not their own, but see themselves as stewards of the state, then the power which they wield is understood not as a possession but as a trust. And if the citizenry itself constantly checks the power of the rulers, then they cannot get drunk with power—should they attempt to do so, the population is educated sufficiently in *phronēsis* to see this and strip them of their offices.

But all this was seen previously in the discussion of the aristocratic polity, whereas we still must define how a God Among Men led government might arise. When Aristotle tells the reader that the end of political wisdom is to "ordain which of the sciences should be studied in a state, and which each class of citizens should learn and up to what point they should learn them," and that all this is to be done according to "strict principles of justice," it makes sense that this is the proper implementation for an aristocratic polity. However, it may further serve the end of recognizing the God Among Men. Indeed, the education and rearing legislated by the state have a causal relationship to the *phronēsis* within the population as a whole, and Aristotle's *Ethics* certainly implies that it is difficult if not impossible for an individual to achieve such preeminent status in wisdom and virtue without such an education within a like-minded community. Therefore, one might recognize in Aristotle's perennial insistence on education in *phronēsis* the shadow of the God Among Men as well. Though the population's possession of *phronēsis* may allow for their recognition of the God Among Men as he who is most fitted to rule and thereby he who is most able to produce the best life, in an aristocratic polity they are in some sense expecting the God Among Men to emerge. Whereas in other governments the God Among Men—if he appears at all—appears accidentally and in spite of the *polis*, in an aristocratic polity the citizens are prepared for the emergence of the God Among Men both through their possession

of *phronēsis* and by means of educating their citizens toward this goal. Thus, other governments deal with him as outside of and anathema to the political order, whereas aristocracy anticipates him as the Arthurian or Messianic *telos* of the political order and the *teleion* of the *polis* itself.[243]

Of course, *phronēsis* cannot be a *technē*. Even in the best aristocracy, *phronēsis* might function similarly to a *technē*, but to say this is merely to skip a step. The citizens possess *phronēsis*, and they receive this education with a mind to their potential to someday become rulers. *Phronēsis* remains the end of this education, for "where excellence has not the first place, there aristocracy cannot be firmly established."[244] But there remains the implicit possibility that one might rise above the rest in his preeminent excellence. By legislating and maintaining education in this manner, the *polis* is constantly ready and, in a sense, expecting the appearance of the God Among Men. Should he appear, the citizens would stand down and "happily obey" him, for their own education is such that they are tempered to recognize his superior ability to produce the good life for all those within the *polis*—his unsurpassed ability to serve the self-interest of each by serving the common interest of all.

The "Best" *Polis* and Political Rule

Of the many issues surrounding the God Among Men, none appears more difficult than the contradiction between the absolute rule of the God Among Men and the political rule celebrated throughout the *Politics*. Nichols (1992) provides a most damning critique of the God Among Men on these grounds. After pointing out the rhetorical contradiction of the God Among Men—that he possesses "extreme" virtue, although the *Ethics* states that anything extreme is always a vice—she concludes that this individual is a mere flight of fancy. That is, Aristotle humors the idea of a utopian *polis* wherein such a Messianic figure arises to rule the *polis*, only to reject it

for a number of reasons. First, the rule of the God Among Men is necessarily absolute, and this would make him a despot. Second, the God Among Men must seize power, although this would be impossible for an individual of unsurpassed virtue. Third, the God Among Men is incapable of being ruled by either law or other individuals, making him incapable of political rule. Therefore, not only is the God Among Men's rule despotic, but the God Among Men by nature is a despot. The reader's options are reduced to an either/or: to take the God Among Men seriously is to reject political rule as the best and most just arrangement in the *polis*, whereas to take Aristotle's much more robust description of political rule seriously is to reject the God Among Men as a fundamental contradiction in terms or a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing.

It is true that Aristotle's comments regarding the God Among Men are scattered and confusing. Most pressing is the issue of the God Among Men being incapable of being ruled: that he is a "law unto himself." Like Aristotle's earlier comments describing the God Among Men's presence in any given *polis* as similar to a god or hero among ordinary persons, this is not just rhetorical flourish. The God Among Men is so preeminent in virtue that he surpasses that of all others. If *phronēsis* is a virtue, and its possession entails the ability to see the good for oneself and for others, then the God Among Men possesses *phronēsis* to a greater extent than all others combined. If one remembers the doctor metaphor from the *Politics*, wherein Aristotle says that there are specialists, practitioners, and consumers of medicine and that all three categories possess their own amount of wisdom, the God Among Men seems to exceed these three categories in ability to the extent that Apollo or Hippocrates would. In short, the God Among Men seems incapable of the political rule celebrated by Aristotle, and even his preeminence would fail to do justice to those around him who deserve their share of honor.

All the other concerns with the existence and justice of the God Among Men follow from

this initial concern. He is a "law unto himself," because laws are static and implemented by individuals. They cannot claim any authority over him for both of these reasons. First, their static nature makes them less capable of discerning that which is necessary and just in a given situation than the God Among Men himself, whose possession of *phronēsis* seems to preclude the possibility of error, let alone that of superior judgment by another (including the law). Therefore, his very existence is as one who is above or outside of the law, regardless of the *polis* in question. Second, any law implemented by any individual would of necessity be either in line with the judgment of the God Among Men or inferior to it. Thus, even in the event that the God Among Men lives according to or within the law, it is accidental and inconsequential to his actions; the God Among Men chooses the path that is happened upon by those who instituted the law because it is right, not because it is a law.

Yet these critiques fail to recognize a critical element in Aristotle's illustration of the God Among Men. The answer lies in Aristotle's statement that a lesser, equivocally called *polis* would exile or kill the God Among Men. The God Among Men's very existence is contingent upon the existence of a *polis* filled with citizens who are educated in *phronēsis*, and who recognize his preeminence as a blessing rather than a threat. The God Among Men's rule is predicated on his arising in such a *polis*, as this is the only situation in which he would be offered such rule. With great irony, this most self-sufficient individual's presence on earth is extremely tenuous: his rule and his very life are contingent upon the *polis* in which he resides. Contrary to those who would claim that the God Among Men is incapable of being ruled, he is completely at the mercy of the *polis*. If the *polis* is truly a *polis*—an aristocratic polity which legislates education in *phronēsis*—then the God Among Men is the natural completion of that regime. They will cede power to him while he is alive *and only as long as he maintains his excellence*; they will remove this power

when he either dies *or in the event of his falling victim to his own appetites*. However, if the *polis* is anything less than this, the God Among Men is all but doomed. It is unclear how the God Among Men would survive, for his virtue would preclude him from hiding himself from the *polis*, although to reveal himself through his virtuous actions would threaten his life. In sum, the God Among Men cannot rule without the consent of the *polis*, and his rule is entirely contingent upon the character of those within the *polis*. The God Among Men is just as much—if not all the more—ruled by the *polis* as he is the ruler of the *polis*.

Within this is a response to those who would see the God Among Men as seizing power rather than having it provided to him. On the one hand, Aristotle does describe this individual as necessarily being provided with absolute rule, which implies tyranny and despotism rather than a political arrangement. However, any individual (or group of individuals) who seizes power within a *polis* has already proven that he (or they) is not, in fact, the God Among Men. As Aristotle says on a number of occasions, for an individual to seize power due to his greater claim to virtue and honor is unjust, and it cannot be justified on the basis of a greater good. Therefore, the God Among Men would be incapable by nature and definition of such seizure, and any individual who attempted such seizure instantly would disqualify his eligibility in the eyes of a population educated in *phronēsis*. The God Among Men must come to power in a Glorious Revolution: the people must ask the God Among Men to become their leader, rather than the God Among Men asserting his claim to the throne.

Finally, there is the question of the God Among Men's "extreme" virtue. On the one hand, Aristotle does use the same Greek to describe the God Among Men's virtue as he does to describe vice in the *Ethics*. As much of this project is built upon the idea that Aristotle chooses his language very carefully and intentionally, far be it for this to be conveniently discarded in the

case of a contradictory point.

Connected to this question are other issues. Most pressing is the absolute loneliness surrounding the God Among Men. If the *Ethics* states that a person could be considered neither happy nor in complete possession of virtue if the individual is without true friendship, then the God Among Men either has friends or the God Among Men is not the God Among Men. Yet the *Ethics* also stipulates that true friendship is only possible between two individuals who are of the same character. If the God Among Men is so unparalleled in his character, then he would be incapable of friendship.[245]

The answer to this paradox may be found in the same place as that regarding the God Among Men's ability to be ruled according to a political arrangement. As Aristotle describes him, the God Among Men sounds utterly alone and incapable of friendship. However, Aristotle allows for two possibilities which may mitigate this loneliness. First, on more than one occasion Aristotle describes the God Among Men not as an individual, but as a family, a group of individuals, and even as the majority of the *polis* itself. Were this ever to occur, the God Among Men would be not one but many, and the possibility of friendship due to similarity of character would be established. Second, the aristocratic polity itself represents an unorthodox, yet sound friend for the God Among Men. The two are mutually dependent insofar as they make each other better, always with an eye to that which is best for the whole as well as the individual. They give to the other as if the other is the self, and they check the other if the other falters. They are as sparring partners, or mirrors in which both flaws and blessings are repaired and celebrated. Their presence together manifests the *teleion* of the *polis*, in the same manner that the presence of true friendship between two individuals who are complete in virtue manifests the *teleion* of the *anthrōpos*: in both cases, something without is required to make the natural entity whole.[246]

The overriding principle in all these rebuttals is simple: either the God Among Men is the God Among Men, or he is an imposter. To call someone a God Among Men who is capable of seizing power, who is without friendship, who is incapable of political rule, or who is actually vicious in his apparent possession of virtue due to its "extreme" nature, is to use the term equivocally. That is, the person in question is simply not the God Among Men. Using the term equivocally does not preclude the possibility of the person actually existing. It is simply to misappropriate the name.

And regardless of whether the God Among Men actually exists, the *polis* for which he exists remains the best possible *polis* for human artifice. The significance of the God Among Men is proven by his inconsequential existence. In the absence of this individual, aristocratic polity is the best possible regime. It proves its superiority both by its capacity to recognize and cede power to the God Among Men, but also in its administration in the absence of such a godlike person. Thus, the relationship between the God Among Men and the aristocratic polity is that between *tuchē* and *phronēsis*: by creating and maintaining an aristocratic polity, human beings do everything they possibly can to bring about the natural end of the *polis* and to complete its existence as a natural entity. Anything beyond this is up to the gods.

But Why Doesn't He Just Say So…

Still, one might contend that Aristotle does not say as much in the *Politics*. In spite of these scattered passages in the *Politics*, which do call the absolute rule of the God Among Men the best government, Aristotle spends most of his time describing in detail aristocracy and polity as the best regimes. Besides, it remains unclear whether or not the God Among Men is even possible, or rather an ideal that Aristotle merely humors. Thus, these attempts to link aristocratic polity to

the God Among Men could be conjectures interpolated into the text.

These objections admit of two practical responses. First, there is the nature of the *polis* and of *phronēsis* as such. On the one hand, if the God Among Men is purely an ideal, a flight of fancy, why does Aristotle include any discussion of him at all? To be clear: when Aristotle mentions a *polis* run by the God Among Men, he calls it the best possible *polis*. Thus, in order to reject the possibility of the God Among Men, one cannot just choose one part of Aristotle over another part. One must explain why Aristotle does not simply award aristocracy or polity highest honors, rather than placing them second to this improbable scenario. And if the God Among Men is in fact not just improbable but wholly ideal, why does Aristotle examine the justice of different responses to him depending on the excellence of the *polis* in which he arises? Surely Aristotle need not include the God Among Men, let alone inquire into the just response to his presence, if he doesn't consider the God Among Men a real possibility. On the other hand, the rule of the God Among Men perfectly accords with the highest end of political activity, or of the *polis* considered as such. To put it another way, if the God Among Men ever did occur in an aristocratic polity, then they would have no choice—read: their shared possession of *phronēsis* would preclude them from any other choice—but to raise him to the throne. For "in all the sciences and arts the end is a good, and the greatest good and in the highest degree a good in the most authoritative of all," and if "this is the political science of which the good is justice, in other words, the common interest," then in a true aristocracy the citizens would recognize the God Among Men as the greatest good for the common interest. In addition, they would recognize that justice (as demanding equal for equals and unequal for unequals) requires he be given the honor that is his right due to his being unequal to all. In other words, *phronēsis* compels both that they recognize his worth as literally the highest end of the *polis*, and that justice demands the right

response to his unequal status.

It would indeed be strange if Aristotle did *not* include a discussion of the God Among Men, and if, in his praise of aristocratic polity, he did not ultimately have in mind its unique capacity to produce and enthrone the God Among Men. For if the state is a natural entity, then the rule of the God Among Men must be the end of this entity. This seems to be the meaning of his statement that the God Among Men is himself a law, and that "the whole is naturally superior to the part, and he who has this pre-eminence is in the relation of a whole to a part."[247] Seeing that the God Among Men is related to the *polis* as both the end and the full actualization of that which defines the *polis* as a natural entity, one must hesitate before reading this as a hypothetical ideal. And seeing how Aristotle's descriptions of aristocratic polity match up in each case with its unique ability to achieve the end and actualization of the *polis*—to greet the God Among Men as two entities which, together, make each other whole—his praise of aristocratic polity as the best government actually serves to support his understanding of the rule of the God Among Men as the most perfect government.

Indeed, as we have seen, the God-Among-Men-led regime *is* an aristocratic polity. For in that *polis* the people rule and are ruled in turn, just as the God Among Men rules and is ruled in turn. The God Among Men is only chosen on the basis of his preeminent possession of *phronēsis*, which means that the best of men rules: this is the definition of aristocracy. However, the people must willingly and happily obey this individual, which means that the people choose their leader, thereby choosing to rule and to be ruled: this is the definition of polity. The God-Among-Men-led *polis* does not require that one revise the chart of the healthy or sick *poleis*, or that one include another *polis* in the category of those which deserve the name. The God Among Men led *polis* is simply an aristocratic polity in its best possible permutation. Therefore, we can

now fully confirm the concept of the only *polis* being that which confers rule upon the best of men—whether they be a single individual, a group of individuals, a majority, or even all those within a state. The logistics are accidental to its status as the best possible *polis*, for the *polis* which both rules and is ruled by one or many who are as gods among humans will always be the best possible *polis*.

V Aliens and Monsters: Does Aristotle Believe in Slavery or Nobility?

"Clarice, does this *random* scattering of sites seem overdone to you? Doesn't it seem *desperately* random? Random past all possible convenience? Does it suggest to you the elaborations of a bad liar?"

- Hannibal Lector, *The Silence of the Lambs*[248]

Introduction

In Chapter IV, it was argued that the only way to save Aristotle from a contradiction regarding the best possible government was to read him as capable of subtle rhetoric. Rather than choose one side of the contradiction as Aristotle's intent while rejecting the other (in this case, two others) on uncertain grounds, the contradiction was removed and Aristotle was read literally. Although it appeared that Aristotle could not believe—even though he clearly says—that the best possible *polis* is that run by the God Among Men *and* that which is a polity *and* that which is an aristocracy, we have seen that it is both possible and consistent to read him as meaning all of the above. The best possible *polis* is an aristocratic polity run by the God Among Men, and the best practicable *polis* is an aristocratic polity which acts as a stewardship in the absence of the God Among Men. Unlike other readings of the text, which require that the reader side with some statements while excising others, this allows Aristotle's text to remain intact and to produce valid results. Indeed, when potential objections were examined, the most compelling of these had nothing to do with the consistency of the account. Rather, it was that Aristotle is not usually credited with subtlety.

In the present Chapter we will shore up this reading of Aristotle's *Politics* by illustrating

two other powerful examples of Aristotle's rhetorical abilities.[249] We will examine Aristotle's descriptions of slavery and noble birth, in order to illustrate their apparent postulation of two additional species, separate from human freepersons. After briefly looking at those passages from the *Metaphysics* that delineate what must be considered in asking about the *to ti en eĩnai* of any living thing, it will be shown that slavery (as seen in the *Politics*) and noble birth (as seen in the fragments from the dialogue *Peri eugeneias*) cannot be simply a part of the biological species *human*. Rather, when one looks at them with regard to their generation, substance and work, Aristotle has precluded the assimilation of these three types. While this reading avoids the notorious difficulties encountered in Aristotle's considerations of slavery and nobility, it replaces them with seemingly impossible requirements for slaves and nobles. Having traded an illogical, traditional reading for a consistent, fantastic one, the reader is forced to ask questions about Aristotle's intent. Does Aristotle genuinely believe in the existence of three species of *natural* beings that cannot be distinguished physically? Or do these passages and their attending problems constitute Aristotle's subtle but effective critique of *actual* slavery and nobility, and thereby his denial of the justice of either in the world?

We will examine both of these extra "species" as they appear in the *Politics* and in the fragments from *Peri eugeneias*, or *On Noble Birth*.[250] We will begin with a brief sketch of those terms most basic to the investigation of a species: necessary accidents, substance, work and form. We will then turn to Aristotle's descriptions of noble birth and slavery, offering a detailed examination of these two kinds in order to show that they cannot be understood as anything but additional species alongside freepersons under some broader genus "human." Finally, we will look at the consequences and implications of assuming that Aristotle intentionally posits this multiplication of humanity, without actually believing that such natural kinds exist. For though

the daunting political, ethical and metaphysical concerns that arise from such a reading could lead many to dismiss Aristotle's writings on nobility and slavery as bad logic and the result of contemporary prejudices, these very concerns could also lead one to see Aristotle as subtly critiquing the possibility of *natural* slaves and nobles.

The-what-was-to-be…[251]

Before one can understand how nobility and slavery break with humanity, one must first ask what it is for one to be a human being. This amounts to asking the complex question of *to ti en eĩnai* of *anthrōpos*, or the-what-it-was-to-be human. Most crucial for this Chapter is Aristotle's insistence that neither an individual's matter (*hule*) nor its arrangement into a particular shape (*morphē*) have any claim to the title of primary substance. Rather, an individual's substance is determined insofar as that individual participates in an *eidos* or form. The individual's form is determined by reference to the individual's ability to pass that form through generation and his capacity to perform the work that is peculiar to all instantiations of the form.[252]

A familiar passage from the *Metaphysics* helps summarize this priority of generation and form over matter and appearance:

> All the things that come to be, either by *phusis* or by *technē*, have matter (*echei hulen*). For each of them has the capacity to be and not to be, and this capacity is the matter in each. And, in general, that from which they come to be is *phusis* and that according to which they come to be is *phusis*, for the thing that has come to be of such a sort as a plant or an animal has *phusis*. And that by which they come to be, the *phusis* so-called according to the form [*eidos*], is of the same form as it

> [*he kata to eidos legomene phusis he homoeides*], though it is in another. For a human being begets a human being.[253]

For Socrates to be anything, he must be made of matter and he must participate in a form. The *hule* or material of Socrates is a particular manifestation of the form *human*, and his makeup can help identify him as such. However, Socrates' corpse is no more a human being than a statue of Socrates. Although the latter may be identical in structure to Socrates, and although the former (at the moment of death) may be identical in its chemistry to Socrates, neither participates in that which is essentially human. By the same reasoning, an individual with an artificial kidney or prosthetic leg is no less a human being due to such changes in the individual's matter.[254] Thus, though the *hule* of any living thing is an obvious precondition for its existence, and though it can be a helpful indicator as to that thing's species, *hule* remains a necessary accident and cannot qualify as the substance of an individual.

An illustration of the difference between necessary accidents and essential traits lies in Aristotle's description of "mutilations." Since Aristotle describes the female as a "mutilated male," the *hule* of one parent will always be "mutilated."[255] Yet Aristotle warns us not to confuse this necessary accident (being female) with an essential trait and thereby with a separate species (*femaleness*). The reasons for this are obvious: *femaleness* cannot be passed in this sense from a mother to a daughter any more than *maleness* could, as the results of making either a species would become nonsensical (e.g., all offspring would be female, or male, or one must discover some calculus for deriving when and why one form at times is more successful at passage than the other, etc.). Should the offspring share in this "mutilation," it is not due to the passage of the form *femaleness*, but is rather a necessary accident that occurs according to specific conditions

imposed on the fetus during the reproductive process. In short, the passing of a form from parent to offspring remains the province of necessity lest something happens contrary to nature. The form determines the range of necessary accidents possible for the individual insofar as they are possible for any given participant of the same form. In spite of its name, then, necessary accidents are themselves within the province of chance.[256]

In discussing this participation of many individuals in a single form, Aristotle finds it necessary to deny the existence of individual forms. One of the ways in which he approaches this is by addressing the problem of unity in an object or a living thing. "What, then, is that which makes a human one, and on what account is he one but not many, of such a sort as both animal and biped? And also, then, if there is, as some say, some *animal* itself and some *biped* itself—on what account is a human not those themselves, and humans will be by participation not in *human* nor in *one*, but in two, *animal* and *biped*?" He alleviates this difficulty through his introduction of potentiality and actuality: "But if it is, as we say, material (*hule*) on the one hand, shape (*morphē*) on the other, potentiality (*to dounamei*) and actuality (*to energeia*), then the search would no longer be judged an *aporia*."[257] In the case of artificial production, the agent manifests the (actual) form *sphere* in her shaping of the (potential) material bronze, though the agent does not create the form *sphere* in this (and every) individual sphere. In the case of natural reproduction, the parent passes his own (actual) form *human* to his offspring, though the matter (i.e. the individual characteristics and attributes) remains the (potential) material of both parent and offspring.

Therefore, Socrates does not have the (individual) form of *Socrates*; this individual living thing has the form *human* and is a "this" whose matter is called "Socrates." Aristotle describes form as

> a "such a sort of thing" [*toionde*], and this is not individuated, but one makes and engenders a "such a sort of thing" from a "this," and when it has been engendered, it is a "this such a sort of thing." And the whole "this," Callias or Socrates, is to this bronze sphere as human and animal are to bronze sphere on the whole.[258]

The whole "this" in this passage reinforces both of the above statements that the forms of living things pass through generation, and that matter is secondary in a discussion of substance. Aristotle continues to drive this home in the remarks that follow: "the whole, the *eidos* of such a sort in this flesh and these bones, is Callias or Socrates; and it [the whole in each case] is different from the other [which produced it] on account of the *hule*, but it is the same with respect to *eidos*, for the *eidos* is indivisible (*atomos*)."[259] That which defines anything as, for example, human being or oak tree, is the individual's (as a "this") participation in the form (the "such a sort of thing"), and the individual's matter proceeds from this as the particular manifestation embodied in the individual (as a "this such a sort of thing").

By turning away from matter as that which is essential for an individual's being a particular type of being, Aristotle gives preeminence to *ergon* as the characteristic work of any living thing. For Aristotle, form and work could not be more intimately related. Irwin (1981) describes this claim—that something is a substance because of its *ergon* and *dunamis*, not its *hule*—as "controversial; it implies that Socrates is essentially a man, something performing human functions, not essentially something with a certain kind of (nonfunctionally described) structure and composition."[260] Irwin emphasizes Aristotle's distinguishing of form and function,

which Irwin refers to as "essential properties," from Aristotle's idea of "intrinsic concomitants"—Irwin's translation of "necessary accidents" (*kath' hauta sumbebekota*). Irwin explains the separation thus: "If an intrinsic concomitant is a necessary property that belongs to something because of its essence, an essential property will explain the necessary properties of a natural kind." Thus, not only do matter and necessary accidents fail to determine the existence of a particular being as, for example, a human being, but also insofar as a particular being participates in the form *human* and insofar as this being is capable of performing that work proper to possessing this form, only thereby may we rightly call this particular being a *human* being.

These functional properties pass through generation. The structure and composition of a table come second to its work *qua* table, and whether the artisan fashioned the work from iron or wood, or with four or six legs, does not change her passage of the form *table* from her mind into whatever *hule* and *morphē* she chooses. So too with natural reproduction: the adult parents pass their form to their offspring, and though the material configuration of the offspring sometimes relates (hair and eye color) and sometimes does not (gender, physical and mental talents), the essential properties of the "this such a sort of thing" are passed with the form. For example, a human child may share eye color with the mother, hair color with the grandfather, and he may receive his father's musical ear. He may also have blue skin and be eight feet tall. All these accidents—some passed through generation, some the result of chance—do not affect the son's participation in the form of the adult parents, for none of them necessarily relates to or affects the functional properties of being *human*.[261]

On Noble Birth

Aristotle's references to noble birth are found almost entirely in a few fragments of a dialogue entitled *Peri eugeneias*.[262] Three fragments of the dialogue have survived.[263] In F 91 and F 92, the interlocutors agree that both the existence and meaning of noble birth are mired in confusion. The principle speaker in F 91 admits that the divisions and obscurity among the wise on this issue are even more pronounced than that among the *hoi polloi*. He goes on to cite differing statements of Simonides, Theognis, Socrates, and Lycophron. The last among these figures questions the very existence of anything like "noble" birth outside of convention. Lycophron apparently claims that it is "something altogether empty," that the reverence offered it is based solely on opinion and speech, and that "the low-born [literally, "those of no family," *tous ageneis*] is in no way different from the nobly born."[264]

Not wanting to surrender *eugeneia* to Lycophron, the speakers in F 92 and F 94 attempt to ground noble birth in nature rather than convention. In F 92, the principle speaker questions the attribution of noble birth on the basis of the acquisition of excellence and wealth, regardless of whether these have been recently obtained or whether the family has had them from ancient times. Though the fragments do not contain a thorough refutation of either opinion, the speakers nevertheless agree that "one must look somewhere else" in order to find the root of *eugeneia*. The principle speaker then refines his or her search by asking his or her counterpart what it is that is indicated by *to eu*. The speaker tentatively (*depou*) proposes that it is "something praiseworthy and excellent," the sort of thing meant when one claims that another has a "noble face" (*euprosopos*) or "noble eye" (*euophtalmon*). This line of questioning quickly leads to their agreement that *to eu* refers in each case to the possession of the *aretē* of that to which *eu-* attaches as a prefix. In other words, it appears as if each thing has an *aretē* particular to its type.

That *genos* which possesses *aretē* is called *spoudaios*, "excellent," while that which does not is called *phaulon*, "common." Finally, the principle speaker concludes that noble birth is the *aretē* of a *genos* (*delon ar', ephen, hoti estin he eugeneia aretē genous*).[265]

The crux of the argument lies in the discussion of the *archegos*, or originator. It is not enough that a *genos* has had *aretē* and been excellent for a long time. Rather, the *genos* must possess *aretē* "from the beginning" (*hoi ten archaian areten*). The speaker repeatedly asserts that the existence of this *archegos* is the sole criterion which could justify a claim of noble birth.

> And this sort of thing happens when an excellent *archē* springs up in [*eggenetai*] the *genos*; for an *archē* of this such a sort has the capacity to produce many like itself. For this is the *ergon* of an *archē*: to make many others of such a sort as itself. When, then, some one of such a sort has sprung up [*eggenetai*] in the *genos* and having such excellence that many offspring have the goodness from that one, it is necessary that this *genos* be excellent… But surely not even those from good ancestors [*ek agathon progonon*] are always nobly born, but only as many as happen to have originators [*archegoi*] who are their ancestors. When, therefore, he is good [*agathos*], but he does not have this sort of natural capacity [*dunamin tes phuseos*] so as to bring into the world many like him, he does not have the *archē*... [lacuna in the text] Those are nobly born from this *genos* not if the father was nobly born, but if the originator of the *genos* was. For not on account of the father himself did he beget a good man, but since he was from this such a sort of *genos* are those nobly born from this *genos*.[266]

This emphasis on the necessity of an *archegos* not only precludes the claims of those who are good and excellent, but it also implies that the *archegos'* preeminence is eternally productive. Put another way, though one can never prove that his line began with such an *archegos*, noble birth is proven experientially by the shared excellence of all members of the *genos*. Indeed, the capacity of the *archegos* cannot expire: if a *genos* claims noble birth, but a single member of the *genos* lacks such traits, it proves that no one in the *genos* ever deserved the title *eugeneia*—for it is now evident that the *genos* never had an *archegos* in the first place. The only way to end this eternal production of nobly born, excellent individuals would be if all members of the *genos* died—extinction.

If the reader suspends her disbelief that Aristotle actually posited the existence of multiple different species of animals shaped like human beings, then the account of noble birth looks like an odd, but auspicious, description of an individual species. First, the speaker insists on the genetic nature of noble birth. No one can claim noble birth unless all the individuals in his *genos*, going back to (but not including) the originator of the *genos*, can likewise claim noble birth. Second, the excellence of the individual and the *aretē* of the *genos* are likewise guaranteed by birth. Those fortunate enough to be born into such a *genos* apparently need not strive for this excellence, as it cannot be earned or achieved. It is their birthright. Even if one wishes to pause before attributing a separate species to nobility, a true noble cannot be human nor a human noble. Few ideas are more fundamental to the *Ethics* than that humans must strive to be good, rather than simply being born good. Yet this is exactly how Aristotle has described noble birth. Indeed, noble birth is even more ubiquitous than the essential traits of other species. For other species are always subject to the occasional caprice of nature, manifested in the appearance of monsters and mutilations. By contrast, if a noble *genos* ever produces something contrary to nature, then it

merely proves that the *genos* was never truly noble. As for the proper work of *eugeneia*, the fragments remain silent. However, given their universal possession of whatever *aretē* which constitutes *eugeneia*, one may speculate with some certainty that all the individuals in the *genos* are equally capable of performing their work. In sum, these criteria commit the speaker to an understanding of *eugeneia* as a separate species from both regular human freepersons and, as will be shown below, slaves.[267]

Slavery

The *Politics* directly addresses those that claim the rule of a master over slaves is contrary to nature, and therefore unjust. Aristotle finds "it is not difficult to behold" the answer to this question, both from reason (*logos*) and fact ("that which has come to be," *ek ton ginomenon*). "For ruling and being ruled are not only of things necessary but also of things advantageous, and directly from birth some have been separated out for ruling, others for rule."[268] For some readers, these preliminary remarks are sufficient cause for condemning Aristotle's account. However, it should be noted that they set Aristotle on the course of defending *natural* slavery; as we shall see, Aristotle would agree with those who question slavery as practiced during his time. As Williams (1993) writes of slaves, metics, and freepersons in Aristotle's time, "What made ancient slavery even more remarkable was the ready way in which a person could change from one of these identities to another."[269] On the one hand, slaves sometimes received their freedom through manumission, and there were many ways in which this could occur. On the other hand, slaves were made as often as they were born to slave families. Hector's lament, addressed to Hecuba, provides the most famous recognition of this reality: no one is immune to terrible chance, as even royalty recognize their vulnerability to arbitrary enslavement.[270] While some

have decried Aristotle's attempt to ground slavery in nature as more morally reprehensible than those who consciously practiced arbitrary enslavement, others have read his search for natural slavery as comparatively quite liberal.[271] For by proclaiming that slavery is unjust lest a natural form can be found, and by searching for the criteria of such natural slavery, Aristotle implies that the aforementioned practice of random enslavement must change.

Central to Aristotle's account are the two separate claims that slavery is necessary and that natural slaves exist.[272] Regarding the former, commentators typically cite two passages from the *Politics*. First, near the outset of the *Politics*, Aristotle names the rule of master over slaves alongside that of male over female as the two relationships necessary "from the beginning."[273] The reasons he states here, however, have to do with the nature and existence of the slave, and therefore it will be more appropriate to discuss them below. Second, Aristotle explains the necessity by reference to economy: if tools and carts were capable of moving themselves, slaves would not be needed.[274] This has been seen as both truncated and unsatisfying. On the one hand, rather than showing the necessity of slaves, it serves to prove their contingency based on present circumstances. Given the existence of a completely automated society—however improbable that may be—the necessity of slaves would vanish.[275] On the other hand, the proper work which necessitates slavery is in no way certain. This is true both in Aristotle's account and historically. Williams (1993) notes that in Greece, "the free and the slaves worked side by side… there were no slave employments as such, except domestic service and, usually, mining; the only entirely free employments were law, politics, and military service (but not in the navy)."[276] And as Ambler (1987) remarks, although Aristotle specifically says that a slave is to serve as a "tool for action," the examples he mentions of actual slaves "show them to be employed as tools for production. There is thus a gulf between the nature of the slave as defined by Aristotle and the

use to which actual slaves are often put."[277] Nevertheless, the belief that the *polis* could not survive without slavery was quite common. Again, Williams (1993) offers a concise statement of the contemporary view: "Aristotle, and no doubt almost everyone else who discussed the issue, thought that if there was a question whether there should be slaves, it had a quick answer: they were necessary."[278]

As for the existence of natural slaves, Aristotle's arguments are not much more satisfying. First, as Garver (1994) notes, their apparent necessity results in a circular proof for their existence: "If nature provides solutions for the problems she creates, it follows that if slaves are necessary, or best, there will be people naturally suited to be slaves."[279] Williams (1993) cites the same proof with reference to the *polis*: if the *polis* is a natural form of association, and slaves are necessary for life to continue in the *polis*, then slavery exists as "the natural condition of human beings to live in such a community."[280] However, Aristotle's own words on the subject are almost always conditionally or hypothetically formulated.[281] The only place wherein some read Aristotle as making a strong claim for the existence of natural slavery is at 1254a21-3: "For ruling and being ruled is not only of necessity but also expedient, and straightaway from birth some have been set apart to be ruled and some to rule." Of course, this remains an exceedingly vague statement: as the immediately following comments qualify, there are many types of ruling and being ruled. This could refer to the rule of man over woman, parent over offspring, human over beast, statesman over subject, Greek over barbarian, and *actual* (rather than *natural*) master over *actual* (rather than *natural*) slave. Indeed, the very passage cited by some as proof of Aristotle's belief in slaves is the same passage which grounds his entire discussion of just political rule in opposition to unjust despotic rule. In short, Aristotle is surprisingly demure with regard to whether natural slaves actually exist, even though this would seem a tautological conclusion if

they are necessary for the existence of the *polis* considered as a natural kind, and given his injunction that nothing can be both natural and unjust.

Nevertheless, if we posit the existence of natural slaves and follow Aristotle's hypothetical formulations of their nature, everything points to their distinction from human freepersons as a separate species. And in each case, the same arguments which served to distinguish noble birth from (or which failed to assimilate noble birth with) freepersons likewise serve to set slaves apart. The first and most significant condition has already been stated: no one can be made a slave who is not a slave by nature. If slavery is not subject to chance, then it must be determined by birth. Second, slaves and human freepersons do *not* differ significantly as regards *morphē* and *hule*. Aristotle states that *if* "the differences of the body only came into being" between freepersons and slaves, they would be as telling as those between freepersons and gods—and, were this the case, "all would be left to say that those of less worth should be slaves to these others."[282] Unfortunately, nature does not provide us with such an easy indicator. Third, slaves *do* differ from freepersons with regard to *logos* and *ergon*. Aristotle says that the slave's proper *ergon* is the use of her body, and since the slave by nature "has the capacity to be another's and on account of this is another's," she "participates in the *logos* so much as to apprehend it, but not to have it."[283] This distinction helps explain why Aristotle places slaves between human beings and animals with respect to their mental capacity: on more than one occasion he likens them to dogs, horses, and other domesticated animals which are capable of learning and following commands, yet incapable of independent rational thought. Finally, when one considers their limited participation in *logos* and their body-oriented *ergon*, it is but a small step for Aristotle to claim that there is no *aretē* proper to slaves. Rather, they participate in the virtue of their masters.

These criteria have led many to judge Aristotle's account of slaves as incoherent. But, taken together, these passages are most cogent if one reads them as committing Aristotle to the view that the natural slave is a separate species from that of freepersons. For each of the above points supports this position. Free human beings differ from slaves *by nature* in their possession of *logos*, in their proper *ergon*, in their ability to possess *aretē*, in the *telos* proper to their kind, and in their capacity to use the former characteristics to achieve the latter. Slaves are consistently referred to as differing from freepersons as much as the latter differ from other animals. Though common sense might incline someone to conclude—on the basis of their indistinguishable physical appearance—that slaves and freepersons are of the same species, in the *Politics* (and elsewhere) Aristotle emphasizes that this lacks any bearing on the radical separation of the two.[284] Indeed, everything Aristotle says that defines slaves as natural slaves would seem to point to their distinction from freepersons, including his explicit refutation of that which may lead someone to conclude otherwise (i.e., their *hule* and *morphē*).

Ambler (1987) has posited that Aristotle intentionally crafted his description of natural slavery so as to make it impossibly impracticable.[285] He begins his reading by assuming the opposite position to that of most commentators—that Aristotle sets out to "deny rather than establish the naturalness of actual slavery"—and finds that Aristotle achieves this goal.[286]

> Aristotle seems to suggest not only that the strict standards for natural slavery are rarely if never met in actual practice but also that they are incoherent even in speech. They seem to require that the slave be human, but that he be as far from his master as are the beasts; that he have no craft but that he be useful; that he be as if a natural part of his master but that he be separable from his master... The

> theoretical problem is least vexing when most removed from the attempt to defend the enslavement of one man over another. A less refined version of this problem is that it may be necessary to choose between the useless but proper enslavement of bestial men and the useful but questionable enslavement of men with some share in reason.[287]

Aristotle's "defense" of slavery is a performative fallacy: he presents that which would be necessitated in order for slavery to be just and natural, in a conscious attempt to illustrate the impossibility of such an institution. The problems found within Aristotle's argument prove the inconsistency of actual slavery alongside the absurdity of natural slavery. In short, regardless of whether or not Aristotle believed that a slave species exists, in the *Politics* he concludes that this is what would be required for slavery to be just.

Martians

There are several potential responses to these readings of slavery and noble birth. Foremost is the issue of necessary accidents. Most agree that Aristotle is explicit in his intention to take slavery and noble birth away from the province of terrible fortune or social convention. As Fritsche (1997) succinctly puts it, in both cases "Aristotle's natural philosophy steps into, and 'biologizes,' the political."[288] But what prevents someone from understanding this biological translation of these categories of persons as similar to traits on the one hand, or sex on the other? Aristotle cautions his readers against finding certain groups of individuals indicative of a completely other species, particularly with his comment that species are indivisible.[289] Therefore, even if Aristotle would have his readers consider slavery and noble birth to be subject to

biological necessity rather than political chance, how are they different from being born with red hair or as a woman?

With regard to noble birth, the speaker is adamant that no one may claim such a title lest he has been born of one who is likewise noble. Thus, the chance active in reproduction cannot influence the passage of *eugeneia* from parent to offspring: for a nobly born individual to have common offspring is as theoretically impossible as her giving birth to a watermelon. As for slavery, Aristotle nowhere states that slaves must give birth to slaves, or that freepersons must give birth to freepersons. Nevertheless, he encourages the reader to infer as much. First, Aristotle precludes the possibility of "just" enslavement on multiple occasions, except in the case of capturing those who are already slaves by nature.[290] Second, though the *Politics* offers quite extensive material related to the question of the *to ti en eĩnai* of slaves, he never mentions how slaves are made. While one might object that Aristotle may not have felt the need to make this explicit, as it was already rooted in the consciousness of his readers, this proves the point: that which his contemporaries might infer is exactly that which he claims is unjust. Third, on several occasions Aristotle intimates that the common understanding of slave procreation is operative in his own account. Unfortunately, the most explicit of these comments is ambiguous—though it includes a remarkable aside regarding noble birth: "And no one would say someone is a slave who is unworthy to be a slave. For if not, it would happen that the most nobly-born (*toùs eugenestátous*) be judged slaves and children of slaves (*doúlous eĩnai kaì ek doúlōn*) if they happened to be captured and sold."[291] The context is unhelpful as to whether Aristotle would have his readers understand him as claiming that *actual* slavery is hereditary and thereby threatens the progeny of nobles with unjust arbitrary ownership, or that those who practice *actual* slavery mistakenly impose hereditary ownership—which is proper and just in *natural* slavery—

on those who are *not natural* slaves. In sum, although every instance wherein Aristotle claims that *natural* slavery or nobility is determined by birth remains implicit or explicit, in each case the individual's being as a *slave* or *noble* is determined *by nature*: either an individual is born a slave due to a chance effect of reproduction or due to the hereditary necessity of a biological species.

While it is true that Aristotle does not directly state that slave parents give birth to slaves, any alternative would transform the theory to nonsense and the practice to chaos. The most immediate concern would be the issue of finding a ready supply of slavish individuals that somehow continually replenishes itself through chance. That is, given the provisions against unjust enslavement in combination with the necessity of slaves for the existence of the *polis*, every time a slave dies one must hunt for a new slave. By allowing slavery to be a necessary accident, Aristotle would utterly scuttle his ostensible purpose of critiquing *actual* slavery. This would not simply solidify the arbitrary practice but would amplify its arbitrariness exponentially. For if slavery is not hereditary, yet natural slaves exist, then children may be as likely to be born slaves as they would women. Indeed, considering their necessity for the *polis* and considering nature's providing for that which is necessary, freepersons would frequently give birth to slaves and vice versa. On the one hand, families of freepersons would be required to sell their children, or to house and treat them as they did the other slaves. On the other hand, freepersons born to slave families would spend their lives negotiating the unjust and unnatural burden of, quite literally, having no family. The *polis* would have to institute some elaborate scheme for discovering the slave- or free-nature of each child, and while the former would need be folded back into the process (to their parents' horror), the latter would need be provided for by the state itself (to their parents' jealousy).

Alongside this issue of procreation is that of an individual's and a species' proper work. This time the quotes about slavery are much more explicit: the slave's being is incomplete, his *ergon* is to be used as a tool of action, and his capacity to participate in *logos* and achieve *aretē* are only possible by proxy through his master. Although some have sided with Fortenbaugh (1977) that slaves appear to possess some, if not all, of those characteristics which distinguish human beings, this would seem to be a red herring: as Aristotle's frequent comparisons make evident, slaves share more with domesticated animals than with their masters.[292] Further, there is Aristotle's blunt assertion that the slave is not a person but a tool. Thus, while Aristotle provides numerous and convincing reasons for concluding that the slave's work is different in kind from that of freepersons, it remains extremely difficult to reconcile these comments in a manner that would result in a single *ergon* for both.

The passages from *Peri eugeneias* are less forthcoming. In no place do the speakers state the *ergon* or work proper to a person of noble birth. Thus, unlike the case with slavery, the reader is left to wonder what this might be. What is certain, however, is that the work of the nobly born must differ from freepersons and slaves. This is guaranteed by the eternal potency of the *archegos*: by ensuring that all members of the *genos* possess that *aretē* peculiar to the *genos*, the speakers set up an irreconcilable rift between freepersons (who must strive to achieve excellence) and slaves (who at best share in the excellence of their masters). If one were pressed to produce a work proper to the nobly born, it would seem to be simply their preternatural ability to produce like kind.

But the *archegos* presents his own fair share of ambiguity. The problems with the *archegos* are clear: the *archegos* is himself incapable of claiming noble birth, as he is the originator of the line. He is likewise incapable of attaining noble birth, as the speaker adamantly

disallows this scenario. One might be inclined to consider this a moot point: though the speaker denies the claim of anyone to nobility who does not proceed from an *archegos*, s/he simultaneously suggests the scenario of an *archegos* spontaneously generating, as it were, from an undistinguished *genos*. The speaker in F 94 encourages such questioning in two ways. First, the speaker twice uses the verb *eggignomai* when describing the *archegos*. This word can mean both "to be born into" as well as "to intervene" or "to spring up/in;" depending on how one translates this verb, the speaker either supports or refutes the ability of nobility to emerge *sui generis*. Second, the same implications arise from the brachylogy in the penultimate sentence of the fragment. Though brachylogy is quite common in ancient Greek, here the speaker comes closest to—yet conspicuously retreats from—directly stating the paradox of postulating an *originator* for noble *birth*. Read without brachylogy, the sentence would stipulate that "those are nobly born from this *genos*, not if the father was nobly born, but if the originator of the *genos* was nobly born." Again, how one reads the passage depends on how one understands the Greek, for the speaker talks out of both sides of his or her mouth. In both these cases, the speaker seems intent on pressing, rather than resolving, the confusion produced by the introduction of the *archegos*. While it would seem the speaker is attempting to avoid infinite regress, upon closer examination s/he is emphasizing the problem.

However suggestive these linguistic observations may be, they conflict both with the collective thrust of the fragments and with Aristotle's thought taken more broadly. Regarding the former, the fragments seem primarily concerned with presenting noble birth as akin to a separate species. In other words, these observations should not obscure the overall consistency of the fragments as presenting such an argument. In his or her attempt to postulate what would be necessary for noble birth to make sense, s/he betrays the problematic conditions without

explicitly rejecting the separate species argument. As for the latter, one of the more problematic issues for readers of Aristotle would be the sudden emergence of the greater arising from the lesser. As Fritsche (1997) succinctly notes in this regard, "an individual of, as it were, a low-level species cannot produce individuals of higher-level species."[293] From the perspective of Aristotelian biology, it would be baffling to conceive of an individual who is capable of generating a potentially infinite line of noble progeny that are different in kind (when considered on the bases of generation and corruption) from all other human beings, and that this person could be spawned by lesser parents (who are themselves, apparently, of a different species than their offspring).

Fritsche (1997) navigates this difficulty by taking the *archegos* more as the *archē*—the originating and ordering principle—*within all* manifestations of *eugeneia*, rather than understanding the speaker as positing the existence of an individual who originates the line. Thus, rather than looking for the originator, "the species precisely never *incipit*. For, whenever it begins anew, it has already begun without the originary moment of inception (though, of course, the originator begins in a mythological time which need not coincide with any empirical time).[294] The reference here to a "mythological time" is telling, as it serves to emphasize the problem rather than assuage it. And in one of the few passages where Aristotle refers directly to noble birth in the *Politics*, he chooses Helen as his archetype. "Who could think it fit to call one a servant / sprung from both sides of the race of gods?"[295] The problem of the *archegos*, whether considered from the point of view of the individual's preeminent virtue, or from the problem of the line's origination, would seem to require a mythological tale to be fully consistent. But should one seek a solution without the intervention of the gods, Fritsche's analysis is compelling: "the different families become the different biological species and the more universal genera

which then can be treated in syllogistic logic. In this move, philosophy 'depersonalizes' the genus since its existence no longer depends on the existence of its distinguished originator."[296] That which defines and sustains the noble therefore need not be some shadowy *archegos* in some impossibly ancient time, but rather the principle within each individual which guarantees that individual's excellence. But by solving the problem of the *archegos*, one strengthens the case for a separate species: the *archegos* names the *archē* within each individual manifestation of noble birth, as that which is essential to a noble and that which passes from one to the next through natural generation.[297]

Having refuted an explanation via necessary accidents and having addressed the primary issues which complicate noble birth and slavery, it appears that the arguments for their common participation in a single species are less coherent than reading them as separate. Regardless of how one understands Aristotle's references to the slave's participation in *logos* and his ambiguity regarding procreation, taken as a whole his remarks on slavery require that they remain biologically different from freepersons. Indeed, the majority of those who critique Aristotle for his incomplete, inconsistent or offensive account of slavery all implicitly or explicitly concur that these problems arise from Aristotle's postulation of persons who are not fully or fundamentally *human*. If one starts from the postulate that what Aristotle means is exactly what he says—that he does *not* consider them to be human—then these problems dissolve. The same holds for noble birth. Regardless of the problems arising from the impossible *archegos* and the undefined *ergon* associated with noble birth, the sum of those claims which appear in *Peri eugeneias* prevent classifying nobility and freepersons together. Although quite important, these hesitations are insufficient to frustrate the argument for separate species. Quite the contrary: with respect to the internal consistency of the account and broader considerations of Aristotle's thought, they

actually serve to amplify its plausibility.

To illustrate this point, it helps to borrow an example from Irwin (1981) which is similar in its apparent preposterousness. After showing that, for Aristotle, human beings are defined by their capacity to guide their actions according to practical reason, he hypothesizes the discovery of a species of Martians "who were also guided by practical reason but were anatomically and chemically quite different from us." The *prima facie* response would be to consider this a wholly separate species, one which would require of Aristotle an entire corpus of species-specific studies on, e.g., *Martian Ethics* and *Martian Politics*. "On the contrary," Irwin writes, "Aristotle's argument here and his general view of the human soul require him to say that we have discovered a new variety of human beings, or perhaps that human beings and these Martians belong to a wider kind—call it 'rationals'—and that the first principles of ethics rest on the characteristic activities of rationals."[298] This seemingly hyperbolic example mirrors the situation with slavery and noble birth, insofar as the conditions are reversed. On the one hand, Irwin's Martians are literally *more human* than Aristotle's nobles and slaves. On the other hand, that which would lead one to assume the opposite—their respective physical similarities and differences—is specious. Using the terminology of contemporary biology, one would say that slaves, freepersons and nobles are uncanny examples of Batesian mimicry: though they are physically indistinguishable from each other, these three are nevertheless participants in three separate forms.[299]

Aside—Critical Apparatus

The controversy surrounding the uncertain status of a slave species has been a favorite amongst readers of Aristotle; every essay and text on the topic of Aristotle and slavery mentions the

question. The discussion typically focuses on Aristotle's injunction that the only natural slave is he who does not possess *logos*. This rightly gains attention, for only a few pages before Aristotle famously names the possession of *logos* to be of the constitutive and unique properties of being a human being. Given the magnitude of attention devoted to this issue, it seems appropriate to pause for a moment to examine the apparatus surrounding the issue.

Fortenbaugh (1977) states the case succinctly: Aristotle "expresses himself in a way that threatens the very humanity of slaves… it is at least understandable why difficulties have been felt as to whether Aristotle classes them as human." However, Fortenbaugh concludes that while Aristotle strips slaves of *logos*, he nevertheless preserves their ability to "make the judgments involved in emotional responses and therefore [they] have at least a minimum share in the cognitive capacity peculiar to men in relation to other animals." This distinction derives its importance from the recognition that "slaves can follow reasoned admonition and judge for themselves whether or not a particular course of action is appropriate. In other words, to offer slaves reasoned admonition is to invite them to make the sort of decision they are capable of making."[300] Though Fortenbaugh maintains that by offering a reason to slaves for their actions and punishments Aristotle thereby requires that masters give a slave "his due," such that the slave "can perceive their masters' reasons and can decide to follow them," it remains to be seen what type of slavery would proceed on these premises. On the one hand, Fortenbaugh appears to be describing a servitude which allows for the slaves' refusal, if the master is incapable of convincing him as to the reason behind the requests. Fortenbaugh does not specify what such failure would entail, or generally how such "ownership" would differ from voluntary work. On the other hand, Fortenbaugh may be describing a relationship not unlike that among pack animals. In this case, the master would be the alpha, and the slaves would follow the master only

insofar as they recognized his position of power. Nevertheless, the implementation of slavery under this interpretation would be in constant threat of chaos.

Smith (1983) begins his discussion principally as a response to Fortenbaugh's account. According to Smith, by focusing on the regal rule of reason over emotion, Fortenbaugh neglects Aristotle's stipulation that the rule over slaves is despotic. Smith thus turns to two comparisons of despotic rule: soul over body and man over beast. In both cases, the lack of *logos* is that which allows for such rule: "To the extent that Aristotle has given us a theory that identifies some biologically human beings as the moral equivalent of non-human animals, therefore, he has given us a defense not only of using such creatures, but of using them despotically."[301] However, this lack remains the central paradox in the discussion of slavery. On the one hand, the only way in which slaves could truly become human is through ownership by a proper master. On the other hand, no one can justly be a slave who has achieved this actualization of his potential. Therefore, the conditions in which one may justly keep a slave (where the slave lacks *logos* and is owned by a proper master) are annihilated once one acquires the slave (for the slave achieves *logos* through the proper master, thereby requiring the freeing of the slave, but at the expense of the slave's participation in *logos*). Aristotle's account is ultimately inadequate precisely because Smith understands Aristotle as speaking of slaves *becoming human*, both due to the inherent contradiction that enslaving is just but is made unjust by enslaving, and because Smith does not recognize the strange fluctuating status of the slaves humanity: "when Aristotle says that slaves lack the ability to deliberate, this does not thereby remove them from our species."[302] In other words, either one agrees with Smith and reads Aristotle as presenting an untenable paradox coupled with an inherent contradiction, or one removes these problems by removing the requirement that slaves are (potential) human beings.

Likewise Garver (1994) understands Aristotle as positing the existence of "defective political animals, not perfect animals of another kind. Their *energeia* is a complete *energeia*, but of a potential *qua* potential."[303] Unlike animals, women, and children, and male humans, Aristotle describes slaves as *ateles*, without their own proper end and therefore incapable of anything like completion or perfection *qua* slave. Insofar as they are always for the sake of another, "slaves differ from complete human beings because their central, essential, characteristic activities are incomplete."[304] Whereas children are completed or perfected by becoming something other than themselves (adults), Garver contends that slaves become slaves solely by *being slaves*—by enacting the *praxis* and participating in the *logos* of the master. For Garver the slave's incomplete *logos* is not so much at issue; he finds the question, raised in Book VII, of the slave's incomplete or non-existent *thumos* to be more important.

Garver thus concludes, *contra* Smith and in a different manner from Fortenbaugh, that Aristotle's argument remains internally consistent. The problem is one of application. As mentioned above, Aristotle proves the *necessity* of slaves before proceeding to the question of their existence. Herein lies the difficulty: "the trouble is in the convenient fit he thinks nature lays out between such people and the appropriate institution."[305] Thus, according to Garver, "the question of the naturalness of slavery becomes the more fundamental political question of the naturalness of the *polis*, and hence of practical life overall."[306] As Garver frames the discussion, if Aristotle's account of slavery results in a contradiction, it does not entail an inconsistency regarding slavery, but rather an inconsistency regarding the conventional understanding of the *polis*.

There is some disagreement as to the frequency and capacity with which nature errs.[307] Fritsche (1997) agrees with Garver that in Aristotle nature very rarely fails in her ventures:

"unnatural things happen rarely and, when they do, they do not remain for a long time."[308] However, von Fritz and Kapp (1977) put forward a different assessment of nature: "'nature' *aims* at something, namely, perfect health, a perfect harmony and functioning of the body which is but scarcely, if ever, realized. This concept of 'nature' is frequently found in Aristotle's writings and most clearly illustrated by those passages in which he says that 'nature wishes to do something but cannot quite do it' (cf. e.g., *Pol*. 1255b3)."[309] And in Garver's own essay he cites a monstrous case of this error-prone or challenged nature which was mentioned in Chapter III—Europe. Aristotle describes the peoples of Europe as psychologically incapable both of forming political communities and of being slaves. But Aristotle also states clearly that the *polis* is a natural entity, that it is that which allows human beings to achieve their end and chief good *qua* human, that human beings are themselves by nature political animals, and that the individual who is "*apolis* by nature and not by chance is truly baser or greater than a human being… either a wild beast or a god."[310] As Garver notes, the Europeans constitute "an unusual instance of a problem set by nature to which nature does not supply a remedy."[311] Without broaching the question of exactly what Aristotle understands the Europeans (and the Asians described in the same section of the *Politics*) to be, they would seem to fit the criteria for consideration as a separate species as much as—if not more than—noble birth or slavery. Finally, Garver cites Aristotle's specific denial that "'the ruler and the ruled differ by the more and the less, for ruler and ruled differ in form [*eidos*], but the more and the less do not' (*Politics* I.5.1259n36, cf. VII.7.1325b3-5)" as proof that, "If slaves are human, they can differ in form from their masters only as incomplete differs from complete, which is not a difference of degree."[312] It would seem that this conditional only complicates matters, particularly when one remembers Aristotle's statement in the *Metaphysics* that "the *eidos* is indivisible [*atomos*]" and that in the *Politics* which states that nature "makes

nothing incomplete [*ateles*]"[313] Given Garver's reminder that the two differ according to *eidos*, and the unique standing that slaves have as being *ateles*, slaves would appear to make more sense if they were a separate species than as some aberrant fragment of a larger kind called humanity or some abortion of nature.

Ambler (1987) may be the only person who has written on this issue with the conclusion that Aristotle intentionally crafted his description of natural slavery so as to make it impossibly impracticable.[314] Ambler begins his reading by assuming the opposite position to that of most commentators—that Aristotle sets out to "deny rather than establish the naturalness of actual slavery"—and finds that Aristotle achieves this goal.[315] On the one hand, in order to define a just system of slavery, Aristotle has to postulate the existence of a separate species. "To admit that the just is the legal is to admit that one may oneself be justly enslaved. The refusal to make such an admission leads one to cease to use the law as sufficient sign of what is just; it leads one to the position that rightful slavery is by nature or by divine favor, that some are slaves everywhere while others nowhere are slaves."[316] In fact, Ambler maintains that Aristotle's account only makes sense if one presupposes that his slaves are a separate species.

> Aristotle seems to suggest not only that the strict standards for natural slavery are rarely if never met in actual practice but also that they are incoherent even in speech. They seem to require that the slave be human, but that he be as far from his master as are the beasts; that he have no craft but that he be useful; that he be as if a natural part of his master but that he be separable from his master. In trying to lessen such incoherence, as by dropping the requirement that slaves be human, we return to a more perfect account of natural despotic rule but also to one that is

> more clearly at odds with actual slavery. The theoretical problem is least vexing when most removed from the attempt to defend the enslavement of one man over another. A less refined version of this problem is that it may be necessary to choose between the useless but proper enslavement of bestial men and the useful but questionable enslavement of men with some share in reason.[317]

In a sense, Ambler's article reaches the same conclusions as Garver with regard to the final analysis of Aristotle's account. They differ in that Ambler finds this all to be a performative fallacy: Aristotle presents that which would be necessitated in order for slavery to be just and natural, in a conscious attempt to illustrate the impossibility of such an institution. As for the problems found within Aristotle's argument, Ambler reads these as proving the inconsistency and illogical formulation of *actual* slavery, and the improbable and implausible existence of *natural* slavery. "It appears then, that it is the character of Aristotle's defense of natural slavery to defend an institution that is scarcely similar to actual slavery; insofar as political and domestic institutions ought to be strictly natural, such a defense is also an attack."[318] In short, regardless of whether or not Aristotle believed in the existence of a separate species of individuals who are slaves according to nature, his argument only makes sense if one reads him as positing this.

Occam's Razor: *ad hominem* or *ad absurdum*?

By reading Aristotle as positing the existence of three separate species with indistinguishable physical traits, one escapes the problems of incoherence that have plagued readers whether the accounts are considered within the individual texts or in relation to Aristotle's thought taken more broadly. But the separate species solution produces a new set of problems. Principally one

must ask why it is that Aristotle would pen such tricky descriptions. First, did Aristotle intend the account literally? That is, what happens should Aristotle's contemporaries implement these theoretical descriptions in practice? Second, if, as will be shown, taking Aristotle literally proves absurd, are we forced to return to an amended version of the majority's conclusion: that Aristotle's account, although now shown to be consistent, is thereby made no less incoherent? That is, if these "just" accounts are either theoretically inconsistent or practically impossible, is it possible to posit Aristotle's intentions all the way down, so to speak, such that the failed project of reforming *actual* slavery and nobility constitutes the successful critique of slavery and nobility *per se*?

During Aristotle's time Greek families commonly claimed bloodlines stretching back to divinely sired heroes. Thus, one might assume that such nobles would welcome Aristotle's account of noble birth as a philosophical aetiology of their mythical heritage. Nevertheless, a careful reading would prevent even the proudest noble Greek from embracing Aristotle's model. The fragments demand the prior and/or continuous appearance of a being more divine than human. Considering the temporal and practical extent to which they establish the divine right of nobles—such that no one of this line can fall short of excellence—the question is less whether nobles and freepersons are of the same species than whether any species could admit such a bloodline as that exhibited by nobility. One would be hard-pressed to imagine any creature possessed of such excellence as to be invulnerable to the slings and arrows of *tuchē*, and to postulate such a being would entail denying a large portion of Aristotle's ethical and biological works.[319] But to claim further that this excellence is predestined by and for one's entire lineage—prior to one's birth and for all one's progeny to come—turns incredulity into mythology. It seems a vast understatement to say that anyone after Homer would admit to having met such a being.

And it is unimaginable that any of Aristotle's contemporaries could withstand an examination based on the rubric outlined in the fragments. If a noble family produced a less than exceptional offspring, all within that bloodline—those living as well as their entire ancestry—would lose their claim to nobility. At best, noble families may have existed in the past, but their lines have long since been extinguished. In sum, Aristotle's "defense" of noble birth would strip all contemporary nobles of the title, forcing the conclusion that either noble birth has never been natural, or that—following Hesiod—Zeus removed them from this earth either through battle or displacement to the Isles of the Blessed at the close of the Heroic Age.[320]

The situation is no less fantastic, though just as poignant and all the more revolutionary, when one seriously considers the existence of a slave race. On the one hand, slavery is a more pressing issue for the *Politics* insofar as Aristotle never claims that nobility is necessary for the *polis*. On the other hand, if as part of its aims the *Politics* attempts to solve the paradox of slavery's necessity for the *polis* and its unjust practice, in this case the cure proves worse than the disease—for the "solution" would cause the complete abolition of slavery. The conditions for the possibility of just slavery are so exacting that, were they to be implemented properly anywhere in Greece, they would result in mass manumission. All those who had been enslaved would need be freed along with all their progeny, and all those who could prove the enslavement of their ancestors would likewise be set free. Slaves could no longer be made, lest one happened across a hapless member of the slave species who had somehow escaped the blessings of servitude up to that point. But if slaves are necessary for the *polis*, then that entity as such would become completely untenable—or would necessitate continuous invasions of Asia to replenish the stock required for the sustenance of the Greek *polis*. Thus, even if there were those who believed that natural slaves exist, and even if they could devise some means by which to find them, the

number of slaves would so drastically dwarf that required for the *polis* as to effectively bring about its end. As Garver (1994) notes, "The question of the naturalness of slavery then becomes the more fundamental political question of the naturalness of the *polis*, and hence of practical life overall."[321] In other words, to take Aristotle's account of slavery seriously is to ask why Aristotle would scuttle the entirety of the *Politics* by simultaneously proving the condition of the possibility for the *polis* and this condition's impossibility in the world.

If a serious consideration of the practicality of natural noble birth or slavery is incoherent, then the reader must ask what Aristotle's reasons could have been for writing it. Two options present themselves:

A. The *ad hominem* explanation: In his attempt to justify the practice of slavery with a natural account, and in the fragments' investigation of claims to noble birth, Aristotle ends up splitting humanity into multiple separate species. Since it seems absurd to attribute such a belief to Aristotle, the split is accidental and unintentional. Further, given the uncharacteristic number of unanswered theoretical and practical problems, as well as the presence of gaps and outright inconsistencies, contained in the accounts, the majority of commentators remain correct in concluding that here contemporary prejudices have dulled Aristotle's typical rigor. That is, whereas this investigation began by contesting the majority's analysis of Aristotle's account of slavery, the *ad hominem* explanation ultimately comes to an identical conclusion. In sum, the problems of Aristotle's descriptions of natural slavery and nobility are extensive and atypical, but they make sense when one considers the context in which he wrote them. At best, Aristotle should be commended for trying (though failing) to rethink these conventions.[322] At worst, the otherwise prescient Philosopher is in this case all too dated.

B. The *ad absurdum* explanation: Aristotle's argument for natural slavery remains fundamentally flawed, but when buttressed by reference to *Peri eugeneias*, and by comparing both texts to his understanding of work and form, this no longer looks like an accident. Rather, the intentional splitting of humanity into multiple species becomes the most plausible and consistent interpretation. The Philosopher did not (un)consciously overlook the myriad difficulties resulting from his descriptions. On the contrary: he intended them. In short, by detailing that which would be required to make these socio-political structures just, Aristotle proves the ambition a nonstarter. Aristotle knew that his defenses of *natural* slavery and nobility, if implemented, inexorably would lead to the destruction of *actual* slavery and nobility in practice. That was the point.

To be clear: the former interpretation regards Aristotle as having made a series of complex mistakes because in this case he was a product of his times. The latter, however, sees the "mistakes" as themselves intended. Rather than failing to construct robust arguments for natural slavery and nobility, Aristotle succeeds in showing that such arguments are nonexistent. Aristotle is typically regarded as the embodiment of the sober scientist, in contradistinction from his erstwhile teacher and friend whose expression, in the words of Emerson and Kierkegaard, is always literary and ironic.[323] In this case, it would seem that Aristotle also learned rhetorical subtlety from Plato, as well as the ability to use it for political purposes. But if this is the case, one must still inquire as to why would Aristotle bury these revolutionary social reforms in this manner.

Although intent is a notorious bugbear, a few possibilities are readily available. It is easy

to see why Aristotle could not simply come out and attack these actual practices. The dangers inherent for a Macedonian metic, living at that time in Athens, both to deny his contemporaries' claims to noble blood, and to condemn the ubiquitous practice of slavery and enslavement, are obvious and terrifying. But while the astute reader might find Aristotle to be doing just this, the casual contemporary would just as likely consider him to be supporting the conventions of nobility and slavery. And if confronted, Aristotle could demure: he has, after all, written a justification of slavery and nobility, not a critique—let alone a revolutionary pamphlet. When one considers the sensitive nature of the two topics, subtlety is an all-too-prudent approach.

As to whether Aristotle would disagree with the conventions of slavery and nobility, so much as subtly to call for their reform or eradication, the question of intent is almost supplemental when considered against the backdrop of the *Ethics* and *Politics*. If slaves and nobles are *not* separate species from all other freepersons, then Aristotle's entire dissertation on how the ethical and political life of human beings leads to their happiness simply has no purchase with large portions of human beings. Put another way, if slaves and nobles were somehow parts of the species human, yet their births set them apart in the drastic manner aforementioned due to natural necessity rather than social convention, then Aristotle might be expected to consider entirely separate treatises attuned to their idiosyncratic differences. Either slaves and nobles are separate species, or their existence is solely due to chance—yet in both cases the absence in Aristotle's corpus of any concomitant account (or even the mention of the necessity of such) regarding their unique ethical and political concerns constitutes a profound and suggestive silence—or an unconvincing oversight.

This is not to suggest that the reader replace one *ad hominem* reading with another *ad hominem* (let alone a Straussian alternative[324]), although the former (Aristotle was blinded by

social conventions into uncharacteristic, shameful, and clear inconsistencies) seems much less likely than the latter (Aristotle used rhetorical subtlety to critique socio-political conventions while shielding himself from potentially life-threatening backlash). To interpret Aristotle as presenting a theoretically consistent yet experientially baffling and practically inconceivable description of natural, just slavery and nobility, all in order subtly to critique their very possibility, remains speculative. But the assumption by many readers that Aristotle agreed with these practices should not preclude the possibility of a fresh approach. While there is much which points to Aristotle's careful and subtle efforts at undermining these practices, there is no compulsory reason to believe that Aristotle supports them. Given the options that the prejudices of the Greek *polis* force Aristotle into errors amounting to a hopelessly incoherent account, or that when necessary Aristotle is capable of subtlety—of an intentionally absurd consistency which is thereby politically revolutionary—Occam's Razor should compel the reader to side with the latter.

VI Political Science as Preparing for Revolution

Die Politik ist die Lehre von Möglichen.

- Otto von Bismarck[325]

Introduction

In the last Chapter, Aristotle's accounts of slavery and nobility were shown to be carefully crafted using subtle rhetoric as a means to effect political critique. This protracted meditation was undergone to provide support for the reading of the *Politics* as ultimately supporting the rule of the God Among Men as the greatest possibility of the *polis*. In each of these three cases—slavery, nobility, and the God Among Men—Aristotle directly states his conclusions as the result of the concomitant, respective investigation, although readers for the most part have interpreted these conclusions as either plagued with inconsistencies or they gloss these parts of the text while emphasizing others to remove the appearance of inconsistency. However, we have seen that there is no reason to do either. In each case, if one will grant Aristotle the rhetorical capacity to use subtlety in those cases wherein it is most required and wherein it is most understandable, the ostensible inconsistency or paradox dissolves. Instead, Aristotle's writing emerges as simultaneously adept with rhetoric in its form and politically revolutionary in its content. Yet what makes this reading most compelling is that it allows for Aristotle to mean what he says while producing a more consistent account than those others which attempt to selectively interpret his emphasis.

In the final pages of this project, four topics that have remained in the background need be addressed. First, there is the issue of the God Among Men himself. Two questions remain

regarding this strange individual or group of individuals. Principally there is the question of his existence. Aristotle describes him in such august terms as to stretch the limits of credulity. The God Among Men possesses such preternatural abilities with *phronēsis* that he seems almost supernatural. Further, his existence would seem to require a biological account not unlike that which was just problematized regarding slaves and nobles. Second, there is the similarity between the God Among Men, as Aristotle describes him, and the philosopher of the later books in the *Ethics*. Indeed, to take seriously the suggestion of the God Among Men and to posit his superiority as outlined is to reexamine to what extent Aristotle's *Politics* departs from Plato's *Statesman* and *Republic*. Third, there is the issue of Aristotle's rhetoric. It has been argued throughout that the *Ethics-Politics* project needs to be read as a dialectical process rather than an exegetical or expositional treatise. Aristotle tells us from the outset and continuously that this is the nature of any investigation into *phronēsis*, but taken together with what has been shown regarding slaves, nobles, and the God Among Men, this should provide greater credibility to the assertion that Aristotle is capable of subtlety. Finally, there are additional areas of inquiry prompted by this study. Of particular interest are the (mis)appropriations of Aristotle's *Politics* as the traditional locus and preeminent support for biologizing the political. This is true both historically (e.g., race theory and slavery) and today (e.g., the Human Genome Project).

In the following, I will briefly address these four issues without giving them complete examination. Each is itself a book-length project, and therefore cannot receive its due diligence in the remaining pages. Nevertheless, each requires some attention as further areas of inquiry suggested or compelled by this project.

The Aristocratic Polity of the God Among Men, Part I: Messianism, Biologism, and Other

Utopian "Wishes"

In the *Politics* Aristotle clearly states, *contra* the author of the *Laws* and the *Republic*, that it is his intention in this project "neither to introduce impossibilities nor to speak of the *polis* in the abstract."[326] He reiterates this when he introduces the discussion of the best regime, stating that one must deal with "ideal conditions, although none of these must be actually impossible."[327] It behooves the reader of to keep this constantly in mind, allowing it to serve as a check on those situations wherein the reader would like to reduce some passage or aspect of Aristotle's account to an "ideal" or "hypothetical" without his express statement that this is the case. This is of vital importance regarding what has been called the aristocratic polity of the God Among Men. Many readers brush this aside, concluding that it is Aristotle's conception of an ideal which he briefly humors, only to reject it for more practical possibilities.

Yet as has been seen regarding the middle Books IV-VI, the traditional interpretation is not always the most fruitful. These books have also been read somewhat casually in the past, with the conclusion that they are constituted of so many Machiavellian tips for the tyrant to maintain his reign. On the contrary: when examined, each of these tips would turn the tyrant, to use Machiavelli's language, away from being feared and towards being loved.[328]

The same could be said for the "best possible" *polis* as that which is both best in an absolute sense and that which is possible in a practical sense. On the one hand, Aristotle has a great deal to say which might limit the ambitions of the utopian political theorist and lawgiver alike. His *Politics* abounds with references to the deleterious effects of everything from climate and soil to the theatre and religion. Therefore, if the reader is to take Aristotle at his word and attempt as little as possible to interpolate without due cause, these considerations cannot simply be flights of fancy. On the other hand, it is important for the reader to understand the difference

between the forest and the trees. Just like in the middle books of the *Politics*, there are many elements which require discussion that nevertheless do not necessarily have an effect on the overall project of *hē politikē*. For example, one can take seriously Aristotle's warnings regarding the dangers of comedy *only* if one remembers the reasons behind them: given insufficient maturity (read: insufficient possession of *phronēsis*), the theatre is dangerous. Yet for mature audiences it is not only harmless, but potentially useful. The same holds for the "ideal" conditions that allow for the best possible *polis*. Aristotle tells the reader that our ability to become both good and happy is not "the work of fortune, but of knowledge and choice." Although chance can make a person unhappy, "only the education that makes a person good can produce happiness."[329] In the event that certain environmental factors threaten to retard the achievement of the good life for the person and the *polis*, it is precisely education in *phronēsis* and implementation in *hē politikē* that mitigate such factors. These incidentals do not make the best *polis* impossible, but further reiterate the paramount import of *phronēsis* for its creation and maintenance. Again, the reader can understand the *polis* in this regard as the individual writ-large, as the same mitigation is required by the virtuous individual to create and maintain his excellence over against the environmental factors which may threaten to retard his access to the good life. Thus, one must consider the form *and* content of Aristotle's remarks regarding what is good for the *polis*, including the nature and possibility of the best possible *polis*.

Fundamental to this project are two seemingly competing claims. First, one cannot expect the certainty of a scientific treatise when examining questions involving human deliberation. Second, the *Ethics-Politics* volumes detail truths regarding the nature, preservation, and decline of the species *anthrōpos* and *polis*. These principles seem at odds due to their potentially contradictory formulations, and the overarching points of Aristotle's texts have more than once

been called “relative absolutes” in this account. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the dialectical investigations enacted in the *Ethics* and *Politics* produce just that: guiding principles that are both valid and sound, yet which require implementation through deliberation in particular circumstances. In other words, we can take Aristotle’s claim that *phronēsis* is the principle if not sole virtue of *hē politikē*, that the *polis* is a natural entity which exists for the sake of the good life, that human beings are by natural political *and* that they are by nature mere parts of the larger whole *polis*, and that the only way in which the human being and the *polis* may achieve their codependent natural ends is through political rule in an aristocratic polity focused on *phronēsis*. The manner in which the last of these claims can be achieved is also defined according to specific relative absolutes: citizens must rule and be ruled in turn (polity), the best among them should rule (aristocracy), they must be chosen on the basis of their possession of *phronēsis* and this is only possible if the citizens simultaneously possess and exercise their franchise.

When attempting to put these relative absolutes together into a theoretically coherent and practically implementable model, one consideration may provide assistance more than any other: Aristotle is not an absolutist. There is nothing in the aforementioned guiding principles which requires utopian or idealist interpretation. On the contrary: all these things allow for implementation which simultaneously respects the messiness of human political life and maintains the ultimate goal of an aristocratic polity under the shared rule of the God Among Men and the citizens *en masse*. For example, Aristotle’s mutual injunctions that the citizens must receive equal public education in *phronēsis*, and that only those with means may rule, need not be seen as resulting in either a plutocratic oligarchy or an utopian egality. It also need not represent another version of Transcendentalist education, wherein farmers and manual laborers are expected to be familiar with the finer points of parliamentary procedure and the history of

Anglo-American law. If one remembers that education in *phronēsis* is, at the most fundamental level, education in discernment, then this education can be (and arguably should be) both available to individuals from all socio-economic backgrounds and applicable to all occupations. This is the same discernment that leads someone to conclude when he needs to see a doctor or hire a plumber to diagnose problems beyond his control, as well as his (albeit limited) ability to tell if the doctor or plumber is a competent practitioner in her field. Indeed, far from being useless for all those save individuals who would pursue the life of politics, *phronēsis* is immanently useful for any person. The same is true of the education described in the *Ethics*. It is astonishing that readers would see the education described therein as solely intended for individuals of means and birth—regardless of ostensible indications within the text that this was Aristotle's intent. There is nothing inherent to the *Ethics* which would require that a poor person be incapable of virtue—particularly if this person lived in a *polis* which assuaged such poverty with, e.g., public education in *phronēsis*. And there is the glaring counterexample of Socrates, which could not have been absent from Aristotle's mind. In short, education in *phronēsis*, as a program for all citizens, maintained by the rulers as their highest priority, is far from an idealistic, impractical, or useless suggestion. It may be the *sine qua non* for the health and functioning of the body politic—not just for Aristotle, but for political theory in general.[330]

With all this in mind, it is important to remember that Aristotle's arguments for an aristocratic polity, ruled by and through *phronēsis* by all of its members, are valid regardless of the presence of the God Among Men. That is, the presence of the God Among Men at any time in the life of the *polis* is inconsequential and has no effect on the status of aristocratic polity as the best possible *polis*. Indeed, the emergence and investment of the God Among Men in this *polis* does not change its status as an aristocratic polity ruled by and through *phronēsis* by all of its

members. Rather, it is simply a description of this *polis* in its most august manifestation.

Nevertheless, even if readers can accept the assertion that Aristotle endorses aristocratic polity as described, and even if they further accept that this is possible, what of the God Among Men himself? Specifically, what is one to make of Aristotle's descriptions of an individual who is seemingly free of doubt and error? Aristotle's name for him, which directly expresses his kinship with the gods more than with the rest of humanity, is not hyperbolic; the existence of such an infallible individual would run roughshod over the majority of the principles outlined in the *Ethics-Politics* project, which are written concerning all-too-human affairs. In short, if the God Among Men is not something to which we all can aspire, then is this a biological anomaly which requires both the faith and the patience of messianism?[331]

If politics, for Aristotle and Bismarck, is truly "the art of the possible," then it is incumbent upon the reader to consider the conditions for the possibility of such a being. On the one hand, his production seems unlikely at best. There is little in Aristotle's philosophy which would suggest that he intends (or believes it possible) for his ethical education to produce such godlike individuals. Again, his references to Priam in the *Ethics*, alongside his allusions to mythological figures like Helen and Heracles in the *Politics*, would seem to argue against his confidence in the possibility of such an invulnerable character. On the other hand, there is nothing which requires the reader to disregard this individual as fantastic, and Aristotle's repeated endorsement of him compels the reader to consider him a real possibility. Indeed, if the project of the *Ethics* and the *Politics* is to examine the end of being human, then this necessarily entails that Aristotle craft his investigation to span the absolute limits of human possibility. All would concede that Aristotle covers one side of this spectrum, whether this be considered slavery (for those who read this account traditionally), madness, or the "animal-like." The God Among

Men names the opposing end of that spectrum, and there is no necessary reason to doubt that Aristotle believe that such possibilities existed for human beings.

Further, there is no reason for the reader to take this designation in its simultaneous literal and mythic implications. Although it is difficult if not dangerous to purport to know what the Greeks of the time believed concerning their own heroes, one can say with some certainty that for any contemporary who believed Plato or Pythagoras were spawned of the gods, there was another who respected their surpassing acumen without actually ascribing to such a belief. It is commonplace, both throughout history and today, for individuals to be revered as godlike without actually being considered gods. One needs but note the regard accorded to athletes, artists, scientists, political figures—just to name a few—which results in their being perceived as more like gods than humans. Indeed, the ancient Greeks referred to their most celebrated athletic contest as the "Olympic Games," and we have kept the name for good reason.[332] It is quite possible that Aristotle's designation *and* his description do not refer to the actual kinship of the individual with the gods, but rather to the respect commanded by such a godlike individual. As Arthur C. Clarke said of science, so too for the God Among Men: any sufficiently advanced *phronimos* could well be indistinguishable from a god.[333]

In this regard, it is helpful to remember a passage previously cited from Book VII of the *Ethics*. At the outset of the Book, Aristotle says that it remains to discuss both "animal-like" and "godlike" persons, called such with respect to their possession of virtue. On the one hand, he says "it is fitting" to discusses these persons both as a natural consequence of the discussion (i.e., as the logical extremes of being human) and as genuine possibilities. On the other hand, his language when discussing the godlike individual is very suggestive. First, when he mentions the godlike individual who possesses "a virtue that transcends us, something heroic and godlike," he

turns to what "Homer made Priam say about Hector, that he was exceedingly good, 'and even seemed to be not the child of a mortal man but of a god.'" Although he is quite clear regarding the deficient extreme or animal-like nature, his language regarding the godlike individual is hesitant and vague. Surprisingly, instead of choosing a quotation from Homer which directly attributes an individual's surpassing virtue specifically to his being born of a god—of which there are countless, and which would appear to be more appropriate—he chooses one which retreats from such designation with the word "seemed." Second, just before these words Priam actually refers to Hector as a *god among men*. The passage reads, "Woe is me, that am all unblest, seeing that I begat sons the best in the broad land of Troy, yet of them I avow that none is left, not godlike Nestor, not Troilus the warrior charioteer, not Hector *that was a god among men*, neither seemed he as the son of a mortal man, but of a god: all of them hath Ares slain" (*ó moi egō panápotmos, epeì tékon huĩas arístous Troíēi en eureíēi, tōn d' oú tina phēmi leleĩphthai, Mēstorá t' antítheon kaì Trōílon hippioxármēn Héktorá th', hòs theòs éske met' andrásin, oudè eōikei andros ge thnētoũ páïs émmenai alla theoĩo*.)[334] It is hard to imagine Aristotle accidentally chose such a pregnant and poignant allusion. There are real limits to being human, considered both as excess and deficiency of that which is most human, but the recognition of an overabundance of humanity need not result in a mythological or biological account.

These considerations would solve the concomitant problems of the biological necessity of the God Among Men (i.e., that he must be born with supernatural abilities) as well as his messianic quality (i.e., that he is so preeminent as to be genuinely supernatural, and that we must all await his coming to bring the era of happiness). Further, this would allow Aristotle's endorsement of him in the *Politics* to remain consistent with the *Ethics*; rather than proposing an individual who *is* entirely superhuman, Aristotle would be describing an individual who so

excels in virtue that he *appears* superhuman. It would allow for political rule to be absolute in the aristocratic polity which gives him the reins, as his "infallibility" would be limited and his rule likewise (insofar as the citizens could remove him in the event of his, e.g., succumbing to hubris or passion). It would remove the apparent likeness between the God Among Men and the *archegos* of *On Noble Birth*, but this would be an argument for his plausibility rather than against it. To take the God Among Men seriously is not to introduce impossibilities into Aristotle's account, nor is it to attribute mythological beliefs to him regarding human beings. Rather, it is to allow Aristotle to mean what he says, and to see this as the most consistent conclusion compelled by his own investigation.

The Aristocratic Polity of the God Among Men, Part II: Philosopher-Kings v. Kings Who Philosophize

Another issue which has been present, though implicit, throughout, is the apparent similarity between the God Among Men and the philosopher of the *Ethics*. More fundamentally, there is the question of the place of the philosopher generally in Aristotle's *Politics*. The proper place or role of the philosopher in the *polis* has been a source of endless debate among readers of Aristotle. But to answer this requires that one delve into the similarities and differences between Aristotle's understanding of the philosopher (both *per se* and in his relationship with the *polis*), and those of Plato's dialogues, particularly the *Republic* and *Statesman*. While there is no ambition to answer these questions in detail here, the present investigation can shed some light on them.

If the first of these questions (i.e., whether the philosopher and the God Among Men are the same) is answered in the affirmative, then the second (i.e., what is the role of the philosopher

in the *polis*) is obvious: the political rule of the God Among Men over a phronetic *polis* is the end of the species *anthrōpos* and *polis* alike. Thus, if the God Among Men is a philosopher, then the philosopher necessarily has a role—indeed, *the* role—in the *polis*. Yet this would be a red herring: in this case, the philosopher's role in the *polis* would be incidental, as the relationship between the two characters has not been established, let alone proven inextricable. In other words, the God Among Men is the natural mirror of the *polis* and brings about its completion, but insofar as he is the preeminent *phronimos*, not insofar as he is a philosopher.

And this last issue would seem to admit of a simple resolution: regardless of whether the God Among Men is a philosopher, a philosopher is not necessarily a God Among Men. That is, Aristotle's descriptions of the philosopher's character and activity both lend themselves to comparison with the God Among Men, but they also argue against it. The relationship might be more easily seen if one reduces the question to the less august examples of these two individuals: the *megalopsuchia* and the student of philosophy. On the one hand, these two have obvious differences. Aristotle goes so far as to say that they have chosen different lives: the life of action and the life of thought. Their relationship to the *polis* is clear, insofar as the former is defined by this relationship whereas the latter would seem to both avoid (read: the activity of the *polis* leads one away from contemplation) and insulate himself against (read: the *polis* is potentially a threat to the philosopher) the *polis*. Thus, one can see clearly that they are not the same, that their characteristic activity is vastly different, and that their relationships to the *polis* are practically opposed.

However, if this is true, then Socrates is definitively *not* a philosopher. More than anything else Socrates is remembered for his relationship to the *polis*, both due to the tragic results of that relationship as well as his conviction that his duty to the *polis* was absolute. Yet

Socrates is also generally remembered as being a man of virtue.[335] Regardless of whether Aristotle would consider Socrates to be great-souled, it is hard to imagine him denying Socrates the title of philosopher. Therefore, the relationship between the two must be more complex than is sometimes portrayed.

Part of the answer is found when one looks to the tragic results of this relationship in the past. Socrates died at the hands of the *polis* which he saw himself as duty-bound to protect and improve, but he was not the only one. Indeed, the *polis* had a history, both prior to and after Socrates, of persecuting those who practiced philosophy within its borders. Most notable among these are Anaxagoras, Plato—and Aristotle himself who, when forced to flee Athens for his very survival, allegedly quipped that he left "lest Athens sin twice against philosophy." There is an obvious relationship between the philosopher and the *polis* insofar as the latter frequently constitutes the existential limit of the former, and not without cause. Each of these philosophers—and one might say *all* philosophers not called such equivocally—had a relationship with the *polis* which was far from removed or benign. Even if one confines this to Aristotle himself, and even if one sets aside his complicated and potentially threatening presence (e.g., a Macedonian metic, widely regarded as a spy, friend of Antipater, former teacher of Alexander, family friend of the Macedonian monarchy, etc.), and even if one sets aside the revolutionary ideas espoused in the *Ethics-Politics* project—even *pace* the issues mentioned here like slavery and nobility, confining this to the claims of the *kaloi k'agathoi* concerning their own political purchase and virtue—even in this vastly reduced view, the very presence of the *Ethics-Politics* texts/courses at the Lyceum is proof of Aristotle's vast and serious preoccupation with the *polis*. Put bluntly, either the philosopher is necessarily concerned with the *polis*, or the Philosopher did not consider himself a philosopher.

Part of the answer is located in the complex requirements Aristotle attributes to the life of philosophy, in addition to those attributed to the life of action. Although these two lives are distinguished in the *Ethics*, they are increasingly similar in the *Politics*. When one takes both accounts together, the separation in the *Ethics* could be read as providing greater distance in order to more easily examine their differences, whereas the consilience in the *Politics* could point to their greater similarities in their most effective and paramount manifestations—and in a proper *polis*. For example, When Aristotle lays out the educational program appropriate for the *polis* and to be implemented by the lawgivers, he separates occupation (*aschólia*) and leisure (*schólia*). On the one hand, to be occupied is literally to be precluded from the study that constitutes contemplation—and thereby from philosophy. On the other hand, Aristotle states clearly that occupation is solely a means to an end (i.e., *schólia*), and that any work which reduces an individual such as to consume him with occupation (e.g., a life of menial labor) is to remove their humanity. Prior to any assertion of social or economic justice, this is simply a consequence of the argument: if *schólia* is that for which human beings are intended (insofar as it is the prerequisite of the activity of that part which is most human), then to preclude this activity (either oneself or to have this imposed from outside) is to create a monstrous, unnatural being. Therefore, leisure must be accessible to all to some degree, and this seems to be implicit in Aristotle's educational reforms. Further, when Aristotle states that philosophy is the primary activity of leisure, he emphasizes that moderation and justice are necessary as well—in order that the philosopher can avoid hubris.[336] His remarks regarding the ruler are near identical: although *phronēsis* is primary for this individual, moderation and justice are equally necessary.[337] As Nichols (1992) has pointed out, this ambiguity is present throughout the *Politics*. When he reframes the question from the *Ethics* regarding whether the life of action or contemplation is

supreme, his formulation of the question in the *Politics* is pregnant with possibilities: "is the political and active life to be chosen, or rather that which is divorced from all external things—that involving some sort of study, for example—which *some* assert is the only philosophic way of life."[338] And in his descriptions of *hē politikē*, Aristotle often refers to political *philosophy* and *theory*, using *theōria*.[339]

Aristotle is not just asking what is the best way of life, nor is he just asking which *polis* allows that pursuit, but he is really asking whether the best way of life for individuals is the best way of life for *poleis*. That is, he is comparing the best *polis* and the best individual and asking if they do, in fact, mirror one another.[340] This line of inquiry is both odd and yet appropriate, given that Aristotle would seem to have discovered two individual entities—the complete *polis* and the complete *anthrōpos*—which are alike in an uncanny number of ways. Each is defined by its ability to choose (or fail to choose) actions which lead to (or away from) its end, unlike other species. Each is only good or happy insofar as it lives its life according to virtue, considered as an active condition which must constantly be maintained. Each can have natural impediments to this activity, yet even these coincide. For example, the *polis* is incapable of friendship with outside entities (*poleis*) by its very nature, as the only possible relationship with other *poleis* is one which subordinates those others to its own interests. Both the philosopher and the God Among Men (regardless of whether they are the same, or whether they both represent competing, complete versions of humanity) are seemingly without the possibility of genuine community, insofar as the former is described as self-sufficient and living within the mind, and the latter is described as ostensibly without equal. In other words, there does not seem to be a "like" available for these two (or three) entities, by their very nature. As Aristotle has described them, they are like "the god and the entire cosmos which have no external actions beyond those that are

proper to themselves."[341]

Yet herein lies the key. If the God Among Men is as we have described him, a "like" to and mirror for the aristocratic polity, and the two admit of a genuine relationship of ruling and being ruled, then the two even present to one another the possibility of a true friendship. Indeed, the two are both independent and yet codependent—like Zeus and the cosmos, they need each other even in the exercise of their ownmost activities. This further points to a consilience of the philosopher and the God Among Men, considered in their most developed forms and in the best possible *polis*. On the one hand, the existence of each seems not to require anything external, insofar as each is a self-sufficient whole. On the other hand, each actually becomes more complete by its relationship to an other that is like to itself—in the case of the philosopher, a community which encourages (rather than threatens) his activity and allows for the development and maintenance of virtue and friendship; in the case of the God Among Men, the sole like to himself which allows him to be what he is, the aristocratic polity of *phronēsis*. Indeed, in this case it would seem that the greatest possibility for *both polis* and *anthrōpos* would be if the God Among Men was also a philosopher and the philosopher a God Among Men, and that this individual (or group) lived in an aristocratic polity thus described—this would be the closest possible approximation on earth to the relationship between Zeus and the cosmos.

Let this suffice as a basic proof that there is a fundamental relationship between the philosopher and the *polis*, if not a thorough or precise exposition of the meaning and extent of that relationship. The philosopher has a vested interest in the *polis*, as the *polis* is both the existential and the practical limit of the philosopher's activity. Regarding the former, the philosopher literally must engage with the *polis* in order to prevent the repeated occurrence of the hostility of the *polis* towards the philosopher. Regarding the latter, to neglect the

philosopher's need for community is either to strip him of his humanity, or to claim that some select sections of the *Ethics* are meant to be taken at face value while the majority of the *Ethics-Politics* volumes are to be ignored. The entirety of these two volumes are predicated on the idea that the good life is only possible when lived in community, and that the active condition of the soul lived in accordance with virtue is the means by which one can access this life. Further, the nature of the community in which one lives either precludes or encourages the good life—it is both the philosopher's access to and the *sine qua non* of his happiness.[342] While Aristotle does say that the philosopher's characteristic activity is possible in solitude, this cannot replace the rest of the texts which state that the good life is lived in a particular type of community, with friends, according to virtue. And it is obviously a portion of the philosopher's *theōria* that he contemplate the affairs of the community and the best regime—just as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and so many others illustrate—as illustrated in Aristotle's own decision to engage himself, in both the form and content of his work, in *hē politikē*. In short, to attempt to claim that the philosopher is somehow immune to the community in which he lives and all this entails is to ignore the majority of Aristotle's thought, the manner in which he presents it, and the repeated historical contingency of the philosopher's existence within the *polis*. To paraphrase Aristotle himself in this regard, the good human being is neither self-sufficient nor selfless, and his virtue both depends on others for its existence and is the cause of his own happiness.[343]

At this point the question whether the philosopher is the God Among Men reduces greatly in significance. On the one hand, there is a great deal that points to their similarity. On the other hand, there are considerations which would seem to separate the two. When we take the latter seriously, and compare *all* that is said regarding the former in Aristotle's thought, the combination of both descriptions of a single person is not only possible, but quite likely. As has

been shown, this conclusion does not turn Aristotle into the Eleatic Stranger of the *Statesman* or the Socrates of the *Republic*.[344] The question of the relationship between Aristotle's political thought and that found in the dialogues of Plato—although quite interesting—is admittedly tangential to and inessential for the present investigation. What is most pressing here is the question of how Aristotle understands the relationship between his own thought and his status as a philosopher, and his direct engagement with *hē politikē* and the *polis*. The reader is compelled to examine this not simply because Aristotle's *Ethics-Politics* project embroils Aristotle himself in the affairs of the *polis*, but also because the manner in which he approaches this investigation is itself a dialectical performance of this engagement. In short, if one asks whether Aristotle believed that the philosopher is necessarily involved in the life of the *polis*, the answer seems to be that the Philosopher wrote two volumes on *hē politikē*. And if one asks whether the philosopher is the God Among Men and vice versa, the answer seems to be that both would more completely enact their characteristic activity *and* that of the species *anthrōpos* if this were so.

Form is Content: The Rhetoric of Revolution

One of the most exciting, although contentious, positions in this investigation is that Aristotle considers his own work to be a dialectical and performative enactment of *hē politikē*. That is, many readers have recently attributed this self-understanding to Aristotle's works, particularly the *Ethics-Politics* volumes. Aristotle would seem to encourage this reading in a number of places in both texts. But even without those moments of self-reflection and self-awareness, it would seem to be the nature of the project itself as Aristotle describes it. Simply put, for Aristotle, for investigations into *phronēsis*, form *is* content.

Aristotle establishes this almost at the outset of the two volumes with his statement,

previously characterized as akin to a warning, though now seen to be merely an observation on the nature of the thing in question, that investigations of *phronēsis* or involving *phronēsis* cannot expect the certainty found in the theoretical sciences. This deceptively simple remark, which Aristotle frequently repeats, contains much more significance regarding the nature of *phronēsis* and the *Ethics-Politics* project than originally anticipated. Although *phronēsis* resists description along the same lines as a philosophical treatise, it does not resist exposition. It simply requires the performance of something dialectical—like these volumes—in order to be made manifest. Aristotle's definition of *phronēsis* would seem to define the project as well: "it is a truth-disclosing active condition involving reason that governs action, concerned with what is good and bad for a human being."[345] Therefore, we can now confirm what was intimated from the outset, that the investigation itself requires this type of dialectical approach which, although it will produce neither immutable certainty nor cynical aporia, is itself a process of revealing which is fruitful because of, not in spite of, being continual. Further, we have seen that this type of approach *does* produce certainty regarding many aspects of the human being and the *polis* without resulting in the same type of certainty as that found in the sciences. In short, we are saved from cynical aporia by the revelation, through a dialectical process of unfolding natural to the subject at hand, of relative absolutes concerning both the individual person and the political community.

In this light we can reinterpret much of what Aristotle says as concerned not only with the theoretical nature of *phronēsis*, but also with the pressing and quotidian concerns of a citizen in *any* political community. Central to this is the idea that the happiness of any individual, considered as the end of being human, is contingent upon the *polis* in which he lives—and the nature of the *polis* is contingent upon such individuals. Aristotle is adamant that the ability of

human beings to achieve their naturally ordained end is dependent upon their membership in a proper community, and this community has been shown to be defined by its active and continual commitment to *phronēsis*. On the one hand, there is a potential disconnect here between what is actually the case for most persons living in community, and what is theoretically the case for human beings *per se*. If we take this claim seriously, then Aristotle would be making two startling claims: that most humans are not humans and *cannot* become humans given their present political circumstances, or that all persons must strive as much as possible to reform their political community, not as a choice but as a duty to themselves, to one another, and to nature itself. When read in this manner, one can understand the force with which Aristotle claims that education in *phronēsis* is the ultimate concern of any government: "It makes no small difference to be habituated this way or that way straight from childhood, but an enormous difference, or rather all the difference."[346] And this is true for any individual living in any *polis*: "Hence it is necessary to arrange for rearing and exercise by laws, since they will not be painful when they have hit upon the right rearing and discipline when they are young, but also afterward, when they have reached adulthood, they must practice these things and habituate themselves and we would need laws about these things as well, and so, generally, about the whole of life."[347]

As mentioned previously regarding the ostensible biological or messianic nature of the God Among Men, there is a distinction present in the text between Aristotle's apparent absolutism regarding *poleis* and his understanding of justice. For example, when talking about that which makes the best *polis*—which, in turn, is that which makes the good life possible for human beings, including those within his audience—Aristotle says, "What is naturally just has the same power everywhere, and is not affected by whether it seems so to people or not, but what is conventionally just is something that at first makes no difference to do this way or some other

way, but when people have established it, does make a difference."[348] Therefore, when Aristotle makes his sweeping claims regarding the importance of education for the possibility of happiness—or his more implicit claims regarding the impossibility of true happiness in Athens—he emphasizes the ubiquity and validity of these claims while anticipating the potential objections of those hearing them. Aristotle is clearly saying that, although inquiries into *phronēsis* may not admit of scientific certainty, nevertheless his critiques of *poleis*—including Athens—are valid. The same is true for his critiques of individuals—including his readers and listeners: their validity is not just assumed, it is a logical consequence of the investigation. The best life and the best government must be as Aristotle describes them, in spite of *and* because of the non-theoretical nature of human questions. Justice requires it.

For example, after proceeding ambiguously, presenting examples of laws and customs which differ between people, he makes what may seem to be a surprising conclusion if one has not kept the form and content constantly in mind. He states that there is a perfect form of *polis* which is both natural and superior to all others: "the things that are just not naturally but by human convention are not the same everywhere, since the kinds of constitution are not the same either, though the only one that is everywhere according to nature is the best kind."[349] Aristotle does not *tell* the reader what this best kind is. Instead, in a manner that is not only consistent with that which is required for such an investigation, but also more convincing for his audience, he leads the reader to that conclusion. Regardless of the logistics of the government's structure, regardless of the natural and political setting of the city, regardless of its history and culture, the establishment of an aristocratic polity with its eye constantly focused on education in and political rewards for *phronēsis* is the best possible government. This is not to say that the concerns of logistics, setting, and culture are unimportant. Rather, it is to say that the way in

which a *polis* most effectively may consider such factors is if that *polis* is fundamentally focused on the *phronetic* education of all of its citizens. Indeed, one might say that the only way in which the *polis* would not be ruled by these factors is if it is a *polis* of *phronēsis*. Again, even if the God Among Men never appears, or if he is not as he appears (i.e., not supernatural but simply an adept *phronimos*), the aristocratic polity is the best possible opportunity for a human being to achieve his natural end of happiness. According to Aristotle's understanding of the relative healthiness of an individual constitution, this may be the only possible opportunity for a human to achieve his end.

And even if the person does not live in an aristocratic polity, the concerted and continuous effort to turn it into such a *polis* is still the most honorable and rewarding work for a human being—both for himself and for the *polis*. In this sense the life of the *polis* and the life of the citizen continue to mirror one another, for the constant striving of the individual towards virtue is identical in nature and effects to the constant striving of the *polis* towards perfection. Therefore, regardless of the presence of the God Among Men and regardless of the presence of a true and proper aristocratic polity, Aristotle's *Ethics-Politics* project provides the best means of insulating the community against faction and degeneration, it cultivates the best means of encouraging its citizens towards the good life, and it describes the best means of patronizing the philosopher so that he may conduct his activities undisturbed.[350]

The language of revolution in this investigation is meant in a dual manner. First, there is the idea, implicit in Aristotle's dialectical exposition of the best possible *polis*, that the appearance of the God Among Men would lead to a peaceful and blessed revolution for those within an aristocratic polity. The other operative meaning of revolution throughout references Aristotle's particular rhetoric in presenting this project. Aristotle subtly, yet effectively, leads the

reader to recognize the inadequacies in his own *polis* while instructing him of the potential and necessity for reform. This is true whether one considers the accounts of nobility and slavery, or whether one looks at his description of the good life in accordance with virtue, or the absolute importance of education in *phronēsis*: "What happens in cities gives evidence of this, for lawmakers make the citizens good by habituating them, and since this is the intention of every lawmaker, those that do not do it well are failures, and one regime differs from another in this respect as a good one from a worthless one."[351] Indeed, when one looks at the *Ethics-Politics* project as a whole, Aristotle has not only predicted a great deal of the future history of political theory, he has implicitly provided the grounds for much of contemporary liberalism and the right to revolution. As stated at the end of the first Chapter, Aristotle has as much to teach the contemporary reader—about her own political and personal life—as he did the ancients.

Aristotle's Bastard Children: Race, Identity, and the Reciprocity between Politics and Biology

Although readers continue to disagree about the proper interpretation of the *Ethics-Politics* volumes, they are united on the terrible (mis)use of them throughout the history of the West. The most (in)famous example of this, particularly for those in the United States, is the manner in which Aristotle was mined for solidifying the idea of race and for justifying the institution of slavery. For centuries Aristotle provided the secular authority for the marriage of the former, unfortunate economic invention and the latter, mutated institution. In this role he was placed side-by-side with the religious authority of Genesis, interpreted to support the idea known as Hamitic Theory. In recent years, most readers of Aristotle have agreed that the interpretations to which he was put were as ludicrous as those purported to be found in the Torah.[352] Nevertheless,

the presence of such pseudo-Aristotelian biologizing is a commonplace in contemporary politics and thought. It is seen whenever a claim is made regarding the potential or actual presence of behavior in individuals, with the express aim of explaining said behavior according to the individual's biology.[353] The most eloquent example of this to be found in the history of the Atlantic Slave Trade is the Valladolid Debate between de las Casas and Sepulveda in 1550-1551. The most current examples of this in contemporary socio-political debates concerning biology are those surrounding the Human Genome Project.

To delve into the complex web of either of these issues would go far beyond the present scope, requiring both historical and contemporary perusal of the vast scholarship on race theory, slavery, the philosophies of biology and psychology, and ethics—just to name a few. Therefore, this will only serve as a brief statement as to the relevance of the present investigation for these disparate fields, and as to that which is suggested by these pages as to how the connections should be approached.

This is not to say that biology has no effect on behavior. Madness, head trauma, disease (communicative and/or congenital), neurological disorders, etc., all obviously affect the abilities and possibilities for individuals, whether considered from a contemporary or an Aristotelian standpoint. What is at issue here is to discuss the specific attempts which have been made and continue to be made to link biology and politics. That is, to biologize the political and legal status of individuals in the absence of such circumstances, with aetiological explanations and/or justifications for actions and character, is anathema to the *Ethics-Politics* project. As repeatedly stated throughout this reading, few things are more fundamental to Aristotle's view of human possibilities than the idea that humans are responsible for making themselves. Therefore, any attempt to found such biological accounts which would look to Aristotle for support is hard-

pressed at best, and Aristotle's philosophy would firmly disagree with many of the contemporary debates surrounding the reciprocity between biology, identity, and political community.

The Valladolid Debate solidified the perceived connection between Aristotle's account of slavery and its use as a justification for the enslavement of the African and Native American peoples. Both participants, Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, used Aristotle in their arguments against and for such enslavement (respectively). Specifically, the two argued on the nature of the individuals in question, and whether this conformed to Aristotle's criteria regarding the relative "humanity" of the African and Native American people. Therefore, they did not concern themselves with the issue of whether Aristotle considered slaves fully or fundamentally human (as discussed in Chapter V), but rather whether the Atlantic Slave Trade could justify the enslavement of individuals on the basis of Aristotle's criteria.

As argued in this project, this constitutes a fundamental misuse of Aristotle. On the one hand, it is interesting, although ultimately quixotic, to wonder what the history of the West may have been like had people not misappropriated Aristotle in this manner. Indeed, without the intellectual pedigree of those like Aristotle in the history of Western thought to shore up the concept of race, it is hard to see how such accounts would have fared. On the other hand, it is interesting to see specifically how these accounts have been misused in the past, as this provides powerful refutations of continued contemporary arguments.

In the service of the above-type usage for biological determinism, the relationship between genetic predisposition and socio-economic opportunity has led to recent clashes with civil rights and privacy law. In 2008, the United States Congress passed a law making it illegal for employers to obtain, by request or clandestinely, the DNA of their employees for use in the hiring, firing, promotion, or determination of health premiums. The law is on the right track,

although it is not getting at the root problem—particularly given that its primary focus concerns the predictive nature of DNA for health purposes. Further, the debate has largely been couched in the right of an individual to protect their privacy, in this case with regard to their genetic code.

However, this relationship between biology and rights is fundamentally flawed, from an Aristotelian perspective. The primary concern is the hubristic position that an individual's possibilities can be determined on the basis of their DNA, rather than an individual's actions and habits. Although it is true, from the perspectives of rights theory and privacy law, that an individual's DNA should be their protected personal property, nevertheless the assumption that such information can be used to determine who and what a person is and will be, as it were, is to make several misappropriations regarding the predictive worth of such information, the possibilities for human plasticity, the preventative aspects of medicine with relation to behavior (v. genetic predisposition), etc. Although the dystopian nature of these and similar issues have been predicted and popularized in literature and film, from *Brave New World* to *Gattaca*, nevertheless the perception of ostensible uses for the HGP continues to grow, including predictive indicators concerning deviant/criminal behavior, sexuality, academic ability, etc. A number of companies are offering "genetic counseling" and "preimplantation genetic diagnosis," which purport to give parents information regarding a fetus in order to determine its future possibilities prior to birth. On the one hand many of these avenues of inquiry have been praised: e.g., in order that sexuality could have a natural basis as opposed to being considered a choice, or in order to determine the presence of a strong predisposition for serious health concerns in a fetus which may or may not be brought to term. On the other hand, there are serious concerns with such lines of thought, from an Aristotelian perspective and beyond.[354]

In each case, the attempt to use biology to determine behavior, which misappropriates

Aristotle as its philosophical progenitor, fundamentally misunderstands and actually disagrees with Aristotelian thought. Again, these are just so many attempts to emphasize a single aspect of Aristotle's text at the (un)conscious expense of the rest of his views. As has been said repeatedly, there are few ideas in Aristotle's thought more fundamental than that a person is not born, but made by her actions. *Pace* the above examples wherein an individual's physiology and/or brain chemistry genuinely limits their abilities to an undeniable and specific extent—and even in these cases, the external determination of the individual's possibilities is extremely dangerous—Aristotle has provided strong limitations as to the extent to which such information should be put, and warnings against any use thereafter. Aristotle is an unlikely, but auspicious source of support for contemporary political theory regarding the use of biology in the public sphere. Further, a proper emphasis on *phronēsis* would allow individuals to recognize the misguided nature of these debates, and the reformulation of them which would allow for greater freedom of choice and greater understanding of responsibility for the individuals in question.[355]

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Notes

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[1] Strauss (1964) believes that the philosopher is virtuous only by association/perception or even as a means to an end. His interpretation seems to be fundamentally at odds with Aristotle, however; e.g., it could never be praiseworthy, which is an essential characteristic of both virtue and philosophy.

[2] Cf. Arendt (1959), Wolin (1960), Pocock (1975), Dietz (1985), Elshtain (1981).

[3] Lord (1982) and Strauss (1953, 1964) are two more well-known examples.

[4] For a particularly historical account of what they call Aristotelian (or "Socratic," as they lump Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle together in both terminology and ideology) partisanship or ideology, see Wood and Wood (1978). Taking the historical context in which the philosophers wrote as their starting point, Wood and Wood argue that Aristotle was primarily concerned with repairing the failing aristocracy of Athens, while critiquing its decadent flights. As they state early on, "If democracy is the essence, the 'final cause,' the *telos* of the *polis*, it is not in the works of Plato and Aristotle, or in the ideas of Socrates which inspired them, that the nature of the *polis* is to be found. On the contrary, their doctrines must be understood as a negation of the *polis*" (13-14). I agree with them that much can be gained from understanding the "Socratics" in their historical context, and their critique of much contemporary philosophy which "self-consciously attempts to discard history with the implication that philosophy and philosophical analysis can be divorced from history and historical analysis" (10). Nevertheless, I find that their approach retards the reader's ability to appreciate that which exceeds the context of the author's time.

[5] For an excellent example, see Nichols (1992).

[6] Throughout I will use the gender specific pronoun, which becomes particularly abrasive in the repeated use of this title. Although recently many have reinterpreted Aristotle's statements on women in a much more favorable light, it is undeniable that women lack proper consideration as political participants in his work. Rather than excuse or ignore this—some choose to convert it to "God Among Humans"—I think it is important to retain the gender, as it is very unlikely that Aristotle would ever have considered a woman capable of being the God Among Men, or that the God Among Men is in fact measured against men *and* women. However, it is important to note that of the two allusions he makes to individuals when referring to the God Among Men—Helen and Heracles—one is a woman.

[7] Cf. *Pol* 1325b28-30, which relates these two in such a way as to illustrate their equal self-sufficiency in their ownmost activity, as well as their mirrored and codependent relationship with one another. I will refer to the *Nicomachean Ethics* simply as the "*Ethics*" ("*NE*" when citing), as my references to the *Eudaimonian Ethics* ("*EE*" when citing) will be much less common. I will render Aristotle's other texts in standard fashion, e.g., *Politics* as *Pol*, *Metaphysics* as *Met*, etc.

[8] Cf. *NE* 1106b5-7; 1106b16-18. Nichols (1992, 59-62; 74-79) makes a great deal of this description, concluding that it dispossesses the God Among Men of his virtue and makes Aristotle's discussion of the God Among Men a contradiction in terms. As will be discussed in Chapter II and particularly in Chapter IV, I believe this can be read as an endorsement, rather than a condemnation, of the God Among Men's preeminent virtue.

[9] *Pol* 1288a35-b5.

[10] I borrow this definition from Sachs (2002b).

[11] Cf. Strauss (1964), 25-50, who makes much of Aristotle's frequent address throughout the *Ethics* to his audience as "gentlemen." Indeed, according to Strauss, "Aristotle's political science is addressed only to such men. The sphere of prudence is then closed by principles which are fully evident only to gentlemen" (25).

[12] This is not to gloss the *deon*-quality inherent in obtaining and maintaining *eudaimonia*. Obviously Aristotle is far from Pollyanna regarding the exigencies of human life. More will be said on this in Chapter II.

[13] Sachs (2002b), whose familiarity with Aristotle's Greek encourages belief in reincarnation, mentions an interesting caveat regarding this widely accepted link: "the *Nicomachean Ethics* is one of the most polished writings of Aristotle that we possess, while the *Politics* is one of the least" (200, n. 304).

[14] Cf. Aristotle's discussion of Priam at *NE* 1099aff.

[15] Or "is most likely to be maintained via education:" *phronēsis* may not be impossible *sui generis*, but much more likely given certain environmental influences. This will be discussed further in Chapters IV and VI.

[16] Aristotle even calls attention to the ambiguity; cf. *Pol* 1279a37-39. I follow Nichols (1992), Lord (1984) in trying to assuage this ambiguity by translating *politeia* generally as "regime," and specifically as "polity" when referring to that healthy government which Aristotle opposes to democracy.

[17] *Pol* 1288a33-41.

[18] *Pol* 1284a3-14.

[19] Cf. Nichols (1992), 72-84. Although I agree with the overall thrust of her work regarding the

status and plasticity of polity *qua* best regime, and the inability of either egalitarians or elitists to claim Aristotle as their own, this is a fundamental point of divergence. She reads the God Among Men as impossible, and therefore concludes that Aristotle could not mean what he says regarding his claim to rule the polity as "best."

[20] *Pol* 1281a40-b3. Nichols (1992) notes a possible allusion here that could mean Aristotle is being tongue-in-cheek regarding the virtue of the many. "In the background of Aristotle's reference to the feast to which many contribute is the meal described at the end of Aristophanes' *Assembly of Women* (1163-82), a meal made up of so many random foods that the mixture is revolting" (195, n. 20).

[21] Wood and Wood (1978), Connor (1971) note that by Aristotle's time this terminology of the leader being both friend and lover of the *polis* or the *demos* (people) was not only common, but had been used both in a complimentary and a pejorative sense. For example, Herodotus, Plutarch and Aristophanes all employ descriptions like *philodēmos*, *eunous toi demoi*, and even *philopolis* to name the at times praiseworthy, at times underhanded manner in which Athenian leaders would make *hetairoi* or "friends" of the *demos* (Wood and Wood [1978], 69-72; Connor [1971], 105-6). In Chapters III and IV, we will see how Aristotle employs this language while redefining its meaning and purpose.

[22] Indeed, after a paper I gave once on Aristotle's use of rhetorical subtlety, a well-known and frustrated Aristotelian scholar objected, "Aristotle is not Plato: he means what he says."

[23] Two excellent examples are Ambler (1987) and Garver (1994).

[24] Nichols (1992) provides a good exposition of this trend.

[25] As Ambler (1987) quips, Aristotle's defense of slavery is actually an attack.

[26] I borrow this translation of *energeia* from Sachs (2002b).

[27] I follow Sachs (2002b) in his understanding of *politikē*: "Aristotle does not specify the noun implicit in the substantive adjective 'the political…' (*hē politikē*), so 'politics' here, from its context, means either knowledge, the art, or some other capacity that is devoted to the things of the city. The word art (*technē*) applies to the skilled know-how involved in making or producing anything, from shoes to health to laws to good citizens. The city (*polis*) is the self-sufficient political community, large enough to feed and defend all its members but small enough for them all to have active dealings with one another" (2, n. 1). However, Salkever (1991) makes an excellent defense of translating *hē politikē* as "social science" rather than "political science." E.g., "Aristotle uses the term throughout the *Politics* and the *Ethics* to refer to the consideration of topics we would today assign to political science, anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, and history… While *politikē* most frequently in both Plato and Aristotle stands by itself as a noun, its ordinary meaning flows from its adjectival function; it modifies nouns like *technē* ('skill or craft'), *epistēmē* ('science'), and *philosophia*. The question, for Aristotle, seems not to be whether social science is possible, but rather just what kind of a science *politikē* is" (13).

[28] The historical locus for the discussion of the development of Aristotle's works is, of course, Jaeger (1948). Although Jaeger's position regarding the dating of the works is not generally accepted today, its influence for Aristotelian scholarship is substantial.

[29] *NE* 1094a. Although this is my translation, I will follow Sachs' (2002b) rendering of the *Ethics* throughout, making note of those incidents wherein I have altered it. Sachs provides a very nice comment regarding Aristotle's "teleology," by which Sachs intends Aristotle's

philosophical cipher, at the outset of the text: "his teaching that all natural events aim at producing or maintaining the wholeness of natural beings, understood not only in a bodily and biological sense but also as the wholeness of being-at-work that constitutes their lives. In human beings, the achievement of this wholeness of life requires choices carried out in action; hence the end appears as a purpose, the accomplishment of which completes the action. The purpose behind all other purposes would be the human end that is complete simply" (p. 9-10, n. 14).

[30] This is an unfortunately, yet necessary, gloss of several tremendously complex issues. The relationship between form and matter, the status of the ultimate or "divine" Good, and the attribution of a quasi-Platonic participation model in Aristotle are each controversial. Cf. Long (1999) for an excellent discussion of the complexity—and inherent dangers—involved in the way in which one understands each of these issues.

[31] *Pol* 1252b1-5, Nichols' (1992) translation.

[32] Ibid., 1252b23-24, Nichols' (1992) translation.

[33] Sachs (2002b) mentions Aristotle's use of the term *makarios*, "blessed," as exhibiting this contingency, defining it as "happy to the maximum extent, for which all the external goods of fortune, such as health, riches, and a flourishing family, are necessary but not sufficient conditions" (202).

[34] Sachs (2002b) defines *energeia*, or "being-at-work," as follows: "The central notion in all of Aristotle's philosophy, the activity by which anything is what it is. To understand any of Aristotle's inquiries is to grasp the centrality in it of being-at-work. In the *Metaphysics*, everything that is derives from and depends upon the things that have their being only by

constant activity. In the *Physics*, nature is not explainable by material but only by the formative activities always at-work in material. In *On the Soul*, a soul is not a detachable being but the being-at-work-staying itself of an organized body. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, everything depends upon the idea of an active condition (*hexis*) that can be formed by a deliberately repeated way of being-at-work, and that can in turn set free the being-at-work of all the human powers for the act of choice (Bk. II, Chaps. 2-3). For example, actions that belong to courage must be performed before one can become courageous; after the active condition is formed, actions that belong to courage spring from it, not as dead habit but from the full and unimpeded presence of active thinking and desiring" (202).

[35] Cf. Heidegger (1988), for an influential and compelling attack on the production model. Although Heidegger's work is of great importance for scholarship on ancient Greek thought in general and Aristotle in particular, the present project is far from his particular concerns and trajectory.

[36] *NE* 1094a38-b12.

[37] The *Republic* obviously looms large in the background of this comment. Although the relationship between the *Republic* and the *Politics* cannot be developed in detail, more will be said on this in Chapter VI.

[38] *NE* 1095a.

[39] Ibid., 1095a, my translation.

[40] Ibid., 1095b.

[41] The word *achreios* admits of a number of different possible meanings, including "useless" and "unprofitable" in addition to "helpless" and "foolish." In the context—for both Aristotle and

Hesiod—"witless" is an appropriate choice.

[42] *NE* 1095b23-31.

[43] Actually, aristocracy is the only "healthy" form of government, although it admits of two possible types and three possible structures: that run by a true *aristoi* (whether they be few or many) and that run by the God Among Men. More will be said on this in Chapter III, when we turn to the *Politics*.

[44] *NE* 1097a30-1097b8.

[45] Ibid., 1097b22-1098a7.

[46] Cf. *Timaeus* 19b, where Socrates famously desires to see the city "in motion," *kineō*.

[47] *NE* 1099b26ff.

[48] Ibid.,1099b. While it is true that Aristotle lists prosperity—and he explicitly tells the reader that this has economic implications—this presents a problem for the overall account. Socrates is the constant bugbear lurking in the background of the *Ethics*, and one wonders if Aristotle himself felt the presence of his master's master while penning it. For Socrates seems to defy nearly every condition for the possibility of the virtuous individual who is both capable of and achieves virtuous acts, yet he appears to be the very embodiment of the active-condition that is virtue. In this case: if economic prosperity is a precondition of virtue, then Socrates would presumably be incapable of virtue as the tradition maintains that he was poor. Thus, one is tempted to conclude either that Socrates is not virtuous, or that economic prosperity must not be a necessary *or* a sufficient condition of virtue. Cf. Wood and Wood (1978) for an alternative view of Socrates' birth and wealth: they contend that the evidence regarding Socrates' social class points to his being from noble and wealthy stock rather than

the traditional view of him as a poor mendicant.

[49] *NE* 1099b26ff.

[50] Again, the discussion of Socrates will be dealt with in Chapter VI, but a later statement by Aristotle helps illustrate the problem. At 1105a35, Aristotle uses—or, according to Sachs (2002b), invents—a "marvelous" adverb to describe the truly impervious nature of the virtuous person: *aemtakietos*. Meaning something like a state of "stability or equilibrium," Sachs explains the idea as akin to a Weeble-Wobble: a children's toy which is shaped like a bowling pin, with a light body and a strong weight in the base, a Weeble-Wobble cannot be knocked down by any external force—save one that actually destroys it. As Sachs relates in his note on the passage, the man of virtue is impervious to any external force short of that which would actually alter his metaphysical being (either via death or some equally devastating experience): "being in a stable condition and not able to be moved all the way out of it" (n. 30).

[51] *NE* 1103a19-25.

[52] Ibid., 1103b1-5.

[53] Ibid., 1106b20ff.

[54] Ibid., 1106b30-1107a. The proverb at the end of the quote is as yet unattributed.

[55] Regarding Aristotle's reference to "missing the mark," the original meaning—and the Hebrew tradition's equivalent term "sin"—are both interesting. Although the words are not related etymologically, the Greek and Hebrew traditions used their respective words for "sin" in the exact manner related herein. That is, in both cases they considered sin not as a metaphysical state or cosmic force, but rather as an error from which one could learn in order to avoid it in

the future—as in archery, when one misses the bull's-eye but tries again.

[56] *NE* 1109b30ff.

[57] Ibid., 1110a8-11.

[58] My thanks to Kevin McCormack, J.D. for a number of fruitful conversations regarding Aristotle and the history of legal philosophy.

[59] *NE* 1111a22-5. Sachs (2002b) includes a helpful comment regarding the limits of coercion for Aristotle. Aristotle mentions the *Alcmaeon* of Euripides which, although no longer extant, is known in the tradition as describing a gruesome matricide which bears some similarity to Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*. However, the situation in the *Alcmaeon*, according to Aristotle, exceeds that which in contemporary law is called the "reasonable person test," whereas the *Libation Bearers* sets up circumstances which require more consideration. As Sachs relates, there must be some things which an individual cannot be forced to do, "but one ought instead to die suffering the most terrible things" (1110a20-35).

[60] *Pace* Aristotle's earlier ambiguity regarding the intellectual virtues. More will be said on this below.

[61] All citations in this paragraph are from *NE* 1112a22ff.

[62] Ibid., 1112b9-27.

[63] Ibid., 1106bff.

[64] Ibid., 1112b9-27.

[65] Ibid., 1112b9-27.

[66] For example, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle places *phronēsis* with the intellectual virtues, while in the *Eudaimonian Ethics* Aristotle lists it with the virtues belonging to

character. Sachs (2002b) offers a helpful synthesis of these seemingly competing claims when he defines *phronēsis* in his Glossary. "The active condition by which someone discerns the right means to the right end in particular circumstances (1144a6-9). Hence the intellectual virtue of practical judgment and the whole of virtue of character are mutually dependent and must develop together, since the right end is apparent only to someone of good character, while the formation of good character requires the repeated choice of the right action, which is impossible without practical judgment (1144b18-32, 1145a4-6). Apart from virtue of character, the capacity to reason from ends to means is mere cleverness (1144a23-29); practical judgment involves skill in making distinctions and seeing connections, but if one does not recognize that such thinking imposes upon oneself an obligation to act, that skill is merely astuteness (1143a4-15). Practical judgment is acquired primarily by experience of particulars, but also involves a knowledge of things that are universal and unvarying within those particulars (1141b14-24), the things studied by Aristotle in his inquiries into politics and ethics" (209).

[67] For a good discussion of desire as a retarding agent naturally present in all human beings, see Salkever (1991).

[68] *NE* 1113ab1-22. Again, the *Republic* is in the background of this discussion: the conflict between pleasure and knowing is the ultimate determinant of moral worth, and the will is still responsible. This is Aristotle's reworking of the Charioteer Metaphor.

[69] *NE* 1114a32-b5.

[70] E.g., Sachs (2002b): "This idea of an innate moral vision is so tempting, and Aristotle's argument for this hypothetical assumption is so vigorously developed, that readers

sometimes mistake it for his own opinion. Aristotle does say that habituation has to work on a natural capacity already present (1103a23-26), but only effort of a kind that each person is solely responsible for making can develop that capacity. To see what is morally relevant requires not a special sense, but an active condition that counteracts distortions (1113a33-b2)."

[71] E.g., at *NE* 1115b25-28, in his discussion of courage, Aristotle mentions the Celts as an example of an extreme excess of courage which results in insanity: "Among those who are excessive, the sort who exceed in fearlessness are without a name (and it was mentioned by us in what preceded that many of these things are without names), though one would have to be insane or incapable of feeling pain if one were to fear nothing, not even an earthquake or a flood, as people say about the Celts."

[72] Sachs (2002b), n. 75.

[73] *NE* 1123a35.

[74] Sachs (2002b) provides a helpful note on translation, and I find his argument for "great-souled" compelling: "*Megalopsuchia* is translated sometimes as 'pride,' sometimes as 'high-mindedness,' but either of these choices misses at least half its meaning, while 'magnanimity' shifts the problem into Latin and carries the wrong connotation. In the *Posterior Analytics*, 97b14-26, Aristotle raises the possibility that it might be a word used in two distinct ways, referring to people like Achilles who do not tolerate insults, but also to people like Socrates who do not care about either good fortune or bad fortune. Even if that is true, one use might be primary while the other is derivative from it. Friedrich Nietzsche, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 212, takes greatness of soul to be the aristocrat's attitude of contempt for

anyone who is not himself, assumed with irony by the low-born Socrates as a piece of one-upsmanship. But the truly great soul might have a standard of worth that has nothing to do with personal superiority. In his treatment of magnificence, Aristotle accepts a popular standard of judgment and purifies it dialectically, shifting its focus from how much is spent to how it is spent, and from the self-display of the spender to the enhancement of common life. Something similar happens with greatness of soul" (n. 85).

[75] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I.84.2. For Aquinas the relationship is completely reversed: if, for Aristotle, *megalopsuchia* directly entails a proper sense of one's self-worth, and thereby represents the presence of exceptional quality, for Aquinas pride is the progenitor of all sin and is in a "special" class in and of itself. That is, whereas for Aristotle this is the result of virtue, for Aquinas this is the cause of vice. And whereas for Aristotle this requires the presence of genuine recognition of and faith in one's own abilities, for Aquinas the same structure proves the apostasy of the individual in whom it exists.

[76] Ibid., *NE* 1123a17-29.

[77] Cf. Munn (2000) for a remarkable examination of Athenian life, culture, and politics from the Peloponnesian War to Aristotle.

[78] *NE* 1129b12-20.

[79] Ibid., 1129b26-1130a9.

[80] Ibid., 1134b18-30.

[81] Ibid., 1135a3-9.

[82] Ibid., 1134bff.

[83] Ibid., 1138b5-18.

[84] One should not read the distinction between the virtues of intellection and action too strongly. First, Aristotle seems somewhat ambivalent regarding the distinction at times, as seen in his alternative categorizations in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudaimonian Ethics*. Second, the virtues of intellection and the virtues of action are possessed in concert, and for "complete" virtue to be achieved one must possess all the virtues. Therefore, on the one hand, you have individuals like Thales, who Aristotle makes the reader question whether he has any of the virtues due to his incapacity with those of action. On the other hand, you have an understanding of the acquisition and active condition of virtue as something that is continuous, and the line dividing the said virtues as at most malleable.

[85] Ibid., 1140a29-b10.

[86] Ibid., 1141b5.

[87] Ibid., 1141b23-6.

[88] Ibid., 1145a15.

[89] *Iliad* XXIV, 258-9.

[90] *NE* 1148b15; 1149a2.

[91] Ibid., 1149a10-16.

[92] Ibid., 1145a20-31.

[93] Ibid., 1155a27-29. As Nichols (1992) says, "In other words, friendship is the fully developed virtue of character which supersedes justice. Indeed, it is that which turns a city from a community of commercial exchange (compare 1132b31-1133a5)… into a complete city."

[94] *NE* 1156b5-25.

[95] Ibid., 1156b25.

[96] Ibid., 1156b29-40.

[97] Ibid., 1158b30-1159a6.

[98] Ibid., 1161a10-21.

[99] Ibid., 1166a10-30.

[100] Ibid., 1167aff.

[101] Sachs (2002b), p. 167, n. 260.

[102] *NE* 1168b30-69a14.

[103] Sachs (2002b) says of this passage, "The argument of the last two paragraphs is one of the two main places in which the *Nicomachean Ethics* ascends to, and finds its place within, Aristotle's study of the things that are higher than human beings. The other is in Bk. X. The vast bulk of evidence from which the inquiry takes its source comes from ordinary experience and opinion, but it is a confirmation of its conclusions that they are continuous with those of other inquiries concerned with the soul, the natural world, and being as a whole. Moral goodness, friendship, and happiness are inseparable ultimately because a human being has a nature as a living thing and a constituent of the whole of things" (p. 177, n. 276).

[104] *NE* 1172a20-21.

[105] Ibid., 1175a11-22.

[106] Ibid., 1175a22-33; 1176a1-15.

[107] Ibid., 1176a29.

[108] Ibid., 1177a21-25. Although this is the first time that Aristotle explicitly names contemplation as the ultimate activity of human beings *qua* human, Sachs (2002b) points out that it has

been implied twice before: at 1095b14-1096a5, "by a reduction argument that rejects the claims of lives devoted to enjoyment or action to be the highest lives and leaves the contemplative life as the only candidate, and at 1143b33-44a6, where contemplative wisdom was said to be dominant among those activities that constitute happiness not as a consequence of what they understand but by their mere being-at-work" (p. 191, n. 292).

[109] Ibid., 1177a21-25.

[110] Ibid., 1177a24-1177b1.

[111] Ibid., 1177b7-25.

[112] Sachs (2002b) writes on this passage, "The reference is to the beginning of Bk. II, Chap. 2. There is a mutual interdependence involved here that has given rise to extensive debate. Contemplative activity is identified as our highest and most complete happiness, but it is insufficient for anything that depends upon action. The life of action is called a happy life in only a secondary way, but it appears to be an indispensable foundation for a contemplative life, since wisdom is not mere cleverness, but requires good character and right choices. At the end of Bk. VII, Aristotle focused on the difficulty of satisfying a complex nature; here he seems to be emphasizing the complex conditions that permit such satisfaction" (p. 196, n. 299).

[113] *NE* 1179b2.

[114] Ibid., 1179b2-20. Sachs (2002b) traces the quote from Theognis to verses 432-434, with the implication being that doctors could cure the human heart of vice and blindly self-destructive passion through their art (p. 196, n. 300).

[115] *NE* 1179b21-1180a14.

[116] *Pol* 1252a1; Cf. Liddell, Scott, Jones and McKenzie (1996) regarding *koinonia*. All translations in this Chapter are my own, unless otherwise noted. However, I have relied heavily on others, particularly Rackham (1944), Barnes (1984), Lord (1984), Nichols (1992) and Sachs (2002b).

[117] *Pol* 1252a1-6.

[118] Ibid., 1252a17-18.

[119] Ibid., 1252a19-20.

[120] Ibid., 1252a30-31.

[121] *Pace* entomology; see n. 132 below.

[122] It is interesting that the Greek is not specific as to who is "preserved" by this relationship. That is, it could be universal-political: both the relationship between male and female are preserved, as well as the relationship between natural ruler and ruled. It could be universal-biological: both the male and female are preserved according to the relationship between the natural ruler and ruled. Or it could be simply political: the natural ruler and the naturally ruled are mutually preserved by their relationship. While this may seem to give inflated importance to Greek intricacies, how one reads the passage has broad repercussions on the work as a whole. These repercussions will become clearer in Chapters IV and V, but for the present it serves to point out one radical difference depending upon how one reads the passage. If the "coupling" of the natural ruler and the naturally ruled merely preserves these two, then it is not necessary for existence; constitution *as well as* ruler would remain something that is subject to human deliberation, in spite of that which nature intends. Put another way, although the natural ruler and the naturally ruled may coexist in a particular

time and place, those who are naturally ruled might choose (albeit foolishly) *not* to be ruled (and thus preserved) by the natural ruler. This is of particular interest not only for the discussion of slavery (which hinges on the existence of *natural* rulers and *natural* slaves), but also on the discussion of the God Among Men (who is himself a ruler naturally, before whom all others are always already *naturally* ruled, and who—except in the penultimate form of government—will not be given the right to rule). In other words, already in this early passage, Aristotle is not just setting up his investigation of the *polis* as a natural entity. He also appears to be pointing towards the problems inherent in the relationships between slaves and masters, as well as the relationship between the best (read: natural) ruler and his potential natural subjects—both considered in the penultimate form of government (wherein they would cede power to him for their own preservation) as well as all others (wherein they would exile or kill him).

[123] As discussed in Chapter II, at *NE* 1161a10-21 Aristotle established that the despotic rule of one individual over another is always unnatural. Despotic rule of a ruler over subjects is unjust, as it does not adhere to the proportional relationship between what is due to the persons involved. As will be seen in Chapter V, despotic rule of a master over slaves is equally unjust. With actual slaves, the problem is again that of proportionality, because they should be free. With natural slaves, the injustice is toward the master himself: since the slaves are property and thereby extensions or "parts" of the master's body, a master who uses his slaves solely with a mind to his own pleasure acts irrationally.

[124] *Pol* 1252a32, emphasis mine. In the very act of distinguishing between "ruler" (*archos*) and "master" (*despotēs*), Aristotle makes explicit that the two are not essentially related.

Although *despotēs* (and the cognate verb *despozō*, "to be master") did not have the same connotation during Aristotle's time as the English borrowed term "despot," nevertheless the distinction will have important implications throughout the *Politics*. A ruler's activity is defined either by his natural or ostensible appropriateness to rule, and the only proper rulers will be shown to be those who rule according to a specifically political relationship: ruling and being ruled in turn, chosen according to their superior possession of *phronēsis* and checked by a population educated (though possessing to a limited degree) *phronēsis* . By contrast, any individual who "rules" his population as a *despotēs* commits a fundamental injustice. In the process, he not only shows that his "rule" is merely called such equivocally, but he also illustrates his incapacity as an actual ruler or *archos*—as well as his lack of *phronēsis* . The contemporary term "despot," which denotes tyrannical and unjust rule, is already prefigured in this initial distinction between a ruler and a slave-master.

[125] Ibid., 1252a35.

[126] Ibid., 1252b1-5.

[127] Ibid., 1252b1. Nichols (1992) reads Aristotle's comments regarding women more generously than most. For example, she notes that Aristotle's claims regarding the deliberative element within women being *akuron*, "without authority," are one-and-all "ambiguous" (30-32). This allows her a type of ambiguity interpreting his position. On the one hand, Aristotle may not have believed that women were inferior to men with regard to *logos*. On the other hand, Aristotle's comments may have been meant to say that the *logos* within men is overbearing. She concludes from this that the relationship between women and men is different from that between master and slave specifically because the former allows for political rule. "Political

rule is therefore appropriate to men and women because each has something to gain from the other, because each can help to make the other's partial perspective more complete. If each is completed by the other, each can in some way make his or her own what the other offers. The differences between them are therefore not absolute, as would be the differences between human beings who fit Aristotle's descriptions of master and slave. Men and women share a common humanity, perhaps best demonstrated by the facts that each combines in his or her person attributes of body and soul, passions and thoughts, and that virtue for each lies in an appropriate mean (*NE* 110a26-32)… Politics, like friendship and marriage, is properly based on similarity and difference" (33).

[128] This distinction between women, (natural) slaves, and (natural) male masters omits an interesting category: female slaves. If each of these—slaves, women, and men—have an *érgon* that is natural to them, this implies that nature makes no distinction between male and female slaves. If this is his meaning, it is very difficult to understand how and why nature has made natural, free males and females fundamentally different yet respectively complete, while making natural slave males and females fundamentally identical yet respectively incomplete. Although the issue of slavery will be dealt with in Chapter V, it is worth mentioning here that Aristotle never addresses this apparent conflation.

[129] *Pol* 1252b24-27.

[130] Ibid., 1252b28-1253a7; the reference to Homer is from *Iliad* IX, 63.

[131] It is important to remember, though impossible to discuss at this early stage, that what Aristotle means by this profound statement is specifically the *Greek polis*. Though it will prove an unsolved quandary in the *Politics*, Aristotle is adamant that other—possibly all

existing—types of government are themselves deficient versions of this natural entity. On the one hand, this creates a number of problems for these other peoples and their political systems. At times Aristotle implies that they have never achieved the type of self-sufficient community which would be properly called a natural *polis*. This leaves one asking what it is that they have accomplished in former and present times: whether it is some manner of deficient and/or monstrous natural entity, or whether it is also a natural entity of another type. On the other hand, Aristotle at times implies that the other peoples in question are incapable of the type of self-sufficing community which he would consider a natural entity. Given the strength of these early claims as to the naturalness of the *polis* as the end and, in some sense, the completion of being human [*beltiston*], the implication is forcefully presented that other peoples are not just different from the Greeks in their communities, but different *in kind* from Greeks—in short, that they are not human. More will be said on this, particularly in Chapter V.

[132] Cf. Grant (1993). The study of the quaking aspen undoubtedly would have fascinated Aristotle for a number of reasons. One seems worth relating, given its applicability to Aristotle's *polis*: "When a single stem dies, however, the entire clone feels the effect. Normally each stem sends hormones into the root system that suppress the formation of new ramets. But when a stem dies, its hormone signal dies as well. If a large number of the shoots in a stand are wiped out, the hormonal imbalance triggers a huge increase in new, rapidly growing stems. The regeneration of stems can dwarf the original destruction: researchers have counted densities of up to 400,000 aspen stems per acre." In short, the entire organism responds to the experience of its constitutive parts. My thanks to Joseph

Orkin for his assistance on all references to modern and contemporary biology.

[133] Although Aristotle points to other examples in the natural world as similar to the *polis*, such as bees and ants, modern biology might consider these to be less likely candidates. As eusocial animals, they share certain community characteristics with human beings like a division of labor, necessarily collective existence, division of reproductive functions, etc. However, the collectives they create are conditions for the possibility of the existence of the hive or colony, not existing entities in and of themselves. In other words, whereas superorganisms like the Trembling Giant in Utah function as a single organism made of many discrete parts, these other communities create a single collective which is necessary for their survival and preservation, but which itself is less a biological entity and more a construction.

[134] *Pol* 1253a7-18.

[135] Ibid., 1253b19-20.

[136] Ibid., 1253a20-25.

[137] Ibid., 1253a29.

[138] Many readers would disagree with this latter assessment of the goals of the *Politics*, as there is disagreement whether Aristotle is describing ideal or real possibilities for the *polis*. Throughout this work I will treat Aristotle as speaking seriously regarding the possibilities available to human beings in themselves and in community. Therefore, this work takes as its starting point the proposition that Aristotle means what he says (although not always at first glance), that he is not a utopian, and that the conclusions garnered from the *Ethics* and *Politics* are to be taken as programmatic (if not exhaustive) remedies for humans in their

natural communities. More will be said on this in the Chapter VI.

[139] Ibid., 1260b22.

[140] Cf., *NE* 1112a15-17, 1113a9-12.

[141] Nichols (1992), 36.

[142] *Pol* 1253a8-19.

[143] This is not to be taken as a general statement about metics, or to ignore Aristotle's unique status in Athens. On the one hand, Aristotle's ability to participate actively in the life of the *polis* does belie the preclusion of metics in *hē politikē*. On the other hand, Aristotle's position, particularly as protected by Antipater's patronage, provides him with a special opportunity to escape or circumvent being a metic.

[144] *Pol* 1265a17.

[145] Ibid., 1269a10.

[146] Ibid., 1260b15.

[147] Ibid., 1263b35-39.

[148] Ibid., 1266b34.

[149] Words attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte come to mind: "A man does not have himself killed for a half-pence a day or for a petty distinction. You must speak to the soul in order to electrify him."

[150] *Pol* 1275a20, 1275b20.

[151] Aristotle has great reservations admitting the possibility, let alone existence, of anything like democracy *qua* universal suffrage. Indeed, he states on more than one occasion that this will always remain an impossibility: total equality and ubiquitous participation in government

are at best merely an illusion and at worst self-destructive. However, this refers more to the modern appropriation of these terms—and then not in actual practice, but in idealistic description. As will be seen later in this Chapter, a polity properly so called is one in which all citizens participate in government, both literally (this is the definition of a "citizen") and practically (according to their relative possession of *phronēsis* , and insofar as they must have a hand in ruling the rulers). In other words, a "democracy" in which the citizens both undergo education in *phronēsis* and elect their leaders according to their greater possession of *phronēsis* is—literally and simultaneously—a democracy, an aristocracy, a polity, and possibly a monarchy. Indeed, if the restrictions on women and slaves were removed, Aristotle's polity is arguably more democratic, and offers greater franchise, than current manifestations of democracy or suffrage.

[152] *Pol* 1276b16ff.

[153] Ibid., 1276b33.

[154] Ibid., 1275b20.

[155] Cf. Munn (2000).

[156] Debate regarding the proper Greek in this passage provides for intriguing emendations to this paragraph's comments, although the differences do not change the stated points. In the middle of the passage, Aristotle states the following: "If it is *impossible* for a *polis* to be made up entirely of excellent men, and if it is necessary for each person to perform well the work of his position, and to do this springs from goodness, then because it is impossible for all the citizens to be alike, the goodness of a good citizen would not be one and the same as the goodness of a good man; for all ought to possess the goodness of the good citizen that is

a necessary condition of the state's being the best possible, but it is impossible that all should possess the goodness of a good man, if it is not necessary that all the citizens in a good state should be good men" (*Pol* 1276b38-1277a3; Ross [1956]). Of particular interest is the first clause. Aristotle would seem to be stating that even in the perfect *polis* it is simply an unrealistic impossibility for all those within it to be good men. This would certainly follow from, or at least align most consistently with, the stipulations frequently cited from the *Ethics* with regard to the confluence of internal and external prerequisite factors which contribute to the possible existence of a good man. Nevertheless, if Aristotle is considering an aristocracy, this unlikely event becomes (much more) possible—if not aristocracy's very definition—insofar as the number of variables is reduced to align with the aforementioned prerequisites. Bernays emends the text of the first clause, changing *adunaton* with *dunaton*, i.e., "If it is *possible* for a *polis* to be made up entirely of excellent men…" Following Rackham (1944), one consistent explanation of the emendation would be that the omitted noun be read as "citizens" rather than "men." As he states in his note to the translation, the meaning would remain roughly the same, "the sense is: assuming the possibility of a perfect state, with all its factors the best of their kind, this means that all the population will be good citizens, not that they will all be perfect specimens of the human race, because the state needs citizens of the working classes, etc., and these cannot in the nature of things be perfect humans" (n. 11). However, should one accept the emendation and keep the referent as "men," then it would be possible—in an aristocracy—that given proper conditions all could be good men *and* excellent citizens. Barnes (1984) supports this reading tacitly: "All must have the excellence of the good citizen—thus, and thus only, can the state be perfect; but

they will not have the excellence of a good man, unless we assume that in the good state all the citizens must be good." Given the difference established herein between actual and equivocal citizens, it seems to support rather than belie the possibility that in an aristocracy—regardless of the actual number of citizens—*all* the citizens could be good men.

[157] Cf. Austin (2000).

[158] In point of fact, just before the quote from Euripides, Aristotle makes a startling—and seemingly counterintuitive—claim: "Now we say that a good ruler is virtuous and wise, and that a citizen taking part in politics need not be wise." There is disagreement on whether the all-important negative in the second part of the sentence was intended or a mistake in the transmission: Barnes (1984) leaves it in, while Ross (1956) excises it without comment. Thus, depending on the manuscript, the passage either confirms the likeness between the ruler and the citizen, or it severs their similarity. As will be borne out in the paragraphs that follow, *both* readings are valid: the negative statement is true in an equivocal sense (but false in a proper sense), whereas the positive statement is true in a proper sense (but false in an equivocal sense).

[159] *Pol* 1277b12-13; Barnes (1984).

[160] Ibid., 1277b15; Barnes (1984).

[161] This last line should not be read as an oversimplification of either position. The former is significant insofar as it establishes, albeit in a roundabout manner, that *phronēsis* is the wisdom peculiar to the citizen-ruler. The latter is significant insofar as it intimates the unique position of the God Among Men. That is, even the best autocrat would seem in need

of education regarding obeying prior to ruling if he is to be most effective. Yet the God Among Men may be a special case, insofar as his rule is described as natural—making being ruled both unnatural and unjust. This will be addressed in the following Chapter.

[162] The named roles are historically anachronistic but theoretically accurate. On the one hand, during Aristotle's time the nobly born would never find themselves foot-soldiers or oarsmen. Their station and wealth would place them at the head of such associations. Indeed, during the Peloponnesian war it was both a duty and a badge of honor for those of means to outfit as many ships for the state as they could afford. Likewise, foot-soldiers had essentially no hope of rising in the ranks of command in any manner similar to a meritocratic military. Oarsmen had even less, as ships were frequently outfitted with slaves. On the other hand, from a theoretical standpoint, Aristotle is not only describing contemporary and historical associations, but also using these to illustrate what would be more appropriate associations. Therefore, regardless of whether the potential rulers in question are young officers (e.g., during Thucydides' time) or members of a meritocratic system (e.g., during Napoleon's time) the point regarding this type of education via experience and emulation is valid. Cf. Williams (1993), Munn (2000).

[163] Although the topic cannot be fully examined in this project, as seen throughout, the absolute ubiquity of *logoi* throughout these two texts (three including *de Anima*) is of great interest and significance. To wit: every significant point in this manuscript could be restated according to a series of ratios, e.g., the presence of *phronēsis* in the ruled and that in the ruler.

[164] *Pol* 1260b12-21.

[165] Ibid., 1276b16.

[166] Ibid., 1277b26-29.

[167] *Pol* 1278a22.

[168] Ibid., 1278a22; Barnes (1984).

[169] Ibid., 1278a35-b3; Barnes (1984).

[170] *Pol* 1279a26-28.

[171] Aristotle's contemporary Greek did not reflect the verbal distinction in English between a monarch or king (which are neutral) and a despot or tyrant (which are pejorative). Indeed, this is made explicit in the *Politics*, as Aristotle does not have a ready vocabulary via which to describe good and bad kings. Therefore, while he switches between the terms, we will use the former (neutral) English terms to name the single individual who rules for the sake of the *polis*, and the latter (pejorative) English terms to refer to the individual who rules for the sake of the self. Whenever the God Among Men is intended, as opposed to a "healthy" king or a "sick" despot, this will be made explicit.

[172] *Pol* 1280a30-35; Barnes (1984). This statement further buttresses the claim that natural slaves, as described by Aristotle, simply *cannot* be human. It will be dealt with in Chapter V.

[173] Ibid., 1280b14-15

[174] Ibid., 1280b15-81a10; Barnes (1984), italics mine.

[175] Ibid., 1281a8ff; Barnes (1984).

[176] Ibid., 1280b5ff; Barnes (1984).

[177] Ibid., 1280b10-13; Barnes (1984).

[178] The status of democracy will have to wait until later in Aristotle's discussion, as he is

ambiguous for much of the *Politics* as to the possibility of widespread possession of *phronēsis* .

[179] Ibid., 1281a11-39.

[180] Ibid., 1281a11ff; Ross (1956).

[181] Ibid., 1281a11ff; Ross (1956).

[182] *NE* 1160b1-3.

[183] *Pol* 1281a11-39; Ross (1956).

[184] Ibid., 1281bff.

[185] Ibid., 1281b18-20; Nichols (1992).

[186] *Pol* 1282a5.

[187] Ibid., 1282a15.

[188] Ibid., 1283a20.

[189] Ibid., 1282b15-20.

[190] Here lies a fantastic claim *contra* those who would determine an individual's relative worth by the color—quite literally—of their skin, or other physiological characteristics. (Anti-)Aristotelians might wish to point to the *Ethics* to claim I am being too generous, but it is important to remember the context in which those other passages—which do concede the advantage of *hoi kaloi*—appear. That is, theirs is an advantage, and *hoi kakoi* are at a disadvantage. But this does not necessarily have anything to do with their abilities or worth. Further, it may be that Aristotle believes it *should* not have anything to do with their lives. That is, rather than being a "typical Greek," it may be that he is being both "modern" and realistic, supporting a position with which many would have to concur. Exceptionally good-

looking people may have an easier time in life than exceptionally ugly people, but Socrates is the quintessential example of why this must be a mutable rule. In this case, as in many, Socrates may be on Aristotle's mind.

[191] I borrow the title of this section from the eponymous Chapter III of Nichols' *Citizens and Statesmen* (1992), although I have added the qualifier "aristocratic." Nichols' reading of the *Politics* is as scholarly as it is accessible, and I find myself closely aligned with her overall theses regarding polity and political rule being the fundamental goals behind the *Politics*. However, as will be shown in this section, her rejection of aristocracy is ultimately a point of contention.

[192] *Pol* 1280a30-35.

[193] Ibid., 1288a33-41.

[194] Ibid., 1286a5ff.

[195] However, at ibid., 1310bff Aristotle calls tyranny the worst form of government and most harmful specifically insofar as it combines the worst vices of oligarchy and democracy. Although this might seem either ambiguous or contradictory, the difficulty recedes when one remembers that the project is a dialectical investigation rather than a linear treatise. In the earlier case Aristotle's concern is how best a state may insure its preservation. Understandably, his conclusion is as Machiavellian as the question: the absolute tyrant is more capable of maintaining order through force than some more diffused power structure. When Aristotle later calls tyranny the worst form of government, he is interested both in the vices particular to the rulers and their effects on the ruled and in the manner in which the ruler might reform towards political rule. Thus, tyranny is the most difficult type of rule,

insofar as it leaves everyone at the mercy of the ruler's caprice, and it is least likely to undergo reform.

[196] E.g., just before 1289b, Aristotle states that the question regarding aristocracy, kingship, and when royal government is to be adopted "has been decided before." This would certainly imply that Book III precedes Book IV.

[197] *Pol* 1295a30ff.

[198] Ibid., 1300b3.

[199] Ibid., 1301a20ff.

[200] Ibid., 1301a22ff.

[201] Ibid., 1309aff.

[202] Ibid., 1309bff.

[203] Cf. Jaeger (1948).

[204] *Pol* 1323a14-16.

[205] Ibid., 1324a25ff.

[206] Ibid., 1325bff.

[207] Ibid., 1325b35ff.

[208] Ibid., 1326b15.

[209] Ibid., 1329a10-20.

[210] Ibid., 1333a8ff, emphasis added.

[211] Ibid., 1334a5ff.

[212] *Analects* II, 1.

[213] Nichols (1992) is an excellent example of a reader who excises the God Among Men as an

apparent contradiction within Aristotle's text. Although she offers a protracted examination of the God Among Men, she ultimately concludes that this individual cannot exist. I will address her argument in Chapters IV and VI.

[214] Although Aristotle sometimes speaks of more than one individual possessing the characteristics of the God Among Men, I will use the singular throughout my discussion in order to avoid more wordy and confusing constructions. As for the gender specific pronoun, given the historical context and Aristotle's own stipulations with regard to the status of women in the *polis*, it would be anachronistic to refer to the political community as anything other than "men."

[215] *Pol* 1284a3-10. All translations from Greek in this Chapter are mine (unless otherwise noted), though I have consulted several other translations, particularly Rackham (1944), Barnes (1984), and Sachs (2002b).

[216] *NE* 1140b1-4.

[217] Ibid., 1140b5-7; 1140b25.

[218] Why he uses these constructions—e.g., whether they result from his students' editorial liberties, whether they are rhetorical choices made by Aristotle for easier discussion but not constitutive, whether they point toward more serious inconsistencies in the text or between texts, whether they imply that there are different types of *phronēsis* , etc.—is beyond the present paper.

[219] Ibid., 1140b8-12.

[220] Ibid., 1141b23.

[221] Ibid., 1142a9-11.

[222] E.g., at ibid., 1142a10-20, Aristotle points out that young men are never thought to have *phronēsis* , because it "becomes familiar from experience, and a young person is not experienced, for length of time makes experience."

[223] Ibid., 1144a25. In this passage, Aristotle uses the word *deinotes* specifically to describe that which allows us to avoid sin—and he uses the exact metaphor (archery) in his description. See n. 64.

[224] Ibid., 1144a26-7.

[225] Ibid., 1144a36.

[226] *Pol* 1275b19-21.

[227] All quotes in this discussion of the good man and the excellent citizen are from *Pol* 1276b15-1277b35, unless otherwise noted. A note on translation: throughout this discussion, I will refer to the comparison as that between the "good man" and the "excellent citizen." This goes against many of the other translations I have consulted, which do not distinguish between the two—resulting in the "good man" and the "good citizen." However, the Greek typically distinguishes the *aretē* of the *andros agathou* from that of the *politou spoudaiou*. Although Aristotle is not completely consistent in his usage, in my discussion I will attempt to preserve the difference where it appears in the Greek, as I find it to be of particular importance when one relates this passage to Aristotle's insistence that *phronēsis* is an *arête*, rather than a *technē* or an *epistēmē*. I hope to discuss this at length in what follows.

[228] *Pol* 1278a12-20. One might complain that citizens in an aristocracy also share in multiple jobs, for they are at least concerned with household management. Though I cannot completely unpack this objection, I can say that in his descriptions of the best citizens in the

best *polis*, Aristotle indicates: first, that they should have but one job (*phronēsis*); second, that they should have the conditions to be subject solely to this job. Thus, citizens in an aristocracy must not be subject to the pursuit of wealth (which would take them away from considerations of the *polis*), but rather must be already wealthy enough to avoid this concern. And regarding household management, Aristotle at least implies that for one who has *phronēsis* , this excellence will provide for their abilities as masters of the house as well as in their role as citizens. "Wherefore for those who have so much substance as not to be in distress, some steward takes this office, while they practice politics or philosophy [*politeuontai e philosophousin*]" (1255b35-1256a1).

[229] Ibid., 1277b20-24.

[230] Ibid., 1278b1-5.

[231] Ibid., 1286a29-b8.

[232] Ibid., 1284a11-14.

[233] Ibid., 1284 b16-34. To my knowledge the first use of the verb *ostrakizo* occurs in Thucydides (1.135), with reference to Themistocles' exile from Athens.

[234] Aristotle reserves the specific distinctions and discussion of the God Among Men for the *Politics*. However, his discussions of "noble birth" (which, though primarily located in the section entitled *ek ton aristotelous peri eugeneias* of Stobaeus' *Anthologium*, nevertheless can be found in several of Aristotle's works) bear striking similarities to the issue of the God Among Men. The issue of "noble birth" will be dealt with in the next Chapter.

[235] *Pol* 1288a16-33. Cf. Ambler (1987), 390-410, who drives home this point well when examining another passage, though he never mentions the God Among Men. When

discussing the despotic rule of master over slave, Aristotle finishes a list of comparisons (soul over body, human over animal, man over women) with the rule of godlike human beings over free persons. "Because the godlike superiority of such men is not doubted, the present text does not occasion dread at the prospect of being enslaved but regret that such extraordinary slave masters are not likely to be recognized. This text thus goes far in reducing our apprehensions about despotic rule properly understood even as it is undeceived regarding the limitations of actual slave masters. Perhaps the greater regret is not that free men might be enslaved but that they will continue to be left without worthy masters. To the doubt that actual slaves are natural slaves, Aristotle adds the doubt that actual masters are natural masters. This, I suspect, is why he now substitutes the term *free man* for the term *master*. We should ask not only whether slaves are slaves but also whether masters are masters" (400).

[236] Ibid., 1288a35-b5.

[237] Ibid., 1284b30ff. After stating that it would be "just and expedient" for a lesser *polis* to ostracize such an individual, Aristotle says that "in the perfect *polis* there would be great doubts about the use of it… Therefore it is left that all gladly obey such a sort, as it were according to nature, and that those of such a sort be kings eternally in their *polis*."

[238] *NE* 1094a27-1094b2.

[239] "The state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing to exist for the sake of the good life" (*Pol* 1252a1-7; See also: 1290a30, 1281a3-8, 1295a35-b1).

[240] Ibid., 1258a20-25.

[241] Ibid., 1333a11-15.

[242] Aristotle's descriptions of aristocracy belie a certain improbability almost like that of the God Among Men. He often refers to "so-called aristocracies, if there are any," seemingly emphasizing the difficulty, though not impossibility, of forming an aristocracy: for "where excellence has not the first place, aristocracy cannot be firmly established," and even then it would truly exist "provided only that a number of men equal in excellence can be found" (*Pol* 1278a16; 1273b3; 1286b10).

[243] Among the folklore surrounding King Arthur is a legend that the king never in fact died. Rather, the spirit of the king lingers or slumbers, only to arise once again when England most needs him. This is not to imply that Aristotle sees the God Among Men as a savior, but rather that the citizenry would perpetuate the idea that the God Among Men may arise at any time. In this context, the God Among Men bears great similarity to the Talmudic tradition regarding the Messiah in Judaism. Of the more famous quotes regarding the Messiah is the question of when he will come. The answer is always the same, though stated in a number of different permutations: "Today, if ye will listen to his voice." The idea is that every generation has its own Messiah, yet his purpose is not to save a fallen world. On the contrary: the Messiah will only reveal himself if the world is ready for him—due specifically to their great righteousness.

[244] *Pol* 1273a35.

[245] This is true regardless of whether the God Among Men in this case is constituted of one or many individuals. On the one hand, if there are a number of individuals of such similar quality (which Aristotle concedes several times as a possibility), then the problem of equals and friendship is potentially moot. On the other hand, the point made in the following few

pages regarding the God Among Men's relationship with the phronetic *polis* holds regardless of the number of individuals each of whom might be called a God Among Men.

[246] Although the language here obviously invokes Levinas (1987), and although I find there to be many exciting similarities between Levinas' understanding of the Other and Aristotle's description of friendship, the allusion is not intended to be pregnant.

[247] *Pol* 1288a30.

[248] Harris (1989), 293.

[249] There are in fact many examples of subtlety, comedy, and irony in Aristotle's work. Further, Aristotle's lost works had a high reputation for style in antiquity.

[250] Cf. Fritsche (1997) for an extensive look at the fragments. Fritsche's essay is one of the few studies I have found that observes the direct links between Aristotle's discussions of noble birth and slavery.

[251] I borrow this translation of *to ti en eĩnai* from Fritsche (1997).

[252] In the following discussion of Aristotle's understanding and use of substance and function, I find myself in agreement with Irwin (1981).

[253] *Met* 1032a20-25. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

[254] Irwin (1981), 38.

[255] *Gen of Animals* 737a28.

[256] *Met* 1033b32-33.

[257] Ibid., 1045a7- b25.

[258] Ibid., 1033b22-25.

[259] Ibid., 1034a5-8.

[260] Irwin (1981), 38. At *Pol* 1253a20-25, Aristotle compares a human hand on a living person, a corpse, and a stone statue. Only the first is properly deemed a "hand;" the latter two share the name but not the being of the thing thus named. "But all things are separated off with respect to *ergon* and *dunamis*, so that the being of the things are no longer said to be the same such a sort of thing, but to have the same name."

[261] *Gen of Animals*, 747a24-749a5; *Met* 1034a21-b19, 1033b20-1034a8.

[262] Although Aristotle often speaks of "nobility" throughout his corpus, nowhere else does he offer a sustained look at "noble birth."

[263] Hereafter F 91, 92, and 94, following Ross (1956).

[264] Stobaeus, *Anthologium* IV xxix A 24.

[265] Ibid., A 25.

[266] Ibid., C 52.

[267] Although one might be tempted to connect this description of the noble *archegos* and Aristotle's description of the God Among Men, it is both tenuous and accidental at best. On the one hand, the preeminent goodness of the *archegos* (and all subsequent members of a noble family) would seem to align with that of the God Among Men, which is outside of the realm of human artifice or education. Just as the God Among Men is described in a manner which seems to exceed the abilities of human beings, so too the *archegos* should lead the reader to assume Aristotle is describing an impossibly virtuous being. In this sense, then, the *archegos* could be described as a "god among men." Nevertheless, his relationship to the state (if he existed) would not necessarily mirror that of the God Among Men described in Chapter IV. If it did, then the *polis* would face the choices of ceding power to him and his

progeny (as they, too, would share his absolute preeminence), or they would try to kill or exile him and his family, depending on the character of the *polis*. This scenario would seem to conflict with Aristotle's comments regarding the worth of individuals and the honors of the state (i.e., in this case the God-Among-Men-led government would be an eternal hereditary monarchy), although given a sufficiently phronetic *polis* they may recognize that the noble family was preeminent in every generation and therefore deserved absolute allegiance. Indeed, while this reading does not disprove the relationship between the *archegos* of nobility and the God Among Men, it does imply either that there have never been noble families on earth, or that there have never been phronetic *poleis*. For given the eternal (*pace* extinction) production of equally qualified Gods Among Men in the noble family, one would expect to find a single account of a noble family taking power in a *polis* and not losing their reign save due to external factors (e.g., invasion). That is, the possibility of a God Among Men as described in the *Politics* is much more likely as it only describes a lifetime, whereas that of *On Noble Birth* is all the less likely due to its eternal efficacy. On the other hand, although the *archegos* may be a God Among Men, the God Among Men is in no way an *archegos*. The fundamental characteristic which determines the noble *archegos* is his ability to produce like kind. The God Among Men, by contrast, has no such designation. Indeed, if the God Among Men were ever to arise, one would hope that his progeny would share his preeminence, but Aristotle gives us no theoretical or practical reason for such hope. Thus, while both descriptions require some suspension of disbelief, the God Among Men does not in any way require a separate species in order to be possible, whereas the *archegos* of nobility specifically requires it.

[268] *Pol* , 1254a18-24.

[269] Williams (1993), 108.

[270] *Iliad* VI, 534-555.

[271] Cf. Ambler (1987), Garver (1994).

[272] Garver (1994) provides an excellent exposition of the importance of keeping these two arguments separate. I recommend his article for a more detailed elucidation of these points.

[273] *Pol* 1252a24-35.

[274] Ibid., 1253b33-54a1.

[275] This is not to critique Aristotle's reasoning by reference to an impossible or near improbable scenario which would be completely beyond his (and arguably everyone's) horizon. Rather, it is merely to point out that his argument for slavery's *necessity*—which entails that slaves must exist, as nature provides for everything that is necessary—actually proves their *contingency*. During Aristotle's lifetime discoveries in engineering illustrated this fact: something which only previously was done by a slave could be shown to be done by other means. If this is at all possible, it belies Aristotle's argument.

[276] Williams (1993), 107.

[277] Ambler (1987), 396. Smith (1983) sees this inconsistency as further proof of Aristotle's failure to provide a robust defense of natural slavery. While Ambler agrees that Aristotle's account is flawed, he finds this wholly intentional: "If, however, it was Aristotle's intention to show various differences between natural and actual slavery, and not so simply to ratify actual slavery as natural, then this would not be a sign of failure but one aspect of his success" (396).

[278] Williams (1993), 111.

[279] Garver (1994), 180. Garver cites *Pol* 1252b1-3 and 1256b20-22 as support for his claim. Though I agree in principle with his statement as an Aristotelian maxim, I do not read either of Garver's references as explicitly making the connection with slavery. The latter passage from the *Politics* does state that nature makes nothing either without a *telos* or idly, but this still requires the *existence* of slaves prior to the question about nature's intention in having made them.

[280] Williams (1993), 113.

[281] Cf. *Pol* 1254a29-31, 1255a5-6, 1255b5-8, etc.

[282] *Pol* 1254b34-1255a2.

[283] *Pol* 1254b15-23.

[284] E.g., as seen in the above discussion regarding *to ti en eĩnai* from the *Metaphysics*, in addition to the *Politics*.

[285] Fritsche (1997) could be read as coming to similar conclusions, though his argument is less concerned with the intention of the *Politics* and more related to the form of Aristotle's argument. More will be said of this below.

[286] Ambler (1987), 390.

[287] Ibid., 400.

[288] Fritsche (1997), 188.

[289] *Met* 1034a5-8.

[290] Presumably Aristotle has in mind such circumstances as re-enslaving one who has wrongly been freed, or enslaving another upon discovering that he has not yet been recognized

according to his nature. Aristotle's comment at *Pol* 1255b37-8, that the just acquisition of slaves is akin to hunting, would appear to support this reading. Although it was mentioned in Chapter III that Aristotle's description of Asians would imply a ready supply of slaves—with the potential conclusion that this type of "hunting" is meant for Asians—there are problems with this. Some were mentioned in that Chapter; the rest will be seen in what follows.

[291] *Pol* 1255a25-6.

[292] Fortenbaugh (1977), 135-139. I agree with Smith (1983) and Williams (1993), who question the end result of Fortenbaugh's account. Aristotle's frequent comparisons might actually lend more support to the reverse of Fortenbaugh's argument: by his own reading, slaves may have more shared characteristics with, and thereby be more likely members of, a species of domesticated animal (e.g., dogs) than humans!

[293] Fritsche (1997), n. 21; cf. *Met* 1255a39-1255b2.

[294] Fritsche (1997), 189.

[295] *Pol* 1255a37-8. This passage prompts two further observations. First, this is one of the few times Aristotle mentions noble birth in the *Politics*. On the one hand, Aristotle talks about nobility in that text frequently. On the other hand, this is one of the few times in the *Politics* wherein he seems to have the same thing in mind as that which is described in *Peri eugeneias*, rather than simply the conventional understanding or the colloquial expression. Second, the comment recalls a passage from the *Iliad* (I.289-320). Just after Achilles smashes his scepter, just after Agamemnon wrongs him and he stays his hand at the order of Athena and Hera, Nestor steps in to adjudicate: **"**The son of Atreus smoldered, / glaring across at him, but Nestor rose between them, [290] / the man of winning words, the clear

speaker of Pylos... / Sweeter than honey from his tongue the voice flowed on and on. / Two generations of mortal men he had seen go down by now, / those who were born and bred with him in the old days, / in Pylos' holy realm, and now he ruled the third. / He pleaded with both kings, with clear good will, / “No more—or enormous sorrow comes to all Achaea! / How they would exult, Priam and Priam's sons / and all the Trojans. Oh they'd leap for joy / to hear the two of you battling on this way, [300] / you who excel us all, first in Achaean councils, / first in the ways of war. Stop. Please. / Listen to Nestor. You are both younger than I, / and in my time I struck up with better men than you, / even you, but never once did they make light of me. / I've never seen such men, I never will again... / men like Pirithous, Dryas, that fine captain, / Caeneus and Exadius, and Polyphemus, royal prince, / and Theseus, Aegeus' boy, a match for the immortals. / They were the strongest mortals ever bred on earth, [310] / the strongest, and they fought against the strongest too, / shaggy Centaurs, wild brutes of the mountains-- / they hacked them down, terrible, deadly work. / And I was in their ranks, fresh out of Pylos, / far away from home—they enlisted me themselves / and I fought on my own, a free lance, single-handed. / And none of the men who walk the earth these days / could battle with those fighters, none, but they, / they took to heart my counsels, marked my words. / So now you listen too. Yielding is far better...” (Fagles, 1990).

[296] Fritsche (1997), 176-7.

[297] Indeed, as Fritsche states without comment, in order for his analysis to make sense, one must assume that nobility is in fact a separate species from freepersons.

[298] Irwin (1981), 49.

[299] Bates (1862).

[300] Fortenbaugh (1977), 135-139. I agree with Smith (1983) and Williams (1993), who question the end result of Fortenbaugh's account.

[301] Smith (1983), 118. There is an inherent irony in the account of Aristotle's description of the soul ruling the body despotically due to the lack of *logos* in one of the parts; the only proper way in which the soul may rule the body is according to *logos* considered as ratio. That is, the soul cannot rule the body with complete despotism, insofar as this would fail to consider the needs of the body *per se*. In other words, it is the lack of *logos* of one of the parts that allows the soul to rule the body *according to the* logos, making the proper rule of the body both despotic and royal.

[302] Ibid., 114.

[303] Garver (1994), 179.

[304] Ibid., 175.

[305] Ibid., 193.

[306] Ibid., 195.

[307] E.g., *Pol*. 1256b20-22: "Now if nature makes nothing incomplete, and nothing in vain, the inference must be that she has made all animals for the sake of man," trans. Barnes (1984).

[308] Fritsche (1997), 187-8.

[309] Von Fritz and Kapp (1977), 116, emphasis in original. It is odd that von Fritz and Kapp cite one of the only examples in Aristotle's corpus wherein he describes nature as failing to do that which it intends—and in the particular context of slavery—as if this were a common or representative illustration of Aristotle's general view.

[310] *Pol* 1253a2-29.

[311] Garver (1994), 179.

[312] Ibid., 182. Garver's translation.

[313] *Met* 1034a5-8; *Pol*. 1256b20-22.

[314] Fritsche (1997) could be read as coming to similar conclusions, though his argument is less concerned with the intention of the *Politics* and more related to the form of Aristotle's argument. Therefore, Ambler is the only commentator who has stated such to my knowledge.

[315] Ambler (1987), 390.

[316] Ibid., 403.

[317] Ibid., 400.

[318] Ibid., 400.

[319] E.g., *NE* 1099b26ff, wherein Aristotle uses Priam as an example of how even the most blessed and happy can fall into abject horror.

[320] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 156-169b.

[321] Garver (1994), 195.

[322] In this vein, readers often cite Aristotle's will from Diogenes Laertius (Vol. I, V.11). Aside from the usual caution requisite in relying on Diogenes Laertius for untainted historical information, in addition to the occupational apprehension associated with *ad hominem* proofs, the account remains mixed. On the one hand, in it Aristotle lays out in detail instructions for the manumission of his slaves. His provisions for their freedom are astonishingly liberal: e.g., he states that Ambracis should not only receive her freedom, but

also that once Aristotle's daughter is married she is to be paid 500 drachmas (roughly the equivalent of one and a half years' salary for a hoplite) and to be given her own slave. On the other hand, there is tremendous cynicism contained in this account if it is accurate. Although readers have pointed to this as proof of Aristotle's progressive views towards slavery, a more honest assessment would note: (a) that Aristotle was more than happy to enjoy his slaves until after his death, and (b) that giving a slave *both* freedom *and* her very own slave is anything but a progressive stance towards slavery.

[323] Emerson (1996); Kierkegaard (1992).

[324] It has been suggested to me that any such (re)interpretation of Aristotle which posits his use of style (e.g., subtlety, irony, etc.) is Straussian. I find this to be an exaggeration of Strauss' influence on ancient scholarship (i.e., there are many other groups in the Continental philosophy tradition which proceed along such lines when reading ancient texts without being considered Straussians), as well as a misconception of the meaning and extent to which such rhetoric is operative in Aristotle's thought. Although I agree with the Straussians—and many others—that there is a potentially infinite reward to (re)reading the philosophical canon with a fresh eye to potential new interpretations, both for what they can tell us about the authors' respective thought and for what they can reveal to us regarding our own milieu, my correspondence with Strauss ends there. Regardless of my allegiance to any group (or possibly because of my lack of allegiance to Strauss), I read ancient and contemporary philosophical scholarship alike with an eye to the most compelling and consistent analysis and interpretation of the text or idea. It is my hope that by suggesting ulterior motives to Aristotle's thought, the analysis will be read on the validity of the

analysis itself.

[325] The quote is widely attributed to Otto von Bismarck, although no firsthand account is extant.

[326] *Pol* 1265a17.

[327] Ibid., 1325b35ff.

[328] Regarding the common invocation of Machiavelli's name with reference to the tyrant maintaining his hold on power through strength and fear, it is important to remember that Machiavelli endorses *both* approaches in *The Prince*. On the one hand, in Chapter XVII, regarding the question whether it is better to be feared or loved, he famously states that while one would hope for both, it is much safer to be feared. However, elsewhere he states that the most secure and effective ruler is he who has the love of the people. For this is as a natural salve to the infectious internal injuries of factions, and is much more difficult to be won once lost.

[329] *Pol* 1332a31-32; Nichols (1992), 151.

[330] *Pace* those who promote or support tyranny: this comment is obviously understood as applying to those who would concern themselves with democracy.

[331] See n. 242.

[332] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Book V (Elis 1), Chapter 7.9.

[333] Clarke (1973).

[334] *Iliad* XXIV, 255-260.

[335] This is certainly not a simple claim, and the present investigation does not permit unpacking a comment which would produce as many pro positions from scholars of Plato as it would con ones. While it is clear that Socrates resists characterization by or through many of Aristotle's

virtues (e.g., temperance), nevertheless he certainly lays claim to many others (e.g., courage). The present point is that he has been regarded throughout the history of the West as a near exemplar of both virtue *and* civic duty, which is why his case is so interesting.

[336] *Pol* 1334a23-24; see Nichols (1992), 151ff.

[337] Ibid., 1277b25-27; b16-18; see Nichols (1992), 151ff.

[338] Nichols (1992), 128-132, emphasis in the original.

[339] Cf. *Pol* 1324a19-20; 1282b23; 1288b13ff. Nichols (1992) concludes from this, "it is wrong to think of *theoria* as necessarily apolitical" (128).

[340] Nichols (1992), 130. Cf. Newman (1902), I, 294-5; Mulgan (1977), 89.

[341] *Pol* 1325b28-30, Nichols (1992), 133.

[342] *Pace* Boethius, who is the classic example of one who took Aristotle's comments regarding the continuous invulnerability of philosophy (ibid., 1177a21-25), even in solitude, to their limit.

[343] *NE* 1097b7-11; 1168b25-34; 1099a34b2; 1097a34-b5 (respectively). Cf. Nichols (1992), 175.

[344] Nor does it make Aristotle's texts, or this reading of them, Straussian.

[345] *NE* 1140a29-b10.

[346] Ibid., 1103b1-5.

[347] Ibid., 1179b21-1180a14

[348] Ibid., 1134b18-30.

[349] Ibid., 1135a-9.

[350] Insofar as the political activity of the philosopher, in addition to his contemplation, does not constitute a disturbance. As has been shown, the life of action is no more at odds with the

life of contemplation than the participation in the political life of the *polis* should be considered a burden for the philosopher. In this we have another example of the misconception, or the circumstantial nature, that the philosopher is most properly a philosopher insofar as he is able to avoid political engagement. This is potentially the case, but it is dependent upon the nature of the *polis* in which the philosopher lives. The philosopher is always necessarily engaged with the *polis*. However, the manner in which the philosopher experiences this engagement—whether as a joy, as a burden, or even as a threat to his existence—is a testament to the *polis* and its place on the spectrum between an aristocratic polity of political rule and a despotism.

[351] *NE* 1103b1-5.

[352] This is not to say that most readers agree with the present project, that Aristotle did not endorse slavery but actually intended his account to be a critique of the practice. Rather, it is to say that almost all would agree that—regardless of Aristotle's intentions—any justification of slavery is ludicrous. The same could be said for the Hamitic Theory regarding the origins of the "races" of Europe, Asia, and Africa (and later Latin America). Regardless of the intentions of the author(s) of these theories and texts, the ideas are politically and biologically ridiculous.

[353] This is not to say that all claims from biology to behavior are specious. More will be said on this below.

[354] As a handicapped individual with a neurological disorder, this issue is of personal importance in addition to its profound philosophical and political implications.

[355] Other potential areas of inquiry, which are supported if not compelled by this project, are (1)

the inextricable relationship between public education and a properly functioning democracy, and (2) the applicability of Aristotle's *Politics* for political theory regarding the strengths, and problems, within liberalism.

VITA

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SELECTED PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS

2011 "*Logos* and Pity in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*," Respondent, Ancient Philosophy Society, April 14, Utah Valley University

2010 "The Politics of Friedrich Nietzsche and John Stuart Mill," Respondent, Tri-State Philosophy Colloquium, March 26-27, Rhodes College

2010 **"**Rumi's Mysticism and/in the *Qur'an*," Core Text Pedagogy Colloquium, March 25, Rhodes College

2009 "The God Among Men in Aristotle's *Politics*," Invited Lecture, Philosophy Lecture Series, April 13, The Pennsylvania State University

2009 "Teaching the *Qur'an*," Core Text Pedagogy Colloquium, March 27, Rhodes College

2008 "Aristotle's Biologizing of the Political," Invited Lecture, Philosophy Department Colloquium, April 24, Texas A&M University

2006 "On Slaves and Nobles: Three Kinds of Being Human in Aristotle's *Politics*," Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy, meeting in conjunction with the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science, October 21, Fordham University

2004 "On *nous* and the Whole: The Two Sides of Anaxagoras' Janus-faced *phusis*," Ancient Philosophy Society, April 17, The Pennsylvania State University

AWARDS AND GRANTS

2010 **Enrichment Grant**, Search Core Texts Program, Rhodes College

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