THE APPROPRIATION OF ARISTOTLE

IN THE LIBERAL-COMMUNITARIAN DEBATE

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Abstract

In the last twenty years or so a key issue in political philosophy has been the debate between so-called communitarian philosophers such as MacIntyre, Sandel, Walzer and Taylor, and those who support forms of liberal individualism such as that found in Rawls's *Theory of Justice.* In this debate reference has quite often been made to Aristotle. This is particularly so in the case of MacIntyre who is frequently seen as presenting a neo-Aristotelian view. But writers from the liberal-individualist camp, such as Miller, have also invoked Aristotle's authority. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the appropriation of Aristotle in this debate. I analyse six key concepts: community, teleology, happiness, justice, friendship and liberty. These concepts play a leading role in both communitarian and liberal political philosophy but they are of course also central to Aristotle's account. In choosing these concepts I do not mean to suggest that there are not other issues which are also important, but these are both characteristic of Aristotle's thought and of obvious relevance to the liberal-communitarian debate.

I argue that neither the communitarian nor the liberal appropriations do justice to Aristotle's political theory. Both seem to attribute their own aspirations to the Aristotelian text and to rely on Aristotle's authority in order to substantiate their arguments. I conclude that Aristotle's political theory, when carefully examined within the debate, comes out as neither liberal nor communitarian. Aristotelian political philosophy is consistent neither with a liberal-individualist nor with a communitarian view that gives such a prominent role to the concept of community. Neither of the two parties to the debate therefore seems entitled to cite Aristotle in support of their position.

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1. INTRODUCTION

> Though words be the signs we have of another's opinions and intentions; yet, because of the equivocation of them is so frequent according to the diversity of contexture, and the company wherewith they go (which the presence of him that speaketh, our sight of his actions and conjecture of his intentions, must help to discharge us of): It must be extremely hard to find out the opinions and meanings of those men that are gone from us long ago, and have left us no other signification thereof but their books; which cannot possibly be understood without history enough to discover those aforementioned circumstances, and also without great
> prudence to observe them.
> Hobbes, *Human Nature*

1.1 Aristotle and the liberal-communitarian debate

My interest in this thesis is to examine the appropriation of Aristotle in the so-called liberal-communitarian debate. Aristotle's *Politics* has been a pivotal text in the debates on the extent and limits of unity and liberty in the state. Indeed, communitarians frequently invoke Aristotle's authority and his understanding of political community when they complain that our political life often resembles something like a Hobbesian account of the state of nature: "nothing but civil war carried on by other means, a war of all against all we make for ourselves, not out of whole cloth but out of an intentional distortion of our social natures".[1]

Although it would be wrong to suggest that there is a single line of argument shared by all communitarian thinkers, it is characteristic of many communitarians to argue that persons are not asocial or unencumbered individuals but that they require a place in a well-functioning community in order to flourish. Such communitarian arguments usually concentrate on the concept of the community and on the concept of the human good which is the aim of the community. This doctrine, according to the communitarian critics of liberalism, can be traced back to Aristotle's political theory for the priority of the *polis* to the individual, since, as Aristotle maintains, individuals can attain perfection only if they are morally habituated under the *polis* and its laws, and,

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[1] Yack (1993), p. 2.

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indeed, it is upon Aristotelian theory that much communitarian theory is based.

Alasdair MacIntyre has recently suggested that, although it was "a prophetic exaggeration when in 1848 Marx and Engels declared that the spectre of communism was haunting Europe, nowadays the spectre of contemporary communitarianism haunts only liberal periodicals and university departments of philosophy and political science".[2] In a similar way, though, one can equally observe that contemporary communitarianism is haunted in turn by the spectre of Aristotle.

A great deal of contemporary communitarian argument is based on an endeavour to reconstruct such an Aristotelian theory, or better to produce a neo-Aristotelian one, which would provide a strong and sufficient framework for the founding of their arguments against liberal theories of the good. But, nevertheless, it still remains to be seen whether an examination of the Aristotelian arguments, as presented in the *Politics*, shows that they do indeed accord with the theory of Aristotle as presented by the Alasdair MacIntyre of *After Virtue*, and whether, in general, Aristotle's political theory really does support any particular position in contemporary political philosophy.

Indeed, Aristotle's influence can most explicitly be shown in MacIntyre's work (mainly in *After Virtue*) where the presence of the Aristotelian tradition is very strong. MacIntyre is definitely the one communitarian philosopher who is clearly neo-Aristotelian beyond any doubt. One should also point out that MacIntyre's thesis has in general influenced greatly the other communitarian philosophers and has provided the historical basis for their arguments.[3] Therefore, the focus of my examination will concentrate mainly on MacIntyre's arguments.

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[2] MacIntyre (1995), p. 34.

[3] This is most apparent in the work of Sandel (1982).

However, there has recently been a tendency among some Aristotelian scholars to adopt another kind of line of argument regarding Aristotle's political philosophy. Their approach of Aristotle's political philosophy is liberal, in the sense that, through the arguments that they provide in favour of Aristotelian political theory, Aristotle appears to be some kind of a liberal thinker, or even libertarian, in the weak sense of the term. Therefore, I will also focus on the examination of these arguments.

Throughout my study, I will analyse six key concepts (community, teleology, happiness, justice, friendship and liberty) which can be found in Aristotle, but which also are key concepts of both communitarianism and liberalism, although they get to be very much differently interpreted in each case. The main questions that I will have in mind, whenever I will examine Aristotelian or Aristotelian communitarian or Aristotelian liberal arguments, would be whether Aristotle's political philosophy is indeed liberal or communitarian.

It should also be noted that, whenever I use the words 'liberal' and 'liberalism' in relation to Aristotelian thought, I actually have in mind what I have called before 'liberal accounts of Aristotle's political philosophy'. However, my scope is broader than that, since I will not narrow myself to presenting only liberal or communitarian accounts of Aristotle but also to try to answer to the question 'How liberal or communitarian was Aristotle?'. In this sense, I shall also present and examine liberal and communitarian arguments relevant to the discussion of Aristotelian politics.[4]

In this thesis I will focus therefore only on these six main concepts of Aristotelian political philosophy--community, teleology, happiness, justice, friendship and liberty--not because there are not many other issues also of

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[4] For the purposes of this chapter I shall assume that there is an opposition between communitarianism and liberalism. Some may argue that the real opposition is between communitarianism and individualism and that liberals do not have to be individualists in the relevant sense.

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great importance, but because those six are, according to my opinion, the most characteristic of his thought in relation to the liberal-communitarian debate. What is interesting is that those six concepts are key ones in both liberal and communitarian thought in the same way that they are for Aristotelian philosophy. All three theories focus on these six concepts and consider them important for political philosophy despite the fact that they deal with them differently. My aim in this thesis would be to examine whether Aristotelian political theory has any affinities with either of the other two and to show in which ways it is appropriated in the liberal-communitarian debate.

According to Beiner, the moral self-understanding of liberalism would be notably strengthened, both theoretically and practically, if it were to shift from a Kantian discourse of rights and individual autonomy to an Aristotelian discourse of virtues and character formation.[5] So, in fact, there are two ways of going if Aristotelianism is to be incorporated into the liberal agenda: either one tries to make liberalism change perspective and argues in favour of Aristotle without denying liberalism at the same time, or one tries to prove that there are affinities between Aristotle and liberal theory. One has, therefore, to decide whether a shift of liberal principles to Aristotelian ones is required, or whether Aristotelianism already has affinities with liberal values. This would mean bringing Aristotelian argument back to our contemporary moral and political liberal agenda, but not without difficulties. Such a project--if plausible at all-- cannot go on without first tackling several problems that come up.

First, this would mean that Aristotle should be seen as part of liberal tradition and in fact be incorporated in it. Seeing Aristotle as part of a liberal tradition would require us to prove first that such a liberal tradition exists, and, second, that Aristotelian political theory has affinities with the central claims of liberalism. But at the same time one should try to define what exactly is meant by 'liberalism'. Even if it is proved that liberalism forms a sort of a

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[5] Beiner (1983).

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tradition which starts from what is called 'classical liberalism' of the seventeenth century onwards and goes on until now and the 'political liberalism' of John Rawls (Nozickean libertarianism being included as an extreme form of what can be called 'hard-core' liberalism), still one has to define with which part of that tradition Aristotle has affinities: classical or contemporary liberalism?

Second, one would have to meet the challenges of communitarian argument where Aristotle is part of the critique of liberal individualism and is seen as an essential part of the communitarian tradition. It should be noted that one of the main difficulties of accomplishing such a project has been that the communitarians have in fact incorporated Aristotle in their communitarian agenda by providing both historical and philosophical argument. In fact, many liberals in their effort to refute communitarianism have in the past focused on criticising Aristotelian arguments without always realising that what they were actually attacking was the communitarian interpretation of Aristotle's thought and not necessarily Aristotle himself.

In this introductory chapter, I will, first, outline roughly the debate between liberals and communitarians by presenting two ideal models of a fully-blooded liberal and a fully-blooded communitarian respectively. Then I will go on to identify the differences between the main exponents of liberalism and communitarianism and try to classify their theories. These outlines of liberalism and communitarianism will be used as guides throughout my thesis when trying to identify Aristotle with one or the other or clarify relevant questions. Second, I will discuss the question associated with the debate of whether the four main exponents of communitarianism (MacIntyre, Sandel, Taylor and Walzer) do indeed deserve the title of 'communitarian', since almost all of them have actually renounced it. This is a serious problem-- at least as far as MacIntyre is concerned--since one could really place him as being a neo-Aristotelian but not a communitarian.

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In the last section of this chapter, I will examine the main historical communitarian argument against modernity which can be found in MacIntyre's conception of an 'Aristotelian or classical tradition'. It is there that the historicist methodology of the communitarian argument at least in relation to Aristotle is fundamentally based. In fact, MacIntyre has been described as being "the past, present, future and all-time philosophical historian's historian of philosophy".[6] In this way, by having examined the main communitarian historical appropriation, I will consider in the rest of the thesis rationalistic appropriations.

I will not embark in general into an extensive discussion of the liberal-communitarian debate; nor will I try to offer a solution to this debate. My aim is to consider the Aristotelian appropriations that take place in this debate and to examine Aristotle's political theory. The liberal-communitarian debate is well known and over discussed if anything else, so I will assume knowledge of the arguments of each side and of the main positions.

1. 2 The liberal-communitarian debate

1. 2. 1 Sketching the debate

Traditionally, the debate in political philosophy has been between two main concepts, liberty and equality, and around these two concepts two opposing political theories have actually been shaped, liberalism and socialism. The one is incompatible with the other it is thought. The debate in the nineteenth century was as to which one should be preferred at the expense of the other in both political and economic theory.

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[6] Teichman (1990), p. 14.

Liberalism is usually referred to as "a historically important approach to political theory shared by a wide variety of political theorists, from Rawls to the libertarians".[7] In fact, "because of the lengthy prominence of liberalism in western politics, it has sometimes seemed impossible to define it without identifying it with western civilisation in its entirety, back as far as the Pre-Socratic philosophers".[8] Liberalism, as its name anyway suggests, was--at least until the nineteenth century--actually concerned with liberty which was considered to be the natural human condition, while political association was considered to be artificial and political authority conventional. Liberal thinking was actually built up around "the absence of positive moral guidance in nature, the priority of liberty over authority, the secularisation of politics, and the promotions of constitutions of government and principles of law that establish the limits of government and the rights of citizens against government".[9]

Liberalism has actually taken a turn in a new direction of considering equality as well as liberty in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the liberal justification for state intervention was re-deployed, as it can been seen for example in the works of T. H. Green, L. T. Hobhouse and J. M. Keynes. These political thinkers have actually shifted away from extreme individualism and tried to reconcile individual liberty with the notion of human welfare, and to provide the foundations of a welfare liberal state. This kind of liberalism has actually been called 'social liberalism'.

Rawls's publication of *A Theory of Justice* in 1971 has agitated the then utilitarian dominated field of analytical political philosophy and gave a new turn to political discussion. At a time when some believed political philosophy to be dead, Rawls has contributed to its revival by abandoning utilitarianism

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[7] Hampton (1997), p. 170.

[8] Zvesper (1997), p. 285.

[9] Zvesper (1997), *ibid*.

and placing himself in the tradition of social contract theories and Kantian liberalism. Rawls has in fact brought forward questions of political obligation and the state, but, most important, he has raised the issues of justice and the welfare state. What Rawls actually tried to do was to settle the old quarrel between liberty and equality, and to try to show that liberty could be made compatible with equality.

After the publication of *A Theory of Justice*, several responses have been made from the utilitarian camp, but also most important from the hard-core wing of liberalism, those calling themselves libertarians--like Robert Nozick for example--who have strongly argued that in no way could liberty ever be compatible with equality, since any egalitarian principle would necessarily pose a threat to liberty. Nozick's theory--or Nozickean libertarianism as it is often called--has actually created an internal debate within the liberal tradition itself which in fact continues the old quarrel between liberty and equality.[10]

But, a stronger and different kind of criticism against contemporary liberalism was to emerge from a quite different camp of political thinkers, those calling themselves communitarians. This debate between liberalism and communitarianism has dominated the 80's, and still dominates political discussion, although the debate has taken a different direction in the sense that the tendency now is more to reconcile both sides by presenting a new theory that would actually compromise between the two theories. Communitarians have criticised liberalism for its individualism, its neglect of community and its conception of justice. Crudely speaking, one can say that liberalism holds the claim that "the individual is prior to society", while communitarianism holds the counter claim that "society is prior to the individual". The central question which dominates the debate really is: "Should the ideally just state be

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[10] It should be noted that it has been pointed out by G. A. Cohen and others that Rawls and the 'new liberals' should be actually called 'social democrats', since they reject the principle of 'self-ownership' which characterised one form of classical liberalism, as in Locke for example. (See Kymlicka (1989), p. 10.) But I do not really see why some notion of self-ownership at least has not survived in the principle of 'self-determination' of the 'new liberals'.

constructed from the standpoint of how to realise an ideal *community*, or should it be constructed from the standpoint of how to foster the well-being of *individuals* in that society?"[11]

Communitarianism is nevertheless a vague label and--although the main exponents of communitarianism (Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Walzer) have widely differing outlooks--it can be said that they all share certain general themes. Liberalism is also a vague label in the sense that one can find different sorts of liberalisms, varying from 'classical liberalism' to contemporary 'egalitarian liberalism' (which can actually be distinguished into 'political liberalism' and 'comprehensive liberalism') or to 'libertarian liberalism', or to 'hard-core liberalism', or even to extreme forms of individualism. "Liberals", in the words of Michael Sandel, "often take pride in defending what they oppose--pornography, for example, or unpopular views".[12] Indeed, liberals in general hold that the state should respect and protect the rights of individuals by being neutral between the different conceptions of the good. Even though the tradition of liberalism includes a spectrum of modern liberals ranging from welfare liberals to libertarians, they all in general agree to a 'negative' definition of liberty, and they oppose the communitarian principle of community on the grounds that the state would violate the rights of individuals if it forced them to conform to an official code of morality.

In fact, the case is that both liberalism and communitarianism are cluster labels attributed to political theorists who do not always consistently hold all the parts of the cluster at the same time. Therefore, those engaged in the debate between liberalism and communitarianism often find themselves criticising views which are not really sustained by the opponents they have in mind. This is a problem deeply inherited in the debate in the sense that a lot of

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[11] Hampton (1997), p. 169.
[12] Sandel (1984), p. 1.

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confusion is created while trying to define terms, since criticisms or responses to criticisms might often miss the point entirely if A criticises *p* but B in fact replies having in mind *q*.

In order to be able to understand what liberalism and communitarianism are respectively, it would be useful to try to imagine what a 'fully blooded liberal' and a 'fully blooded communitarian' would be.[13]

Let's start our analysis by trying to imagine what a full-blooded liberal would be like. This would be a person who endorses all liberal arguments at once, but who would primarily be some kind of a Rawlsian liberal since it is mostly around Rawlsian liberalism that the debate has been shaped. She would believe in the liberty principle, in the principle of self-determination, in the priority of the right over the good, in state neutrality and in tolerance. She would actually make claims of seven sorts:

(1) First, and most important, she would endorse the liberty principle. She would hold, that is, a conception of negative liberty. 'Negative liberty', according to Berlin's famous distinction, is involved in answering the question of the area within which persons or groups of persons should be left to do what they want without interference by others, while 'positive liberty' on the other hand is involved in answering the question what, or who, is or should be the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do or be one thing rather than another. Negative freedom is in this sense *freedom from*, whereas positive freedom is *freedom to.* Therefore, our full blooded liberal would endorse Mill's liberty principle according to which state interference should not be left to arbitrary custom and popular morality (Mill's greatest enemy), but limitation of a person's freedom of action is justifiable by the state only if it threatens harm to another person: "The only purpose for

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[13] The liberal in my account is depicted as female while the communitarian as male. Usually, it is the other way round, as in Bell's dialogue (1993). But, since all the main communitarians are male, while there are many female liberals around, I thought that this sex classification would be more appropriate.

which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant."[14]

(2) Related to the liberty principle is the principle of self-determination. She would believe that we promote people's interests by letting them choose for themselves what sort of life they want to lead, and that to deny people this self-determination is to fail to treat them as equals. Although she might leave some space for acts of paternalism (in our relations with children for example), she would insist that every competent adult be provided with a sphere of self-determination which must be respected by others. The argument for self-determination, in its extreme formulation would go like that: "no one may be in a better position than I am to know my own good. Even if I am not always right, I may be more likely to be right than anyone else".[15]

(3) She would also hold the view that the state should be neutral between competing conceptions of the good. The state must exhibit a kind of impartiality to different conceptions of the good which is captured by an anti-perfectionist ideal of liberal neutrality. She would associate perfectionism with intolerance. Some familiar examples of perfectionism which lead to the association of perfectionism and intolerance include legal prohibition of homosexual activity, legally mandated school prayer and moralistically inspired censorship of pornography. Thus, she would actually endorse Rawls argument that "his account of self-determination should lead us to endorse a 'neutral state', i.e. a state which does not justify its actions on the basis of the intrinsic superiority or inferiority of conceptions of the good life, and which does not deliberately attempt to influence people's judgements of the value of

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[14] Mill (1989), p. 135.
[15] Kymlicka (1990), p. 203.

these different conceptions".[16] But it should be noted that 'neutrality' is a fairly new liberal concept that was not always associated with liberalism.

(4) Consequently, she would also have to base the distribution of primary goods on a 'thin theory of the good', which can be used to advance many different ways of life. This 'thin theory of the good' actually relates to the liberal deontological principle of the priority of the right over the good.

(5) Since she is a 'new' liberal, she should of course also be committed to "equality of the people in the political society, and to the idea that the state's role must be defined such that it enhances freedom and equality".[17]

(6) She will not however endorse scepticism because scepticism does not in fact support self-determination. "If people cannot make mistakes in their choices, then neither can governments. If all ways of life are equally valuable, then no one can complain when the government chooses a particular way of life for the community."[18]

(7) And, lastly, after the publication of Rawls's *Political Liberalism* in 1993, she would also distinguish between reasonable and rational conceptions of the good, from which two the reasonable ones are to be preferred. In general, liberalism is committed to the idea that "reason is the tool by which the liberal state governs. Whatever the religious, moral, or metaphysical views of the people, they are expected to deal with one another in the political arena through rational argument and reasonable attitudes, and the legitimating arguments directed at individuals in order to procure their consent must be based on reason".[19] She would also adopt Scanlonian contractualism according to which "an act is wrong if its performance under the circumstances would be disallowed by any system of rules for the general regulation of behaviour

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[16] Kymlicka (1990), p. 205.
[17] Hampton (1997), p. 179.
[18] Kymlicka (1990), pp. 201-202.
[19] Hampton (1997), p. 181.

which no one could reasonably reject as a basis for informed, unforced general agreement".[20]

Let's now in turn try to imagine what a 'fully blooded communitarian' would be. This would be a person who endorses all communitarian arguments at once. He would criticise liberalism--and mostly Rawlsian liberalism-- on its notion of the self and on the connected issues of neutrality and the good, and he would hold that liberalism does not sufficiently take into account the importance of community for personal identity, moral and political thinking and judgements about well-being in the contemporary world. He would actually make claims of seven sorts:[21]

(1) First, he would criticise the liberal conception of 'negative' liberty by holding the alternative view of 'positive' liberty which allows for individuals to make their own informed choices about how it is best to live. People cannot be made free if left alone and freedom is not about being free *from* any restraint, but about being free *to* make the right choices. To be able to make the right choices involves socialisation and education about one's 'real interests'. Since no one has an interest in anything that undermines their society (since this would at the same time involve undermining their identity), positive liberty--although it does not allow the individual to engage in actions contrary to customary morality--is not considered to be limited, as opposed to its negative conception.[22]

(2) Second, he would hold that the liberal notion of the self, according to which the self is prior to the ends which are affirmed by it, is false. It ignores the fact that the self is 'embedded' or 'situated' or 'encumbered' in existing social practices which we cannot always stand back from and opt out of them.

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[20] Scanlon (1983), p. 110.

[21] For this exposition of communitarianism I mostly rely on Mulhall and Swift (1996). I also draw from Kymlicka (1989), Bell (1993), Taylor (1989), pp. 159-182 and from Walzer (1990), pp. 6-23.

[22] Wolff (1996), p. 145.

In deciding how to lead our lives, we "all approach our own circumstances as bearers of a particular social identity. Hence what is good for me has to be the good for one who inhabits these roles".[23] It is only from within some socially located standpoint that we recognise those higher, strongly evaluated goods that generate moral obligations, goods which we may subsequently endorse retrospectively. The most celebrated advocate of this view is of course Sandel; but MacIntyre and Taylor also develop a substantial communitarian conception of the self as 'embedded'.

(3) Third, he would object to the notion of asocial individualism that liberalism--according to his opinion--advocates, and instead he would argue that it should be abandoned for a politics of the common good. By 'asocial individualism' he has in mind the liberal assumption that any individual's ends, values and identity can be thought of as existing independently of the wider communities of which he is a member, and also the liberal error of failing to acknowledge the true significance of those particular human goods whose content or focus is inherently communal, such as the good of political community. MacIntyre and Taylor develop arguments that aim to undermine this view of asocial individualism.

(4) Fourth, he would object to the concept of neutrality that liberals hold since he would think that Rawlsian liberalism is far less neutral between competing conceptions of the good than it is usually thought to be. Related to that is a further view that he would hold according to which there is indeed an objective good, rather than a plurality of contending goods, which at least compromises and possibly undermines the negative liberty with which liberals traditionally associated their theories. One important aspect of Rawlsian liberalism is that its theory of justice, which incorporates strong rights to negative liberty, must be prior to and independent of a theory of the good. This is important in view of the requirement that any adequate theory

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[23] MacIntyre (1985), pp. 204-205.

accommodates a plurality of contending views of the good, no one of which is capable of eliciting public assent to it. Again, Sandel, MacIntyre and Taylor criticise liberal anti-perfectionism and the concept of neutrality.

(5) Fifth, he would also argue that there are claims about how, within our own social order, we have to rely on historically generated shared understandings in moral discourse with others (Taylor, Walzer).

(6) Sixth, he would challenge the liberal self-determination principle according to which the individual's choices of ends, values and conceptions of the good are arbitrary expressions of preference. Liberal justice is intended for rational individuals who freely choose their own way of life, on the assumption that we have a 'highest-order' interest in choosing our central projects and life plans, regardless of what it is that is chosen. But this view according to communitarianism does not capture our actual self-understandings.

(7) Finally, a seventh set of beliefs addresses issues about the nation as a principal locus of community. He would hold that the state should promote some conceptions of the good over others. As it has been pointed out, "full-blown communitarians make three claims of increasing commitment: (1) The state should promote some conceptions of the good over others, (2) The conceptions to be favoured are those that have a significant degree of reliance on common goods, and, (3) The correct common goods to favour for any particular state are given by its social traditions or folkways".[24] But, although most communitarians would hold (1) and (2), historicist communitarianism need only hold (3). MacIntyre is the only one who denies (7), as I will show in the following section of this chapter, since he believes it would be a mistake to charge the state with the duty of advancing common goods (Sandel, Taylor, Walzer).

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[24] Wolff (1997), p. 35.

1. 2. 2 Denouncing the communitarian title

Another problem associated with communitarian theory in general has been that almost all communitarian philosophers have strongly resented the label and have publicly tried to disassociate themselves from it. In fact, the only communitarian philosopher who actually calls himself a communitarian is Daniel Bell (1993). This is a problem in the sense that one could argue that it would be unfair to drag philosophers like MacIntyre and Taylor who are in fact neo-Aristotelians into the political debate, which has actually been often associated with popular but not philosophical works of political activists like Amitai Etzioni (1995) that many contemporary politicians have claimed to have read and admire. But also, most important, their rejection of the label communitarian should be considered, since--communitarianism being a cluster concept--they may be rejecting parts of the cluster which they take to be essential and we view as accidental.

As Bell points out, all four moral and political philosophers--MacIntyre, Sandel, Taylor and Walzer--who are typically labelled as 'communitarian critics of liberal political theory' have actually disassociated themselves from the 'communitarian movement'.[25] Taylor (1984) leaves himself out when he distinguishes between two teams (team L and team C) involved in the contemporary debate in social theory and, in particular, in the theory of justice. Also, Walzer (1990) criticises current American versions of the communitarian critique and offers a less powerful version of his own, one more available for incorporation within liberal (or social democratic) politics. But, Walzer actually avoids any mention in this article of the communitarian critique of universalist liberal methodology that is normally associated with his own book *Spheres of Justice* (1983). Lastly, Sandel, although he is really the only one who on different occasions has identified himself with the

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[25] Bell (1993), p. 4 and p. 17, n. 14.

communitarian camp, it can be suggested that in his *Liberalism and Its Critics* (1984) "he is presenting leading statements of liberal theory and some largely. negative challenges to it, as opposed to contrasting two fully developed theories".[26]

But, from all four, it is really MacIntyre who has very strongly dissociated himself from contemporary communitarians whenever he had had the opportunity.[27] In *The Responsive Community*, for example, he opens a letter strenuously disowning the label communitarian:

> In spite of rumours to the contrary, I am not and never have been a communitarian. For my judgement is that the political, economic, and moral structures of advanced modernity in this country, as elsewhere, exclude the possibility of realising any of the worthwhile types of political community which at various times in the past have been achieved, even if always in imperfect forms. And also I believe that attempts to remake modern societies in systematically communitarian ways will always be either ineffective or disastrous.[28]

Also, at the end of his "Reply" in *After MacIntyre* he briefly indicates that he has modified some of his views, and that he never considered himself a communitarian.[29]

MacIntyre finds himself opposing contemporary communitarians who advance their proposals as a contribution to the politics of the nation-state. It is in this sense, that he does not think that the state should promote some conceptions of the good over others, that he rejects the label communitarian. But does he really differ from the other communitarians, and could it be said that he is no communitarian at all?

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[26] Bell (1993), p. 17.

[27] MacIntyre (1991), pp. 91-2, and MacIntyre (1994), p. 302.

[28] MacIntyre (1991), p. 91.

[29] MacIntyre (1994).

In saying that he is no contemporary communitarian, MacIntyre makes actually two different points which are related to one another. First, he admits that liberals have rightly resisted the view of the modern nation-state as an all-embracing community out of fear that such a view would generate totalitarian and other evils. And, second, that a genuinely Aristotelian conception of the *polis* has to be a relatively small-scale and local form of political association, totally distinct from any communitarian conception of a modern nation-state.

For those who hold an Aristotelian conception of the *polis* the nation-state is not and cannot be the locus of community. These Aristotelian conceptions of the state should not be fused with the distinctively romantic vision of nations which conceived of them as actual or potential communities, whose unity could be expressed through the institutions of the state. As MacIntyre puts it, "When practice-based forms of Aristotelian community are generated in the modern world they are always, and could not but be, small-scale and local".[30]

MacIntyre, as we have seen, holds all the above positions except for (7) and it is indeed due to this seventh set of beliefs that all the other three communitarian thinkers share that he has renounced the label communitarian. In brief, on MacIntyre's account of the relationship of the individual to the community, any attempt to give a coherent account of the person and of morality understood as a rational enterprise should take reference to the participation of individuals in essentially social phenomena such as practices and traditions. "Communal membership is not merely essential to one sort of human good, but is integral to the possibility of attaining any sort of human goods whatever."[31]

It is true that MacIntyre does reject one part of the cluster concept of communitarianism that I have outlined above. But this is not such an

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[30] MacIntyre (1991), p. 91.

[31] Mulhall and Swift (1996), p. 161.

essential part of the cluster concept in order to disqualify him from being a communitarian.[32] In fact, by arguing for (2), (4) and (5) above, and by advocating that the correct common goods to favour for any particular community are given by its social traditions or folkways, he is one of the main advocates of historicist communitarianism.[33]

In MacIntyre's project of *After Virtue* Aristotle's account of the virtues plays a very important role in the formulation of MacIntyre's critique of modernity. In fact, as he characteristically says, Aristotle is *"the* protagonist against whom I have matched the voices of liberal modernity."[34] Indeed, in *After Virtue* he reconstructs a neo-Aristotelian theory of the virtues in the third part of the book, which he calls 'the Aristotelian tradition' and, by pleading passionately for the revival of this tradition, he considers it to be an antidote to the disease of modernism. Modern philosophical discourse of moral concepts and ethical problems suffers gravely and, according to MacIntyre, the etiology of these flaws of modernity can be traced back to the beginning of modern times, when the systematic repudiation of 'the Aristotelian tradition' began.

Although he does not systematically argue against the specific writings of contemporary political thinkers--in the way that Sandel does for example-- and although many of the issues of moral philosophy that he examines do not explicitly manifest their connection with issues of contemporary political philosophy, the importance of his writings and his contribution towards communitarianism lies in the fact that his critical analysis is focused on the origins, the development and the decline of Western moral and political culture in such a way as to provide a strong historical framework that supports on the one hand his critique against the flaws of modernity and on the other

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[32] Wolff (1997), pp. 5-6.
[33] Wolff (1997), *ibid.*
[34] MacIntyre (1985), p. 146.

hand provides at the same time historical evidence of his alternative theory that establishes in a much more profound way, than others do, the communitarian theory.[35]

MacIntyre starts his enquiry in *After Virtue* with a "disquieting suggestion", a vivid hypothetical example denoting that contemporary moral and political culture is in a state of confusion. All we possess are fragments of knowledge, as if, in the case that the natural sciences were to suffer the effects of a catastrophe, and the knowledge of experiments was detached from any knowledge of the theoretical context that gave them significance, but nonetheless all these fragments are re-embodied in a set of practices that go under the revived names of physics, chemistry and biology. Everybody argues about these theses but almost nobody realises that what they were doing is not natural science in any proper sense at all, "for everything that they do and say conforms to certain canons of consistency and coherence and those contexts which would be needed to make sense of what they are doing have been lost, perhaps irretrievably".[36]

This is exactly the situation that, according to MacIntyre, modern liberal democracies are in today. We are all troubled with arguments between people advocating opposing moral positions on different moral and political issues, such as the rightness of abortion, the justifiability of doctrines of deterrence in a nuclear age and the structure of truly just societies, but the problem is that no sort of agreement can be established between these opposing positions. Our moral language on the surface, according to MacIntyre, is the language of objectivity, rationality and truth. But this language deceives us since the concepts that it engages on have become so etiolated that they can no longer do any serious moral work, nor are they able to provide criteria by which to decide what, in a moral context, counts as rational. The condition of modernity is,

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[35] Mulhall and Swift (1996), p. 70.
[36] MacIntyre (1985), p. 1.

therefore, one in which we possess only "fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance was derived. We possess indeed the simulacra of morality, we continue to use many of the key expressions. But we have--very largely, if not entirely--lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality."[37] As Horton and Mendus put it, *"After Virtue* is the story of how we came to be in this parlous state, how we continue to be deceived by it, and how we might escape it".[38]

1.3 Aristotelianism as a tradition

Communitarianism bases part of its theory in the notion of tradition. The living practices of a community define the activities of its members. As MacIntyre argues,

> man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal... the key conception for men is not about their own authorship; I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'of what story or stories do I find myself a part?' We enter human society, that is, with one or more imputed characters--roles into which we have been drafted--and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be construed.[39]

But this is not always true. In fact, one could argue (echoing Anderson's *Imagined Communities*)[40] that such 'stories' are usually nothing but a 'myth'. A sort of literature or mythology one builds among oneself, like people who are in love or nations who rally round a common cause. Communities, associations of any kind in general, usually do create such myths and build on

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[37] MacIntyre (1985), p. 2.
[38] Horton and Mendus (1994), p. 6.
[39] MacIntyre (1985), p. 204.
[40] Anderson (1983).

them, when respectively they say for example--in a case of a relationship--the belief that it was fate that brought two people together for x reasons, or--in the case of a nation-state--the untrue belief that they suffered disastrous events at the hands of an enemy nation-state. But one should move on beyond myths. Myths might be useful in order to start a relationship or to establish national identity at some point of history, but if individuals or nations remain attached to them and fail to realise the deceptions involved in them, then progress or change of any kind would be impossible and several disasters could very easily occur, like for example loss or war.

In fact, this has been all along the liberal's complaint against state power and authority and their fear of perfectionism, that it could eventually lead to totalitarianism. And MacIntyre actually, as we have seen above, admits to the fact that this liberal fear has been justifiable. As Hampton points out, "for this reason in their argumentation liberals start from the individual. By insisting that the individual is the focus of moral concern, the liberal gets the critical moral distance from community and the government that the communitarian lacks".[41]

Communitarianism has in fact tried to create a similar sort of a 'story' or 'myth' for itself which is called an 'Aristotelian' or 'classical' tradition. This concept of an 'Aristotelian tradition' has mainly been argued by MacIntyre. It is clear that throughout *After Virtue* MacIntyre makes a conjunction of philosophical and historical argument. As he explicitly says:

> The role of Aristotelianism in my argument is not entirely due to its historical importance. In the ancient and medieval worlds it was always in conflict with other standpoints, and the various ways of life of which it took itself to be the best theoretical interpreter had other sophisticated theoretical protagonists. It is true that no doctrine vindicated itself in so wide a variety of contexts as did Aristotelianism: Greek, Islamic, Jewish and

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[41] Hampton (1997), p.188.

Christian; and that when modernity made its assaults on an older world its most perceptive exponents understood that it was Aristotelianism that had to be overthrown. But all these historical truths, crucial as they are, are unimportant compared with the fact that Aristotelianism is *philosophically* the most powerful of pre-modern modes of moral thought. If a pre-modern view of morals and politics is to be vindicated against modernity, it will be in something like Aristotelian terms or not at all. What the conjunction of philosophical and historical argument reveals is that *either* one must follow through the aspirations and the collapse of the different versions of the Enlightenment project until there remains only the Nietzschean diagnosis and the Nietzschean problematic *or* one must hold that the Enlightenment project was not only mistaken, but should never have been commenced in the first place.[42]

In relation to this, it should be noted that MacIntyre himself sets his project of reviving the Aristotelian tradition by setting his method of enquiry in such a way as to indicate that:

> it will be necessary to consider Aristotle's own moral philosophy not merely as it is expressed in key texts in his own writings, but as an attempt to inherit and to sum up a good deal that had gone before and in turn as a source of stimulus to much later thought. It will be necessary, that is, to write a short history of conceptions of the virtues in which Aristotle provides a central point of focus, but which yield the resources of a whole tradition of acting, thinking and discourse of which Aristotle's is only a part, a tradition of which I spoke earlier as 'the classical tradition' and whose view of man I called 'the classical view of man'.[43]

Moreover, in chapter twelve of *After Virtue*, where he mainly discusses the Aristotelian account of the virtues, he makes it clear, in the beginning of his analysis, that since Aristotle is the protagonist against whom he has matched the voices of liberal modernity, he is clearly committed to giving a

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[42] MacIntyre (1985), p. 118.
[43] MacIntyre (1985), p. 119.

central place to his own highly specific account of the virtues. But, at the same time, MacIntyre is also determined to treat Aristotle as part of a tradition and, although he realises that this is a very unAristotelian thing to do, his analysis is focused on regarding Aristotle not as an individual theorist but as the representative of a long tradition who articulates what a number of predecessors also articulate with varying degrees of success.[44]

So, as we can see, MacIntyre's methodology relies on the historicist account of the concept of the Aristotelian tradition. Although MacIntyre realises that the crucial fact is for Aristotelianism to be philosophically the most powerful of pre-modern modes of moral thought, he nevertheless embarks on proving this philosophical value by relying on historical facts; in this way, he is applying a purely historicist methodology.

MacIntyre is clearly committed in accomplishing two tasks concerning Aristotle's own moral philosophy: to consider it, first, as it is expressed in key texts in his own writings, and, second, as an attempt to inherit and to sum up a good deal that had gone before and in turn as a source of stimulus to much later thought. He does the first by writing a short history of conceptions of the virtues in which Aristotle provides a central point of focus, and the second by using the resources of the Aristotelian or classical tradition.

Obviously, MacIntyre's claim about his argument, that it will be given in something like Aristotelian terms or not at all, does not commit him to the role of the uncritical follower of Aristotle's arguments, since like any commentator and exponent of Aristotelian thought he is allowed his own reading of the text. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether MacIntyre always presents a plausible interpretation of Aristotle's arguments.

But, primarily, what is most important concerns the historical foundations of the concept of the Aristotelian tradition. If, as I will try to argue, MacIntyre articulates an unhistorical view of what he names as Aristotelian

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[44] MacIntyre (1985), p. 146.

tradition, then his is a forced view of methodology that has to fail. But if this 'embedded', historicist methodology fails, then MacIntyre's argument loses its strength. He would have to support it by using rationalistic methodology, since all his historicist methodology is unhistorical, but this would mean using argumentative resources that he does not have, since he has refused philosophical argument based to alleged first principles available to us all.

I would like here to concentrate on MacIntyre's historical account of an Aristotelian or classical tradition and to examine whether this notion, on which most of his argument is based, can be adequately sustained. A serious objection that can be raised against MacIntyre's conception of the Aristotelian tradition amounts to whether this conception is based on a historical fact or on a fictitious understanding.[45] If we take into account the historical, political, cultural, religious and philosophical changes that occurred in the Hellenistic, the Graeco-Roman, the Byzantine and the Medieval periods, then a historical account of the Aristotelian or classical tradition--presumably foreshadowed in the Homeric epics and completed much later by the Christian Gospels--seems more like a myth than a fact. This is important if we take into consideration the fact that his criticism of modernity and his plea for the revival of the Aristotelian tradition rest on the assumption that there was a time when such a tradition actually existed. In fact, MacIntyre's historicist methodology is based on this concept of an Aristotelian tradition. If it can be shown that this tradition is not a historical fact but merely a MacIntyrean construction, then the historicist argument that supports his thesis becomes baseless.

MacIntyre's main thesis involving the concept of the Aristotelian tradition can be summarised in two points. First, that all attempts of modern philosophers to provide a rational justification of morality have utterly failed. The cause of this failure is the fact that modern individualism and liberalism have succeeded in cutting our ties with the Aristotelian tradition of virtues as

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[45] Evangeliou (1989), p. 162.

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understood and practised in Antiquity and later as expanded and transformed during the Middle Ages. This Aristotelian tradition can be rationally defended even today, provided that it is appropriately amended. MacIntyre's second claim is, therefore, that rational justification of moral choices and practices is possible within the Aristotelian tradition of moral virtues. What we need in order to achieve this is to go back to Aristotle who has provided us with a classical statement of the virtues developed in Greek society since Homer.

What I will try to prove by the brief historical account that follows is not only that the talk of a single Aristotelian tradition involves discontinuities and illusions and, therefore, could never be successfully sustained--let alone revived, since something that never existed cannot be revived--but, furthermore, that individualism and the emotivist self are not modern inventions of the Enlightenment Project--as MacIntyre argues--but that they were already embedded in the everyday practical activities of classical Greece and in the philosophy of the Sophistic movement, the so-called Greek Enlightenment.

If this last point is true, a further implication for MacIntyre's predicament of modernity arises: likewise, his criticism of modern systems of morality as deviations from the Aristotelian tradition becomes deprived of any methodology. Not only does MacIntyre's proposal of a new *telos* for the modern man, being just an updated version of a long Aristotelian tradition, fail in view of the historical fact that such a tradition is a fiction, but also the disquieting suggestion that he offers in the beginning of *After Virtue* fails too. In fact, we possess no fragments or simulacra of morality, since there never was a disarray in the sense that MacIntyre has argued and we never had a tradition expressing a single morality, in order for this single morality to become fragmented. The state we are in, modernity, is not something that was invented by the Enlightenment thinkers all at once; in fact, if anything ever

existed in Antiquity, this was a fragmented tradition that incorporated different conceptions of the good.

My historical account will focus on four issues, related to MacIntyre's concept of a tradition, in order to prove my point: first, on the history of Greece of Aristotle's historical period; second, on the historical account of the Greek city-state; third, on the philosophical traditions that existed before and after Aristotle; and, fourth, on the tradition of the Aristotelian commentators in the Ancient, Byzantine and Medieval periods.

Let me begin, first, by giving an historical account of Classical Greece at the time of Aristotle. When Aristotle returned to Athens in 335-4 BC where he established the Lyceum, Philip of Macedon had already defeated the Athenians and the Thebans in the battle of Chaeronea in 338 BC. The destruction of Thebes, the leading city at the time, meant the unconditional surrender of Athens and the voluntary death of Isocrates--the advocate of a peaceful pan-Hellenic union. During the same year, Philip--having acquired effective control over Greece--announced at the congress in Corinth his intention to invade Persia, a plan put into practice by his son Alexander after Philip's assassination in 336 BC. These events ended for good the existence of the Greek city-states as independent and political units. But, Aristotle's political doctrines envisioned the traditional Greek *polis*--as it historically existed--as the *sine qua non* condition of the good life for man. As Barker points out:

> By 330, while Aristotle was still teaching the theory of the *polis* in the Lyceum, Alexander was already planning an empire in which he should be equally lord of Greeks and Persians, and both should be equally knit together by intermarriage and common military service. This meant a great revolution. It meant the appearance of the cosmopolis in place and instead of the *polis*. It meant the appearance of the idea of the equality of all men in that *cosmopolis*.[46]

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[46] Barker (1958), p. xxiv.

The consequence these political developments had is that they made Aristotle's theory rapidly irrelevant and that, despite incidents like the attempt of the Aristotelian philosopher, Demetrius of Phaleron, to rule Athens, Aristotelianism as an ethical and political theory could not successfully compete with the fashionable new doctrines, Epicurean and Stoic, which were to dominate the scene for the subsequent centuries by appealing to man as a citizen of one *cosmopolis* rather than any particular Hellenic *polis*.[47]

Second, it is important, so far as the concept of the *polis* is concerned, to understand what exactly Aristotle means when he refers to it. This special community of the *polis*, what actually made the *polis* thus and so, was a unique historical phenomenon that only took place in classical Greece of the fifth and sixth centuries and that had actually faded out from the time of Aristotle with the creation of the Hellenistic world which was marked by the conquests of Alexander the Great, the pupil of Aristotle. For Aristotle, politics implies the *polis*, the Greek city-state, scattered over the Greek mainland and the maritime area of the Greek dispersion. As Barker says, "it presupposes a small Mediterranean world which was a world of 'urbanity' or civic republics (the largest with an area of 1,000 square miles, but many with 100 or less) and which stood, as such, in contrast with the world of 'rurality' in which the nations or *ethne* lived. There was some notion among the Greeks of a community called 'Hellas', but it was in no sense a political community."[48] This Greek *polis* provided a unique type of civilised life, well-suited for the full development of human potential, since "small as it was, it is complete in itself: it is self-sufficient, in the sense that it meets from its own resources--its own accumulated moral tradition and the physical yield of its own soil and waters--all the moral and material needs of its members".[49] And most

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[47] Evangeliou (1989), p. 163. See also, Evangeliou (1983), pp. 132-134.

[48] Barker (1958), p. vii.

[49] Barker(1958), p. viii.

important, as Barker again remarks, this *polis* being whole and complete, with a rounded life of its own, rises to a still higher dignity than that of self sufficiency: "It is conceived as 'natural'--as a scheme of life which, granted the nature of man, is inevitable and indefeasible"[50]. This notion of self-sufficiency that determines the *polis* has a value only in the context of the ancient Greek *polis*, with its special landscape which provided and secured the self-sufficiency of the *polis* necessary for its economic and political independence. Self-sufficiency in this context is not an abstract term but a very specific and practical political one.[51]

Furthermore, it would be unfair to the Greeks, let alone to Aristotle, to claim that their tradition was Aristotelian in the sense that MacIntyre uses the term. The Greek *polis*, and especially Athens, was a big centre that attracted a lot of foreigners for commercial and cultural reasons. Aristotle was, for example, a foreigner himself. Athens possessed at that time an understanding of what nowadays is usually called multi-cultural citizenship.[52] Athenians interacted with other civilisations and gained from them. Individuality was well understood and protected, and so was individual freedom; and there were few restrictions at the time on what one could or not do. Hence, to try to apply a communitarian ideal to the every day life of classical Athens does not seem, at least historically speaking, to be plausible at all.

Third, as far as the philosophical tradition that preceded and succeeded Aristotle's political theory is concerned, it should be noted that there are at least two movements ignored in MacIntyre's discussion: the Sophists and the Stoics. I will not go on to elaborate their theories here; I will merely try to

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[50] Barker (1958), *ibid*.

[51] The abbreviated account of the history of Ancient Greece derives from Barker (1958), pp. xi-xxvi and Evangeliou (1989), pp. 159-167.

[52] See Pecirka (1967), pp. 23-26 and Mossé (1967), pp. 17-21. See also J. Dover (1974).

indicate some points related to these two philosophical traditions in order to support my position.[53]

As Kerferd points out, the Sophists were part of the movement that was producing the new Athens of Pericles, a social phenomenon within the context of fifth century Athens.[54] According to Kerferd, there were two elements in Athens responsible for the Sophistic movement: the social and political conditions and Pericles. Periclean democracy rested upon two normative assumptions. The first assumption can be summed up from Thucydides (II. 37. 1): "It is called a democracy because the conduct of affairs is entrusted not to a few but to many, but while there is equality for all in civil affairs established by law, we allow full play to individual worth in public affairs". The second assumption was that high offices carrying the right to advise and act for the people should be entrusted to those best fitted and most able to carry out these functions.[55]

Furthermore, MacIntyre has ignored the philosophical tradition of the Stoics in his account of the classical tradition. As Long has argued, MacIntyre has overlooked the fact that Stoicism was the accepted ethical tradition for the Graeco-Roman world from 300 BC to 300 AC approximately, having incorporated some non-political aspects of Aristotelianism and having influenced Christian morality because of their many moral affinities.[56] According to Long, "given MacIntyre's requirements of a successful moral philosophy, Stoicism, in at least some of its approaches, suits his book even better than Aristotle himself".[57]

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[53] As far as MacIntyre's analysis of the Homeric virtues is concerned (1985, Ch, 10), virtues which he takes to echo the Aristotelian tradition, I believe that MacIntyre there also follows a weak line of argument, but I will not deal with this issue here.

[54] Kerferd (1981), pp. 15-16.

[55] Kerferd (1981), *ibid*.

[56] Long (1983), pp. 184-185.

[57] Long (1983), p. 185.

Finally, I would like to turn to the fourth issue of my historical exposition, the tradition of the Aristotelian commentators in the Ancient, Byzantine and the Medieval periods. What can be justified is, I think, to speak of a scholarly Aristotelian tradition of commentary in logic, physics and metaphysics but not in ethics and politics. But, let us see, first, whether an Aristotelian tradition of commentators, in which, according to MacIntyre, "the Aristotelian moral and political texts are canonical"[58], can be established during the period of Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman culture. Although in 44 BC Cicero was writing that Aristotle was ignored by all but a few philosophers, soon after an explosion of interest in Aristotle started which occupied the rest of the century.[59] Andronicus of Rhodes produced a scholarly edition of the Aristotelian *corpus* in the first century which forms the basis of today's editions and accompanied some of the treatises with commentaries. After Andronicus, several other editions followed until the end of the first century: five different commentaries on the *Categories*, a Doric version of the *Categories* purporting to be the work of the old Pythagorean Archytas, and two compendia of the philosophy of Aristotle.[60] The interest in the *Categories* remained strong until the end of the second century; in fact, the *Categories* acted as a catalyst and attracted commentaries from three schools, Stoic, Platonist and Aristotelian.[61]

By the third century, though, the viability of Aristotle's categorical scheme has started to be questioned. Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, was critical of the *Categories* in his *Enneads*.[62] Porphyry, nevertheless, who flourished at the end of the third century AD (232-309)--and Iamblichus and Dexippus who followed--managed to produce a synthesis of Aristotelianism

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[58] MacIntyre (1985), p. 261.

[59] Sorabji (1990).

[60] Sorabji (1990).

[61] Sorabji (1990).

[62] *Enneads*, 6.1-3.

and Platonism which made Aristotle's logic and a selection of his other texts become a standard prerequisite for Platonic studies in the Neoplatonic schools.[63] It has to be acknowledged though that Neoplatonism was the dominant philosophy of the time.[64]

As far as the *Ethics* are concerned, Porphyry saved very little from the Aristotelian doctrine of the virtues which were eventually incorporated in the grand Neoplatonic synthesis and in this way passed on to Byzantium and to Christianity in the West. Although Porphyry included some account of the Aristotelian doctrine of virtues, he however placed Aristotle's *politikai aretai* first in the grade of hierarchy of virtues below the *karthatikai*, the *paradeigmatikai* and the *noetikai aretai*--having at the same time degraded the classical cardinal virtues of *sophia, dikaiosyne, andreia* and *sophrosyne*, which eventually were embraced by the Fathers of the Christian-Orthodox Church who gave priority to the theological virtues of *pistis, elpis* and *agape* (faith, hope and love-charity).[65]

Likewise, it is not possible to defend the existence of an ethical Aristotelian tradition during Byzantine and Mediaeval times. As Praechter has remarked, "anyone looking at the list of works of Aristotle commented upon in late antiquity or early Byzantine times is struck by three gaps--the *Politics*, the *Rhetoric*, and the zoological and anthropological works".[66] Anna Comnena, the daughter of Emperor Alexios, had made the same observation eight hundred years before and placed under her protection two Byzantine scholars: Eustratius, Metropolitan of Nicaea, and Michael of Ephesus. The former commented upon certain books of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and sections of the *Organon*, while the latter on other books of the *Ethics*, sections of the *Organon*, the *Rhetoric*, the *Physics*, the *Politics*, and a number of

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[63] Hadot (1990).

[64] Sorabji (1990), p. 2.

[65] Evangeliou (1989), p. 163.

[66] Browning (1990), pp. 399-400.

zoological and anthropological works. In fact, it has been argued that for the *Ethics*, following the plan of Anna Comnena, they each commented on different books so that the whole of the treatise could be covered.[67] Michael of Ephesus, who MacIntyre does not mention, was indeed one of the most important commentators on Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* but still he was only one enlightened exception. But, although Michael of Ephesus is known as an Aristotelian, it should be emphasised--as Mercken points out--that "his Aristotelianism is never a militant one".[68] His philosophical language is coloured by Neoplatonism and, although this is a feature he shares with his contemporaries, nowhere in his commentary on the *Ethics* does he show an interest in attacking Plato and the Platonists in the name of Aristotle and the Peripatetic school.[69] In addition, this revival of Aristotelian scholarship did not go much beyond the activities of Michael and Eustratius and it was confined to exegesis, not extending to a revival of Aristotelian philosophy.[70]

In general, it should be noted that, the standard view is that Aristotelian political philosophy was totally neglected during Byzantine times. Five facts have been cited to demonstrate this: (i) by the fact that in the manuscript tradition--as we can see in the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* edition (Berlin 1882-1909) and in earlier editions of the Humanists of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries--the *Politics* in particular are not commented upon, (ii) by the historical fact that the *Politics* were rare in the libraries of the Roman Empire, and, therefore, did not reach the Byzantine Empire as well, (iii) that the *Politics* remained unknown to the Arabs, (vi) that even earlier Augustine did not make any use of them at all, and, (v) that it does not seem that the *Politics* played any role in the formation of the first Italian Republics of

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[67] Browning (1990), pp. 399-404.

[68] Mercken (1990), p. 434.

[69] Mercken (1990). In this article, Mercken argues extensively against the so-called Aristotelianism of the Greek commentators on Aristotle's *Ethics*.

[70] Mercken (1990), p. 437.

eleventh and twelfth centuries, since until that period it is obvious that the West is inclined to prefer Latin political writers and Roman political thought in general.[71]

Finally, in the Western section of the Roman Empire, Boethius was executed before he had the opportunity to complete the translation of the Aristotelian treatises into Latin, although it can be said that in any case it is more likely that he would have followed Porphyry, as he did in his commentaries on the *Categories*.[72] Abelard--for whom MacIntyre says that "what Abelard took to be Aristotle's definition of a virtue, transmitted to him by Boethius, is put to use to provide a corresponding definition of a vice'--does mention Aristotle's definition of virtue in his *Ethics* but still his contribution cannot be considered as seriously advancing the formation of an Aristotelian tradition of *Ethics* and *Politics*. In fact, it should be noted that up to the 12th century there is not even a single quotation of the *Politics* in the West until 1260, when in Corinth William of Moerbeke produced the first translation of the *Politics* in Latin. This translation, which was received enthusiastically by Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great, is in fact the second ever form of the text of the *Politics* in Antiquity.[73] Furthermore, it is very difficult to consider St. Thomas and his commentaries as evidence for the existence of a tradition, since as MacIntyre himself acknowledges: "It is therefore important to stress both that Aquinas' version of Aristotle on the virtues is not the only version and that Aquinas is an uncharacteristic medieval thinker, even if the greatest

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[71] Benakis (1985), p. 230.

[72] Evangeliou (1989), p. 167.

73 Benakis (1985), p. 235. It should be noted that Benakis has argued that Aristotelian political and ethical philosophy was in fact embedded in the educational system of the Byzantine Empire in contrast to the West, despite the lack of documentary evidence (See Benakis (1985), pp. 230-236 and Benakis (1996), pp. 252-256). If this point is true, then a further implication for MacIntyre's argument arises when we take into consideration the philosophical tradition of the Neohellenic Enlightenment which was--among other things--strongly influenced by Aristotelianism. MacIntyre having ignored both the Byzantine and the Neohellenic periods of Hellas, might be missing the only geographical landscape where a sense of the Aristotelian tradition at least in the philosophical texts might have ever existed. See also Begzos (1996), pp. 228-239.

of medieval theorists".[74] To summarise, according to Sorabji, in the CAG edition from sixty-two commentaries that have survived only seven are on the *Nicomachean Ethics* and none on the *Politics*. From those seven on the *Nicomachean Ethics* only two are on all the books, while the others are on individual books.[75]

In addition, a last point that can be made against MacIntyre's concept of a tradition is against his notion of 'we' that is echoed in Aristotle's texts.[76] By asking in the *Nicomachean Ethics* the question 'What do *we* say on such and such a topic?' and not 'What do *I* say?', Aristotle reflects, according to MacIntyre, with the use of 'we', an account of the virtues that is implicit in the thought, utterance and action of an educated Athenian. But this is totally wrong. Although the explanation that I am going to offer is philological rather than philosophical, nevertheless MacIntyre's point about the use of the word 'we' is also based on an observation of the Aristotelian text that focuses on the translation of it rather than on its actual meaning. The personal pronoun 'I' (ἐγώ), is never used in the ancient Greek language--nor in modern Greek-- directly in written speech, only in oral speech. In fact, the use of the pronoun ἐγώ directly in a written text must always be avoided, in contrast with the English language where 'I' is widely used. This is due mainly to three reasons, two grammatical and one psychological: first, because in order to indicate the person speaking you need not use the pronoun, since the verbs have conjugations; second, because one's personal opinion can be expressed in the third person singular by using the optative mood; and, third, because the use of ἐγώ is somehow connected with the showing off of one's self for purely selfish motives. When Aristotle writes in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1094b14),

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[74] See also Bosley and Tweedale (1991).

[75] These commentaries are: 1) Aspasius in *EN* 2) Heliodorus in *EN* 3) Eustratius in *EN* 1, 6, 4) Adrastus (derivative) in *EN* 2-5, 5) Anonymous in *EN* 7, 6) Michael of Ephesus in *EN* 9-10, and 7) Michael of Ephesus in *EN* 5. (See R. Sorabji, *ibid.*, pp. 27-29).

[76] MacIntyre (1985), pp. 147-148.

therefore, Λέγοιτο ἄν ἱκανῶς, and we translate "Our treatment of this science will be adequate", what the "our" stands for, or the "we" in other cases, is the impersonal "it can be said" which indirectly refers to the personal opinion of the writer, that is the 'I'.[77] There are cases where Aristotle mentions 'we' in *NE* Book I, Ch. 3 but even there he is referring to Plato's Academy, hence 'we' is appropriate there.

Even though MacIntyre is a neo-Aristotelian, there is indeed a philosophical significance to the claim that his position differs significantly from Aristotle's real view. There are two sort of questions that can be raised against MacIntyre's project in *After Virtue*: Questions of substance and questions of method. My argument against MacIntyre's project focuses against the second set of questions, those of methodology. As we know, two kinds of methodology can be distinguished: rationalistic and pragmatic or historicist. As I have tried to show, MacIntyre's methodology mostly is of the second kind. MacIntyre bases this historicist or embedded methodology that he applies in support of his argument in two main claims: First, in his conviction that Aristotle thought of Aristotle in the way that MacIntyre himself presents him; and, second, that Aristotle is part of a classical tradition that actually existed until it was interrupted by the Enlightenment Project. My response to these two claims was that both MacIntyre and the tradition that he invokes have misrepresented Aristotle. I have argued that the tradition that MacIntyre invokes is fictitious and, therefore, should be rejected on historical grounds. Thus, what I have tried to demonstrate, by showing that MacIntyre--although being a neo-Aristotelian--has misrepresented Aristotle, is that if he wants to prove his thesis, he would have to use rationalistic methodology, since all his historicist methodology is unhistorical. His argument cannot be defended without support from a rationalistic methodology of some kind; but MacIntyre has unfortunately refused philosophical argument in *After Virtue*.

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[77] This is a point that Williams (1993) also acknowledges.

In conclusion, I do not assert that I have given here a full account of all the historical circumstances related to what MacIntyre calls an Aristotelian or classical tradition. This would require a much larger and fuller elaboration of the particular historical circumstances that fall beyond the limits of this chapter. What I have really tried to do is to illustrate the illusions, the discontinuities and the historical inaccuracies involved in MacIntyre's concept of an Aristotelian tradition.

2. COMMUNITY

You said: "I'll go to another country, go to another shore,
find another city better than this one.
Whatever I try to do is fated to turn out wrong
and my heart--like something dead--lies buried.
How long can I let my mind moulder in this place?
Wherever I turn, wherever I look,
I see the black ruins of my life, here,
where I've spent so many years, wasted them, destroyed them totally."

You won't find a new country, won't find another shore.
This city will always pursue you.
You'll walk the same streets, grow old
in the same neighbourhoods, turn grey in these same houses.
You'll always end up in this city. Don't hope for things elsewhere:
There's no ship for you, there's no road.
Now that you've wasted your life here, in this small corner,
you've destroyed it everywhere in the world.
C. P. Cavafy, 'The City'

2. 1 Introduction

The concept of community plays an important role in contemporary discussions of political philosophy and especially in the communitarian criticisms of liberal theories of the good. Community is indeed what concerns the communitarians most, as their name suggests anyway. According to communitarianism, individuals are partly constituted by the communities of which they form part, and, therefore, a politics of the 'common good' should be advanced in preference to liberal neutrality. The common good of the community is thus the primary concern of communitarian theory. Liberalism presupposes an implausible metaphysics of the self, since--according to communitarianism--individuals can develop their ends, identity and talents only in the context of a community. Community should, therefore, be prior to the individual and not vice versa, since it is community that determines and shapes the natures of the individuals.

This communitarian notion of community is partly based on Aristotelian principles (at least as far as MacIntyre is concerned, who explicitly refers to the Aristotelian notion of community throughout his work) and on

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the Aristotelian *polis* or city-state.[78] MacIntyre, as I will show in the next section of this chapter, does indeed base his notion of community on an Aristotelian account of the *polis*. The Aristotelian notion of community is also echoed by both Taylor and Sandel, in a more explicit way for the first and in a less explicit one for the latter. Taylor attacks the plausibility of the liberal 'atomistic', as he calls it, conception of the self by saying that it sees a person as primarily a 'will', without taking into consideration the complexities of human personality, and that it ignores the fact that persons need to be situated in a society in order to develop.[79] Sandel, although he very rarely mentions Aristotle in his work (as when he says for example, attributing to Aristotle, that "thus Aristotle said that the measure of a *polis* is the good at which it aims"),[80] he is, nevertheless, clearly influenced by the work of MacIntyre whose historical argument he takes for granted. But, it is not entirely clear how these communitarian pronouncements connect into the Aristotelian account of the *polis*.

The standard response from the liberal side to this communitarian critique has been that liberalism never really viewed the individual as not belonging to a certain community, nor has argued that we should extract individuals from their natural communities in order to render them asocial and unencumbered. On the contrary, liberalism too insists on the social nature of human beings. The problem is that we usually view liberalism in an extreme Hobbesian view--not representative of liberalism--that sees individuals as radically asocial, and we ignore other liberals like Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Rawls, Gauthier and Feinberg who have insisted on the social nature of human beings.[81]

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78 See especially MacIntyre (1985), and MacIntyre (1994), pp. 283-304.
79 Taylor (1985), pp. 187-210.
80 Sandel (1992), p. 15.
81 Hampton (1997), p. 185.

There have also been responses from the liberal side which have tried to reconstruct this Aristotelian notion of community by interpreting it as not opposing the liberal ideas but indeed as supporting them. Yack, for example, has also argued that political community is for Aristotle a conflict-ridden reality rather than a speculative alternative, and that "the core of the *Politics*, Books III-VI, focuses instead on the kinds of conflict peculiar to political communities", and that "the existence of these conflicts bespeaks the presence, not the absence, of political community for him".[82]

Therefore, from what we can see, apart from the difficulties which arise from the implausibility of the revival of the Greek *polis* in our days if we take into account the formation of the modern nation-state--to take just one example--several objections can arise as to whether this communitarian interpretation of Aristotelian community is indeed the correct one in the sense that it really represents what Aristotle himself had in mind when he laid out his theory, or whether it merely reflects the communitarian anticipations and impositions on his authority.

2. 2 Conceptions of community

It will be necessary, though, to try, first, to define what a political community really consists of. Although the simplest thing to say would be that a community is an association of individuals, there is much dispute concerning the nature of this particular association. Really, there are two issues in dispute concerning the notion of political community. The first has to do with the relation between the individual and the community, and the bearing that the individual membership in a community has on his individual identity, while the second has to do with the diversity of human associations

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[82] Yack (1985), pp. 92-112. See also Yack (1993).

(neighbourhoods, football clubs, universities, churches, philosophy departments etc.) that can be characterised as a community.[83]

Despite the diversity of opinion concerning the notion and the importance of community which exists between the different stands in political philosophy (left, traditional, or romantic right, communitarianism and liberalism), in general, it can be said that our notion of community has actually been shaped by three main models.[84] I will present these models in what follows but not in great detail since most of the distinctions are reasonably clear and well known.

The first model derives from Tönnies's distinction between community (Gemeinschaft) and association (Gesellschaft) which are based respectively upon natural and rational will. A community is distinguished from an association in the sense that a true community is really organic and it involves ties of blood and kinship and shared attitudes and experiences. A shared locality is a necessary condition but not a sufficient one for the existence of a community, since community is something that one could only be born into and not a matter of interest and contract. In Tönnies's community, individuals come to develop an idea of interests only because they have been born into a specific community.[85]

The second model of community focuses on the importance of the communality of interests, since a community is a product of the will of its members and of the will for the good that its members have in common. This model (shaped by MacIver, 1917) has its roots in Rousseau's distinction between the general will and the will of all. In this model, historical ties are not as essential as they are in Tönnies model. What is important is the common concern for the good of the community. Community, according to MacIver, can be created by will, but this would only be the will of a particular

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[83] Kukathas (1996), pp. 82-83.
[84] Categorised by Plant (1990), pp. 88-90.
[85] Tönnies (1955).

sort, for a common good or for a set of interests that a group shares. This sort of community depends on the existence of a group which can be as large as a nation.

Lastly, the third model described by Plant[86] regards community as encompassing "partial relations" that is, groups related not by shared localities or a direct concern for some common good, but simply by specific private interests. This model stresses individual interests and views community as a specific device for enhancing and extending these interests. According to this model, professional and occupational groups may be seen as embodying a sense of community, since associations like these are based upon private interests. Similar to this model is that put forward by Kukathas which regards community as "an association of individuals who share an understanding of what is public and what is private within that association".[87]

It is interesting to bear in mind though a further distinction made by Kymlicka between political and cultural community. On the one hand, according to Kymlicka, a political community is one within which individuals exercise the rights and responsibilities entailed by the framework of liberal justice. People residing within the same political community are fellow citizens. On the other hand, a cultural community is one within which individuals form and revise their aims and ambitions. People within the same cultural community share a culture, a language and history which defines their cultural membership.[88]

In the following three sections of this chapter I will try to present the notion of liberal and communitarian community respectively, having the above three models of community in mind, and to reconstruct the Aristotelian notion of community as it is presented in his *Politics*. Finally, in the

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[86] Plant (1990), p. 89.
[87] Kukathas (1996), p. 85.
[88] Kymlicka (1989), p. 135.

conclusion, I will try to see what associations can be drawn between these four notions of community.

2. 3 The communitarian notion of a community

According to Kukathas, "the centrally important point of contention is the relationship between the individual and the community and, more specifically, the question of whether the individual is shaped or constituted by the community or whether the community is something to which individuals merely belong or are attached"[89]. The issue here is, according to him, one of identity. It is actually in this claim that the liberal-communitarian debate is focused concerning the notion of political community.

Most communitarians argue that individuals are subject to the authority of the community, pursuing a politics of the 'common good' in preference to liberal community. Such communitarian arguments usually concentrate on the concept of the community and on the concept of the human good which is the aim of the community. This doctrine, according to the communitarian critics of liberalism, can be traced back to Aristotle's political theory for the priority of the *polis* to the individual, since, as he maintains, individuals can attain perfection only if they are morally habituated under the *polis* and its laws. The term 'community' can be traced back not only to Aristotle but also to Cicero and the Roman community of law and common interests, to St Augustine's community of emotional ties, to Thomas Aquinas's idea of the community as a body politic, to Edmund Burke and to the works of Rousseau and Hegel. As Burke defined it, the community is a partnership "not only between the living, but those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born".[90]

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[89] Kukathas (1996), p. 85.
[90] Avineri and De-Shalit (1992), p. 1.

I will start my presentation of the communitarian notion of community with that of Sandel who--despite not being a neo-Aristotelian--has the most clear-cut notion of all the three main communitarians, and still remains loyal to his critique of the liberal notion of community.[91] Sandel complains that Rawls's theory of justice assumes the existence of a self as antecedently individuated which is unaltered by communal attachments, a self which is 'unencumbered'. But, Sandel claims, our individual identities are not given independently of our membership in particular communities. In fact, what really is the case is that our identities are partly constituted by our social contexts and the commitments we have as parts of a community. There are three conceptions of a community according to Sandel.[92] The first account of community conceives community in wholly instrumental terms and invokes the image of a 'private society', where individuals regard social arrangements as a necessary burden and co-operate only for the sake of pursuing their private ends. The second account of community, which corresponds according to Sandel to the Rawlsian one, offers a sentimental account of community in which the participants have certain 'shared final ends' and regard the scheme of co-operation as good in itself. But both these notions of community are inadequate, since "one would have to imagine a conception of community that could penetrate the self more profoundly than even the sentimental view permits".[93] As Sandel argues, one would need a theory of community that would resemble Rawls's conception in that the sense of community would be manifest in the aims and the values of the participants but also in which

> to say that the members of a society are bound by a sense of
> community is not simply to say that a great many of them profess
> communitarian sentiments and pursue communitarian aims, but
> rather that they conceive their identity--the subject and not just the

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[91] See Sandel (1996).

[92] Sandel (1982), pp. 147-154.

[93] Sandel (1982), p. 149.

object of their feelings and aspirations--as defined to some extent by the community of which they are part. For them, community describes not just what they *have* as fellow citizens but also what they are, not a relationship they choose (as in voluntary association) but an attachment they discover, not merely an attribute but a constituent of their identity.[94]

MacIntyre is (as I have already mentioned) probably the communitarian who is the most neo-Aristotelian of all. According to MacIntyre of *After Virtue*, in the Greek culture the chief means of moral education is the telling of stories. The important element of the Greek cultures is that these narratives provided the historical memory of the societies in which they were finally written down. Moreover, stories, like the Homeric poems, provided a moral background to contemporary debate in classical societies, an account of a 'now-transcended' or 'partly-transcended' moral order whose beliefs and concepts were still partially influential, but which provided at the same time an illuminating contrast to the present.[95] It is on this historical fact that MacIntyre's argument is based when he relates the Aristotelian theory with the virtues of the Homeric society.

In the Homeric world, every individual has a given role and status within a well-defined and highly determinate system of roles and statuses. In the Heroic society a man is what he does and to judge a man is to judge his actions. The Homeric individual had, therefore, a fixed role according to the position that he occupies in society and the knowledge of his role dictated to him his behaviour in society in order to redeem the duties incumbent upon him, since the concept of the virtues express the excellencies of character.[96]

In the Homeric society, therefore, morality and the requirements determined by social structure coincide: in fact, there exists no difference between them and the identity of a person is determined only by right action. It

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[94] Sandel (1982), p. 150.
[95] MacIntyre (1985), p. 121.
[96] MacIntyre (1985), pp. 122-123.

follows that such a human life has a determinate form, the form of a certain kind of story.[97] The Homeric poems narrate what happens to men and, furthermore, in this narrative they capture a form that was already present in the lives which they relate, being able to portray a society which already embodies the form of epic.[98] But, what does this mean? Is it not the place of the individual in society rather than his actions which determine his identity? According to MacIntyre, Aristotle is a part of this Homeric tradition, since the Athenians of the fifth century understood themselves as having emerged from the conflicts of this society and, consequently, defined their own standpoint partially in terms of that emergence.[99] But this is a very questionable step in MacIntyre's argument.

MacIntyre focuses on the Aristotelian account of human nature and links it with the metaphysical biology which the *Ethics* presupposes. According to MacIntyre's appropriation, for Aristotle, human beings, like the members of all other species, have a specific nature; and that nature is such that they have certain aims and goals, such that they move by nature towards a specific *telos* and the task that Aristotle faces is that of giving an account of the good which is at once local and particular, located in and partially defined by the characteristics of the *polis*, while at the same time being cosmic and universal. The good for man is identified with *eudaimonia*, the state of being well and doing well in being well, of a man's being well-favoured himself and in relation to the divine. But, as MacIntyre rightly points out, the question of the content of *eudaimonia* is left, from the beginning, largely open.

MacIntyre's Aristotelianism becomes clear when he talks about the Aristotelian virtues. In MacIntyre's view, Aristotle suggests that the final end of man determines the virtues. The relation between the virtues and the end is an internal one and he calls a means internal to a given end, when the end

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[97] MacIntyre (1985), p. 124.
[98] MacIntyre (1985), pp. 124-125.
[99] MacIntyre (1985), p. 131.

cannot be adequately characterised independently of a characterisation of the means. Of course, it should be noted that this distinction between internal and external virtues is not made by Aristotle but by Thomas Aquinas.

MacIntyre analyses three different conceptions of virtues. The first derives from Homer and is typical of the image of the Homeric society. It has to do with virtue as a quality that enables man to fulfil his social role. The second conception is based on Aristotle, the New Testament and Aquinas and has to do with that quality that leads man to the fulfilment of a human end, natural or supernatural. The third expresses the beliefs of the Eighteenth century, and it has as an example Benjamin Franklin, and conceives virtue as a quality whose utility is made clear in the fulfilment of happiness.

MacIntyre's notion of the Aristotelian virtues can be summarised in what Mulhall and Swift point out:

> the virtues as Aristotle understands them cannot be exercised outside the political community; their development and implementation in a complete human life requires that such a life be lived out in the *polis*, together with others all engaged in a common project of attempting to live a good life. Only the material and cultural resources of the city state allow this project to be implemented; and virtues such as courage, fidelity and friendship constitute both the framework conditions for any such community to maintain itself and an essential part of the form of life at which those in the community are aiming. This is the sense in which Aristotelian man is necessarily a political animal.[100]

Nevertheless, as Mulhall and Swift remark, MacIntyre has (at least) two main reasons for thinking that his prescription for modern morality must be a heavily reconstructed version of Aristotle. First, MacIntyre has to show that the teleological understanding of human nature is justified without relying upon the Aristotelian metaphysical biology. Second, MacIntyre has to find a way of invoking the concept of a community in morality without presupposing entirely utopian social and political changes. In doing so he must

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[100] Mulhall and Swift (1996), p. 81.

take into consideration the fact that the Aristotelian emphasis on the constitutive role of the *polis* for morality is grounded on the *polis* of Athens which was unique in its historical and cultural appearance.[101] Also, another question to be asked is how dependent was Aristotle on Athens as opposed to Greek practice in general?

MacIntyre attempts to meet these challenges by the development of the three central concepts that he introduces: of a practice, of the narrative unity of a human life, and of a tradition. These three concepts, being inherently social in nature, are intended to provide a rational framework for morality in which the concept of virtue retains a central place.

The most important element of MacIntyre's argument is based on the thesis that virtue always presupposes some elements of social and moral life according to which it is defined and explained. 'Virtue' is:

> an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.[102]

'Practice' is first of all the social background where the exercise of the virtues is made possible. Practice, according to MacIntyre, is:

> any coherent and complex form of socially established co-operative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.[103]

On the other hand, by the concept of the 'narrative unity of a human life' MacIntyre invokes the conception of a *telos* by following Aristotle that "man is by nature a political animal" and that the *polis* is a natural political

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[101] Mulhall and Swift (1996), p. 82.
[102] MacIntyre (1985), p. 191.
[103] MacIntyre (1985), p. 187.

organisation by arguing that we cannot justify political arrangements without reference to common purposes and ends and that we cannot conceive our personhood without reference to our roles as citizens and as participants in a common life. As MacIntyre puts it,

> man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal... the key question for men is not about their own authorship; I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'. We enter human society, that is, with one or more imputed characters--roles into which we have been drafted--and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how responses to them are apt to be construed.[104]

And, lastly, by the concept of a tradition MacIntyre has in mind the different historical and social circumstances that individuals live through, and by this he invokes a kind of moral relativism. As he says,

> But it is not just that different individuals live in different social circumstances; it is also that we all approach our circumstances as bearers of a particular social identity... As much as I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectation and obligations. These constitute the given of life, my moral starting-point. This in part is what gives my life its moral particularity.[105]

It should though be noted--as I have pointed out in the previous chapter--that MacIntyre does not quite accept the communitarian notion of community at least as it has been generally presented, in the sense that he does not believe in the re-introduction of a neo-Aristotelian conception of politics at the level of the contemporary Western nation-state. In fact, what MacIntyre really does, when advocating that when practice-based forms of Aristotelian community are generated in the modern world they should always be small-scale and local, is to be more on the side of the third model of community,

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[104] MacIntyre (1985), p. 201.
[105] MacIntyre (1985), pp. 204-205.

which I have outlined previously, without denying though the historical and social ties of the Tönnies model.

Charles Taylor's notion of community follows pretty much on the same track as MacIntyre's, although Taylor is more inclined not to reject all elements of liberal modernity. Taylor also connects the notion of the self with that of the community. In order to be able to ask the question what a person is, we need first to be able to connect it with his self-interpretations. As Mulhall and Swift point out, according to Taylor, this essential relation between selves and self-interpretation entails an equally essential relation between selves and other selves which is a relation to the community. This can be viewed in two ways. First, by gaining access to a vocabulary that embodies these self-representations. A language for Taylor exists only in a community. Second, by searching for my personal identity in relation to others, since one can be a self only amongst other selves.[106] The only way through which I can learn about myself is engaging in conversation with others by using a language reflecting the community I am in. This does not deny the possibility of disassociating myself from others in the long run, from disputing and setting myself free to lead my own way. But, nevertheless, a self exists for Taylor only within what he calls 'webs of interlocution', and these can only be achieved inside a community.[107]

In conclusion, we can see from the above presented communitarian accounts of community that, in general, communitarians think of individuals being socially embedded in the communities they live in and that their appropriation of Aristotle seems to support their view. To what extent though this appropriation of Aristotelian community accurately represents Aristotle's actual notion of community as presented in the *Politics* still remains to be seen.

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[106] Mulhall and Swift (1997), pp. 111-112.
[107] Taylor (1989), p. 36.

2. 4 The liberal notion of a community

Liberalism is not really considered as having much to say about community in general. In fact, some might think that to talk about such a thing as a 'liberal community' even existing on the first place, would be to talk about something totally alien to liberal philosophy. But is this really the case? It is true of course that the issue of community has been put forward in the open in a direct manner only by the communitarian critique of liberalism. It is communitarian philosophy which primarily takes the common good of the political community as its first object of concern. According to communitarianism, liberalism undervalues community, while in fact the existence of political community and its value should be our primary concern in political philosophy.

The liberal response to this communitarian critique varies. In fact, by following the line of argument that the communitarians themselves offer one could even sustain the idea that it is possible to have a communitarian society advancing liberal ideals, since, if community is to aim at its common good, one could easily imagine a community set to advance as its common good liberal ideals such as neutrality and self-determination. As Sandel himself points out, Rawls believes that he is allowing a fuller theory of community than is usually available on traditional liberal assumptions, in the sense that where the content of motivations is left open, as in the original position of the *Theory of Justice*, it is possible to suppose that "individuals may pursue social or communitarian aims as well as merely private ones, especially in a society governed by a scheme of reciprocity that works to affirm their sense of self-esteem".[108]

As Rawls points out, "there is no reason why a well-ordered society should encourage primarily individualist values if this means ways of life that

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[108] Sandel (1982), p. 148.

lead individuals to pursue their own way and to have no concern for the interests of others (although respecting their rights and liberties). Normally one would expect most people to belong to one or more associations and to have at least some collective ends in this sense".[109]

One liberal response has been to argue that social pluralism renders the existence of political community implausible.[110] As Rawls says in *Political Liberalism*:

> justice as fairness does indeed abandon the ideal of political community if by that ideal is meant a political society united on one (partially or fully) comprehensive religious, philosophical or moral doctrine. That conception of social unity is excluded by the fact of reasonable pluralism; it is no longer a political possibility for those who accept the constraints of liberty and toleration of democratic institutions.[111]

A second response has been to argue that there is a sense in which liberal society constitutes a community insofar as there is a distinctive set of liberal virtues, settled around a commitment to the idea of public justification. Macedo has argued for example that there is a shared public morality in liberal society, and a distinctive set of liberal virtues appropriate to such a community.[112] Also, a third response has been to argue for a "political liberalism which takes political community itself as an aim, and not the realisation of a particular vision of human flourishing or human excellence".[113] Others though, like Kukathas for example, have tried to weaken the notion of community overall, and have argued that both communitarianism and contemporary liberalism have exaggerated the value

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[109] Rawls (1975), p. 550.
[110] Kukathas (1996), p. 81.
[111] Rawls (1993), p. 201.
[112] Macedo (1990).
[113] Moon (1993).

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of political community, and have mistakenly assumed its centrality as a starting point for philosophical reflection.[114]

In fact, it should be noted that all the talk about community from both sides, communitarian as well as liberal, evolves around the conception of liberal asocial individualism and the liberal principle of self-determination. Surely, one cannot possibly sustain that liberalism in general has no conception of political community. That would be impossible, since it would suppose that liberal argument is blind to the ways people do organise and live their lives, and this is through one or another form of political community or association. And, surely, all liberal thinkers from Locke and Mill to Rawls and Dworkin when theorising on the principles that should govern our political life, have some conception of a political community that they have in mind.

Rawls is mistaken, according to Kukathas, to argue that he will not even consider the possibility of considering political society as a community since such a community will by its very nature require the oppressive use of state power.[115] But this criticism of Rawls is wrong. It is precisely for this reason-- the fear of the oppressive use of state power--that liberals have resisted all along the communitarian longings for community. It precisely for this that liberalism could never fully abandon the principle of self-determination and its metaphysical conception of the self, no matter how plausible and historically acceptable are the communitarian arguments in favour of a 'situated' self.

MacIntyre has acknowledged this and has credited liberalism--as we have seen in the previous chapter--for having it right from the very beginning in resisting all along the view of the modern nation-state as an all-embracing community out of fear that such a view would generate totalitarian and other evils. A genuinely Aristotelian conception of the *polis* has to be a relatively

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[114] Kukathas (1996), pp. 98-103.
[115] Kukathas (1996), p. 93.

small-scale and local form of political association, totally distinct from any communitarian conception of a modern nation-state. And, in this respect a point of convergence between liberals and communitarians can partly at least be achieved.[116]

2. 5 The polis as an association

Aristotle begins his analysis on political science in the *Politics* with the assertion that every city is a species of association (πᾶσαν πόλιν ὁρῶμεν κοινωνίαν τινὰ οὖσαν). As he says in the opening passage of the *Politics* ,

> Observation shows us, first, that every city (*polis*) is a species of association, and, secondly, that all associations come into being for the sake of some good--for all men do all their acts with a view to achieving something which is, in their view, a good. It is clear therefore that all associations aim at some good, and that the particular association which is the most sovereign of all, and includes the rest, will pursue this aim most, and will thus be directed to the most sovereign of all goods. This most sovereign and inclusive association is the city (or *polis*), as it is called, or the political association.[117]

The *polis* is described as a *koinonia* (κοινωνία), an association of some kind or in modern terminology a 'community'. Most translators of the *Politics* translate κοινωνία as 'association'[118] or 'partnership'.[119] Some, on the other hand, have been inclined to translate *koinonia* (κοινωνία) as 'community'[120] since community is the term that describes best the particular meaning of political association. Translators favouring the 'community' option include

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[116] MacIntyre (1994), pp. 302-304.
[117] I.1.i (1252a 1-7).
[118] Saunders (1995), Barker (1958).
[119] Rackham (1944).
[120] Jowett, Barnes (1984) and Everson (1988) in the revisions of the Jowett translation. Also Yack (1993) and Miller (1995).

some who are and some who are not involved in the modern liberal-communitarian debate. But the term community is misleading, since community is much more specific in a sense, while *koinonia* (κοινωνία) derives from the adjective *koinos* (κοινός) which refers to anything shared or held in common, and literally means a 'sharing' or 'partnership'. 'Association' fits much better the various meanings of the Greek word *koinonia*, since Aristotle by using this particular word does not always refer only to the political association, or political community, but also to other kinds of partnership such as family, household, management, marriage etc.

The problem of the non existence in the English language of an adequate translation of the word κοινωνία becomes even more complicated if we call to mind the modern vocabulary of contemporary political philosophy which uses terms such as 'community', 'society' and 'association' in very different contexts. As Mulgan points out, both 'community' and 'association' as possible candidates for the translation of the word *koinonia* may be very misleading if, for example, they suggest the common distinction which relies on Tönnies's classification between community (Gemeinschaft) and association (Gesellschaft).[121] A typical case of 'community' would be, according to this distinction, the family or the tribe, since communities meet a wider set of needs and are cemented by ties of sentiment and sympathy and not only of self-interest. 'Associations' on the other hand, such as a joint stock company are usually formed deliberately and contractually in order to meet specific needs. Aristotle though when referring to *koinonia* "includes both the strictly utilitarian business partnership and the close-knit family under the heading of *koinonia* and ascribes both the sentiment of friendship or co-operation and the more rational principle of distributive justice to every *koinonia*".[122] In

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[121] Mulgan (1977), p. 17.
[122] Mulgan (1977), p. 18. Mulgan nevertheless thinks that 'community' is preferable as a translation to 'association' because of its etymological connection with 'common' which corresponds to the derivation of κοινωνία from κοινός.

addition to Mulgan's remark, it is also worth pointing out that, on the one hand, 'Gesellschaft' is normally formed with some good in mind, while if 'Gemeinschaft' aims at a good it may do so unconsciously. In addition, in the same context, it is worth exploring the reference to friendship (φιλία) made above; Aristotle's account also seems to blur 'Gesellschaft' and 'Gemeinschaft' and it is not clear whether there is such a distinction in the different kinds of friendship as presented by Aristotle.[123] The Aristotelian pronouncements concerning friendship will become apparent in chapter six where I will discuss the Aristotelian notion of φιλία at length.

The implications that Tönnies's distinction between community and association has in the contemporary liberal-communitarian debate are not only related to the Aristotelian concept of κοινωνία but also to the notion of community in general in both communitarian and liberal theories. Communitarian arguments against liberalism mainly rest on the assumption about the value of community, which is, according to Yack, highly controversial in the sense that "communitarians generally assume that social and political health requires the strong sense of belonging to a community that they believe is characteristic of the specific form of social life that Tönnies and others call community".[124] The value of community as described by communitarian thought might be very controversial in the sense that "it is not clear that communities, as conceptualised by Tönnies and those who follow him, actually do generate a strong sense of belonging to a community among its members".[125] The problem we are presented with in this case is that the sense of belonging to a community can only be plausible if we conflate community with communion. But in order for this to be the case, one should be able to prove that there is a plausible connection between community and

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[123] I suppose Tönnies's distinction could not have been made in a pre-capitalist society.
[124] Yack (1995), p. 48.
[125] Yack (1995), p. 49.

communion in the sense that it should always be the case that communion would rise out of community.

According to Yack, both communitarians and liberals tend to blur the distinction between generic and specific uses of the term 'community'. This frequent blurring of this distinction between generic and specific uses of terms such as 'community', 'society' and 'association' is difficult to detect in general in arguments of both sides, since "we lack a generally recognised term for the genus of all social interactions", and, therefore, by "lacking a suitable term, we make terms such as *community, society,* and *association* do double duty as generic and specific categories and suffer the consequences in conceptual confusion and repetitious intellectual controversies".[126] But is this a valid distinction that Yack makes? Although it may be true concerning the communitarian notion of a community, this charge could not really be made against Aristotle's use of *koinonia* as an association because that it embraces all forms of association, i.e. a distinction between a sense of 'community' which can embrace many different kinds of societies and associations and a sense in which it refers to one specific form of association.

The importance that communitarians ascribe to the value of community certainly needs to be spelled out, since it is not clear why community is a good thing as such in the first place or what sorts of community are desirable. Perhaps one could argue, for example, that not all communities are good. Indeed, it is clear that not all communities are good. Communities of thieves or terrorists, for example, could hardly be regarded as good, although they generate a sense of belonging to the individuals who participate in these sort of activities. At the same time, the communitarian would also be in a difficult position to successfully argue--without lapsing into relativism--that communities which, for example, violate women's rights are

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[126] Yack (1995), pp. 49-50.

valuable. A communitarian could not distinguish between a community and its mistaken values, as others might.

Another point to be considered related to the above is what evidence there is that Aristotle values community and considers it as a good. Is community a good for Aristotle? Community generates a strong sense of belonging that is important for Aristotle as the *Ethics* chapters on friendship indicate. So, Aristotle would probably think community to be a good, although it should be stressed that not all communities or associations are good for Aristotle. As we shall see in chapter six on friendship, communities of thieves, for example, are not considered to be good for Aristotle. Not all kinds of associations are good, according to Aristotle; only those which meet the right criteria to be characterised as such are good. So one should be able, according to Aristotle, to distinguish between different kinds of communities or associations and not to think that all kinds of associations are necessarily good.

But, in addition, one should also distinguish between what is good for a community or an association and what is good for the individual. The good for an association is not necessarily the same as the good for the individual. For example, in the case of marriage, what is good for the marriage is not necessarily the same as what is good for the individuals who are married to each other (e.g., divorcing, running off with someone else, etc.). Some communitarians at least usually tend to identify the good of a community or an association with that of the individual. They tend to see community as a substantial entity inclusive of the good of the individual. Aristotle certainly does not think that all associations are substances; some people[127] claim that the *polis* is a substance (or substance like) because it is natural. But, according to Aristotle, an association is not required to be seen as a substance, and, therefore, the Aristotelian notion of *koinonia* is not a substantial entity. Although Aristotle considers collective activity to be an essential part of the

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[127] See, for example, Meikle (1991) and (1995).

human good, he thinks that one could still experience his individual good without experiencing merely a part in the collective common good.

The concept of *koinonia* plays an important role in Aristotle's political theory since the *polis* is perceived as a shared enterprise undertaken by the citizens.[128] The fundamental goal of the *polis* is that of human good. The importance that the notion of good has for Aristotle's political theory is made clear in the opening sections of both the *Politics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the very beginning of book I of the *Politics* (1252a 1-7) Aristotle starts by arguing that "the *polis* has as its aim the pursuit of the most sovereign of all goods (κυριωτάτου ἀγαθοῦ)". This conclusion is based on the following three premises: a) "The *polis* is a species of association or partnership (κοινωνία)" (1252a 1), b) "All associations are instituted for the purpose of attaining some good" (1252a 2), and c) "The *polis* is the most sovereign (κυριωτάτη) of all and includes all the rest" (1252a3-6). The *polis* has, therefore, an end, a *telos* (τέλος). As Keyt puts it, the *polis* is *telic*.[129] The end of the *polis* is the good of man, the good life, *eudaimonia* (εὐδαιμονία). This is argued by Aristotle throughout the *Politics*, but twice at length: first, in book I using a genetic or historical method and, second, in book III using a more analytical one. But I will not focus on Aristotle's notion of human good at this point, since I will discuss it in chapter four.

A community is, according to Aristotle, a group which co-operates for the sake of some common good. This common good can vary for example from meals or property to *eudaimonia*:

> There must be some one thing which is common to all the members, and identical for them all, though their shares in it may be equal, or unequal. The thing itself may be various--food, for instance, or a stretch of territory, or anything else of the kind. (1328a26-b1)

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[128] Stalley (1995), p. 318.
[129] Keyt (1991).

This notion of the common good which holds the *polis* together and renders it into a *koinonia* can also be seen in 1252b29 where Aristotle says that the *polis* arises for the sake of survival but exists for the sake of well-being. Two questions arise from the above passage. First, do all *koinonia* seek a common good, as opposed to enabling individuals to pursue their own goods? Second, what is meant by saying that they must have something in common?

Now, as far as this feature of the *polis* is concerned, MacIntyre maintains that the citizens of the Aristotelian *polis* take part in a project which is recognised as being good and that the goal of the life of the individual can be determined only according to his contribution to this good. This corresponds to his particular role set by the community. The role of the virtues is to maintain those traditions that enable the realisation of the particular common good. The individual contributes to the good of the community by realising in the best way possible his role and acquires happiness in the sense of the joy that accompanies every success.

MacIntyre makes here a similar point to Charles Taylor[130] when he says that in liberal modernity we are familiar with this Aristotelian notion of the common good only in respect to the grounding of hospitals, schools or charity:

> An Aristotelian theory of the virtues does therefore presuppose a crucial distinction between what any particular individual at any particular time takes to be good for him and what is really good for him as a man. It is for the sake of achieving this latter good that we practice the virtues and we do so by making choices about means to achieve that end (...) It is worth remembering Aristotle's insistence that the virtues find their place not just in the life of the individual, but in the life of the city and that the individual is indeed intelligible only as a *politikon zôon*. This last remark suggests that one way to elucidate the relationship between virtues on the one hand and morality of laws on the other is to consider what would be involved in any age in founding a community to

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130 Sandel (1992, p. 15) also says, attributing to Aristotle, that "Thus Aristotle said that the measure of a *polis* is the good at which it aims".

achieve a common project, to bring about some good recognised as their shared good by all those engaging in the project. As modern examples of such a project we might consider the founding and carrying forward of a school, a hospital or an art gallery; in the ancient world the characteristic examples would have been those of a religious cult or of an expedition or of a city. Those who participated in such a project would need to develop two quite different types of evaluative practice. On the one hand they would need to value--to praise as excellencies--those qualities of mind and character which would contribute to the realisation of their common good or goods. (...) They would also need however to identify certain types of action as the doing or the production of harm of such an order that they destroy the bonds of community in such a way as to render the doing or achieving of good impossible in some respect at least for some time.[131]

But there is no evidence in Aristotle's text to suggest that "the virtues find their place not just in the life of the individual, but in the life of the city and that the individual is indeed intelligible only as a *politikon zôon*". Also, associations like schools, hospitals or art galleries--valuable they may be--are not necessarily good and could not in any way compare with the political association that a *polis* is which aims at the highest good of all.

In *Politics*, Book III. 3 Aristotle argues that a *polis* cannot be identified by reference to its place or the race of its inhabitants, since it is only the constitution (νόμος) of a *polis* which unites it. As he says,

If a city is a form of association, and if this form of association is an association of citizens in constitution, it would seem to follow inevitably that when the constitution undergoes a change in form, and becomes a different constitution, the city will likewise cease to be same city. We say that a chorus which appears at one time as a comic and at another as a tragic chorus is not the same--and this in spite of the fact that the members often remain the same. What is true of the chorus is also true of every kind of association, and of all other compounds generally. If the form of its composition is

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[131] Taylor (1989), pp. 150-151.

different, the compound becomes a different compound. A scale composed of the same notes will be a different scale depending on whether it is in the Dorian or the Phrygian mode. If this is the case, it is obvious that in determining the identity of the city we must look to the constitution. Whether the same group of people inhabits a city, or a total different group, we are free to call it the same city, or a different city. It is a different question whether it is right to pay debts or to repudiate them when a city changes its constitution into another form (1276b1-10).

From what Aristotle says in this passage one may be inclined to argue that "if what it is for something to be a *polis* is for it to be a society unified by a single constitution, then there is no reason in principle why a much larger society than a city should not be a *polis*".[132] If we see Aristotle's view, though, under this interpretation, then we should, first, accept the interpretation according to which it is the constitution that holds the *polis* together, and, second, the view that "Aristotle's subject in the *Politics* is neither the nature of the 'city-state' nor of the 'city' but of the society unified by constitutional government".[133] According to this last view, a modern nation state can function as a *polis*. But it is highly unlikely for this view to be plausible, if we take into account the definition of the modern nation state and its past and current historical formation. Some communitarians, like MacIntyre for example, were in the past inclined to indirectly suggest such a possibility, but not any more. But it should be pointed out that one could argue that a nation state could still have some essential characteristics of a *polis* (e.g. government by single assembly). Surely one could argue that different types of constitution create different types of society. For example, choirs are different from Rugby teams even though they are both types of social organisation.

It should also be pointed out that the above passage seems quite problematic. Aristotle's view, as presented here, seems not only to be opposed

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[132] Everson (1988), p. xv.
[133] Everson (1988), *ibid.*

to the communitarian argument but also to ordinary ways of speaking, since, on the one hand, it appears to treat the city as a substance with form and matter, while, on the other, it presents the city as an artefact. If the city becomes a new city at every revolution, then it must be more like an artefact than a natural substance. This is a strange position that Aristotle seems to be committed to--in distinguishing between different senses of natural and artificial--that will become apparent in the following chapter in the discussion of his political teleology.

Fred D. Miller argues, concerning both MacIntyre and Aristotle in their conception of state and community, that MacIntyre's description of liberalism shifts between two different concepts, that of community and that of government.[134] According to MacIntyre, liberalism misconstrues the nature of community, since

> For liberal individualism a community is simply an arena in which individuals each pursue their own self-chosen conception of the good life, and political institutions exist to provide that degree of order which makes such self-determined activity possible. Government and law are, or ought to be, neutral between rival conceptions of the good life for man, and hence, although it is the task of government to promote law-abidingness, it is on the liberal view no part of the legitimate function of government to inculcate any one moral outlook.[135]

In this description, as Miller points out,[136] MacIntyre makes a switch between community and government, that is the state. The mistake made here is that these two conceptions--the first, the state, understood as the association which successfully asserts a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, and the second, the community, understood in the broader sense of society comprised of many different forms of association--are quite different. To support a thesis according to which a limited state will be dedicated to the protection of

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[134] Miller (1995), pp. 363-366.
[135] MacIntyre (1985), p. 181.
[136] Miller (1995), pp. 363-364.

individual rights does not suppose at the same time that society as a whole should resemble a liberal state in the sense that its components must be value-free and neutral. On the contrary, the advocate of the limited state can sustain that the community in the broader sense should be a civil society,[137] a community, consisting of many different associations which the government should protect.

From that, Miller is inclined to argue that the essential functions of the Aristotelian conception of best *polis*, that is moral education and the direct facilitation of the good life, could be sustained by a limited government. And he goes on to say that

> Just as Aristotle makes the mistake of conflating two concepts of the polis, modern communitarian theorists run the risk of committing a similar error in connection with the community in so far as they treat it as a state or a quasi-state with an authoritative structure and a collective voice.

This is connected to a previous argument that Miller has offered on Aristotle's political theory according to which Aristotle's inference that the *polis* is the most inclusive of communities leads to the conclusion that it has the most authority. And this inference is plausible only because Aristotle fuses together the notions of the state and society.[138]

But is this true? As Ober argues,[139] when we refer to the *polis*, either the one derived from the Aristotelian theory or the Athenian practice, neither the state/society distinction nor the community/city distinction can be fully

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[137] This idea of civil society, as Miller (1995, p. 364) points out, was clearly distinct, although it was advocated since the Enlightenment, by Hegel who treated it as a form of association distinct from both the family and the state. Furthermore, Oakeshott (1991, pp. 108-184 and 313-315) had distinguished a civil association from an enterprise association where the members pursue a substantive common purpose under a common authority. In a civil association the members do not have common substantive ends but co-operate and coexist under non-instrumental rules. Modern totalitarian regimes are an extreme example of the attempt to force societies into the mould of enterprise associations. Oakeshott proposed the civil association as a more defensible model for modern society.

[138] Miller (1995), p. 358.

[139] Ober (1993), p. 129.

sustained, but on the contrary the conception of *polis* has to be viewed as a society and a state at once. According to Ober, when Aristotle uses the term *polis* he always assumes the existence of, and sometimes refers specifically to, the society at large, and also while the fourth-century Athenian social practice did make a distinction between state and civil society, that distinction was far from clear-cut and interchange between the public and private spheres was constant and meaningful.

2. 6 Conclusion

From the three above notions of community I have outlined, it can be seen that the differences among them are not always clear-cut. Some liberals will endorse some communitarian claims, and vice versa. As for Aristotle, his conception of community cannot possibly be viewed independently of his notion of good and his doctrine that man is by nature a political animal born fit for society. In order for one to decide whether the communitarian interpretations of Aristotelian community are on the right side, and in order to settle in general the issue of whether Aristotle is a communitarian or a liberal and in what sense, it is necessary to explain his conception of man and in particular his doctrine that man is a political animal by nature, since it is--as we have seen--on Aristotelian teleology as opposed to the Rawlsian neo-Kantian metaphysical conception of the self that the communitarian theory on the community is mainly based upon.

3. TELEOLOGY AND HUMAN NATURE

> From these considerations it is evident that the city belongs to the class of things
> that exist by nature, and that man is by nature a political animal.
> *Politics*, 1253a 1-3

3. 1 Introduction

Much contemporary interest in Aristotle's political theory is due to what can be called the appeal of the natural. As Yack remarks, "in the textbook accounts, this claim makes Aristotle a defender of the naturalness of co-operation among human beings and an opponent of those, like Hobbes, who insist that human impulses drive human beings into conflict with each other".[140] The above textbook interpretation involves a twofold issue. First, it has to do with Hobbes's own misunderstanding of Aristotle's political theory in interpreting it as directly opposed to his own--a mistake originated by Hobbes that still dominates contemporary political philosophy. In the whole of Hobbes's work, his opposition to Aristotelianism (or better, his strong anti-Aristotelianism), and to the theory of the *Politics* in particular, is more than evident[141]; but what Hobbes did not see was that, despite his apparently objective opening in the beginning of the *Politics*, Aristotle's account is less factual than aspirational and that his ideal is strongly opposed to the vicious social and political strife

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[140] Yack (1993), p. 6.

[141] Hobbes, although he was educated in Oxford, which at the time was dominated by Aristotelianism, and despite his admiration of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, in the whole of his works regards Aristotelian thought with a critical eye and often with dislike. (For an account of the evolution of his thought see Skinner (1996, pp. 58-61). His anti-Aristotelianism is vividly expressed in *Leviathan*, Part IV, Ch. XLVI, 'Of Darkness from Vain Philosophy, and Fabulous Traditions', where he says: "The naturall Philosophy of those Schools, was rather a dream than Science, and set forth in senselesse and insignificant Language... Their Morall Philosophy is but a description of their own Passions... And I beleeve that scarce any thing can be more absurdly said in naturall Philosophy, than that which now is called *Aristotle's Metaphysics*; nor more repugnant to Government, than much of that hee hath said in his *Politiques*; nor more ignorantly, than a great part of his *Ethiques*.".

which was common in the Greek cities and which Aristotle describes elsewhere.[142]

In one of the most characteristic passages of the *De Cive* where his opposition to the Aristotelian political theory is also demonstrated, Hobbes advocates that:

> The greatest part of those men who have written aught concerning commonwealths, either suppose, or require us or beg us to believe, that man is a creature born fit for society. The Greeks call him ζῷον πολιτικὸν and on this foundation they also build up the doctrine of civil society, as if for the preservation of peace and the government of mankind, there were nothing else necessary than that men should agree to make certain covenants and conditions together, which themselves should then call laws. Which axiom, though received by most, is yet certainly false; and an error proceeding from our too slight contemplation of human nature. For they who shall more narrowly look into the causes for which men come together, and delight in each others company, shall easily find that this happen not because naturally it could happen no otherwise, but by accident. For if by nature one man should love another, that is, as man, there could no reason be returned why every man should not equally love every man, as being equally man; or why he should rather frequent those, whose society affords him honour or profit. We do not therefore by nature seek society for its own sake, but that we may receive some honour or profit from it; these we desire primarily, that secondarily.[143]

Hobbes's argument takes for granted that the Aristotelian position is opposed to his own.[144] He clearly takes Aristotle to be one of his main intellectual opponents. Indeed, one way of viewing Hobbesian political theory could be as a reply to the Aristotelian one in the sense that Hobbes's project seems to set out to defeat Aristotelian political naturalism. The main contrast between Hobbesian and Aristotelian accounts of society, as Hobbes sees it, is

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[142] *Politics*, 1296a22-b2 and 1318b1-5.

[143] Hobbes (1966), pp. 2-3.

[144] This opposition is quite common in general. For a similar mistake in Arendt (1955), see Swanson (1992, pp. 1-2, 3n).

that Aristotelian political philosophy defends the naturalness of co-operation among human beings while the *Leviathan* account insists that human impulses drive human beings into conflict with each other. The main disagreement in this context is between opposing accounts of human nature. Hobbes, as we know, puts forward a Thucydean account of human nature where 'man is wolf to man' and not 'a political animal by nature'. Aristotle's is one that supports the idea that human beings have the natural impulse to live together and to form political associations.

To some extend Hobbes is right to make this contrast. There is no doubt that Aristotle thinks that man is a political animal by nature born fit for society and that the creation of political associations comes naturally to him. But the political nature of man does not imply that the *polis* is natural in the sense that a living organism such as a plant is. Political associations, according to Aristotle, are still artifacts in the sense that they have been created by someone. Indeed, as we shall see later in this chapter, Aristotle speaks of the first man who created the *polis* to be the greatest of all benefactors. Aristotle is not advocating a strong organic view of the *polis*, and it is in this point that Hobbes is wrong to make the above contrast.

Therefore, from what we can see from the above passage,[145] Hobbes's misunderstanding of Aristotle's political philosophy is twofold.

First, Hobbes seems not to have understand the aspirational nature of the opening of the *Politics* and to realise that despite the historical language, Aristotle did not claim to have any special insight into the actual history of the human race. Aristotle's account in *Politics* Book I is not a historical one. Aristotle was not interested in presenting us with a historical account of how political association came into being, since--like most Greeks--he took the existence of the state for granted.

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[145] The same is obvious in other various places of *Leviathan* and *De Cive*.

Second, as I have pointed out above, Aristotle did not--as Hobbes thought--advocate a strong organic view of the state. It is true that Aristotle did not share the same view of human nature as Hobbes's. But, nevertheless, Aristotle's account of human nature as intrinsically political need not conflict in theory with a contractarian political theory. This is apparent for example in the case of Rousseau's social contract. But, what Hobbes did not see was that Aristotle in his account of the state did not rule out conflict; on the contrary he was more than aware of the human impulses that drive human beings into conflict with each other. But Aristotle did not think that conflict is incompatible with the human urge to be political.

The fact that Aristotle's theory can be read as a counter argument against Hobbes's theory and the contractarianism that his theory of the non-natural justification of the state often seems to imply, [146] and also at the same time as an anti-liberal theory, has often stimulated philosophers to build up an Aristotelian theory that could cure the flaws of liberal modernity. It should be pointed out though that the dispute between Hobbes and Aristotle does not merely concern whether modern political life actually is like a Hobbesian state of nature or whether the modern state resembles the Hobbesian state of nature, since all parties to any dispute in this area would argue that the state of nature is not and is not akin to any recognisable states or form of political life. Nevertheless, though, it should at the same time be pointed out that the account of human nature that political philosophers endorse shapes their views on the state. It is in this aspect that the core of the dispute lies.

Second, it is worth noticing that, when the *Politics* is read within the context of the controversy about the nature of political community, especially within the context of the liberal-communitarian debate, then Aristotle's pronouncements about the priority of the political community to the individual seem the most striking. And, very often, the interpretation of

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[146] Wolff (1994), p. 271.

Aristotle's arguments is identified with the numerous objections that political philosophers have raised against liberal individualism.[147] As Irwin points out,

> In the *Politics*, Aristotle seeks to complete his ethical theory, by examining the implications of his account of the human good, of the virtues, and of friendship, for the proper understanding of the political community (the *polis*), and of its role in promoting the human good; this is not immediately acceptable, or even recognisable, to those who are more familiar with the tendencies in modern political theory that begin with Hobbes and Locke. This distance between Aristotle and those tendencies give us a good reason for studing Aristotle. (...) The fact that Aristotle excites such disapproval in Hobbes should dispose us to take him seriously.[148]

Of course, several questions arise from this description of modernity and from this sharp contrast between the two opposing accounts of human nature, Aristotelianism and Hobbesianism. It is not quite clear, for example, whether modern political life actually is really like a Hobbesian state of nature, as described by the communitarians, or rather that political life is merely presented as such by communitarian political thinkers. Is the question that the modern state resembles the Hobbesian state of nature, or is it we who assume an Hobbesian view of man embedded in our everyday political and social practices?

Most important, is such a distinction between an Hobbesian and an Aristotelian perspective truly representative of the actual distinction between a liberal and communitarian view of man respectively? Although Hobbes's state of nature provides us with a very sharp and clear-cut account of liberty--in its negative form as presented by Berlin (which is indeed usually one of the main concepts of any liberal account) it is not, nevertheless, clear that liberal theories, when discussing liberty, have always in mind negative liberty--and not both positive and negative liberty combined, as we shall discuss later in

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[147] Yack (1993), p. 13.
[148] Irwin (1996), p. 26.

chapter seven. Hobbes's account of liberty is a useful device when trying to explain and to understand liberty in its extreme form, but it does not represent an accurate account of what actually liberals mean by liberty. It should also be noted that Hobbes, although being the father of social contract theory, is nevertheless no liberal thinker. It is not, therefore, clear whether it is right to refer to Hobbes's when discussing contemporary liberalism on the one hand, and, on the other to contrast Aristotle's thought only with a Hobbesian account of human nature, and not with other accounts representative of classical liberalism such as Locke's for example.

Furthermore, it has recently been argued that Aristotle's naturalistic approach to politics, which finds its concrete expression in the claim that the *polis* is natural and that man is, therefore, by nature a political animal (ἐκ τούτων οὖν φανερὸν ὅτι τῶν φύσει ἡ πόλις ἐστί, καὶ ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικόν ζῷον, 1253a 2-4) is inconsistent with his general political theory. As Keyt has pointed out

> One of the basic issues between Aristotle and Thomas Hobbes in political philosophy concerns the nature of the political community. Aristotle maintains that the political community, or the *polis*, is a natural entity like an animal or a man. For Hobbes, on the other hand, the political community is not an entity, it is a product of art. Now, I claim that Aristotle ought to agree with Hobbes, that according to Aristotle's own principles the political community is an artifact of the practical reason, not a product of nature, and that, consequently, there is a blunder at the very root of Aristotle's political philosophy.[149]

According to Aristotle, the *polis* is natural to man who is himself naturally a *polis*-animal and is also prior to him in the sense that it is the presupposition of his true and full life. The question here is how the concept of nature is conceived by Aristotle and, mainly, what exactly he has in mind when he says that "man is a political animal by nature".

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[149] Keyt (1991), p. 118.

Despite Keyt's argument on Aristotle's contradiction in this matter, there are commentators who argue that this contradiction is only apparent and not real. Traditionally, Bradley, Barker and Allan, for example, have in the past argued against this contradiction and have tried to save Aristotle's appearances by adopting a loose version of the notion of the 'natural'. In recent times Miller, Yack, MacIntyre and Taylor have tried to do the same. One interesting thing about this issue is that Miller and Yack follow the lines of an interpretation of Aristotle that makes him sympathise with a liberal or even a libertarian theory, while communitarian thinkers, like MacIntyre and Taylor, depict Aristotle as supporting a communitarian standpoint.

In fact, the dispute between these two positions comes down to the question of what exactly the notion of natural or naturalness means. On the one hand, Keyt adopts a strict version of the notion of the natural according to which the *polis* is natural in the sense of natural objects such as plants and bees. On the other hand though, Bradley, Barker and Allan, all adopt a loose version of the natural according to which the *polis* is natural in the sense that it is natural to man.

As Bradley points out, "And so, as a master, a husband, a father, a member of a village, his possibilities are still in various degrees latent, only partially brought into life. It is only in the state that they come in a full play, and therefore the state is 'natural' to him".[150] Allan also argues that, "One should not be mislead by the historical language used by theorists, whether ancient or modern, who describe the origin of the state; they do not claim to have special insight into the actual history of the human race. Most likely both Plato and Aristotle believed that civilisation has arisen and been destroyed many times in the past, and they sometimes speculated about regular law of occurrence; the world, for them, has existed from the beginning of time; it does not occur to them that man may have been slowly evolved from a lower

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[150] Bradley (1991), p. 198.

species. What is intended in political philosophy is to make clear the function of political society, as distinct from simpler forms of association, by a quasi-historical account of its origin; this was as clear to the authors of the *Republic* and the *Politics* as to Rousseau and other modern thinkers".[151]

Barker goes even further in claiming that "what makes the state natural is the fact that, however it came into existence, it is as it stands the satisfaction of an immanent impulse in human nature towards moral perfection".[152] One could of course argue that possibly this loose interpretation of the natural goes too far in the sense that it could be compatible with any account of how the *polis* comes into existence. The *polis* according to this interpretation could, for example, be either merely a creation designed by a small group of highly intelligent people, or a result of an intervention of a supernatural being, or even merely a pure accident.[153] Despite the fact that I am more sympathetic to this loose view of the natural, since--if true--it somehow seems to soften the gap between Antiquity and the Enlightenment, Aristotelianism and Modernity, a detailed examination of Aristotelian arguments is required nevertheless before favouring either view.

3. 2 Aristotle and the naturalness claim

One of the basic ideas of the *Politics* (I. 2) is that the *polis* is a natural entity like an animal or a man. Two additional ideas are that man is by nature a political animal and that the *polis* is prior to the individual. In fact the whole of *Politics*, Book I, 2 is dedicated to arguing for the naturalness of the *polis*.

Aristotle begins in *Politics* 1252a 1-23 by criticising the political theories of his predecessors and making an immediate reference to Plato's *Statesman*. He disagrees with Plato's view that the roles of a statesman, a king, a

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[151] Allan (1970), p. 143.
[152] Barker (1958), p. xlix.
[153] Chan (1992), p. 190.

household-manager and a master of slaves are the same since, as he says, this Platonic view is based on three false assumptions that: (a) "each of these differs in point of large or small numbers, but not in kind" (1252a 9-10), (b) "there is no difference between a large household and a small state" (1252a 13-14), and (c) on the notion of the respective roles of the statesman and the king, by believing that when a man is in personal control he has a role of king, whereas when he takes his turn at ruling and at being ruled according to the principles of that sort of knowledge, he is a statesman (1252a 14-16).

Aristotle's point--that each smallest part (i.e. man/woman, master/slave, father/son, the smallest parts of a household and hence of a *polis*) is different and requires a ruler different in kind--as he explains in 1252a 17-23--will become clear when it is examined according to his normal mode of inquiry, that is to analyse a compound into its irreducible elements, the smallest parts of a whole. In this way, by examining the component parts of the state, we will be in the position, according to Aristotle, to "see better both how these two differ from each other and whether we can acquire some skilled understanding of each of the roles mentioned". This mode of inquiry is the same as that described in the *Physics* and employed variously throughout Aristotle's work.

It should be noted that Aristotle here seems to be appealing to two methods which on the surface look distinct: analytic (dividing into subject parts) and genetic (seeing how it comes into being). As he says, "as in other sciences, so in politics compounds should always be resolved into the simple elements or smallest parts of the whole; and if you consider things in their first growth and origin, whether they are cities or anything else, you will get the clearest view of them" (1252a 19-25). Aristotle's mode of enquiry is to analyse a compound into its elements; in order to do that one has to look at its origin and to see how it grows. Aristotle supposes that the cities are open to the same sort of scientific investigation as animals and plants. He does not suppose

though that the *polis* is simply a product of nature. What he does suppose is that it is sufficiently like a natural product to respond to the same sort of inquiry.

His analysis starts with the examination of the natural growth of things from their beginnings in order to distinguish the different forms of association and successively to trace the association of the household, of the village and, finally, that of the *polis* which is the crown of all, since it completes and fulfils the nature of man. This genetic method of considering things in the process of their growth is the same as the analytic suggested previously, since the genetic method consists of beginning with the simple elements, something that implies anyway the use of analysis. It is through this analytic-genetic method (1252a 24-1253a 1) that Aristotle will finally come to the conclusion of providing a proof of the natural character of the *polis*. One should point out that the analytic and genetic methods are the same only if one supposes that wholes came into existence by the combination of parts which remain unchanged in themselves; an example of such a case would be to compare the parts of a tower built from children's blocks with the ingredients of a cake.

Aristotle's analysis in 1252a 26-27 starts, first, by examining the relation between "those which are incapable of existing without each other and must unite as a pair". These associations are two that of the male and the female (the first and simplest association that existed) and that of master and slave. The first exists for breeding and is not one that is being made by choice but rather from the urge that exists in man, as in other animals as well and in plants, to leave behind another such as one is oneself. The second exists for preservation between that which naturally rules and that which is ruled. This association is natural for Aristotle since for him that which can use its intellect to look ahead is by nature master, while that which has the bodily strength to labour is ruled and is by nature a slave, and they both benefit from the same thing.

After making the distinction between these two associations, he goes on clarifying that the distinction between female and slave is also made by nature, since nature produces nothing in a niggardly way for many purposes, as for example the Delphic knife that smiths were supposed to make, and therefore it is wrong to assign to female and slave the same status, as the barbarians (the non-Greeks) do. This assumption is made by them according to Aristotle because they do not have that which naturally rules and thus their association comes to be that of a male slave and a female slave. From this he asserts that, as the poet says, "it is proper that Greeks should rule barbarians", since according to his line of thought a barbarian and a slave are by nature identical (1252a 34-b9).

In 1252b 10-15 Aristotle concludes that it was from these two associations of man--woman and master--slave that the association of the household arose. As Hesiod, the poet says in his *Theogonia*: "first of all a house and a wife and an ox to draw the plough"; for oxen serve the poor in lieu of household slaves. The first form of association is therefore naturally instituted for the satisfaction of the purposes of every day life. The members of this household are named by Charondas "bread-fellows" and by Epimenides "stable-companions".

In the next paragraph (1252b 15-27) Aristotle continues his genetic analysis to explain the formation of the village. A village is the first association from several households for the satisfaction of other than daily purposes, and seems to be by nature in the highest degree. This is the reason that the *polis*, and the colonies, were first ruled by kings; because they were formed from persons that were under kingly rule. This is explained if we see that every household is under the kingly rule of its most of senior member, something which is mentioned in Homer when he says--speaking of the Cyclopes--that "each lays down the law to children and wives" and proves that men in ancient times lived in scattered groups. Further proof to the fact that men in ancient times were governed by kings is the reason that leads us all to assert

that the gods are also governed by a king, since we make the lives of the gods in the likeness of our own, in the same way that we make their shapes. Aristotle is here arguing from history; the historical basis of what Aristotle says is dubious, but this does not necessarily affect the value of his argument.

Finally, in 1252b 27-1253a 1 Aristotle's discussion is focused on the *polis* which is "the complete association, from several villages, which at once reaches the limit of total self-sufficiency". The *polis*--i.e. the association that is finally composed of several villages and has at last attained the limit of virtually complete self-sufficiency; "whereas it comes into existence for the sake of life, it exists for the sake of good life", and therefore "every *polis* exists by nature, since the first associations did too". "For this association is their end, and nature is an end; for whatever each thing is in character when its coming into existence has been completed, that is what we call the nature of each thing--for a man, for instance, or a horse or a house. Moreover the aim, i.e. the end, is best; and self-sufficiency is both end and best". Aristotle's argument is of course quite puzzling here, since he has not really proven the claim that the *polis* exists for the good life. In 1253a 1-7, he concludes that

> These considerations make it clear, then, that the state is one of
> those things which exist by nature, and that man is by nature an
> animal fit for a *polis*. Anyone who by his nature (διά φύσιν) and
> not by ill-luck (οὐ διὰ τύχην) is cityless (ἄπολις) is either a wretch
> (φαῦλος) or superhuman (κρείττων ἤ ἄνθρωπος); he is also like
> the man condemned by Homer as having 'no brotherhood, no law,
> no hearth'; for he is at once such by nature and keen to go to war,
> being isolated like a piece in game of *pettoi*.

The above arguments depend on the claim that the *polis* exists for the good life; something which is hardly demonstrated by Aristotle's semi-historical argument.

In 1253a 7-18 he develops his thesis further by putting forward the argument that "it is obvious that man is an animal fit for a state to a fuller

extent than any bee or any herding animal". This thesis is peculiarly argued and the argument goes as follows: (a) nature does nothing in vain, (b) man alone of the animals is furnished with the faculty of language, (c) the mere making of sounds serves to indicate pleasure and pain, and it is therefore a faculty that belongs to animals in general (their nature enables them to attain the point which they have perceptions of pleasure and pain and can signify those perceptions to one another), (d) but, language serves to declare what is just and what is unjust, (e) it is the peculiarity of man in comparison with the rest of the animal world to possess a perception of good and evil, of the just and the unjust, and of other similar qualities, and, finally, (f) it is association in a common perception of these things which makes a family and a *polis*.

Furthermore, in 1253a 18-29 Aristotle argues that, although the individual and the household is prior to the *polis* in time, the *polis* is prior by nature to the individual and to the household. This thesis is based on the following argument: (a) the whole is necessarily prior to the part, (b) if the whole body will be destroyed, then there will not be a foot or a hand, except in that ambiguous sense in which one uses the same word to indicate a different thing (ὁμωνύμως)[154] (as when one speaks of a hand made of stone, since when a hand is destroyed--when the whole body is destroyed--it will be no better than a hand made of stone), (c) all things derive their essential character from their function and their capacity, (d) therefore, if things are no longer fit to discharge their function, they are no longer considered to be the same things (τὰ αὐτά), but that they only have the same name by ambiguity (ὁμώνυμα). So, finally, "it is clear that the *polis* exists by nature and is prior to the individual". Because, "if an individual is not self-sufficient after separation, he will stand in the same relationship to the whole as the parts in the other cases do, while a man who is incapable of associating, or has no need of it because of self-

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[154] As a term 'homonymous' is analysed in the *Categories*, I, 1a1.

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sufficiency, is no part of a *polis*, so he must be either a beast or a god" (ὥστε ἤ θηρίον ἤ θεὸς).

But, although the impulse towards this kind of associations exists by nature in all men, "the first person who first constructed such an association was none the less the greatest of all benefactors". Aristotle makes this point more clear by pointing out that "man is the best of all animals when he has reached his full development, and he is worst of all when divorced from law and justice. Injustice armed is at its harshest; man is born with weapons to support practical wisdom and virtue, which all are too easy to use for the opposite purposes. Hence without virtue he is the most savage, the most unrighteous, and the worst in respect of sex and food. The virtue of justice is a characteristic of a state, since justice is the arrangement of the association that takes the form of a state and the virtue of justice is a judgement about what is just" (1253a29-39).

One reason why Aristotle thinks that the *polis* exists by nature, even though it does not satisfy his main criterion of the natural--i.e. that which exists always or for the most part--is because it aims to produce *eudaimonia*, the true end of human life. It is clear that for Aristotle the *polis* is not natural because it is grown. The *polis* is made natural because however it came into existence, it is as it stands the satisfaction of an immanent impulse in human nature towards moral perfection--an immanent impulse which drives men upwards, through various forms of society, into the final political form. As we can understand from the text, Aristotle did indeed believe in the conscious construction of the *polis*. This is supported from what we have already seen that he says in *Politics*, Book I, 2: "There is an immanent impulse in all men towards an association of this order; but the man who first constructed such an association was the greatest of all benefactors". There is a real question as to whether Aristotle's discussion of "the man who first constructed the city" is consistent with his overall accounts of the *polis*. If his account could be proven

to be consistent, a good question would be whether Aristotle's account of the *polis* as natural could be compatible with a contractarian view.

3. 3 Teleology and communitarianism

The application of natural teleology by Aristotle to the science of the *Politics* and whether it is successful, or even more intended, has often troubled the Aristotelian scholars, since--as it has often been argued--if the politics and the ethics of Aristotle are implausible without the connection to physics and metaphysics, then it would be very difficult to successfully sustain such a political position which is based on a metaphysical position that we can no longer share. If, as MacIntyre argues, Aristotle's ethics presupposes his 'metaphysical biology',[155] then how far is the Aristotelian enterprise of linking politics to an account of human nature and the human good drawn from that biology vitiated by the failure of that biology? But, regardless of whether Aristotle's teleological application is successful or not, what I would like to examine in this section is whether the teleological explanation of Aristotle's ethics that MacIntyre adopts is consistent with Aristotelian teleology. MacIntyre points out that Aristotle, by seeing everywhere the growth of an initial potentiality into a final form or end, and distinguishing in its form or end the essential nature of everything, applied his general philosophy to man and man's long development, as he struggled upward from the potentiality of primary instincts to the form, or end, or nature of a political being--a being intended by his potentialities for existence in a *polis* and a being who achieved his nature in and through such existence. The *polis* is therefore entirely and perfectly natural, since it was the natural home of the fully grown and natural man. Thus, we arrive by the application of teleology to Aristotle's *Politics* and

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[155] MacIntyre (1999) has tried to provide us with a solution to this problem; not a very successful one, according to my opinion, but I will not expand on his argument here.

Ethics to MacIntyre's distinction of man-as-he-happens-to-be and man-as-he-should-be-if-he-realised-his-essential-nature.

However, it should be noted that MacIntyre conceives the notion of good as being the excellent performance of a function for the achievement of a common end. But, this functionalistic interpretation of the good made by MacIntyre is likely taken in by a widespread misunderstanding of the Aristotelian sense of *telos*.

Aristotle tries to develop an approach to the study of living things that is both explanatory and evaluative. As he says in *Metaphysics Z*, 1040b 26-27, every natural thing can be understood in terms of the potentiality (δύναμις) and the function or actuality (ἐνέργεια) that define it. The form (εἶδος) or end (τέλος) or actuality (ἐνέργεια) of a thing is the primary means of explaining what each natural thing is,[156] and this explanation is at the same time evaluative or critical, since in giving an account of any given human being or human culture we must characterise its goals or practices in terms of and relative to the goals that define human being as a certain kind of entity. The *Politics*, as well as the *Ethics* and the *Rhetoric*, are filled with explanations and evaluations of such kind. Human nature is understood in all these examples as a hierarchy of ends, and serves as the perspective from which to judge the extent to which various characteristic ways of life and cultural institutions are just or right (δίκαιος) by nature. Human nature provides a ground for judgments that are at once causal and evaluative, even though what is just or right by nature does not take the form of universal laws, but varies, within limits, from place to place and person to person.[157]

MacIntyre raises the possibility of recovering this tradition of evaluative explanation in *After Virtue*, where he maintains that the classical philosophical tradition is fundamentally a continuation or expression of the

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[156] *Physics*, 2, 193b6-18.
[157] Salkever (1990), pp. 19-20.

prevailing views of Greek political culture. He further asserts that all forms of ethical functionalism--whether Aristotle's view or the one embedded in traditional Greek politics--are essentially the same because of their common origin in an opposition to moral and methodological individualism. According to his argument in *After Virtue*,

> Aristotle takes it as a starting-point for ethical enquiry that the relationship of 'man' to 'living well' is analogous to that of 'harpist' to 'playing the harp well' (*NE*, 1095a 16). But the use of man as a functional concept is far older than Aristotle and it does not initially derive from Aristotle's metaphysical biology. It is rooted in the forms of social life to which the theorists of the classical tradition give expression. For according to that tradition to be a man is to fill a set of roles each of which has its own point and purpose: member of a family, citizen, soldier, philosopher, servant of God. It is only when man is thought of as an individual prior to and apart from all roles that 'man' ceases to be a functional concept.[158]

But MacIntyre's argument is not all that convincing. As Rapp has pointed out, a state which can be brought about by technical knowledge is only a special instance of *telos*. In general, *telos* expresses the fully unfolded essence of a thing--connected to this with regard to the *polis* is a normative criterion for the comparison of various institutions. A constitution is better to the extent that it comes closer to the *telos* of the *polis*, to the distributively common advantage of everyone, to their good life. This sense of end does not necessarily include the notion that the citizen of a *polis* seeks to achieve the end of the *polis* as the players of a football team seek victory, and the Aristotelian notions of *praxis* and *eudaimonia* even exclude this view. Rather, the concrete *polis* comes nearest to the essence of a *polis*, which is inferred from the bilevel reconstruction of political life--and thus attains its *telos*--if it provides favourable conditions for the individual quest for happiness by its

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[158] MacIntyre (1995), pp. 58-59.

citizens and supports to the best of its ability these possibilities through education and good laws. The talk of a common project and the functionalistic view of the good implied in MacIntyre's argument is at the end of the day missing the point entirely.[159]

In conclusion, one could argue that MacIntyre's functionalistic view of the good and his insistence that the *polis* should aim to a common project (and that it is only through the realisation of this common project that the citizen would reach his full potential and become good) commits him to a kind of organicism, in the sense that the *polis* is viewed as a natural organism such as a human being for example. On this view each citizen has a specific function which contributes to the overall welfare of the city. The citizen's role is thus similar to that of a part of an organism or a machine. The value of his life is determined by the contribution he makes to the whole. This view leaves no room for expressing any kind of individuality on the part of the citizen body and is not supported by Aristotle's pronouncements and his criticism of Plato's *Republic* in *Politics*, Book II, as we shall see in the following chapters of this thesis.

3.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, our examination of the arguments in *Politics*, I, 1-2 shows that there is of good deal of ambiguity in Aristotle's claims that the *polis* is natural and that man is a political animal by nature. It appears that there are three plausible ways of interpreting Aristotle's pronouncements.

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[159] Rapp (1994), pp. 340-341.

First, there are passages which suggest that the *polis* may be compared to a natural organism such as a human being and the citizens may be compared to the parts of its body. If these passages are to be taken literally, then they imply a strongly organic view of the state. However, a view of this kind would seem incompatible with Aristotle's conception of human good and with his complaints in *Politics*, Book II that Plato has an over-unified view of the state, an criticism of Aristotle's that I will expand on in later chapters. Such a view of the *polis* as an organism would be unlikely to commend itself to many modern political theorists because it implies that the citizen has no value except in so far as he or she contribute to the overall functioning of the state.

A second more plausible interpretation would be to take Aristotle as meaning that the city is natural in the sense that human beings have a natural tendency to live in cities and can only achieve their good within the *polis*. But again this claim can still be interpreted in different ways. The most obvious interpretation is suggested by the claim put forward in *Politics*, Book I, Ch. 1 that the city is an association for the sake of the most sovereign good. Also, by the one put forward in *Politics*, Book I, Ch. 2 that the city comes into being for the sake of life but exists for the sake of the good life. One would naturally take these passages to imply that the citizens must share a common conception of the good. The *polis* is natural in the sense that only within the *polis* can human beings achieve their true good. This view would be compatible with the fact that most human beings do not live in a *polis*. The point made here is that only those fortunate enough to live in a *polis* have a chance of a truly good life.

Third, an alternative interpretation--suggested by the argument from language and the comparison with other social animals--is that Aristotle's claim is simply that it is natural for man to live in society. This is of course a very plausible claim to make. Man has characteristics such as the ability to use

language which make him fit for society, most men do indeed live in societies, and it is difficult for man to survive outside society.

In general, looking at Aristotle's philosophy as a whole it seems as though the second interpretation offered above is the correct one, but, nevertheless, in arguing for this view Aristotle has used arguments which would have better suited the first or the third interpretation.

But, of course, from the point of view of this chapter, the important thing is to see what bearing all this has on the liberal-communitarian debate. On the one hand, it is essential to the second interpretation that a *polis* has a shared conception of the good. In this sense it agrees with the communitarian position. But this view is linked with the idea that there is one kind of life that is the good life for man. That in turn is based on Aristotle's teleological view of man. Therefore, without committing himself to Aristotle's metaphysical biology, it is difficult to see how the communitarian could accept this interpretation. On the other hand, the third interpretation avoids these metaphysical difficulties, but there does not seem to be anything specifically communitarian about it. A liberal individualist could agree that it is natural to live in society in the sense that human beings tend to live in societies and have difficulty living outside a society. The communitarian would really have to suggest that a successful society needs a shared conception of the good, even though there is no one good life for which man is fitted by nature. But, there appears to be no Aristotelian support for this position.

4. THE CITY AND THE GOOD LIFE

πᾶσα κοινωνίαν ἀγαθοῦ τινος ἕνεκεν συνεστηκυῖαν
Politics, 1252a 2

4.1 Introduction

A central principle of Aristotle's *Politics* is that the city exists for the sake of a good life. In this chapter we shall investigate how that principle bears on the liberal-communitarian debate. There are two questions to consider here. First, does the idea that the city exists for the good life have *in itself* any implications which a liberal individualist would have to reject? Second, does the idea that the city exists for the good life *when taken in conjunction with an Aristotelian account of the good* have any implications which a liberal individualist would have to reject? But, first, we have to consider the part that this idea plays in Aristotle's own political philosophy.

The problems and the various interpretations surrounding Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia* are well-known and much discussed. Therefore, I will not attempt here to solve the questions surrounding Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia* as presented in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I will merely outline the main theses in Aristotle's position and stress the issues relevant to my discussion on the appropriation of Aristotle's political theory in the liberal-communitarian debate. In the first section, I will examine Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia* and the bearing it has in his political philosophy. Also, I will distinguish between three different Aristotelian accounts of the best city in the *Politics*, and I will discuss the role that Aristotle's account of the good life plays in the city. In the next sections I will discuss the liberal and communitarian conceptions of the good and their appropriations of Aristotle's conception of the good life in the city.

Ancient ethical theory largely revolved around the notions of the human good, or, in Aristotelian terms, of the 'good for man' (ἀγαθόν) and of 'happiness' (εὐδαιμονία). Indeed, two of the questions most often asked by Greek philosophers were 'What is the human good?' and 'What is the good life?'. This has always been central for Greek philosophy, since Socrates who argued that an unexamined life is not worth living, and that philosophy is not a trivial matter, since it involves a quest about how one should live. To inquire about the good life is to ask about the proper course of an entire life and not just about proper conduct in a particular situation. Aristotle's main concern was to inquire about the good and the nature of human happiness and not just about right action. Consequentialist and deontological ethical theories discuss 'right action', while ancient Greek writers--although interested in right action as well--were preoccupied in discussing 'lives as a whole'.

In one way or another questions about the good continue to occupy a central place in contemporary moral and political discussion. Indeed, when discussing the good for man and the notion of *eudaimonia* or 'happiness' in relation to applications of both to political theory and practice, different sorts of questions arise.

Clearly, first, there are questions concerning the notion of the good and the good life *per se*: whether one is justified in talking about the good life in the first place or whether there can be different conceptions of the good and many ways of leading the good life, since theories of the good divide into two kinds: monistic and pluralistic. These questions play an important part in liberal and communitarian theories of the good but are clearly of interest to Aristotelian thought as well.

Second, there are issues of interpretation as far as Aristotelian thought is concerned, since one is presented with two different accounts of political community and of human good that Aristotle advances in the *Politics*. First, with the form of constitution which would be best under ideal conditions and

is therefore best absolutely that he advances in Book VII, and second, with the form of constitution that is best under the conditions that actually prevail that he advances in Book IV.

Third, there are questions concerning the limits of authority of the state over the individual which are closely related to the concept of the good. Whether one will adopt an inclusivist or a dominant interpretation of *eudaimonia* would determine the conception of state in the sense of allowing or not allowing pluralism to take place in it.

I will start my analysis of Aristotle's position by presenting an exegesis of the two above mentioned Aristotelian accounts as they can be found in the *Politics*, offering at the same time an interpretation of the Aristotelian text and discussing the several issues as they emerge during the discussion. But, first, I would like to consider briefly Aristotle's account of human good in his ethical writings and its bearing on political matters.

4. 2 The good life in Aristotle's *Ethics*

The fundamental goal of the *polis* is that of human good. The importance that the notion of good has for Aristotle's political theory is made clear in the opening sections of both the *Politics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

In Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argues that the good and the highest good (τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον) is the end of the *polis* and is studied by political science, which is the most authoritative of the sciences or a kind of master art or science. As he points out, the subject matter of political science is human action. Political science is the 'architectonic' or master discipline, which exercises general control over all other practical disciplines. The authority of political science is supreme and it directs the activities of other disciplines, each of which is concerned with one particular area of

human activity, therefore, its aim or purpose must be all-embracing. The science of politics lays down which of the sciences there should be in cities and which each class of person should learn and up to what level; so even the most honourable of faculties--such as military science, domestic economy, and rhetoric--come under it. Since political science uses the rest of the sciences, and since, again, it legislates as to what we are to do and we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the other sciences, so that its end must be the good for man:

> For even if the good is the same for an individual as for a city, that of the city is obviously a greater and more complete thing to obtain and preserve. For while the good of an individual is a desirable thing, what is good for a people or for cities is a nobler and more godlike thing. (*EN* I. 2, 1094b 4-11)

Ethical and political theory are, therefore, inseparably linked together in one discipline, that is, political science.[160]

Aristotle examines the notion of human good and of *eudaimonia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* in Books I and X. When Aristotle uses the concept of the supreme good, or supreme end in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he understands it as the idea of a goal of action which is desired for itself and not as a means to secure further ends. As he says in the opening sentence of the *Nicomachean*

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[160] This relation, though, between the *Ethics* and the *Politics* is not unproblematic. One common mistake usually made in regard to Aristotle's political philosophy is its subordination to his ethical theory, something that MacIntyre does for example. What most philosophers fail to see is not just the unity of Aristotelian ethical and political philosophy, but mainly the fact that the ethical writings of Aristotle do not constitute an autonomous moral science and do not merely include the politics, but rather that the ethics form part of his comprehensive political science. According to Yack (1993, p. 4) for example this has further implications since the result of this interpretation is that some writers, unlike Aristotle, see social structures and contingencies as factors that constrain the application of ethical concepts rather than as partly constitutive of these concepts. The issue in question here is whether political factors affect ethical concepts or merely constrain their application in practice. This subordination of politics to ethics leads to the underestimation of the extent to which political contingencies constrain ethical choices and development. According to Yack (1993, pp. 4-5), Irwin (1988, pp. 447, 409)--despite his own arguments against separating the two fields--minimises the political constraints on the achievement of the good life, and suggests, therefore, that the Aristotelian virtues pursue the common good in a rational way and secure it in moderately favourable conditions. These moderately favourable conditions refer to the conditions expressed in Aristotle's *polity*, since, as he thinks, without the ideal city there will be no good men.

Ethics: "Every skill and every inquiry, and similarly every action and rational choice, is thought to aim at some good; and so the good has been aptly described as that at which everything aims." (*NE*, I. 1094a 1-3) The most complete (and most final, or most perfect) good is that which is not instrumental to any other good, and is good in itself. Happiness (*eudaimonia*) is the end for the sake of which we all do everything else. The chief good (κυριώτατο ἀγαθόν) is evidently something 'final without qualification' (τέλειον ἁπλῶς), it is 'self-sufficient' (αὐτάρκες) and 'something of one's own and not easily taken from one' (*NE*, I, 7).

Εὐδαιμονία, usually translated as 'happiness' in English, is an activity desirable for its own sake, and not a disposition or a state of feeling or enjoyment or content, the usual meaning of the English term. To be *eudaimon*, is to flourish, and while happiness refers mostly to a psychological state, a state of feeling, *eudaimonia*, being a kind of a more objective condition of a person, is closer to connotations of well-being and flourishing. *Eudaimonia* is defined as an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. It should be noted that, since *eudaimonia* is an activity exercised in accordance with virtue, then, presumably, this implies that the city must equip its citizens with the virtues and with opportunities for their exercise.

Eudaimonia involves the exercise of two types of virtue, ethical and intellectual. The man of ethical virtue possesses courage, justice, magnificence, liberality, magnanimity, good temper, friendliness, truthfulness, ready wit and temperance.[161] To be happy, in addition, he must possesses a certain amount of 'external goods', since "there are some things the lack of which takes the lustre from happiness, such as good birth, goodly children, beauty".[162] In order of course to acquire *eudaimonia* one should only need a modest level of human goods, since "we can be happy without ruling earth or sea".[163] And,

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[161] *EN* I. 8, 1099a 31-b 8 and X. 8 (1178 b 33-5.
[162] *EN* X. 8, 1099b 2-3.
[163] *EN* X. 8, 1179a 4.

lastly, the happy man needs to possess the intellectual virtues which are art or technical skill, scientific knowledge, prudence or practical wisdom, wisdom and intelligence. Among them, practical wisdom (φρόνησις) is involved in ethically virtuous behaviour while wisdom (σοφία) concentrates on eternal and unchanging objects and is identified with philosophical contemplation which is the highest and best human activity.

But, what does the good for man, *eudaimonia*, consists in? Aristotle explicitly introduces the so-called 'function' (ἔργον) argument (*NE*, I, 7; *EE*, II, 1) in order to best describe what the nature of *eudaimonia* is. Aristotle's 'function' argument relies heavily on his conception of nature. There is a general relation between the function of an *x*, a good *x*, and the good for an *x*. A human being's ergon is "an active life of the element that has a rational principle". Since the characteristic capacity of a human being is the exercise of reason, then the good of a human being will be exercising this capacity well. The good is acting well and acting well is acting in accordance with the virtues. So, exercising rationality well will consist in exercising rationality in acting virtuously. As he argues in *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a 7-17,

> For just as for a flute-player, a sculptor, or an artist, and, in general, for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the 'well' is thought to reside in the function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function. Have the carpenter, then, and the tanner certain functions or activities, and has man none? Is he born without a function? Or as eye, hand, foot, and in general each of the parts evidently has a function, may one lay it down that man similarly has a function apart from all these? What then can this be?

The man's function is, thus, to be found in the active life of the rational part of the soul:

> There remains, then, an active life of the element that has a rational principle; of this, one part has such a principle in the sense of being obedient to one, the other in the sense of possessing one

and exercising thought. And, as 'life of the rational element' also has two meanings, we must state that life in the sense of activity is what we mean; for this seems to be the more proper sense of the term. Now if the function of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle, and if we say 'so-and-so' and 'a good so-and-so' have a function which is the same in kind, e.g. a lyre, and a good lyre-player, and so without qualification in all cases, eminence in respect of goodness being added to the name of the function (for the function of a lyre-player is to play the lyre, and that of a good lyre-player is to do so well): if this is the case, and we state the function of man to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete.

The supremacy of contemplation is argued for in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle claims that reason is the best part of man, that contemplation is the most continuous and the most pleasant activity, that the philosopher has the least need for external goods and that contemplation is the only thing loved for its own sake and is the only truly divine activity.[164] In fact, as he argues in the *Metaphysics*, the actual object of contemplation is pure thought, something that only God could fully achieve, since, as he admits, it is too high for man.

As we have seen, ethics and politics are closely connected in Aristotle's view. This is made plain by the references to politics in his ethical works and to ethics in his work on politics. The *Nicomachean Ethics* is concerned from its early chapters with politics (I, 2, 1094a 27-8, b10-11; 3.1095a2; 4.1095a14-17; *EE* VII, 1, 1234b 22) and ends with a transition to a study of politics and the science

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164 *EN* X. 7-8.

of legislation (X, 9, 1180b 28-end). Its final paragraph, or epilogue outlines the contents of a 'life of politics':

> Now our predecessors have left the subject of legislation to us unexamined; it is perhaps best, therefore, that we should ourselves study it, and in general study the question of the constitution, in order to complete to the best of our ability the philosophy of human nature. First, then, if anything has been said well in detail by earlier thinkers, let us try to review it; then in the light of the constitutions we have collected let us study what sorts of influence preserve and destroy states, and what sorts preserve or destroy the particular kinds of constitution, and to what causes it is due that some are well and others ill administered. When these matters have been studied we shall perhaps be more likely to see with a comprehensive view which constitution is best, and how each must be ordered, and what laws and customs it must use, if it is to be at its best. Let us make a beginning of our discussion.

One could say that in *NE* X. 8 Aristotle tries to compromise between the two different ways of life and to defend the theoretical or contemplative way of life by arguing that theoretical life need not be inactive since it is primarily in thinking that we are active. So, in fact, one could say that, if it is primarily in thinking that we are active, then there is no actual dispute between the two different ways of life, since there is only one way of life which really exists, that of the active life which includes both contemplative and political. One could go even further in supposing that anyway contemplative life would be impossible without having some knowledge of the political sphere and without participating in it. For one thing, one should have something to contemplate about, and the objects of contemplation exist in the external world, in the sphere of the political. Aristotle would not nevertheless see these as objects of contemplation. As Aristotle has stressed himself in the beginning of the *Politics*, man is a political animal by nature and someone outside political association would either be god or wild animal, and--unless the philosopher is prepared to play god--the wild animal lacks the capacities for

contemplation since it has no association with others. Also, another interesting thing that one could actually derive from this passage is that despite the need for active civic participation in the city, the private sphere is not totally excluded and someone could act as a free individual while participating in the common affairs.

One interpretation which tries to solve the inconsistency would be to argue that contemplation should occupy only part of a philosopher's life since in so far as he is a human being who lives among other people, he has to choose to do acts of ethical virtue. This also applies to the ordinary citizen who in order to achieve *eudaimonia* should accomplish a mixture of contemplation and ethical virtue, combining these two with a full social and political life. Such a model of a citizen though, fully accomplished, could probably be only ideal, and would be more likely to exist only among the 'few' and not among the 'many'. Aristotle believes that it is only through a well organised educational system that a political community could consist of informed citizens. And it is exactly at this point, in the last book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that the connection between his ethical ideas and his political science is most explicitly shown. Having completed his account of the good life, he raises the question of how it is to be implemented. Everyday people are unlikely to become good unless the government and the laws are directed towards the achievement of human good. Therefore, the complete philosophy of human nature should also include the study of laws and constitutions and how best to frame them.[165]

But, this view is difficult to reconcile with Aristotle's general views on morality and politics and, in general, the problems of interpretation involved in the Aristotelian accounts of the active and the contemplative life have

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[165] Mulgan (1977), p. 6. In a similar line of thought, Tessitore (1996) argues--rather unsuccessfully--that Aristotle aims to effect a reconciliation by leading statesmen to appreciate philosophy. Despite that Aristotle in fact believes that true happiness consists in a life devoted to philosophical speculation, his intended audience was non-philosophers in the hope to lure them into it.

puzzled philosophers over the centuries. The major dispute has been about the interpretation of Books I and X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* concerning Aristotle's question on 'what it is that we all ultimately aim at'. In *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I, 2, 1094a 18-26 Aristotle seems to suggest that there is one ultimate end towards which all our actions are directed:

> So if what is done has some end that we want for its own sake, and everything else we want is for the sake of this end; and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (because this would lead to an infinite progression, making our desire fruitless and vain), then clearly this will be the good, indeed the chief good. Surely, then, knowledge of the good must be very important for our lives? And if, like archers, we have a target, are we not more likely to hit the right mark? If so, we must try at least roughly to comprehend what it is and which science or faculty is concerned with it.

Views among the commentators differ significantly as to what exactly Aristotle had in mind and even as to whether his view is worthy of any interest whatsoever in the first place. Kenny, for example, has argued that Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* is not only inconsistent but also implausible, since it rests on the mistaken thesis of *NE* Book I where he claims that the good life for man would have as its pursuit a single dominant end around which the agent should centre his life and activities. According to Kenny--who thinks that Aristotle considers *eudaimonia* only in the dominant sense--"Aristotle's belief that the pursuit of happiness must be the pursuit of a single dominant aim, and his account of the nature of philosophy, seem to be both so seriously mistaken as to make unprofitable a discussion of his arguments that happiness consists in *theoria*".[166] Hintikka has also argued that Aristotle falls victim to his "conceptual teleology" in the sense that, since he could not accommodate within his conceptual system an activity that did not have a *telos*, he had to provide one even for activities that he wanted to

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[166] Kenny (1965-6), p. 58. See also Kenny (1992).

distinguish from productive ones, hence falling into the absurdity of speaking of an activity of the former kind as its own *telos*.[167]

The central problem has traditionally been whether Aristotle takes a 'dominant' or an 'inclusive' view about *eudaimonia*.[168] On the one hand, according to the 'dominant' (or 'exclusive') view, happiness is the primary or dominant good among several others; in NE, X.7, 1177a Aristotle appears to claim that happiness is to be identified with just one good, that of philosophical contemplation. To conceive one's end in life as a dominant (or exclusive) end is to identify it as lying in something rather highly specific, for example as power over others or service to others or contemplation. On the other hand, according to the 'inclusive' view, any conception of happiness must include all goods. In this sense, to conceive our end in life as an inclusive end is to conceive it as possibly consisting in an array of goods or satisfactions, for example victory and wealth and honour and friendship and pleasure and intellectual satisfaction {X + Y + Z + ...}.

But how are the terms 'inclusive' and 'dominant' to be understood? As Ackrill points out, "the term 'inclusive' suggests the contrast between a single aim or 'good' and a plurality, while the term 'dominant' suggests the contrast between a group whose members are roughly equal and a group one of whose members is much superior to the rest". These two terms, when used as a contrasting pair of terms, are to be understood as follows: (a) "by an 'inclusive end' might be meant any end combining or including two or more values or activities or goods; or there might be meant an end in which different components have roughly equal value (or at least are such that no one component is incommensurably more valuable than another)", (b) "by a 'dominant end' might be meant a monolithic end, an end consisting of just

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[167] Hintikka (1973), pp. 53-62.

[168] Hardie was the first to label the two views as 'dominant' and 'inclusive'; Hardie also argued that Aristotle confuses the idea of an 'inclusive' end and the idea of a 'dominant' end because he fails in NE Book I to distinguish clearly between means and ends. See, Hardie (1968a), pp. 297-322. See also, Hardie (1968b), Ch. 2.

one valued activity or good, or there might be meant that element in an end combining two or more independently valued goods which has a dominant or preponderating or paramount importance".[169] Ackrill points out that it is clearly in the strong sense of 'dominant' and the contrasting weak sense of 'inclusive' that both Hardie and Kenny base their view that Aristotle advances in *NE* Book I *eudaimonia* as a 'dominant' end.

Ackrill defends Aristotle against the charge that in *NE*, Book I the confusion about means and ends leads him to hold that action has value only as a means to *theoria* by arguing that when Aristotle says that *A* is for the sake of *B*, he need not mean that *A* is a means to subsequent *B* but may mean that *A* contributes as a constituent to *B*. When Aristotle says that good actions are for the sake of *eudaimonia*, he means that good actions contribute as constituents to *eudaimonia* and not that *eudaimonia* consists in a single type of activity, that is *theoria*.[170]

What is, though, the bearing that Aristotle's conception of the good for man and the good life in the *Nicomachean Ethics* has on political matters? And, indeed, why should it have any bearing at all in his political philosophy?

In the *Politics*, Aristotle discusses the good for man and *eudaimonia* on more than one occasion and, as he says, the city has as its aim the pursuit of the most sovereign of all goods. The problem of the inconsistency between the two different ways of life--the practical and the contemplative one--also comes forward in book VII of the *Politics*. It should be pointed out that whether one adopts an 'inclusive' or a 'dominant' interpretation of the good is not a trivial matter, since it has a bearing on whether one would be allowed to choose a 'life of politics' in the first place. It is only if one adopts an 'inclusive' view of *eudaimonia* that political activity is made possible. If political activity is a dominant end, no value can be attached to contemplation. The 'dominant'

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[169] Ackrill (1980), p. 17.
[170] Ackrill (1980), pp. 18-29.

interpretation of *eudaimonia* has to be rejected as far as political life is concerned. One could hardly be in a position to play an active role in the political life of a city--let alone to participate in any way in politics--if his dominant end in life is that of philosophical contemplation.

Therefore, if one is to make any sense of Aristotle's moral and political philosophy, it seems that he would have to adopt an 'inclusivist' view of *eudaimonia*. Although philosophical contemplation (*theoria*) might be a necessary constituent of a good life, it is true that nobody could survive without devoting some time to other activities since they are also necessary in order to live a good life. One could not possibly spent his life philosophising alone with no family, friends and community.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that I do not go into a detailed examination of the different arguments offered by various interpretators in support of the one or the other view, since my aim in this section was merely to identify the different interpretations of the human good in order to demonstrate their bearing on Aristotle's political theory. As has been pointed out previously, whether one adopts an 'inclusive' or a 'dominant' interpretation of the good life is of great significance to political theory, since a 'life of politics' could only be pursued if one has an 'inclusive' view of *eudaimonia*. Philosophical contemplation, on the one hand, pursued as a dominant end in one's life would leave no room for political activity, and would mean the end of political life as Aristotle at least envisaged it. On the other hand, one can pursue political activity as a dominant end; but this would again be unacceptable to Aristotle because it would leave no room for philosophical contemplation.

In addition, the conception of *eudaimonia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is of importance for Aristotle's political theory and its appropriation in the liberal-communitarian debate for two main reasons. First, because most of the communitarian appropriations of Aristotelian political theory rely on an

account of human good and *eudaimonia* derived from the *Ethics* and not from the *Politics*. Second, because, depending on whether one adopts the 'inclusive' or the 'dominant' view of *eudaimonia*, Aristotle can either be appropriated as an individualist or a communitarian.

4. 3 The good life in Aristotle's *Politics*

We may distinguish two different Aristotelian accounts of the best *polis* in the *Politics*: first, in the form of constitution which would be best under ideal conditions--and is, therefore, best absolutely--that he advances in Books VII and VIII; and, second, in the form of constitution that is best under the conditions that actually prevail that he advances in Books IV. It should be noted, though, that the account of the good life plays a central role in the city of books VII and VIII, some role in Book II but very little in Books III and IV. I will argue that the Book VII account includes a good deal that liberals must reject; this stems not so much from the idea that the city exists for the sake of the good life as from Aristotle's particular conception of the good life.

It is rather important to have in mind that in the *Politics* Aristotle brings forward two kinds of questions concerning the best constitution. He tries to examine which form of constitution would be the best absolutely under ideal conditions and which form of constitution would be best under the conditions that actually prevail.[171] He deals with the first question in books VII and VIII and with the second in books IV to VI.

This is important in the sense that much depends on whether one would take Aristotle to be strongly committed to the first or the second form of constitution that he discusses in the *Politics*, the one that is best absolutely or the one which is best under the conditions that actually prevail. Some think

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[171] Stalley (1995), p. 331.

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that Aristotle is aware that his best constitution is just an ideal that cannot in fact have any application in practice, and that in fact Aristotle would only be in favour of imperfect political associations. Presumably, though, Aristotle must be in favour of his ideal constitution; but he could, nevertheless, see the ideal constitution as lacking in practical relevance. One could go further and argue that Aristotle could even hold that it is positively harmful for the practical politician to connect himself with such ideals.

Yack has argued, for example, that the way we should interpret Aristotle is as actually having in mind imperfect and conflict-ridden communities and not his analysis on the ideal state, as we usually do, since such an ideal state-- even to Aristotle's knowledge--has no chance of ever existing.[172] Furthermore, Yack contends that man is in Aristotle an argumentative animal, since man has the capacity for argument, and also that Aristotle's citizens argue about general standards of justice and goodness.[173] Therefore, one could argue that in fact the *Politics* entails two different theories on the best form of constitution which could be seen independently from one another and also that one could actually be in a position to choose to adopt the one and drop the other.

Two questions though arise from an interpretation of this kind. On the one hand, if the two conceptions presuppose radically different views of the same condition, what are they doing in the same author? On the other hand, if they do not presuppose a totally different view of the same condition, they must be related in some way.

The first of the two above questions would not seem too difficult to answer if we think in terms of the theory of the 'second-best'. The term is borrowed from Plato's *Statesman* where Plato argues that government in accordance with written law is only the second-best.[174] According to this line of

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[172] See Yack (1993).
[173] See also Yack (1985), pp. 92-112.
[174] Plato, *Statesman*, 297e 1-5. See also *Laws* 739a-e.

thought, it is plausible that Aristotle advances his theory on the good life in the ideal state which would be best absolutely under ideal conditions, but at the same time he realises that this is a theory that could not be applied in practice under the circumstances which are actually prevailing. He needs, therefore, to come up with another theory, a 'second best' theory, which could be implemented under the circumstances which are actually prevailing. There are two ways to do that: (a) either to present a view very similar to that which is best absolutely, or (b) to propose instead a different one all together. There is no reason why one should not go for the second option: if my first option is to spend my summer holidays on a beach in the Mediterranean but I cannot afford it, there is no reason why I should go on a British beach instead; my second best option could well be to do something very different all together and to spend my holidays in the Scottish Highlands.

In the very beginning of Book I of the *Politics* (1252a 1-8) Aristotle starts by arguing that "the *polis* has as its aim the pursuit of the most sovereign of all goods (κυριωτάτου ἀγαθοῦ)". This conclusion is based on the following three premises: (a) Every *polis* is a species of association, (b) All associations come into being for the sake of some good (for all men do all their acts with a view to achieving something which is, in their view, good), and (c) the particular association which is the most sovereign of all, and includes all the rest, will pursue this aim most, and will thus be directed to the most sovereign of all goods. This most sovereign and inclusive association is the *polis* (1252a3-7). This is related to Aristotle's general view that all our deliberate acts are directed to some good, a view that is found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[175]

The *polis* is, therefore, an association that is distinctive in aiming at the most sovereign good. Of course all forms of association have their own good that they aim at. If one cannot define the good of the state more precisely than by saying that it is the sovereign good, one might question whether there is

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[175] Stalley (1995), p. 318. *NE* 1094a1-b11.

any good that is common to all cities. But, is the most sovereign good the same as the highest good?

The question that arises from that is whether the most sovereign good (κυριώτατον ἀγαθόν) is the same as the highest good (ἄριστον ἀγαθόν). It is indeed difficult to know exactly what is meant by κυριώτατον, since a city might have a misplaced conception of the good in such a way as the good that is sovereign in a particular city need not also be the highest. One could argue that the sovereign good is not the same with the highest good, since all associations aim at some good but there could be cities that do not manage to reach the highest good or are mistaken in their conception of the good, and pursue, therefore, a conception of the good different to that of the highest.

Thus, it is not clear whether the most sovereign good means 'most sovereign for that particular city' or 'most sovereign overall'. There is a scope ambiguity here similar to *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I. It should also be pointed out that this also has a bearing on many other parts of the *Politics*; for example, on the genetic account of the state, on the account of justice in Book III and on the account of the ideal state.

The above problem may point to the difficulty of assimilating politics to the teleology of nature. Human beings could choose to create cities for a variety of different ends but (on Aristotle's view at least) natural things have a predetermined end. This could further support the argument about the conscious creation of the *polis* discussed in the previous chapter on teleology, since, as Aristotle points out in the beginning of *Politics* Book I (1252a 2-3), "all men do all their acts with a view to achieving something which is, in their view, good" (τοῦ γὰρ εἶναι δοκοῦντος ἀγαθοῦ χάριν πάντα πράττουσι πάντες). This implies that, since men act to achieve something which is good, and since the *polis* aims at the pursuit of the most sovereign of all goods, then the *polis* need not be a natural creation. As we shall see, Aristotle discusses the account of the highest good (ἄριστον ἀγαθόν) in *Politics* Books VII and VIII.

In Book III, 3, 1276b1 Aristotle argues that, since the *polis* is an association (κοινωνία)--and, in particular, an association of citizens in a constitution (ἔστι δὲ κοινωνία πολιτῶν πολιτείας)--when the form of the government changes and becomes different, then it may be supposed that the *polis* is no longer the same, just as, for example, a tragic chorus differs from a comic chorus, although the members of both may be identical.

In chapter 6 of the same Book, when he speaks about the constitutions (πολιτεῖαι) and their classification, he makes clear that man is by nature a political animal that comes together in the *cities* for the sake of the good life, and, since the constitution of a *polis* is the ordering of its offices and particularly of the sovereign one, it is, therefore, correct if it aims at the common good, since the *polis* is a society of the free. But, as he says, if the constitution aims at the good of the rulers only, it is despotic and perverted.

In Book III, 9, when he examines the principle of a constitution[176] which is its conception of justice, he presents an argument in support of his definition of the *polis* which comes down to a search for the feature that distinguishes a city from the other kinds within its genus. This feature of the *polis* which distinguishes it from the other kinds of associations is its end (τέλος). This argument is a totally different one from the others presented in Book I in support of the same thesis. He starts his argument by examining all the possible candidates for the end of the *polis* and he rejects them in turn all as inadequate except for one. The six candidates for the differentia of a *polis*, its *telos*, are: 1) property, 2) self-preservation, 3) mutual defence against outsiders, 4) trade and mutual intercourse, 5) prevention of injustice to one another, and finally 6) good life. All these first five candidates, even if they are taken severally or jointly, establish at most an alliance (συμμαχία) and not a political association.

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[176] It should be noted though that πολιτεία is, of course, ambiguous because it sometimes means 'constitution' but also refers to a particular kind of constitution, the 'middle' constitution. 'Polity' is often used of the latter. But that meaning is not in play here.

First, property is an unsuccessful candidate because, "if men formed the political association (ἐκοινώνησαν) and came together (συνῆλθον) for the sake of wealth, their share in the *polis* is proportionate to their share in the property". If property was the end of the state, the oligarchic view would be right (namely that in a partnership with a capital of 100 minae it would not be just for the man who contributed one mina to have a share whether of the principal or of the profits accruing equal to the share of the man who supplied the whole of the remainder). But, wealth can not be a supreme good since it is only instrumental and not intrinsic to the good life of the state (1280a25-31).

Self-preservation is also rejected in his famous phrase that the *polis* was formed not for the sake of life only but rather for the sake of the good life (μήτε τοῦ ζῆν μόνον ἕνεκεν ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τοῦ εὖ ζῆν), for otherwise a collection of slaves or of lower animals would be a state, but as it is, it is not a *polis*, because slaves and animals have no share in well-being or in purposive life (1280a31-35).

'Mutual defence against outsiders', 'trade', 'mutual intercourse', and 'prevention of injustice to one another' are also rejected as candidates for the goal of the *polis*. If the *polis* was formed for the sake of trade and of business relations, then, all the people that have commercial relations with one another, like for example Etruscans and Carthaginians, would be virtually citizens of a single city. It is true that such people have agreements about imports, treaties to ensure just conduct and written terms of alliance for mutual defence. But they do not have common offices appointed to enforce these matters, but different officials with either party take any concern as to the proper moral character of the other, nor attempt to secure that nobody in the cities shall be dishonest or in any way immoral, but only that they shall not commit any wrong against each other (1280a35-b5).

Aristotle concludes that it is only the good life which is the successful candidate as the end of the *polis*. What justifies the *polis*, what gives the

content to the formulation of the *polis* is the good life. This is why he thinks that the good life is the end of the existence of the *polis*, because the good life provides an adequate explanation of the justification of the *polis*.[177] A *polis* is an association of households and clans in living well (ἡ τοῦ εὖ ζῆν κοινωνία), for the sake of a perfect (τελείας) and self-sufficient (αὐτάρκους) life (1280b33-35). Finally, after combining this definition with the criterion that satisfies the goal of the *polis*, Aristotle concludes that "those who contribute most to such an association have a larger share in the city than those who are equal or superior in freedom and birth but unequal in political virtue, or those who exceed in wealth but are exceeded in virtue" (1281a4-8). It should be noted though that it is interesting that these arguments suggest various criteria for the existence of a *polis*--as for example that there be common officials--which are not obviously related to the goal of the good life.

Aristotle has repeated this claim in Book I, 1252b 29, when he said that "although the polis comes into being at first for the sake of living, it exists for the sake of living well" (γινομένη μὲν οὖν τοῦ ζῆν ἕνεκεν, οὖσα δὲ τοῦ εὖ ζῆν). Later, though, in 1281a 3 he reformulates this by replacing the 'good life' (εὖ ζῆν) with the 'for the sake of noble actions' (τό ζῆν εὐδαιμόνως καὶ καλῶς). This distinction of 'living as survival' and 'living as well-being' is, therefore, fundamental for the understanding of Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia*.

The *polis* thus arises for the sake of survival but exists for the sake of well-being. He distinguishes thus between living as survival and living as well-being. This first notion of living as survival on which part of the existence of the *polis* depends is linked to the satisfaction of elementary needs which strongly necessitate co-operation with others, since as he says in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1133a16) the community does not consist of two

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[177] It should be noted that here Aristotle's arguments on the justification of the *polis* are empirical, since he argues from everyday experiences that exist in real life, and not hypothetically.

physicians, but of a physician and a farmer and in general of people who are unequal, and it is need which holds every human being together.

Furthermore, the participants of this pre-associational community, according to Aristotle, form a basic form of community where everything that is common endures by way of the just and where the change that is mutually advantageous should be guided by the just as such (ἁπλῶς δίκαιον).[178] This mutual advantage presupposes that the participants are able to have a genuine self-interest. The just as such is distinguished from the politically just and is to a certain extent pre-political and already bound up with man's faculty of speech, since--as Aristotle says in *Politics* 1253a 14--speech is designed "to explain what is useful and what is harmful and as a consequence what is just and what unjust". The participants of this pre-political need-exchange model of life as survival are able to direct their decision to what is just or unjust without having to appeal to the common project of the *polis*. In fact this kind of association and this kind of justice, as Aristotle says in the *Eudemian Ethics* 1242b 6-1243b 39, could exist even if there were no *polis*. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that, although Aristotle does think of justice as pre-political, he mainly sees it as presupposing a *koinonia*. Indeed, justice and κοινωνία are inseparable.

But of course this does not mean that living as survival and living as well-being are two separate activities. Despite the fact that one can survive but not live well, one cannot live well without surviving. This first level of living as survival has in fact to be presupposed in the *polis* so that the notions of the fullness or excellence of life can be developed. Aristotle challenges precisely the view that people want to live solely in order to survive: everyone strives naturally for a good life, *eudaimonia*.

In what follows, I will discuss, first, Aristotle's account of the good life in the ideal city, second, his criticism of Plato's political theory and how this

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[178] *EE,* 1241b14.

criticism help us understand better Aristotle's conception of the good life in *Politics*, Books VII and VIII, and, third, his account of the city which is best under the circumstances actually prevailing.

4. 3. 1 The good life in the ideal city

Aristotle's account of the good life in the *Politics* is mainly set out in books VII and VIII which contain the portrait of a best or aristocratic state (ἄριστος). His account of the ideal state is supported by his account of how the *polis* promotes the human good. For, in order to be able to depict the ideal constitution, we must first determine which is the most appropriate candidate for the good life. In Aristotle's ideal state the city only exists for the good life, since this account of the ideal state presupposed the best possible conditions and is the best absolutely.[179] But one should point out that the fact that there is only an account of the good life in his discussion of the ideal city raises the question whether Aristotle's conception of the good life has any relevance to practical affairs.

It is the account of the highest good (ἄριστον ἀγαθόν) that Aristotle embarks on discussing in *Politics*, Books VII and VIII. These Books set out Aristotle's political ideal on the constitution that should be best absolutely under the best possible conditions. In the first three chapters of Book VII Aristotle sets forth the normative principles for his ideal constitution by discussing the nature of the highest good and of the best and happiest life, while in the rest of Book VII and in the whole of Book VIII he sets out the sketch of a best constitution and the educational principles that should govern that ideal state.

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[179] Stalley (1995), p. 395.

In order to be able to decide on the ideal constitution though, one should first be able to give an account of how the political association promotes the human good. Many of the problems that surround problematic ideals of constitutions, or actual ones, depend on the conceptions of *eudaimonia* which enables the cities to promote the human good. As Aristotle points out in 1323a14-20, "Anyone who is going to make a proper inquiry about the best form of constitution (πολιτεία ἀρίστη) must first determine what mode of life is most to be desired". Otherwise, it would be very difficult to be able to define what is the best constitution, since as can be expected-- provided that nothing extraordinary happens--"those who live under the constitution that is best for those in their circumstances will have the best way of live". Therefore, Aristotle concludes, "we must, first of all, find some agreed conception of the way of life which is most desirable for all men in all cases; and we must then discover whether or not the same way of life is desirable in the case of the community as in that of the individual".

So, in fact, the discussion in the first three chapters of Book VII aims at presenting an accurate conception of the highest human good and of the best and happiest life that would be the most appropriate for his ideal constitution. Having agreed on an accurate conception of the highest human good, the *polis* would be able to promote that human good, to provide for its citizens and to persuade them that they have reason to promote it for its own sake. As he says in 1324a, his argument would be that "the best way of life, for individuals separately as well as for cities collectively, is the life of goodness (virtue) duly equipped with such a store of requisites as makes it possible to share in the activities of goodness". We shall see in what follows by examining Aristotle's argument how he makes this important transition from the first claim that the city seeks the good to the last one that the good consists in a life of virtue.

Aristotle starts his enquiry into the nature of the best way of life desirable for all men (ὁ πᾶσιν αἱρετώτατος βίος) by making a classification of

goods that no one--according to his opinion--could challenge and which the *eudaimon* man should possess. The classification of these elements falls into three groups: (a) external goods (τῶν ἐκτὸς), (b) goods of the body (τῶν ἐν τῷ σώματι), and (c) goods of the soul (τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ). From these three, the goods of the soul come first, since as he says,

> The facts themselves make it easy for you to assure yourselves on these issues. You can see for yourselves that the goods of the soul are not gained or maintained by external goods. It is the other way round. You can see for yourselves that the happy life--no matter whether it consists in pleasure, or goodness, or both--belongs more to those who have cultivated their character and mind to the uttermost, and kept acquisition of external goods within moderate limits, than it does to those who have managed to acquire more external goods than they can use, and are lacking in the goods of the soul (1323a 35-b7).

This can also be proven theoretically. The claim that happiness is proportionate to goodness and wisdom is derived from his argument that goods of the soul are more valuable than those of the body (1323a 35-b). While external goods have a necessary limit of size, with goods of the soul the greater the amount of each, the greater is its usefulness or its value. The goods of the soul are not gained or maintained by external goods. On the contrary it is the other way round: "the happy life--no matter whether it consists in pleasure, or goodness, or both--belongs more to those who have cultivated their character and mind to the uttermost, and kept acquisition of external goods within moderate limits, than it does to those who have managed to acquire more external goods than they can use, and are lacking in the goods of the soul" (1323ba 35-5). According to Aristotle, it should be agreed that

> the amount of happiness which falls to each individual man is equal to the amount of his goodness and his wisdom, and of the good and wise acts that he does. God Himself bears witness to this conclusion. He is happy and blessed; but He is so in and by Himself, by reason of the nature of His being, and not by virtue of

any external good. This will explain why there must always be a difference between being happy and being fortunate. Accident and chance are causes of the goods external to the soul ; but no man can be just and temperate merely from chance or by chance (1323b21-29).

Finally, he concludes the first chapter by making the last point that

the best city is the one which is happy and 'does well'. To do well is impossible unless you also do fine deeds; and there can be no doing fine deeds for a city, any more than there can be for an individual, in the absence of goodness and wisdom. The courage of a city, and the justice and wisdom of a city, have the same force, and the same character, as the qualities which cause individuals who have them to be called just, wise, and temperate.

In the following chapter (VII. 2), Aristotle goes on to discuss whether the life of goodness--which is the best way of life for both the city and the individual--consists more in external action or more in internal development. In the opening of chapter 2, in 1324a5, he examines the question of whether the happiness of the city is the same as that of the individual, or whether it is different. The answer is clear, as he says, since "all agree that they are the same":

Those who believe that the well-being of the individual consists in his wealth, will also believe that the city as a whole is happy when it is wealthy. Those who rank the life of a tyrant higher than any other, will also rank the city which possesses the largest empire as being the happiest city. Anyone who grades individuals by their goodness, will also regard the happiness of cities as proportionate to their goodness (1324a9-13).

The happiness of the city is the same as that of the individual in the sense that in the same way that it is important for the individual to be wealthy, good etc., it is also important for the city too to be wealthy, good, etc.

In the following paragraph of the same chapter, Aristotle puts forward two questions. First, which way of life is the most desirable: to join with other

citizens and share in the city's activity, or to live in it like an alien, released from the ties of political association? Second, which is the best constitution and the best way of organising the city--no matter whether we assume that it is desirable for all to have to share in the city, or regard it as desirable for the majority only? The first question raises the issue of what is good for the individual, while the second one is a matter for political thought and political speculation.

One thing is clear about the best constitution: "It must be a political organisation which will enable anyone to be at his best and live happily" (1324a23-25). But views are divided around which way of life is the most desirable, the practical and political life (ὁ πολιτικός καὶ πρακτικός βίος) or the theoretical one (θεωρητικός βίος), the one which is appropriate for a philosopher? We are faced with a similar question as far as cities are concerned; which kind of life is the most desirable for the city, (a) the life of politics and action, which issues in the assumption of authority over others, or (b) the life of the self-contained city which engages in developing its own resources and culture?

Many cities, like Sparta for example, choose to pursue the first ideal and they make war part of their everyday life, in their legislation and their educational system and also in their customs and traditions. But military pursuits, and war in general, should not be the chief end of man, transcending all other ends. Problems of war do occur of course because of the neighbouring countries, and there is the need to defend oneself against the others. On the other hand though, one could imagine an ideal city isolated with no enemies and no neighbouring countries that would have no need for war or warlike legislation. It should be clear that war is only a means to a chief end. So, "the task of a good lawgiver is to see how any city or race of men or society with which he is concerned, may share in a good life and in whatever form of happiness is available to them" (1325a6-11).

In the next chapter Aristotle deals with the same question concerning the two options between the two different life-styles, but as far as the life of the individual is concerned. This dilemma brings forward the same problem discussed in the *Nicomachean Ethics* concerning the life of active virtue and the life of theoretical virtue. It should be clear that the dispute here is about how the individual should live the life of goodness (τὸν μετ' ἀρετῆς βίον). As Aristotle says, there are two schools of thought divided over this issue.

The first school advocates that one should refrain oneself from taking part in political office and should consider the life of the free individual (τὸν τοῦ ἐλευθέρου βίον) to be better and more preferable than that of the politician. The second school, on the other hand, thinks that the active life of the politician is the best, since it is impossible--according to their opinion--for someone who does nothing to do well and they identify eudaimonia with active well-doing (τὴν δ'εὐπραγίαν καὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν εἶναι ταὐτόν) (1325a18-24).

Both schools argue well in some points and wrongly in others according to Aristotle. The first view is right in advocating that the life of a free individual is much better than that of a despot, someone who is a master over people inferior to him (ὁ τοῦ ἐλευθέρου βίος τοῦ δεσποτικοῦ ἀμείνων), since nobody finds anything pleasant or fulfilling in mastering slaves. The second view is wrong in considering every form of authority as mastery, since governing free men is different from ruling over slaves in the same way as that which is by nature free differs from that which is by nature servile (φύσει ἐλεύθερον--φύσει δοῦλον). In general, it is wrong to prefer inaction over action, since *eudaimonia* is action (ἡ γὰρ εὐδαιμονία πρᾶξις ἐστιν) and the actions of the just and wise men accomplish many and good things (1325a24-34).

Having argued that "sovereign power is the highest of all goods, because it is also the power of practising the greatest number of the highest and best activities" (1325a34-35) and that everyone should act on the principle 'the best

is the most desirable' and 'to do well is the best', he concludes by saying that *eudaimonia* should be held to consist in 'well-doing' (εὐδαιμονίαν εὐπραγίαν θετέον) and from that it follows that "the life of action is best (ἄριστος βίος ὁ πρακτικός), alike for every city as a whole and for each individual in his own conduct" (1325b14-17).

But, the life of action need not always be a life which involves relations to others and the 'internal' life of contemplation need not be completely excluded from the *polis*:

> But the life of action need not be, as is sometimes thought, a life which involves relations to others. Nor should our thoughts be held to be active only when they are directed to objects which have to be achieved by action. Thoughts with no object beyond themselves, and speculations and trains of reflection followed purely for their own sake, are far more deserving of the name of active. 'Well-doing' is the end we seek: action of some sort or other is therefore our end and aim; but, even in the sphere of outward acts, action can also be predicated--and that in the fullest measure and the true sense of the word--of those who, by their thoughts, are the prime authors of such acts. Cities situated by themselves, and resolved to live in isolation, need not be therefore inactive. They can achieve activity by sections: the different sections of such a city will have many mutual connections.This is also, and equally, true of the individual human being. If it were not so, there would be something wrong with God himself and the whole of the universe, who have no activities other than those of their own internal life (1325b20-30).

In summarising, according to Aristotle, *eudaimonia* in the *polis* consists of the life of goodness duly equipped with such a store of requisites as makes it possible to share in the activities of goodness and that the same way of life which is best for the individual must also be best for the city as a whole and for all its members.

This is a summary of Aristotle's main arguments in the first three chapters of *Politics*, Book VII where Aristotle sets forth the normative

principles that should govern his ideal constitution. But, from what we have seen so far, does Aristotle have a clear view of the ends of the state? If there are ambiguities what are they? Is what he says sufficient to give a content to the idea that the city aims at the good life?

Aristotle's search was for the feature of the city which distinguishes it from the other kinds within its genus in order to justify the state. What the end of the city is, justifies the existence of the state. The end of the ideal city is not property, self-preservation, mutual defence against outsiders, trade and mutual intercourse or prevention of injustice but the good life. The good life provides, therefore, the justification of the state. What justifies the state, what gives the content to the state is good life. This is why Aristotle thinks that the good life is the end of the existence of the *polis*; because he thinks that the good life provides an adequate explanation of the justification of the city. He envisages a community of persons who associate with each other not because of their need to make a living, but who have as their goal the good life, a life of fulfilment of exemplifying the characteristically human virtues. In the rest of Book VII and Book VIII, Aristotle is concerned with the way laws and institutions are to be structured in order to ensure that citizens are educated into virtue.

Aristotle's notion of the good life in *Politics* VII, 1-3 is an inclusive one. As Depew points out, the argument of *Politics* VII, 1-3 is centred on the fact that there two ways of life, the political and the intellectual, which seem to be plausible candidates for the way of life of a happy state (VII, 2, 1324a25-34).[180] Which of these two would be the best to be chosen for the ideal state? The political and practical life of the statesman (βίος πολιτικός) or the free life of speculations and thoughts (βίος θεωρητικός)? We are faced, therefore, in the *Politics* in the discussion of the good life for the ideal city with the same question as we were in the *Ethics*. Indeed, the *Nicomachean Ethics'*sconceptual

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[180] Depew (1991), pp. 348-349.

analysis of the components of *eudaimonia* is present in this account of the ideal city and the tension between the two different ways of life is the same. Aristotle's solution to the problem here is to try to compromise the two ways of life and to put forward an inclusive account of the good life in the best city.

As Depew advocates, according to Aristotle's argument in Book VII, 1-3, a person will count as genuinely political only if he regards intellectual and political virtues as connected to *eudaimonia* through noble activity done for its own sake.[181] The conventionally political man has an inadequate and incomplete conception of virtue, since those who pursue an exclusively political life typically mistake means for ends by treating virtue as an instrumental good in order to acquire external goods which they regard as ends, such as power, money etc. As Aristotle points out in *Eudemian Ethics* 1216a 23-7, the majority of those engaged in politics are not correctly designated politicians, since they are not truly political in the sense that the political man is someone who purposely chooses noble actions for their own sake and not for the sake of money or excess as it is usually the case. The politician should, thus, love learning for its own sake and have at the same time an appreciation of genuine political life.[182] This is an inclusive ends interpretation of Aristotelian *eudaimonia* for the state. According to the inclusive view, "Aristotelian happiness countenances a lifetime of excellent activity in both the political-moral and contemplative spheres".[183] In this sense, 'inclusivism' contrasts with 'strict intellectualism', both in a radical form, where the true happy, contemplative person regards himself as altogether free from social obligations, and in a weaker, more plausible version, according to which moral duties are necessary conditions for, but not proper parts of, happiness".[184]

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[181] Depew (1991), p. 358.
[182] Depew (1991), *ibid.*
[183] Depew (1991), p. 360.
[184] Depew (1991), *ibid.*

Inclusivism itself also has of course weaker and stronger versions. On the first hand, according to the weaker version of inclusivism, *eudaimonia* is considered to be merely the additive sum of goods commonly regarded as constituents of the good life with no strong ordering principle among them. This interpretation, as Depew points out, has been called the 'trade-off' view, since "this countenances the unconstrained trading off of one good to realise another".[185] On the other hand, according to a stronger version of inclusivism, the contemplative virtues serve as an ordering principle according to which contemplation is to be pursued as vigorously as possible within the bounds of social obligations that must be met first.[186] In this account, moral virtue comes first, but once it is secured then the other intellectual goods are allowed to come forward. According to Depew, in Aristotle's ideal state good politics and contemplative activity are mutually entailing: "What undergirds Aristotle's solution is his deep confidence in the practical wisdom (phronêsis) of autonomous political agents, which, for Aristotle, does not repress, deflect or manage desire, but completes the education of desire for intrinsically good things, and prizes contemplation not because it is politically useful, but because it is inherently noble and divine".[187]

4. 3. 2 Aristotle's criticism of the Platonic ideal state

Before going on to discuss Aristotle's 'second best theory', I would like to discuss briefly his criticisms of Platonic politics with the view of deriving from it conclusions about the good and its role in his political theory. Aristotle's criticisms of the *Republic* at least may help to fill a picture of Aristotle's ideal

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[185] Depew (1991), pp. 360-361. Ackrill (1973) and Nussbaum (1986, p. 375) also put foward this interpretation.
[186] Depew (1991), p. 361.
[187] Depew (1991), p. 380.

as one of individual activity, as opposed to a life in which the individual is merely a member of a collective.

In *Politics* Book II, Aristotle reviews theoretical and practical ideals of constitutions, theoretical constitutions and actual constitutions which approach the ideal. From the first group, he examines Plato's *Republic*, Plato's *Laws* and the theories of Phaleas of Chalcedon and Hippodamus of Miletus. From the second group, he examines the Spartan, the Cretan, the Carthaginian constitutions, and some other legislators like Solon, Draco and Pittacus.

Aristotle's criticism of Plato's ideal constitution mainly brings forward questions concerning the political unity of the state. Whether the state or the *polis* should be viewed as one and whether there should be only one conception of the good. Rawls apparently seems to think that Aristotle is committed to a rather strong conception of the unity of the state. Rawls holds this view rather *in passim* really when he mentions Aristotle among others as advocating that there should be only one conception of the good to be recognised by all persons. As Rawls argues,

> One of the deepest distinctions between conceptions of justice is between those that allow for a plurality of reasonable though opposing comprehensive doctrines each with its own conception of the good, and those that hold that there is but one such conception to be recognised by all citizens who are fully reasonable and rational. Conceptions of justice that fall on opposite sides of this divide are distinct in many fundamental ways. Plato and Aristotle, and the Christian tradition as represented by Augustine and Aquinas, fall on the side of the one reasonable and rational good. Such views hold that institutions are justifiable to the extent that they effectively promote that good. Indeed, beginning with Greek thought the dominant tradition seems to have been that there is but one reasonable and rational conception of the good. The aim of political philosophy--always viewed as part of moral philosophy, together with theology and metaphysics--is then to determine its nature and content. The classical utilitarianism of

Bentham, Edgeworth, and Sidgwick belongs to this dominant tradition.[188]

But, as Aristotle's criticism of Plato's *Republic* shows us, Aristotle does not envisage for his account of the state the absolute unity of the state that the *Republic* advocates. Aristotle's view is not one of organicism, the view that the individual is a means to the community as end, that there is a good of society as a whole to the promotion of which the individual is purely instrumental and subordinate. Although there are traces of organicism in Plato, as for example in the subordination of the guardian's happiness to the welfare of the city as a whole, there is no such view present in Aristotle's account.

As Stalley points out, in fact Aristotle in *Politics* Book II does not offer so much "a critique of the *Republic* or its ideal constitution as a discussion of political community".[189] Aristotle starts his discussion in Book II (1260b 36-1261a 9) by asking whether it is necessary either that the citizens have all things in common, or that they have nothing in common, or that they have some things in common, and others not. He thinks that it is clearly impossible that they should have nothing in common since the constitution of a city involves in itself some sort of association and its members must in the first place share a common locality. A city though which is to be well conducted does not have to share in all the things in which it is possible for it to share but it should share in some things and not in others.

Aristotle does not agree with the Platonic view that the gardians should have women and children in common. His criticisms are unfair to Plato's views but his intentions were not to make a scholarly criticism of Plato but to

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[188] Rawls (1996), pp. 134-135. Also in Rawls (1982, p. 160) where he says the same thing. Rawls contrasts in the first paper his political liberalism with forms of moral liberalism like that of Raz and Dworkin which are, according to him, similar to Aristotle's perfectionist account of the good. But, of course, it is not clear why liberal theory in general should be affiliated to the kind of liberalism that Rawls advocates and not to some sort of liberal perfectionism.

[189] Stalley (1991), p. 184.

put forward his own views.[190] In 1261a 20-22, Aristotle advocates that the main mistake in Plato's theory is to assume that the whole *polis* should ideally be as much of unity as possible, denying thus its plurality:

> A city, by its nature, is some sort of plurality. If it becomes more of a unit, it will first become a household instead of a city, and then an individual instead of a household; for we should all call the household more of a unit than the city, and the individual more of a unit than the household. It follows that, even if we could, we ought not to achieve this object: it would be the destruction of the city. Not only is the city composed of a number of people: it is also composed of different kinds of people, for a city cannot be composed of those who are like one another.

As Stalley argues, one should also note the passages from the *Metaphysics* (XIV. 4. 1091b 16ff.) and the *Eudemian Ethics* (I. 8. 1218a 6ff.) where Aristotle criticises those Platonists who identify the good with the one and see plurality as the source of evil: "Aristotle's view is that, far from being an imperfection, the plurality of a city is part of what makes it valuable".[191]

4. 3. 3 The good life in the city

In conclusion, what are we to make out of the above Aristotelian accounts of the good life? Does Aristotle's account of the best city actually provide the ideal of the good life and could that ideal be achievable without the state as he actually describes it? Also, does Aristotle think it is possible to live a good life outside the ideal state?

As far as the good life in the ideal state is concerned, Aristotle is committed to two main claims; first, that one can live a good life in the ideal state, and, second, that there is no other state which provides an equal or better

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[190] Stalley (1991), pp. 183-186.
[191] Stalley (1991), p. 187.

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chance of living a good life. He describes the best form of political community for human beings to be able to follow their ideal form of life. His account of the good life in the ideal state is an inclusive one which combines the active life of the citizen with that of the life of contemplation of the philosopher. It provides the opportunity for small numbers to live a good life in the small boundaries of a *polis*. Nevertheless, as we have seen, Aristotle also thinks that other states, than the ideal one, could also provide opportunities for people to live a good life. In that sense, it might be possible for one to envisage a liberal state which could provide the good life.

Of course, Aristotle's conception of the good life in the ideal state is not a liberal one. In fact, Aristotle's ideal state is a very illiberal one. On the other hand, as we have seen, in *Politics* Book IV we are presented with a less illiberal conception of the good life. It is clear that there exists a difference between the two Books. Nevertheless, one could still argue that one could have within a liberal state individual groups (for example, people who educate their children in private schools) who would actually pursue an Aristotelian conception of the human good without the state imposing it on them.

It is true that there are communitarian elements in Aristotle's ideal account but these are not intrinsic to the Aristotelian conception of the human good. In Book IV, Aristotle's account could not be seen as being so close to communitarianism and does not seem to imply that the state should promote the human good in such a way as that everybody should adopt it. The Aristotelian conception of the state is, therefore, in a way communitarian (definitely in Books VII and VIII); but it is not intrinsic to Aristotle's account of the human good to be such, since it would allow citizens living in a liberal state to pursue the Aristotelian good life, and still remain Aristotelian, in the sense that he might be Aristotelian in his account of the good but not see it as the state's duty to promote this specific account of the good. A liberal would of course reject Aristotle's conception of the good in Books VII and VIII as

rational activity necessarily involving participation in common activity and education in virtue being necessary in order to engage in rational activity; nevertheless, even someone with a broadly Aristotelian view in mind might not want to live in an Aristotelian liberal state.

4. 4 The good life and the liberal-communitarian debate

In considering liberal views on the good and the good life one should be well aware that liberal thinkers vary considerably in this matter. A standard liberal viewpoint is that the state should be neutral between different conceptions of the good. One should clearly distinguish though between those forms of liberalism which do make explicit a conception of the good and those forms which deny that they rest on such a conception. Incidentally, it should be pointed out that one could have a conception of communal good without having a conception of individual good. For example, one could argue that a society full of variety is good in itself, without supporting any particular conception of individual good and without defending any view of communal good by reference to individual good.

It should be pointed out that the notion of the plurality and the diversity of different conceptions of the good is not typical of all forms of liberalism but that it is mostly a figure of Rawls's form of political liberalism. Actually, the idea endorsed by Rawls, according to which the state should be neutral between the different conceptions of the good, is in fact alien to almost all forms of classical liberalism and to most forms of nineteenth and twentieth centuries liberalism. One of the main points of Rawlsian liberalism that communitarians often criticise is that its theory of justice is prior to and independent of a theory of the good--the priority of right over the good thesis as it is often called. As Rawls says,

The principles of right, and so of justice, put limits on which satisfactions have value; they impose restrictions on what are reasonable conceptions of one's good. In drawing up plans and in deciding on aspirations men are to take those constraints into account. Hence, in justice as fairness one does not take the propensity and inclinations as given, whatever they are, and then seek the best way to fill them. Rather, their desires and aspirations are restricted from the outset by the principles of justice which specify the boundaries that men's systems of ends must respect. We can express this by saying that in justice as fairness the concept of right is prior to that of the good.[192]

But, what is the priority of the right over the good really about? If it is only about the issue of distribution and is put forward only as a critique of utilitarianism and in order to ensure that the innocent will not be sacrificed for the sake of the overall good--as Kymlicka thinks--then Rawls's opposition to teleological theories may not be so real after all. Rawls calls all theories which give priority to the right over the good, including his own, deontological. His theory has an account of people's rightful claims that is not entirely derivative from the maximisation of the good. Right is prior to, and constrains the pursuit of the good. Each person's good matters equally in a way that constrains the pursuit of the good; each person's good should have a standing that puts limits on the sacrifices that can rightfully be asked in the name of the overall good. If Kymlicka (1989) is right in that Rawls misunderstands utilitarianism in the sense that he wrongly criticises its teleological assumptions, then it might not be necessary after all to rule out teleological theories, if indeed there is a way to make them secure individuality.

Despite Rawls's 'Aristotelian Principle'[193] , where it seems that he relies on the Aristotelian notion of reason and rationality, as for example when he speaks of 'the rational plan' from which a person's good is determined (*NE*

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[192] Rawls (1971), p. 31.
[193] Rawls (1971), pp. 424-433.

1178a 5), Rawls naturally also thinks that Aristotle is committed to a rather strong conception of the unity of the state. In a similar line of thought, John Stuart Mill in his essay *On Liberty* placed liberty as the central principle of political philosophy. Mill did not think that this would be such an easy task, since--as he said--despite the "air of truism" that his position might seem to have, "there is no doctrine which stands more directly opposed to the general tendency of existing opinion and practice" and "society has expended fully as much effort in the attempt (according to its lights) to compel people to conform to its notions of personal, as of social excellence".[194] Mill in this passage draws attention to the difference between the ancient commonwealths and the modern world and points out that in the ancient commonwealths the state had a deep interest in the whole bodily and mental disciple of every one of its citizens, while "in the modern world the greater size of political communities, and above all, the separation between spiritual and temporal authority (which placed the direction of men's consciences in other hands than those which controlled their worldly affairs), prevented so great an interference by law in the details of private life".[195] As Mill says concerning the ancient commonwealths:

> The ancient commonwealths thought themselves entitled to practise, and the ancient philosophers countenanced, the regulation of every part of private conduct by public authority, on the ground that the State had a deep interest in the whole bodily and mental discipline of every one of its citizens; a mode of thinking which may have been admissible in small republics surrounded by powerful enemies, in constant peril of being subverted by foreign attack or internal commotion, and to which even a short interval of relaxed energy and self-command might so easily be fatal, that they could not afford to wait for the salutary permanent effects of freedom.[196]

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[194] Mill (1989), p. 16.
[195] Mill (1989), *ibid.*
[196] Mill (1989), *ibid.*

Communitarians challenge liberal conceptions of the good and in particular Rawls's theory of the thin conception of the good by advocating that, on the contrary, it is essential for a community to have a shared conception of the good, since individuals are to be seen in the social context of constitutive attachments, and not as 'asocial' and 'unencumbered' selves. Their view is roughly that individuals are to be seen in the social context of constitutive attachments. It is a denial of the idea, typical of one form of liberalism, that there is a human essence which can be defined universally and trans-historically irrespective of social context. Liberalism, even in its minimalist classical formulation, entails a substantive moral position, and is committed to resisting the violation of rights that lead to the crises with which communitarians are concerned.

Despite the fact that communitarians hold the claim that "a community must have a shared conception of the good" (as for example in the case of a shared conception of the good among the community of Eskimos: "the good of the community of Eskimos"), it does not easily follow that they also adopt the claim that "there is indeed an objective good that everyone should adopt". It rather seems that MacIntyre, and the like, look more like relativists than objectivists, since MacIntyre holds that the state should promote valuable conceptions of the good but he does not hold, or would wish to hold, that the state should promote an objective conception of the good. Indeed, communitarians notoriously deny the idea, which is traditionally associated with one form or another of Kantian liberalism, that there is a human essence which can be defined universally and trans-historically irrespectively of social context.

It seems more plausible that an objectivist communitarian would really be someone like Aristotle, since despite the fact that he argues for three different theories throughout the *Politics*--either the one of the ideal state or the one of the 'second-best' or of conflict-ridden constitutions--in his mind

there always is an objective notion of human good, even if it is implausible for the citizens of actual states to accomplish it fully. Communitarians endorse the notion of the 'common good' which is quite different from that of Aristotelian 'human good'.

But, first, let's examine some of the communitarian appropriations of Aristotle. As we have seen, the end of the *polis* is for Aristotle the good life, *eudaimonia*. MacIntyre advocates that the citizens of the Aristotelian *polis* take part in a project which is recognised as being good and that the goal of the life of the individual can be determined only according to his contribution to this good which corresponds to his particular role which is set by the community.

How does this notion of the common good accord with the Aristotelian one of *agathon*? In *Politics* 1252b29, Aristotle says that the *polis* arises for the sake of survival but exists for the sake of well-being. He distinguishes thus between living as survival and living as well-being. This first notion of living as survival on which part of the existence of the *polis* depends is linked to the satisfaction of elementary needs which strongly necessitates co-operation with others, since, as he says in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1133a 16, the community does not consist of two physicians, but of a physician and a farmer and in general of people who are unequal, and it is need which holds every human being together. This exchange between unequals applies to survival needs, but in a sense also to higher level needs in order for the political association to be able to function.

Furthermore, the participants of this community, according to Aristotle, formulate a basic form of community where everything that is common endures by way of the just and where the change that is mutually advantageous should be guided by the ἁπλῶς δίκαιον, the just as such.[197] This mutual advantage presupposes that the participants are able to have a genuine

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[197] *EE*, 1241b 14.

self-interest which also presupposes freedom in the weak sense of the *Metaphysics* whereby the participants live for their own sake. The just as such is distinguished from the politically just and is to a certain extent pre-political and already bound up with man's faculty of speech, since--as Aristotle says in *Politics* 1253a14--speech is designed "to explain what is useful and what is harmful and as a consequence what is just and what unjust". The participants of this pre-political need-exchange model of life as survival are able to direct their decision to what is just or unjust without having to appeal to the common project of the *polis*. In fact this kind of association and this kind of justice, as Aristotle says in the *Eudemian Ethics* 1242b6-1243b39, could exist even if there were no *polis*.

But of course this does not mean that this distinction between living as survival and living as well-being is an actual one. It is rather a conceptual one. This exchange model is definitely not a historical one but rather one that continues to exist in the *polis*. This first level of living as survival has in fact to be presupposed in the *polis* so that notions of the fullness or excellence of life can be developed. Aristotle challenges precisely the view that men want to live solely in order to survive: everyone strives naturally for a good life, *eudaimonia*.

The end of the *polis* is, therefore, for Aristotle the good life, *eudaimonia*. But, although MacIntyre's notion of the common good sets out from the second element of the existence of the *polis*, of the living as well-being, he seems to hold that it is the common project which is the end of a community, and not Aristotelian *eudaimonia*. For MacIntyre, the community draws its right to exist from the common project. But this notion is totally alien to Aristotle, since with respect to the good life, what is of concern is the good life of each individual in a distributive sense and thus also the advantage

of each individual.[198] As Aristotle most characteristically says in 1278b22-31 of the *Politics*:

> Now it has been said in our first discourses, in which we determined the principles concerning household management and the control of slaves, that man is by nature a political animal; and so even when men have no need of assistance from each other they none the less desire to live together. At the same time they are also brought together by common interest, so far as each achieves a share of good life. *The good life then is the chief aim of society, both collectively for all its members and individually;*[199] but they also come together and maintain the political partnership for the sake of life merely, for doubtless there is some element of value contained even in the mere state of being alive, provided that there is not too great an excess on the side of the hardships of life, and it is clear that the mass of mankind cling to life at the cost of enduring much suffering, which shows that life contains some measure of well-being and of sweetness in its essential nature.

This is an important point since it shows us that MacIntyre's account would submerge the individual in the common good. The idea of a common project seems to leave no room for notions of individual good.

Furthermore, the fact that the legitimation of the political community is individually affected can also be shown in Aristotle's critique of Plato's authoritarian republic where it is clearly shown that Aristotle rejects every non-distributive reading:

> It is not possible for the whole to be happy unless most or all of its parts, or some of them, possess *eudaimonia*. For *eudaimonia* is not a thing of the same sort as being an even number: that may belong to a whole but not to either of its parts, but happiness cannot belong to the whole and not to its parts.[200]

Therefore, as we can see from the two previous accounts of MacIntyre and Aristotle, MacIntyre is wrong in attributing to Aristotle that the *polis*

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[198] Rapp (1994), pp. 338-340.
[199] The italics are mine.
[200] *Politics*, Book II, 1264b 17-24.

should be solely aiming at the collective human good. Although for Aristotle the *polis* exists for the good life, according to MacIntyre's interpretation the *polis* exists for the implementation of a common project. In addition while for Aristotle it is much more plausible for the individual to understand autonomously the notions of the good life--even when the *polis* supports the individual or even if a realisation without the *polis* would be entirely out of the question--the individual in MacIntyre's account can only, on the contrary, understand the concept of good as the good realisation of his particular contribution to this project. On MacIntyre's account, that is, individual happiness would be a by-product of the communal effort rather than its end.

According to Aristotle, every individual chooses the good or what seems good in all his conscious and voluntary activities. Good for Aristotle is what is chosen, in the sense that good in itself or by nature is that which everyone would under normal circumstances prefer to its contrary, as for example honour, money, health, self-preservation etc. As he says in *Politics* 1324a 4:

> It remains to say whether the good life is the same for the private individual as for the polis, or not the same. This too is evident; for everyone would agree that they are the same. If riches make men happy, they will also make a political society happy. If the individual finds happiness in dominating others, the political society will be happy by conquering other states. If a man finds that virtue is his greatest joy, so will the political society.

It should be noted though that Aristotle's position seems a bit peculiar here. For example, if individual good consists in contemplation, could the good of the *polis* consist in contemplation? There are two ways of classifying the various goods required for the individual's choice of a form of life according to Aristotle. First, in reference to the choice situation which can be described as wherever one has to choose, he would prefer good A to good B. And, second, the concept of an unparalleled good which is chosen always only in itself and

never for the sake of a higher good, and which could not be augmented by any further addition. This good is found in the notion of *eudaimonia*.

It could, however, be argued that MacIntyre's emphasis upon the narrative unity of the self adequately acknowledges the role of each individual's specific conception of the good, by allowing each individual to answer the overarching question of how best to live through combining a variety of practice-based goods in different ways. Indeed, "this narrative form provides the framework within which we can attempt to make rational choices concerning the conflicting demands of different practices" by giving to the individual the opportunity to ask the question: 'How best may I live out the narrative unity of my life?'.[201] MacIntyre argues at this point that "the asking of the question is at least as important to an individual's success in living the good life for human beings as the specific answers which may or may not emerge".[202]

I do not aim to refute this claim in the argument that I have provided concerning Aristotle's and MacIntyre's conceptions of *eudaimonia*. What I wanted to stress in the above argument was their difference in the conceptions of the good. From what I have analysed, MacIntyre's notion of the human good derives in practice solely from the first half of the existence of the *polis*; while Aristotle derives human good from both halves and identifies it with eudaimonia. If this is true, then MacIntyre has a very different notion of *eudaimonia* than Aristotle does.

4. 5 Conclusion

From the account of the good life already depicted in Aristotle's ideal state, it is obvious that it would be very difficult for any liberal individualist to accept it.

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[201] Mulhall and Swift (1996), p. 88.
[202] Mulhall and Swift (1996), *ibid*.

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It looks as though a Rawlsian liberal would have to reject the idea that the city exists for the sake of the good life, unless one takes that to mean simply that it exists to enable each individual to pursue his or her own conception of the good life. A liberal perfectionist could accept that the city exists for the sake of the good life but would define the good life in such a way that freedom is an essential part of it. The liberal perfectionist's conception of the good life might not be very far from Aristotle's. Both would value a life which enables us to live a life of practical reason. But Aristotle would lay the emphasis on reason while the liberal would emphasise choice and spontaneity.

Even so, Aristotle's is not the standard communitarian account of the good life. Aristotle clearly thinks that there is an ideal account of the good and a conception of the good life that ideally we should all follow. Although Aristotle sees individuals in the context of the *polis* in which alone can distinctively human goodness and happiness be achieved, he, nevertheless, does not think that the good is relevant to the particular historical and cultural circumstances of the *polis*. Aristotle recognises the fact that different kinds of constitutions exist, since there are different conceptions of the good. Nevertheless, not all conceptions of the good are acceptable according to his view. There is one conception of the good that is best absolutely and which ideally should be pursued in the best city of our dreams. If the ideal is not achievable, then we should try to be as close to it as possible by adopting a second best one.

It is true that Aristotle has a 'formal' account of the good life in the sense that there is a pattern that its city follows depending on the conception of the good that it adopts. But this does not make all the conceptions of the good equally acceptable. It should also be stressed that his account of the good life is not historically based. The conception of the good is not based on the historical circumstances of the city; the ideal city is best absolutely, it does not depend on a particular social context of a historically specific community, as

communitarianism advocates. The communitarian misappropriation is to take the formal account of the Aristotelian good life and the function of a man and to argue that this should be the model for a city. The communitarian sets out an Aristotelian teleological account of how a city should be like and what goals it should pursue. But the end of the city for the communitarian depends on the particular historical and cultural circumstances of that particular community. For Aristotle, the conception of the good could be universally pursued if the conditions that he sets out are met. Aristotle has a substantive conception of the good and he wants the state to promote it.

5. JUSTICE

5. 1 Introduction

As I have previously pointed out, Aristotle's *Politics* has a certain ambiguity which is picked up by the communitarians on the one side and by the liberals on the other side, and they both think that Aristotle echoes their views. This is also demonstrated in the case of justice. My aim in this chapter is to try to clarify Aristotle's conception of justice in relation to its appropriations by both the liberal and the communitarians camps in either case where these appropriations are Aristotelian (as in the case of MacIntyre) or explanatory of Aristotle's position (as in the case of Miller and Yack). But, first, I will put forward Aristotle's account of justice as presented in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Politics* and the *Eudemian Ethics*.

It should be emphasised here that Aristotle makes justice the chief virtue of the *polis*. As he says in *Politics* III, 1282b 14-18, "The good in the sphere of politics is justice". As Miller points out, justice is central to Aristotle's political theory right from the start of the *Politics* where--when he defends political naturalism in Book I, 2--he makes two important references to justice. First, Aristotle claims that human beings--being political animals by nature--are uniquely endowed by nature with the ability to form the concept of justice and with the capacity for political co-operation (*Pol.*, 1253a7-18 and *EE*, 1241b14-15). Second, Aristotle's argument about the lawgiver being a great benefactor also contains the claim that human beings need law and justice in order to form a political association.[203]

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[203] Miller (1995), p. 67.

According to Aristotle, justice is important since it aims at the common interest of the *polis*. For Aristotle there are universal and particular forms of justice as well as natural and conventional forms. The question in contemporary political philosophy concerns the role of justice as an institution settled to fix the limits of human conduct. According to Rawls, Aristotle could never be a liberal because he gives priority to one rational conception of the good rather than to justice. Rawls argues that justice is not prior for Aristotle, since in the definition of the *polis* we can find the good but not the concept of justice.[204] A similar point is made by MacIntyre when he argues that Aristotle offers an instrumentalist conception of the *polis*, namely that of covering the primary needs of the people (the living as survival), in the sense that the *polis* exists primarily for its members to survive.

But one should note that Aristotle does not put forward the same account of justice in both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, so one should be careful to first examine these two accounts separately and then try to understand Aristotle's conception of justice as a whole. At the same time, it is worth looking into the connection of justice to friendship that Aristotle makes in both the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics* and try to further enhance from it Aristotle's conception of justice. Since, in general, Aristotle's notion of 'political friendship' has not been discussed in great detail, I will devote in the next chapter a considerable analysis of this notion and its relation to Aristotle's account of justice, since I take it to be of great importance in order to throw new light into Aristotle's account of justice, but, also, into his political theory in general.

In this chapter, I will, first, present Aristotle's conception of justice as presented in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and in the *Politics*. Second, I will examine the Aristotelian conception of political justice in relation to communitarian theory, especially in connection to MacIntyre's theory of

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[204] Rawls (1999), p. 360.

justice and his appropriation of Aristotle's conception of justice. Finally, I will discuss Aristotle's view on justice and moderation, i.e. his idea that, in the world as we find it, where the ideal is not possible, we may have to choose the kind of constitution which is least prone to *stasis*. On this account, Aristotle's considerations do not rest on a concept of desert and do not presuppose a thick theory of the good, therefore, they could be recognised by a modern liberal.

5. 2 Aristotle's account of justice

5. 2. 1 Nicomachean Ethics

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle puts forward his well known account of distributive justice, but it should be noted that distributive justice is not the only kind of justice that Aristotle recognises, as will be made clear in the discussion that follows. Aristotle's theory on distributive justice in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (V. 3) can be outlined as follows: (a) Distributive justice is a kind of geometric proportion[205] involving at least two persons, A and B, and two things, C and D[206]. In a just distribution, according to this view, the ratio of C to D is the same as that of A to B: (i) $A/B=C/D$.[207] When the ratios are equal, the distribution is just if C is allocated to A, and D to B[208]. (b) The ratio of the things is then replaced by the equal ratio of sums that reflects 'the yoking together' of A and C and of B and D: (ii) $A/B=A+C/B+D$[209]. (c) If we replace C and D in the original formula by definite descriptions, then we have: (iii) A/B=the thing allotted to A/the thing allotted to B. (d) Since persons, or things, do not stand in ratios to each other *per se* but only in certain respects

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[205] *NE*, V. 3, 1131b12-13.

[206] *NE*, V. 3, 1131b18-20.

[207] $A : B = C : D$, then, $A : C = B : D$, and, therefore, $A + C : B + D = A : B$ [$A/B=C/D$, $A/C=B/D=R$, $A+C/B+D=CR+C/AR+D= C (R+1)/D(R+1)=C/D=A/B$].

[208] *NE*, V. 3, 1131b 20-24.

[209] *NE*, V. 3, 1131b 3-12.

such as age, height, wealth, etc., what in fact these ratios imply is some basis of comparison of the persons and the things, which in this special comparison is their positive or negative value[210], that of the persons is their worth[211] (ἀξία, *axia*): (iv) the worth of person A/the worth of person B=the value of the thing allotted to A/the value of the thing allotted to B. This Aristotelian concept of distributive justice asserts that a distribution is just if it follows this formula, if the value of the thing it allots to one person stands to the value of the thing it allots to another as the worth of one person stands to the worth of the other.[212]

But this needs further illumination in order to be clear as to what exactly Aristotle means. According to Aristotle, the just is equal as a mean of the inequalities of greed and inferiority, of profit and loss. The just involves persons and objects and is meaningful only in connection with four terms, and is a mean and an equal only in relation to these four terms. The relation of the objects must be analogous to the relation of the persons; if the persons are equal, then they deserve equal shares; if they are not equal, then they will not have equal gain. So, Aristotle says, in the same way that everybody believes that the just is equal, everybody admits that also in distributive justice the just has to be distributed according to worth (κατ'ἀξίαν), from the principle of 'assignment by desert'. The dispute lies in the determination of the identity of desert as a criterion of distribution of the parties because "all agree that justice in distributions must be based on desert of some sort, although they do not all mean the same sort of desert; democrats make the criterion freedom; those of oligarchic sympathies wealth; upholders of aristocracy make it virtue".[213] In this way the criterion of distribution is 'proportion', the equality of logical

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[210] *NE*, V. 3, 1131b 19-23.

[211] *NE*, V. 3, 1131ba 24, 26.

[212] This outline is derived from Keyt (1995), pp. 127-128. See also Keyt (1991), pp. 238-278.

[213] *NE* 1131a 28-31. This is related to MacIntyre's discussion of the notion of desert. In this case, people disagree "because they are bad judges in their own affairs" and also "because both the parties to the argument are speaking of a limited and partial justice, but imagine themselves to be speaking of absolute justice" (*Politics*, 1280a 20-22).

relation, or geometrical equality--as Aristotle calls it--which is qualitative relation as opposed to the arithmetical, or numeral equality that applies to corrective law and to friendship. In other domains of law other criteria apply.[214]

What is interesting in this point is that, as Aristotle says, disputes about distributive justice start not over the principle of distributive justice itself, nor over the value of the things being distributed, but over the worth of the persons claiming a share of the distribution. According to Keyt, "it is useful here to borrow the distinction from Rawls between the *concept* of distributive justice, which is expressed by the formal and abstract principle of distribution to which everyone assents [formula (d) above] and the various conceptions of distributive justice, which evaluate a person's worth according to various standards such as freedom, wealth, good birth, and virtue. Thus, a democratic conception of justice is expressed when worth is evaluated according to the standard of freedom, and the oligarchic conception is expressed when it is evaluated according to the standard of wealth. Everyone shares the same concept of distributive justice, but not the same conception".[215] From this it follows that if Aristotle's account of justice in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is read formally (that is, 'treat equals equally and unequals unequally'), then, in that sense, almost any philosopher could read his view in it. From that point of view, Aristotle's doctrine on distributive justice is really neutral between any political position.

One could, therefore, say that Aristotle acknowledges the possibility of the application of different distributive criteria in the different areas of social and political relations and in the different spheres of justice, while as far as the economic and social goods are concerned, he puts forward the criterion of

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[214] *NE*1131a 2, 1155a 27, 1157b 36, 1158b 29-34, 1132b 21-33, 1134b 8-18, 1161a 20-1161b 1.
[215] Keyt (1995), p. 129.

'proportion' which he leaves open, and according to which among equals there exists absolute equality, while among unequals a relative one.

5. 2. 2 Politics

Aristotle in *Politics*, III, 9-13 discusses the relation of justice to constitutions, and wealth. He approaches the classification of the constitutions from the point of view of justice.[216] It should be pointed out that this account of justice that Aristotle puts forward in *Politics* III gives content to the account of justice by explaining what sorts of equality and inequality are relevant. This--as demonstrated in the previous section--was not obvious from the account presented in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

According to Aristotle, the principle of a constitution is its conception of justice. As he says in *Politics* 1280a 7-9 when he discusses oligarchy and democracy, "We must next ascertain what are said to be the distinctive principles of oligarchy and democracy, and what are the oligarchic and the democratic conceptions of justice. All parties have a hold on a conception of justice; but they both fail to carry it far enough, and do not express the true conception of justice in the whole of its range." Both oligarchy and democracy--which are of course perversions of right constitutions--rest on a particular social class. They have their own distinctive conception of justice concerning the way that offices and honours are distributed which enables them to justify the predominance of the class they favour.[217]

Democrats think that the conception of justice is based on the principle of equality (equality in free birth), while oligarchs base justice on inequality (inequality in wealth). Aristotle's principle of political justice, on the other hand, is that political offices and honours should be distributed according to

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[216] Stalley (1995), pp. 356-57.
[217] Stalley (1995), p. 357.

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virtue. His own view is elaborated through the critique of the respective principles of the oligarchic and democratic constitutions.

Aristotle argues that justice is the political good. As he says, "Justice is concerned with people; and a just distribution is one in which there is proportion between the things distributed and those to whom they are distributed, a point which has already been made in the *Ethics*. There is general agreement about what constitutes equality in the thing, but disagreement about what constitutes it in people" (1280a 17-23). But, according to Aristotle, both sides--being mislead by the fact that they are professing a sort of conception of justice, and professing it up to a point, into thinking that they profess one which is absolute and complete--fail to mention the 'real cardinal factor', as he calls it. The cardinal factor in this case is that the end of the city is the common promotion of a good quality of life and not only mere life.

Justice consists, therefore, in what tends to promote the common interest. There are, however, different views of what constitutes the common interest and these give rise to forms of constitution. As Aristotle points out,

> Thus, as general opinion makes justice consist in some sort of equality. This agrees up to a point with the philosophical inquiries which contain our conclusions on ethics. In other words, it holds that justice involves two factors--things, and those to whom things are assigned--and it considers that those who are equal should have assigned to them equal things. (1280a 17-20)

The question which must not be overlooked and which arises from the above presentation of justice is, according to Aristotle, 'equals and unequals in what?'. This is a question that involves us in philosophical speculation on politics.

As far as economic and social goods are concerned, Aristotle places desert, that is the relative proportional equality, as the distributive criterion for the man who lives 'in the world as we know it'.[218] This applies only to this

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[218] *Politics*, 1280a 33.

kind of man, since in a society of exceptional men there is no place for anything but absolute equality. It has to be noted that Aristotle does not define the precise content of this proportional equality, but he simply attempts a formal analysis by leaving the criterion open. In the economic area, proportional equality is determined according to the contribution of each citizen.[219] Furthermore, superiority of political rights is not allowed unless in the case of something that contributes to the excellence of performance.[220] When laws are said to be 'right', the word must be taken to mean 'equally right', and this means 'right' in regard to the interest of the whole polis and in regard to the common welfare of the citizens.[221] In conclusion, seen in the context of the application of his principle of 'mean' and his theory on the best life, Aristotle argues that there should exist for everybody a minimum of social goods, and also a maximum of goods should not be exceeded.[222]

The democratic conception of justice that Aristotle presents here sounds similar to the liberal definition of freedom. This may suggest that the state should be maximising freedom, since the democrats see freedom as the good. But the democratic conception is not a liberal conception. If one takes this view to be the ancient conception of freedom that Aristotle is arguing about, then-- as we shall see in the chapter on freedom--it is a democratic conception but not a liberal one in the sense that part of its definition at least consists not in exercising freedom of choice but of having a share in rule. So, the democratic view is not an individualist conception of freedom or justice. This is further enhanced by Aristotle's criticism of Lycophron's 'libertarian' view and of Hippodamus's view (as we shall see). Of course, Aristotle is critical of both the oligarchic and the democratic conception of the state. But his arguments are

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[219] *Politics*, 1280a 25-30.

[220] *Politics*, 1282b 23-1283a 1.

[221] *Politics*, 1283b 40.

[222] It should be noted that the concept of 'mean' in the case of justice is different from that in the other virtues, because the mean in this case does not refer to the middle between two equally bad habits, but to a mean in relation to the things.

not undemocratic as such; he is more keen to demonstrate the dangers of democracy--in the same way that Plato was aware of democracy's dangers--than criticise democracy as such.

Aristotle seems to envisage a possible role of the state to promote the good life but not to guarantee just claims. The state's job is not to arbitrate disputes. As Aristotle points out at 1280b 6-12, if the city does not devote itself to the end of encouraging goodness, a political association sinks into a mere alliance, which only differs in space (in the contiguity of its members) from other forms of alliance where the members live at a distance from one another. The law becomes a mere covenant--or, in the phrase of the sophist Lycophron, 'a guarantor of just claims'--but lacks the capacity, according to Aristotle, to make the citizens good and just.

In order to illustrate this point, Aristotle imagines an hypothetical case where two cities unite into one: if, for example, two different sites could be united in one, so that the *polis* of Megara and that of Corinth were embraced by a single wall. But, this union, according to Aristotle, would not make a single city, since a *polis* is not an association of site (ἡ πόλις οὐκ ἔστι κοινωνία τόπου).[223] As he says at 1280b 29-1281a 1,

> It is clear, therefore, that a city is not an association for residence in a common site, or for the sake of preventing mutual injustice and easing exchange. These are indeed conditions which must be present before a city can exist; but the presence of all these conditions is not enough, in itself, to constitute a city. What constitutes a city is an association of households and clans in a good life, for the sake of attaining a perfect and self-sufficing existence. This, however, will not come about unless the members inhabit one and the self-same place and practice intermarriage. It was for this reason that the various institutions of a common social life--marriage-connections, kin-groups, religious gatherings, and social pastimes generally--arose in cities. This sort of thing is

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[223] *Politics*, 1280b 30.

the business of friendship, for the pursuit of a common social life is friendship. Thus the purpose of a city is the good life, and these institutions are means to that end. A city is constituted by the association of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing existence; and such an existence, on our definition, consists in living a happy and truly valuable life.

The pursuit of a common social life is, therefore, friendship, but, nevertheless, the purpose of a city is the good life and these institutions are means to an end. Therefore, Aristotle concludes at 1281a 2-10 that it is for the sake of actions valuable in themselves, and not for the sake of social life, that political associations must be considered to exist. Those who contribute most to this association have a greater share in the city than those who are equal to them (or even greater) in free birth and descent, but unequal in civic excellence, or than those who surpass them in wealth but are surpassed by them in excellence. This, according to Aristotle, shows that the disputants about constitution profess only a partial conception of justice.

Aristotle gives great importance to criticising Lycophron's alternative view because his aim is to emphasise that--when discussing different conceptions of justice, and the equality and inequality relevant to the distribution of honours--it is important that we have first agreed on the end for which the city exists. The distribution of honours depends ultimately on the purpose for which the association exists. In that sense, Aristotle is able to discriminate between different conceptions of justice, and, also, to demonstrate that each conception of justice contains an element of truth. This is based on the assumption that we have agreed on the end for which the city exists.[224] This criticism of Lycophron is similar to the argument against Hippodamus's theory made by Aristotle at *Politics* 1267b 37. Aristotle's first criticism of Hippodamus's theory concerns the division of the citizen body; all share in the

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[224] Stalley (1995), p. 358.

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constitution but not all of them bear arms and become, therefore, the slaves of the class in possession of arms.

5. 3 Communitarian accounts of Aristotelian justice

5. 3. 1 MacIntyre's account of justice

According to MacIntyre's argument in *After Virtue* and in *Whose Justice Which Rationality* the concept of justice cannot provide the basis for practical and philosophical agreement. MacIntyre claims that Rawls and Nozick advance incommensurable conceptions of justice which are logically incompatible (Rawls's needs-based theory/Nozick's entitlement theory). Neither Rawls's account nor Nozick's allow a central place for desert in claims about justice and injustice. Desert is, for MacIntyre, at home only in the context of a community and not in the individualism of Rawls and Nozick. MacIntyre has five aims in *After Virtue*: (i) to prove practical disagreement on the conception of justice, (ii) to prove philosophical disagreement on the conception of justice, (iii) to show that moral philosophy reflects the debates and disagreements of the culture so faithfully that its controversies turn out to be unsettlable in just the way that the political and moral debates themselves are, (iv) to point out the flaws of liberal individualism, and, (v) to stress the need for the revival of the so-called Aristotelian tradition. My aim in this section, and in the one that follows, is to show the inconsistencies involved in MacIntyre's argument, to illustrate the special character of the Aristotelian concept of justice and its connection with MacIntyre's argument and to show MacIntyre's misinterpretation of the Aristotelian concept of justice. In addition, I would like to point out the importance of political disagreement, and to show its relevance to the notion of justice and its connection with Aristotelian political philosophy.

Contemporary political disagreement is apparent at both theoretical and practical levels. As we know, at the practical level it is expressed in the debates over what kind of policies the state should pursue, as for example on the enforcement of taxation. The issue of taxation also provokes disagreement at the theoretical level in the debate over whether social justice requires priority to be given to the worst off through re-distributive taxation. According to Mason, two different conceptions of political disagreement can be distinguished: the 'imperfection' and the 'contestability' conception.[225] According to the model of the 'imperfection' conception, it is assumed that when political disagreement arises at least one party to the dispute is mistaken and that given time, patience, impartiality and logical skills, political disputes could be settled to the satisfaction of any reasonable person who is sincerely engaged with them. In this model there is, first, the implicit idea that disagreement can be explained by a theory of 'error' of why some have made mistakes and also, second, by the commitment to a form of cognitivism according to which the notion of correctness is in place in relation to moral and political thinking because when it is properly conducted it is governed by a rational method. According to the model of the 'contestability' conception, political disagreement is intractable because rational constraints on the proper use of political terms allow for a variety of different applications of them. From this point of view, disagreement over the use of political terms will always arise, provided that there exists freedom of expression.

In relation to the concept of justice, political disagreement finds its expression in the different theories of justice developed by the political theorists or in the arguments of the 'ordinary non philosophical citizens' who argue about the conception of justice and choose to vote for different political parties according to their views of what is 'just'. MacIntyre has argued in *After Virtue* that contemporary moral and political disagreement is largely due to a

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[225] Mason (1993), pp. 2-4.

clash between incommensurable ways of thinking about moral issues, some of which have been prised from the historical and social contexts that gave them their meaning. Our current moral discourse consists of modern terms such as 'rights' and 'utility', which are moral fictions because they have no proper reference and they coexist alongside older concepts, such as the notion of desert.[226] In the conceptual *mélange* of moral thought and practice today, fragments from the tradition are still found alongside characteristically modern and individualist concepts such as those of rights and utilities. The Aristotelian tradition survives, according to MacIntyre, in a much less fragmented form in the lives of certain communities whose historical ties with their past remain strong, like some Catholic Irish, some Orthodox Greeks and some Jews of an Orthodox persuasion. The allegiance of such marginal communities to the tradition is constantly in danger of being eroded and our society cannot hope to achieve moral consensus. The nature of any society is not therefore to be deciphered from its laws alone, but from those understood as an index of its conflicts. From which it seems, therefore, MacIntyre follows the 'contestability' model.

MacIntyre, in chapter 17 of *After Virtue*, entitled 'Justice as a Virtue: Changing Conceptions',[227] deals with the question of political disagreement on the conception of justice, and argues that moral and political philosophy reflects the debates and disagreements of the culture so faithfully that its controversies turn out to be unsettlable in just the way that the political and moral debates themselves are. MacIntyre starts his discussion on political disagreement about justice by saying that "when Aristotle praised justice as the first virtue of political life, he did so in such a way as to suggest that a community which lacks practical agreement on a conception of justice must also lack the necessary basis for political community".[228] According to his

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[226] Mason (1993), p. 7.
[227] MacIntyre (1985), pp. 244-255.
[228] MacIntyre (1985), p. 244.

opinion, "the lack of such a basis must therefore threaten our own society. For the outcome of that history (...) has not only been an inability to agree upon a catalogue of the virtues and an even more fundamental inability to agree upon the relative importance of the virtue concepts within a moral scheme in which notions of rights and of utility also have a key place. It has also been an inability to agree upon the content and character of particular virtues. For since a virtue is now generally understood as a disposition or sentiment which will produce in us obedience to certain rules, agreement on what the relevant rules are to be is always a prerequisite for agreement upon the nature and content of a particular virtue. But this prior agreement on rules is (...) something which our individualistic culture is unable to secure. Nowhere is more marked and nowhere are the consequences more threatening than in the case of justice".[229]

According to MacIntyre, everyday life is pervaded by these consequences of individualism, and basic controversies cannot be rationally resolved. To illustrate his point, he brings in the discussion an example from American politics in the form of a debate between two ideal, but typical, characters named A and B on the question of whether it is just or unjust to raise taxes. A in the example represents the property owners and B represents the have-nots or the social workers. Since these two characters have different conceptions of justice respectively based on the principle of legitimate entitlement and the principle of basic needs, it is impossible for them to settle their dispute rationally. What is unjust for A is just for B. They will have to enrol in different political parties with hope that the 'right' party will win the next elections so that just laws will be passed which will advance or protect the interests of each of them respectively. It should be pointed out though that, for Rawls and Nozick, it is a question of advancing a conception of justice, rather than of protecting interests. According to MacIntyre, A and B can also expect that in the course of time capable philosophers will appear to take up their respective claims and

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[229] MacIntyre (1985), *ibid.*

defend them as they think they deserve. MacIntyre suggests that Nozick and Rawls have done exactly that for A and B respectively.

MacIntyre, then, proceeds to quote and compare the basic principles of Rawls's and Nozick's theories of justice in order to prove their incompatibility which mirrors the incompatibility of A's position with B's, and that to this extent Rawls and Nozick successfully articulate at the level of moral philosophy the disagreement between such ordinary non-philosophical citizens as A and B. It appears so far that what MacIntyre says about the incompatibility of A's and B's position--the incompatibility of Rawls's and Nozick's theories of justice--is very similar to the old quarrel between democrats and oligarchs that Aristotle describes in 1280a 8-18 of the *Politics*.[230]

According to MacIntyre, even though the positions of Nozick and Rawls articulate the views of A and B, both these views fail to fully account for the positions of A and B respectively, because they leave out--as he says--any appeal to desert which is a relic of an older, more traditional, more Aristotelian and Christian view of justice. But his mentioning of Aristotle's conception of justice goes no further than that, and he does not really give an extensive account of it.

For MacIntyre, desert is at home only in the context of a community. In both Rawls's and Nozick's account, individuals are primary and society secondary, and the identification of individual interests is prior to, and

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[230] "We must next ascertain what are the distinctive principles attributed by their advocates to oligarchy and democracy, and are the oligarchic and the democratic conceptions of justice. Both oligarchs and democrats have a hold on a sort of conception of justice; but they both fail to carry it far enough, and neither of them expresses the true conception of justice in the whole of its range. In democracies, for example, justice is considered to mean equality [in the distribution of office]. It does mean equality--but equality for those who are equal, and not for all. In oligarchies, again, inequality in the distribution of office is considered to be just; and indeed it is--but only for those who are unequal, and not for all. The advocates of oligarchy and democracy both refuse to consider this factor--who are the persons to whom their principles properly apply--and they both make erroneous judgements. The reason is that they are judging *in their own case*; and most men, as a rule, are bad judges where their own interests are involved. Justice is relative to persons; and a just distribution is one in which the relative values of the things given correspond to those of the persons receiving--a point which has already been made in the *Ethics*."

independent of, the construction of any moral or social bonds between them. Rawls explicitly makes it a presupposition of his view that we must expect to disagree with others about what the good life for man is and must therefore exclude any understanding of it that we may have from our formulation of the principles of justice. Only those goods in which everyone, whatever their views of the good life, takes an interest, are to be admitted to consideration. In Nozick's argument too, the concept of community, required for the notion of desert to have any kind of application, is simply absent. According to MacIntyre, desert is ruled out in Rawls and Nozick accounts in two ways because, first, the shared social presuppositions of Rawls' and Nozick's are based in the social contract tradition, and, because, second, Nozick's account is based on a Lockean mythology according to which all legitimate entitlements can be traced to legitimate acts of original acquisition.

In the first case, Rawls and Nozick articulate with great power a shared view which envisages entry into social life as the voluntary act of at least potentially rational individuals with prior interests who have to ask the question 'What kind of social contract with others is it reasonable for me to enter into?'. A consequence of this is that their views exclude any account of human community in which the notion of desert in relation to contributions to the common tasks of that community in pursuing shared goods could provide the basis for judgements about virtue and injustice. In the second case, the Lockean thesis ignores, according to MacIntyre, the fact that the property-owners of the modern world are not the legitimate heirs of Lockean individuals who performed quasi-Lockean acts of original acquisition; they are the inheritors of those who, for example, stole, and used violence to steal the common lands of England from the common people, vast tracts of North America from the American Indian, much of Ireland from the Irish, and Prussia from the original non-German Prussians.

MacIntyre contrasts the liberal conception of 'justice as impartiality' with that of the Aristotelian conception of 'justice as virtue'. Liberal individualism does roughly adopt the model of justice as impartiality and allows for disagreement on the conception of justice, since it maintains that the task of political philosophy is to devise principles of justice that will be abstract and general, assigning rights, duties, and responsibilities to individuals. Political philosophers in democratic regimes should accept that the existence of conflicting conceptions of the good is a permanent feature of the social landscape.

In particular, according to Rawls, political philosophy in democratic regimes should have as its most important aim the achievement of an overlapping consensus in which those who hold different comprehensive views of the good life converge on a single conception of justice. Disputes over which conception of distributive justice we should accept can be resolved to the satisfaction of any reasonable citizen, but these sources of reasonable disagreement will mean that even if we can reach un-coerced agreement on a particular conception of justice, we may continue to disagree on questions of how it is to be interpreted. I suppose that the central question posed is whether the Aristotelian conception of justice help us bridge the gap which separates Nozick from Rawls in their respective approaches to the question of justice, as MacIntyre understands it here. On MacIntyre's view the gap cannot be bridged because Rawls and Nozick start from inconsistent assumptions. The question really here is, for MacIntyre, not of bridging the gap but of providing an alternative non-individualistic account.

From what we have seen, MacIntyre partly endorses a version of the 'contestability' conception of political disagreement in the sense that he seems to believe that justice, which is a key political concept, can reasonably be interpreted differently and be used to express incommensurable ways of thinking. In that sense, for MacIntyre, the existence of political disagreement

need not imply that someone has made a mistake. But at the same time, MacIntyre wants to challenge the relativistic claim according to which "no issue between contending traditions is rationally decidable".[231] MacIntyre's response to the above challenge is that disputes between different traditions of thought with their own norms of rational inquiry may nevertheless be rationally resolvable in some cases. According to MacIntyre, a particular tradition T1 may face an epistemological crisis in which it fails to deal with an important incoherence and in which another tradition T2 can provide a cogent and illuminating explanation by the standards of T1 for why this incoherence has arisen.[232]

In *Whose Justice, Which Rationality*, MacIntyre argues that the correctness of the Thomist tradition--which synthesises Aristotelianism and Augustinian Christianity and gives the notion of desert a central place in its conception of justice--can be demonstrated from within each of the other traditions. In MacIntyre's view, unless a tradition overcomes an epistemological crisis it is facing, it will be 'defeated' and adherents to it will be 'compelled' to change allegiances.[233] But, as Mason points out, "it is natural to think that there will almost always be scope for reasonable disagreement over whether some tradition has solved a set of problems, and over whether there are prospects for resolving these problems from the standpoint of any other tradition when they are interpreted in its terms. An epistemological crisis[234] is unlikely to give conclusive reasons to abandon a tradition. When reasonable disagreement does occur over whether a tradition has been defeated, and over whether an alternative tradition is better able to deal with the problems faced, it is hard to see from the perspective of MacIntyre's theory how one of these

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[231] MacIntyre (1988), p. 352.
[232] Mason (1993), p. 7.
[233] MacIntyre (1988), pp. 364-5.
[234] This idea is most likely borrowed by MacIntyre from Kuhn. Also, it should be noted that in the hermeneutics circles the overall coherence of a view is what makes it plausible to us.

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traditions might be true and the others false, for MacIntyre denies content to the notion of truth independent of tradition".[235]

5. 3. 2 MacIntyre's appropriation of Aristotelian justice

Let's see though whether MacIntyre's use of Aristotle is justified. On the one hand, it can be argued that MacIntyre's use of Aristotle is justified so far as Aristotle gives priority to a concept of desert. This concept seems possible only when there is a shared conception of the good. The notion of political friendship which will be discussed in the next chapter, also points in the same direction.

On the other hand though, there are various different points that could be raised against MacIntyre's appropriation of Aristotle's conception of justice, despite the truth of the previous point concerning desert. One point that can first be made against MacIntyre's appropriation is that--at least as it is most obviously demonstrated in *After Virtue*--in his interpretation of Aristotle's conception of justice he concentrates exclusively on the *Nicomachean Ethics* account. This account, as we have seen, is purely formal and leads, therefore, to a relativistic view, since many different conceptions of justice satisfy the formal requirements. If MacIntyre had dealt with the account of justice presented in the *Politics*, he would have seen that Aristotle's account is in fact much less relativistic. Although Aristotle recognises in the *Politics* that there can be many conceptions of justice, he believes that a community's conception of justice is determined by its conception of the good. Since there is a correct conception of the good, there also is a correct conception of justice according to Aristotle. Therefore, according to Aristotle's view it is the virtuous who deserve to receive offices and honours. Since virtue is determined by human

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[235] Mason (1993), p. 8.

nature, there is a correct conception of justice. Although Aristotle recognises for example oligarchic and democratic conceptions of justice and desert, he clearly regards these as deviant.

Second, MacIntyre thinks justice must be dependent on a community's shared conception of the good. Therefore, on this view, there cannot be justice outside a community. Aristotle also agrees that each community has its own conception of justice which is dependent on its shared understandings of the good. But Aristotle thinks there are well-organised and badly organised communities. For Aristotle the true conception of justice is that of the well organised community. So, justice is not relative for Aristotle. There cannot be distributive justice outside a community, but some of Aristotle's remarks suggest that there could be other forms of justice.

Third, Aristotle thinks that justice resembles the other virtues. Aristotle's position is not that the structure of society determines what qualities are virtues. He thinks that certain qualities are virtuous and that communities, which have no place for or do not encourage those virtues, are defective communities. Since the city exists for the sake of the good life, virtues are prior to the community. This can be illustrated, for example, in his treatment of the virtue of generosity.

Fourth, MacIntyre criticises Rawls for supposing that we can think of an individual as being isolated from his community (as demonstrated in his 'veil of ignorance'). Our self-identity, according to MacIntyre, depends on the narrative we would give of our lives and that in turn depends on the place we occupy in the community. This is what MacIntyre calls the "narrative unity of human life". According to MacIntyre it is the narrative form of our lives that gives them a certain teleological character and also provides the framework within which we can attempt to make rational choices concerning the conflicting demands of different practices.[236] But Aristotle believes in a human

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[236] MacIntyre (1985), pp. 200-201.

nature which does not depend on community. In fact, communities exist to satisfy the demands of human nature. So, although Aristotle would reject the Rawlsian approach to justice, he would do so for completely different reasons.

Fifth, the above point is made more explicit when we look into Aristotle's educational project. This is of course much stronger in the case of Plato, especially in the *Republic*. Education for MacIntyre depends on the assumption that we are all aware of canonical texts which are widely taught in Universities and on which all rely upon. Aristotle also thinks that we ought to have canonical texts but these should be the 'right' texts. On MacIntyre's view though we could in fact have in theory any texts provided these texts are embedded in the tradition of the community in question.[237] Aristotle, on the other hand, would think that the virtues are prior to the text, though expressed in it.

One may argue against the above criticism of MacIntyre that this reading of his work is maybe too relativistic. I would like to respond that it is because of the way that MacIntyre himself insists that we should go back to small communities and forget the big nation state that his account seems more and more to be drifting towards relativism.[238] Aristotelian moral and political theory, when deprived of his metaphysics, becomes inevitably relativistic. Also, one could add that it is exactly this which is a fundamental difficulty for MacIntyre as soon as he does away with Aristotle's metaphysical biology, as we have seen in the chapter on teleology.

5. 4 Justice and moderation

It is interesting at this point to discuss Aristotle's advocacy of moderation, the mixed constitution and the man in the middle. Although Aristotle's

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[237] MacIntyre (1987), pp. 15-36.
[238] See MacIntyre (1996).

conception of the city as promoting virtue plays a part in this context, some of his arguments here are based on the idea that, in the world as we find it, where the ideal is not possible, we may have to choose the kind of constitution which is least prone to stasis. There are considerations which do not rest on a concept of desert, do not presuppose a thick theory of the good and could be recognised by a modern.

In addition, Aristotle's advocacy of moderation in the mixed constitution in relation to justice is closely connected with his view of 'political friendship', since--according to Aristotle's view--equality of means produces the right kind of relationship among the citizens (which is a friendship among equals) and encourages, therefore, not only the right kind of political community but also a secure and stable political regime.[239] As Aristotle points out in *Politics* 1295b 20-27, where he discusses the problems arising from a *polis* in which the distribution of wealth is unequal:

> The result is a city, not of freemen, but only of slaves and masters: a state of envy on the one side and of contempt on the other. Nothing could be further removed from the spirit of friendship or of a political association. An association depends on friendship-- after all, people will not even take a journey in common with their enemies. A city aims at being, as far a possible, composed of equals and peers, which is the condition of those in the middle, more than any group.

I will not refer in great detail here on the merits of the mixed constitution, as presented by Aristotle, since I have already expanded on this subject in the previous chapters. My concern here is to point out the way that moderation relates to justice. According to Aristotle, the polity is bound to have the best constitution, since it is composed of the elements which naturally go to make up a city. The middle classes enjoy a greater security themselves than any other class, since they do not, like the poor, desire the

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[239] Hampton (1997), p. 154.

goods of others; nor do others desire their possessions, as the poor covet those of the rich and since they neither plot against others, nor are plotted against themselves, they live free from danger. The best form of political association is, first, one where power is vested in the middle class, and, secondly, that good government is attainable in those cities where there is a large middle class--large enough, if possible, to be stronger than both of the other classes, but at any rate large enough to be stronger than either of them singly; for in that case its addition to either will suffice to turn the scale, and will prevent either of the opposing extremes from becoming dominant. It is therefore the greatest of blessings for a city that its members should possess a moderate and adequate property. Where some have great possessions, and others have nothing at all, the result is either an extreme democracy or an unmixed oligarchy; or it may even be--as a result of the excesses of both sides--a tyranny. Tyranny grows out of the most immature type of democracy, or out of oligarchy, but much less frequently out of constitutions of the middle order, or those which approximate to them.[240]

According to Hampton, there is no better argument for distributive equality than the one that Aristotle provides us with in his account of the 'polity'. Nevertheless, as Hampton argues, "contemporary political theorists have sought to mount other, more complicated arguments for this distributive conclusion as a way of trying to say not only that distributive equality is a good idea given its good consequences but also an idea required by the concept of justice".[241] In Hampton's view, Aristotle is attempting to characterise what constitutes a 'good' political system by relying on a consent-based theory of political authority: "a stable, effective. and just political society is one in which the political authority, however it is structured, operates in a way that recognises the equality between the rulers and the ruled".[242] As Hampton

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[240] *Politics*, 4, 1295b 30-1296 a 12.
[241] Hampton (1997), p. 154.
[242] Hampton (1997), pp. 32-33.

points out, "although Aristotle insists that there is such thing as natural slavery, he is even more insistent that the political relationship among people who are equals in their capacity to reason effectively ought to be constructed so that this equality is acknowledged".[243]

Hampton thinks that Aristotle's theory is a better alternative to 'welfare egalitarianism' and to Ronald Dworkin's 'resource egalitarianism' since Aristotle does not take for granted that equality is simply part of our conception of what a 'just' distribution is:

> Aristotle believes that it is both possible and necessary to defend the linkage between equal distributions and justice via moral argument. On his view, distributive justice is a moral concept whose content we derive rather than discover, and we do so by understanding the way in which some distributions promote certain moral or social values better than others. So Aristotle first asks, What kind of society do we want? and after answering that question, he asks, What kind of distribution of goods promotes this kind of society?[244]

5. 5 Conclusion

There are in general three main points that can be made concerning the relation that the Aristotelian conception of justice might have to the liberal one. MacIntyre seems right in his view that an Aristotelian conception of justice would be based on a conception of desert which is fundamentally at odds with individualist conceptions of justice such as those of Rawls and Nozick.

First, Aristotle is obviously far from arguing for equality in distribution. But it should be noted that, unlike modern writers on justice, he is more

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[243] Hampton (1997), p. 33.
[244] Hampton (1997), p. 158.

concerned with distribution of offices than with wealth. His arguments in *Politics*, book II suggests that he would object to wealth, partly because it is impracticable but also because they run counter to his conception of virtue. On the other hand his account of the ideal state suggests people need a certain minimum of wealth, though this does not seem to be seen as a matter of justice. More fundamental of course Aristotle is far from the idea that people have equal rights, or that they should be given equal opportunities.

Second, Aristotle's treatment of Lycophron, as we have seen, shows how far he is from the conception of the minimal state. It is also worth noticing that he does not have any account of procedural justice. Thus, his account of rectificatory justice and of justice in exchange are based on fairness of outcome rather than fairness of procedure. So he could not have much sympathy for Nozick. It is notable that even his account of oligarchic justice is based on the idea that the rich deserve office, so it is quite different from the ideas of justice that underpin modern capitalism.

Third, democratic justice seems to have much more in common with modern liberal theories, since it emphasises freedom, equality of opportunity and equal political right as for citizens. Aristotle dismisses the conception of democratic justice largely because it fails to embody a correct conception of the good.

Rawls assumes (a) that there are many different conceptions of the good, and, (b) that none of these conceptions is preferable on *a priori* grounds. Therefore, the fundamental structure of a just society must be neutral between competing conceptions of the good. Aristotle accepts that there are in practice many competing conceptions of the good, but he does think that one is to be preferred *a priori*. He, therefore, thinks that an account of justice must be founded on that conception of the good. This is related to the question, discussed in the previous chapters on community and on teleology, of

whether the *polis*, or the state, is a natural entity or an artifact that comes into being naturally.

First, as we have seen previously, according to the extreme holistic view, for Aristotle the *polis* is a substance, and not an aggregate. According to the 'substance model', there exists a natural growth and development that belongs to the city. The city, according to this view, grows naturally in the same sense that a living organism does. This view that the *polis* is a substance will generate an extreme holistic view that Aristotle does not hold. Although, according to Aristotle, it is natural for humans to form communities because it is in their nature to be with other people, the *polis* itself is not natural: it is an artifact that came to exist out of this natural need to be with other people. This is the way to reconcile the so-called inconsistency of *Politics* Book I, when Aristotle says that the man who first constructed the *polis* was the greatest of all benefactors. Unlike the extreme holist, Aristotle did not think that the *polis* is a substance; the *polis* is artificial not a living organism.

According to the Hobbesian view on the other hand (the extreme individualist view), individuals have tendencies to form communities, but they also have desires and in order to satisfy these desires you need a state. Locke on the other hand holds the view, as opposed to Hobbes, that there are different conceptions of the right of nature. The state is artificial but it is artificial because one has these rights. The state is artificial not in a kind of way as to overcome nature. The state is not a device in order to overcome nature.

But what are we to make of Aristotle's suggestion that man is a political animal, and what bearing does this claim have on his conception of justice? Since it is in our nature to be social and to form associations, it is a necessary feature, and not a contingent one, that we live in a *polis*. Shared conceptions of the good are essential to the Aristotelian view, because otherwise one would not be able to form an association. It should be noted that both of the views that Aristotle examines (oligarchic, democratic) presuppose a conception of the

good. The city itself should embody a conception of the good. This conception of the good could well be misguided, and hence a false one, as in the cases of democratic and oligarchic constitutions. If the *polis* is natural because it is essential for the good life, then one should know what the good life consists in and would have to be determined by the conception of the good life. The question posed here is whether society is merely a means to achieve our own good, or an essential element in our own good. For Rawls, though, rules of justice are neutral between the different conceptions of the good life. In Aristotle's case, rules of justice are determined by the notion of the good life; the notion of desert is determined by our conceptions of the good, and offices and honours have to go in accordance to virtue, or wealth, or equality-- according to which conception of the good one holds. In Aristotle's view then, it would seem that, if the state is genuinely neutral between the different conceptions of the good, one could not really have justice, not even rectificatory justice. In conclusion, one should also point out that Aristotle presents a consequentialist argument in defence of the existence of the state; he defends that state on the advantages of that state. There is no individualism explicit in his argument, but neither is the idea of the value-based MacIntyre state; the Aristotelian state is based on a notion of what is the best way to govern.

6. FRIENDSHIP IN THE CITY

> When people are friends, they have no need of justice.
> *NE*, 1155a 26-27

6.1 Introduction

Aristotle discusses friendship (φιλία, *philia*) in the *Nicomachean*, the *Eudemian Ethics* and in the *Rhetoric*. In both versions of the *Ethics* Aristotle seems to give an important place to political friendship but strangely he says very little about this in the *Politics*. His account of friendship, and the bearing it has on his ethical and political theory, have been poorly discussed in the past, although there have been some recent valuable contributions to the advancement of the subject (e.g. Telfer, Cooper, Annas, Nussbaum, Schofield, Price and Stern-Gillet[245]). Most of the previous commentators though, have either thought that any discussion on friendship has little or no importance for moral and political theory and have considered Aristotle's treatment of the subject as *sui generis*, or else have focused entirely on the *Nicomachean Ethics* neglecting the account of friendship offered in the *Eudemian Ethics*. In addition, there has been very little discussion about Aristotle's notion of 'political friendship' (πολιτικ**ή** φιλία) discussed in both the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics* and of the bearing that this conception might have on his political theory, as presented in the *Politics*, where the notion of 'political friendship' is not discussed at length, although it is mentioned, as we shall see, in some places. Most important, very little has been said on the relation between justice and friendship (something that Aristotle points to in both his accounts of friendship in the *Nicomachean* and in the *Eudemian Ethics*), and indeed this is left out from most--if not all--discussions about Aristotelian

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[245] Telfer (1971), Cooper (1999), Annas (1993), Nussbaum (1986), Schofield (1999), Price (1989), Stern-Gillet (1995).

justice. It is not surprising, therefore, that, although there are studies of Aristotle on friendship, very little has been written specifically about his view on political friendship.

Moreover, strangely enough, communitarians seem to have paid little attention to friendship in relation to justice, or to the Aristotelian conception of friendship as such, despite the fact that it would seem to be a natural line for them to pursue, especially in view of what Aristotle says about 'friendship holding the state together' (*NE*, 1155a 22-23). It is true that communitarians do mention friendship either *in passim* or in relation to the Aristotelian notion of *philia*, stress its importance for the development of the state and complain about the lack of it in the liberal vision. But, nevertheless, in either case nobody seems to develop a coherent normative account of civic friendship or to successfully explain why civic friendship is incompatible with the liberal state. I shall also argue that communitarian appropriations of the Aristotelian notion of political friendship (e.g. MacIntyre) tend to develop instead a Platonic notion of political unity of the state that is not representative of the Aristotelian conception. In addition, it should be noted that recent discussions of the development of the notion of friendship in general typically tend to focus on the value of friendship but not on the nature of friendship itself.[246] Aristotle's notion of political friendship, nevertheless, is important not only because it can help us develop a better understanding of his notion of political justice, but also because it can, if successfully applied to our notion of the modern state, contribute to its improvement.

Therefore, these Aristotelian pronouncements--if taken seriously--could in a way further strengthen the communitarian view. As we know, communitarians put forward a conception of the self diametrically opposed to that of the liberal atomistic self. Whereas the liberal self is pre-social and empty of all metaphysical content except abstract reason and will, the communitarian

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[246] A point made by Cocking and Kennett (1998), pp. 502-527.

self is one whose identity and nature are embedded in particular and contingent social attachments. The communitarian self emerges to self-consciousness inside a social context defined by the community and social relationships such as the family and friendly relations. Sandel argues that we cannot regard ourselves as independent-- in the way that liberalism thinks we are--without great cost to those loyalties and convictions by which we live and understand ourselves as the particular persons we are, "as members of this family or community or nation or people, as bearers of this history, as sons and daughters of that revolution, as citizens of this republic".[247] As Sandel points out in the last section called 'Character, Self-knowledge, and Friendship' of the conclusion of *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* ,

> Allegiances such as these are more than values I happen to have or aims I 'espouse at any given time'. They go beyond the obligations I voluntarily incur and the 'natural duties' I owe to human beings as such. They allow that to some I owe more than justice requires or even permits, not by reason of agreements I have made but instead in virtue of those more or less enduring attachments and commitments which taken together partly define the person I am.[248]

Nevertheless, despite the strong commitment of the communitarian to social relations, including friendship, and to the encumberedness of the self, communitarianism has not given friendship the importance that Aristotle's account seems to imply. If Aristotle's account of 'political friendship' is proven to be feasible, then social relations and attachments could be seen as almost necessary, if not compulsory, for the prosperity of the state, and the communitarian would then be vindicated.

One of the most striking factors of Aristotle's account is that he sees an important relation between justice and political friendship. In his view, friendship is in some ways as important as justice--if not more--for the

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[247] Sandel (1982), p. 179.
[248] Sandel (1982), *ibid.*

prosperity of the state. As he says in *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155 a 26-27: "when people are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality". The city is a partnership for the sake of the good and, in the same sense that justice is the good in the sphere of politics, friendship is also a good and holds the state together. Lawgivers, according to this argument (*NE*, 1155 b 21-27), seem to care more for friendship than for justice, since friendship generates concord (ὁμόνοια)--i.e. unanimity of the citizens--which is similar to friendship. In that way, friendship can hold the state together--in the same sense that justice does--and can also expel faction. It is in this sense that, when people are friends, they have no need of justice, while when they are just, they need friendship as well, and the highest form of justice seems to be a matter of friendship. This is of course at first sight an odd claim for Aristotle to make, since one might say that friendship presupposes justice anyway.

The claim that friendship is necessary for justice comes out of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, when he discusses friendship at length in Books VIII and IX, and also in the *Eudemian Ethics*. There is very little mention of 'political friendship' as such in the *Politics*, or its relation to justice. Aristotle discusses friendship in passing in some places in the *Politics*. First, in Book I, 1255 b 13 when he talks about friendship between master and slave (a same point he has made in *NE* VIII, 13. 1161 b 5). Second, he also mentions friendly feeling when he talks about common land in *Politics* VIII, 10, 1330 a 1 (τῇ χρήσει φιλικῶς γινομένην κοινήν). Political friendship is also mentioned at *Politics* 1280b 38 and 1295b 23; both passages claim that friendship is essential to the state but say little about it. Friendship is also mentioned in Book II where Aristotle criticises Plato's *Republic* and refers to the kind of friendship evolving in such constitutions as 'watery' friendship. The passage in *Politics* book II is an important one--as will become apparent later in this chapter--because it

demonstrates the essential difference between the Platonic and the Aristotelian notion of the unanimity of the state that political friendship makes possible.

The fact that political friendship is not explicitly discussed in the *Politics* is problematic, in a way, for the manner in which Aristotle's ethical works relate to his political treatise. Perhaps, one could say that Aristotle saw no need to discuss it in the *Politics*, since he had already done so at length in the *Nicomachean* and in the *Eudemian Ethics*. Another way of justifying the absence of extensive discussion of 'political friendship' in the *Politics* would be to point out to the peculiarity of the Books of the *Politics* themselves which are not a consistent work but rather a number of originally independent essays, not completely worked up into a whole.[249] So, one could say that somehow a discussion on 'political friendship' was left out from the *Politics* simply due to the general disorganisation of the treatise. But, another line of argument would be that a discussion of 'political friendship' was left out from the *Politics* because it would not seem essential when discussing a normative political theory, in the sense that, since there is no plausible way to legislate friendship, one cannot force people to become friends. If that is right, then despite the fact that friendship in general and 'political friendship' in particular were thought by Aristotle to be essential to justice and to the good of the *polis* and its citizens (let alone to the good of the individual), he may, nevertheless, have realised that there is no practical way of 'forcing people to be friends', to adapt a familiar Rousseaunean expression. Entering into friendship is something to be done voluntarily and no law could normatively regulate that we should have friendship in our private or political life. It is true that Aristotle does seem to say at *NE* 1155a 23-24 that the lawgiver's aim is to try to create friendship in the state (ἔοικε δὲ καὶ τὰς πόλεις συνέχειν ἡ φιλία, καὶ οἱ νομοθέται μᾶλλον περὶ αὐτὴν σπουδάζειν ἢ τήν δικαιοσύνην). But, nevertheless, there is nothing in either the *Nicomachean* or the *Eudemian* text to suggest

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[249] Ross (1995), p. 13.

that there is a way for the lawgiver to actually regulate friendship--in the form of legislation for example. Aristotle there rather seems to suggest that the lawgiver should encourage friendly feeling among the citizens; but could not, nevertheless, force them to be friends. In addition, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Aristotle points out in *Politics* 1280b 38-40 that, although friendship is necessary for social life--in the sense that the pursuit of a common social life is friendship--nevertheless, political associations exist not for the sake of social life but for the sake of the good life.[250]

6. 2 Problems with Aristotle's notion of political friendship

This view that Aristotle puts forward in both the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics* obviously needs further examination. What exactly does he have in mind when he says that "when people are friends they have no need of justice" and that "concord" (ὁμόνοια) which comes from friendship "holds states together"?

One reaction to the above Aristotelian pronouncements is that the view they endorse seems bizarre, since justice and friendship seem to conflict. As Stern-Gillet points out, reminding us of Cicero's *De Amicitia*--friendship is usually considered to be an obstacle to justice, since personal friendship could threaten the state instead of safeguarding it, when conflicts of loyalties are generated between political obligation and private friendship.[251] This is true if we think that friendship involves partiality while justice is generally thought of as requiring impartiality.

A similar criticism has been made by Kantians. They point out that acting morally and acting out of friendship does not necessarily come to the

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[250] ἡ γὰρ τοῦ συζῆν προαίρεσις φιλία. τέλος μὲν οὖν πόλεως τὸ εὖ᾽ζῆν, ταῦτα δὲ τοῦ τέλους χάριν. (*Politics*, 1280b 38-40)
[251] Stern-Gillet (1995), p. 149.

same thing. They may even be inconsistent. Kantians think that friendship runs directly counter to accepted moral requirements, since "as the joke has it, a friend will help you move a house, a good friend will help you move a body".[252] Kantians tend to criticise the neo-Aristotelian's claim that friendship is a virtuous relation between persons and that the trust and intimacy of close friendship must be based upon mutual recognition of another's virtue,[253] since they think that this is a highly moralised account of friendship which does not take into account the fact that our friends are not normally or constitutively moral exemplars who thus inspire us to moral growth and improvement. As Cocking and Kenneth point out, "while a focus on the pursuit of the other's well-being from a particularised deeply felt care and concern might plausibly be thought of as both constitutive of close friendship and a central moral good of friendship, we shall miss much of the good of friendship, if we focus exclusively on our pursuit of the well-being of the other".[254]

Kantians see this as undermining the neo Aristotelian position that links friendship and virtue. However Aristotle would deny that there can be a clash between the demands of morality and friendship properly understood. According to Aristotle, if someone was to ask me to do something immoral that would show that he was not a true friend.

One might reply that, in one sense, to say that "when people are friends, they have no need of justice" may not be a bizarre view to hold, since, in the first place, we are not going to be motivated by considerations of justice if we are friends with someone: we are not likely to think for example that 'It's my duty to send him a birthday-card' or 'It is only just that I treat him this way', if we are friends with someone. One does not tend to treat his friends rightly

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[252] Cocking and Kennett (2000), p. 278. See also Cocking and Kennett (1998), pp. 502-527.

[253] For such neo-Aristotelian accounts of personal friendship, see for example Sherman (1993), pp. 91-107, and Blum (1993), pp. 192-210.

[254] Cocking and Kennett (2000), p. 296.

because justice requires this; one treats one's friends rightly out of affection and concern for them, and in many cases one would say that one owes to his friends more than justice requires or even permits. Justice might be seen, nevertheless, as a condition of friendship but only under the surface, in the sense that, if one starts treating his friends unjustly, then the friendship will eventually dissolve. So, injustice could make friendship break. But it was not out of considerations of justice that one treated his friends justly in the first place; it was rather because they were his friends and had concern for them that his behaviour was just. Similarly, questions about justice arise when a friendship breaks up. We can only become and remain friends if we treat one another justly; when friends fall out, it is then that they appeal to justice, as for example in the case when a marriage breaks up, it is then that questions about justice (distribution of common property, money etc.) arise. Similar examples are offered by Aristotle in the *Eudemian Ethics* at 1243b 15-38. So, friendship (personal friendship at least) and justice are connected, but not in a straightforward way. As Aristotle himself remarks in the beginning of his treatment on friendship in the *Eudemian Ethics*, "all say that justice and injustice are specially exhibited towards friends; the same man seems both good and a friend, and friendship seems a sort of moral habit;[255] and if one wishes to make people not wrong one another, one should make them friends, for genuine friends do not act unjustly" (1234b 25-30).[256] "But neither will people act unjustly if they are just; therefore justice and friendship are either the same or not far different" (1234b 30-31).

Another problem is whether Aristotle's notion of 'political' friendship is a kind of 'advantage' or 'utility' friendship. These two issues are in a way connected. Friendship, viewed in that context, would suggest that Aristotle puts forward a conception of the state which is very much one of mutual

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[255] φιλία ἠθική τις εἶναι ἕξις
[256] οἱ γὰρ ἀληθινοὶ φίλοι οὐκ ἀδικοῦσιν

concern, where friendship in that state is of "interest in and concern for the well-being of every citizen just because the other is a fellow-citizen" to use John Cooper's words.[257] If friendship is essential in that way to developing a conception of justice, then the liberal/individualistic conception of justice as impartiality could be seriously undermined, at least when the connection with friendship is made. On the other hand, it has been pointed out by Schofield and Annas that the notion of political friendship is a form of advantage friendship, and not the relationships of mutual other-concern that Cooper puts forward. In what follows, I will critically discuss both these interpretations of political friendship and try to define the notion of political friendship and its relation to justice.

In a way, both of the above issues are connected with each other, since what we decide about the kind of political friendship involved would affect our understanding of the question about political obligation and private friendship (Cicero's objection), and *vice versa*. Cicero--having looked into the past history of the Roman State for cases where friendship had interfered with the affairs of politics--points out in *De Amicitia* (XII, 40) that it does not advance the future state of the Roman Republic to force people in the name of friendship to act against their duty. He, thus, proposes that a law should be enacted concerning friendship that "one should not ask disgraceful things, nor do them if asked; it is a bad and unacceptable excuse for any sort of wrongdoing, but particularly if a man says he has acted against the interests of the state for the sake of his friend". Therefore, according to Cicero, if good men fall unknowingly into a friendship that requires from them to go against their duty, they must not think themselves bound by it to such an extent that they should not part company with their friends when the latter do wrong in some great manner (VII, 42), since it is a law of friendship that we should ask only

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[257] Cooper (1999), pp. 356-377.

honourable things of our friends, and do honourable things for their sake (VII, 44).

In trying to understand Aristotle's position on these issues, we should notice two points. First, his notion of 'political friendship' is not connected in any close way to the notion of personal friendship, at least in the sense that Cicero was thinking. Second, Aristotle's idea of friendship--either personal or political--involves impartiality anyway to start with. But this will become obvious later. Nevertheless, despite the apparent naiveté of Cicero's point, its question about justice and friendship still remains an open one when discussing matters of partiality and impartiality in relation to justice and friendship and Kantian versus virtue-ethics accounts of moral obligation, as I will demonstrate at the end of this chapter. Cicero's point was that personal friendships can be an obstacle to justice, since they can interfere with our political judgements when these concern our friends. Aristotle's notion of 'political friendship' is not associated--directly at least--with any notion of friendship between individuals, since friendship in the public sphere is quite different from friendship in the private sphere. But, nevertheless, Aristotle does not explain how disputes of justice are to be settled when personal friendships are concerned; in fact, he seems to have no answer to Cicero's question, since, even in the context of his political friendship, individual friendships are going to exist and one would have to deal with the implications of justice.

There is also another kind of conflict that might arise from Aristotle's notion of political friendship. In what way, if at all, is the friendship of those who are citizens of the same community different from those friendships which might exist between citizens of different communities? Since ideally--according to his view--in a *polis*, a community, a partnership of some sort, we should all experience feelings of friendship to our fellow citizens *qua* fellow citizens in order to achieve concord that will hold the city together in the same

sense that justice does, should we have these feelings of friendship only for our fellow citizens or for other people as well? How does one account for relations with citizens from other cities when one has to view fellow Athenians *qua* citizens? And what about people much further away that one has never even heard of? Should we have friendly feelings for them as well, and should considerations of justice apply in their case? Surely, I do not refrain from going around the Philosophy Department nicking the A4 paper from the printers just because I might get caught; rather, I do not steal the A4 paper because it would frustrate the other members of our philosophical community when they would like to print but find there was no paper. Furthermore, if everybody nicked the A4 paper, then I would also be frustrated etc. etc., and in general it would be a very 'unfriendly' and 'uncomradely' thing to do. So, at the end of the day, I do what justice requires out of concern for my associates. But what about nicking the A4 paper from the Business Studies Department? Surely, I have no obligation to look after the well-being of the members of the Business Studies Department, and maybe I have no friendly feelings whatsoever towards them. So, how does one act towards people that one has no concern for? It is in cases like this where justice has to step in; I refrain from stealing the A4 paper from other Departments, not because friendship prevents me from doing so, but because justice requires me not to. So, in this case Aristotle would have to show how his account of political friendship would account for conflicts between different kinds of communities and associations.

A final question is whether it is possible today in a modern nation state (with all its largeness, multi-culturalism and impersonality) for such a feeling to develop and flourish? Or, is Aristotle's account bound to the uniqueness and the limitations of the Greek city-state? Is his account unique to the *polis* or could it apply to other political associations as well as to modern nation states?

Underlying all these problems are questions about the relationship between friendship and the conception of the good. It seems that there are two plausible views that Aristotle could hold about the role of friendship. First, one could say, on the one hand, that friendship is a necessary part of the end of the state, since the *polis* exists for the sake of the good life. In order for human beings to flourish, there must be mutual concern. This view could even be taken to imply that at the end of the day friendship could even be part of the goal of the state. Second, one could also argue, on the other hand, that friendship is contingently necessary. Since society would break down very quickly if people did not have mutual concern, a degree of friendship is in practice necessary for its survival. This view does not suit the idea that friendship is the goal of the state. In support of this second view, one could say that since law is necessarily general, it leaves a lot of gaps. It cannot legislate in detail on every aspect of human life. So we must rely on relationships of an informal kind for the city to function at all.

Which of these views does Aristotle hold? Is it possible that he is committed to both views? And how does he overcome Cicero's objection? We know that for Aristotle the function of the state is to enable us to live a good life. This is a view of course that, sketched in this way, neither a communitarian nor a liberal would object to. But it should be noted that the individualist and the communitarian position on the relation of friendship to justice would differ considerably, since the individualist would think that friendship, although desirable, is not necessary for justice. Rawls, for example, under the veil of ignorance has no place for friendship since what he is trying to establish is justice in a 'hostile' state. The assumption behind the veil of ignorance is that we would not be in a position to know what place we will have in society, whether we will be rich or poor, talented or untalented, with friends or friendless, and justice is suppose to guarantee us fairness no matter which end of the pile we end up at. Friendship is not necessary for Rawls,

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because justice is supposed to protect us if we have no friends. As Sandel points out,

> Not egoists but strangers, sometimes benevolent, make for citizens of the deontological republic; justice finds its occasion because we cannot know each other, or our ends, well enough to govern by the common good alone. This condition is not likely to fade altogether, and so long as it does not, justice will be necessary. (...) By putting the self beyond the reach of politics, (liberalism) makes human agency an article of faith rather than an object of continuing attention and concern, a premise of politics rather than its precarious achievement. This misses the pathos of politics and also its most inspiring possibilities. It overlooks the danger that when politics goes badly, not only disappointments but also dislocations are likely to result. And it forgets the possibility that when politics goes well, we can know a good in common that we cannot know alone.[258]

The communitarian, thus, could think friendship to be necessary, since he thinks that justice can only exist in a community that shares a common aim. It is difficult to see how people could share common aims without being to some extent friends, so justice for the communitarian could not exist without friendship.

6. 3 Definition of friendship

In order to be able to understand Aristotle's notion of political friendship, we should, first, look into his notion of personal friendship and how this affects his conception of political friendship, as well as to try to clarify his view of the relationship between personal and political friendship.

First, it is important though to clarify the Greek notion of friendship (*philia*) which, at first, seems to be very different from the concept of

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[258] Sandel (1982), p. 183.

'friendship' at least in its contemporary ordinary English use. If we look into the meaning and the definition of the Greek concept, the meaning of *philia* (as it has been pointed out by all the standard treatments of Aristotle on friendship) is much wider than the English concept of 'friendship'[259] and the equivalents in other modern languages.[260] As Cooper points out, the field of *philia* "covers not just the (more or less) intimate relationships between persons not bound together by near family ties, to which the words used in the modern languages to translate it are ordinarily restricted, but all sorts of family relationships (especially those of parents to children, children to parents, siblings to one another, and the marriage relationship itself); the word also has a natural and ordinary use to characterise what goes in English under the somewhat quaint-sounding name of 'civic friendship'. Certain business relationships also come in here, as does common membership in religious and social clubs and political parties."[261]

One could see therefore that friendship is not in all contexts an exact translation of the word *philia*, at least in its ordinary usage in English today.[262] Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that it would be a mistake not to translate *philia* as friendship. It would be a mistake not to, partly because it

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[259] See, Blundell (1989), pp. 39-49. Blundell discusses the many levels and varieties of *philia* under three main headings: family, fellow citizens and personal friends.

[260] It seems though that the concept of φιλία in modern Greek has retained some of its ancient wider meaning. Although usually used in the same casual way, as in English, to denote friendship, the word φιλία and the verb φιλῶ still mean love in some contexts, either erotic love or not. Φιλῶ in modern Greek nowadays mostly means 'to kiss' which is an expression of love feeling in general; while φίλος is always someone 'dear' to us.

[261] Cooper (1999b), pp. 312-313. Examples of *philia* describing family relationships such as those of parents to children, children to parents, siblings to one another, and the marriage relationship itself can be found in *NE* VIII, 1161b 12, 1242a 1, 1161b 12.; also in *Generation of Animals*, III, 2, 753a13

[262] Φιλεῖν mostly denotes 'loving feeling', so in that sense *philia* in some contexts at least is much closer to love in the modern sense than any other ancient Greek word, and indeed it does mean love in some contexts. It should be noted though that the Greeks used ἔρως (eros) to denote 'erotic love' (the state of being 'in love'), while the word ἀγάπη (love) does not occur in Aristotle and was only put into usage much latter by Christian authors in the much celebrated notion of Christian love (agape). The word ἀγαπᾶν does occur in Aristotle of course, but as a synonym of τιμᾶν and βούλεσθαι, αἱρεῖσθαι, διώκειν; it does not therefore denote 'love', not in the modern sense at least. The connection between love and friendship was also made in Latin, as Cicero points out in *De Amicitia* (VIII, 26): "For the first thing to bring people together in a relationship is love (amor), from which friendship (amicitia) derives its name".

would alienate the Greek conception of friendship from our contemporary one and attribute to it a purely historical interest, and partly because it would conceal an important similarity between the Greek and the English concepts. The words 'friend' and 'friendship' resemble the Greek *philos* and *philia* in denoting someone who is 'dear' to us or someone who has kind feelings towards us without us necessarily being aware of these feelings;[263] we tend to say, for example, "I thought you were my friend" or "He has a friend in the Senate", "He was a friend to her".

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle starts his discussion concerning friendship stressing that friendship "is a virtue or implies virtue" and "is most necessary with a view to living":

> For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods; even rich men and those in possession of office and of dominating power are thought to need friends most of all; for what is the use of such prosperity without the opportunity of beneficence, which is exercised chiefly and in its most laudable form towards friends? Or how can prosperity be guarded and preserved without friends? (...) And in poverty and other misfortunes people think friends are the only refuge.

Furthermore, as it has already been mentioned above, Aristotle--right from the beginning of *NE*, Book III, 1154 b 21-27, where he starts discussing friendship-- makes the important pronouncement, relating thus friendship to justice and the state:

> Friendship also seems to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than for justice; for concord (ὁμόνοια) seems to be something like friendship, and this they aim at most of all, and expel faction as their worst enemy; and when men are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality.

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[263] As Telfer (1971, p. 223) points out, we normally distinguish between 'befriending' or 'being a friend to' and 'being friends' or 'being a friend of'.

As Annas points out, Aristotle is not concerned to demonstrate that love and concern for others for their own sake is possible, either for ordinary people or for the virtuous, since he simply takes that for granted.[264] This is clearly demonstrated in *Rhetoric* 1380b36-1381a5 where (when setting out various views not as part of what we all accept) he shows us that love and concern for others is part of the normal meaning of 'friendship':

> We will begin by defining friendship (τὴν φιλίαν) and friendly feeling (τὸ φιλεῖν). Let friendly feeling, or loving, (τὸ φιλεῖν) be defined as wishing for someone what one thinks to be goods (ἔστω δὴ τὸ φιλεῖν τὸ βούλεσθαί τινι ἃ οἴεται ἀγαθά, ἐκείνου ἔνεκα ἀλλὰ μὴ αὐτοῦ) for their own sake and not for one's own, and being inclined, so far as you can, to bring these things about. A friend (φίλος) is one who feels thus and excites these feelings in return. Those who think they feel thus towards each other think themselves friends. This being assumed, it follows that your friend is the sort of man who shares your pleasure in what is good and your pain in what is unpleasant, for your sake and for no other reason.[265]

According to some, this passage from the *Rhetoric* is the one that holds the key to the whole interpretation of Aristotle's notion of friendship, since it is in this passage that Aristotle indicates the core common to all friendly associations. It is suggested that the central idea contained in friendship is that of doing well by someone for his own sake, out of concern for him and not, or merely, out of concern for oneself. Cooper argues that this definition from the *Rhetoric* states the core of Aristotle's own analysis of friendship, since on Aristotle's account in perfect friendship "the parties love one another for their characters and not merely because they enjoy or profit from one another's

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[264] Annas (1993), p. 249.

[265] The Greek, nevertheless, in the sentence above at 1380 b 36-37 (ἔστω δὴ τὸ φιλεῖν τὸ βούλεσθαί τινι ἃ οἴεται ἀγαθά, ἐκείνου ἔνεκα ἀλλὰ μὴ αὐτοῦ) is thought by some to be ambiguous. Indeed, some have taken ἃ οἴεται ἀγαθά to mean (a) "what one thinks goods" (Annas 1993, p. 249, and Cooper 1999, p. 313), or "what you believe to be good things" (*Rhetoric*, trans. by Roberts 1984), while others translate as (b) "what he thinks goods" (Cooper 1999, p. 313, n. 6).

company". This is what Cooper calls character-friendship (the primary friendship) which is distinguished from the other two forms of friendship in that the description under which one loves the other is a description of that other's whole. It should be noted here though that--although I adopt Cooper's interpretation--I do not think that the term 'character-friendship' successfully describes Aristotle's notion of this kind of friendship. Therefore, throughout this chapter I will use the term 'primary friendship' to refer to Aristotle's φιλία κατ' ἀρετήν or 'virtue-friendship' or 'friendship of the good'.

What in any case the *Rhetoric* account successfully demonstrates is that for Aristotle friendship in general clearly entails at least two important constitutive features: affection and an altruistic concern for the friend's good. This is quite important for the understanding of Aristotle's normative notion of friendship in both the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian* accounts. When examining his distinction between the three kinds of friendship and the notion of political friendship, one should bear in mind this core common to all friendly associations, as described in the *Rhetoric* definition of friendship.

There are also several other passages where Aristotle stresses this. For example, in *NE* Book IX, 1166a1-10--where he discusses the origin of relations of friendship towards our neighbours and of the characteristics by which we distinguish the various kinds of friendship that seems to be in our relations to ourselves--Aristotle points out that,

> some people define a friend as someone who wishes and does what is good, or what appears to be good, for the sake of his friend; or someone who wishes his friend to be and to live for his own sake--this is the attitude of mothers toward their children, or friends who have come into conflict. Others define a friend as someone who spends time with another and chooses the same things as he does; or someone who shares in the sorrows and joys of his friend--and this quality too is found in mothers in particular.

Goodwill (εὔνοια) alone of course, as Aristotle points out in *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166b 30-1167a 3, although it seems to be a characteristic of friendship, it still is not friendship, since goodwill can arise even towards people we do not know, and without their being aware of it, but friendship cannot. In this sense, goodwill is not even affection (φίλησις), since affection involves intimacy, while goodwill can spring up suddenly.

Some think that 'living together' is--either for Aristotle or in general-- an essential requirement for friendship.[266] However I do not think it should be part of the general definition of friendship offered above. It is true of course that Aristotle argues that in order to achieve primary friendship (which is of course the best kind of friendship) living together and sharing common activities in a daily basis is an important requirement. In fact, Aristotle thinks that ideally the best friends should spend their days together (*NE*, 1158a 9, 1171a 5) or go through time together (*NE*, 1157b 22) since it is important in order to achieve a thorough experience of the other's character and habits to have this sort of day-to-day association. But, nevertheless, Aristotle also seems to think that it is not always important for friends to spend their days together in constant company, since he seems to be suggesting in several places that it is not always necessary that people we love be always with us. It is true that some people find their enjoyment in living in each other's company, and bestow good things on each other, but "others are asleep or separated by distance, and so do not engage in these activities of friendship, but nevertheless have a disposition to do so; for distance does not dissolve friendship without

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[266] For example, Nussbaum (1986), pp. 357-359, and Telfer (1971), pp. 223-224. Nussbaum argues that there are in Aristotle eight 'requirements for friendship': 1) mutuality in affection, 2) independence (the object of philia must be seen as a being with a separate good, not as simply a possession or extension of a philos; and the real philos will wish the other well for the sake of that separate good), 3) mutual benefiting in action, insofar as this is possible, 4) living together, 5) trust, 6) mutuality in pleasure, 7) mutual helping, and 8) mutual attraction; also, there are three mechanisms of friendship: 1) mutual influence, 2) shared activity, and 3) emulation and imitation (mirror friendship). According to Telfer, there are three types of activity which are all necessary conditions of friendship (the 'shared activity' condition for friendship): (i) reciprocal services, (ii) mutual contact and (ii) joint pursuits. But the 'shared activity' condition for friendship is a necessary but not a sufficient one.

qualification, but it does dissolve its activity" (*NE*, 1157b5-13). Also, Aristotle seems to think that it is a rational and appropriate reaction which correctly corresponds to the value of personal affection in a good human life to value people who are dead as well as people who are alive.[267] As he says, "we consider it a virtue in people, if they love their friends equally both present and absent, both living and dead" (*Rhet.*, 1381b24-26).

So, in conclusion, taking into account the *Rhetoric* definition and the three books of the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics*, one could say that, according to Aristotle: x and y are friends iff

(1) x and y know each other

(2) x and y have mutual goodwill for the other's sake

(3) x and y feel affection for each other, and

(4) x and y recognise (2) and (3).

6. 4 Three kinds of personal friendship

Aristotle distinguishes between three kinds (εἴδη) of friendship (*NE*, VIII, 2-3); *philia* that arises either from (i) usefulness, or (ii) pleasantness, or (iii) excellence (διὰ τὸ χρήσιμον, δι' ἡδονήν, κατ' ἀρετήν).

It should be noted though that one should distinguish pleasure and advantage friendships from exploitative relationships in which the parties aim each at their own pleasure and not at all at the other's good. As Nussbaum points out, three things should be distinguished: the *basis* or *ground* of the relationship (the thing 'through which' they love); its *object*; and its *goal* or *end*. Pleasure, advantage, and good character are three different bases or

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[267] Nussbaum (1986, pp. 361-362) interestingly points out the difference between a Kantian and an Aristotelian in this matter in the sense that a Kantian would tend to think that this reaction is an unfortunate psychological fact about many people. But, as Aristotle says in *NE.*, 1099b2-4, "nobody will entirely live well, if he is both solitary and childless; still less, perhaps, if he has terribly bad children or friends, or has good ones who die".

original grounds of friendship, but they are not the goal or final (intentional) end of the relationship. "The object of the relation in all cases is the other person; but the person will be conceived of and known in a way bounded by the basis: as someone who is pleasant to be with, as a person well-placed for useful dealings, as a person of good character. Thus the two inferior types aim at benefit for the other only under a thin and superficial description of the other".[268] This is an important distinction which will prove useful later to our understanding of political friendship, since one should not think of advantage friendship--despite the fact that it is the lowest form of friendship--as not falling under the general definition of friendship offered previously.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* 1155b 17-1156a 5, Aristotle says that the kinds of friendship may perhaps be cleared up if we, first, come to know the object of love (τὸ φιλητόν). There are three grounds on which people love:

> of the love of lifeless objects we do not use the word 'friendship', for it is not mutual love, nor is there a wishing of good to the other (for it would surely be ridiculous to wish wine well; if one wishes anything for it, it is that it may keep, so that one may have it oneself); but to a friend we say we ought to wish what is good for his sake. But to those who thus wish good we ascribe only goodwill, if the wish is not reciprocated; goodwill when it is reciprocal being friendship. Or must we add 'when it is recognised?' For many people have good will to those whom they have not seen but judge to be good or useful; and one of these might return this feeling. Those people seem to bear goodwill to each other; but how could one call them friends when they do not know their mutual feelings? To be friends, then, they must be mutually recognised as bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other for one of the aforesaid reasons.

Corresponding to the object of love, there are three kinds of friendship equal in number to the things that are loveable; "for with respect to each there is a mutual and recognised love, and those who love each other wish well to

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[268] Nussbaum (1986), p. 355.

each other in that respect in which they love one another" (*NE*, 1158a6-10). The different reasons for loving someone depend on whether one loves them for their utility, their pleasantness or their excellence:

> Now those who love each other for their utility do not love each other for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other. So too with those who love for the sake of pleasure; it is not for their character that men love ready-witted people, but because they find them pleasant. Therefore those who love for the sake of utility love for the sake of what is good *for themselves*, and those who love for the sake of pleasure do so for the sake of what is pleasant *to themselves*, and not in so far as the other is the person loved but in so far as he is useful or pleasant. And thus these friendships are only incidental; for it is not as being the man he is that the loved person is loved, but as providing some good or pleasure. Such friendships, then, are easily dissolved, if the parties do not remain like themselves; for if the one party is no longer pleasant or useful the other ceases to love him. (1156a10-24)

Perfect friendship, on the other hand, is the friendship of people who are good, and alike in virtue.[269] Such friends wish well alike to each other *qua* good, and they are good in themselves:

> Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of their own nature and not incidentally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good--and goodness is an enduring thing. And each is good without qualification and useful to each other. So too they are pleasant; for the good are pleasant both without qualification and to each other, since to each his own activities and others like them are pleasurable, and the actions of the good *are* the same or alike. And such a friendship is, as might be expected permanent, since there meet in it all the qualities that friends should have. (NE, 1156b 9-19)

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[269] Τελεία δ' ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν φιλία καὶ κατ' ἀρετὴν ὁμοίων· οὗτοι γὰρ τἀγαθὰ ὁμοίως βούλονται ἀλλήλοις ᾗ ἀγαθοί, ἀγαθοὶ δ' εἰσὶ καθ' αὑτούς. (*NE*, 1156b 6-8)

Aristotle, then, says that all friendship is either on account of the good or on account of pleasure--good or pleasure either in the abstract or such as will be enjoyed by him who has the friendly feeling (πᾶσα γὰρ φιλία δι᾽ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν ἤ δι᾽ἡδονήν, ἤ ἁπλῶς, ἤ τῷ φιλοῦντι). Friendship is also based on certain resemblances; and to a friendship of good men all the qualities we have named belong in virtue of the nature of the friends themselves; "for in the case of this kind of friendship the other qualities also are alike in both friends, and that which is good without qualification is also without qualification pleasant, and these are the most loveable qualities". According to Aristotle, love and friendship are found, therefore, most and in their best form between such people (*NE*, 1156b 19-24).

It should be pointed out here that Aristotle describes primary or perfect friendship to be 'on account of the good' (δι᾽ἀγαθόν), and not 'for the sake' of the good, as it is usually translated. Ross for example translates δι᾽ἀγαθόν as 'for the sake', and most, if not all, follow this line when referring to primary friendship as being 'for the sake of the good'. But, this is misleading, I think. 'Διὰ' does not necessarily always translate as 'for the sake of' anyway, since it is not the same as 'ἕνεκα' which always translates as 'for the sake of'.

What is the meaning then of 'on account of the good' when Aristotle distinguishes between the different types of friendship? If one sees primary friendship as being 'on account of the good' instead of 'for the sake of the good', then his notion of primary friendship becomes less unintelligible and maybe more plausible. To translate δι᾽ἀγαθόν as 'for the sake of the good' would suggest that one loves his friend not for his sake, as the *Rhetoric* account suggests, but for 'what one thinks goods' or 'what one believes to be good things'. But, as Urmson points out, if one makes a sacrifice for another in order to attain a greater good, then it is not true that one has made the sacrifice for the sake of that other: "If this line of argument is correct, Aristotle has failed to reconcile his view of friendship as involving disinterested care for the

friend's welfare with his general view that men seek what they take to be their highest good".[270] One does not do a good thing for his friend or is someone's friend just for the sake of the good, since that would mean that he would not value that person and his welfare, but that at the end of the day he would only value his own welfare. If one though is someone's friend on account of the good, then this could include other-concern as well as self-concern, and concern for the good.

Aristotle's definition of primary friendship as friendship on account of the good could be further illuminated if we look at what he says in *NE* 1169a 18-b 14 concerning sacrifices made for one's friend and country:

> It is true of the good man too that he does many acts for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary dies for them; for he will throw away both wealth and honours and in general the goods that are objects of competition, gaining for himself nobility; since he would prefer a short period of intense pleasure to a long one of mild enjoyment, a twelvemonth of noble life to many years of humdrum existence, and one great and noble action to many trivial ones. Now those who die for others doubtless attain this result; it is therefore a great prize that they choose for themselves. They will throw away wealth too on condition that their friends will gain more; for while a man's friend gains wealth he himself achieves nobility; he is therefore assigning the greater good to himself. The same too is true of honour and office; all these things he will sacrifice to his friend; for this is noble and laudable for himself. Rightly then is he thought to be good, since he chooses nobility before all else. But he may even give up actions to his friend; it may be nobler to become the cause of his friend's acting than to act himself. In all the actions, therefore, that men are praised for, the good man is seen to assign to himself the greater share of what is noble. In this sense, then, as has been said, a man should be a lover of self; but in the sense in which most men are so, he ought not.

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[270] Urmson (1988), p. 116.

This passage has been taken by some to imply that the sacrifice is not made for the sake of the friend but for a greater good; a sacrifice made for another in order to attain a greater good is not made for the sake of that other. Hence, according to this line of argument, as we have seen before, Aristotle has failed to reconcile his view of friendship as involving disinterested care for the friend's welfare with his general view that people seek what they take to be their highest good.[271] But I do not see why Aristotle should be taken that way. He clearly says that a friend will give up all wealth and everything else to help a friend. He sacrifices all these things to his friend because he is noble and laudable for himself; because, at the end of the day, he could not live with himself if was not good to his friend. This is Aristotle's notion of self-love, a quite contrary one to the usual notion of self-love, as Aristotle himself acknowledges. But this is self-love for Aristotle: to assign oneself the greater share of what is noble for the good of others but also for the good of oneself, since one would not be able to live with oneself if he were not noble.

Aristotle is of course quick enough to point out straight away that such perfect friendships are rare, since such people are also rare, and also that such friendship requires time and familiarity: "as the proverb says, people cannot know each other till they have 'eaten salt together', nor can they admit each other to friendship or be friends till each has been found loveable and be trusted by each"(*NE*, 1156b19-28);

> Those who quickly show the marks of friendship to each other
> wish to be friends, but are not friends unless they both are loveable
> and know the fact; for a wish for friendship may arise quickly, but
> friendship does not. (*NE*, 1156b28-32)

Friendship, therefore, resembles hospitality in a way, "of which it has been said, aptly it seems, that one should have 'neither many guests, nor none'"[272] (*NE* 1170b21-22). As far as friendships which are based on either

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[271] Urmson (1988), p. 114.

[272] μήτε πολύξεινος μήτ' ἀξεινος (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 715)

utility or pleasure, it is obvious that one should not have too many, "since returning favours to many people is laborious, and life is too short to do it" and "so more friends than suffice for one's own life are superfluous, and a hindrance to noble living"; also, in the case of friends for pleasure, "a few are enough, as a little seasoning in food is enough" (*NE* 1170b23-29).

But, also, as far as primary friendships are concerned, in the same sense that there is a limit to how many people make a city, it is obvious that one cannot live in the company of many people and share oneself between them, since "it becomes hard to share personally in the joys and sorrows of many, because it is likely to turn out that one shares the pleasure of one and the distress of another at the same time" (*NE*,1171a6-8). In fact, Aristotle even seems to suggest here that true primary friendship can only truly exist between two people, since, as he points out, "the celebrated cases are spoken of as between two people" (*NE*,1171a15-16). Aristotle has nothing but contempt for people who have too many friends:

> Those, however, who have too many friends and treat everybody they meet as if they were close to them seem to be friends of nobody, except in the sense that fellow-citizens are friends. These people are called obsequious. In the way fellow citizens are friends, indeed, one can be a friend to many and yet not obsequious, but a genuinely good person; but one cannot have many friends for their virtue and for their own sake. We must be content to find even a few friends like this. (*NE*,1171a15-20)

These Aristotelian remarks that perfect friends are rare and that perfect friendship anyway requires time and familiarity are quite important in illuminating Aristotle's notion of perfect friendship. Aristotle tells us something that we all intuitively already know: that true friendship is rare, if not impossible, and that it sometimes takes a lifetime to recognise a friend. Nevertheless, since Aristotle acknowledges this, he could not have intended

this kind of friendship to be the only one that he counts as friendship, since we all have relationships we call friendships that do not match this ideal.

In general, there are several issues that arise from this distinction of the three kinds of friendship. First, what about the evolution of friendship? Can different kinds of friendship evolve, i.e. what does Aristotle have to say about friendships developing and changing from one kind to another? For example, can friendship start from mutual advantage and then develop into primary friendship? Second, what about combining the three kinds of friendship? Friendship that is primary but is also pleasurable and advantageous? Or would that fall under the definition of primary friendship anyway? Most likely, one could say that such friendship, which is primary but also pleasurable and advantageous, would fall under primary friendship, since Aristotle explicitly mentions pleasure in this context. This is a point Aristotle acknowledges in the *Eudemian Ethics* at 1240b 37-40 where he says that all friendships reduce to the primary kind (πᾶσαι αἱ φιλίαι ἀνάγονται πρὸς τήν πρώτην). Also, *NE*, 1156b 15 suggests that primary friendship involves pleasure.

One could plausibly argue, I suppose, that this distinction between the three kinds of friendship may be a very interesting one, but perhaps it should only be used as a way of making the point that friendships vary greatly and should not be taken formally in the sense of thinking that all kinds of friendship relations fall strictly under it. There is enough room in Aristotle's account, I think, to argue that he did not intend primary friendship to be the only kind of friendship recognised truly as such, or to be *the* only kind of real friendship. If he did, then why bother discussing the other two kinds of friendship on the first place? It is more likely that primary friendship is, for Aristotle, an ideal form of friendship--not always easy or plausible to be achieved--which serves as a model for the other kinds. Indeed, Aristotle himself includes family relations as forms of *philia* and illustrates *philia* by a mother's love for her child (NE 1159a27-1159b1), despite the fact that such

relationships do not really fall under any of the three kinds of friendship. The other two kinds of friendship are classified as friendships because they resemble primary friendship which serves as the prototype of friendship, but this does not imply that Aristotle looks down on these kinds of friendship.

But, is this consistent with the definition offered previously [x and y are friends iff (1) x and y know each other, (2) x and y have mutual goodwill for the other's sake, (3) x and y feel affection for each other, and (4) x and y recognise (2) and (3)], and, as Cooper asks, what was it that inclined the Greeks to group all these different relations together under this common name? Ross suggests that the word *philia* "can stand for any mutual attraction between two human beings".[273] But this account of Ross's seems to let in too much according to Cooper,[274] since there are many forms of attraction that would not count as *philia*. So, for example, I could meet a stranger on the Edinburgh train, be mutually attracted to each other during our conversation, and never see him again for the rest of my life, but this mutual attraction could hardly qualify as friendship. One could also add to Cooper's point that 'attraction' anyway sounds wrong when discussing, for example, one's relations with fellow citizens. According to Cooper, the account of liking (τό φιλεῖν) that Aristotle puts forward in the *Rhetoric* suggests that "the central idea contained in *philia* is that of doing well by someone for *his* own sake, out of concern for him (and not, or not merely, out of concern for oneself)".[275] Cooper argues that this definition from the *Rhetoric* does state the core of Aristotle's own analysis of *philia*. In this sense, according to Cooper, for Aristotle "*philia*, taken most generally, is any relationship characterised by mutual liking, as this is defined in the *Rhetoric*, that is, by mutual well-wishing and well-doing out of concern for one another.[276] In addition, as Cooper points out, "the different

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[273] Ross (1995), p. 235.
[274] Cooper (1999), p.313.
[275] Cooper (1999), *ibid.*
[276] Cooper (1999), p. 314.

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forms of *philia* listed above could be viewed just as different contexts and circumstances in which this kind of mutual well-doing can arise; within the family, in the state at large, and among business partners and political cronies, well-doing out of concern for other persons can arise, and where it does so, there exists a friendship".[277]

It is obvious from Aristotle's analysis that, from all three kinds of friendship, primary friendship (or friendship of the good, or virtue-friendship, or friendship of character) is the one to be preferred. Cooper thinks that the expression 'character-friendship' ('moral friendship'; ἠθική φιλία) is the one that mostly represents what Aristotle had in mind when discussing primary friendship, since this expression "brings out accurately that the basis for the relationship is the recognition of good qualities of character, without in any way implying that the parties are moral heroes". Furthermore, Cooper adds that one should not overlook the significance of the fact that Aristotle himself prefers to characterise the central type of friendship by concentrating almost exclusively on the friendship of perfectly good men, since "it is an aspect of the pervasive teleological bias of his thinking, which causes him always to search out the best and most fully realised instance when attempting to define a kind of a thing"; nevertheless "Aristotle does not himself mistake the perfect instance for the only member of the class, and there is no necessity for us to do so".[278]

Furthermore, it is interesting to point out that Aristotle introduces a further distinction (ἠθική καὶ νομική φιλία) in some places in both the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics*. This is a very interesting distinction, different from the one concerning the three kinds of friendship that Aristotle put forward previously. This distinction between moral and legal friendship is in a way one that can be applied to all three kinds of friendship. Aristotle in

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[277] Cooper (1999), p. 313.
[278] Cooper (1999), p. 320.

Nicomachean Ethics (1162b 21-23) is talking about a variety of utility friendship that depends on trust rather than legally binding agreement. But there is a discrepancy between the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics* in the sense that Aristotle seems to say in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that ἠθική φιλία can be for utility whereas in the *Eudemian Ethics* he seems to say that it is not.

It should be noted though that ἠθική φιλία should not be confused in any way with what Cooper calls 'character-friendship' which is the 'primary' friendship, the friendship of the good. This is apparent from the Greek, since ἠθική φιλία is contrasted with νομική φιλία. Clearly the fact that the obligations of a particular form of friendship are not legally applicable does not mean that friendship must be a case of primary friendship. So, primary friendship, or what Cooper calls 'character-friendship', is merely a form of ἠθική φιλία, but it is not identical with ἠθική φιλία.

Aristotle distinguishes in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1162b 21-23 between moral and legal friendship: "as justice is in two kinds, one unwritten and the other legal, one kind of friendship of utility is moral and the other legal" (ἔοικε δέ, καθάπερ τὸ δίκαιον ἐστι διττόν, τὸ μὲν ἄγραφον τὸ δὲ κατὰ νόμον, καί τῆς κατὰ τὸ χρήσιμον φιλίας ἡ μὲν ἠθικὴ ἡ δὲ νομικὴ εἶναι). In this passage, ἠθική φιλία is referred to as the type of friendship which is not on fixed terms in contrast to the legal type which is on fixed terms, in the sense that if one makes a gift it is not clear what should be expected in return while in the case of legal friendship it is clear and not ambiguous what should be expected in return. The same argument is presented in *Eudemian Ethics* 1242b-1243a. But in *Eudemian Ethics* 1242b 35-1243a 2, Aristotle, when referring to a kind of 'political' friendship, points out that this kind of 'moral' friendship is quite different from the 'legal' one, in the sense that 'moral' friendship in fact merely pretends to be 'moral', like that of good men that is. These kind of men wish to have both utility and excellence together, but in fact they really associate together for the sake of utility while

representing their friendship as moral, like that of good men; by pretending to trust one another they make out their friendship to be not merely legal.

In the *Eudemian Ethics* he also refers to ἠθική φιλία at 1241a 1-14 where he discusses the relation of kindly feeling or goodwill (εὔνοια) to friendship. Aristotle points out that, when we distinguish friendship according to the three sorts, εὔνοια is found only in the primary sort. Since goodwill seems like to be not goodwill for him who feels the goodwill, but for him towards whom it is felt, and if goodwill existed in the friendship towards the pleasant, then men would feel goodwill towards inanimate things, therefore, goodwill is concerned with the friendship that depends on character (ἠθική). From this passage we can indeed see that Aristotle considers primary friendship to be a form of ἠθική φιλία, but not identical with it.

6.5 Defining political friendship

Aristotle talks of political friendship in various places in both the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics*. As he points out in the last chapter of book IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, "friendship is community, and as we are in relation to ourselves, so we are in relation to a friend" (1171b32-33).[279] But what is the role political friendship plays in the city for Aristotle, and what is its relation to justice?

Relating justice to friendship was not an alien conception in Greek society. On the contrary, as we know from Plato's *Republic*, most Greeks thought that "justice is doing good to one's friends and harming one's enemies". Indeed, the contrast between friends and enemies was very strong in Classical Greece.[280] Justice is also conceived by Plato and Aristotle primarily as the personal virtue of justice (δικαιοσύνη), "the mainspring of the behaviour

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[279] κοινωνία γάρ ἡ φιλία, καὶ ὡς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἔχει, οὕτω καὶ πρὸς τὸν φίλον
[280] See, Blundell (1989).

of one individual towards another",[281] and indeed we all know that Plato talks of 'justice in the city' and 'justice in the individual'.

For example, Creon in Sophocles's *Antigone* (182f) argues that loyalty to the city is an essential qualification for being a friend, a view that has been called 'a radical idea for a Greek'.[282] Indeed, Creon--contrary to common Greek opinion, but reflecting at the same time the development of the patriotic spirit of democratic Athens--has no regard for anyone who values a *philos*, a personal friend or relative, above his native land.[283] For Creon, friendship (either personal or familial) poses a moral danger to citizenship in this context.

But, as Schwarzenbach argues, Aristotle's notion of 'political friendship' should not be confused with the phenomenon of 'political patronage',[284] as presented by Polemarchus in Plato's *Republic*. Polemarchus, as we know, argues in *Republic* 332d that justice is nothing but "helping friends and harming enemies", and, when asked what he means by friends, he replies: "It is likely ... that one loves those one thinks good, and hates those one thinks wicked" (334c). According to Schwarzenbach, "although such highly partial friendship politics may indeed have been closer to the actual practice of the ancient Greek *polis*, it is important not to confuse political patronage with Aristotle's normative notion of political friendship", since "in the latter, impartiality and the rule of law are being advocated, even if Aristotle has not yet arrived at the idea of universal individual rights".[285] This is a very important point not only in relation to Aristotle's notion of political friendship but also as far as the conception of justice in Plato's *Republic* is concerned, since one could see the whole of the *Republic* as a response to the question of political patronage that the Polemarchus view advocates. In the

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[281] Schofield (1999), p. 83.
[282] Blundell (1989), p. 118.
[283] Blundell (1999), pp. 117-118.
[284] It should be noted though that Plato never uses the term 'political friendship' in the *Republic*.
[285] Schwarzenbach (1996), p. 105.

same way, as Annas has pointed out, Aristotle's account of personal friendship can be seen as trying to answer the questions raised in Plato's *Lysis* concerning the altruistic nature of friendship and the relation between liking and thinking good.[286]

In general, Aristotle mentions several kinds of *philia* similar to the political one: friendships of fellow-citizens, fellow-tribesmen, shipmates, etc. (φιλίαι πολιτικαὶ, φυλετικαὶ, συμπλοϊκαὶ, κοινωνικαὶ, *NE*, 1161b 12). These, as he says, are more like friendships in a community, because they appear to be based on a sort of agreement; in this sense, the friendship of host and guest could also fall into this category. Communities or associations like these--as we have seen previously in chapter two--although similar to the political community, should be distinguished from it. It is the 'constitution' (the system of courts, a common set of laws and a shared conception of justice) which distinguishes the political community from other associations either merely contractual or commercial.

Friendship and justice seem to be concerned with the same things and to be found in the same people:

> For there seems to be some kind of justice in every community, and some kind of friendship as well. At any rate, people address as friends their shipmates and fellow soldiers, and similarly those who are members of other kinds of community or association with them. And the extent of their community is the extent of their friendship, since it is also the extent of their justice. The proverb, 'What friends have, they have in common', is correct, since friendship is based on community. But while brothers and comrades have everything in common, what the others whom we have mentioned have in common is more limited--more in some cases, less in others, since friendship too differs in degree. (*NE* 1159b25-1160a)

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[286] Annas (1977), pp. 532-554.

Aristotle does not explicitly state exactly how political friendship is related to the three kinds of friendship already mentioned, but it seems he regards it as a special case of advantage-friendship.[287] He points out that the political community is formed and survives for the sake of the common advantage derived by its members from it, in such a sense that it is essential to such a community that it aims at securing what is needed by its members to support their lives:

> All communities seem to be parts of the political community, since people journey together with something useful in mind, to supply something for life. And the political community seems originally to have come together and to continue for the sake of what is useful, since it is this that legistrators aim at, and it is said that what is useful, in common, is just. (*NE*, 1160a 11-12, a 21-23)

All these different small communities which exist within the larger political association seem to be subordinate to this political community, because the political community aims not at what is immediately useful, but at what is useful for the whole life. "All these communities, then, appear to be parts of the political community; and the particular kinds of friendship will correspond to the particular kinds of community" (1160a28-30).

This is problematic for Aristotle's general notion of friendship, since if one defines political friendship in this way, then there is a danger of it not being friendship in any real sense. Political friendship, defined thus--it could be argued--is friendship only in name; it has in fact nothing to do with the definition of friendship offered previously.

But, as Cooper has argued, political friends nonetheless retain the aspects of mutual awareness and liking, of the reciprocal wishing the other well for that other's sake, and of doing things for the friend, only now they are evidenced in a general concern.[288] The primary difference between personal

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[287] Cooper (1999), p. 333.

[288] Cooper (1999b), pp. 356-377. Price (1989, pp. 179-205) offers an alternative interpretation, since he attaches the label of 'virtue' to civic friendship, disagreeing thus with Cooper. Stern-

and political friends is that among civic friends intimate knowledge of the friend and a close emotional bond are absent. In personal friendships the intimate knowledge of and the close emotional bond between friends allows for far greater contingent inequalities without these destroying the friendship itself. The opposite, though, is the case with political friends. In the case of political friendship, there are normally no ties of intimacy, of personal knowledge or of individual affection. Also, since political friendship is based from the outset on reciprocal advantage, not only real, but perceived injustices or proportionate inequalities between the citizens will far more quickly threaten an end to the friendship relationship.

Primary friendship--being the central and basic kind of friendship-- allows all sorts of interpersonal relations which involve mutual other-concern to fall under friendship. As Cooper points out, "civic friendship, then, as the special form of friendship characteristic of this kind of community, is founded on the experience and continued expectation, on the part of each citizen, of profit and advantage to himself, in common with the others, from membership in the civic association".[289] Civic friendship then exists when the fellow-citizens, to one another's mutual knowledge, like (φιλεῖν) one another, that is, where each citizen wishes well (and is known to wish well) to the others, and is willing to undertake to confer benefits on them, for their own sake, in consequence of recognising that he himself is regularly benefited by the actions of the others.[290]

In such a community animated by political friendship, each citizen assumes that all the others, even those hardly or not at all known to him, are willing supporters of their common institutions and willing contributors to the common social project, from which he, together with all the other citizens,

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Gillet (1995, pp. 147-169) also agrees with Price in this. I do not follow these interpretations in my discussion, since I agree with Cooper.

[289] Cooper (1999), p. 333.

[290] Cooper (1999), *ibid.*

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benefits. As Cooper points out, if this is what political or civic friendship is, it is not surprising that Aristotle should remark that lawgivers are more concerned to foster friendship among their citizens than they are to put their relations on a footing of justice: "For justice can exist perfectly well among those who care nothing for one another and who would not lift a finger to help anyone else, except insofar as rules of justice may require; the sense of justice, understood as respect for fairness and legality, is compatible with a suspicious, narrow, hard, and unsympathetic character" (*NE*, 1155 a 23-24).[291]

In a general atmosphere of distrust and mutual ill-will, citizens can still perceive themselves to be unjustly treated even if they are not so--even if justice or 'proportionate' equality is being strictly adhered to. In aiming for unanimity the task of the legislator is to manage perceived as well as real injustices, and, hence, to strengthen the political bond. Justice will not be experienced as such in a context of hostility and mutual ill-will. It is because of this that in order for a society to be stable and good--a society where the truest form of justice is not merely meted out, but recognised by all citizens involved--it should be animated by political friendship.

This is the account of political friendship offered in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. But, as Schofield points out, political friendship in the *Eudemian Ethics*, VII. 10 is something quite different than the one presented in the *Nicomachean Ethics* account. It looks quite different from the 'civic friendship' that Cooper has sought to find in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where 'civic friendship' was a matter of interest in and concern for the well-being of every citizen just because the other is a fellow citizen. Schofield's view is that political friendship in the *Eudemian Ethics* is a matter of contingent individual personal relationships and of straightforward advantage friendship.

Aristotle discusses political friendship in the *Eudemian Ethics* at 1242a1-1243b 37. He refers to political friendship (the friendship of kinsmen,

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[291] Cooper (1999), *ibid*.

comrades, partners) as the one that "has been established mainly in accordance with utility (τὸ χρήσιμον); for men seem to have come together because each is not sufficient for himself (διὰ τὸ μὴ αὐταρκεῖν), though they would have come together anyhow for the sake of living in company (τοῦ συζῆν χάριν)" (1242a 6-9). The justice belonging to the friendship of those useful to one another is, according to Aristotle, pre-eminently justice, for it is political justice (πολιτικόν δίκαιον, 1242a 11-12).

Indeed, Aristotle in the *Eudemian Ethics* does not, as Schofield points out, "flatly assert that all justice is relative to a friend"; he presents it as the conclusion of a syllogism in which the middle term is κοινωνός (associate or partner):[292]

> To inquire, then, how to behave to a friend is to look for a particular kind of justice, for generally all justice is in relation to a friend. For justice involves a number of individuals who are partners, and the friend is a partner either in family or in one's scheme of life. (*EE*, 1242 a 19-22)

The relationship between friendship and political association (κοινωνία) that Aristotle makes is quite important here. It follows that political friendship is based on mere advantage in this account, as Aristotle seems to include it as such a few lines later. As he says at 1242a 19-30:

> For man is not merely a political but also a household-maintaining animal, and his unions are not, like those of the other animals, confined to certain times, and formed with any chance partner, whether male or female; but man has a tendency to partnership with those to whom he is by nature akin. There would, then, be partnership and a kind of justice, even if there were no state; and the household is a kind of friendship; the relation, indeed, of master and servant is that of an art and its tools, a soul and its body; and these are not friendships, nor forms of justice, but something similar to justice; just as health is not justice, but something similar.

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[292] Schofield (1999), p. 85.

Aristotle also argues there that it is in the household first where we have the sources and springs of friendship, of political organisation and of justice. This can be seen if we take into account that the friendship of man and wife is a friendship based on utility and that it is a kind of a partnership. Also, the friendship of a father and son is the same as that of god to man, of the benefactor to the benefited, and in general of the natural ruler to the natural subject. The friendship of brothers to one another, on the other hand, is eminently that of comrades, inasmuch as it involves equality (1242a 30-1242b 2).[293]

This account of political friendship is, according to Schofield, focused on advantage, but it is also a form of egalitarian friendship (*EE*, VII. 10, 1242 a 9-11, b 21-22, 27-31). There is a contrast with friendship based on superiority, hierarchy or deference. Justice is in the hierarchical cases a matter of proportional equality, in the egalitarian it is one of numerical equality. As Aristotle says in *Eudemian Ethics*, VII, 10, 1242 a 9-11, "Only political friendship and the deviation corresponding to it[294] are not just friendships, but associations which operate as friends do: the other sorts are based on superiority".

According to Schofield, Aristotle's[295] comments on the equality of status characteristic of political friendship focus not so much on equality as such, but

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[293] It should be noted here that Fred Miller thinks that this passage in the *Eudemian Ethics* explicitly admits a non-political form of justice. The kind of justice discussed in that passage could be regarded, according to Miller, as a type of 'proto-justice', in view of the subsequent statement: 'In the household first are the sources and springs of friendship, the constitution, and justice' (1242a 40-1242b 1). For Miller this is evidence that Aristotle in general recognises non-political forms of justice and that the virtue of justice in all its forms is not only concerned with the community. But, I do not see how Miller can infer this from a passage which explicitly discusses 'political' friendship, and is, hence, concerned with friendship and justice in the political association. I do not think that Miller's point is successful, although I do agree with the point made in the same section of his book concerning the scope of justice not to be confined to members of one's own political community, as I point out later in this section. (Miller 1995, pp. 84-86.)

[294] This refers according to Cooper to democratic friendship--that characteristic of a *polis* in which there is self-interested popular rule.

[295] It should be noted that Schofield does not accept the view that Aristotle is the author of the *Eudemian Ethics* which is odd in the sense that one can ask, if Aristotle was not the author of

on utilitarian motivation and the weakness of the bonding it creates: "I help out other citizens when I perform a liturgy, that is, undertake some service for the city. But I am only taking my turn, in expectation that I will get advantage back when others do theirs".[296] Aristotle makes two observations. First, that when citizens see no more advantage in their friendship, they simply terminate it. There is a tacit contrast with hierarchical friendships: between king and subject, or father and son, or benefactor and beneficiary (*EE*, 1242 b 22-27). Second, the political equality of citizens under a polity means that the notion of rule is altogether thinner. Government is not based in nature nor is it kingly but something one undertakes in the spirit of an economic exchange.[297]

Furthermore, at *Eudemian Ethics*, 1242 b 31-1243a 14 Aristotle draws the distinction that we have seen previously within advantage friendship between what he calls 'political' (πολιτική) and 'ethical' (ήθική) friendship. According to this argument, political friendship could be either legal or moral. This opposition between political and ethical forms of advantage friendship is a function of a whole range of other contrasts. Thus, political is based on agreement, while ethical is based on trust; political looks to the transaction and to equality, while ethical looks to intention; political is legal, while ethical is companionable.[298] As he says at 1243a 31-35:

> Political friendship, then, looks to the agreement and the thing,
> moral friendship to the choice; here then we have a truer justice,
> and a friendly justice. The reason for the quarrel is that moral
> friendship is more noble, but useful (χρησίμη) friendship is more
> necessary; men start, then, by proposing to be moral friends, i.e.
> friends through excellence; but as soon as some private interest
> arises, they show clearly they are not so. For the multitude aim at

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the *Eudemian Ethics*, what does it matter anyway that his account of political friendship is different in the *Eudemian Ethics* from the account offered in the *Nicomachean Ethics*?

[296] Schofield (1999), p. 90.

[297] Schofield (1999), *ibid*.

[298] Schofield (1999),p. 92.

the noble only when they have plenty of everything else; and at noble friendship similarly.

Aristotle makes a very interesting point immediately after this passage when he discusses recriminations (ἐγκλήματα) in dissimilar friendships and how justice is to be distributed in such cases. What is really interesting is the explanation he offers concerning the occurrence of recriminations in friendships, as well as the way he proposes to resolve these. As he says at 1243 b 15-27,

> Recriminations are common in dissimilar friendships, where action and reaction are not in the same straight line; and it is not easy to see what is just. For it is hard to measure by just this one unit different directions; we find this in the relation of lovers, for there the one pursues the other at times for his utility. When the love is over, one changes as the other changes. Then they calculate the quid pro quo, thus Python and Pammenes quarrelled; and so do teacher and pupil (for knowledge and money have no common measure), and so Herodicus the doctor quarrelled with a patient who paid him only a small fee; such too was the case of the king and the lyre-player; the former regarded his associate as pleasant, the latter his as useful; and so the king, when he had to pay, chose to regard himself as an associate of the pleasant kind, and said that just as the player had given him pleasure by singing, so he had given the player pleasure by his promise.

This is interesting since it explains, or at least it tries to offer one kind of explanation of why disputes and recriminations in friendships occur. This is due to the fact that the friendship in which the recrimination occurs was dissimilar; the parties did not enter the friendship with the same things (utility, or pleasantness, or excellence) in mind. So, their friendship was not one of pleasure for example for both parties concerned and this is why, according to Aristotle, recrimination takes place.

In such cases of solving recrimination among dissimilar friendships the role of justice is, according to Aristotle, that of proportion. In order to be able to

decide in such matters, the measurement must be by one measure, only here not by a term but by a ratio; one must measure by proportion, just as one measures in the associations of citizens. According to this, to all whose exchanges are not of the same for the same, proportion is the measure (1243b 26-38).

This is the account of political friendship presented by Aristotle in the *Eudemian Ethics*. It is true that it differs from that in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as Schofield quite rightly has pointed out. Nevertheless, I do not think that its importance is quite so grave as Schofield wants us to think nor that it undermines the Cooper interpretation. One could argue--trying to establish consistency between the two ethical treatises--that Aristotle merely discusses in the *Eudemian Ethics* an additional kind of political friendship based mainly on advantage that he did not discuss in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This kind of political friendship is closer to what we could call economic friendship, as Aristotle refers to it in *Eudemian Ethics*, 1242 a 23: "For a man is not merely a political but also a household-maintaining animal". But this does not mean that the account of 'political' friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is at all undermined.

6.6 Political friendship, justice and the unity of the state

In what way, though, is political friendship related to justice, and what is it exactly that friendship can achieve for the state? More important, what kind of unanimity of the state is it that Aristotle has in mind? How does friendship generate concord which contributes to the unity of the state in the same sense that justice can? How is the unity of the state to be understood? What kind of unity is Aristotle advocating here?

Aristotle's criticisms of Plato's *Republic* in *Politics* Book II could help us illuminate further this notion of the unity of the state and its relation to friendship. As we know, Aristotle's remarks on Plato's *Republic* should not be taken at face value as direct criticisms of the *Republic*, but should rather be seen as expressions of Aristotle's own political position.[299]

Aristotle makes an important point when he complains that Plato's view would give rise to a 'watery' friendship in Book II of the *Politics* where he criticises Plato's idea of community of women and children in the *Republic*. Indeed, his argument against such a 'watery' friendship in the *Politics*--as it has been pointed out by Stalley[300] and Mayhew[301]--is essential for achieving an understanding of the notion of Aristotle's political friendship, and its relation to justice and the unity of the state.

As Aristotle points out, "the spirit of friendship is likely to exist to a lesser degree where women and children are in common; and the governed class ought to have little of that spirit if it is to obey and not to attempt revolution"(1262b 1-3). Friendship, he argues, is the chief good of cities, because it is the best safeguard against the danger of fractional disputes, and, indeed, 'Socrates' himself particularly commends the ideal of the unity of the city which unity is the result of friendship. It is similar to what 'Aristophanes' in Plato's *Symposium* (191a, 192d-e) refers to when he speaks of lovers desiring out of friendship to grow together into a unity, and to be one instead of two. In the case of the lovers, it would be inevitable that both or at least one of them should cease to exist; but in the case of political association--Aristotle points out--there would be merely a watery sort of friendship, since a father would be very little disposed to say 'mine' of a son, and a son would be as little disposed to say 'mine' of a father: "Just as a little sweet wine, mixed with a great deal of water, produces a tasteless mixture, so family feeling is diluted and tasteless

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299 Stalley (1991), pp. 182-199.
300 Stalley (19991), pp. 191-193.
301 Mayhew (1997), pp. 79-85.

when family names have as little meaning as they have in a constitution of this sort, and when there is so little reason for a father treating his sons as sons, or a son treating his father as a father, or brothers one another as brothers" (1262b 17-22). Aristotle points out at the end of this discussion of 'watery' friends that there are two motives which particularly move people to care for and love an object: "the first is that the object should belong to yourself, while the second is that you should like it" (δύο γάρ ἔστιν ἃ μάλιστα ποιεῖ κήδεσθαι τούς ἀνθρώπους καὶ φιλεῖν, τό τε ἴδιον καὶ τὸ ἀγαπητὸν). But neither of these two motives can exist among those who live in a constitution such as the one described above.[302]

As Stalley points out, according to Aristotle, "friendship is an essential ingredient in the good life, not just because it is useful but because it is the source of some of our greatest satisfactions". In addition, there is also a political dimension of friendship, since it is both what holds the city together and a main reason for its existence. The city--as Stalley suggests--"is formed for the good life which requires relations with one's fellows; it also involves parents, children wives and in general one's friends and fellow-citizens: thus the city is to be valued as providing the context for friendship".[303]

Thus, the Platonic notion of 'watery' friendship renders friendship to be no friendship at all, either in the Aristotelian or in the contemporary sense. Plato, of course, does acknowledge the importance of friendship; the whole purpose of abolishing the family was after all in order to establish friendship in the city, to render the city into a unified whole. But, as Stalley argues, Plato differs from Aristotle in two quite essential points:

(1) He treats friendship as a means of preserving the state rather than the state as a means of preserving friendship.

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[302] Aristotle's argument about 'watery' friends supports further the claim made previously in this chapter that it is not possible to legislate friendship.
[303] Stalley (1991), p. 193.

(2) He pays little attention to the fact that, since friendship is essentially a relationship between individuals, the number of friends is necessarily limited.[304]

Aristotle, of course, does not think that. He argues that there is a limited number of friends that one could have. Finite beings that we are, we can only be in a state of friendship with a limited number of people. In this sense, "it follows that only in a secondary sense can we enjoy friendship with a large number of people"; "for this reason, Aristotle attaches importance not only to the family but also to other forms of social organisation within the state".[305]

The role of friendship in the city is, for Aristotle, to generate concord (the unanimity of the city) and to safeguard justice. As he points out though, "concord is not agreement in belief, since this can occur even among people unknown to one another". "Nor are people described as being in concord when they agree about just anything, for example, the heavens (since concord here has nothing to do with friendship), but a city is said to be in concord when people agree about what is beneficial, rationally choose the same things, and carry out common resolutions". (*NE* 1167a22-28)

Aristotle stresses that concord in a city, if achieved, does not in any case deprive the citizen body of its separateness and individuality, or its ability to deliberate on political decisions:

> In the case of a city, concord exists when all the citizens think that public offices ought to be elective, or that they ought to make an alliance with Sparta, or that Pittacus ought to govern, when he himself is willing. But when each person, like those in The Phoenissae, wants the same thing all for himself, then there is civil strife. For being in concord does not consist merely in each person's having the same thing in mind for the same person. (*NE* 1167a28-1167b2)

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[304]Stalley (1991), *ibid.*
[305] Stalley (1991), *ibid.*

It should be, nevertheless, pointed out that the relation between justice and friendship does not make friendship a necessary condition for justice. Justice can exist, in Aristotle's account, even if we had no political friendship in the city. The state might not have concord, but then again one would not expect all constitutions to have that; if they did, they would be no imperfect ones. Concord seems to be political friendship, since it is concerned with what benefits people and what affects their lives. This kind of concord is found among good people, since they are in concord with themselves and with each other, being as it were of the same mind wishing for and aiming in common at what is just and beneficial. As he points out,

> Bad people cannot be in concord, except to a small extent; for they try to get more than their share of advantages, while falling short in difficult jobs and public services. And since each wishes this for himself, he keeps a sharp eye on his neighbour and holds him back, because if people do not look out for the common interest, it is destroyed. So what happens is that they are in civil strife, pressing one another to do what is just while not wishing to do it themselves. (*NE* 1167b9-16)

So, in conclusion--from what we have seen in the previous sections--for Aristotle it is impossible to have many character and parental friendships. Although it is possible to have many friendships of varying intensities, very few of those will be intimate in the way that character and parental friendships are. According to Plato though, the citizens are supposed to feel close familial affection for one another similar to that experienced in the character and parental friendships that Aristotle describes in the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics*. But, we have previously seen why Aristotle thinks that to feel close familial affection for one another in the city would be impossible.

The political friendship that Aristotle advocates in both the *Politics* and the *Ethics* could not of course be any sort of primary friendship, since this would mean that Aristotle would have made the same mistake he accused

Plato of; by attempting to make political friendship as close as character or familial friendship, the citizens would have to feel close personal friendship for one another as if the whole city was a close family. But, as Aristotle points out, such a thing could not be feasible since it is not possible to be friends with so many people. So, at the end, Plato's solution will result in leaving affection out of the ideal city. Aristotelian political friendship does not require from us to feel the same strong feelings of affection and liking that primary friendship does. Aristotelian political friendship does, nevertheless, require us to have concern for our fellow citizens; 'concern for others' as opposed to 'respect for others' that liberalism advocates. Therefore, political friendship for Aristotle is a much weaker version of primary friendship. Political friendship will, nevertheless, for Aristotle contribute to the unity of the state by creating agreement or concord (ὁμόνοια). But the unity of the state advocated by Aristotle is one where citizens agree on what the proper conception of justice would be, enabling them thus to make arrangements concerning the rulers and the ruled, the election of offices etc. As we have seen in chapter two, the unity of the city depends on the parts of the city being held together by a certain type of constitution.

6. 7 Political friendship and altruism

The above discussion brings us to another aspect of Aristotelian friendship bearing on the political and the moral that I would like to discuss in this section. Stern-Gillet argues that "Aristotelian fully-fledged friendship effects a harmonisation between the self-centred notion of *eudaimonia* and the altruism that many a later philosopher claims to be central to the moral life. Motivating humans to feel for others, as well as to act in their interest, complete friendship also uniquely contributes to the cognitive self-

actualisation of virtuous persons".[306] Aristotle accepts the common belief that friendship involves altruism, and active goodwill, which requires--in the case of primary friendship at least--concern for the friend for the friend's own sake (*NE*, 1155b31-4). But, as we have previously seen, Aristotle's account of friendship is not limited to the ideal or primary one, and this also has bearing to the notion of political friendship.

This aspect of friendship is very important, especially since it can help us make sense of the role that friendship occupies in Aristotle's moral philosophy in general and its connection with the notion of *eudaimonia* in particular. As Ross points out, Aristotle's discussion of friendship is a valuable corrective to an impression that the rest of Aristotle's ethical work tends to make:

> For the most part Aristotle's moral system is decidedly self-centred. It is at his own εὐδαιμονία, we are told, that man aims and should aim. In the account of justice there is an implicit recognition of the rights of others, but in the whole of the *Ethics* outside the books on friendship very little is said to suggest that men can and should take a warm personal interest in other people; altruism is almost completely absent. Traces of an egoistic view are present even in the account of friendship, as they should be, for friendship is not mere benevolence but demands a return. But justice is done to the altruistic element; loving is said to be more essential to friendship than being loved; a man wishes well to his friend for his friend sake, not as means to his own happiness. The various forms of friendship mentioned by Aristotle are all illustrations of the essentially social nature of man. On the lowest plane he needs 'friendships of utility', since he is not economically self-sufficing. On the higher plane, he forms 'friendships of pleasure'; he takes a natural delight in the society of his fellows. On a higher still, he forms 'friendships of goodness' in which friend helps friend to live the best life.[307]

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[306] Stern-Gillet (1995), p. 4.
[307] Ross (1995), pp. 235-236.

It is true that both friendship and justice help us view Aristotle's moral theory in particular, and Greek moral theory in general, as being much less egoistic than they usually seem. Since the main preoccupation of ancient moral thought has been an assessment of one's own life and the reordering of one's life in a reflective way, it is obvious why such an activity would seem essentially individualist and egoistic. Indeed, some claim that Aristotle's account of friendship is the only thing that rescues his otherwise individualistic account of morality. It is because of the notion of friendship, that three possibilities are open for a moral agent: 'his own good life', 'the good life' and 'to share a conception of *the* good life with another'. It is because of the possibility of friendship that the moral agent is in a position to 'open' himself to the existence of another and to pursue the good life with this other person.

It is also true of course that Aristotle does not think that we could have feelings of friendship for people who are remote from us or for people we know nothing about. As Annas correctly points out, for Aristotle "the pursuit of our final end does not directly imply any concern for the 'furthest Mysian',[308] someone living in far-off foreign country, with whom we have no personal ties at all".[309] Annas uses this example of 'the furthest Mysian'-- finding it a suitable example to make the point about impartiality in moral theory--since the Anonymous Commentator on the *Theaetetus*, in his note on *Theaetetus* 143d, introduces the furthest Mysian in the moral context of the requirement of justice, according to the Stoics, that one be impartial to everyone, even if you have no personal ties with them.[310]

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[308] Plato, *Theaetetus* 209b; "the remotest peasant in Asia", according to McDowell's translation of Plato's *Theaetetus* (Oxford 1973). At *Theaetetus* 209b Socrates complains that the conditions introduced so far for distinguishing something in one's thought will not in fact distinguish Socrates' thought of Theaetetus or of 'the furthest Mysian'. This phrase is used to suggest proverbial remoteness, together with a certain contempt.

[309] Annas (1993), pp. 250-251.

[310] Annas (1993), pp. 250-251, n.7.

Aristotle does not seem to discuss, under the heading of ethically required other concern, concern for the interests of others however close or distant one's commitment to them. His attention is focused rather on friendship as other-concern restricted to those people to whom one has a certain kind of commitment which can be deep, as with friendship based on excellence, or shallow, as in utility friendships. In all cases though, friendship involves some personal commitment, and thus cannot be demonstrated to 'all humanity' in the sense of caring for people about whom we know nothing or to whom we have no special kind of personal commitment.[311] For people we know nothing about, we could of course have 'goodwill', but goodwill alone--as we have seen--is not a sufficient condition for friendship.

Nevertheless, Aristotle does seem to think that the scope of justice, at least, is not strictly confined to members of one's own political community, as Fred Miller points out.[312] Aristotle, in *Politics* 1324a 35-38, criticises those who "argue that the despotic and tyrannical form of constitution is the only one which gives happiness; and indeed there are cities where the exercise of despotic authority over neighbouring cities is made the standard to which both constitution and laws must conform". Aristotle also points out at 1324a 35-38 that cities like Sparta and Crete frame their education and the majority of their laws with a view to war. This view is criticised by Aristotle at 1324b 22-28 and 1324b 32-36 where he claims that it is strange for the citizens of cities like Sparta and Crete to expect to be treated justly themselves while they are ready to act unjustly towards their neighbours against whom they make war. According to Miller, Aristotle, at least in these passages, is in a way anticipating the more explicit efforts of later moral theorists such as the Stoics to develop a moral point of view which includes all of humanity in its scope.[313]

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[311] Annas (1993), p. 250.
[312] Miller (1995), pp. 84- 86.
[313] Miller (1995), p. 86.

The above point about the 'furthest Mysian' is interesting if we consider recent discussions regarding the demands of morality and the so-called problem of 'moral saints', as put forward by Susan Wolf.[314] It also points once more to the egoistic aspect of Greek moral theory. Moral saints, according to Wolf, would be unattractive, bland people; a society in which everyone was bent on acting for the common good would be undesirable. For us individually, living a saintly life would mean giving up things that we value other than the moral good. But those other things, for example artistic or sporting activities, are part of a healthy good life, and at the end of the day it is also because we value these goods that we think that we live a good life. Our good life is constituted by these goods.

Finally, there is, also, a different kind of reference to friendship that Aristotle makes when he refers to the virtues of social intercourse in *Nicomachean Ethics* IV, 1126b11-1127a12 that might help us acquire more insight into the way that some notion of friendship could be very important for social and political life. As he says, referring to the virtues of social intercourse, in the gatherings of people, in social life and the interchange of words and deeds, some people are thought to be obsequious (ἄρεσκοι), viz. those who to give pleasure praise everything and never oppose, but think it their duty 'to give no pain to the people they meet'; while those who, on the contrary, oppose everything and care not a whit about giving pain are called churlish and contentious (δύσκολοι καὶ δυσέριδες). The above states are obviously culpable and it is obvious that it is the middle state of these two that is laudable which is the state in virtue of which a man will put up with, and will resent, the right things and in the right way. But Aristotle points out that no name[315] has been assigned to the above state, although it most resembles friendship:

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[314] Wolf (1997), pp. 79-98.
[315] In this context, we could, I suppose, in modern English use the word 'friendliness' today .

For the person who corresponds to this middle state is very much what, with affection added, we call a good friend (τόν ἐπιεικῆ φίλον, τὸν στέργειν προσλαβόντα). *But the state in question differs from friendship in that it implies no passion or affection for one's associates; since it is not by reason of loving or hating that such a man takes everything in the right way, but by being a man of certain kind.* For he will behave so alike towards those he knows and those he does not know, towards intimates and those who are not so, except that in each case of these cases he will behave as is befitting; for it is not proper to have the same care for intimates and for strangers, nor again is it the same conditions that make it right to give pain to them. (*NE*, IV, 1126b20-30)

This person, who resembles our dearest friend who acts with equity and love, will associate with people in the right way and aim at not giving pain or at contributing love by reference to what is honourable and expedient. "For", Aristotle says, "he is concerned with the pleasures and pains of social life, and wherever it is not honourable, or is harmful, for him to contribute pleasure, he will refuse, and will choose rather to give pain; also if his acquiescence in another's action would bring disgrace, and that in a high degree, or injury, *on that other*, while his opposition brings little pain, he will not acquiesce but will decline". Also, "he will associate differently with people in high station and with ordinary people, with closer and more distant acquaintances, and so too with regard to all other differences, rendering to each class what is befitting, and while for its own sake he chooses to contribute pleasure, and avoids the giving of pain, he will be guided by the consequences, if these are greater, i.e. honour and expediency. For the sake of a great future pleasure, too, he will inflict small pains" (1126b31-1127a5). This is the person who, according to Aristotle, attains the mean, but has no name, and resembles a friend. In other words, to sum up, friendliness involves behaving as a friend would, but does not include affection. The above account demonstrates that Aristotle understood that drawing parallels between friendship and other virtues could be useful in helping us realise how it is best to live our social life, and that he

thought that the example of friendship could enhance the development of our social life.

In conclusion, one should point out that, in general, an Aristotelian account of friendship need not include an overmoralised view of friendship-- seeing the concern for the friend's good as the central element in friendship-- and neglecting thus the liking of the friend, the desire to be with him, the enjoyment of shared activities etc. So we could agree with Blum who points out, "one does not need to regard someone as a virtuous person in order to care for him as a friend; nor, in caring for him for his own sake need one focus primarily on whatever morally virtuous qualities he has".[316] It is important to point out the altruistic aspect of friendship, in particular, and of the emotions in general, stressing at the same time that the Kantian view according to which the impartial perspective is required of us in all our actions can be refuted. As Blum suggests, "friendship is a relationship in which sympathy and concern flourish, and an argument that beneficence prompted by friendship is morally good is an argument that beneficence prompted by altruistic emotion is morally good".[317]

6. 8 Political friendship in the liberal-communitarian debate

In this section, I would like to explore the communitarian notion of friendship and to examine whether this agrees with the Aristotelian one offered above. It should be pointed out that, although communitarians do discuss friendship in various places of their work, their discussions, nevertheless, do not focus on the normative notion of friendship as such, but, instead, merely mention its importance in relation to the community and the family. Also, it should be noted that no full discussion of the communitarian notion of friendship has

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[316] Blum (1993), p. 208.
[317] Blum (1993), p. 209.

so far been produced. As I will try to demonstrate in this section, communitarian accounts of friendship seem to fall victim of the Aristotelian criticisms of Plato's *Republic* on the unity of state, as discussed in section six of this chapter.

First, I will briefly present MacIntyre's account being the most characteristic and the most Aristotelian. MacIntyre sustains what he claims to be an Aristotelian conception of friendship. Friendship is for him a network of relationships that unifies a political community in virtue of a "shared conception of the good" and a "common project of creating and sustaining the life of the *polis*". MacIntyre's contrast is between a modern and an ancient conception of friendship; he decries the weakness that he attributes to what he calls "modern" friendship derived from its consignment to "private life", in contrast to the "social and political" friendship of the ancients. He also maligns the basis of modern friendship in emotion and affection and regards it as, at best, "that inferior form of friendship which is founded on mutual advantage".[318] According to MacIntyre, it is only via the virtues of the right sort of friendship that we will be able to cement the political bonds of the community.

Indeed, MacIntyre's reading of Aristotle's notion of friendship seems to be very controversial and quite different from the account of Aristotelian friendship offered above, or from any standard treatment of Aristotelian friendship for that matter. MacIntyre is right to acknowledge that a community whose shared aim is the realisation of the human good presupposes a wide range of agreement in that community on goods and virtues; it is this agreement that makes possible the kind of bond between citizens which constitutes a polis. That bond is the bond of friendship, as MacIntyre says, and "the type of friendship which Aristotle has in mind is that which embodies a shared recognition of and pursuit of a good"; "it is this sharing which is

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[318] MacIntyre (1985), pp. 146-147.

essential and primary to the constitution of any form of community, whether that of a household or that of a city".[319]

But MacIntyre seems to think that in order to reconcile Aristotle's notion of political friendship (taking into account the size of the population of a *polis*) with Aristotle's assertion that one cannot have many friends one must say that "we are to think of friendship as being the sharing of all in the common project of creating and sustaining the life of the city, a sharing incorporated in the immediacy of an individual's particular friendships".[320] Friendship is a bond between the citizens by being composed of a network of small groups of friends.

This notion of the political community as a common project is alien, according to MacIntyre, to the modern liberal individualist world which has relegated friendship to private life. Despite the fact that MacIntyre recognises that for Aristotle friendship requires affection, nevertheless he thinks that affection is secondary, since it arises within a relationship defined in terms of a common allegiance to and a common pursuit of goods. But, a reading of Aristotelian friendship that excludes affection in that way seems indeed to be a very peculiar one. MacIntyre seems to think that liberal individualism has given too much importance to affection and has abandoned the 'moral unity of Aristotelianism':

> In a modern perspective affection is often the central issue; our friends are said to be those whom we *like*, perhaps whom we like very much. 'Friendship' has become for the most part the name of a type of emotional state rather than of a type of social and political relationship. E.M. Forster once remarked that if it came to a choice between betraying his country and betraying his friend, he hoped that he would have the courage to betray his country. In an Aristotelian perspective anyone who can formulate such a contrast

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[319] MacIntyre (1985), p. 155.
[320] MacIntyre (1985), p. 156.

has no country, has no *polis*; he is a citizen of nowhere, an internal exile wherever he lives.[321]

But--as we have seen in the previous sections of this chapter--this is not the kind of political friendship that Aristotle advocates. Aristotelian political friendship is a kind of mutual advantage friendship and quite distinct from the kind of the "social and political" friendship of the ancients that MacIntyre himself advocates. In addition, it should be pointed out that Aristotle does not denounce personal friendship or affection; on the contrary he considers it to be essential to the development of our private lives. It was at this point, as we have seen before, that Aristotle's disagreement with Plato was based. Plato paid little attention to the fact that, since friendship is essentially a relationship between individuals, the number of one's friends is necessarily limited. It is only in a secondary sense that we can enjoy friendship with a large number of people. MacIntyre in this case makes the same mistake as Plato. He advocates a kind of political unity which is one of the whole in such a way as to leave no room for political or any other kind of friendship at all.[322]

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[321] MacIntyre (1985), p. 156. MacIntyre (1999, pp. 147-154) puts forward a similar account of friendship (although more Thomist than Aristotelian).

[322] Friedman (1993). In general, recently there has been an increasing feminist concern for civic friendship from similar neo Aristotelian standpoints. Another criticism of the communitarian notion of friendship has recently emerged from the feminist camp. Feminists have stressed the exclusiveness and divisiveness of friendship against the communitarian conception of the self which is too narrow. According to the feminist argument, it is urban communities and personal friendships, chosen on the basis of shared values, which provide social support to those who suffer intolerance from family or neighbourhood for their unconventional values or life-styles. In addition, personal friendships play an important psychological, moral and political role in the development of our personal and social lives in society. The communitarian vision of a society is, nevertheless, one whose citizens feel little or no friendship or sense of community with those outside of their chosen groups. The feminists argue, in a way similar to Aristotle's, that a good society is one united not only by commercial and contractual relations between different groups or individuals but also by civic friendship. This notion of friendship, if developed further, maybe could help us reconcile Aristotle's notion of friendship with liberal theory. See, also, Schwarzenbach (1996), pp. 97-128. Schwarzenbach argues that a powerful resource for a renewed conception of civic friendship is the traditional activity of women (what she calls 'reproductive activity'). According to her argument, the traditional, reproductive activity of women not only consciously aims at *philia*, but has contributed much to binding even the modern state together. The implications of such reproductive activity, as well as *philia*, should be acknowledged for political life. Nevertheless, from what we have previously seen, I think that it is obvious that such feminist approaches to *philia* does not do justice to the wider notion of Aristotelian friendship.

MacIntyre's notion of friendship is quite similar to Sandel's (as we have seen in the introduction of this chapter), although Sandel does not claim his account of friendship to be an Aristotelian one. Nevertheless, Sandel's account--being very similar to MacIntyre's--also undermines personal friendship and renders it into a 'watery' one. Walzer also discusses the sort of intimate relationships that could fall under the description of friendship when stressing the relativity of social meanings.[323]

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that I do not wish to advocate here a notion of Aristotelian friendship that would be compatible with the impartial perspective required by liberal individualism.[324] Liberals put forward the notion of 'mutual respect' that should exist among the citizens which is opposed to the notion of 'mutual concern' that the Aristotelian notion of political friendship advocates.[325] On the contrary, my aim was to stress the peculiarity of Aristotle's notion of friendship, either personal or political, to try to explain it as clearly as possible, and to show its relevance to contemporary discussions.

6. 9 Conclusion

In conclusion, one could argue that Aristotle's notion of political friendship as a form of advantage friendship poses no moral danger and does not relate to Cicero's concerns about the relation of personal friendship and the state. Aristotle, though, does not adopt Cicero's point as far as personal friendships are concerned. As Aristotle points out, there are indeed cases in which one has

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[323] Walzer (1983), pp. 227-248.

[324] Although, as it has been argued by Blum (1990, pp. 173-197), the liberal-communitarian debate could be brought into closer relationship with moral theory by arguing that the 'personal-impersonal' framework that forms the context of the debate about the legitimate scope of the personal domain presents a substantial obstacle to developing the kind of moral psychology capable of illuminating the liberalism-communitarianism controversy.

[325] Yack (1993), Kalimtzis (2000) and Swanson (1992) have indeed tried to put forward a model of Aristotelian political friendship that would be compatible with the modern liberal state.

to choose between his friends and his country where it is obvious that he has to choose the first. Nevertheless, although Aristotelian personal friendship could indeed pose a threat to morality (partiality), the Aristotelian normative notion of political friendship presupposes impartiality and the rule of law.

Aristotle's notion of friendship develops beyond the 'Help Friends/Harm Enemies' conception, although it does not denounce this conception. It is true of course that the 'Help Friends/Harm Enemies' conception of *philia* is very close--if not identical--to our contemporary notion of friendship and could indeed pose a moral danger for the moral agent, since it may clash with other moral norms.[326] But one should bear in mind that Aristotelian friendship--either personal or political--will always retain the 'Help Friends/Harm Enemies' conception, since we could never feel affection for people we know nothing about. Aristotle does not of course go as far as E.M. Forster to suggest that "...if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country". As Aristotle points out, it is not always clear how to act in circumstances where one wonders whether he should help a friend rather than a good person or show gratitude to a benefactor rather than offer a service to a companion, if he cannot do both (*NE*, 1164b 22-25). One should take into consideration different factors when deciding what to do, since "discussions of actions and feelings are as precise as their subject-matter" (NE, 1165a 12-14); ethics is not a precise subject-matter.

Finally, it should be stressed once more that Aristotle's notion of political friendship is not the same as the Greek popular notion of 'helping friends and harming enemies' that Polemarchus presented in the *Republic*. Also, as we have previously seen, Aristotelian political friendship does not aim to originate the kind of political unity that Plato envisages for his ideal

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[326] See Blundell (1989, pp. 50-59) for examples from Greek antiquity on what to do when a friend committed a murder or other injustice.

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state. The common mistake made by communitarians when appropriating the Aristotelian notion of political friendship is to equate it with Plato's conception of the unity of the state which allows no room for individuality (or personal friendship), and to relate it, thus, to the problems that the Platonic vision of the city as a whole is associated with.

7. FREEDOM

7. 1 Introduction

My aim in this chapter is to examine the key concept of liberty and to explore both ancient and contemporary political conceptions of it within the context of the liberal-communitarian debate. Liberty has played--and still does--an important role in the debate and is of course a central concept in contemporary political philosophy in general, but no sufficient analysis of it within the context of the liberal-communitarian debate has so far been produced. There has been much discussion among liberals about liberty, but almost none concerning the communitarian conception of liberty. In addition, as far as ancient liberty is concerned--and Aristotelian freedom in particular--little philosophical scholarship has been produced so far, mostly because it has either been thought that the ancient conception of freedom is outdated and of no contemporary relevance, or that Aristotle's notion of freedom is non-existent. Therefore, far less obvious appropriation of the Aristotelian account of freedom has been made within the liberal-communitarian debate. Nevertheless, an examination of the above debate and of Aristotle's appropriation in it would be incomplete if the concept of liberty were excluded. In addition, Greek political thought, and Aristotelian in particular, would seem to have very little to contribute to contemporary political philosophy if it had nothing to say about freedom.

In the first section of this chapter I will discuss different conceptions of liberty shaped around Isaiah Berlin's famous distinction between negative and positive liberty as these stand in contemporary political discussion, and I will

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try to indicate the difficulties surrounding the conception of freedom from each standpoint. I will also outline the so-called contrast between the 'modern' and the 'ancient' conception of liberty made by Berlin and derived mainly from Benjamin Constant's account[327] which will prove useful in my discussion of the Aristotelian conception of liberty.

In the second section of this chapter, I will look into three different representative interpretations that have been formulated on Aristotle's conception of liberty and I will try to show some of the difficulties involved in them. I will also examine these accounts of Aristotle on liberty in relation to the different conceptions of liberty as they emerge from the Constant-Berlin distinction, and I will try to demonstrate the level of Aristotelian appropriation involved in these accounts. In addition, I will investigate which of these views most accurately represent Aristotle's position.

Lastly, in the third section, I will outline Aristotle's conception of liberty as that can be found in remarks he makes in his ethical and political works having a bearing on freedom in the accounts on (i) property, (ii) family, (iii) economics and trade, (iv) citizenship, (v) the criticism of Plato, (vi) the conception of the good life and its implication for the concept of liberty, (vii) education, (viii) the discussion on the voluntary and choice in *NE* Bk. III, Ch.. 1-3, and (ix) in general, in any explicit remarks he makes about freedom (ἐλευθερία) and its derivatives (ἐλεύθερος, ἐλευθέριος, ἐλευθεριότης); and I will put forward an alternative interpretation of Aristotle's conception of freedom.

7. 2 Conceptions of liberty

The discussion about liberty has been central in political philosophy. As has been mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, the concept of liberty is one

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[327] Constant (1988), pp. 309-328.

of the main parts of the cluster of ideas that both liberals and communitarians hold. In a way, it is possible, according to my opinion, to outline--easily and briefly at least, if not accurately--the whole liberal-communitarian debate around the distinction between negative and positive liberty as made in Isaiah Berlin's famous Inaugural Lecture 'Two Concepts of Liberty' (1958).[328] At first sight it may seem that, following Berlin's distinction, liberals hold a negative conception of freedom, while communitarians hold a positive one. It is not a coincidence that inevitably when one is discussing Berlin's essay, questions about liberalism and communitarianism always arise. It is as if the debate has been shaped around that distinction, but also as if the debate has been hostage to that distinction, constantly haunted by the extreme representations of the two concepts of liberty.

Both these accounts commonly guiding respectively these distinctions are in fact, despite first appearances, caricatures of themselves, since--as Charles Taylor has pointed out--"it is too easy in the course of polemic to fix on the extreme, almost caricatural variants of each family"[329]. Although it is true that there are times when one has to present abstract absolute accounts in order to be able to simplify matters and give outlines of issues, in this particular case one should agree with Charles Taylor that on both the positive and negative sides of freedom Berlin has placed, from what it seems, two corresponding caricatural versions of positive and negative freedom.

As Charles Taylor points out, positive freedom from that perspective is usually represented by "some Left totalitarian theory in mind, according to which freedom resides exclusively in exercising collective control over one's destiny in a classless society, the kind of theory which underlies, for instance, official Communism".[330] According to this caricatural version of positive freedom, "one can be forced to be free", since the freedoms guaranteed in other

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[328] Berlin (1969), pp. 118-172.
[329] Taylor (1991), p.141.
[330] Taylor (1991), *ibid.*

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societies are not recognised as genuine and coercion can be justified in the name of freedom if it is needed to bring into existence the classless society in which alone men are properly free. But, according to Taylor, "this is an absurd caricature if applied to the whole family of positive conceptions", since, the way Berlin described it, it includes "all those views of modern political life which owe something to the ancient republican tradition, according to which men's ruling themselves is seen as an activity valuable in itself, and not only for instrumental reasons". The conception of positive liberty as defined so widely by Berlin includes in its scope thinkers like Tocqueville and even J. S. Mill and "has no necessary connection with the view that freedom consists *purely and simply* in the collective control over the common life, or that there is no freedom worth the name outside a context of collective control". Therefore, according to Taylor, it does not necessarily generate a doctrine that men can be forced to be free. [331]

On the other hand of course, in Berlin's picture, there is the corresponding caricatural version of negative freedom according to which freedom is viewed simply as the absence of external physical or legal obstacles. This view which goes mainly back to Hobbes--or according to Charles Taylor back to Bentham[332] in another way--holds firmly to the view that to speak for instance of false consciousness or lack of awareness or repression or other inner factors of similar kind, is to abuse words. On the contrary, according to this extreme version of negative freedom, the only clear meaning which can be given to freedom is that of the absence of external obstacles.[333]

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[331] Taylor (1991), pp. 141-142.

[332] This is a point that Taylor (1991) makes. I suppose that the connection with Bentham could be explained in reference to his view that nothing matters apart from the satisfaction of desire and that one desire is as good as another. Happiness, according to Bentham, is maximum satisfaction of desires, and, therefore, anything that inhibits the satisfaction of our desires is undesirable, and therefore, any restriction on liberty is also undesirable. This Benthamite view is about individuals who have desires and is in contrast with Aristotle who does not hold a similar conception of the good.

[333] Taylor (1991).

What is very interesting indeed is that, as Taylor has pointed out, it seems that there is a strange asymmetry in Berlin's view as well as in the views depicted in both sides of the liberal-communitarian debate. As explained above, these extreme caricatural views tend to come to the fore in the polemic, but "whereas the extreme 'forced-to-be-free' view is one which the opponents of positive liberty try to pin on them, as one would expect in the heat of the argument, the proponents of negative liberty themselves often seem anxious to espouse their extreme, Hobbesian view".[334] Having this in mind, one can easily then notice that in the course the liberal-communitarian debate has taken, liberals have often been unfair to themselves, while at the same time being unfair to communitarians, and vice versa.

Another difficulty also lies in the fact that both these conceptions of liberty are not clearly defined, and few individual philosophers of either camps match either of these ideal types. In fact, as we shall see, it has been almost impossible for any individual philosopher to develop an account of liberty without drawing from more than one at the time different traditions of liberty. It is not of course always the case of mere inconsistency in someone's views. Often, and this is quite important, philosophers draw on different approaches in formulating their views, keeping their affiliations with all different 'camps'. So, in that sense, it would be unfair to associate someone with one camp only, as it is clearly the case with J. S. Mill or T. H. Green for example.[335]

7. 2. 1 The Constant-Berlin distinction

As well as the distinction between negative and positive liberty, a distinction is sometimes drawn between ancient and modern liberty. So it may seem that there are four kinds of liberty to consider.

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[334] Taylor (1991), pp. 143.
[335] See Taylor (1991) and D. Miller (1991), pp. 1-20.

I would like here to illustrate this further distinction, that of Constant's between the liberty of the ancients and that of the moderns, which will prove useful to our discussion of Aristotle's conception of freedom later in this chapter. In this section I will merely raise the question whether Aristotle would endorse Constant's account of liberty. But I shall try to answer it later.

The understanding of Constant's distinction between the liberty of the ancients and that of the moderns will also prove important for the comprehension of Berlin's distinction, since Berlin has based his distinction on the Constant one. But it is also necessary for the additional reason that Constant's distinction has shaped modern and contemporary conceptions about ancient liberty by challenging the sanity of the appeal of his contemporaries to antiquity.[336]

It is clear that Berlin historically derives his distinction between positive and negative liberty from Benjamin Constant's distinction between the liberty of the ancients versus that of the moderns. Berlin in his 'Two Concepts of Liberty' names Constant together with J. S. Mill as the fathers of liberalism. Constant, "the most eloquent of all defenders of freedom and privacy",[337] stands in the same tradition of those liberal thinkers who believed that "there ought to exist a certain minimum area of personal freedom which must on no account be violated; for if it is overstepped, the individual will find himself in an area too narrow for even that minimum development of his natural faculties which alone makes it possible to pursue, and even to conceive, the various ends which men hold good or right or sacred".[338] As he says, every interpretation of the word liberty, however unusual, must include a minimum of what he has called 'negative' liberty, "but the fathers of liberalism--Mill and Constant--want more than this minimum: they demand a maximum degree of non-interference compatible with the minimum

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[336] Holmes (1984), p. 1.
[337] Berlin (1969), p. 126.
[338] Berlin (1969), p. 124.

demands of social life".[339] In fact, Berlin characterised Constant's approach as the model for a "negative theory of liberty, liberty being simply in this context the protection of individual experience and choices from external interferences and constraints".[340] In this way, it can be argued that the negative-positive distinction has sustained a historical narrative to go along with the philosophical dichotomy of private and populist liberty.

But, first of all, let's turn to Constant, to see how this distinction originated.[341] Constant formulated the distinction between ancient and modern liberty in his famous 1819 lecture delivered to the Athénée Royal in Paris entitled 'The Liberty of the Ancients compared with that of the Moderns'.[342] According to Constant, there is a distinction to be made between two kinds of liberty: "The first is the liberty the exercise of which was so dear to the ancient peoples; the second the one the enjoyment of which is especially precious to the modern nations".[343] Ancient liberty was active and continuous participation in the exercise of collective power, while modern liberty consists of peaceful enjoyment and private independence.[344] "The aim of the ancients", according to Constant, "was the sharing of social power among the citizens of the same fatherland: this is what they called liberty". On the other hand, "the aim of the moderns is the enjoyment of security in private pleasures; and they call liberty the guarantees accorded by institutions to these pleasures".[345]

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[339] Berlin (1969), p. 161.

[340] Berlin (1969), p. 163ff.

[341] Holmes (1984) has challenged Constant's interpretation as an antidemocratic liberal thinker and has argued that Constant has been misinterpreted. Holmes argues that Constant does make allowances for the 'liberty of the ancients' contrary to what has usually being thought. By introducing this new interpretation of Constant's liberalism, Holmes tries to defend a democratic version of liberalism. This is an very interesting interpretation indeed, since it tries to redefine liberalism and render it more attractive to supporters of ancient liberty, but I will not deal with this view here, since my aim is to examine the way that Constant's view has traditionally influenced political theory.

[342] Constant (1988), pp. 309-328.

[343] Constant (1988), p. 309.

[344] Constant (1988), p. 316.

[345] Constant (1988), p. 317.

Constant was critical of ancient liberty because it no longer seemed to be able to satisfy the needs of the modern people. Constant sustains his view historically by demonstrating it to us with examples in support of it from various historical Greek and Roman city-states, Athens and Rome in particular. In Constant's words, the liberty of the ancients consisted in "exercising collectively, but directly several parts of the complete sovereignty; in deliberating in the public square, over war and peace; in forming alliances with foreign governments; in voting laws, in pronouncing judgements; in examining the accounts, the acts, the stewardship of the magistrates; in calling them to appear in front of the assembled people, in accusing, condemning or absolving them".[346] Ancient collective freedom was compatible with the complete subjection of the individual to the authority of the community. All private actions were submitted to severe surveillance and no importance was given to individual independence, to opinions, to labour or to religion. The right to choose one's own religious affiliation would have seemed to the ancients a crime and sacrilege. The ancients had no notion of individual rights.[347] The laws were sovereign and regulated all affairs. Also, because of the constant strife in the cities, commerce could not flourish. Thus, according to Constant, "among the ancients the individual, almost always sovereign in public affairs, was a slave in all his private relations; the individual was in some way lost in the nation, the citizen in the city".[348]

Modern liberty, on the other hand, consists of peaceful enjoyment and private independence. Liberty for a modern Frenchman, Englishman and a citizen of the United States of America is "the right to be subjected only to the laws, and to be neither arrested, detained, put to death or maltreated in any way by the arbitrary will of one or more individuals. It is the right of everyone to express their opinion, choose a profession and practise it, to dispose of

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[346] Constant (1988), p. 311.
[347] Constant (1988), p. 312. Constant attributes this to Condorcet.
[348] Constant (1988), p. 311-2.

property, and even to abuse it; to come and go without permission, and without having to account for their motives or undertakings. It is everyone's right to associate with other individuals, either to discuss their interests, or to profess the religion which they and their associates prefer, or even simply to occupy their days or hours in a way which is most compatible with their inclinations or whims. Finally, it is everyone's right to exercise some influence on the administration of the government, either by electing all or particular officials, or through representations, petitions, demands to which the authorities are more or less compelled to pay heed".[349]

Constant, thus, declares the death of ancient liberty. The individual, according to his verdict, can no longer "enjoy the liberty of the ancients", since "the share which in antiquity everyone held in national sovereignty was by no means an abstract presumption as it is in our day". On the contrary, the will of each individual had real influence and the exercise of this will was a vivid and repeated pleasure. The ancient individual was compensated for losing out on individual freedom by being aware of his personal importance.[350]

But this compensation no longer exists for the modern individual who is lost in the multitude, his will not impressing itself upon the whole. As Constant points out[351]

> The exercise of political rights, therefore, offers us but a part of the pleasures that the ancients found in it, while at the same time the progress of civilisation, the commercial tendency of the age, the communication amongst peoples, have infinitely multiplied and varied the means of personal happiness. It follows that we must be far more attached than the ancients to our individual independence. For the ancients when they sacrificed that independence to their political rights, sacrificed less to obtain more; while in making the same sacrifice, we would give more to obtain less. *The aim of the ancients was the sharing of social power*

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[349] Constant (1988), p. 310-1
[350] Constant (1988), p. 316.
[351] Constant (1988), p. 316-7.

among the citizens of the same fatherland: this is what they called liberty. The aim of the moderns is the enjoyment of security in private pleasures; and they call liberty the guarantees accorded by institutions to these pleasures.[352]

The above distinction made by Constant is quite an important one in the sense that it marks a turning point for the perception of the concept of liberty thereafter. As Pettit points out, "when Constant delivered his lecture, he saw only the alternatives of positive liberty, in particular the liberty of democratic participation, and negative liberty: liberty as non-interference", while "when Berlin came to present his own retrospective musings on these matters, he could only suggest that those not attracted to positive liberty allied themselves invariably with the Hobbesian tradition".[353]

This of course was not a completely alien distinction at the time of Constant. Many people--like Montesquieu, Hume, and Voltaire before him-- had criticised the ancient *polis*,[354] but Constant was the first to make the distinction in such a way. What Constant achieved was to make freedom break free from its ancient conception; for better or for worse, it remains to be seen.

7. 2. 2 A trichotomy. Three families of traditions of freedom

In the light of the above, it is possible to argue that there are three kinds of classifications that one can make as far as different conceptions of liberty are concerned: negative liberty is freedom as non-interference; positive liberty is freedom as self-mastery; ancient liberty is freedom as democratic self-government.[355]

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[352] The emphasis is mine.

[353] Pettit (1997), p. 50.

[354] Voltaire (1961), pp. 731-38; Hume (1963), pp. 381-451. As Voltaire points out, "nous respectons Cicéron et tous les anciens qui nous ont appris à penser" (1961, p. 738)

[355] Ancient liberty is usually defined as self-mastery, but I think self-government is a more accurate term including that of self-mastery, and it describes more precisely the nature of liberty for the ancients in the 'rule and being ruled' elements (ἄρχειν καί ἄρχεσθαι). Plato's

It should be noted that these three kinds of liberty correspond in fact to three different families of traditions. Here, I will go along with David Miller's classification of these three main traditions, or 'families of ideas' of liberty, as he calls them. I will hold on to this distinction for the time being, for I find it to be an easy way to illustrate the different traditions of liberty involved in shaping the conception of liberty.

The three traditions in question are the republican[356], the liberal and the idealist ones. David Miller calls them families of ideas, because they do not amount to three cut and dried conceptions of freedom, but are rather clusters of ideas held together by a family resemblance among their members. Also, as Miller illustrates, there can be fruitful intermarriages where an idea of freedom combines elements from two or even perhaps all three of these lineages.[357]

According to this classification, Miller names the first tradition 'republican'. Both the conceptions of positive and ancient liberty correspond to this family. It would be true to say that the republican tradition corresponds closely to the ancient one and that Berlin fails to distinguish it from the idealist tradition. The republican family holds the most directly political conception of freedom, since it defines freedom by reference to a certain set of political arrangements. This is the tradition of freedom that originated with the Greek political philosophers. To be a free person is to be a citizen of a free political community which is self-governing. To be self-governing means that the political community should not be ruled by foreigners, and that the citizens play an active role in government, in such a way as the laws that are

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conception of freedom is more close to something like self-mastery, self-mastery though being again related to the notion of self-government.

[356] I here use 'republican' in a broad sense to cover what Constant called 'ancient liberty'. For the purposes of this thesis I shall ignore the conception of 'republican' freedom, described for example by Skinner (1998) who draws heavily on Roman models. I shall also ignore the modernised version of this conception (freedom as non-domination) recently introduced by Pettit (1997).

[357] D. Miller (1991), p. 2.

enacted reflect in some sense the wishes of the people. In this tradition, despotism is the opposite of freedom; it is defined as the arbitrary rule of a tyrant who disposes of his subjects lives and possessions by means that they are powerless to resist.[358]

The 'liberal' family or tradition holds a view on liberty in which "freedom is a property of individuals and consists in the absence of constraint or interference by others". Both the conceptions of negative and modern liberty correspond to this family. A person is free to the extent that he is able to do things if he wishes--speak, worship, travel, marry--without these actions being blocked or hindered by the activities of other people. As far as politics is concerned, in the liberal view "government secures freedom by protecting each person from the indifference of others, but it also threatens freedom by itself imposing laws and directives backed up by the threat of force", while in the republican view freedom is seen "as being realised through a certain kind of politics". The liberal on the other hand "tends to see freedom as beginning where politics ends, especially in various forms of private life".[359]

Finally, in the 'idealist' family, the focus "shifts from the social arrangements within which a person lives to the internal forces which determine how he shall act; the struggle for freedom is no longer directly with the external environment, but with elements within the person himself which thwart his desire to realise his own true nature".[360] A person is free when he is autonomous, meaning that he is able to follow his own authentic desires, or his rational beliefs about how he should live. This view is connected with politics since certain political conditions are identified as being necessary in order to be able to acquire such a freedom. Plato's conception of freedom is for example certainly idealist.

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[358] D. Miller (1991), pp. 2-3.
[359] D. Miller (1991), p. 3.
[360] D. Miller (1991), p. 4.

I will elaborate on the three above clusters of views of liberty while discussing the liberal and communitarian conceptions. But, for the time being, having roughly outlined these three families, the question here is, as I mentioned above, to what extent there are intermarriages between the above families. In order for the above labels to reveal their corresponding cluster of ideas and in order to be able to make sense of what exactly each side advocates one has to look carefully into the distinctions made and to try to understand the multiple claims that each side makes.

7. 2. 3 Berlin's dichotomy

The above distinction made by David Miller can be proven to be useful for an additional reason: it can make us view Berlin's dichotomy from a quite new perspective. Also, under the light of the Constant's account presented above, it should be pointed out that, although Berlin seems to think he is making the same point as Constant, their distinctions are different.

David Miller himself acknowledges this when he traces notions of his trichotomy in Berlin's dichotomy. Berlin's negative conception of liberty clearly corresponds to the liberal view of freedom; but his positive sense of freedom is far less clearly specified:

> When he (Berlin) first introduces it, he identifies it as self-mastery: a person is free when he controls his own life, rather than being an instrument of someone else's will. As the concept is developed, however, it comes to embrace a number of quite different doctrines, of which three in particular may usefully be isolated: 1) Freedom as the power or capacity to act in certain ways, as contrasted with the mere absence of interference. 2) Freedom as rational self-direction, the condition in which a person's life is governed by rational desires as opposed to the desires that he just as a matter of fact has. 3) Freedom as collective self-determination,

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the condition where each person plays his part in controlling his social environment through democratic institutions.[361]

As Miller points out, it should be apparent that the second positive view corresponds to idealist freedom, while the third to republican freedom.

But, there is also a sense in which Berlin's negative conception of freedom is far less clearly specified: it is not clear to what extent the negative conception is related, if not identical, to the conception of modern liberty described by Constant as "the guarantees accorded by institutions to the enjoyment of security in private pleasures".[362] This is important if we take into account the fact that Constant's account of modern liberty is void of any echoes of democracy in the way of 'participating in government', of having a 'say' in the political decisions. Modern liberty presented in the Constant way is not necessarily attractive: one is free to look after one's private affairs and to freely exercise commerce etc., to do whatever one likes in the privacy of his own home, but one has lost the political freedom to actively decide in the public sphere. What 'ancient' liberty meant (to take part in the public life of the state by means of institutionalised proceedings that secured your right to be heard and to participate in government by ruling and being ruled in turn) has been replaced by the conception of modern liberty which is only concerned with the enjoyment of security in private pleasures. If this connection between negative and modern liberty was explicitly made apparent from the very beginning in Berlin's essay, it is not certain that negative liberty would have appeared as attractive as it originally did.

In addition, as we can infer from the above Miller account, Berlin has included in the definition of positive liberty both the accounts of ancient and idealist liberty. He has thus succeeded in this way in attributing characteristics of idealist liberty to the conception of ancient liberty and vice versa. Berlin,

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[361] D. Miller (1991), p. 10.
[362] Constant (1988), p. 317.

when referring to positive liberty, in fact refers to two different conceptions of freedom: ancient and idealist. He contrasts negative to positive liberty, but when referring to positive he only criticises ancient freedom without referring to its idealist part.[363]

But, let's turn to Berlin's distinction to see how it has been formulated and which are the characteristics of the two accounts of negative and positive liberty. Berlin discusses the two concepts of liberty which, according to him, stand out as centrally important, positive and negative liberty. According to Berlin negative liberty is involved in answering the question of the area within which persons or group of persons should be left to do what they want without interference by others. Positive freedom, on the other hand, is involved in answering the question what, or who, is or should be the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do or be one thing rather than another. Negative freedom in this sense is *freedom from*, whereas positive freedom is *freedom to*. Taking of course the definition of freedom as being "freedom from some possible restraint and freedom to do what you want or choose to do", it is difficult to say at first glance whether these two notions of freedom are one or two different concepts.

To be negatively free essentially means not to be interfered with in the pursuit of one's desires. As Berlin says, "I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no man or body of men interferes with my activity. Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others. If I am prevented by others from doing what I could otherwise do, I am to that degree unfree; and if this area is contracted by other men beyond a certain minimum, I can be described as being coerced, or, it may be, enslaved".[364] Liberty is in this way conceived as the absence of coercion or enslavement which are contained in the meaning of unfreedom. Coercion

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[363] Berlin (1969), p. 166.
[364] Berlin (1969), p. 122.

though does not cover all sorts of inability since it implies the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area of action of the other human beings. Therefore, mere incapacity to attain a desired goal--when one is physically handicapped for example--is not lack of political freedom. According to Berlin, inability to do something could be a form of coercion, but only if it is due to poverty or weakness. Inability in that sense is used in the context of a particular social and economic theory about incapacities. As Berlin says.

> The criterion of oppression is the part that I believe to be played by other human beings, directly or indirectly, with or without the intention of doing so, in frustrating my wishes. By being free in this sense I mean not being interfered with by others. The wider the area of non-interference the wider my freedom.[365]

Having illustrated negative freedom in this way, one can understand, according to Berlin, that complete social freedom contradicts itself unless people have nothing to do with each other. Liberty must obviously be restricted if it is to be effective. The problem for political theory is how far the restriction should go. According to Berlin, since the area of man's free action must be limited by law, it is equally assumed that there ought to exist a certain minimum area of personal freedom which must on no account be violated. Therefore, a frontier must be drawn between the area of private life and that of public authority.[366]

One could argue against this assumption that there ought to exist a certain minimum area of personal freedom which must on no account be violated by saying that it is not clear that in order for someone to be autonomous, he would need a 'private' area to exercise his autonomy. Why could not one be autonomous in the public sphere? One could say of course that, if one values autonomy, then it is obvious that one wants an area to practice autonomy in. But why should a private sphere should be created in

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[365] Berlin (1969), p. 123.
[366] Berlin (1969), p. 124.

order for one to be able to practice autonomy in? Surely, if one is autonomous, then he would be so in both private and public spheres. So why can't we just have only one sphere? It is not clear whether this area of personal freedom, as Berlin describes it, can be drawn from the above reasoning, since it is not obvious that it is necessary for an area of personal freedom to exist merely because the area of man's free action must be limited by law. One might, for example, be free from outside constraint in many of one's actions but be non-autonomous nevertheless (a slave to one's desires).

Berlin also distinguishes between the concept of liberty and the interference of the state in private life and questions such as (i) the belief that the freedom that men seek differs according to their social or economic conditions and (ii) equality of liberty. According to him, these concepts should not be confused with one another: "everything is as it is: liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice or culture, or human happiness or a quiet conscience".[367] Since the freedom of some must at times be curtailed to secure the freedom of others, the real question that must be posed is upon what principle this should be done. From the feedback we can see that views on this matter diverge. Locke, Smith and Mill, for example, who shared an optimistic view on human nature and a belief in the possibility of harmonising human interests, believed that social harmony and progress are compatible with reserving a large area for private life over which neither the state nor any other authority must be allowed to trespass; while Hobbes and others on the other hand believed in increasing the area of centralised control and decreasing that of the individual.

Berlin focuses on presenting Mill's conception of liberty and by doing so he, first, places Mill among the exponents of the concept of negative liberty and, second, he succeeds in showing the connection that he thinks exists between negative and positive freedom. Mill believed that the protection of

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[367] Berlin (1969), p. 125.

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individual liberty is very important, since he felt that unless men are left to live as they wish in the path which merely concerns themselves, civilisation cannot advance; the truth will not, for lack of free market in ideas, come to light; there will be no scope for spontaneity, originality, genius, for mental energy, for moral courage. Society will be crushed by the weight of 'collective mediocrity'.

Against the above Millian pronouncement one could argue, first, that, although this is supposed to show a connection between negative and positive freedom, it seems to claim a connection between negative liberty and other virtues. Second, so far as positive freedom and its relation to autonomy are concerned, the obvious thought is that you can't control your desires unless you practice making decisions. So far as positive freedom and republic freedom are concerned, there need not be any connection.

Berlin conceives Mill's notion of liberty as not being incompatible with some kinds of autocracy, or at any rate with the absence of self-government. As he says, "liberty in this sense is principally concerned with the area of control, not with its source". It is not, at any rate logically, connected with democracy or self-government. Self-government may, on the whole, provide a better guarantee of the preservation of civil liberties than other regimes, and has been defended as such by libertarians. But there is no necessary connection between individual liberty and democratic rule. The answer to the question 'Who governs me?' is, according to Berlin, logically distinct from the question 'How far does government interfere with me?'. It is in this difference that the great contrast between the two concepts of negative and positive liberty, in the end, consists. For the positive sense of liberty comes to light if we try to answer the question, not 'What am I free to do or be?', but 'By whom am I ruled?' or 'Who is to say what I am, and what I am not, to be or do?'.[368]

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[368] Berlin (1969), pp. 128-129.

This is the concept of positive freedom according to Berlin: "not freedom from, but freedom to--lead one prescribed form of life--which the adherents of the negative notion represent as being, at times, no better than a specious disguise for brutal tyranny". Freedom in this sense consists essentially of rational self-determination or self-mastery. It derives from man's desire to be in control of his own destiny. A proponent of positive liberty wants his life and decisions to depend on himself, not on external forces. He wants to be an instrument of his own, not of another's acts of will; to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by purposes which originate with him, not with someone else.[369]

According to Berlin, the concept of liberty as self-mastery seems at first glance quite straight forward and understandable; but in fact the concept does naturally suggest and many philosophers have interpreted it to imply a peculiar dualistic theory of the person according to which each of us is composed, on the one hand, of a real self, the transcendent, dominant controller, and on the other of a bundle of feelings and passions to be disciplined and brought to heel. This 'real' self is usually identified by this 'idealist' concept of liberty with reason, with man's higher or autonomous nature and contrasted with his 'lower' animal nature which is made up entirely of irrational impulses and uncontrollable desires. Rational self-mastery constitutes the only genuine purpose of man and therefore should be pursued at the expense of other goals which he might mistakenly think are equally important. Therefore, according to this notion of freedom, man can and should be forced to be free in this positive sense, however violently his poor, unreflecting, desire-ridden self may cry out against this process.

But one could argue against the above description of positive freedom that Berlin describes that it is surely quite difficult on the first place to force someone to make autonomous decisions. How can one force somebody to

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[369] Berlin (1969), pp. 130-131.

show self-mastery? It seems quite impossible to force someone into that; one could encourage someone to be autonomous but never force him. And, even if one could do that, why *should* you force them to be free?

Berlin poses, therefore, two objections to this positive concept of freedom. First, rational self-mastery is not the sole nor even necessarily the most important goal in life; it is just only one among several possible goals not all of which are commensurable. Second, the contention that force utilised to achieve rational self-mastery can be justified, that anyone who does not realise what is truly good for him should be made to realise it, is morally bankrupt. To oppress, torture, or coerce men in the name of their freedom betrays the most dangerous kind of moral despotism. Power, for Berlin, can never be exercised rightfully over any mentally sane adult except to prevent him from harming others.

There are several issues emerging from Berlin's criticism of positive liberty. What is most interesting from the above criticism of positive liberty is Berlin's failure to distinguish between the different families of liberty, the republican and the idealist--that I have presented previously--which are clearly present in his account.

Therefore, from what we have seen above, it is clear that Berlin includes in the definition of positive liberty two different accounts of liberty: the 'ancient' and the 'idealist' and conflates them into one. This integration would have been acceptable, if Berlin clearly distinguished between the two and discussed their differences. But he does not; instead, throughout his paper he refers to ancient liberty as if it were idealist liberty, and vice versa. But, by doing that, he also criticises ancient liberty on the grounds against idealist liberty; he provides, that is, arguments against the conception of ancient liberty, while in fact these arguments are against the idealist conception. So, in the end, he presents an image of ancient liberty which in fact belongs to the

idealist account of liberty. By failing to distinguish ancient liberty from the idealist, Berlin commits a fallacy of equivocation.

7. 2. 4 Liberal and communitarian conceptions of liberty

Liberalism is all about liberty, some people say at least. Indeed, if there is one fundamental principle that every liberal--no matter of what sort he might be-- is deeply committed to, this is liberty. Even though the tradition of liberalism includes a spectrum of modern liberals ranging from welfare liberals to libertarians, one could nevertheless roughly say that they all in general agree with this 'negative' definition of liberty, following Locke's theory that the state should interfere as little as possible. Presumably the interference of the state has to be qualified in some way, and this depends on what kind of liberal one is. So, for example, some liberals would object to a state policy of 'practising happiness at 3 am'. They oppose the communitarian principle of community on the grounds that the state would violate the rights of individuals if it forced them to conform to popular morality, in the sense that the nature and the limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual should be clearly set in such a way as not to undermine or threaten individuality and personal freedom. Indeed, it is interesting that most debates among liberals--like the one between Rawls and Nozick for example--have not focused on questions about liberty but equality.

A liberal would also endorse Mill's harm principle; it should be noted though that negative liberty as such does not generate the harm principle. According to the harm principle, state interference should not be left to arbitrary custom and popular morality (Mill's greatest enemy), but limitation of a person's freedom of action is justifiable by the state only if it threatens harm to another person: "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully

exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant".[370]

Related to the 'harm principle' is the liberal conception of self-determination. Liberals believe that we promote people's interests by letting them choose for themselves what sort of life they want to lead, and that to deny people this self-determination is to fail to treat them as equals. Although liberals leave some space for acts of paternalism (in our relations with children for example), they insist however that every competent adult be provided with a sphere of self-determination which must be respected by others. The argument for self-determination, in its extreme formulation could also be expressed as follows: "For one thing, no one may be in a better position than I am to know my own good. Even if I am not always right, I may be more likely to be right than anyone else".[371] It should be noted though that this is only one conception of self determination, since theorists of positive freedom would, of course, adjust it to mean 'being determined by one's (true) self'. Indeed, a point that can be made against this liberal notion of self-determination is that self-determination is essentially a positive libertarian's term.

The liberal notion of liberty has recently been associated with the view that the state should be neutral between competing conceptions of the good. According to this view, the state must exhibit a kind of impartiality to different conceptions of the good which is captured by an anti-perfectionist ideal of liberal neutrality. This is a Rawlsian argument according to which self-determination should lead us to endorse a 'neutral state', i.e. a state which does not justify its actions on the basis of the intrinsic superiority or inferiority of conceptions of the good life, and which does not deliberately attempt to influence people's judgements of the value of these different conceptions.[372]

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[370] Mill (1989), p. 135.
[371] Kymlicka (1990), p. 203.
[372] Kymlicka (1990), p. 205.

Indeed, Rawlsian liberals in general hold that the state should respect and protect the rights of individuals by achieving some kind of neutrality between the different conceptions of the good. But this is not true for all liberals of course; not all liberals would hold Rawls's notion of neutrality. T. H. Green for example claims contrary to Rawls that "the better organisation of the state means freer scope to the individual (not necessarily to do as he likes, e.g. in the buying and selling of alcohol, but in such development of activity as is good on the whole)".[373] Mill likewise insists on the freedom of self-development--which seems to be distinct from Rawlsian neutrality.

So, in general one could roughly distinguish four sources of liberalism as far as liberty is concerned: (i) The Lockean minimal state, (ii) The harm principle, (iii) The autonomous individual, and (iv) The neutral state. According to (i), the state exists to protect the basic rights of life, liberty and property, and transgresses its rightful authority if it seeks to do more than this. Checks and balances are needed to restrain state activity and protect individual rights. Of course, it should be noted that a rights-based theory which started from a more extensive list of natural rights might lead to a very different view. One might also get a different view if one saw the protection of rights as only one among a number of basic tasks of the state. The harm principle (ii) implies that there is a private area of life with which the state and other agencies should not interfere. According to (iii), the good life is one of autonomy so society should be structured so as to promote autonomy. Finally, according to (iv) the state should be neutral between different conceptions of the good. In conclusion, as we have seen, modern liberals may draw on a number of these ideas. Aristotle seems to have no interest in (ii) or (iv). On some readings he may give some value to (iii). On Fred Miller's view he recognises some elements of (i). But even if he does see the state as protecting rights it is unlikely that he would interpret this in a way that leads to the liberal state.

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[373] Green (1997), p. 234.

It is generally assumed that a communitarian account of liberty would follow Berlin's conception of positive liberty. It is true that neo-Marxist theorists put forward an account of positive liberty, but neo-Marxism is a quite distinct critique of liberalism from the communitarian one. One cannot really claim that there is a communitarian conception of liberty as such, since no communitarian philosopher has put forward a coherent and full account of freedom. One could guess what a communitarian account of freedom would be like if he looks into the communitarian responses to liberal accounts of liberty.

Indeed, most of the communitarian attention has been drawn to the liberal conceptions of liberty, and it is this part of liberal thought that they are more keen on criticising. Whereas liberals usually disagree among each other about equality, the distribution of wealth and the welfare state, the communitarian critique on the other hand has concerned itself rather with the freedom-related aspects of liberalism than with its equality-related or distributive aspects.[374] As Mulhall and Swift argue,

> In terms of substantive political issues, what this means is that where the debate between redistributive liberals and libertarians centres on the justifiability of the welfare state and the taxation required to pay for it, that between the liberal and the communitarian concerns itself rather with the importance of the individual's right to choose her own way of life and to express herself freely, even where this conflicts with the values and commitments of the community or society of which she is a member.[375]

Communitarians complain that political life in a liberal state often resembles something like a Hobbesian account of the state of nature. But liberals have pointed out, that, although Hobbes's state of nature provides us with a very extreme and clear-cut account of liberty, it is not clear that liberal

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[374] Mullhal and Swift (1996), p. xvii.
[375] Mulhall and Swift (1996), *ibid.*

theories always have in mind negative liberty in the strict Hobbesian sense. Rather they might seek to combine the accounts of positive and negative liberty. In fact, it is not clear that a liberal should accept the Hobbesian view at all. In the Hobbesian state of nature, although free from state control, people in a state of nature may be subject to many other forms of coercion. Liberals, on the other hand, accept that law is needed in order to preserve freedom. Hobbes's account of liberty is a useful device when trying to explain and to understand liberty in its extreme form, but it does not represent an accurate account of what actually liberals mean by liberty. It should also be noted that Hobbes, although being the father of social contract theory, is nevertheless no liberal thinker. It is not quite clear, for example, whether modern political life actually is really like a Hobbesian state of nature, as described by the communitarians, or rather that it is only presented as such by communitarian political thinkers. That is, is the problem that the modern state resembles the Hobbesian state of nature, or is it we who assume an Hobbesian view of man[376] embedded in our everyday political and social practices?

The communitarian conception of liberty rests on its assumption on the notion of the self. It rests on a particular metaphysical view about the self. "True freedom must be situated", as Charles Taylor says. Communitarians criticise the individualist conception of the self which they take to underline liberalism. They oppose to it the view that the self is, at least in part, a social creation. According to Taylor, the desire to subject all aspects of our social situation to our rational self-determination is empty, because the demand to be self-determining is indeterminate: "it cannot specify any content to our action outside of a situation which sets goals for us, which thus imparts a shape to rationality and provides an inspiration for creativity".[377] Communitarians

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[376] Hobbes's view of man puts forward a capitalist conception of human nature; see MacPherson (1962).
[377] Taylor (1979), p. 157.

cannot see liberty as an absolute value; rather the value of particular kinds of freedom rests, for them, on the values shared by society.

In conclusion, what would a communitarian view of freedom presuppose? We could say that communitarians in general put forward the following views: (i) Liberty is not possible as an isolated individual good, (ii) Freedom presupposes some kinds of values (Taylor), and, (iii) The self is, at least in part, a social creation (Taylor, Walzer, MacIntyre). One should point out, nevertheless, that it could be argued that the conflict between communitarians and liberals concerning liberty seems not to be on whether there are no *really* autonomous actions because we are at least partly socially created (a negative libertarian, as opposed to an idealist libertarian, would not be worried about that), but on the fact that 'doing your own thing' is less highly rated as an absolute value by the communitarian. But communitarians cannot see liberty as an absolute value; it is rather that the value of particular kinds of freedom rests on the values shared by society.

7. 3 Aristotelian accounts of freedom

7. 3. 1 Three interpretations of Aristotelian freedom

Having the previously discussed distinctions in mind, it would be useful-- before exploring more into the writings of Aristotle having a bearing on freedom--to investigate into some different interpretations of Aristotle's conception of freedom (what I call here 'Aristotelian accounts of freedom').

Roughly, one can distinguish three main positions according to which, first, Aristotle had a 'socially dependent' conception of liberty tied to the specific social circumstances of the Greek *polis* (the 'Bradley-Mill' view), second, Aristotle did not really have a conception of liberty in the modern sense (the 'Barnes' view), and, third, that Aristotle had a 'moderate socially

dependent' conception of liberty (the 'Fred Miller' view). These views have been respectively represented in the literature among others by Bradley and Mill, Barnes, and Miller.

These three interpretations of Aristotle's conception of liberty are important because they indicate the different levels of appropriation of Aristotle's view according to the theory of liberty that is adopted. These accounts are relevant in the sense that their views imply criticisms of MacIntyre and in the case of most of them Aristotle influences their own views of liberty. The Aristotelian text, in all these four cases, is analysed each time--and has being appropriated in the end--according to a specific conception of liberty that the 'appropriator' has in mind. Each of these appropriators adopts a different conception of liberty when he refers to the text in examining Aristotle's view on liberty. These accounts of Aristotelian liberty spring from one or another conception of liberty that I have outlined previously. Indeed, it is interesting to see how the different distinctions of liberty shape these three interpretations of Aristotelian freedom.

7. 3. 2 The Bradley-Mill view

Both Bradley and Mill share a view of the ancient *polis* as an integrated community and would probably accept the idea that Aristotle is the main exponent of this idea of the *polis*.

When Mill in *On Liberty* placed liberty as the central principle of political philosophy, he did not think that this would be such an easy task, since--as he said--despite the "air of truism" that his position might seem to have, "there is no doctrine which stands more directly opposed to the general tendency of existing opinion and practice" and "society has expended fully as much effort in the attempt (according to its lights) to compel people to

conform to its notions of personal, as of social excellence".[378] Mill in this passage draws attention to the difference between the ancient commonwealths and the modern world and points out that in the ancient commonwealths the state had a deep interest in the whole bodily and mental disciple of every one of its citizens, while "in the modern world the greater size of political communities, and above all, the separation between spiritual and temporal authority (which placed the direction of men's consciences in other hands than those which controlled their worldly affairs), prevented so great an interference by law in the details of private life".[379] As Mill says concerning the ancient commonwealths,

> The ancient commonwealths thought themselves entitled to practise, and the ancient philosophers countenanced, the regulation of every part of private conduct by public authority, on the ground that the State had a deep interest in the whole bodily and mental discipline of every one of its citizens; a mode of thinking which may have been admissible in small republics surrounded by powerful enemies, in constant peril of being subverted by foreign attack or internal commotion, and to which even a short interval of relaxed energy and self-command might so easily be fatal, that they could not afford to wait for the salutary permanent effects of freedom.[380]

As we can see, Mill's view here is quite similar to that of Constant's about the 'liberty of the ancients'; since the Greek city-state was surrounded by powerful enemies, it had to rely on public authority in order to survive, something which is no longer necessary in the modern States. But, there is nothing more to this view of Mill's, in the sense that Mill does not want to make any particular claim about Aristotle's theory nor does he claim to have any special insight of Aristotle's account of liberty.

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[378] Mill (1989), p. 16.
[379] Mill (1989), *ibid.*
[380] Mill (1989), *ibid.*

According to Bradley the specific character of the *polis* was such as to allow:

> an amount of governmental inspection and control of private affairs which, even if suited modern ideas, would be scarcely possible in a nation. Such "interference with liberty" was not felt to be an interference. In the best days of Greece, to participate in this rapid and ennobling public life was enough for the Greek citizen. If his country was independent and himself an active member of it, this community satisfied him too completely for him to think of "using his private house as a state" (III. 9. 128026) or a castle. "To live as one likes"--this is the idea of liberty which Aristotle connects first with the most primitive barbarism (EN X.9.1180a24-9), and then with that degraded ochlocracy which marked the decay of the free governments of Greece (V. 9. 131a32-4, VI.2.1317b11-12, 4.1319b30).[381]

Therefore, according to the Bradley-Mill account, Aristotle did not really have at all a modern conception of liberty but his concept of liberty was tied to the world of the Greek *polis*. This view is influenced by Hegel's distinction between *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralität*, the former encompassing the ethical principles that are specific to a certain community and the latter referring to the abstract or universal rules of morality. As we have seen in chapter two, according to Hegel, *Sittlichkeit* is a higher level of morality since it represents the only way that genuine moral autonomy and freedom can be achieved. *Moralität*, on the other hand, is a higher level of morality according to liberal thought only, since it is tied to the notion of the abstract and universal individual who stands as an entity unto himself, the free and rational person, and to the priority of the right over the good. Hegel bases ethics on the morality of the society. The essential character of morality is to be found on the objective forms of family, society and the state which is the realisation of the ethical spirit and of the moral idea.[382]

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[381] Bradley (1880), p. 19.
[382] Hegel (1991).

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As far as Aristotle is concerned, Hegel thinks therefore that Aristotelian ethics were primarily a social morality subjected to the particular special circumstances of the Greek *polis* and that his political works were subordinated to his ethical thought. Aristotle's ethics is characterised by Hegel as belonging to the objective social morality (*Sittlichkeit*) and not to the subjective morality of the free and reflective personality (*Moralität*). According to Hegel's interpretation of Aristotle, virtues and values express the shared understandings of Greek society about family, society and state, and are respected by all citizens.

In conclusion, it seems that Bradley and Mill assume that Aristotelian liberty would require an identification of the individual with the state. But, in fact, there is evidence against this view as we have previously seen in chapter two and four; in (a) Aristotle's account of *koinonia* (*Politics* I. I), in (b) Aristotle criticises Plato for treating the state as too much of a unity (*Politics* II), in (c) virtue is defined with respect to the individual (*Politics* VII. 1-3 + *Ethics* 10.9), and, in (d) *Politics* III. 4 where Aristotle distinguishes between good citizen and good man. Aristotle emphasises participation rather than identification. Overemphasis on identification would be incompatible with Aristotle's view that the good life consists in rationally chosen activity.

7. 3. 3 The Barnes view

Jonathan Barnes has argued that there exists no conception of political freedom in Aristotle's work.[383] Barnes has put forward the view that (a) Aristotle did not hold a conception of liberty and (b) that by thinking of people as parts of states Aristotle's theory is reduced to totalitarianism which "rests ultimately on a questionable inference from a metaphysical untruism".[384] I

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[383] Barnes (1990a), pp. 249-263 and Barnes (1990b), pp. 1-23.
[384] Barnes (1990a), p. 263.

will present here his view, which is according to my opinion an extreme one and a quite unfair to Aristotle, but I will not discuss in detail all the points he is making, since most will be discussed later when Aristotle's account of freedom will be presented.

(i) Barnes's two red herrings: voluntary action and the critique of Plato.

Barnes starts his examination of Aristotelian freedom by spotting two red herrings, as he says.[385] The first is Aristotle's account of voluntary action in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the second Aristotle's criticism of Plato in the *Politics*.

A familiar theme from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, often used in arguments in favour of the view that Aristotle was sympathetic with a libertarian or at least a liberal position, is the one associated with Aristotle's account of voluntary and involuntary action and rational choice in *NE* Book III. According to this view, *eudaimonia* is achieved only if we act virtuously; we act virtuously only if we act κατὰ προαίρεσιν; we act κατὰ προαίρεσιν only if we act ἔκοντες; we act ἔκοντες only if we act freely. *Eudaimonia*, therefore, has freedom as a precondition.

According to Barnes, Aristotle's argument depends on a "childish confusion" because the freedom that *eudaimonia* requires is not political liberty. First, it should be pointed out that Barnes seems to distinguish between the general concept of freedom and the concept of political liberty.[386] Second, it should be noted that Barnes stipulates the following:

> (1) issues of a kind K are *political questions* just in case the State is entitled to intervene, directly and restrictively, in any question of the form "Shall x φ ?" which falls within K.

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[385] Barnes(1990a), pp. 251-2.
[386] Barnes (1990a), pp. 249, 253.

(2) x enjoys political liberty with regard to issues of kind K just in case the State does not intervene, directly and restrictively, in any question of the form "Shall x ϕ ?"

Thus the main matter is this: On what conditions and in what circumstances is a State entitled to intervene directly and restrictively in questions of the form "Shall x ϕ ?".[387]

As Barnes says, "x can ϕ κατὰ προαίρεσιν even if the question 'Shall x ϕ ?' is political". Evidently, for Barnes, this must be so; "for otherwise law-abiding actions could never be virtuous--and that is absurd". Barnes also argues that we cannot pretend that Aristotle mistakenly supposed 'free action' to demand political liberty. On the contrary, according to Barnes, in the *Ethics* and the *Politics* Aristotle regards it as one of the functions of the legislator to outlaw wickedness and enjoin virtue. And for Barnes, "whatever may be thought of this view, it is not evidently self-contradictory".[388]

The second red herring is, according to Barnes, Aristotle's attack on communism (as he calls it), that is Aristotle's critique of Plato in *Politics* Book II. Barnes's thesis is quite peculiar here; he dismisses Aristotle's account with an easiness unbecoming to an Aristotelian scholar, or any scholar for that matter. He says that "Aristotle argues against Plato that women and children should not be 'common', and he argues further that property should not be held in common". Barnes seems to think that, looking into Aristotle's text, one could infer that "he is against State intervention in certain areas of life". But, to say that is of no importance to liberty for Barnes, since according to him "women and goods do not raise political questions".[389] It is unfortunate that Barnes discusses Aristotle's private property theory and his criticism of Plato as if one could formulate a view about these only from reading the headings of Book II.

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[387] Barnes (1990a), p. 250.
[388] Barnes (1990a), p. 252.
[389] Barnes (1990a), p. *ibid*.

As far as Aristotle's view on property is concerned, he points out that "a clear analysis of the concept of property is needed in many parts of political theory--not least in Aristotle's own defence of slavery". He criticises it as being 'vague' ("it is better for holdings to be private and for us to make them common in their use", *Politics*, 1293a 24) and dismisses it quickly by saying that it is hard to see how private ownership can consist with common use and that anyway it will be regulated by public law, and concludes saying that "Aristotle's remarks in the *Politica* are too nebulous to sustain any serious critical discussion".[390]

(ii) An one-sided conception of liberty

Barnes's article rests on an one-sided conception of liberty, an unusually narrow view of liberty. Barnes identifies liberty with a Lockean or a minimalist conception of the state and, with this definition in mind, starts to examine Aristotle's conception. This is apparent throughout his paper. As he says, when for example he criticises *Politics* Z8, 1321b 12-18, "the passage shows (what hardly needs showing) that he was no adherent to a Lockean or a minimalist conception of the State".[391]

Barnes commitment to this conception of liberty is obvious right from the beginning of his paper, and--to be fair to him--he makes it clear that this is how he "intends the notions".[392] He is concerned, as he says, with the issues arising from the question 'What questions are political questions?' which is, according to his opinion, an aspect of the problem of political liberty. His concern lies with direct restrictive state intervention and in what conditions

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[390] Barnes (1990a), p. *ibid.*
[391] Barnes (1990a), p. 258.
[392] Barnes (1990a), p. 249.

and circumstances is a state entitled to intervene directly and restrictively in questions of the form 'Shall x ϕ ?'.

According to Barnes, Aristotle "scarcely touches on the question of what the limits of rule should be"; instead, "he occupies himself constantly with the question of who should rule whom". As he says,

> Numerous other issues in political theory are not raised in the *Politica*. We should not expect to find there a discussion of the problems of multinational corporations. But liberty is not a modern problem. Questions of liberty must impose themselves on anyone who is ruled--and on every decent ruler.[393]

It is true that, if liberty means 'liberty from state interference' then the minimal state will provide the greatest liberty, and indeed some liberals would hold this view. There is indeed an argument from liberty to the minimal state, but it would rest on the assumption that the overriding value is liberty from state control. But this is not the only definition of liberty, and indeed in order to have a conception of liberty (or some conception of liberty), one does not have to commit oneself to a minimalist state. The minimalist state is not a pre-condition of liberty. A minimalist has a specific conception of liberty, but this conception is a very specific one to try to impose as a general definition of liberty. One can have (an extreme) conception of negative liberty based on the minimalist state, but, as we all know, there are different conceptions of liberty not based on the above definition. Therefore, one cannot simply argue that Aristotle has no conception of liberty because "he was no adherent to a Lockean or a minimalist conception of the State".[394] So, it is clear that Barnes' minimalist view arises from a negative view of liberty.

Barnes argues that the general notion of freedom (ἐλευθερία) as it appears in Aristotle is not the notion of political liberty: "The citizens of an unperverted State are free men: this says nothing whatever about the extent of

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[393] Barnes (1990a), p. 250.
[394] Barnes (1990a), p. 258.

their political liberties, it does nothing to determine the scope of political questions".[395] He does not think that there is anything worth keeping from Aristotle's notion of freedom (ἐλευθερία) as it appears throughout the *Politics* because it is associated with the notion of free man as opposed to slave and with the idea that someone is free if he is able to participate in government, and to rule and being ruled in turn. This conception of liberty (the very same conception of ancient liberty as described by Constant, and later incorporated in the Berlin account of positive liberty) is not according to Barnes the notion of political liberty. He has only accepted a narrow conception of negative liberty and rejected positive liberty. He makes his account of political liberty true by definition and offers a narrower account than either Constant or Berlin.

Moreover, as we have previously seen, Barnes has distinguished between the general concept of freedom and the concept of political liberty.[396] But, just by distinguishing between a general concept of freedom and one of political liberty, Barnes is already implying that there are other conceptions of liberty, not just the conception of political liberty, which he recognises as the only true form of liberty. But, surprisingly, he only seeks to find in Aristotle a conception of 'political liberty' as he defines it; and when he does not find one, he accuses Aristotle for not having a conception of liberty at all.

(iii) Criticism of the democratic definition of freedom

Barnes also criticises the democratic definition of freedom presented in the *Politics*. This is the definition of freedom according to the democrats which Aristotle presents and criticises in the *Politics*. Barnes argues that "if democrats espouse freedom in the sense of doing what you wish, why do they conclude that it is best to rule and be ruled in turn?"; "why is that a form of freedom?

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[395] Barnes (1990a), p. 253.
[396] Barnes (1990a), pp. 249, 253.

Why don't 'democrats' work out a minimalist state, where interference is reduced to the minimum?".[397] This is, according to Barnes, a significant omission that Aristotle does not discuss.

But I do not see why the democrats should actually support the idea of the minimalist state on the first place. To begin with, the democrats are not simply concerned with liberty. At the same time, the democrats could also argue that the minimalist state will not provide effective liberty. They are democrats, they believe in democracy and in the equality of the *demos*. They want the people (δῆμος, λεὼς, ὄχλος) to rule, to be in power, that is, the poor. The democrats do not advocate the minimal state and democratic freedom is not one of the kind implied in the minimal state. It is true that some of the Greeks did envisage a minimal state (as in the case of Lycophron) but this is not the conception put forward by the democrats which Aristotle criticises.

Aristotle on the other hand does not in any way envisage this kind of freedom: he opposes ochlocracy, that's why he criticises the democratic conception of freedom as "doing what you want", but he does not reject the "rule and be ruled in turn" notion of liberty. Barnes wants us to think that, from that, it then follows that Aristotle's account of the democratic view is confused. But Aristotle explicitly says in Z2, 1317b 2-17 that there are two marks of liberty (σημεῖον ἐλευθερίας):

> The argument is that each citizen should be in a position of equality; and the result which follows in democracies is that the poor are more sovereign than the rich, for they are in majority, and the will of the majority is sovereign. This is then one mark of liberty, which all democrats would agree in making the defining feature of their sort of constitution. Another mark is 'living as you like'. Such a life, they argue, is the function of the free man, just as the function of slaves is not to live as they like. This is the second feature of democracy.

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[397] Barnes (1990a), p. 256.

It is clear enough from the text what Aristotle has in mind when he refers to two marks of liberty, and I do not see why Barnes takes σημεῖον to mean "two sorts of freedom" and why he wonders whether Aristotle recognises both the two sorts.[398] Aristotle in this passage refers to two features of democracy associated with liberty, not to two different sorts of liberty. The first is a defining one on which all democrats would agree, while the second, the 'living as you like' is associated with the function of the free man as opposed to that of the slave in the sense that only if one is a free man, is one in a position to 'live as he likes'. I do not see here any connection between the democratic mark of liberty as 'living as you like' and the concept of negative liberty, as Barnes would like us to think.

Also, one would think that it is more than apparent in the Aristotelian text that Aristotle is "reporting and not endorsing a democratic view", something that Barnes seems to be in doubt about.[399] Barnes's point misses both Aristotle's and the democrat's points, since: (a) Aristotle wants ἀρχαὶ to be normative and to govern the state, (b) the democrats want the people to rule, the poor majority to be in power. The whole point of having a state anyway is so that people cannot merely live, but live well, that is, flourish, and it is this flourishing that the lawgiver must secure.[400] A minimalist state could not promote the interests of the poor, and so it cannot not be a democratic ideal, despite the fact that it could still be the most free state according to Barnes.[401]

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[398] Barnes (1990a), p. 255.
[399] Barnes (1990a), p. 255.
[400] Sorabji (1990b), p. 266
[401] See also Sorabji's (1990b, p. 267-273) historical explanation of why Aristotle did not consider a minimalist state.

(iv) The Aristotelian Axiom

Another thesis related to Aristotle's notion of freedom is put forward by Barnes in his paper 'Partial Wholes' (1990b) where he discusses what he calls the 'Aristotelian Axiom'. Barnes attributes to Aristotle an extreme form of holism similar to the one that Popper finds in Plato. This position has been disputed by Fred Miller.[402]

Barnes criticises in this paper one version of what he calls 'collectivist philosophy'. He sets out to criticise Alexander Pope's version, a version that has been as popular and as widely supported as any philosophy of human nature. Barnes subjects to scrunity the anthropological aspect of Pope's philosophy and the axiological side of the theory which is, as Barnes claims, Aristotelian. According to Barnes,

> Individualists like to think themselves as atoms, their trajectories causally dependent on collisions with other similar entities but their essence resolutely independent and autonomous. They are whole and entire in themselves: they are not elements or adjuncts of some greater whole. Collectivists take an opposite view. Their oddities and accidents may be individual and independent, their movements and machinations largely self-determined, but in their essence they are necessarily bound to others--for all are adjuncts and elements of a larger whole.[403]

Pope's axiological thesis states, according to Barnes, that the good of any part is determined by its status as part of its whole. Barnes claims that a particular version of this thesis is endorsed by Aristotle in *Politics* 1337a 27-31. According to Barnes, Aristotle there urges that "one should not think that anyone of the citizens belongs to himself but that all belong to the State. For each is a part of the State; and the care of each part naturally looks to the care of the whole".[404] Also, Barnes claims that Aristotle had already stated the thesis

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[402] This is basically F. Miller's (1995, pp. 196-197) point.
[403] Barnes, (1990b), p. 1.
[404] Barnes, (1990b), p. 16. The translation is Barnes's.

in perfect generality at the end of the first Book of the *Politics*: "Since every household is a part of the State, and individuals are parts of households, and since *the excellence of the part must look to that of the whole*, it is necessary for one to look to the State when educating children and women (*Politics*, 1260b 13-17)".[405]

Barnes argues that the idea that we all belong to the state and that the good of the part depends on the good of the whole is found in Plato. Barnes claims that Aristotle's axiom has it that individual interests are determined by and depend upon the interests of the whole. According to Barnes, a rough version of the Aristotelian axiom might run as follows:

> It is in the interest of a part that it be so-and-so if and only if it is in the interest of the whole that the part be so-and-so.[406]

The axiom could be written more narrowly as follows:

> (1) If x is essentially (or naturally) an integrating part of some systematic whole y, then it is good for x that Fx if and only if it is good for y that Fx.[407]

A more sophisticated version of the Aristotelian axiom, according to Barnes, would be:

> (1*) If x is essentially an integrating part of some systematic whole y, then it is good for x that Fx insofar as[408] it is good for y that Fx.

> (2) If x is essentially an integrating part of some systematic whole y, then x ought to do A if and only if it is in the best interest of y that x do A.

> (3) If x is essentially an integrating part of a system y, then all x's essential properties are determined by x's membership of y.

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[405] Barnes, (1990b), p. 17. Again the translation is Barnes's and so is the emphasis.
[406] Barnes, (1990b), p. 17.
[407] Barnes, (1990b), *ibid*.
[408] Barnes presumably here taking 'insofar as' to mean 'iff and because'.

(4) If P is an interest-generating or a duty-generating property of x, then P is an essential property of x.

(5) If x is essentially ϕ and accidentally ψ, then
(i) if it is in x's interest *qua* ϕ that Fx and in x's interest *qua* ψ that Gx, then
and
(ii) if x ought to do A *qua* ϕ and x ought to do B *qua* ψ, then x ought to do A rather than B.[409]

Two points can be made against Barnes's 'Aristotelian Axiom'. First, it is not clear that Aristotle's quotations support Barnes's 'Aristotelian Axiom' (1), which says that interests of parts and wholes <u>never conflict</u>.[410] "Look to" suggests a more complex relationship. Second, even if Barnes can extract his (1), what entitles him to extract (3)? He strengthens 'if and only if' to *are determined by* and *depend upon* which seems much stronger than 'look to'. 'If and only if' in (1) is substituted by (the logically dubious) 'insofar as' in (1*), so that the *are determined by* and *depend upon* can be expressed; 'insofar as' meaning in this context 'if and only if and because'.

As far as the first point made above, textual evidence also suggests otherwise from Barnes's translation (and inevitably interpretation). Barnes, on the one hand, translates (p. 17): *the excellence of the part must look to that of the whole*. But, Aristotle's text (1260b 14-15) reads: τὴν δὲ τοῦ μέρους πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ὅλου δεῖ βλέπειν ἀρετή. On the other hand, most of the other scholars translate differently; Jowett translates: the *excellence of the part must have regard to the excellence of the whole*; Barker/Stalley translate: the *goodness of every part must be considered with reference to the goodness of the whole*; Saunders translates:*the virtue of the part ought to be examined in relation to that of the whole.*

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[409] Barnes, (1990b), pp. 17-21.
[410] Barnes, (1990b), pp. 16-20.

7. 3. 4 The Fred Miller view

Fred Miller, in his account of Aristotelian freedom makes Locke the starting point of his investigation of Aristotle's conception of liberty. In this Miller agrees with Barnes. The only difference is that, unlike Barnes, Miller sees Aristotle as having some affinities with the Lockean minimalist conception of liberty. As Miller asserts, "Aristotle is not a totalitarian who advocates total governmental authority at the expense of individual liberty".[411] Miller points out that it is true that Aristotle's sketch of the best constitution in *Politics*, VII-VIII, contains many restrictions on individual liberty (Miller actually provides us with a list),[412] but, as he says,

> Aristotle does not justify such measures on the holistic grounds that individual interests may be sacrificed in order to promote the general good. Rather, he justifies them on the ground that the aim of the polis is to promote moral perfection in the individual citizens. To achieve this goal the citizens must perform only those functions which are conducive to their mutual happiness.

Miller argues that "to some extent Locke agrees with Aristotle that freedom is justly subject to certain constraints".[413] Locke would agree with Aristotle to some extent, according to Miller, because Locke rejects Robert Filmer's definition of freedom as "A Liberty for everyone to do what he lists, to live as he pleases, and not to be tied by any Laws".

It is true, as we know that Locke criticises Filmer throughout the *Two Treatises*; in fact, the first treatise aimed at criticising 'The False Principles and Foundation of Sir Robert Filmer', as its title indicates. Locke--in chapter IV, 'Of Slavery', in the *Second Treatise*--says concerning Filmer's definition of freedom:

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[411] Miller (1995), p. 248.
[412] Miller (1995), p. 248-249.
[413] Miller (1995), p. 250.

> *Freedom* then is not what Sir R. F. tells us, *'A Liberty for every one to do what he lists, to live as he pleases, and not to be tyed by any Laws'*: But *Freedom of Men under Government*, is, to have a standing Rule to live by, common to every one of that Society, and made by the Legislative Power erected in it; A liberty to follow my own Will in all things, where the Rule prescribes not; and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, Arbitrary Will of another Man. As *Freedom of Nature* is to be under no other restraint but the Law of Nature.[414]

Also, as Laslett points out, a similar point about law and freedom also appears in Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (IV, iii, 18) where he says that "No government allows absolute liberty".[415] In relation to Aristotle, as Laslett points out, "Locke's state of nature, with its immanent sociability and its acceptance of man's dependence on his fellows, does in a sense incorporate the Aristotelian attitude".[416] In that context, maybe one could argue that Locke's view could seem close to Aristotle, and is plausible that it echoes Plato's *Laws*.

Miller's view focuses mostly on Filmer's definition of freedom which Locke criticises. According to his view,

> Locke departs from Aristotle in making freedom central to natural rights, when he characterises the state of nature as *'a state of perfect Freedom* to order their Actions, and dispose their Possessions, and Persons as they think fit, within the bonds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other Man'. Locke implies that freedom is a central defining condition of the human end. Thus, for Locke natural rights provide a self-limiting, inalienable sphere of liberty for the individual right-holder.

Miller thinks that Aristotle had a "moderate socially dependent" conception of liberty; freedom has its place in Aristotle's account, but a much

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[414] Locke, (1988), IV. 22.
[415] Laslett (1988), p. 283n.
[416] Laslett (1988), p. 100.

more modest one than in Locke's account who implied that freedom is a central defining condition of the human end. According to Miller, liberty is for Aristotle "an external good necessary for virtuous activity but which can be possessed in excess".[417] Miller seems to see a similarity between Locke's criticism of Filmer and the democratic definition of freedom which Aristotle criticises. According to Miller, for Aristotle when this external good, freedom, is defined by the ancient democrats as "doing whatever one wishes" (*Pol.* V 10 1310a31-2), then liberty--possessed in excess in this way--becomes an impediment to personal moral perfection and a threat to constitutional order. Miller thinks that Aristotle's critique of democratic freedom is revealing and that what Aristotle says about democratic freedom in *Politics* V 10 1310a 32-6 supports his view: "The result of such a view is that, in these extreme democracies, each individual lives as he likes--or, as Euripides says, 'For any end he chances to desire'. This is a mean conception [of liberty]. To live by the rule of the constitution ought not to be regarded as slavery, rather as salvation (σωτηρίαν)".[418] Thus, according to Miller, for Aristotle "the aim of the individual should not be unlimited liberty but moral perfection, which is achieved through conformity to the constitution. Freedom is an external good subject to the Aristotelian mean."[419] Miller concludes by putting forward two claims: one about Aristotle's conception of the democratic ideal of liberty and another about justice and its relation to liberty:

> Aristotle's repudiation of the democratic ideal of liberty (and the implied rejection of the modern ideal of purely 'negative' freedom) is entirely consistent with the interpretation defended throughout this chapter: that justice, the political good, consists in the mutual advantage, i.e. the perfection of each of the citizens.

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[417] Miller (1995), p. 250. In support of this claim, Miller refers to Aristotle's *NE* X 8 1178a28-33.

[418] Miller (1995, p.150) translates the above passage slightly different: "So that in such democracies each person lives as he wishes and 'for what he craves', as Euripides says; but this is base; for [he] should not believe that living in relation to the constitution is slavery, but preservation".

[419] Miller (1995), pp. 250-1.

Here again, illiberal features of Aristotle's best constitution result from controvertible premises which are logically distinct from his theory of justice.[420]

Miller also puts forward two passages from the *Politics* (V 12 1316b21-27 and VI 4 1318b38-1319a1) in support of his claim that excessive liberty becomes an impediment to personal moral perfection and a threat to constitutional order, but there is little evidence that these passages that Miller has in mind point to the direction he wants.

The key in understanding Aristotle's conception of freedom in this context lies in what Aristotle takes the democratic notion of liberty as 'doing what one likes' (τὸ ὅ τι ἄν βούληταί τις ποιεῖν/τὸ ζῆν ὡς βούλεταί τις) to be. This is also important for Barnes's account of Aristotelian freedom. The crucial issue concerning the notion of liberty as 'doing what one likes' is whether Aristotle intended to criticise negative libertarians and whether 'doing what one likes' should be taken to denote a negative conception of liberty. I will analyse in detail the meaning of liberty as 'doing what one likes' in the following section of this chapter when I will discuss Aristotle's conception of freedom.

Nevertheless, for the moment, it should be pointed out that there are two things that stand out almost straight away as unsatisfactory in Miller's account as presented above. First, the connection that he has tried to establish between Aristotle and Locke, and second, quite different from the first, his classification of liberty as an external good.

Miller, in my opinion, has not successfully established the connection between Aristotle and Locke. It is true that one could say that Miller merely contrasts Locke to Aristotle but obviously Miller wants to do more than that: he wants to show that there are some affinities between the two philosophers. Indeed, Miller says that Locke agrees to some extent with Aristotle that

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[420] Miller (1995), pp. 251.

freedom is justly subject to certain constraints. But of course to say that is too vague: anyone--unless he were an anarchist--could have in that context affinities with Locke, from Plato to Hegel.

This is why Miller tries to establish that connection by drawing a parallel in their accounts against Filmer in the case of Locke and the ancient democrats in the case of Aristotle. He takes both criticisms to be against a negative conception of liberty, at least in the case of Aristotle as Miller clearly points out. But if this parallel was true, then Locke should also be rejecting the negative conception of liberty, if Locke were to have any affinities with Aristotle. But Locke is in fact rejecting a very peculiar notion of negative liberty put forward by Filmer which very few, if any, negative libertarians would endorse. Aristotle, on the other hand, as I will try to show in the following section, did not have a negative conception of liberty in mind when he was criticising the ancient democrats.

Returning to the second point mentioned above, Miller's use of external good is quite problematic. As we have seen above, according to Miller "for Aristotle liberty is an external good necessary for virtuous activity but which can be possessed in excess (see *EN* X 8 1178a 28-33)".[421] R. T. Long argues that Miller takes 'external good' to mean in this context a good external to well being. As Miller says elsewhere, "Aristotle evidently relegated liberty to the status of a mere external good".[422] It is clear though in Miller's text from the *Nicomachean Ethics* quotation that he refers to external goods as defined by Aristotle.

In conclusion, as far as the Miller view is concerned, one could argue that in Aristotle's conception of freedom Miller sees affinities with Locke but these are superficial. Locke's conception of freedom is founded on rights while Aristotle's is founded on the good life. For Aristotle liberty is an essential

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[421] Miller (1995), pp. 250.
[422] Miller (1995), pp. 356.

requirement in order to live a good life. The good life requires social activity; liberty that enables you to take part in the life of the *polis*. Man is for Aristotle a social animal, so the good life requires him to participate in government. Therefore, Miller by eliminating Aristotle to Locke misses the crucial point about Aristotle.

7. 3. 5 Which view?

Both Bradley and Mill share a view of the ancient *polis* as an integrated community and would probably accept the idea that Aristotle is the main exponent of this idea of the *polis*. If they are right, then Barnes would be correct to the extent that he denies to Aristotle the 'modern' conception of liberty (even if this is just an account of 'minimalist' liberty), but not if he denies that Aristotle has any conception of liberty. Miller could also be correct to claim that Aristotle might have some affinities with Locke but he has no comprehensive modern account of freedom.

But, as we have seen, Bradley and Mill assume that Aristotelian liberty would require identification of the individual with the state. But there is no real evidence for this. Aristotle emphasises participation rather than identification. Overemphasis on identification would be incompatible with Aristotle's view that the good life consists in rationally chosen activity. Barnes's view on the other hand assumes that the only kind of liberty is negative liberty. Miller sees affinities of Aristotle's conception with Locke, but these are superficial, since Locke's conception of freedom is founded on rights while Aristotle's is founded on the good life.

So, the question posed here is 'Who is right?'. Does Aristotle (a) have no conception of liberty as a value, (b) support the 'ancient' conception, but not the modern one, or, (c) provide some room for the modern concept? Also, if

Aristotle does provide some room for the modern concept, the question we should ask here is which of the modern concepts that I have outlined in section one? In addition, having in mind Constant's account of 'ancient' liberty, as outlined previously, we should also ask whether Aristotle would endorse Constant's account of 'ancient' liberty. Further to this, one should ask whether Constant's account of 'ancient' liberty is indeed in general representative of accounts of freedom among the Greeks.

Therefore, it would be useful to investigate more thoroughly which of these views most accurately represent Aristotle's position. This can only be achieved by going back to the Aristotelian text and from there to try to coherently reconstruct Aristotle's account of freedom. In fact, what I will try to sustain in the following section of this chapter is that none of the above views accurately represents Aristotle's conception of freedom.

7. 4 Aristotle's conception of freedom

So, finally, what is Aristotle's conception of freedom (ἐλευθερία)? As we know, Aristotle presents us with no formal account of freedom. He does not discuss freedom extensively anywhere in his work. So, in order to be able to see whether Aristotle has anything interesting to say about freedom, one is only left to look at passing remarks that he makes having a bearing on freedom.

Aristotelian remarks having a bearing on freedom can be found in both his ethical and political works in the accounts on property, family, economics and trade, citizenship, the criticism of Plato, the conception of the good life and its implication to the concept of liberty, education, the discussion on the voluntary and choice in *NE* Book III, 1-3, and, in general, in any explicit

remarks he makes to freedom (ἐλευθερία) and its derivatives (ἐλεύθερος, ἐλευθέριος, ἐλευθεριότης).

When discussing Aristotle's conception of freedom, it should be noted though that--from what we have already seen from the previous examination of the different interpretations of Aristotle's conception of liberty--it is important to try to find an Ariadne's thread to guide us out of the labyrinth of liberty, since from what seems to be the case each individual interpreter of Aristotle attributes to him one or the other view about freedom according to the modern conception that he already has in mind.

First, let's briefly look into the ancient conception of liberty that Constant discussed and see whether his views correspond with the conception of liberty among the ancient Greeks. As Mulgan says, "Freedom at all times throughout the ancient world stood primarily for the status of the free person rather than the slave".[423] This is the original sense of freedom which, according to Mulgan, provides the most obvious contrast with the social and political context of modern liberalism.

Indeed, as we know, for the ancient Greeks the main meaning of the words ἐλευθερία and ἐλεύθερος has been not to be ruled by others, to self-rule, to have a share in ruling, to be able to rule and be ruled in turn, to be, in other words, a free man. This was the main meaning of ἐλεύθερος: not a δοῦλος, a free man as opposed to slave. As Festugière points out, "when we speak of a 'free man' and wish to analyse this notion, we are immediately led to the contrary idea: 'captivity'".[424]

Freedom as self-rule is, in this sense at least, equivalent to freedom as participation in government. There are at least two ways in which one can lack participation in government: (a) if he has no democratic self-government, or at least some kind of participation in the political and social activity of the *polis*,

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[423] Mulgan (1984), pp. 8-9.
[424] Festugière (1987), p. 3.

and (b) if he has no national independence. Lack of national independence for the ancient Greeks usually ended up in enslavement (which was common practice of the time), since it meant the end of the freedom of the *polis*. As Festugière indicates, "the citizens of the fifth-century Greek states fought with might and main for the freedom of their fatherland which was identical with their own liberty".[425]

So, there are two senses in which one can fail to have self-rule: (a) if he has no control over the political decisions of the governing body of his political association, and (b) if he has no national independence, if he is that is subordinated to alien rule. Having (b) is of course a prerequisite for being able to have (a). But, since there can be cases--in theory at least--where a particular nation might lack national independence, but still have political independence, one could argue that all that is really required at the end of the day in order to have freedom as self-rule is political independence.

Both these ideas of ancient liberty have been present in historical modernity in several occasions, the most obvious being the French Revolution (the revolution that Constant complained about that led to catastrophic results for the French nation because of the insistence of its aspirators on the ideal of ancient liberty), and the various national revolutions in the nineteenth century (the so-called Century of Revolution).

Some have, therefore, argued that the meaning of freedom (ἐλευθερία) is more that of freedom and much less of liberty; taking freedom, in this context, to be a general concept, and liberty to mean 'political liberty' in a negative sense. Barnes, as we have seen, in his account of Aristotle on freedom has clearly, even if not successfully, distinguished between a general concept of freedom and that of political liberty.' Freedom (ἐλευθερία), it can be argued, is about self-rule and political independence, and not about individual or negative liberty.' Ελευθερία refers to the public sphere and not to the private.

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[425] Festugière (1987), p. 4.

But, I do not see how this is possible: the concept of political liberty (even in the restricted sense that Barnes attributes to it) is included in the general concept of freedom. It is not possible to distinguish the public from the private: if there is no freedom in the public sphere one can hardly see how any liberty can be really granted in the private sphere.

So one could say that even if we define ἐλευθερία as having a share in ruling, it is obvious that negative liberty is part of the general definition of freedom. What Aristotle says about the democrats, that they espouse freedom in the sense of doing what you wish, but nevertheless choose as 'second best' to rule and be ruled in turn, shows exactly that: participation in ruling brings political liberty.

If one is participating in ruling, that means that he has a say in political decisions, he is able to put forward his views, he is at liberty to choose. Ruling in turn is a form of freedom, as Sorabji notes, because "it promotes my being able to do what I like".[426] The basic assumption behind this idea is that negative liberty would never be secured unless political participation in government is guaranteed. Without being able to participate in government, negative liberty will almost always be arbitrary and subject to the good will of the occasional 'benevolent' sovereign or sovereign body.

But when did freedom start losing its meaning? Well, according to Pettit, since Constant's lecture. In fact, when ancient freedom was replaced with the liberal one, a kind of a strange shift occurred, as if a compromise was made, a 'new deal' about being free: it is alright if you are not able to have political freedom (to participate in government); instead you'll have personal freedom (you'll be able to do what you like in private). But wasn't personal freedom something one already had when he had political freedom? The 'new deal' of modernity consisted in rendering 'free politically active citizens' to

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[426] Sorabji (1990b), p. 266.

'idiotic citizens' (ἰδιῶτες/ἰδιωτεύοντες). In that context, Berlin would have no problem with a totalitarian regime if it allowed personal freedom.

From what it seems, in Berlin's account the negative-positive distinction has sustained a historical narrative to go along with the philosophical dichotomy of private and populist liberty. According to Pettit, Berlin provided his view on the two concepts of liberty with a false historicism, a false historical view to back up his view:

> Constant's modern liberty is Berlin's negative liberty, and his ancient liberty--the liberty of belonging to a democratically self-governing community--is the most prominent variety of Berlin's positive conception. Modern liberty is being left to the rule of your own private will, ancient liberty is sharing in the rule of a public, democratically determined will. The modern ideal is characteristically liberal, the ancient characteristically populist.[427]

Athenian democracy, despite all its faults (slavery, limited citizenship, suppression of women), provided its citizens--the ones that would qualify for citizenship--with freedom of expression. The Athenians drew a circle; whoever was inside that circle and qualified for citizenship enjoyed the goods and liberties of democracy. It is unfair to say that Athens was not a democracy simply because not everybody was a citizen. That would imply that no modern nation state is a democracy either, since citizenship is nowadays also limited; not everybody is a citizen in the United Kingdom today either. One could hardly be in a position to accuse Aristotle, or Athenian democracy, for the position of women and slavery etc., when women acquired the vote in the twentieth century in Europe, and still do not really have equal rights, and slavery was abolished in the USA in 1868.

Aristotle speaks of the free man (ἐλεύθερος) as being "ἄνθρωπος ὁ αὑτοῦ ἕνεκα καὶ μὴ ἄλλων ὤν" (*Metaphysics*, I. 2. 982b 26). A man is called free, if he exists for himself and is not dependent on others:

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[427] Pettit (1997), p. 18.

Clearly then it is for no intrinsic advantage that we seek this knowledge; for just as we call a man free who exists for himself and not for another, so we call this the only free science, since it alone exists for itself. For this reason its acquisition might justly be supposed to be beyond human power, since in many respects human nature is servile; in which case, as Simonides says, "God alone can have this privilege", and man should only seek the knowledge which is within his reach.

The free man is defined as one who can rule himself. So, the free man is self-ruling. There is a distinction to be drawn, according to Aristotle, between men who are rulers and men who are being ruled. The virtuous, according to Aristotle, are genuinely free, and have practical wisdom.

One of the keys to Aristotle's conception of liberty lies in his criticism of democratic liberty. Aristotle, like Plato, is opposed to the democratic ideal of freedom and criticises it on several occasions throughout his work. This criticism of democratic liberty by Aristotle has often been, as we have seen previously, the focus of attention by various scholars in trying to understand Aristotle's conception of liberty. But what is Aristotle actually in favour of, and is his criticism of democratic liberty able to provide us with an answer?

Aristotle refers to liberty directly in the *Politics* in the occasions where he discusses aristocratic, oligarchic and democratic conceptions of constitutions. Indeed, it should be noted that the only direct references that he makes to liberty are always in relation to democracy, since liberty is after all the defining factor of democracy, as Aristotle mentions on more than one occasion in the *Politics* (1280a5, 1291b30, 1294a11, 1316b21-7, 1318b27, 1318b38-1319a1, 1319b). In all the above passages Aristotle critically discusses the features that are generally held to define democracy, but at the same time he also makes remarks about the conception of liberty in general. Liberty is the end of democracy, as Aristotle says in *Rhetoric* 1366a:

Nor should the end of each form of government be neglected, for people choose the things which have reference to the end. Now, the end of democracy is liberty, of oligarchy wealth, of aristocracy things relating to education and what the law prescribes, of tyranny self-protection.

According to Aristotle, the democratic conception of liberty is defined by two features: (i) the interchange of ruling and being ruled and (ii) living as you like. *Politics*, VI, 2. 1317b 2-17 is the passage where Aristotle discusses at length the idea that ἐλευθερία is the precondition of a democratic state (ὑπόθεσις τῆς δημοκρατικῆς πολιτείας ἐλευθερία). Aristotle here defines the democratic conception of liberty. The passage is as follows:

The underlying principle of the democratic type of constitution is liberty. Indeed it is commonly held that liberty can only be enjoyed in this sort of constitution, for this, so they say, is the aim of every democracy. Liberty in one of its forms consists in the interchange of ruling and being ruled. The democratic conception of justice consists in arithmetical equality, rather than proportionate equality on the basis of desert. On this conception of justice the masses must necessarily be sovereign and the will of the majority must be ultimate and must be the expression of justice. The argument is that each citizen should be in a position of equality; and the result which follows in democracies is that the poor are more sovereign than the rich, for they are in a majority, and the will of the majority is sovereign. This then is one mark of liberty, which all democrats agree in making the defining feature of their sort of constitution. Another mark is 'living as you like'. Such a life, they argue, is the function of the free man, just as the function of slaves is not to live as they like. This is the second defining feature of democracy. It results in the view that ideally one should not be ruled by any one, or, at least, that one should [rule and] be ruled in turns. It contributes, in this way, to a general system of liberty based on equality.

The conflict of course between liberty and equality that Aristotle finds at the root of democracy is still unresolved. As he points out in *Politics* 1318a 6-10, equality is for the poorer class to have no larger share of power than the

rich, and not for the poorer class alone to be supreme but for all to govern equally. In this way the worst-off would feel that the constitution possessed both equality and liberty. But, as he says in *Politics* 1318b 39-41, unfortunately, liberty to do whatever one likes cannot guard against the evil that is in every man's character.

Aristotle has already argued in 1310a 26-38 that democracy usually rests on a false conception of liberty. As he says, there are two features which are generally held to define democracy: the sovereignty of the majority and the liberty of individuals. Justice is assumed to consist in equality in regarding the will of the masses as sovereign; liberty is assumed to consist in "doing what one likes". But the result of this view is that in extreme democracies each individual lives as he likes and "he chances to desire for any end", as Euripides says. But, according to Aristotle, this is a false conception of liberty, since to live by the rule of the constitution ought not be regarded as slavery, but rather as salvation. What is important in the city is for preservation and stability to be ensured, and this will not be achieved if the form of the constitution is based on such a conception of liberty.

As Barker notes, Aristotle assumes that the idea of liberty, on its political side, is ultimately based on the conception of justice. Aristotle would agree with Taylor that liberty does not come first; liberty is not a good to be pursued for its own sake; it is not prior to other values, like justice for example. For Aristotle, justice comes first. As we have seen, Aristotle opposes Plato's conception of the city as unity. As Aristotle points out in *Politics* 1324a5, where he examines the question of whether the happiness of the city is the same as that of the individual, or whether it is different:

> Those who believe that the well-being of the individual consists
> in his wealth, will also believe that the city as a whole is happy
> when it is wealthy. Those who rank the life of a tyrant higher than
> any other, will also rank the city which possesses the largest
> empire as being the happiest city. Anyone who grades individuals

by their goodness, will also regard the happiness of cities as proportionate to their goodness (1324a9-13).

The happiness of the city is the same as that of the individual only in the sense that in the same way that it is important for the individual to be wealthy, good etc., it is also important for the city too to be wealthy, good, etc.

From the above, we can draw the following conclusions regarding Aristotle's conception of liberty. Liberty in one of its forms consists in the interchange of ruling and being ruled. (*Pol.*, 1317b2-3) This contributes to a general system of liberty based on equality (*Pol.*, 1317b15-17). But while the democrats adopt arithmetical equality, Aristotle supports proportionate equality. One form of liberty, as he says, is to govern and be governed in turn. This is the conception of liberty that Aristotle accepts while he denies the one form according to which liberty is to do whatever one wants that the extreme democrat advocates. The idea of liberty, on its political side, is ultimately based on the conception of justice. But justice for Aristotle should consist in proportionate equality on the basis of desert and not in arithmetical equality as in the case of the democratic conception of justice. (*Pol.*, 1317b2-11)

Although ideally one should not be ruled by any one, this is not possible since the state would resolve into anarchy. In order to prevent this, a compromise should be made at the expense of liberty: one should live by the rule of the constitution. Living by the rule of the constitution ought, therefore, not to be regarded as slavery but as salvation (*Pol.*, 1310a33-39). Aristotle, as we have seen, argues that it is slavish to live for another with the crucial exception of a friend. If the ideal city rests on an extension of the best type of friendship (as we have seen in the previous chapter), the virtuous person's relationship to the city is not slavish.

The greatest of all the means for ensuring stability of constitutions is the education of citizens in the spirit of their constitution. The citizens should be attuned, by the force of habit and the influence of teaching to the right

constitutional temper. It is true that to some extent Aristotle agrees that freedom is living as one wishes; but he denies that living as one wishes requires freedom from the constraints of law or moral education. Although being a free man as opposed to a slave is considered to be the greatest good, a free man is in a way worse than a slave because he has only responsibilities, does nothing at random and has no leisure (*Met.*, 1075a).

7. 5 Conclusion

Having illustrated Aristotle's conception of freedom, the question we are left with is whether Aristotle would endorse Constant's account of ancient liberty. I have successfully, I hope, shown in the first section of this chapter that Berlin's conception of negative liberty involves some kind of fallacy. Also, that another mistake of interpretation is made in Aristotle's conception of the democratic notion of liberty "as doing what you want". Constant's account of ancient liberty, while not free from misinterpretations, is the one most accurately representing Aristotle's conception of liberty as participation in government and as self-rule. Constant's account is correct in spirit at least, if not in its letter.

Aristotle's account of the good life requires that we should exercise self-government and be ruled in turn; but it does not imply that there is not room for a private sphere (household, family, contemplation). Aristotle's account of liberty rather concentrates on the public sphere, and it is from there that his conception of freedom is derived. An argument about liberty in the private sphere would be a different argument from Aristotle's. All the discussion about liberty in Aristotle refers to the public; it is an account of freedom described in social terms. Mill's account on the other hand is described in moral terms.

It is apparent that Aristotle, in the *Politics*, in the first sentence of Book I and in the opening sentences of Book VII, is committed to a thick theory of the good. It follows that, for Aristotle, the state could not be neutral between different conceptions of the good. For Aristotle man is a political animal, and the good life requires him to participate in government. The good life requires social activity and the kind of liberty that enables you to take part in the life of the *polis*. Liberty is an essential requirement in order to live a good life. Aristotle, therefore, would agree with the Taylor view according to which liberty is not prior; the value of liberty depends on other values. The question that comes first for Aristotle, as for Taylor, is 'what values are important?'. Once this question is settled, then the definition of liberty will follow.

Aristotle is, thus, advocating pretty much what Constant called ancient liberty. This means that he is definitely not a liberal in his conception of freedom. He surely is though no negative libertarian either, as Fred Miller would like him to be. Whether a communitarian can find support in Aristotle depends on what the communitarian view is. Liberty as participation requires some shared values and one could not be free in this sense outside a society. Aristotelian liberty as participation is not alien to the positive conception of liberty, since it is also defined as obedience to rightly constituted law. We have already seen that Aristotle thinks that "to live by the rule of the constitution ought not to be regarded as slavery, but rather as salvation" (*Pol.* 1310a34-36). Therefore, one could argue that there is common ground between Aristotle and the communitarian position. Nevertheless, if the communitarian conception of liberty is trying to restate a Hegelian view of liberty as self-mastery, then the communitarian position introduces ideas which would be alien to Aristotle.

8. CONCLUSION

> The ancients had political greatness,
> for, unlike Frenchmen, they had politics.
> Voltaire

In this thesis I have examined six key concepts (community, teleology, happiness, justice, friendship and liberty) which can be found in Aristotle, but which also are key concepts of both communitarianism and liberalism, although they get to be very differently interpreted in each case. My aim was to show that neither the communitarian nor the liberal appropriations do justice to Aristotle's political theory. Both seem to attribute their own aspirations to the Aristotelian text and to rely on Aristotle's authority in order to substantiate their arguments.

Fundamental to Aristotle's position is his account of the good life and his view that man is a political animal. Aristotle believes that there is an objectively best form of life, that this form of life can only be achieved in the *polis*, and that the *polis* exists in order to make it possible. These doctrines determine his treatment of all the concepts discussed in this thesis.

His concept of teleology is very different from that of the liberal-individualist because he thinks of the state as natural rather than artificial. This does not mean that cities develop of their own accord but rather that only in the city can human beings achieve the kind of life that constitutes their flourishing. This conception is obviously different from that of the liberal-individualist but it also differs from any account that could be put forward by a modern communitarian because the communitarians do not accept the Aristotelian view of human nature. They cannot, therefore, agree that there is one objectively best form of life. For the same reason the communitarian could not accept the Aristotelian view of the state as the highest community because it aims at the most sovereign good. They may agree that a community

requires a shared conception of the good, but they believe that there are different conceptions of the good and that no one good can therefore be sovereign.

The Aristotelian view of the good also shapes Aristotle's conception of justice. This differs from that of the individualists because it gives a central role to the idea of desert which in turn requires that a conception of justice must be underpinned by a conception of the good. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle gives a purely formal account of the good as treating equals equally and unequals unequally. This would allow different communities to have different conceptions of justice depending on their conceptions of the good and could be accepted by a modern communitarian. But in the *Politics* Aristotle makes it clear that there is one true account of justice which is based on the correct account of the good for man. Conceptions of justice which rest on other conceptions of the good, such as the democratic and oligarchic conceptions, are not strictly speaking correct. Here Aristotle parts company with communitarians who would hold that a conception of justice has only to conform to the conception of the good of a particular historical community.

The same considerations apply to friendship. A liberal would no doubt see friendship as desirable but it is not an essential feature of the state. Communitarians may emphasise the importance of feelings of community. Aristotle's view that political friendship holds the city together may seem very similar to this. But it comes to seem rather different when we investigate his conception of friendship, resting as it does on the idea that true friendship is friendship for the sake of the good.

Aristotle clearly cannot accept the negative conception of liberty which seems to be implicit in the political philosophy of liberal individualism. A mere absence of constraint would not help one to lead the good life. One might, therefore, be inclined to think that he must be adopting a positive conception of liberty. Although communitarian thinkers have little to say

about freedom there are indications that they too might favour some version of positive liberty. But, again, on closer examination Aristotle's position comes to seem rather different. His view of liberty is more like Constant's ancient liberty or republican liberty. It is essentially the condition of one who shares in ruling and being ruled according to law.

The upshot is then that Aristotle would certainly reject most of the key ideas of liberal individualism. But this does not make him an ally of the communitarians. Because Aristotle's views are founded on a metaphysical and moral conception of human nature which would not be accepted by the communitarians, they cannot claim his authority for their doctrines.

But this does not mean that Aristotle has nothing to contribute to contemporary political discussion. His views on the value of friendship and, in particular, his notion of political friendship as 'concern for others' has a lot to contribute to a contemporary discussion that seems to be dominated merely by the liberal notion of 'respect for others'. So has his conception of liberty; the ancient notion of 'freedom as participation in government' could help us re-evaluate the role of political activity and its importance for self-determination. This need not imply that the negative conception of liberty would have to be ruled out. Aristotle's political philosophy is not hostage to the historical circumstances of the Greek city-state. It was meant to be a model that--as Thucydides would say--could guide us in running the state's affairs for ever (ἐσαεί).

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* <u>Note on translations</u>: Aristotle translations used in this thesis are from Ross (1980), Stalley (1995) and Barnes (1984) with some alterations of my own.

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