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**ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS AND ECONOMICS PART II:  
POLITICS (HIGH AND LOW)**

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

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## Aristotle's Ethics and Economics Part II: Politics (High and Low)\*

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### ABSTRACT

This paper on Aristotle (384-322 BC) is part of a long-term research programme on the ancient Greeks. It is a companion to other work, which deals with the ancient Greek context, and the thought/work of Socrates (469-399 BC), Plato (427-347 BC), and Xenophon (434-355 BC). The framework for the investigations is shaped by the Capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen.

This is the second of three papers concerning Aristotle. The first paper considered Aristotle's ethics. The projected paper will focus on his economics. The current paper focuses on Aristotle's politics.

Aristotle distinguishes between a narrow and a broad definition of politics (*politikē*). The peak of politics in the *polis*, the legislative art, fundamentally affects private behaviour (and choice and character) by individuals through enactment of law. Political science, in this sense, is the 'architectonic' or 'master' science i.e. the master of the practical sciences. It is in this 'master' role that politics can bring the potential formative (character shaping) role of law into being in a coherent manner. Under the master science are three subordinate practical sciences: ethics (*ēthika*); the science of household management (*oikonomikē*); and political science in the second, narrow sense, of the study of the government of the *polis* (*politikē*).

The paper is structured as follows. After a brief introduction, Section 2 turns to some preliminary points. The next two sections discuss ethical motivation. Section 3 discusses Aristotle's view of the development of the virtues, especially friendship and justice, *before* the *polis* emerges. Section 4 turns to Aristotle's view of the virtues, especially friendship and justice, in the *polis*-era of history. It elaborates on the institutional needs of *eudaimonia*. The following three sections primarily address Aristotle's view of social achievement. Section 5 discusses the variety of political regimes and citizenships. It introduces us to some of Aristotle's views on politics in the more mundane sense of 'government' of the *polis*. Section 6 discusses Aristotle's criticisms of various actual and imagined regimes which have been called very good or 'best'. Section 7 uses Aristotle's statements in his own name to sketch the best regime. Some concluding comments are offered in Section 8.

**Keywords:** ethics and economics; Aristotle; Amartya Sen; ethical motivation; human well-being; social achievement

**JEL:** A12; A13; B11

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper on Aristotle (384-322 BC)<sup>1</sup> is part of a long-term research programme on the ancient Greeks which will culminate in a book (Alvey forthcoming a). It is a companion to other work, which deals with the ancient Greek context, and the thought/work of Socrates (469-399 BC), Plato (427-347 BC), and Xenophon (434-355 BC).<sup>2</sup> The framework for the investigations is shaped by the Capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen (see Alvey 2005).

This is the second of three papers concerning Aristotle. The first paper considered Aristotle's ethics (see Alvey forthcoming b). The projected paper will focus on his economics. The current paper focuses on Aristotle's politics.

This paper has seven further sections. Section 2 discusses some preliminary matters, including what Aristotle means by politics. He distinguishes between politics as the master art (legislating character-forming laws) and politics as government administration. Sections 3 and 4 discuss ethical motivation. The former discusses Aristotle's view of the development of the virtues, especially friendship and justice, *before* the *polis* emerges. The latter turns to Aristotle's view of the virtues, especially friendship and justice, in the *polis*-era of history. It elaborates on the institutional needs of *eudaimonia*. The following three sections primarily address Aristotle's view of social achievement. Section 5 discusses the variety of political regimes and citizenships. It introduces us to some of Aristotle's views on politics in the more mundane sense of 'government' of the *polis*. Section 6 discusses Aristotle's criticisms of various actual and imagined regimes which have been called very good or 'best'. Section 7 uses Aristotle's statements in his own name to sketch the best regime. Finally, some concluding comments are offered in Section 8.

## 2. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

Before proceeding to the main arguments of the paper in Sections 3 to 7, five preliminary matters need to be discussed. First, we need to clarify why a paper on Aristotle's politics is required at all. Second, some background on Aristotle's divisions of knowledge is required. Here we clarify the two types of 'politics' which Aristotle considers. Next, we need to discuss two important ancient Greek institutions: the *oikos* and the *polis*. How did they emerge and when? What are their main features? Fourth, we need a little information on what Aristotle has to say on virtue in general and the specific virtues. Finally, what Aristotle says about the best way of life must be addressed.

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, unless otherwise stated, all citations are to the works of Aristotle. The following abbreviation conventions have been adopted: Aristotle *Eudemian Ethics* = *EE*; Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* = *NE*; Aristotle *Politics* = *Pol*; Aristotle *Rhetoric* = *Rhet*; Plato *Republic* = *Rep*; Plato *Statesman* = *States*; Xenophon *Memorabilia* = *Mem*; Xenophon *Oeconomicus* = *Oec*; and Xenophon *Ways and Means* = *Ways*. Citations from classical sources follow the standard conventions.

<sup>2</sup> On the ancient Greek context see (Alvey 2010a). On Socrates and Xenophon, see (Alvey 2010b; Alvey 2011b). On Plato, see (Alvey 2010c; Alvey 2010d; Alvey 2011a; Alvey 2011c).

--*Why Do We Need a Paper on Aristotle's Politics?*

Why is a paper on Aristotle's politics required? In the earlier paper on Aristotle's ethics, at many points, explicit linkages were made to politics as the master art. In addition, implicit connections were made to the lower form of politics (government). Two conclusions follow. First, we should elaborate on some of the social or political virtues. This enriches the 'ethics-related view of motivation' and *eudaimonia* that dominated that earlier paper. Second, we should begin to discuss social achievement.

--*Aristotle's Divisions of Knowledge*

Next, in order to grasp what Aristotle means by politics, we need to consider the divisions of knowledge that Aristotle adopted. For Aristotle, there is a sharp break between the theoretical and the practical sciences. The objects of the theoretical sciences are the unchangeable things (what we call the pure and natural sciences, plus theology); the practical sciences concern the changeable things which are associated with human action (*praxis*) (Lord 1984, p. 18).

Some difficulty occurs in grasping Aristotle's understanding of the practical sciences because of his terminology. He distinguishes between a narrow and a broad definition of politics (*politikē*) (*NE* 1141b22-34; [1925] 1980, p. 147). The peak of politics in the *polis*, the legislative art, fundamentally affects private behaviour (and choice and character) by individuals through enactment of law: 'it legislates ... what we are to do and what we are to abstain from' (*NE* 1094b5-7; [1915] 1925; see Sen 1987, p. 3). Political science, in this sense, is the 'architectonic' or 'master' science i.e. the master of the practical sciences (*NE* 1094a27-8; [1925] 1980, p. 2; Lord 1984, p. 19). It is in this 'master' role that politics can bring the potential formative (character shaping) role of law into being in a coherent manner.<sup>3</sup>

Under the master science are three subordinate practical sciences. They are ethics (*ēthika*), or what may be called the study of character (*ēthos*); the science of household management (*oikonomikē*); and political science in the second, narrow sense, of the study of the government of the *polis* (*politikē*) (Lord 1987, p. 121). This paper will consider both politics as the master science and politics as government.

--*The Oikos and the Polis*

The next preliminary points concern the historical emergence and character of two fundamental ancient Greek institutions, the *oikos* and the *polis*. The *oikos* has no modern name but can be translated as 'household' providing that some explanation of the term is provided. Both persons and property belong to the *oikos* (Nagle 2006, p. 16n). Actual *oikoi* developed over time in size, autonomy, and function. In the classical pattern presented by Aristotle, the normal *oikos* grew in size, and then became a part of a village (*kome*) and then a *polis*. On the other hand, not all households followed this pattern. In some contexts, the *oikos* was swallowed up in an empire. In other contexts, the household remained autonomous. A regional territory with a people (a *dēmos*) without a formal union is called an *ethnos* (i.e. a tribe or nation) (Pomeroy et. al. 1999, p. 86). What we will focus on here is 1)

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<sup>3</sup> On the character-forming role of law, see Kitto [1951] 1957, p. 94; Alvey 2010c, p. 6; Alvey 2010d, pp. 9-10, 17; Alvey 2011a, pp. 7, 12.

the ideal *oikos* within the *polis*; 2) the normal *oikos* within the *polis*; and to a lesser degree 3) the possibility of life without an *oikos*.

The ideal *oikos* is roughly what is described by Xenophon in the *Oeconomicus*. It is a ‘highly self-sufficient’ (*autarkēs*) unit, which includes a farm. It requires ‘minimal market activity’ as a supplement (Lowry 1987, p. 61; Booth 1993, p. 34). Household management in the ideal *oikos* consists, to a considerable degree, in farm or estate management; it is a significantly larger undertaking than it is in the modern, nuclear family (consisting of perhaps four people).

The ideal *oikos* is a community (*koinōnia*)<sup>4</sup> and managing it is more like managing a small village;<sup>5</sup> it is also more diverse, as it includes ruling over family members (parents, a number of surviving children, and perhaps one or more grandparent) and, it includes management of servants, such as a steward (*epitropos*),<sup>6</sup> a housekeeper, waiting maids, farm workers (or field hands), and (other) slaves<sup>7</sup> (Xenophon *Oec* 1970; Patterson 1998, p. 43; Pomeroy 2002, pp. 38-40, 42, 45-7, 56, 74-5). The ideal is material self-sufficiency and autonomy.

Second, the normal *oikos* is smaller and less able to provide self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, the gap between the normal and the ideal is not dramatic, although dependence on markets increased to some degree by Aristotle’s time. Nagle (2006) implies that a normal *oikos* is about twelve people. In terms of scale, this is more like an extended family than a village.

Finally, not every family has an *oikos*. For example, a hired labourer (a *thēs*; plural *thētes*) is too poor to have an *oikos* (Nagle 2006, pp. 16-7). Similarly, some commentators suggest that artisans do not have an *oikos* (Lewis 1978).<sup>8</sup>

What functions does the *oikos* perform? First, it is the institution in which friendship manifests itself. Friendship within the *oikos* exists between spouses and between them and their children. In addition to friendship, reproduction, and a sense of community (and sometimes despotism as we will see), in modern terms, the *oikos* is the realm of ‘production,<sup>9</sup> distribution, transmission [of property rights via inheritance], ... and co-residence’ (Nagle 2006, p. 2; see Wilk and Netting 1984, p. 11). Further, unlike most households known in human history, it also has roles in ‘defense, law, and politics’ (Nagle 2006, p. 5; see pp. 4-5, 7-9).

Who is in charge of the *oikos*? Each *oikos* is under the control of a patriarch or master (*kurios* or *oikodespotes*).<sup>10</sup> The *kurios* is responsible for household management

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<sup>4</sup> *Koinōnia* also means partnership. On the *oikos* as a community, see Booth 1993, pp. 35-8.

<sup>5</sup> The management of such a community might be compared to managing an estate at various times in history. Thus, Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*, which was dedicated to this theme, had wide appeal for many centuries.

<sup>6</sup> This term can be translated as foreman or supervisor (Pomeroy 1994, pp. 316-7).

<sup>7</sup> Kitto suggests that there was roughly one slave for two free Athenians for domestic service and the same number for production ([1951] 1957, pp. 131-2; see Amemiya 2004, p. 59). He concludes that slaves were ‘not the basis of economic life’ of the Greeks (Kitto [1951] 1957, p. 32; c.f. Amemiya 2004, p. 59). This understates the dependence on slavery in Sparta, where the slaves outnumbered the free; indeed, the slave proportion of the population grew over time (see Cartledge 2001, pp. 150-1).

<sup>8</sup> This point will be discussed further in the projected paper on Aristotle’s economics.

<sup>9</sup> Kitto goes as far as to call the *oikos* a ‘factory’ ([1951] 1957, p. 230).

<sup>10</sup> Consistent with the bias in the Greek original, references throughout this paper tend to be to the male gender.

(*oikonomikē* or *oikonomia*).<sup>11</sup> This includes exercising gentle rule over his spouse and children. On the other hand, the *kurios* rules, or can choose to rule, slaves despotically. The art or skill (*technē*; plural *technai*)<sup>12</sup> of the household manager (*oikonomos*) also covers military, religious, and economic duties (Lowry 1987, p. 26).

Let us pause here. I want to *begin* to sketch out an image of the *oikos* and *polis* which will be developed further below.<sup>13</sup> The *kurios* is the head of a hierarchically structured *oikos* (which is composed of a number of free and unfree humans). Let us visually represent the household by a ‘pyramid’ with the *kurios* at its apex. Add to this picture some communication cables that connect individuals within the ‘pyramid.’ Often there is two-way communication, but sometimes communication is just a directive from the head. At times, the latter takes the form of violence.

In time, *oikoi* joined into larger units (villages) and a group of villages joined into a *polis*. The *polis* emerged around 700 BC and was regarded as the ideal unit in classical Greece.<sup>14</sup> The *polis* typically included a city (*asty*) and a surrounding territory (*chora*). There is a physical ‘core’ and a ‘periphery’. In the case of Athens, the city was separated from its port, Piraeus, by about 6 miles. By modern standards, the population of a ‘Normal*polis*’ was very small. Kitto says that only Syracuse, Acragas, and Athens had more than 20,000 citizens (*politai*; singular *politēs*) ([1951] 1957, p. 66; see also Xenophon *Mem* III.6.14; 1994, p. 89; Nagle 2006, pp. 15n., 45-58).<sup>15</sup> Nagle calls Athens and Syracuse ‘mega-*poleis*’ (2006, pp. 14, 74).

When the *polis* emerged, the *oikos* was preserved as a unit within the larger structure. Because the *oikoi* retained their autonomy to a large degree for centuries until the sixth century BC, the early *poleis* had very little need for central administration (Lowry 1987, p. 20).

The story presented above is over-simplified. When the *polis* emerged, the *oikos* was preserved but it was somewhat re-modelled. New relationships emerge between the *oikos* and the *polis*. The *oikos* becomes more porous within the *polis* structure. The *kurios* now seeks to be involved in *polis* affairs as well. Further, in some regimes (*politeiai*; singular *politeia*), such as democracy, he would be *expected* to play an active role in *polis* affairs.

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<sup>11</sup> On the term *oikonomia*, see Petrochilos 2002, p. 623. Strauss notes that *oikonomia* has a number of meanings (1970, p. 113).

<sup>12</sup> Both technique and skill are acceptable renderings of *technē*. Bloom defines *technē* as ‘art, ... a skill or craft; not far from science; a discipline operating under clear principles which can be taught’ ([1968] 1991, p. 478). Nussbaum says that it is often translated as ‘craft’ ‘art’ or ‘science.’ She adds that there is no ‘systematic or general distinction between *epistēmē* and *technē*’ (knowledge) in Plato’s time ([1986] 2001, p. 94; see pp. 95-8).

<sup>13</sup> This picture of the *oikos* and the *polis* has been developed throughout Alvey forthcoming 2011a.

<sup>14</sup> The process of political unification was called *sin-oikismos*; it is translated as ‘having the *oikoi* together’ (Pomeroy et al. 1999, pp. 84-5). Units larger than the *polis*, such as the Egyptian and Persian empires and the Macedonian people, existed but such political arrangements were rejected by the Greeks (see Irwin 1999, p. 174 note on ‘people’). Other structures also existed.

<sup>15</sup> The number of citizens, of course, was only a fraction of the total population.

Let us return to the image sketched earlier and put the *oikos* in the context of the *polis*. The *polis* is a piece of land with a collection of ‘human pyramids’ located close to each other in its cultural ‘core’. This is surrounded by a cultural ‘periphery’ which consists of resident aliens (*metics*) and those attached to them (i.e. their households).

At least in a democratic regime, *oikos* heads serve as *permanent* representatives of their *oikos* in the political processes of the *polis*. In our picture, we may depict this by connecting together horizontally all of the ‘pyramidal’ apices. This connection represents the political communication channels. Information received from this network would then be processed and re-transmitted to the other *oikos* members via the internal ‘pyramidal’ communication cables.

#### --Virtue and the Virtues

The next preliminary point concerns Aristotle’s view on virtue as a whole and the list of virtues. First, virtue is a complete whole and the virtuous life is one that brings all of the elements of virtue together.<sup>16</sup> In this sense it is correct to speak of virtue as a singular: ‘complete virtue’ (*NE* 1101a16; c.f. 1129b31-2; 1999, p. 14; c.f. p. 108). The inseparability of the moral virtues was the standard view of the ancients (Kent 2001, p. 226). Nevertheless, in obvious tension with this position, Aristotle claims it is *also* correct to speak of virtues in the plural and that they are separable. One may possess or demonstrate one or more of the virtues without possessing or demonstrating others; similarly, one may be disposed towards or commit one of the vices but not all (*NE* 1130a17-22; [1925] 1980, p. 109). Further, demonstration of any virtue is not simply all or nothing; gradations of achievement occur (*NE* 1173a20-2; [1925] 1980, p. 251). Individuals who demonstrate some virtue, have elevated themselves somewhat from their animality and achieved a richer life but they will fail to achieve complete *eudaimonia*.

As soon as one speaks of virtues in the plural, one must recognize Aristotle’s distinction between the intellectual and the moral virtues. His list of *intellectual* virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics* includes prudence (*phronēsis*), which guides decision making in the world of human action (*NE* 1138b19-45a13; [1925] 1980, pp. 137-58).<sup>17</sup> There are several versions of prudence (legislative, household, deliberative, judicial, and individual) the peak of which seems to be legislative prudence (*NE* 1141b25-34; 1999, p. 92).

It is Aristotle’s famous list of *moral* virtues, however, that is of more interest at present: courage; temperance or moderation; liberality or generosity; magnificence (*megaloprepeia*); magnanimity, high-mindedness, or greatness of soul (*megalopsychia*); proper ambition; gentleness; friendliness; truthfulness; wit; and justice (*dikaiosunē*) (*NE* 1109b30-38b10; [1925] 1980, pp. 48-136; see Bartlett and Collins 2011, pp. 303-4).<sup>18</sup> Some of these virtues require immediate comment or clarification.

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<sup>16</sup> Kenny argues that Aristotle’s view in the *Eudemian Ethics* is closer to this position than in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1992, pp. 16-22).

<sup>17</sup> Prudence plays an important role in Aristotle’s politics, as well as in the work of Adam Smith, the founder of modern economics. On prudence in Adam Smith, see Alvey 2003, pp. 60-1.

<sup>18</sup> Two points should be made about the list of virtues presented in the text. First, the items taken from Books III to V of the *Nicomachean Ethics* may have different translations. Second, Aristotle actually mentions other virtues elsewhere, such as ‘equity’ (*NE* 1137a31-38a3; [1925] 1980, pp. 132-4).

Two of the virtues are concerned with the good *use* of wealth/money. While generosity is reasonably clear (and clarified further below), magnificence is not. It requires grand, visible displays of generosity towards the operation of the *polis* (or towards other members of the *polis*) and is not available to most people, especially the poor (*NE* 1122a17-23a34; [1925] 1980, pp. 85-9). Following the other Socratics, *none* of the virtues are concerned with acquiring wealth/money.

Friendship, as Aristotle understands the term *philia*, covers a very wide range of relationships, including what we mean by friendship but also love and affection within the family (between husbands and wives and between parents and children), fellow-feeling for other citizens, and perhaps even fellow human beings.<sup>19</sup> Consistent with the three ends of human choice (pleasure, honour, and wisdom), there are three types of friendship: virtue, utility, and pleasure (*NE* 1155b18-56a9; [1925] 1980, pp. 194-5). Again, the *purpose* of the friendship is fundamental. Some types of friendship are more like exchange and others are more sublime. The highest type of friendship ('the friendship of good men based on virtue') is extremely rare (*NE* 1156b8-32; [1925] 1980, pp. 196-7; Lord 1987, pp. 129-30).

Aristotle understands justice to embrace a large number of components or manifestations. Some groupings of the terms may be helpful. Aristotle refers to 1) a 'wide', general or universal justice and to 2) 'particular' justice (*NE* 1130a33-30b5; [1925] 1980 p. 110; Gordon 1975, p. 55).<sup>20</sup> General justice refers to 'all the objects with which the good man is concerned', whereas particular justice is concerned with things motivated by 'the pleasure that arises from gain' (*NE* 1130b4-6; [1925] 1980, p. 110).

Second, let us shift our focus from specific virtues to virtue in general. Aristotle propounds his 'doctrine of the mean' as a way of providing a better description of the moral virtues (Urmson 1973; Hursthouse 1980-1). In discussing these virtues, he argues that (for most of the moral virtues) what is virtuous is a sort of 'mean' between immoral extremes. For example, generosity is some point (the 'mean') between 'prodigality' (or extravagance) and 'meanness' (or stinginess) (*NE* 1119b20-20a5; [1925] 1980, p. 79; see tabular presentation in Bartlett and Collins 2011, pp. 303-4). The doctrine refers to choice and action in the context of practical or prudential reasoning but it also refers to the *emotion* manifest in action; the latter must be the 'mean' between extremes (this in turn is related to character).<sup>21</sup>

Third, while each virtue is given some attention by Aristotle, it emerges that some virtues are more important than others. In elaborating upon three of the virtues, he gives us some insight into the hierarchy of the virtues and why possessing the full set of moral virtues is extremely rare (*NE* 1109a25-30; [1925] 1980, p. 45). Greatness of soul refers to one capable of great things and who fulfils the promise (and hence deserves great honour) (*NE* 1123a35-25a36; [1925] 1980, pp. 89-95). From the *perspective of the individual*, 'greatness of soul' unites all

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<sup>19</sup> *NE* 1155a17-20; 1162a16-7; 1999, pp. 119, 133; *Pol* 1280b35-40; 1295b23-4; 1984, pp. 99, 134; Barker [1946] 1948, p. 373 and n.1; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 354; Lord 1987, p. 129.

<sup>20</sup> While some things that Aristotle calls 'just' fit neatly under these two headings, it is not clear that all of them do.

<sup>21</sup> What is needed is the mean in the sense that, at the right time (before action), one has the right feelings for the right reasons, and chooses correctly (*NE* 1106b22-4; [1925] 1980, p. 38; see Urmson 1973).

of the other virtues: it is ‘the crown of the virtues’ (*NE* 1124a1-2; [1925] 1980, p. 91; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, pp. 337-8; Lord 1987, p. 127). Two other virtues are important from the *perspective of society*, or one’s relations with others (Lord 1987, p. 127). Aristotle ascribes a high rank to justice (*NE* 1129b26-30a7; [1925] 1980, pp. 108-9). Finally, some sort of friendship is fundamental: it is the glue that holds a *polis* together (*NE* 1155a24; [1925] 1980, p. 192).<sup>22</sup>

Despite the difficulties of achieving full *eudaimonia*, Aristotle is not disinterested in what can be achieved by most people and most societies. First, the range of individual virtues plays an important role in *evaluating* individual lives and societies. Second, and just as importantly, the range of virtues plays an important role for setting *aspirations* for improvement. Naturally, this is fundamental for politics as the master art.

### --*The Best Way of Life*

The final preliminary point concerns Aristotle’s discussion of how *eudaimonia* links to debates about the best way of life for human beings. Aristotle reports that all parties agree that the comprehensive human good is *eudaimonia* (*NE* 1095a17-9; [1925] 1980, p. 5). As Nussbaum points out, *eudaimonia* is more than a psychological state, as it requires action, and is better translated as ‘living well and doing well’ or ‘human flourishing’ ([1986] 2001, p. 6n.; see Aristotle *NE* 1095a18; 1999, p. 3).

The human *telos* is *eudaimonia*; it is a kind of self-sufficiency (*NE* 1097b7-11; [1925] 1980, p. 12). It is sought for its own sake and never as a means (*NE* 1097b6; [1925] 1980, p. 12). By contrast, honour, pleasure, reason, and even the virtues are chosen as both means and ends (*NE* 1097b2; [1925] 1980, p. 12). Because some of these things are ends in some sense, they can become the focus of a whole *way of life* (albeit defective in some cases when viewed from the perspective of human flourishing).

Consequently, disputes have arisen, Aristotle admits, as to which way of life constitutes *eudaimonia*: for most people, it is the life of pleasure (but Aristotle says that they also speak of wealth, honour, and even health); for the more refined, it is the political life of honour (i.e. of a *politikos* or statesman); and for the few, it is the contemplative or philosophic life (*theōria*) (see *NE* 1095a22-96a6; [1925] 1980, pp. 5-7; Lord 1987, p. 123). Aristotle rules out the life devoted to acquiring wealth (i.e. the life of the subsistence farmer, the artisan, the trader, and the retailer) because it is only a means to the end. The purely private life of household management is also ruled out but it can constitute a *part* of another way of life.

Reasoning is required for the life devoted to pleasure, the life devoted to honour, and the life devoted to contemplation. The philosophic life requires intellectual contemplation. The other two require lesser forms of reasoning.

The investigation of *eudaimonia* begins with the opinions of real people about what the term means and how these opinions manifest themselves in disputes about the best way of life. After

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<sup>22</sup> We will return to justice and friendship below and in the projected paper on Aristotle’s economics.

presenting the opinions and arguments that support them, Aristotle arbitrates between them. In his final judgment, he may advocate some sort of composite.

Aristotle adopts a species or essentialist conception of man (Nussbaum, 1992). Because humans are capable of reason and speech--and thus capable of what can be call higher functionings--they are separate from, and better than, the (other) animals (c.f. Singer 1976). Aristotle rejects the life dedicated to pleasure that most people adopt: in the life of pleasure one is 'slavish' to the passions and it is a 'life for grazing animals' (*NE* 1095b21; 1999, p. 4; see Xenophon *Oec* I.22; 1996, p. 43).<sup>23</sup> Hence, there are only two serious contenders for the best way of life.

### 3. THE VIRTUES BEFORE THE *POLIS*, FOCUSING ON FRIENDSHIP AND JUSTICE

This section extends the discussion above on the various virtues (see also Alvey forthcoming b). To what extent are the virtues, especially friendship and justice, present in the pre-political era? There are three stages of society before the *polis*. The first stage (the primitive household) is discussed in the first two sub-sections. The later two stages (the extended household and the village) are discussed in the third sub-section. Much of the discussion in these sub-sections diverges from Nagle (2006, pp. 135-51).

#### --*The Origin of the Species I: A Conjugal Animal with an Innate Sense of Justice*

First, Aristotle remains in a pre-Darwinian world (Williams 1995, p. 195; Pack 2010, pp. 21, 36-7).<sup>24</sup> Human beings are always human (*Pol* 1255b1-4; 1984, p. 42). Second, Aristotle repeatedly rejects the view that humans are solitary.<sup>25</sup> Even the Cyclopes, who he mentions, lived in small scattered groups (*Pol* 1252b22-6; 1255b3-4; 1984, pp. 36, 42).

Human beings have *logos*. This ancient Greek term can be translated as reason or speech; there is apparently no difference between the two (see Saxonhouse 1985, p. 66). This makes perfect sense if two assumptions hold: 1) humans have the potential to transform sounds into speech and 2) humans *always* live in society and hence always have the *need* to use speech. Speech reveals not only 'the advantageous and the harmful', but 'also the just and the unjust' (*Pol* 1253a15; 1984, p. 37; Lord 1987, p. 136). The inchoate foundations of ethics and justice are evident right from *the origin of the species*.

Aristotle discusses the origins of the family in two parallel passages in his ethical works (*NE* 1162a17-30; [1925] 1980, p. 214; *EE* 1242a25-b2; [1935] 1952, pp. 417-9). Commentators are divided, however, on how to interpret them. In one version, the passages are viewed as *primarily* accounts of the family in Aristotle's own day (Provencal 2001, p. 10 n.9; see also

<sup>23</sup> In the *Politics* Aristotle contrasts the life of an animal with a human one and describes the former as living but the potential goal of a human being as living well (*Pol* 1252b29; 1257b41; 1280a31-2; 1984, pp. 37, 48, 98). At one point he describes some distant foreigners who 'live only by sense perception' (*NE* 1149a9-11; 1999, p. 107; see also *Pol* 1338a21; 1984, p. 233). In reality, despite having a human shape, they live as beasts.

<sup>24</sup> While Aristotle does refer to the Cyclopes, Nussbaum correctly calls them 'a mythical hybrid', rather than human (*Pol* 1252b22-6; 1255b3-4; 1984, pp. 36, 42; Nussbaum 1995, p. 107; see p. 97; Nussbaum 1990, p. 218).

<sup>25</sup> *Pol* 1253a27-8; 1984, p. 37; *NE* 1097b7-11; 1155a6-12; 1169b8-19; [1925] 1980, pp. 12, 192, 238-9; *EE* 1242a22-7; [1935] 1952, p. 417. The Rousseauian pre-social stage of history is implicitly rejected (Rousseau *Second Discourse* Pt I ¶¶ 6, 9, 13, 23-5; 1964, pp. 107, 110, 112, 119-21).

Nagle 2006, pp. 140-51). The other interpretation, which we follow, is that *most* of these passages describe the origins of the species (Salkever 1991, p. 181).

What do these passages tell us? First, in Aristotle's account, humans are originally found in couples; indeed, they are *more* inclined to form couples than cities (*poleis*) (*NE* 1162a20-2; [1925] 1980, p. 214). Humans are *conjugal* animals (*sunduastikon*); friendship between the sexes is 'natural', in as far as it arises from the irrational part of the soul (perhaps due to attraction to beauty). Like the animals, *one* aim of a man and woman living together is 'reproduction' but this friendship has additional elements (*NE* 1162a20; [1925] 1980, p. 214).

Second, Aristotle tells us that all types of friendship require just actions, although they will not be equally just. What is envisaged is some sort of proportionality between 1) the type of friendship and 2) the type of justice (*NE* 1159b29-60a8; [1925] 1980, pp. 207-8). Presumably, where friendship does not exist, there is no justice.

Sexual 'friendship' is not based on chance encounters (as Rousseau suggests occurred in the origin of the species); the friendship is with another with whom there is a 'natural kinship' (*EE* 1242a25-30; [1935] 1952, p. 417; c.f. Rousseau *Second Discourse* Pt I ¶¶ 13, 23-5; 1964, pp. 112, 119-21). There would be 'partnership and justice of a sort' even in these days (*EE* 1242a28-9; [1935] 1952, p. 417). The reality of male dominance<sup>26</sup> distorted but did not destroy the friendship and justice between the two partners. Resentment on the one side, no doubt was followed by compromise on the other.

Aristotle makes it clear that, '*from the very beginning*' of the coupling, there is a division of labour along gender lines (*NE* 1162a22-3 emphasis added; [1962] 1986, p. 239). While this understanding is not popular today, he says that each partner 'supplies the other's needs by contributing a special function<sup>27</sup> to the common good' (*NE* 1162a23-4; 1999, p. 134). The sexual relationship is a blend of the utility and pleasure types of friendship and sometimes all three types (recall Section 2) (*NE* 1162a20-25; [1925] 1980, p. 214). Finally, he confirms that the friendship between a man and his wife involves justice (*NE* 1162a30-4; [1925] 1980, p. 214).<sup>28</sup> As stated above, in primordial times the male partner did not act as justly as the friendship required.

Some comments on the presentation above are in order. First, the primordial division of labour is based on what Aristotle perceives to be different natural abilities. Hence, for Aristotle at least, the division of labour is traced to the origins of the species. This *spontaneous* division of labour may also serve as a model for later *calculated extensions* of the concept.<sup>29</sup> Second, one aspect of the coupling arrangement is, at least potentially, like an *exchange* relationship. In pooling

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<sup>26</sup> Aristotle states that the relationship between the couple may be based 'on virtue', but not necessarily (*NE* 1262a17-25; [1925] 1980, p. 214). The despotism of the husband is possible.

<sup>27</sup> See the discussion of human functions in Alvey forthcoming b.

<sup>28</sup> Elsewhere, Aristotle asserts that the decision making within the couple ought *not* to be tyrannical. The spontaneous division of labour leads to decision making autonomy. Consider also Xenophon's view (see Alvey 2010b; Alvey 2011b). Ultimately, the male ought to rule on the basis of his 'worth'; Aristotle calls this 'aristocratic rule' (*NE* 1160b33-4; 1999, p. 131).

<sup>29</sup> The division of labour in two stages (spontaneous and deliberately applied) was developed subsequently by Adam Smith (c.f. Smith [1776] 1976, p. 25; Smith 1978, p. 348; Alvey 2003, p. 67).

their talents, each partner contributes to the common good (CG Level 1) and thus, at least potentially, each gains utility from the relationship. This is interesting because, the common good is the most important element of general justice. The potentiality outlined here presumably moves closer to complete actualization as human relations move forward toward the advent of the *polis* (and especially as the *polis* matures).

--*The Origin of the Species II: A Familial and Household Animal*

Right from the outset, humans are conjugal by nature and demonstrate rudimentary manifestations of the virtues of friendship and justice (c.f. Nagle 2006, p. 142). Let us see how things develop over time.

The coupling produces families of sustained duration (*EE* 1242a22-7; [1935] 1952, pp. 417). Presumably in this context, the primitive (or ‘incomplete’) household arises, including some possessions (*Pol* 1253b3; 1984, p. 38). The household is ‘earlier and more necessary’ than the political association (*NE* 1262a18-9; [1925] 1980, p. 214). In some rudimentary sense, humans are a ‘householding animal’ (*zōon oikonomikon*) (*EE* 1242a22-5; [1935] 1952, pp. 417).<sup>30</sup> This is a strong endorsement of Xenophon’s view (and Plato’s in the *Laws*).<sup>31</sup>

The ‘house’, tends to create or extend a sense of a common good (CG Level 2) between the partners. The arrival of children increases the ‘bond’ uniting the couple (*NE* 1162a27; 1999, p. 134). To the extent that some diluted common good exists before, the arrival of children *deepens* that sense of a ‘common good’ (CG Level 3) between the parents; if there had been no sense of common good, the arrival of children would *create* some (*NE* 1162a28-9; 1999, p. 134). Hence, humans are a conjugal, householding, and *familial* animal.

The affection for children promotes benevolence on the part of the mother *and* the father (*EE* 1242a30-5; [1935] 1952, p. 419). Bonds of friendship also develop between siblings (*EE* 1242a34-7; [1935] 1952, p. 419). It is in this context that Aristotle concludes that ‘in the [primitive] household are found the origins and springs of friendship, of political organization, and of justice’ (*EE* 1242a40-42b2; [1935] 1952, p. 419). Aristotle thinks that there is *some* truth in Xenophon’s view that the household is like a miniature *polis*.<sup>32</sup> Already three levels of the common good exist in the primitive household.

--*From the Primitive Household to the Polis*

This sub-section briefly outlines some of the ethical issues in the historical development from the primitive household through to the *polis*. Economic aspects of these developments will be left for a future paper on Aristotle.

The primitive household expands into a larger, ‘complete’ household (*Pol* 1252a25-b13; 1984, pp. 35-6). The number of household members increases: Aristotle’s image of the extended family includes the possibility of a number of wives and children (and indeed slaves) (*Pol*

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<sup>30</sup> Salkever translates this as ‘familial [or economic] animal’ (1991, p. 181).

<sup>31</sup> On Xenophon, see (Alvey 2010b; Alvey 2011b). On Plato’s *Laws*, see (Alvey 2010d).

<sup>32</sup> Xenophon *Oec* XIV.1-7; XXI.2-12; 1970, pp. 57-8, 78-80; Xenophon *Mem* III.4.12; III.6.14; IV.2.11; 1994, pp. 80, 89, 115-6; see Alvey 2010b; Alvey 2011b. Aristotle’s final view is that the *polis* is qualitatively different from a household (*Pol* 1252b29-30; 1253a3-19; 1257b41; 1261a17-22; 1280a31-2; 1281a1-3; 1984, pp. 36-7, 48, 56, 98-9).

1252a32-b23; 1984, p. 36).<sup>33</sup> Households are ‘scattered’ and, as a rule, free members of the household are kin (*Pol* 1252b15-25; 1984, p. 36).<sup>34</sup> Certainly by this stage, we can begin to see another level of the common good (CG Level 4). Hence, it makes sense to speak of the emergence of ‘friends’ (who are inside the four levels of the common good) and ‘enemies’ (who are threats to the household common good).

In the context of discussing that aspect of justice involved in ‘helping friends and harming enemies’, in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle refers to ‘reciprocity’ (*to antipeonthos*) (*Rhet* 1374a18-24; 1926, p. 145; Lord 1991, p. 65 and note). This term means ‘retaliation for injuries’ and ‘exchange of benefits or goods’; it seems to be the raw sense of equalizing benefits and injuries in a non-political context (Lord 1987, p. 128). It may be the most visible early expression of the inchoate, primordial origins of justice mentioned earlier.<sup>35</sup> This aspect of justice is of interest for two reasons. First, it provides more evidence of the deep historical roots of justice. Second, reciprocity is the aspect of justice addressed in one of the most famous discussions of the exchange of goods in the *Nicomachean Ethics*; the exchange takes place, once again, in a non-political context (*NE* 1132b21-33a5; 1999, p. 74).<sup>36</sup>

After the extended household, the next step is the formation of a village (*Pol* 1252b15-7; 1984, p. 36). The joining together of several households of blood relatives is the usual process of development of a village (*Pol* 1252b15-25; 1984, p. 36; Nagle 2006, pp. 20, 25). The intense friendships within the family are extended in a somewhat diluted manner to kin living in close proximity. Religious and cultural associations across households arise to help bind them together within the village (*Pol* 1280b35-81a4; 1984, p. 99; Nagle 2006, p. 25). We can now speak of a further level of the common good (CG Level 5). Nevertheless, the ‘joining’ is not a merger: households retain considerable autonomy.

#### --Conclusion

After the village comes the formation of a *polis* (*Pol* 1252b27-8; 1984, p. 36). This event, however, does not simultaneously create the moral virtues, such as friendship and justice. Buds of these virtues appear in primordial times; it is as if they are hardwired into human beings from the start. At least five levels of the common good have emerged. Also, some of the intellectual virtues begin to improve in the pre-political era. Prudence (*phronēsis*) in individual and household decisions improves and, along with it, moral actions.

Nevertheless, at the pre-political stage there is a low ceiling on material and ethical progress (Nagle 2006, p. 21). Humans are stuck in an economic and ethical *development trap*.<sup>37</sup> Can we make any conclusions about the best way of life in this era? Recall that in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle states that the final two contestants as to the best way of life are the political life and the philosophical life. First, by definition, the former is not possible

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<sup>33</sup> Polygamous relations no doubt reduced the friendship between the partners. The presence of conventional slaves within the household may contaminate genuine friendships between free members.

<sup>34</sup> By assuming that the early scattered households were those of the Cyclopes, Nagle may have assumed a darker human past than is warranted (2006, pp. 140-51).

<sup>35</sup> Lord suggests that reciprocity is the *original* form of justice (1987, p. 128).

<sup>36</sup> We will return to this passage in the projected paper on Aristotle’s economics.

<sup>37</sup> The notion of a development trap in economics is now widely accepted in the sub-discipline of economic development (Rosenstein-Rodan 1943; Todaro and Smith 2009, pp. 158-92).

before the *polis*. Second, philosophy requires considerable free time; the choice to philosophize is not an option throughout most of human history. For Aristotle, it is a recent development, almost certainly associated with the *polis*.<sup>38</sup>

#### 4. THE VIRTUES AFTER THE ADVENT OF THE *POLIS*

Despite the ethical foundations laid in the three phases of pre-*polis* life, *eudaimonia* is not possible (Nagle 2006, p. 21). The arrival of the *polis* has two consequences. First, the ethical aspirations of living together are raised; higher ‘purposes of life’ are pursued within the household unit (inside the *polis*) and within the *polis* more generally (*NE* 1262a17-23; [1925] 1980, p. 214).<sup>39</sup> Second, it is the *polis* that first provides the environment in which appropriate institutions can be created to realize high aspirations.<sup>40</sup>

The purpose of the *polis* is not mere survival but ‘living well’ (*eu zēn*) (*Pol* 1252b29-30; 1280a31-2; 1280b39-41; 1984, pp. 37, 98-9). Given Aristotle’s teleology, the *polis*, as the perfected human partnership, is truly natural; it is the *telos* of the ‘political’ trajectory through time of man as a social and ‘political animal’ (*Pol* 1253a3; 1278b18; 1984, pp. 37, 94; see *NE* 1097b11-2; 1999, p. 8; Lord 1987, p. 124; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 345n.).<sup>41</sup> Aristotle is certainly aware of nations and empires but sees them as an extension beyond what is desirable for human beings; the *polis* is a sort of mean between the village and the empire (*Pol* 1276a24-30; 1984, p. 89). The *eudaimōn* life is possible only in the *polis*-phase of human existence (Saxonhouse 1985, pp. 66, 76; Nagle 2006, pp. x, 8, 8-9 n., 21; c.f. p. 13n.). Hence, from Aristotle’s perspective, the potential to live a flourishing life is a recent possibility.

##### --*Humans as Social Animals*

Let us consider social aspects of human life in this sub-section and in the next turn to the political aspects. Humans are social beings who lived *social* lives before the advent of the *polis*. Social life (*suzēn*), however, could be further improved. As we saw at the opening of Section 3, deeper and richer friendships could develop *within* the household. Similarly, new and improved friendships could emerge between households and new ethical networks could emerge between individuals generally throughout the *polis*. These developments could be self-reinforcing, propelling an upward *ethical spiral*. Escape from the ethical trap is possible.

The best life is a type of self-sufficiency but this is understood to refer to a life surrounded by one’s spouse, various family members, friends, and fellow citizens (*NE* 1097b7-11; [1925] 1980, p. 12). Social life is integral to the *eudaimōn* life (Nussbaum 1995, p. 108).

Part of the expanded social life within the *polis* is with fellow citizens. Aristotle gave friendship a central place in political life; it is the glue holding a *polis* together (*NE* 1155a24;

<sup>38</sup> The *polis* emerged about three hundred years before Aristotle’s day.

<sup>39</sup> A detailed examination of the moral achievements of the household in this era is provided in Nagle (2006, pp. 152-202).

<sup>40</sup> On this point, see Alvey forthcoming b.

<sup>41</sup> There is a ‘natural drive (*hormē*)’ towards the *polis* but this needs the aid a founder (*archēgetēs*) to be actualized (Nagle 2006, p. 24; see pp. 25, 27).

[1925] 1980, p. 192). All cities strive for ‘concord’ (a diluted type of friendship) and the avoidance of faction and civil strife (*NE* 1155a26; [1925] 1980, p. 192). Friendship provides not only the foundations for the social side of human life but also a bridge to the political side.

--*Humans as Political Animals*

Humans are both social and *political* animals. The *polis* is qualitatively different from pre-*polis* life. The fundamental aspect of political life, justice, remained at a rudimentary level in the pre-*polis* phase of history. Nevertheless, there does seem to be some nisus towards civic virtue (Williams 1985, p. 44).

At the time the *polis* was created, much scope remained for the development of justice within the household and beyond. There are ethical impacts of the household on the city and feedbacks to households (Nagle 2006, p. 9). For Aristotle, the household is an incubator of morality. More just relations between spouses are likely once the *polis* emerges.<sup>42</sup> Like friendship, improvements in justice within the household would feedback to the relations outside of the household. Intra-household relations and *polis*-wide relations have deeply ethical threads.

Only in the political partnership is it possible to achieve a *shared understanding* of the ‘good’ and the ‘just’ and satisfy the moral longings of the ‘political animal’ (*Pol* 1253a3; 1984, p. 37; Lord 1987, p. 136). Conversely, a shared understanding of justice ‘makes a household or a city’ (*Pol* 1253a18-9; 1984, p. 37). What is required, especially outside of the intra-household relations, is for a sense of trust to emerge. The *polis* then helps to actualize some of the latent ethical potentialities.

Does the political nature of human beings mean that they *must* participate in ruling? Some argue that, for Aristotle, the good life requires participation in a democracy or that the political life is the ideal (Pocock 1975, p. 550; Taylor 1995, pp. 242-6; c.f. Waerdt 1985). Participation seems to be another functioning and a part of the good life. It is, however, a controversial issue.<sup>43</sup>

Let us again return to the image of the household as a ‘pyramid’ that we introduced earlier. The core of the *polis* consists of a few hundred or a few thousand ‘pyramids’ that are physically located near each other. Each household head is the apex of an *oikos* ‘pyramid’. In certain types of regimes (e.g. a democracy) there are four or five citizens in an average household (including the household head) and they interact with citizens from other households in public fora. The horizontal communication cable that connects the apexes of households, however, is not just a communication device. It is supposed to prompt citizens to share and inculcate notions of justice within the *oikos* (i.e. vertically within their own ‘pyramid’) (Nagle 2006, pp. 6, 9).

The really problematic area within the household and the *polis*, however, is slavery. This constrained justice within both domains. The treatment of females (notably in non-Greek

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<sup>42</sup> See Nagle 2006. Consequently, Aristotle says that ‘the one who *first* constituted [a city] is responsible for the greatest of goods’ (*Pol* 1253a30; 1984, p. 37).

<sup>43</sup> This topic will be discussed further in a projected paper on Aristotle’s economics.

households) as slaves was unjust (*Pol* 1252b57; 1984, p. 36; Saxonhouse 1985, pp. 77, 90). This view is made clearer when Aristotle distinguishes between a slave by law and a 'natural slave' (*Pol* 1252a30-b2; 1255a5-11; 1984, pp. 36, 41). Further, according to the standard he establishes for a 'natural slave', conventional slavery (such as that found in Athens) is unjust; only those truly incapable of making their own decisions, and living a life of practical reason, are natural slaves (Nussbaum 1980, p. 420; Nussbaum 1995, pp. 117, 122; Saxonhouse 1985, p. 70; Ambler 1987, p. 404). Nevertheless, despite his own critique of virtually all existing slavery, Aristotle is resigned to this injustice so that at least some people can overcome the leisure requirements of *eudaimonia* (Ambler 1987, pp. 404-6).<sup>44</sup>

Slavery remains a part of the citizen-*oikos* structure. Slaves are at the very bottom of the *oikos* 'pyramid'. In addition, slaves could be found within the *polis* 'core' but outside of the *oikos* 'pyramids' (i.e. they belong to the *polis* as a whole). Finally, some slaves are located outside of the 'core'. These are part of *metic* households (the 'flat-roofed' equivalents of citizen-'pyramids'). Slavery is ubiquitous but in most *poleis* it exists on a rather small scale.

#### --Rule of Law, and Justice as Law Abidingness

The law regarding slavery (i.e. conventional slavery) leads us into a more general discussion of law. Law is general and consequently cannot cover all particulars (*Pol* 1286a7-16; 1984, p. 111; *NE* 1137b13-25; [1925] 1980, p. 133). It can never capture all of the complexity of human life; human judgment is needed (see Bartlett 1994, p. 145). Like Plato, therefore, Aristotle sees a strong case for the *pambasileia* (the outstanding individual ruling without law), who can pay attention to all particulars (*Pol* 1286a8-25; 1288a18-31; 1984, pp. 111, 116). It is like the best form of parental rule within the household, except in this case the children never mature. Nevertheless, Aristotle recognizes that the *supply* of such outstanding individuals is extremely limited (*Pol* 1332b23; 1984, p. 219; *NE* 1145a27-8; [1925] 1980, p. 159). For this and other reasons,<sup>45</sup> he generally advocates the rule of law, where rigid rules of justice are applied.<sup>46</sup> Here again, Aristotle follows the logic of Plato's *Laws* (Plato *Laws* 875c6-d5; 1980, p. 271). Both Aristotle and Plato recognized the egalitarian flavour of the choice.

The rule of law, however, requires obedience. Law abidingness, therefore, is another aspect of justice (*NE* 1129b13-4; [1925] 1980, p. 107). By definition, it only arises with the advent of the *polis*. We have seen some aspects of justice already. In the next two sub-sections several more are discussed.

#### --The Common Good and Corrective Justice

One aspect of law abidingness of particular interest is respect for character-forming laws. As stated earlier, politics as the master art aims to create laws which *form* virtuous character; they aim at making the people virtuous. By defining the virtues (and demanding or forbidding certain acts), law aims at producing and preserving happiness 'for a political

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<sup>44</sup> Aristotle's own view is indicated in his will, which freed his slaves (Diogenes Laertius 1925, pp. 455-9).

<sup>45</sup> Even identifying these outstanding individuals is difficult (*Pol* 1254b27-55a1; 1984, pp. 40-1; Saxonhouse 1985, pp. 75-6). There is no *demand* for them in democracies; such individuals are expelled (*Pol* 1284a2-25; 1984, pp. 107-8).

<sup>46</sup> To soften these rigidities, a new virtue of equity arises (*NE* 1137a32-38a3; [1925] 1980, pp. 132-4).

community' (*NE* 1129b19; 1999, p. 68; Lord 1987, p. 127; Collins 1999, p. 149). To the extent that laws aim at improving character, they aim at the common good (one aspect of justice). Law-abidingness in turn, by supporting this moral edifice of the law, can be considered as a part of justice understood as the common good (*NE* 1129a33-b16; [1925] 1980, p. 108). By providing formative law, the city promotes law-abidingness and an *expanded* sense of the common good (i.e. CG Level 6). These are two important components of justice and hence *eudaimonia*.

Of course, the common good of the *polis* involves much more than formative laws. External security is one element. Material goods within the *polis* must be defended (CG Level 7). Internal order (the prevention of civil war or deep factional division) is another. Good will, friendly relations, trust, and co-operation can be seen in the same light. There are also clear implications for inequalities of material possessions. Cultural and religious life is another element (CG Level 8).

A third aspect of justice that emerges in the *polis* is 'corrective' or 'rectificatory justice' (*to diorthōtikon dikaion*); this is a part of particular justice (*NE* 1131b25-32a20; [1925] 1980, pp. 114-5). In the Middle Ages Thomas Aquinas gave this type of justice a new name in Latin, which has come down to us as commutative justice (1964, p. 300). Within Catholic social thought, and beyond, this terminology continues to be used (Collins 1999, p. 151). Such terminological confusion is common in commentaries on Aristotle.

Corrective justice involves both 'voluntary and involuntary' transactions: contracts and physical injuries respectively (*NE* 1131a1-9; 1131b25-32a20; see 1178b12; [1925] 1980, pp. 111-2, 114-5; see p. 267; Lord 1987, pp. 127-8). Clearly, it is a refinement of reciprocity (discussed above). It is also an extension because, in this context, Aristotle several times refers to the participation of a judge or mediator (*NE* 1132a65-33; 1999, p. 73; consider also *Pol* 1297a5-6; 1984, p. 137). The mediator represents an improved *political* solution to inadequate responses to injustice in the pre-political era (e.g. escalating cycles of revenge).

#### --*Distributive Justice, Political Justice, and Natural Justice*

We have seen some aspects of general and particular justice already. In this sub-section we consider some more. Another aspect of justice is distributive justice (*to dianemētikon dikaion*). This type of justice means giving a fair share of what is regarded as the good things (notably honours or rewards) within the *polis* to its members; this is another aspect of particular justice (*NE* 1130b30-5; [1925] 1980, p. 111). This distribution Aristotle calls 'geometrical', which means distribution 'according to merit' of some sort (*NE* 1131a25-6; [1925] 1980, p. 112). The principle has two parts: equal shares must be given to equal human beings but inequality is to be given to unequals.<sup>47</sup> In the case of human beings of unequal merit, the difference in *degree* of merit must be matched by proportional inequality of reward. Aristotle's distributive justice must not to be confused with the notion prevailing today (entitlement based on need).

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<sup>47</sup> The public finance concepts of horizontal and vertical equity are analogues (Musgrave 1959, p. 20).

It is in the context of discussing distributive justice that Aristotle refers to another fundamental dispute. The major contenders in politics--the democrats, the oligarchs, and the aristocrats--accept the principle of distributive justice but disagree on the thing being measured. The metrics advocated are freedom, wealth, and virtue, respectively (*NE* 1131a26-9; [1925] 1980, p. 113). This dispute is at the root of the disagreements over *who should rule* and the nature of the best regime. This aspect of distributive justice is called 'political justice' in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and Aristotle spends considerable time arbitrating between the claims of the political combatants in the *Politics* (*NE* 1134a17-35a15; [1925] 1980, pp. 123-5; *Pol* 1282b12-84b18; 1984, pp. 103-8).

Finally, specifically in the context of discussing political justice, Aristotle refers to natural justice (or natural right), which is what is just by nature (*to physei dikaion*) (*NE* 1134b18-35a5; [1925] 1980, p. 124).<sup>48</sup> Aristotle's brief discussion was given considerable attention by the Scholastics and integrated into their Christian natural law framework (Aquinas 1964, pp. 324-8; Lord 1987, pp. 128-9).

Both distributive justice and political justice arise after the *polis*. The creation of these types of justice complicates any project of political reform.<sup>49</sup>

#### --Resolution of the Dispute over the Best Way of Life

Finally, let us return to the dispute about the best way of life mentioned earlier. Both the political life and the philosophical life are possible in the *polis*. In the final book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle declares the winner: the philosophic life.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the political life, at its best, is highly respectable.

Aristotle's choice of the philosophical life is strong evidence for the philosophical/elitist/aristocratic interpretation of Aristotle by Strauss, Cropsey, and associates. Despite this evidence against the Sen/Nussbaum interpretation in the *Ethics*, there is some evidence for it in the *Politics*. Aristotle's conclusion in favour of the life of contemplation (*theōria*) in the *Ethics* is modified when he turns to the best regime in the *Politics* (see Taylor 1995, pp. 250-2).

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<sup>48</sup> Lord points out that there is no counterpart in the *Politics* (Lord 1984, p. 19).

<sup>49</sup> The status of natural justice within Aristotle's work is problematic. Likewise, attempts to synthesize Aristotle into a natural law framework are questionable.

<sup>50</sup> *NE* 1177a11-79a33; [1925] 1980, pp. 263-9; Lord 1987, pp. 123, 151; Urmson 1988, p. 120; Broadie 1991, pp. 427-33 c.f. 387; Hutchinson 1995, p. 205. Ultimately the intellectual virtues trump the moral virtues in the *Ethics*. The morally virtuous life of the good man (and the political life of the good citizen) falls short. Both the political left (Nussbaum and Sen) and the right (the followers of Leo Strauss) agree that rationality is a feature of humanity for Aristotle. They disagree, however, on how great the differences in the rational capacities between human beings are. The Straussians (Strauss, Jaffa, Cropsey, Bartlett, and others) argue that the Socratics were elitists who believed in the fundamental *inequality* of humans in terms of the individual's potential for, and achievement of, the intellectual and moral virtues (see Strauss 1964, p. 38). Nussbaum and Sen adopt an egalitarian interpretation of Aristotle.

### --Conclusion

The advent of the *polis* allows existing friendships to develop and new types of friendships to emerge. Associated with potentially improved friendships are more just relations.<sup>51</sup> Along with the rule of law, a wide variety of new types of justice emerge. The common good is extended to at least eight levels. The intellectual virtues are improved. For example, there is the improvement or emergence of various types of prudence (i.e. legislative, household, deliberative, judicial, and individual levels). For the first time it is possible to live a political life or a contemplative life. Nevertheless, merely living in this era of human existence is insufficient for living well. Many humans in Aristotle's time continued to live in pre-political units. Others were living in empires, which Aristotle, and the other Socratics, considered to be inhuman (*Pol* 1326a10-27a3; 1984, pp. 204-6). Nevertheless, living in a *polis* opened up new possibilities. Only in the city is *eudaimonia* possible.

There are biological forces working towards the construction of the *polis* and ethical life generally. Nevertheless, it is not deterministic, because otherwise there would be more moral behaviour than Aristotle observes and *eudaimonia* would be easier to achieve.<sup>52</sup>

## 5. THE VARIETY OF REGIMES AND CITIZENSHIPS

The discussion so far has emphasized the commonalities of *poleis*. Aristotle argues that it is important, however, also to recognize the important differences between them. This section considers some of these differences for two reasons. First, much of his discussion of the lower type of politics occurs here. Second, these topics show that ethical considerations are relevant to the notion of *eudaimonia* endorsed and how social achievement is viewed.

Political unions differ in various ways, including the understanding and ranking of the various virtues (notably justice). Such visible differences, in turn, originate in what Aristotle calls the political regime (*politeia*). Regimes fall under six broad categories (see below).

In Books IV-VI of the *Politics* Aristotle adopts moves somewhat anticipatory of theories of second-best and path dependence (Lipsey and Lancaster 1956; Puffert 2008). The path of each regime varies. For some, at the end of the path, a stable, local optima may be possible. For many, however, the path ends in self-destruction (*Pol* 1315b32-16b26; 1984, pp. 179-81). To avoid this result, Aristotle invests great efforts in classifying and analyzing regimes.

### --Classification of Regimes

Aristotle initially classifies all regimes according to the quantity (one, few, or many) and quality of the rulers. Quality refers to whether the rulers act according to the common good (or common advantage), or not. Those regimes that 'look to the advantage of the rulers'--namely, tyranny, oligarchy and democracy-- are not correct; those that look to the 'common advantage'--namely, kingship, aristocracy, and *polity* (*politeia*)-- are 'correct' (*Pol* 1278b19-79b10; see 1289a26-30; 1984, pp. 94-6; see pp. 119-20; Plato *Laws* 715b; 1980, p. 101; c.f.

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<sup>51</sup> Aristotle exaggerates when he says that that justice 'is a thing belonging to the city' (*Pol* 1253a36-7; 1984, p. 38). He means that *many* of the manifestations and components of justice are possible only in cities.

<sup>52</sup> Williams says that Aristotle contradicts himself here (1985, p. 44).

Plato *States* [1925] 1939).<sup>53</sup> When used in this second sense, *politeia* means the ‘correct’ version of democracy. Democracy was the least bad of the defective regimes; this category included Athens at the time (*Pol* 1289b3; 1984, p. 120; Saxonhouse 1985, p. 70). (Using Aristotle’s classifications, the advanced liberal societies today would be polities.)

Each regime type has a corresponding type of citizenship. The most fundamental aspect of political justice is awarding it. The citizen (*politēs*) is a free person who participates in ruling in the city, by holding deliberative or judicial office (or is at least entitled to vote in juries or political assemblies) (*Pol* 1275a20-b18; 1984, p. 87; Lord 1987, p. 138; Lord 1984, p. 274). The type of city and citizen is ultimately decided by the nature of the political regime.<sup>54</sup>

Two points need elaboration. First, recall the image of the *oikos* and the *polis* that we have been developing above. Clearly, the image of four or five citizens per household (the apex of the *oikos*) is limited to democracies and *polities*. Under aristocracy and oligarchy only a small group of men constitute the regime; under monarchy and tyranny only one person rules. The ‘pyramidal’ *oikos* structures play a less important role in those four regimes and the political communication networks are very different from the two more-participatory regimes.

Second, while there is some validity in the initial classification of six regimes, Aristotle subsequently shows that further sub-divisions are required. For example, there are at least five types of democracies (*Pol* 1291b28-92a38; 1984, pp. 125-6). Indeed, once the full array of regimes is viewed, various types will straddle the borders of two regimes listed previously. This is important in the context of political reform (see below).

#### --*Political Justice and Distributive Justice Revisited*

In arbitrating the disputes between the various political parties, Aristotle argues that the claims made on behalf of freedom, wealth, and virtue need to be evaluated against an independent standard: the contribution to the (eight levels of the) common good of the *polis* (*Pol* 1281a3-6; 1984, p. 99). This means the survival of the city and its cultural, material, and moral improvement. In a pluralistic tone, Aristotle concludes that freedom, wealth, and virtue each contribute to the *polis* but greatest weight must be given to virtue (*Pol* 1280b6-7; 1281a2-8; 1984, pp. 98-9).

Consider Aristotle’s analysis of oligarchy, the regime that gives priority to wealth. This is an ‘incorrect’ regime for two reasons. First, it understands the *polis* as a sort of alliance for defending wealth along the lines of a social contract (*Pol* 1280a25-b32; 1984, pp. 98-9). This devalues political life; oligarchy is unconcerned with moral character and *eudaimonia*

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<sup>53</sup> The distinction between the correct and incorrect types of rule also implies something about the virtue of the rulers. The actions of the ruler demonstrate yet another sense of justice. While some aspects of virtue demonstrate individual excellence, and others display excellence in relation to other human beings, ruling requires demonstrating *all* of the virtues in relation to the community. Justice as ‘complete virtue’ benefits others; serving one’s own interest is a deviation (*NE* 1129b27; see 1129b27-30a9; [1925] 1980, pp. 108; see pp. 108-9; Collins 1999, p. 150). This notion of justice derives from the Socratic argument in the *Republic* that a ruler in the ‘precise sense’ benefits others, not himself (Plato *Rep* 341b-c; see 340d-342e; 346d-347d; [1968] 1991, pp. 18-21, 23-5).

<sup>54</sup> Does Aristotle’s understanding of humans as political animals extend to the point of requiring each adult to *fully* participate in ruling? The political combatants cited by Aristotle all claim that slaves, foreigners, and women must be excluded. Aristotle’s method of discussion (which relies on *endoxa*), limits his inquiry.

properly understood (see Lord 1987, pp. 134, 136). A narrowly economic understanding of politics is misguided.<sup>55</sup> Second, the exclusion of most of the population from political participation will deepen the political divisions and ultimately lead to civil war (*Pol* 1281b25-31; 1305a36-41; 1984, pp. 101, 156). The destruction of the *polis* is not desirable (see below). A theme running through Books IV to VI of the *Politics* is that *stability* (*asphaleia* or *sōtēria*) must be one standard for evaluating regimes.

Stability is a problem not only for oligarchy but also for democracy. Aristotle refers to legislation passed in oligarchies which redistributes from the many, and to laws passed by ‘authoritative’ bodies in democracies which redistribute ‘things of the [rich] minority’ (*Pol* 1281a16-8; 1984, p. 100). Such laws ‘rob and plunder’ on the basis of ‘force’ that is no different from that of a tyrant (*Pol* 1281a22-5; 1984, p. 100). Ultimately, they will ‘destroy the city’ but preserving the city is in the common good. Hence, neither of these laws can be ‘just’ (*Pol* 1281a21; 1984, p. 100). For Aristotle, tyranny of one, the few, or the majority, leads ultimately to the destruction of the city. Ruling according to the private advantage leads to instability and then revolution (*metabolē*).

An orientation to the common advantage is only one step in the right direction. The true goal is the promotion of the wide range of virtues identified by Aristotle and listed earlier. Aristotle is clearly concerned about arbitrating the political justice claims over honour. His concern with distributive justice (just distribution of rewards), however, is complicated by his view of the need for stability.

#### --*Improving Regimes*

Contrary to Plato, Aristotle tells us that improving an existing regime is as important as founding a new one (*Pol* 1289a3-4; 1984, p. 119). Preceding reform, practical reasoning in the political domain is required. Prudence has several types and the highest version is involved here (the lower versions concern judicial and individual decision making and household management) (Hutchinson 1995, p. 207; c.f. p. 202).

Each regime needs detailed assessment and classification. The laws are specific to each of the six regime types mentioned earlier (*Pol* 1282b8-11; 1984, p. 103). Indeed, at times, Aristotle suggests that law is relative to each *variety* within these six regimes (*Pol* 1289a20-5; 1984, p. 119). The regime can shape the character of its people to some degree (recall formative laws). This top-down causation is only part of the story, however. There is also causation in the opposite direction. The character of the people in each *polis* will determine what sort of regime is sustainable (*Pol* 1296b12-35; 1317a10-3; 1318b6-19b20; 1984, pp. 136-7, 182, 186-8; Nagle 2006, p. 13n.). A city which has a history of democratic participation may not tolerate an aristocracy, even though the latter is a better regime. Practical reasoning within the political sphere which aims at reforms must take these particularities into account.

Given this framework, Aristotle has a range of strategies aimed at political improvement. First, as preservation of the *polis* is good, Aristotle advocates means that tend to increase

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<sup>55</sup> Public Choice analysis has similar defects.

stability, such as the reduction of faction (*Pol* 1270b20-2; 1272b28-31; 1319b37-20a5; 1984, pp. 76, 81, 189). Second, Aristotle argues that, in many cases, promoting the rule of law is a real improvement (*Pol* 1292a22-35; 1984, p. 126). In the better democracies and polities the rule of law applies. Equality before the law is consistent with the egalitarian spirit of these regimes. At times, Aristotle gives extremely high praise to the rule of law and law abidingness (*Pol* 1287a30-87b4; 1984, p. 114; see Bartlett 1994, pp. 144-7). Nevertheless, as we have seen already in the case of tyranny of the majority, there are problems with law. Third, he argues that, in many cases, *diluting* the principle of the regime is an improvement; what is needed is a *mixing* of principles from various regimes (*Pol* 1294a30-b33; 1984, pp. 131-2). A well-mixed regime, Aristotle now declares, is either a type of *polity* or aristocracy.

#### --Citizenship

Let us briefly return to citizenship. The task (*ergon*) of the *good* citizen is the ‘preservation of the [political] partnership’ but the latter is the regime (*Pol* 1276b28; 1984, p. 90). The regime, in turn, is effectively ‘the governing body’ (*politeuma*) (*Pol* 1278b31; 1984, p. 94; Lord 1987, p. 139). Clearly, the good citizen--who adheres to the ideals and way of life of a regime and defends the governing body--is unlikely to coincide with the good man (*agathos*).<sup>56</sup>

The nature of the regime is fundamental in establishing the orientation towards virtue. Only in the *exceptional* case, of a regime dedicated to virtue, will conflicts between one’s dedication to the regime and to virtue disappear. This leads us into Aristotle’s understanding of the best regime in Sections 6 and 7 below.

#### --Conclusion

Initially, Aristotle’s discussion of regimes seems to be relativistic. He rejects the view that the type of laws and the reforms should be identical (Spiegel 1991, p. 29). Nevertheless, moral themes run through the whole discussion of ‘government’, including explicit cross-references to the *Ethics* (*Pol* 1295a35; 1984, p. 133). Aristotle’s evaluation of regimes is largely based on ethical considerations (*Pol* 1295a35; 1984, p. 133). Further, his systematic discussion of particular regimes culminates in reforms designed to improve them: directing the regime more towards 1) the service of the various levels of the common good, or 2) the deeper instantiation of the various Aristotelian virtues outlined earlier. Only in those cases in which the various virtues are seriously addressed and promoted (for example, through public education), will the regime have a local optimum (on its path through time) consistent with a high level of social achievement. Overall, Aristotle thought that the *eudaimōn* life would be a rare achievement, even in the age when it was a possibility. Nevertheless, he called for improvement in every existing regime i.e. practical reasoning of a high order devoted to the particularities of one’s own regime.

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<sup>56</sup> Aristotle’s view of the *agathos* is discussed in Alvey forthcoming b.

## 6. CRITIQUES OF VERY GOOD OR BEST REGIMES

We have had some hints already about Aristotle's view of human functionings and *eudaimonia* in different regimes. We also have gained some insights into his view of what different regimes consider to be the benchmark for their own success (or social achievement). How many and which individuals are to be supported in their quest for functioning achievements? How many and which functionings are to be considered as 'basic' and warranting of greatest attention? How many and which are 'higher level' or more aspirational achievements? We can now elaborate on Aristotle's insights into the 'task' of the best regime (*Pol* 1326a12; 1984, p. 204).

Insights into Aristotle's view of the 'task' of the best regime can be gleaned from two sources. First, he critiques several of the actual regimes that are reputed to be best (Crete, Sparta, and Carthage) and various hypothetical 'best' regimes (including Plato's). Second, Aristotle gives some insights into the best regime in his own name. This section focuses on the former, the next section on the latter.

### --On Sparta and Crete

The laws, and hence way of life, in Sparta and Crete predominantly concern martial virtue; this is associated with a desire for military conquest and domination of foreign cities (*Pol* 1333b5-33; 1984, p. 221; Lord 1987, pp. 150-1; see Plato *Laws* 626a-b; 1980, p. 4). Aristotle rejects these laws for two reasons. First, their aim is unjust; Aristotle argues that the best regime will not aim at empire (*Pol* 1324b25-25a10; 1984, pp. 200-1).<sup>57</sup> Second, particularly in the Spartan case, the obsession with military training and 'warlike virtue', turns children into 'beasts' (*Pol* 1271b1; 1338b13; 1984, pp. 78, 232). Like Plato in the *Laws*, Aristotle argues that other virtues must be developed also (*Laws* 624a-650b, 803d; 1980, pp. 3-31, 193; Saxonhouse 1985, p. 79).

The obsession with warfare meant that, when the Spartans were at peace, they had only one use for their time: preparation for war (*Pol* 1271b3-6; 1334a35-34b5; 1984, pp. 78, 222-3). This indicates their lack of education for cultured pursuits in leisure.

### --On Friendship in Plato's Republic

For our current purposes, Plato's *Republic* is of interest for two reasons. First, it accepts Aristotle's stress on friendship but radicalizes it into a science fiction hive-type relationship. Second, associated with the first point, is a call for the abolition of private property. This sub-section addresses the first point and the following sub-section turns to the second.

The *Republic* gives one of the most extreme roles to friendship in the history of ideas. The doctrine at the root of Plato's communism is the Greek proverb that 'the things of friends are common' (*Pol* 1263a30; 1984, p. 60). The goal is complete unity of the members of the *polis*,

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<sup>57</sup> Like Xenophon, Aristotle does not rule out a hegemonial role over other cities (*Ways* V.5- VI.1; [1925] 1968, pp. 227-31; *Pol* 1327a40-b1; 1984, p. 207; Lord 1987, p.149). Nevertheless, he rejects the common opinion that empire is desirable because it 'leads to a large accession of material prosperity' (*Pol* 133bb15-6; [1946] 1948, p. 318).

at least within the ruling class (*Rep* 462a-464a; [1968] 1991, pp. 141-3).<sup>58</sup> Aristotle rejects this. Diversity is also good (*Pol* 1261a17-23; 1984, p. 56; Nussbaum 1988, p. 159; Spiegel 1991, pp. 24, 28). Plato considered his regime in the *Laws* the second-best regime *because* of its abandonment of communism. By contrast, Aristotle considers the friendships within the family not as dispensable pre-political relics but of great importance.

In order to establish the Platonic ideal type of friendship,<sup>59</sup> and ensure that the guardians serve only the common good, they had to lose all private possessions: their own spouses, children, and property. Aristotle notes that even Plato's Socrates conceded that the guardians are not happy (*Rep* 420b-421b; [1968] 1991, p. 98; *Pol* 1264b15-8; 1984, p. 63). Aristotle adds that it is immensely more pleasurable to consider something 'one's own' than otherwise (*Pol* 1263a41-2; 1984, p. 61). Second, where wives and children are in common, Aristotle says that 'love will be watery'; children are given better care in the private family (*Pol* 1263b13 Browning translation in Browning 2007, p. 41; see 1261b31-9; see Aristotle 1984, pp. 57-8). He implies that personal responsibility and affection (*philia*) are greater in the family than the commune (*Pol* 1259b10-1; 1261b32-62a13; 1984, pp. 52, 57).<sup>60</sup> Aristotle concludes that Plato's communist project is 'altogether impossible' and misguided (*Pol* 1263b28; see 1264b15-25; 1984, p. 61; see p. 63). The 'pyramidal' *oikos*, which Plato had abolished, must be rehabilitated.

#### --On Private Property in Plato's Republic

Plato's argument against the family in the *Republic* is part of a wider argument against the household and private property within the *polis*, at least for the key classes (once again this view is abandoned in the *Laws*). Aristotle wants to retain the household and private property (Spiegel 1991, p. 27). He argues that private property is the universal practice in the world of his day and that it is only opposed in theoretical accounts, such as Plato's.

In the *Politics* Aristotle gives four justifications for private property (c.f. Spiegel 1991, pp. 27-30). First, repeating the argument above, he says it is more pleasurable to consider something 'one's own' than otherwise (*Pol* 1263a42; 1984, p. 61). Second, what is common is given least care, whereas things held privately are given careful attention (*Pol* 1261b32-3; 1984, p. 57). We might say that private property leads to better stewardship of things. By contrast, economists persist in claiming that Aristotle rejected common ownership because of its 'lack of economic incentive' and 'efficiency'; they happily attribute their own views to him (Gordon 1975, pp. 52-3). The third reason is that without private property one cannot display the virtue of liberality (*Pol* 1263b30-1; 1984, p. 61; Lord 1987, p. 135).

The fourth justification occurs in the context of a discussion of the rule of law; recall the earlier discussions of tyranny of the majority or tyranny of the rich. In the non-communist

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<sup>58</sup> The best city is one in which there is a 'community of pleasure and pain' (*Rep* 464a; [1968] 1991, p. 143). What is being described in these passages in the *Republic* is a combination of empathy, emotional contagion, and emotive telepathy on a *grand scale*. The comparable Biblical concept is limited to heterosexual married couples (see Gen 2:24; Mt 19: 5; 19:6; Mk 10:8; Eph 5:13).

<sup>59</sup> Perhaps the highest form of friendship would be between those guardians who are also philosophers.

<sup>60</sup> Aristotle says that there is another moral defence of the family. The abolition of the family will also abolish the virtue of '[sexual] moderation [by men] concerning women' (*Pol* 1263b6-10; 1984, p. 61). See Nussbaum 1988, pp. 162-3.

world, any attempt to take private possessions, even by authorized force, will be met by resistance from the owner. Attachment to one's possessions may well be stronger than it is to the *polis*. Resistance to confiscation may even lead to the destruction of the *polis*. Nevertheless, 'civil stability' or preserving the *polis* is in the common good (Bartlett 1994, p. 149). Aristotle's fourth defence of private property is that it may be a necessary means to preserving the political partnership.<sup>61</sup>

Overall, Aristotle's defence of private property is *primarily* moral. On the other hand, he defends private property only *within limits*: 'what is sufficient to sustain the polis life of the citizen' (Lewis 1978, p. 72; see *Pol* 1256b-57b; 1984, pp. 45-8). Today, mainstream economists use efficiency and incentive arguments to 1) defend private property, and 2) condemn limits on property acquisition.

#### --On Plato's Laws

Plato says that distributive justice requires that the inhabitants of a city 'be well known to one another' (Plato *Laws* 738d-e; 1980, p. 125). Aristotle agrees with this principle. Citizens must 'be familiar with one another's qualities'; only by day-to-day contact can one make judgments about the allocation of administrative offices based on 'merit' (*Pol* 1326b15-6; 1984, p. 205). The same principle applies in making good judicial decisions (which are concerned with fine judgements on criminal and some other matters) (*Pol* 1326b16; 1984, p. 205). On the other hand, he disagrees with Plato's view in the *Laws* on what this means for the ideal size of the *polis*. Aristotle says that Plato's regime of 5,000 citizens is far too big (*Pol* 1265a5-18; 1984, p. 64; Plato *Laws* 737e; 740d; 1980, pp. 124, 127).

Familiarity of one thousand citizens with each other is quite conceivable, especially when they share meals and military duties together. This is roughly equivalent to the number of students in a large high school. Let us again revisit the 'pyramidal' image of the household that we have used several times in this paper. The human 'core' of the *polis* is the thousand (or so) citizens. Within each *oikos* 'pyramid,' four or five of them, led by the household head, are the permanent 'representatives' of the *oikos* in the political partnership. In *polities* and democracies, the citizen-*oikos* structures are the 'core' of the *polis* and represent the majority of the population. In other regimes, the 'pyramidal' *oikos* structures would not constitute a majority of the population.

Aristotle's view of the ideal political size, however, may seem incredible to many of us today who live in what he would consider to be empires. If Plato's regime in the *Laws* fails to meet these standards, stronger criticisms would apply to today's large, anonymous market societies.

## 7. ARISTOTLE'S BEST REGIMES

Aristotle tells us that the best regime aims at the 'best possible' life (*Pol* 1328a35; 1984, p. 209). This section considers three topics. First, we discuss the principles that Aristotle uses

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<sup>61</sup> His overall teaching seems to be that law and law-abiding should be assumed to be just but they may not be so.

to establish his best regime(s). Second, we lay out his hierarchy of ‘best’ regimes. Third, we provide a few details of what is *effectively* his best regime.

#### --*The Principles or Structure of the Best Regime*

Aristotle offers three different principles that define the best regime. Two principles were previously established by Plato. One appears to be Aristotle’s invention.

First, following his teacher, Aristotle draws the parallel between the individual and the city: the *polis* should have the same *structure* or virtue as that in the good individual soul (*Pol* 1323b30-1; 1984, p. 198). Aristotle says that ‘the best city is happy and acts nobly’; it demonstrates, the same structure of ‘courage, justice and prudence’ as is found in the good individual (*Pol* 1323b30-1; 1984, p. 198; Plato *Rep* 592a-b; [1968] 1991, pp. 274-5; Nussbaum 1988, p. 156). Courage in attacking and defeating neighbours in order to acquire empire does not qualify.

Second, again following Plato, Aristotle says that the way to consider success is to view the city as a whole (i.e. the quality of life on average). Hence, ‘happiness can only be ascribed to a state [*polis*] if we extend our view to embrace the whole body of its citizens and do not confine ourselves to a single one of its elements’ (*Pol* 1329a20-5; c.f. 1264b18-20; [1946] 1948, p. 302; c.f. p. 54; Plato *Rep* 419-21; [1968] 1991, pp. 97-9). As Nussbaum points out, the first two principles are potentially reconcilable; nevertheless, they will diverge frequently (1988, pp. 155-60).

Third, Aristotle gives us a picture of the best regime that is in broad agreement with the aspirations of Nussbaum and Sen. ‘It is evident that the best *politeia* is that arrangement (*taxis*) according to which anyone whatsoever (*hostisoun*) might do best (*arista prattoi*) and live a flourishing life (*zoiē makariōs*)’ (Nussbaum translation of *Pol* 1324a23-5 in Nussbaum 1988, p. 146; see also Taylor 1995, p. 248).<sup>62</sup> This ‘distributive conception’ is at the heart of what Nussbaum calls ‘social democracy’ in Aristotle (1988, pp. 147-8; Nussbaum 1990). This principle again diverges from the other two.

With regard to the first principle, the parallels between the city and the individual have clear limits.<sup>63</sup> Like Xenophon (and Plato in the *Laws*), Aristotle gives extensive treatment to the household. In this three-tier approach (city, household, and individual), the simple parallel of the individual and the city breaks down. That leaves us with two principles. Aristotle seems to have been unable to choose between them or the text has been sufficiently corrupted that we no longer have the relevant passages that resolve the issue.<sup>64</sup>

#### --*The Hierarchy of Best Regimes*

Aristotle’s apparent indecision over the principles underpinning the best regime is reflected in his caution about specifying the best regime; he says that there are really *three tiers* of

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<sup>62</sup> Nussbaum equates *makariōs* with *eudaimonia* in her translation (Nussbaum [1986] 2001, pp. 318-42; c.f. Lord 1984, p. 276).

<sup>63</sup> Nussbaum concludes that it is not Aristotle’s main line of argument (1988, pp. 155-9).

<sup>64</sup> We will return to this problem in a projected paper on Aristotle’s economics.

good regimes (*Pol* 1288b36-40; 1984, p. 119).<sup>65</sup> The highest and truly *best* regime is a kingship of the *pambasileia* type.<sup>66</sup> This standard, equivalent to the philosopher/king in Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle regards as essentially a *utopia* of a former stage of history.<sup>67</sup> For his own era, that left him with two tiers of good regimes which could be realized with more or less difficulty: a type of aristocracy and a type of *polity*. Because he ranks the former<sup>68</sup> above the latter, and discusses it at much greater length, we will focus on it below.

#### --Some Details of Aristotle's 'Best Regime'

First, in terms of population size, the best city must not be too small; it should be big enough to be 'self-sufficient with a view to living well' (*Pol* 1236b8-9; 1984, p. 205; see *NE* 1170b30-3; [1925] 1980, p. 243). More importantly, it must not be too big, 'like a nation'; it should be the greatest number consistent with self-sufficiency yet 'readily surveyable' (*Pol* 1326b24; see 1327a3; 1984, p. 205; see p. 206). The size must be combined with not only friendship among the citizens but 'affection' (*Pol* 1295b23; 1984, p. 134). Affection does not mean *Republic*-type hive unity. Overall, the ideal is a small, self-sufficient *polis* in which the citizens share an ethical bond.

The inclination to reproduce, which is shared with animals, becomes subject to choice (Saxonhouse 1985, p. 77). To maintain the ideal population size, strict fertility control is required. While frequent childbirth reduces a woman's chance of high functioning achievements, Aristotle's focus is on other reasons to limit population growth (i.e. friendship, allocation of offices by merit) (c.f. Sen [1999] 2000, pp. 198-9). An optimal *polis* size brings practical reasoning into play.

Second, although Aristotle identifies a variety of aristocracies, the best regime is an aristocracy in the highest sense: the regime is comprised of those who are 'similar' but also simply best (or virtuous) (*Pol* 1328a35; 1984, p. 209).<sup>69</sup> Only in this regime, where virtue is 'honoured above all,' is the 'same person' both 'a good man and a good citizen' (*Pol* 1293b6; see 1279a35-7; 1984, p. 129; see p. 96).

Third, what is the way of life of the citizen? The stress is on the life of 'leisure' (*scholē*). Leisure means freedom from earning a living. In material terms, it requires being 'well off in terms of property', living 'in a liberal fashion' but with 'moderation'; it is a mean between 'penury' and 'luxury' (*Pol* 1326b30-8; 1984, pp. 205-6).

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<sup>65</sup> Alexander (2000) says that there are two best regimes: the philosopher king and aristocracy. See also Lord 1984, p. 22. The best regime is not *polity*: it is merely the most practicable of the correct regimes (*Pol* 1288b39-40; 1984, p. 119).

<sup>66</sup> The *pambasileia* is the outstanding individual who rules without law but, like a good parent, looks to the needs and capacities of each and every individual in the family and to the common good of the family.

<sup>67</sup> *Pol* 1273b12-7; 1286b7-22; 1297b2-28; 1313a1-10; 1984, pp. 82, 112, 138-9, 173; Saxonhouse 1985, p. 70; Waerdt 1985.

<sup>68</sup> By including magnificence and greatness of soul in the list of virtues, Aristotle shows his bias towards aristocracy (Lord 1987, p. 126; Bartlett and Collins 2011, pp. 303-4). Few are capable of such virtue.

<sup>69</sup> Lord 1987, p. 147. In addition, there are at least two other types of aristocracies: those regimes where the few rule with a view to the common good; and those well-mixed regimes which incline towards oligarchy (*Pol* 1293a35-b20; 1984, p. 129). See also Alexander 2000, pp. 191-3.

What do citizens do with their leisure? First, they must be free to engage in military and political activities (*Pol* 1329a1-3; 1984, p. 211; Lord 1987, p. 147). Nevertheless, the way of life must be primarily peaceful. Peace plus ‘leisure’ provide preconditions for the good life. Second, citizens must have time for ‘the leisured cultivation of music and poetry’ (i.e. *musikē*) (*Pol* 1334a22; 1984, p. 222). This is a broadly defined, or diluted, type of ‘philosophy’, or what Lord calls ‘culture’ (Lord 1987, p. 153; see Lord 1982).<sup>70</sup> Hence, the life overall is a *compound* of the two best ways of life discussed earlier (i.e. the political life and the philosophical life).

A central element in the picture that still needs sketching concerns the extent to which the various human functionings can and should be *guaranteed* in the best regime. While we have some sense of social achievement already, the picture is not complete. This will be discussed further in a projected paper on Aristotle’s economics.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This presentation of Aristotle’s politics leaves out a great deal of detail but it serves to illustrate the importance and dignity of political life: it requires a high level of practical reasoning within an ethical framework. While considerable stress is placed on the need for social stability and cohesion, Aristotle has a deeper ethical thread that runs through his politics. Aristotle puts considerable stress on friendship and justice (especially the common good). Explicit cross references are made to his ethical writings. Contrary to Marxism and contemporary Public Choice theory, in his analysis of politics, Aristotle gives some, but surprisingly little, role to economic motivations.<sup>71</sup>

When read in the context of the companion paper on Aristotle’s ethics (Alvey forthcoming b), this paper constitutes the second foundation for grasping Aristotle’s ethics and economics. A further paper on Aristotle’s economics is required to complete the task.

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<sup>70</sup> Aristotle does not believe that a few thousand citizens can philosophize in the true sense (Bartlett 1994, p. 148).

<sup>71</sup> Aristotle stresses honour, arrogance, fear, and contempt (*Pol* 1302b1-5; 1984, p. 150; Lord 1987, p. 146).

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