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friend is like a second self, when one is with one's friend one is, in a way, perceiving oneself. When one is thus aware of oneself being active in the best sorts of ways, then one has the pleasure of awareness to add to the pleasure of the activity. And the better the activity, the more valuable is the society of our friends; "men should contemplate in common and feast in common, only not on the pleasures of food" but on the pleasures of discussion and thought. The best kind of man will indeed have friends, and the best kind of friendship will be the comradeship of fellow-philosophers (*EE* 1244b1-45b19; *NE* 1169b3-70b19, 1171b29-72a15).

Even while discussing the social meaning of friendship, Aristotle remained true to the inspiration of the *Exhortation* and the appeal of the intellectual life. To judge from his will, he ought to have died a happy man, because among his closest friends were several fellow-philosophers, including Theophrastus, his close colleague and his successor as head of the Lyceum, the institution of higher learning where he spent most of the last decade of his life. Unfortunately, he had a stroke of bad luck in the end; after the death of Alexander the Great there were anti-Macedonian disturbances in Athens, and Aristotle found it necessary to leave the Lyceum and go to his family estate at Chalcis, where he died soon afterwards, far away from his colleagues and friends.

8 Politics

One of the superficially most surprising features of Aristotle's practical philosophy is his application of the name *politikê* (sc. *methodos* or *epistêmê*, i.e., political enquiry or science) not to an enquiry into the nature of the state, or into the foundations of political authority, but to moral theory itself. The kind of enquiry exemplified by Aristotle's ethical treatises is regularly designated by that term (e.g., *NE* 1095a2, a15-17), and the treatise in the Aristotelian corpus which bears the title *Politics* is represented by Aristotle as a continuation of the *NE*, required to complete the programme of the latter work (*NE* 1181b12-23). The reason is that the ethical treatises are practical enquiries directed toward the achievement of the good life, an aim which, given the social nature of human beings, cannot be achieved except in the context of a political society. Political theory, then, is for Aristotle neither a distinct subject from moral theory nor the application of moral theory to the political sphere; rather, it is a discipline ancillary to moral theory. Given the identification of human good achieved by the latter, political theory narrowly conceived seeks to identify which forms of society are more and which less conducive to the achievement of that good, to explain the defects of the imperfect forms, and to suggest how those defects might be remedied. The question of political authority, central to most modern political philosophy, is, then, absent from Aristotle's agenda. That question, which may be phrased as "What are the grounds, and what are the limits, of the individual's obligation to obey the state?," presupposes a background of thought in which the central concept is that of obligation and in which the state is seen as something external to the individual, a coercive agency whose power to interfere and to limit stands in need of justification. Aristotle's presuppositions

are quite different. His fundamental concept is not that of obligation, but of human good; while in his view the role of the state, so far from limiting the individual's freedom of action with the aim of securing a common good, is precisely that of enabling the individual to realize his or her potential to achieve his or her individual good, an achievement impossible unless in the context of the state. From either perspective, questions about the relation of the state to the individual are central, but the questions are different. For the modern theorist the central problem is why the individual should accept the authority of the state; Aristotle has rather to make good the claim that individual good is unattainable except to an active participant in a political community.

The *Politics* explicitly assumes the account of human good arrived at in the *Ethics*, viz., "activity of the soul in accordance with excellence," that is to say, the excellent realization of those capacities which are distinctive of human life, specifically the capacities for practical and theoretical rationality.¹ The perfection of practical rationality is the life of complete virtue of character, guided by practical wisdom (*phronêsis*), while the perfection of theoretical rationality is the life of theoretical contemplation (*theôria*). Why does either kind of perfection require participation in political life?

We must emphasise the word "political" if the question is to be properly understood. The *NE* advances a number of plausible arguments for the thesis that a good human life must be a communal life. No one, Aristotle reasonably asserts, would wish to live in isolation, without friends. Quite apart from whatever extrinsic benefits we may derive from others, such as help in time of trouble, we find the sharing of a life with like-minded friends an intrinsic good, in that such a life is more enjoyable and more worthwhile to us than a life without friends (1169b16–22). (Some of Aristotle's arguments for this conclusion may be dubious, e.g., that we value friends partly because we value our own fine actions, and we can more easily appreciate actions of those kinds done by our friend, who is "another self," than by our own self (1169b30–1170b10). Irrespective of this, the conclusion is certainly true.) Again, most of the virtues of

¹ For the account of the good in the *NE*, see 1098a16–18; in the *Politics*, see 1295a35–37, 1328a37–8, and 1332a7–9. On the vexed question of the relation of practical to theoretical excellence in the good life, see this chapter, section III.

character, in whose performance the excellence of the practical life consists, require interaction with others; e.g., generosity and justice require people to be generous and just to others, temperance involves refraining from wanton insolence to others (1178a28–b3). But these arguments show merely that in order to live well we must live in some kind of community, not that we must live in a political community, still less that we must take an active part in political life. As Aristotle recognizes (*Pol* I) other forms of community than the political, he cannot be assumed to have overlooked the distinction. Rather, he thinks that considerations of the relations between the political and other forms of community provide grounds to accept the thesis that a good human life must be a political life.

In fact Aristotle's claim is the more specific one that a good human life must be a life of participation in a specific form of political organisation, viz., the city-state (*polis*). He was of course aware of other types of state, such as the Persian kingdom, but is unwilling to count them as *poleis*, apparently on the ground that they are too big (1326b2–7). (He seems confused on this point, since he says that a nation is hardly capable of having a form of government [*politeia*], yet he counts monarchy as a form of government and knew that some nations (and indeed groups of nations) were governed by monarchs.) We must start, then, by examining his account of the *polis* and its relation to other forms of community, to see whether he can make good his claim that participation in the life of the *polis* is essential for a good human life.

I

Aristotle's account of the *polis* is firmly rooted in his philosophy of nature. The connection is expressed in two fundamental theses, 1) that the *polis* exists by nature, and 2) that a human being is a being of a kind naturally adapted to live in a *polis* (1253a1–3). While his enunciation of both theses in a single sentence indicates their intimate interconnection, the precise nature of his view of the logical relation between the two is not entirely clear. The same evidence, he says (*ibid.*) is sufficient to establish both, which is compatible with material or formal equivalence, or with entailment in either direction. In outline, his train of argument is as follows. The continuation of the human species requires two primitive forms of interpersonal

relation, that between male and female for the purpose of reproduction and that between master and slave for survival. Hence the most primitive social unit is that constituted by individuals bearing those relations to one another, viz., the household (*oikia*), while the village (*kôme*) is a further natural development, a permanent association of households existing for the fulfilment of needs (presumably both economic needs and the need for protection against animals and other human groups).²

Households and villages are thus natural forms of association in that they develop in response to certain natural human needs. We might note in passing that the notion of "natural" in play here is not entirely unproblematic. If "natural" is understood as "such as will inevitably come about unless prevented by external interference," then Aristotle is surely unjustified in claiming that the household and the village, as he understands them, are natural in that sense. Plainly, the basic human needs of reproduction and survival may be satisfied in numerous kinds of organization (e.g. the nomadic tribe) other than those which he has identified. Again, it is unclear to what extent "natural" (or, equivalently, "by nature") is opposed to "conventional" or "artificial." The master-slave relation, even if natural in some sense (see below, section V), is conventional to the extent that a slave is by definition the property of the master, so that the existence of the relation presupposes the conventions constitutive of the institution of private property. Even at this most basic stage, Aristotle has built into his account of what is natural a considerable element of description of the fundamentals of ancient Greek society.

He now (1252b27–31) argues that since the *polis* is the complete or perfect type of community, it must be a natural form of community if, as has already been shown, the more primitive forms are natural. The argument is an application of a principle of his biology, that the nature of a kind is realized when the instances of that kind achieve their complete development, i.e. their mature or adult form.³ The development from household via village to *polis* is thus presented as analogous to that e.g. from acorn via sapling to mature oak. But what reason does he give us to accept that analogy? His

² Cf. Plato, *Protagoras* 322b.

³ See *Phys* 193b3–12. For a valuable discussion of Aristotle's use of this principle here, see Stephen Everson, "Aristotle on the Foundations of the State," *Political Studies* 36 (1988): 89–101.

argument is that the process of development from the household is a purposive one, in which people who as individuals lack self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) combine to form communities of increasing complexity, until the aim of producing a self-sufficient community is achieved by (and only by) the development of the *polis*. If self-sufficiency is understood, as the discussion of the primitive forms of community has suggested, simply as the ability to sustain and reproduce individual life, then the claim that the development of the *polis* is not only sufficient but also necessary for that end must be rejected. But there is a suggestion in the text that that conception of self-sufficiency is inadequate, in Aristotle's remark (1252b29–30) that the *polis* comes into being for the sake of life, but exists for the sake of the good life. If we accept that the good life is correctly specified in his ethical writings as the life shaped by exercise of the virtues of intellect and character, the previous objection – that mere sustenance and reproduction does not require the *polis* – lapses. But our problems are not over. For even if we allow Aristotle the highly controversial claim that the life of virtue is impossible except within the specific form of the *polis*, we still may question whether that way of life is the goal or completion toward which the primitive forms of organization are to be seen as tending. Aristotle's description of the *polis* as coming into existence for the sake of life, but existing for the sake of the good life, suggests that simple survival and subsistence was the goal which explains the original development of the *polis*, and that the conception of it as existing to promote the good life is a subsequent development, which presupposes the general adoption of a system of values itself made possible by the conditions of life in the *polis*. If so, then in what sense is it true that the primitive forms of organization are natural stages in a process of development which is complete when and only when that conception of the good is realized? Primitive communities may evolve, and no doubt have actually evolved, into a variety of types of political organization; what entitles one such form to be identified as *the* goal toward which the process of evolution tends?

Aristotle's first argument for his thesis that the *polis* exists by nature is as follows: the *polis* is the goal of the primitive communities; nature is a goal; therefore, the *polis* exists by nature (1252b30–32). We have seen that he has not established the first premiss. Further, the conclusion does not follow; even granted that the *polis*

is the goal of the primitive communities, and that nature is a goal, it need not be the case that the *polis* is a natural entity. For it could be the case that the kind of goal which the development of the primitive communities has is such that it requires a non-natural means of achievement, as the goal of flying is for humans. To meet that objection the first premiss would have to be formulated as "The *polis* is the natural goal of the primitive communities." But then the desired conclusion would already be assumed, and the argument therefore otiose. Aristotle further argues (1252b34–1253a1) that that for the sake of which something is, i.e., its goal, is the best thing, and self-sufficiency is a goal and the best thing. Assuming that there is precisely one best thing, it follows that self-sufficiency is that for the sake of which (sc. the primitive communities evolve into more developed ones), but it still does not follow that the kind of self-sufficiency which is achieved by the development of the *polis* is natural.⁴

As we have seen, Aristotle asserts that the grounds for the thesis that the *polis* exists by nature are also grounds for the thesis that "Man is by nature a political animal". Like most slogans, this, perhaps the most famous of Aristotle's political pronouncements, is susceptible of various interpretations. He clearly intends to assert that, in the way outlined in the previous discussion, human beings are adapted by nature for life in the *polis*, in that life in that context is necessary and sufficient for the attainment of individual human good. He supports this claim by an interesting application (1253a7–18) of his principle that "Nature does nothing in vain" (a9). While animals are generally able to express pleasure and pain by their cries, humans and only humans possess speech, which enables them to make judgments of what is beneficial and harmful, right and wrong. That is to say, the human capacity for practical judgment marks the species out for life in the *polis*, since (it is implied) it is in that context, and only in that context, that that capacity is properly exercised. This claim is a powerful one; it implies, for example, that modern political institutions systematically deprive

⁴ For a fuller discussion see David Keyt, "Three Fundamental Theorems in Aristotle's *Politics*," *Phronesis* 32 (1987): 54–79. A revised version, entitled "Three Basic Theorems in Aristotle's *Politics*," appears in David Keyt and Fred D. Miller, Jr., eds., *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell 1991), 118–41.

their participants of the full exercise of one of their most fundamentally human capacities.

Some of these points will be discussed further below. For the moment I turn to a yet more disturbing aspect of Aristotle's slogan. This is the claim that the *polis* is prior to the individual, since the whole must be prior to the part and the individual is a part of the *polis* (1253a18–29). The sense of "prior" in question is that of priority in essence or being (*ousia*), in which A is prior to B if and only if A can exist without B, but not vice versa.⁵ That this is the kind of priority at issue is made clear by Aristotle's use of the analogy of bodily parts; a hand or a foot cannot exist in isolation from the body as a whole, for a detached part is not a part properly so called, but is so-called only homonymously, as the hand of a statue is not strictly speaking a hand (or, as we might more naturally say, not a real hand).⁶ The point is that bodily parts are functionally identified, via their relation to other parts and to the functioning of the whole system into which they fit; physically isolated from that context they are at best potential parts (if they retain the possibility of being reintegrated into a functioning system), at worst dead, i.e., former, parts. Aristotle makes analogous claims about the relation between individual and *polis*; an individual *incapable* of membership of a *polis* is not, strictly speaking, a human being, but rather a (non-human) animal, while one who is self-sufficient apart from the *polis* is superhuman, or, as Aristotle puts it, a god (a25–9). His point is not the uncontroversial one that one cannot be a *citizen* except in the context of a *polis*, as one cannot be a wicket-keeper (as opposed to a former, or a potential, wicket-keeper) except as a member of a cricket team. It is the stronger point that one cannot be a human being except in the context of a *polis*. The context need not be actual; so Robinson Crusoe does not cease to be human during the period of his total isolation. But nevertheless the analogy commits Aristotle to holding that what makes any of us human is our capacity for *polis* membership, just as what makes this quantity of organic matter a hand is its capacity to play a particular role in a functioning human body. The political implications of this analogy are momentous, since the parts

⁵ See, e.g., *Met* 1019a2–4: "[Prior] by nature and essence are such things as can exist without others, whereas the latter cannot exist without them." Cf. *Phys* 260b18–19.

⁶ Cf. *An* 412b18–22.

of an organism have no interests independent of the interests of the organism as a whole. Rather, the good of the part is its being such as to make its proper contribution to the good of the organism. That is the sense in which "the same thing is good for the part and for the whole" (1255b9–10).⁷ If this analogy is taken seriously, Aristotle must be committed to an extreme form of totalitarianism: not merely the doctrine that the independent good of the individual must be subordinated to the greater good of the state, but the yet more extreme doctrine that the individual has no independent good, his or her good being identified with his or her contribution to the good of the state.⁸ The relation of slave to master appears to give the nearest analogy to the relation of the individual to the state: as individuals we are living parts of the state, as the slave is a living part of the master (1255b11–12); and like the slave we find our good not in the realization of any aims of our own, but in the fulfilment of the aims of that of which we are a part.

In fact Aristotle's predominant view of the individual–state relation is the antithesis of this. He expressly distinguishes political rule from the rule of master over slave (I.7) on the ground that, whereas the latter is, properly, exercised over those who are incapable of exercising rational control over their own lives (1254b16–23, 1260a12), the former is exercised over those who are "free and equal" and must consequently have as its aim the promotion of the good of those who are freely to accept it (1279a28–32). The good of the individual is not, therefore, merely independent of the good of the *polis*; in two of the many ways in which one thing can be prior to another it is prior to it, in that (a) the aim of political organization is to promote the good life for the citizens, and therefore (b) the good of the state is defined via that of the individual, in that the state is well organized when it is so organised as to fulfil its aim, which is as specified in (a).⁹ Further, that aim is not such as could be imposed on the individual for his or her own good. For the good of the individual is to live the life of moral and

7 On the application of that doctrine to the master–slave relation, see below, section V.

8 I distinguish various kinds of totalitarianism (including those just mentioned) in "Plato's Totalitarianism," *Polis* 5.2 (1986): 4–29.

9 A is prior to B *logôî* (= in definition) if and only if the definition of A is included in the definition of B, but not vice versa (*Met* 1028a32–36).

intellectual virtue, which requires that the individual directs his life by his autonomous practical reasoning. But at the same time the social requirements of human nature are such that the best exercise of autonomous practical reasoning is the promotion of the good life not for the individual in isolation, but for the whole community (*NE* 1094b7–10; *Pol* 1278a40–b5).

The thesis that the *polis* stands to the individual as whole to part is therefore an aberration on Aristotle's part; it commits him to denying two central theses of his ethico-political system, that the aim of the *polis* is the promotion of the good life for its citizens, and that the central activity of the good life is the exercise of autonomous practical rationality.¹⁰ But we can see that Aristotle was led to that overstatement by another thesis equally central to that system, viz., the thesis that the good life is necessarily a social life. Nevertheless the fact that we cannot live a good life in isolation from others should no more lead us to conclude that we are essentially parts of a social whole than the fact that (for most people) we cannot lead a good life without some satisfactory sexual relations should lead us to conclude that we are essentially parts of some sexual whole. Aristotle ought to separate the claim that humans are creatures adapted for life in the *polis* from the claim that they are parts of the *polis* and, for the sake of consistency with his central doctrines, to repudiate the latter.

Why does the exercise of practical rationality require the *polis*, as distinct from other forms of (in the modern sense) political organization such as the nation state? Aristotle's answer is clear. The good life is the life directed by *phronêsis*, and the most perfect exercise of *phronêsis* is the application of that virtue to the common good of a community (see above). That is to say, the good life requires participation in the government of a self-governing community, i.e., a

10 Nevertheless, this claim is repeated at 1337a27–30; since the citizen is part of the state he belongs not to himself, but to the state. The assertion that the citizen does not belong to himself is identical with what is said of the natural slave, who does not belong to himself, but to someone else (1254a13–17). It is inconsistent with *Met* 982b25–26: "a free man is for his own sake and not for the sake of another," since what is for its own sake determines its activities for its own ends and so cannot be at the disposal of another. See T.H. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 411.

polis. Someone who has no share in the government of his or her community, say a subject of an absolute monarch, or someone who elects to play no part in political life, has, willingly or perforce, to surrender crucial aspects of his or her life to the direction of another, and thus abandons the task of *phronêsis*, "to deliberate well about what is good and advantageous for oneself, not in particular areas, such as what promotes health or strength, but with a view to living well overall" (NE 1140a25–28). While of course Aristotle had not envisaged modern representative democracy, we may surmise that he would have held that the same objection applied to it. Representative government removes the individual too far from day-to-day decision-making to allow it to count as giving the individual the degree of control over his or her life which the exercise of *phronêsis* requires. An objection to Aristotle's position (suggested, e.g., by NE X.7) is that the ideal life may be a life of total commitment to theoretical activity, requiring withdrawal from political activity altogether, the kind of life later undertaken by Epicurean communities. Aristotle's implied response is that such a life is possible only within a political framework on which the philosophical community must rely for its subsistence and protection, and that, once again, the imperative to perfect one's *phronêsis* requires that one participates in the government of the community which the philosophical life requires. That does not, it should be noticed, commit Aristotle to denying that theoretical activity is the most valuable human activity, and there is indeed more than a hint of that doctrine in *Pol* VII.3 (see below, section III). What it does commit him to denying is that the best possible human life is one devoted exclusively to theoretical activity. To repeat, the best form of human life is that directed by the agent's own *phronêsis*, and the best form of *phronêsis* is that directed toward the promotion of the good life for the whole community. In Aristotelian terms, the good human being must be *phronimos*, and the ideal *phronimos* is the *politikos* (1278b1–5).

It follows that the citizens of a *polis* must participate in its government; every *polis*, not merely the best, must be a participatory democracy. But Aristotle counts democracy as merely one form of the constitution of a *polis*, not in fact the best; he includes other forms, such as tyranny and monarchy, which allow little or no participation in government to their citizens, and he asserts in the NE

that kingship (which is a form of monarchy) is the best form of constitution (1160a35–36). To confront these difficulties we must consider Aristotle's classification of types of political constitution.

II

A *polis* is a species of community, other species being the household, the village, and the nation. The various kinds are defined by the different forms of rule or subordination (*archê*) which govern the activities of their members. The rule of master over slave, of the patriarch over wife and children, and of monarch over subjects are different forms of rule from political rule, which we saw to be a) exercised over free and equal subjects (1255b20) and b) exercised with a view to promoting the common interest (1279a16–21). So a *polis* is by definition a community of individuals who participate in the government of the community. This is confirmed by Aristotle's account of the relation between the *polis* and the citizen (III.1); a *polis* is a community of citizens (*politai*; 1274b41), and a citizen is defined as one who is able to participate in the deliberative and judicial areas of government (1275b18–20). Yet this participatory account of the *polis* is, as we have seen, in tension with Aristotle's classification of kinds of constitution (*politeia*). First, he counts monarchy as a species of constitution (1279a32–34), containing two sub-species, kingship and tyranny (a32–b7). Then, despite the definition of political rule as directed to the common interest, he distinguishes (*ibid.*) various correct forms of constitution which satisfy that requirement from their corresponding deviant or perverted forms (*parekbaseis*), which aim, in contrast, at the promotion of various sectional interests instead of the common interest.

The tension is in fact generated by two aspects of Aristotle's enterprise, on the one hand the descriptive/classificatory, on the other the analytic/prescriptive. Under the former heading falls the activity of identifying and classifying the sorts of governmental systems actually to be found in those political communities which Aristotle and his contemporaries recognised as *poleis*; for this purpose a *polis* can simply be taken to be a more-or-less autonomous community, normally but not necessarily Greek (Aristotle counts Carthage as a *polis*), inhabiting a roughly continuous and fairly small tract of land, usually

containing a single urban centre and a number of smaller settlements. *Poleis* thus conceived may be governed in a variety of ways: by monarchs of various kinds, by unconstitutional despots (tyrants), by various kinds of oligarchies, by varieties of democracies, or by systems combining elements of those diverse types. On the other hand the analytic programme rests on a number of principles, some of which we have already come across: a) we understand the nature of a natural entity when we see it fully developed; b) the *polis* is a specific form of community, and every community is a natural entity, developed in response to certain specific needs of its members; and c) the full development of the *polis* is the organizational state which enables it most fully to meet the specific needs which led to its institution. Given these principles, we can see that certain forms of actual political organization are best understood as deviations from the proper/natural pattern of the development of a political community, deviations which arise from the substitution of sectional interest for the proper/natural goal of the community, viz., the common interest. We thus arrive at a simple and perspicuous classification of types of constitution: the common good may be sought by a) government by a single individual (kingship), b) by the few (aristocracy), and c) by the many (*politeia*), but each of those correct forms may be perverted into a form in which the ruling element seeks its own sectional interest instead of the common good, viz. a') tyranny, b') oligarchy, and c') democracy (Aristotle's own terms are used as labels). But while that will explain why the perverted forms of constitution are counted as political organizations at all, we need to look further for an explanation of why monarchy is so counted; if a *polis* is a community of citizens, and a citizen is one who has the opportunity to share in government, then surely a monarchy cannot be a *polis*.

This difficulty is alleviated, if not altogether eliminated, by Aristotle's distinction (1285b20–33) between various forms of kingship, some of which (e.g. the Spartan dual monarchy) were in fact forms of magistracy assigned specific roles (generalship in the Spartan case) within a system clearly political by Aristotle's criteria. In those cases the application of the name kingship (*basileia*) is presumably to be explained as a historical survival from a period in which a fuller range of powers had been concentrated in the hands of the king. But in that case we might expect Aristotle to say that kingship properly so called belongs to a prepolitical stage of social organization, and

that only the restricted types of kingship can have a role in the *polis*. In fact, however, the type of kingship to which he devotes most attention is what he calls total kingship (*pambasileia*), in which the king has control of all matters (1285b29–31), a feature which is at odds with Aristotle's definition of citizenship (see above). This autocratic form of rule is that which the patriarch exerts over his household, as he explicitly points out in his introduction of this kind of kingship (1285b31–33), describing it as "household management of a *polis* or of one or more nations." Strictly speaking, then, it ought to be classed rather as a special sort of *oikonomia* than as a kind of political rule. (The fact that the king rules with the consent of his subjects does not count against that, for so does the patriarch.) Household management involves the rule of the developed practical wisdom of the patriarch over slaves, females, and children, all types of human being who, in Aristotle's view, lack that developed wisdom; "the slave does not have the faculty of deliberation, the female has it, but in a form lacking in authority [*akuron*], and the child has it, but in an incomplete form" (1260a12–14). Since that deficiency makes them unable to provide adequately for their own lives (and household management is concerned at least primarily with the economic conditions of life), they must make good the deficiency by dependence on the wisdom of the patriarch.

The application of that model to a community of adult males suggests similarly that the subjects must be lacking the wisdom necessary for the proper organization of their own lives; otherwise why is it appropriate for them to be totally subject to the king? Aristotle seems to recognize this point; at 1287a10–12 he says that it seems to some that it is contrary to nature for one to be in control of everything (or "of all") when the community is composed of similar people; and while he does not there explicitly endorse that view, he does so more unambiguously at 1287b41–1288a2: "From what has been said it is clear that among those who are alike and equal it is neither expedient nor just that one should be in control of all." Yet the endorsement is not unqualified, for he adds (a4–5) "not even if he is superior in excellence, unless in a certain way," a suggestion amplified at a15–19: "whenever it happens that a whole family or a single individual is so outstanding in excellence that it outstrips that of all the others, then it is just that that family should be royal and in control of all, and that one individual king." The reference in

this passage is to 1284a3–14, where Aristotle states that if in a community there is an individual or group who so far surpasses the rest in virtue that the virtue of the others is not to be compared to his (or theirs), that individual or group cannot be counted as part of a *polis*; rather he is to be counted as a god among men and cannot be subject to law, for he is himself the law. Subjecting someone like that to control would be as absurd as presuming to control Zeus and share his rule; rather, everyone should gladly obey such a ruler, so that such people should be perpetual kings (b30–34).

It is clear first that Aristotle does not consider this a practicable ideal; such a king would have to be a person of literally superhuman excellence, a type whom Aristotle describes with surely intentional understatement as “not easy to find” (1332b23; cf. NE 1145a27–28). The requirement that there should literally be no comparison between the excellence of the ideal king and that of his subjects is so extreme that it is hard to see how it could be fulfilled in any possible conditions. Moreover, as I have suggested, the fulfilment (per impossibile) of that requirement does not fit readily into Aristotle’s developmental account of the *polis*. That account maintains that individuals need the *polis* in order to live the good life, i.e., the life shaped by the shared exercise of *phronêsis*. But under the rule of the godlike king, the only shared exercise of *phronêsis* would be acquiescence in the king’s absolute rule; and even that acquiescence would hardly be a political act. The subjects of the ideal king are no more *politai* than are the children of an ideal patriarch. It is then unclear why the godlike king should rule over a *polis* rather than some other kind of community, whether smaller (a village) or larger (a nation).

Insofar as the *polis* is a human institution, developed by imperfect individuals to serve their need for a good form of communal life, monarchy does not provide a model for the ideal *polis*. The only form of monarchy suitable for imperfect individuals (including the monarch) is a monarchy limited by law (III.15–16), but in that form, as Aristotle recognizes, it is the law which has supreme authority, and the monarchy is in fact a form of magistracy (1287a3–6). Genuine, i.e. absolute, monarchy is in fact not a form of government of a human community, but is rather a sort of divine rule. Aristotle does not satisfactorily resolve the tension between the principles underlying his participatory conception of the *polis* and the principle that the best form of constitution is the rule of the best ruler (1288a33–34),

since he does not insist on the restriction that the best ruler must be a human ruler. Once that restriction is granted, the equality between ruler and ruled which springs from their common human nature requires the participation of all in government (1332b25–29).¹¹

A similar problem applies to oligarchy. Given the participatory account of citizenship, it is contradictory to define an oligarchy as a community in which participation in government is confined to a certain proportion of the citizen body, since those excluded from those functions are excluded by definition from the citizen body itself. One might of course identify an oligarchy by differentiating various aspects of citizenship, some of which, such as liability for military service or taxation, apply to all, whereas others, such as eligibility for various kinds of magistracies, are the prerogative of a minority, however defined, e.g. by a property qualification. Aristotle does not, however, attempt to define a minimum condition for citizenship purely in terms of obligations, such as those just mentioned, perhaps because such a criterion would not reliably distinguish from citizens such categories of resident non-citizens as resident aliens (*metoikoi*), who were subject to some such obligations. Rather he defines citizenship in terms of the right to participate in government in one way or another, and then faces the difficulty that in the typical oligarchy those rights are restricted to some of the citizens only. He makes the useful distinction (1275a23–26) between definite offices (i.e., those held for a fixed period) and indefinite (i.e., those without temporal restriction, such as eligibility for the assembly of the people), but recognizes that in some oligarchies not even the latter are available to all (b5–11). Aristotle accepts that his account of citizenship applies best to democratic states (b5–7) and that in practice the status of citizen is accorded on whatever grounds are found convenient in different states (b22–30). He offers his own account as an improvement (b30–32), yet has no answer to the difficulty we have just raised. His account is on the right lines, since he is right to think that the concept of citizenship cannot be defined purely in terms of residence or of subjection to authority, but implies

¹¹ The question of the relation between monarchy and the ideal form of *polis* is ably discussed by P.A. Vander Waerdt in “Kingship and Philosophy in Aristotle’s Best Regime,” *Phronesis* 30 (1985): 249–73. He rejects the central claim urged here, viz., that the conception of the good life assumed in the *Pol* is a politically active life.

participation in the essential activity of a community, and also to see that participation is a matter of degree. A somewhat more liberal conception of participation, including such elements as the right to participate in ritual, or to identify oneself as a descendant of some mythical ancestor, might have helped him deal with the problem of non-participatory citizenship.

III

We have now to consider Aristotle's account of the best type of *polis*, or rather his accounts, for he distinguishes the ideally best type, discussed in Books VII–VIII, from the best type for most people (given their actual circumstances), discussed in IV–VI. We shall first consider the ideal type.

The character of the ideal state emerges directly from the account of the goal of the *polis* discussed earlier. Since a *polis* is a community existing not merely for the sake of subsistence and protection but for the sake of the good life, the best kind of community is that which makes the best life available to its citizens. Immediately this raises classical questions of distribution, familiar from consideration of utilitarianism. Is the best kind of community that in which each individual enjoys the best life available, given the restriction that every other must enjoy a life equally good? Or is it that in which the best life absolutely (assuming that conception to have a clear sense) is available to some, even if that requires that some have a life less good than the best life, or a life less good than the life that they could have had had others not enjoyed the best life, or even, perhaps, a life which is not good at all? Because Aristotle thinks that the constituents of the best life are not contested goods such as wealth or honours, which have to be distributed, but virtues of intellect and character, he does not confront these questions directly. Rather he assumes that the best state is that in which every citizen is given the opportunity to achieve complete excellence in these respects (1324a23–25: "it is clear that the best constitution is that organization by which everyone, whoever he is, would do the best things and live a blessed life"), and does not consider whether the conditions for the achievement of excellence by one might require the abridgement of the possibilities of excellence of another. But his theory does generate these problems, in various ways. Thus the cultivation of practical and theoretical

excellence requires leisure (VII.15), but leisure presupposes that the necessities of life are already supplied by the labour of those whose lack of leisure prevents their cultivating either kind of excellence. We thus have a choice between an organization of the *polis* which requires everyone to divide their time between economic production and cultivation of excellence, and one in which those distinct types of activity are the province of different sections of the community. Aristotle's preference for the latter then faces the objection that, like Plato's *Republic*, his ideal state must contain a majority of non-ideal citizens. Worse still, although the aim of the *polis* is to provide the good life for its citizens, the best form of *polis* is one which frustrates that aim in the case of the majority. Aristotle's response is that of Plato in the *Laws*: the necessary economic functions are to be carried out by non-citizens, slaves and resident aliens, who need not even be Greeks (1329a24–26). But in that case the *polis* is no longer a community, i.e. an association of people self-sufficient for life, but a fraction of such a community, dedicated to the pursuit of an aim, viz., the pursuit of the good life, which is alien to the majority on whose labours that fraction depends. Moreover, the unity of the larger unit, comprised of citizens and non-citizens, is now problematic. What explains the willingness of the latter to play their necessary role in supporting the *polis* proper, under the government of the citizens? Insofar as they are slaves, the question does not arise (although the dependence on slavery challenges the claim to be a morally tolerable, much less ideal community). But insofar as the producers are aliens, there of their own choice, they must believe that they would be better governed by Aristotle's moral elite than by themselves. But Aristotle gives neither any explanation of why they would believe that, nor any reason to think that it would be true. Of course, the ideal citizens of Aristotle's ideal state are ex hypothesi possessed of highly developed *phronêsis*; surely that guarantees that their subjects are better governed than by their own imperfect rationality. But their perfect *phronêsis* guarantees that their political deliberation produces the best possible organization. What is precisely at issue is whether that organization is *best* for all those involved in it, or merely best for the citizens for whom, and for whom alone, it provides the opportunity to live the best life. Granted Aristotle's emphasis on the centrality of the exercise of *phronêsis* in the good life, one might have expected him to favour an arrangement in which

everyone had some share in the leisure necessary for the cultivation of excellence, whether by a system of part-time work throughout life, or by a system of recurrent "sabbaticals" devoted to participation in government. As it is, it is a cardinal feature of this ideal state that his citizens take turns to rule and be ruled (1332b26–29), the various governmental functions being shared out among the older, while the men of military age perform the function of defending the *polis* and are trained in the administration which they are to exercise later in life (VII.14). It would seem that the extension of that principle to the producers in his ideal state, i.e. their inclusion in the citizen body proper, would strengthen, not weaken, the consistency of his system. For that extension would allow the ideal *polis* to be a genuine community, unified by the common goal of enabling all citizens to share, to some extent or other, in the good life. As it stands, the so-called ideal *polis* is not a political community at all, since it is not self-sufficient for life, much less for the good life (1252b27–30). Rather, it is an exploiting elite, a community of free-riders whose ability to pursue the good life is made possible by the willingness of others to forgo that pursuit.¹² Even leaving aside the question of slavery, the "ideal" *polis* is thus characterized by systematic injustice.

Before leaving consideration of the ideal *polis* we should consider Aristotle's conception of the good life in a little more detail. Notoriously, in *NE* X.7–8 Aristotle praises the life of theoretical activity as the life of perfect well-being (*teleia eudaimonia*) and downgrades the life of practical excellence to a status of secondary value, thereby giving rise to a long-running debate as to whether the *NE* as a whole has a consistent position on the nature of the good life. Whatever the final verdict on that question, it may well appear that the *Politics* definitively rejects the "intellectualism" of *NE* X, since the good life which is shared by the citizens of the ideal *polis* is without doubt a practical life in which the citizens exercise their practical excellence to promote the common good. In fact, I doubt whether there is any major discrepancy between *NE* X and the *Politics*. (I also think that there is no discrepancy between *NE* X and the rest of that work, but that is not our present concern.)

Aristotle raises the question of the relative merits of the philosophic

¹² Aristotle makes very much the same criticism of Plato's *Republic*, 1264a24–29.

and the practical life in VII.2. Having first said (1324a23–25) that it is clear that the best form of constitution is that in which each individual does best and lives "blessedly" (*makariôs*), i.e. achieves complete well-being, he continues that there is disagreement between those who think that the best life is the practical, political life and those who urge the claims of a purely theoretical life, completely divorced from external concerns (a25–29). Having devoted the rest of the chapter to rejection of the view that the life of domination over others is the best, he returns to the original dispute in the next chapter. Characteristically, he says that both parties are in a way right and in a way wrong. The supporters of the philosophic life are correct to think that the life of a free man (which is apparently how they describe the life of one free from practical concerns) is better than the life of a slave-master, but wrong to identify the latter with the political life (because of the earlier distinction between political and despotic rule). They are also wrong to rank inactivity above activity, since well-being consists in activity, and the acts of the virtuous are fine (1325a23–34). Aristotle does not state explicitly where the adherents of the practical life are either right or wrong. The point just mentioned, that virtuous activity is intrinsically fine, is presumably a point in their favour, while earlier they were said to share the view of their opponents that the theoretical life is inactive (1325a21–22), concluding, since well-being consists in activity, that that life cannot constitute well-being.

Aristotle now proceeds to identify that view as a crucial error. Well-being does indeed consist in activity, but pure thought is not inactivity. Rather, activities carried out for their own sake, of which pure thought is the prime example, are the best sort of activity, as is attested by the fact that that is the kind of activity proper to the gods, who enjoy supreme well-being (b16–30). The divine character of the theoretical life was, of course, one of the principal grounds of its elevation to supreme value in *NE* X (notably in 1178b8–28). Is Aristotle, then, simply endorsing that position in *Pol* VII, and with it accepting the claim of the theoretical life to supreme value? Here we have to distinguish the value of pure theoretical *activity* from the value of the theoretical *life*, i.e., the life devoted exclusively to theory. Aristotle, in my view, endorses in the *Politics* the position of the *Ethics* on the former question: theoretical activity is the best kind of activity that human beings can undertake, and the best form

of political organization is that which makes that activity available to the best possible extent. (I adopt that deliberately vague formulation to avoid reopening the questions of distribution, discussed above, with respect to excellence generally.) On the latter question, he takes over the position of *NE* 1177b26–31 and 1178b5–7 that the exclusively theoretical life is not available to humans, whose nature demands that they live a social life. Given that requirement, the arguments reviewed earlier preclude a total withdrawal from political activity, for that would involve an abdication of *phronêsis*, and thus an abandonment of that total virtue which it is the aim of the good *polis* to promote.

We can now reconstruct Aristotle's position on the extent to which both parties to the dispute are partly right and partly wrong. The adherents of the theoretical life are right in thinking that pure thought is the most valuable activity, but wrong in drawing from that the conclusion that the best life for a human being is a life withdrawn from political activity. Their opponents, conversely, are right to think that the best life requires political activity, but wrong to think that that activity is the best thing in that life. I leave open a number of questions, some much discussed by commentators, about the relative contributions of theoretical and practical activity to the value of any individual life. I have sought merely to show that the discussion in the *Politics* does not require the hypothesis of a radical discontinuity between that work and *NE X*.

IV

As Aristotle insists on the practical value of his enquiry to would-be legislators, he has to investigate not merely what is the ideally best form of government but also what is the best available, given the limitations imposed by actual economic and other conditions. This requires comparison of the various types of actual constitution with a view to identifying their relative merits and defects, in order to guide the legislator in his task of either preserving an existing political order or improving it. This enterprise, to which books IV–VI are devoted, is illustrated by a wealth of empirical detail drawn from the comprehensive survey of the constitutions of Greek states (158 in all) which Aristotle organized, of which the sole survivor is the *Athenian Constitution*. I shall not attempt detailed discussion of

this portion of the work, which is fully discussed by a number of able and acute commentators,¹³ but shall confine myself to a few general remarks.

Broadly speaking, Aristotle regards wealth as the primary determinant of political organization.¹⁴ Every community contains some who are rich, who tend to be in the minority, and the poor, who tend to be in the majority. Each class tends to favour a political organization which entrenches itself in power: where the rich minority are in power we have some type of oligarchy, and where the poor majority are in power we have some type of democracy (1290b17–20). Most actual regimes are one or the other (1296a22–23). The distinction between an oligarchic and a democratic regime is not sharp, but is rather a matter of degree; a regime is more or less democratic or oligarchic in virtue of being characterized by more or fewer of a cluster of features. Thus characteristically democratic features are payment for public service, including attendance at the legislative assembly and jury service, the selection of magistrates by lot, and the absence of a property qualification for office. Characteristically oligarchic features are a property qualification for office, election of magistrates, and financial penalties for non-attendance at deliberative or judicial bodies. Extreme instances of either kind will be characterized by all these features, less extreme by fewer, while some regimes are mixed, being characterized by both democratic and oligarchic features (1293a30–1294b13). Aristotle is unsympathetic to extremes of either type, which he sees as tending to promote the sectional interest of either rich or poor at the expense of the common interest. The common interest is best promoted in his view by a mixed regime, although, in line with his general principle that practical questions do not admit of exceptionless generalizations, he eschews any attempt to specify any particular mix as best in all cases. In line with his general position (see above), he assumes that a mixed constitution will also have an economic determinant, viz., the political predominance of those of

¹³ See, e.g., R.G. Mulgan, *Aristotle's Political Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), with the bibliography contained therein.

¹⁴ For fuller discussion see T.H. Irwin, "Moral Science and Political Theory in Aristotle," in P. Cartledge and F. Harvey, eds., *Crux, Essays in Greek History presented to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix* (London: Duckworth, 1985), 150–67.

intermediate wealth (IV.11). Hence he tends to describe the best practically attainable type of constitution as an intermediate constitution (*mesê politeia*) indifferently in the sense of one characterized by a mix of democratic and oligarchic features, and in the sense of one in which the intermediate or middle class (*hoi mesoi*, lit. "the middle people") predominates (1295b34–1296b12). He does not explain why the predominance of the middle class is less likely to lead to the improper elevation of their sectional interest above the common interest than is the predominance of either rich or poor. Is it because they have no sectional interest of their own? But why should that be? Or is it because their sectional interest always coincides with the common interest? If so, what guarantees that fortunate coincidence?

V

Slavery is prominent in the introductory pages of Aristotle's discussion of the *polis*, since the master–slave relation is, as we have seen, an element in the most primitive form of community. Master and slave are described as types of human being who cannot do without each other (1252a26–27); just as male and female need one another for the perpetuation of the species, so master and slave need one another "for preservation" (a31). Preservation must mean not defence, but rather subsistence, since the role of the slave is elucidated by comparison not with a weapon, but with a tool (1253b32–33) and with a draught animal (1252b12). The master needs the slave, then, as the peasant needs a hoe or an ox; he uses the slave to perform a task which he could not do, or could do less easily, by himself. But why does the slave need the master, as the description "unable to do without one another" implies? Surely neither the ox nor the hoe needs the farmer. At this point another analogy surfaces, viz., that between soul and body. The body is naturally (and therefore properly) under the direction of the soul; without rational direction (provided by the soul) the body is unable to cope with the environment. So it is better for the body to be under the direction of the soul, not merely in the sense that it is better that the body should be under rational control than not, but in the sense that it benefits the body to be so controlled. Similarly, living beings which lack the capacity for rational self-direction are better off subject to the rational control of another than left to their

own non-rational promptings (1254b2–23). Some humans are like that; they are natural slaves, who altogether lack the capacity for deliberation (1260a12). Hence, a) they find their natural role, and make their special contribution to the *polis*, as human draught animals, and b) they do what is best for themselves in so doing.

If we take the analogy with draught animals seriously, we must ask in what sense it is in the interest of the ox to be yoked to the plough. It can indeed be argued that domestication is in the interest a) of some species, in that it improves the survival chances of members of the species and b) of individual members of those species, in that e.g., this ox is looked after by the farmer but would soon be devoured by predators in the wild (1254b10–13). Here we apply the standard conception of interest, survival and health, to an animal species and to its members, and claim that there is a coincidence between that interest and the economic interest of the domesticator. Were Aristotle to apply that analogy to the case of slaves, he would have to argue that the enslavement of natural slaves benefits them by giving them a better life than they would have had had they been left at liberty (as some apologists for the modern slave trade argued that slavery benefited the slaves by giving them the opportunity to embrace Christianity). Perhaps that is implied by the description of natural slaves as lacking the capacity for deliberation; they might be thought of as mental defectives, who, left to themselves, would just blunder about helplessly until their (presumably speedy) extinction. But non-human animals get along all right without deliberation, guided as they are by instinct and perception; would it not be more plausible to think of natural slaves on those lines? If so, the claim that they would do worse left to themselves than enslaved looks shaky. Aristotle's other analogies, those of a tool and of a part of the body, tend if anything to confuse the issue. For here there is no coincidence of independent interest such as Aristotle appears to be claiming for master and slave; it may be good for a hoe to be kept clean and sharp, and for one's muscles to be given regular exercise, but what is good for these things is just whatever is conducive to their doing their job. So on those analogies the claim that the same thing is good for master and slave (1252a34) does not mean that the interests of master and slave coincide (as on the draught animals analogy), but that the interest of the latter is wholly determined by the interest of the former.

Aristotle's difficulties over natural slavery are revealed by his vacillation on the question of whether there can be friendship between master and slave. At 1255b4–15 he appeals to the principles that what is good for the whole is good for the part, and that the slave is a part of the master, to support the claims that there is identity of interest "and friendship towards one another" between those who stand in the natural master–slave relation. Friendship, according to the *NE* (1155b27–1156a5) requires mutual concern (*antiphilêsis*), the desire of each party for the good of the other. The master is certainly concerned for the good of his slave to the extent that the slave has to be in good condition in order to carry out his tasks; hence Aristotle says accurately that while in a way master and slave have the same interest, the relationship is concerned with the slave's good only incidentally, in that the subordination cannot be preserved (and the master's purposes thereby fulfilled) if the slave perishes (1278b32–37). But the converse relation is problematic. The problem is not primarily why the slave *should* be concerned for the welfare of the master; if, as Aristotle claims, the continuation of the relation were of mutual benefit to both, even to the limited extent suggested by the draught animal analogy, and if the slave were aware of that fact, the slave would have some reason to want the relation to continue and therefore to be concerned for the continued survival and prosperity of the master. Rather, the problem is to explain how a being supposedly totally lacking in deliberative capacity *could* have that concern for another. For such a being can have no conception of the long-term good of anything (including itself), or of the means by which that good might be fostered. Hence we find Aristotle saying with complete consistency (in *NE* 1161a33–b5) that where there is nothing in common between ruler and ruled there can be no friendship between them, giving as examples the impossibility of a friendship between a craftsman and his tools, a farmer and his animals, or a master and his slave "for the slave is a living tool, and the tool a lifeless slave."¹⁵ He adds that while one cannot be a friend to a slave *qua* slave, one can be a friend to him or her *qua* human, "for in a certain way every human being can have a relation of justice with someone who can be a party to laws and agreements; and there can be friendship too, in so far as [the other party is] human" (b5–8). But the very features of humanity which make it

¹⁵ Cf. *Pol* 1253b30–1254a1.

possible to enter into relationships such as those of justice and friendship are incompatible with the status of a natural slave, since it is insofar as one is a rational agent that one can be involved in these relationships, whereas the natural slave is a natural slave precisely because he or she lacks rationality.¹⁶ The only sort of slave with whom it is possible to be a friend is the sort who should not be a slave at all, the rational agent who has been unjustly subjected to slavery through the chance of war or similar circumstance (e.g. capture by pirates) (1.6).

Aristotle fails to provide a justification of slavery as actually practised either in the Greek world or in any other known society. The only form of slavery that his principles justify is that in which the slave is a natural slave, but he gives no reason to believe that there are any natural slaves. But could there even be any such? On his account a natural slave would have to be a sort of mental defective, lacking as he does the capacity for practical reason; but such a being, to have survived to adulthood, must have been taken care of by rational adults. The very idea of a *community* of natural slaves is incoherent; yet the practice of slavery as envisaged by Aristotle envisages that barbarian peoples are just such communities, adapted by nature to serve as a continual source of slaves for the Greeks (1252b7–9). The only alternative would be to deny that non-Greek societies were communities in Aristotle's sense, i.e., associations determined by shared purposes, and to attempt instead to explain their organization by appeal to non-rational instinct, perhaps on the model of flocks of birds. But since Aristotle uses the phenomenon of language precisely to differentiate human societies from associations of social animals such as bees (1253a7–18), that would appear to commit him to denying language to non-Greeks.¹⁷

¹⁶ Strictly speaking, the natural slave is not *totally* lacking in rationality; he "participates in reason so far as to perceive, but not to have it" (1254b22–23).

¹⁷ On Aristotle's treatment of slavery, see W.W. Fortenbaugh, "Aristotle on Slaves and Women," in Barnes, Schofield, and Sorabji, eds., *Articles on Aristotle Vol. 2: Ethics and Politics* (London, 1977); Nicholas D. Smith, "Aristotle's Theory of Natural Slavery," *Phoenix* 37 (1983): 109–22 (reprinted in Keyt and Miller, *op. cit.*, 142–55), and Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), ch. 5.

VI

This brief study has necessarily been highly selective. In seeking to elucidate some central themes of Aristotle's political philosophy by exhibiting their connections with his ethical theory and his natural philosophy, I have been obliged by constraints of space to ignore not only the "empirical" books IV–VI (see above, pp. 252–253), but also much of philosophical interest, notably Aristotle's criticisms in Book II of various proposed ideal states (including Plato's) and his account in book VIII of the educational system of his own ideal state. I hope that this essay may stimulate the reader to independent exploration of these and other facets of this rich and complex work.

9 Rhetoric and poetics

I. AN ART OF RHETORIC?

Modern philosophy does not greatly occupy itself with rhetoric. Ancient philosophy did: philosophy was sometimes hostile and sometimes friendly, but it never ignored rhetoric. Indeed, one of the questions which preoccupied philosophers was precisely the question of what attitude philosophy should take to rhetoric.

The question standardly took this form: Is rhetoric an art, a *technê*? The task of oratory, it was universally supposed, is to persuade; and good orators have the capacity to persuade by their speeches. The object of rhetoric was to study and to teach this capacity, and rhetoric is an art only insofar as it can achieve its object by intellectually respectable means. In particular, an art is a body of knowledge, practical in aim but systematic in organization, in which particular theorems and precepts are shown to follow from a relatively small set of fundamental truths. (An art is to practice what a science is to theory; and the conception of an art which I have just sketched bears an evident relation to the concept of a demonstrative science.¹) If rhetoric is an art, then it is in principle the sort of thing which a philosopher might study.

Plato, in the *Gorgias*, had argued that rhetoric was no art – it is a mere knack, like the skill shown by a good chef. (And what is more, it is a disreputable knack.) In his *Phaedrus* he modified his view: rhetoric, as it is commonly understood, is indeed pretty contemptible; but there is no reason why there should not be developed a "philosophical" rhetoric. Plato's reflections formed the background against which philosophers and rhetoricians argued for centuries:

1 On which see pp. 109–113.