

ARISTOTLE AND ANARCHISM

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1. Anarchism, Ancient and Modern

Aristotle's infamous defense of slavery in the first book of the *Politics* is intended as an answer to a sweeping challenge of the institution. "Some maintain," Aristotle reports, "that it is contrary to nature (*para phusin*) to be a master [over slaves]. For [they argue] it is [only] by law (*nomoi*) that one man is a slave and another free; by nature (*physei*) there is no difference. Hence it is not just; for it rests on force [*biaion*]" (I.3.1253b20-23).¹ Aristotle does not identify the exponents of this impressive argument. The only writer of the classical period to whom its leading idea can be attributed with certainty is the sophist Alcidamas, a follower of Gorgias. In his Messenian Oration, a speech that Aristotle studied (*Rhetorica*, hereafter *Rhet.*, I.13.1373b18, II.23.1397a11), Alcidamas is reported to have said that "God left all men free; nature has made no one a slave" (Scholiast on *Rhet.* I.13.1373b18).²

The argument challenging slavery that Aristotle preserves has a ramification that its exponents, whoever they were, may not have noticed. It contains the seeds of philosophical anarchism. The conclusion of the argument is inferred from two assertions about slavery: that there is no difference by nature between a master and a slave, and that the rule of a master over a slave rests on force. Now, the very same things can be plausibly maintained about rulers and subjects in a political community: there is no difference by nature between a ruler and a subject, and political rule rests on force. Thus, by parity of reasoning political rule is unjust. A wholesale challenge of political authority is but a short step from the

wholesale challenge of slavery.

Philosophical anarchism is simply a generalization of the antislavery argument. Its central idea is that coercion is unjust. The classical statement of the theory is in William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*,³ though the use of the word 'anarchism' in an ameliorative sense to describe the theory is a later idea. Thus, Godwin claims "that coercion, absolutely considered, is injustice."⁴ The phrase 'absolutely considered' implies that Godwin might sanction coercion in some circumstances, which in fact he does. He says, for example:

Now it is the first principle of morality and justice, that directs us, where one of two evils is inevitable, to choose the least. Of consequence, the wise and just man, being unable, as yet, to introduce the form of society which his understanding approves, will contribute to the support of so much coercion, as is necessary to exclude what is worse, anarchy.⁵

As this quotation makes plain, Godwin is a foe of anarchy in the pejorative sense, the false anarchy of disorder and violence. Being opposed to the use of force, Godwin is also a foe of revolution: "Revolutions are a struggle between two parties, each persuaded of the justice of its cause, a struggle not decided by compromise or patient expostulation, but by force only."⁶ "Revolution," he remarks, "is engendered by an indignation against tyranny, yet is itself ever more pregnant with tyranny."⁷

The rejection of political authority, which gives anarchism its name,⁸ is not a first principle of the theory, but a corollary of its view about coercion and force. Thus, Emma Goldman, a twentieth-century anarchist, defines anarchism as "the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are *therefore* wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary"⁹ (my emphasis). This is a succinct rendering of a more elaborate argument of Godwin's. The major premise of Godwin's argument is that "[g]overnment is nothing but regulated force; force is its appropriate claim upon your attention."¹⁰ But force, or the threat of force, destroys understanding and usurps private judgment and individual conscience: "Coercion first annihilates the understanding of the subject upon whom it is exercised, and then of him who employs it."¹¹ Godwin concludes "that government is, abstractedly taken, an evil, an usurpation upon the private judgement and individual conscience of mankind; and that, however we may be obliged to admit it as a necessary evil for the present, it behooves us, as the friends of reason and the human species, to admit as little of it as possible, and carefully to observe, whether, in consequence of the gradual illumination of the human mind, that little may not hereafter be diminished."¹²

The easy transfer of the antislavery argument to the political realm raises the question of whether in the classical period there were any representatives of philosophical anarchism. The answer is that Greek democracy,

at least as interpreted by Plato and Aristotle, contains a trace of anarchism, that several of Socrates' ideas are in an anarchistic vein, and that a full-fledged anarchism is implied by some of the sayings attributed to that "Socrates gone mad" (*Diogenes Laertius*, hereafter *D.L.*, VI.54) Diogenes of Sinope.

Although both Plato and Aristotle find a trace of anarchism in Greek democracy, they find it in different places. Plato finds Greek democracy anarchic in practice. He claims in the *Republic* that in a democracy there is no coercion either to rule or to be ruled (VIII.557E2-4); thus democracy is *anarchos*, without a ruler (VIII.558C4). By Aristotle's lights, on the other hand, the champions of democracy are anarchists in theory only. As Aristotle interprets their idea of freedom, they recognize the practical necessity of government—democracy is after all one form of government—but would prefer not to be ruled at all (VI.2.1317b14-15).

At least two of Socrates' ideas are in an anarchistic vein. In Plato's *Apology* (25C-26A), Socrates argues that if he corrupts the young, he does so unintentionally. For no one, he reasons, wishes to be harmed; and if a man corrupts those around him, their corruption will lead them to harm him. But if a person corrupts the young unintentionally, he is in need, not of punishment, but of instruction. This is an argument that philosophical anarchists would applaud. Godwin remarks, for example, that "[if] he who employs coercion against me could mould me to his purposes by argument, no doubt he would. He pretends to punish me, because his argument is strong; but he really punishes me, because his argument is weak."¹³

Also in an anarchistic vein is the Socratic idea that the first of the three cities described in Books II and III of the *Republic* is "the true city" and not, as Glaucon characterizes it, "a city of pigs" (372D-E). This first city, an idyllic agrarian community without warriors or rulers, whose farmers, craftsmen, traders, seamen, and wage-earners supply the necessities of life but no luxuries, resembles Godwin's anarchist utopia.¹⁴ Even though Socrates is Plato's spokesman throughout most of the *Republic*, this particular idea may reflect a genuine Socratic sentiment. It is of a piece with the argument in the *Apology* opposing punishment and is inconsistent with the Platonic idea expressed later in the *Republic* that the true city is an aristocracy in which the farmers, craftsmen, traders, and other workers of Socrates' first city are ruled by a group of philosopher-kings backed by a military force (*Republic* IV.445D-V.449A, together with *Statesman* 300D11-301A2).

The seeds of philosophical anarchism are more easily found in Diogenes the Cynic than in Socrates.¹⁵ Diogenes said that "the only correct constitution is that in the cosmos" (*D.L.* VI.72) and declared himself to be a citizen of the cosmos (*kosmopolitês*) (*D.L.* VI.63). The first of these sayings entails that no constitution in a polis is correct (and hence just) whereas the second may be taken, consonant with this, as a disavowal of citizenship

in any polis. Diogenes had similar anarchistic ideas about slavery and marriage. "To those who advised him to pursue his runaway slave, he said, 'It would be absurd if Manes can live without Diogenes, but Diogenes cannot without Manes' " (*D.L.* VI.55). Diogenes implies in this saying that slavery should be a voluntary relation resting on the need of the slave for a master. "He also said that wives should be held in common, recognizing no marriage except the joining together of him who persuades with her who is persuaded" (*D.L.* VI.72). In this saying, Diogenes advocates free cohabitation and disavows marriage based on coercion.

Aristotle refers to Diogenes only once in his extant works (*Rhet.* III.10.1411a24-25); but since Diogenes was such a prominent spectacle in Athens, it is safe to assume that Aristotle was familiar both with his outlandish behavior and with his ideas.¹⁶

That Aristotle is addressing the proto-anarchism of Diogenes in the introductory chapters of the *Politics* (I.1-2) has been realized for a long time.¹⁷ The general consensus is that Aristotle is an uncompromising opponent of anarchism. Whereas Diogenes brags about being *apolis*, without a polis (*D.L.* VI.38), Aristotle claims that "man is by nature a political animal" (I.2.1253a2-3) and that "he who is unable to share in a community or has no need . . . is either a beast or a god" (I.2.1253a27-29). And what could be further removed from anarchism than the total subordination of individual to state that Aristotle seems to envisage (I.2.1253a18-29; see also VIII.1.1337a26-30)?¹⁸

Aristotle defends the polis against Diogenes' assault. So much is clear. But, it will be recalled, the anarchist's rejection of the state is not a first principle of his philosophy but a consequence of his idea that coercion and compulsion are unjust. So there is a deeper question to consider. Where does Aristotle stand on this matter of the injustice of coercion and compulsion? As a defender of the political community, he must reject the central idea of philosophical anarchism, must he not? The answer is surprisingly unclear. As I shall show immediately, that coercion is unjust is a theorem of Aristotelian philosophy: it follows syllogistically from three basic ideas of Aristotle's ethical and natural philosophy. But whether Aristotle realized this, whether he consciously embraced the central idea of philosophical anarchism, is a further question.

2. Derivation of the Anticoercion Principle

The chief philosophical idea of the *Politics* is that of a link between justice and nature. When Aristotle wishes to justify a certain practice, institution, or form of government, his ultimate appeal is always to nature. He subscribes to two principles relating justice and nature: a positive principle linking the just and the natural (I.5.1255a1-3, III.17.1287b37-39,

VII.9.1329a13-17) and a negative principle linking the unjust and the unnatural (I.10.1258a40-b2, VII.3.1325b7-10; and see I.3.1253b20-23). (For both principles together, see I.5.1254a17-20 and III.16.1287a8-18.)

These principles are obviously of restricted generality, since the sphere of justice is much narrower than the realm of nature. The realm of nature includes all objects that have an internal source of motion—the simple bodies, plants, animals, and the heavens (*Physica*, hereafter *Phys.*, II.1.192b8-32, *Metaphysica*, hereafter *Met.*, XII.1.1069a30-b2)—whereas the sphere of justice is restricted to human beings. (The gods are beyond both nature [*Met.* VI.1.1026a13-22] and justice [*Ethica Nicomachea*, hereafter *EN*, X.8.1178b8-12].) Furthermore, many of the movements of human beings such as growth and respiration are natural but outside the field of ethics (*EN*, I.13.1102a32-b12). Only voluntary (*hekousia*) actions are praised or blamed (*EN* III.1.1109b30-31). And, finally, among voluntary actions only those that affect others are just or unjust (*EN* V.1.1129b25-27, 1130a10-13, and 11.1138a19-20). The sphere of justice is restricted, in sum, to human conduct that affects others, or, in short, to social conduct.

By Aristotle's theory, the negative principle is not equivalent to the converse of the positive. For although Aristotle holds that everything (within the sphere of social conduct) that is unnatural is unjust, he denies that everything that is just is natural. The people of Amphipolis, for example, passed a law honoring the Spartan general Brasidas, who was killed defending their city (*Thucydides* V.11). It is just, in Aristotle's view, to obey such a law, once enacted, even though the justice of doing so is legal or conventional only (*nomikon*), not natural (*phusikon*) (*EN* V.7.1134b18-24).

The two principles relating justice and nature are not first principles of Aristotle's philosophy but corollaries of his natural teleology. Consider the positive principle first. According to Aristotelian teleology, "nature makes everything for the sake of something" (I.2.1252b32; *De Partibus Animalium* I.1.641b12, 5.645a23-26; *Phys.* II.8), where this something, the end, or *telos*, of the making, is something good (I.1.1252b34-1253a1; *Phys.* II.2.194a32-33, 3.195a23-25; *Met.* I.3.983a31-32).¹⁹ This view of nature yields the first (or minor) premise in the following quasi²⁰ syllogism:

- 1.1 Everything natural is good.
- 1.2 Everything (within the sphere of social conduct) that is good is just.
- 1.3 Therefore, everything (within the sphere of social conduct) that is natural is just. (The justice of nature principle.)

That Aristotle subscribes to its major premise, which connects the justice of nature principle with his natural teleology, is clear from his assertion that "justice (*dikaiousunēn*), which all the other virtues necessarily

accompany, is social virtue (*koinôniken aretên*)” (III.13.1283a38-40). The justice that all the other virtues accompany is universal rather than particular justice. It is the justice that is the same as complete virtue and whose opposite is lawlessness (*EN* V.1). Since the justice of nature principle applies to every sort of social conduct, this must be the sort of justice referred to in it as well. Furthermore, *dikaios* (‘just’) is the adjective of the noun *dikaiosunê* (‘justice’), and *agathos* (‘good’) is the adjective of the noun *aretê* (‘virtue’). So the relation Aristotle asserts between *dikaiosunê* (justice) and *aretê* (virtue) also holds between that which is *dikaios* (just) and that which is *agathos* (good). Consequently, to say that justice and social virtue are the same is equivalent to saying that in the sphere of social conduct what is just and what is good are the same.²¹ Aristotle’s statement is thus a bit stronger than the premise he needs, for it entails both the premise and its converse.

The negative principle relating the unjust and the unnatural is derived similarly. If within the sphere of social conduct what is good and what is just are the same, then within the same sphere what is bad and what is unjust are the same. This yields the major premise of a second quasi syllogism. As for the minor premise, Aristotle never, to my knowledge at least, asserts straight out that what is unnatural is bad; but his statement that “nothing contrary to nature is beautiful (*kalon*)” (VII.3.1325b9-10) comes close. For the adjective *kalos* applies, not only to physical beauty, but also to moral beauty—the beauty of good character and right conduct. So it seems reasonable to attribute this second argument to him:

2.1 Everything contrary to nature is bad.

2.2 Everything (within the sphere of social conduct) that is bad is unjust.

2.3 Therefore, everything (within the sphere of social conduct) that is contrary to nature is unjust.

It is worth recalling at this point that in Aristotle’s philosophy of nature what is forced and what is contrary to nature are identified. Thus, Aristotle says that “what is by force (*biai*) and what is contrary to nature are the same” (*De Caelo* I.2.300a23; see also *Phys.* IV.8.215a1-3, V.6.230a29-30; *De Generatione Animalium*, hereafter *GA*, V.8.788b27). In Aristotelian physics, for example, fire moves upward toward its natural place by nature but downward only by force and contrary to nature (*De Generatione et Corruptione* II.6.333b26-30 and elsewhere). This identification of the forced and the unnatural is a feature, not only of inanimate nature, but of the entire natural world (*GA* II.4.739a4, III.8.777a18-19, V.8.788b27; *Ethica Eudemia*, hereafter *EE*, II.8.1224a15-30; *Rhet.* I.11.1370a9). Thus, Aristotle accepts:

2.4 Whatever is forced is contrary to nature.

When this idea is combined with 2.3, we have an Aristotelian derivation of the first principle of philosophical anarchism:

2.5 Everything (within the sphere of social conduct) that is forced is unjust. (The anticoercion principle.)

That Aristotle was aware of the anticoercion principle there can be no doubt. He chronicles it as a premise of the antislavery argument (I.3.1253b22-23); in an aporetic passage he suggests that certain claims to political power are suspect because they imply its opposite, that rule based on force is *just* (III.10.1281a21-24); and he attempts to mediate a dispute between those who champion the principle and those who champion its opposite (I.6.1255a5-21). Moreover, the fact that it follows from three of his basic ideas—2.1, 2.2, and 2.4—means that he cannot deny it without inconsistency. Since a charitable interpretation strives to preserve consistency, the possibility that Aristotle accepts the first principle of anarchism is worth exploring. I try to show in the remainder of this paper that it is indeed a fundamental principle of his political philosophy.

3. Whose Advantage Is the Common Advantage?

In searching for evidence that Aristotle accepts the anticoercion principle, a good place to begin is with his distinction between constitutions that are correct (*orthoï*) and hence just, and those that are deviations (*parekbaseis*) and hence unjust (III.6.1279a17-20, 11.1282b8-13). The question we need to consider is his basis for inferring that a constitution is unjust because it is deviant. Does the inference rest on the anticoercion principle? But before addressing this question we need to understand the distinction itself. In marking it, Aristotle uses an expression that requires elucidation.

The difference between the correct constitutions (kingship, aristocracy, and polity) and the deviations (tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy) is that the correct constitutions look to the common advantage (*to koinêi sumpheron*), whereas the deviant constitutions look only to the rulers' own advantage (III.6.1279a17-21). Thus, tyranny aims at the advantage of the tyrant; oligarchy at the advantage of the rich; and democracy at the advantage of the poor (III.7.1279b6-9).

Whose advantage do kingship, aristocracy, and polity aim at? Whose advantage is the common advantage? Aristotle does not give a straightforward answer. The common advantage is not the advantage of every inhabitant of a given polis. The common advantage does not include the advantage of slaves (III.6.1278b32-37). Nor apparently does it include the advantage of resident aliens (*metoikoi*) or foreign visitors (*xenoi*).²² Aristotle

seems to equate the advantage of the whole polis with the common advantage of its citizens (III.13.1283b40-42).²³ As W. L. Newman remarks, "[t]he common advantage . . . which a State should study is the common advantage of the citizens . . . , and that of other classes, only so far as their advantage is bound up with that of the citizens. . . ."²⁴

In this explanation of the common advantage, who counts as a citizen? The answer is surprisingly complex. By Aristotle's official taxonomy there are four types of citizen. The basic concept is that of a *full citizen* (*poliûês haplôs*) (III.1.1275a19-23, 5.1278a4-5). Aristotle defines a full citizen as a man²⁵ who "is entitled to share in deliberative or²⁶ judicial office" (III.1.1275b17-19). The group of full citizens is thus the supreme political authority in a polis (III.1.1275a26-29; see also 6.1278b10-14, 11.1282a25-39). The other concepts of a citizen are derivative from that of a full citizen. Thus, a boy or a youth who will in the future be entitled to be enrolled as a full citizen is an *immature citizen* (*poliûês atelês*), and an old man who was a full citizen but is now exempt from political duties is a *superannuated citizen* (*poliûês parêkmaqôs*) (III.1.1275a14-19, 5.1278a4-6). Aristotle also mentions *female citizens* (III.2.1275b33, 5.1278a28) but does not give an account of the concept. A female citizen (*politîs*) is presumably a woman or a girl who has the legal capacity to transmit citizenship to her (properly sired) offspring and, in particular, to her sons. The concept of a female citizen is important under any constitution that requires that a full citizen have a citizen mother (I.2.1275b22-24).²⁷ By this taxonomy, the citizens of a polis will normally be the full citizens and the members of their families: their wives, children, and elderly parents.

We are now in a position to notice a problem about Aristotle's explanation of the common advantage that has generally gone unnoticed.²⁸ On the assumption that a man's advantage is closely tied to that of the household he heads, the advantage of the full citizens of a polis will be the same as the advantage of the totality of its citizens. But, on Aristotle's functional definition of a full citizen, the full citizens of a polis are its rulers. Hence, if the common advantage of a polis is the advantage of the totality of its citizens, a constitution that looks to the rulers' advantage looks to the common advantage, and the distinction between correct and deviant constitutions collapses.

The solution to this problem is to be found in Aristotle's tacit recognition of second-class citizenship. There are several reasons for attributing such a concept to Aristotle. First of all, by Aristotle's definition of a full citizen there is only one full citizen in a kingship—the king himself.²⁹ Thus, the only citizens in a kingship are the members of the royal family. But in two passages in the *Politics* Aristotle, following the normal Greek practice, refers to other men besides the king himself as citizens (III.14.1285a25-27, V.10.1311a7-8). (In both passages a citizen, a *politês*, is contrasted with an alien, a *xenos*.) Since these men do not share in deliberative or judicial

office, the citizenship they enjoy must be second-class. Secondly, in discussing revolution Aristotle twice contrasts a group of men who are "outside the constitution" with the group of rulers (V.4.1304a16-17, 8.1308a3-11). Since these men appear to be neither metics, foreigners, nor slaves, they too must be second-class citizens (compare III.5.1277b33-39). Thirdly and finally, in his essay on the best polis, in a context where only adult males are under discussion, Aristotle uses the expression "citizens who share in the constitution" (VII.13.1332a32-34), which would be pleonastic unless one could envisage (second-class) citizens who do *not* share in the constitution.³⁰

Who would these second-class citizens be? Presumably, they are individuals who have a moral, though not a legal, claim, based on their free status and place of birth, to be first-class citizens. In short, they are free natives. A second-class citizen, like an immature citizen, is a citizen "under an assumption" (*ex hupotheseôs*) (III.5.1278a5). The assumption in the case of an immature citizen is that he will one day become a full citizen. The assumption in the case of a second-class citizen is that he or she would become a first-class citizen should such citizenship be maximally extended, as in a democracy.

On this interpretation of the *Politics*, Aristotle divides the population of a typical Greek polis into five groups as follows:

1. First-class citizens:
 - a. Full citizens
 - b. Immature citizens
 - c. Superannuated citizens
 - d. Female citizens
2. Second-class citizens
3. Metics (resident aliens)
4. Foreign visitors
5. Slaves

The solution to the puzzle, then, about the collapsing distinction between correct and deviant constitutions is to take the common advantage to be the advantage of both first- and second-class citizens. The difference between a correct and a deviant constitution is that a correct constitution looks to the advantage of both classes of citizen, whereas a deviant constitution looks to the advantage of first-class citizens only.

But a question remains. By this explanation of the common advantage, shouldn't a democracy, contrary to Aristotle's classification, be a correct, rather than a deviant, constitution? For in a democracy first-class citizenship is maximally extended, and thus in aiming at their own advantage its full citizens aim at the common advantage. The answer is that the definition of democracy that leads to its being classified as a deviant consti-

tion is in terms of social classes rather than free status. By this definition, democracy is essentially rule by the poor and only incidentally rule by the many (that is, by the free) (III.8.1279b34-1280a6). Under such a constitution the poor constitute a majority, vote their own interests in the assembly and in the law courts, and reduce the rich to virtual second-class citizenship. Such a proletarian democracy is as much a deviant constitution as an oligarchy (III.7.1279b8-10).³¹

4. Deviant Constitutions

Aristotle defines a deviant constitution as one under which the rulers rule for their own advantage (III.6.1279a19-20). He goes on to claim that deviant constitutions are characterized by their use of force (III.10.1281a23-24; see also III.3.1276a12-13), that they are contrary to nature (*para phusin*) (III.17.1287b37-41), and that they are unjust (III.1.1282b8-13). Aristotle does not explicitly connect these three claims with each other or with his definition. But the derivation of the anticoercion principle shows how they can be linked together.

That the rulers in a polis with a deviant constitution must use force to maintain themselves in power is a consequence of the nature of their rule. For deviant constitutions are all despotic (III.6.1279a19-21, IV.3.1290a25-29, VII.14.1333a3-6). Under such a constitution the rulers, looking only to their own advantage, treat those outside the constitution, the second-class citizens, as slaves (see III.6.1278b32-37 and IV.11.1295b19-23). Since these outsiders are free men (III.6.1279a21; see also IV.6.1292b38-41), there can be no question of their enduring such treatment willingly (see IV.10.1295a17-23). Thus, under a deviant constitution there is always a group of subjects who obey their rulers only because they are forced to. In a democracy it is the rich; in an oligarchy, the poor; in a tyranny, the free (for tyranny, see III.14.1285a25-29, V.11.1314a10-12).

Given the Aristotelian equation of the forced and the unnatural, it follows at once that deviant constitutions are contrary to nature. From this one can infer, by an appeal to nature, that such constitutions are unjust. Thus, we can construct an argument that moves within the same circuit of ideas as the derivation of the anticoercion principle:

3.1 Every deviant constitution rests on force.

3.2 [Whatever is forced is contrary to nature.]

3.3 Therefore, every deviant constitution is contrary to nature.

3.4 Everything (within the sphere of social conduct) that is contrary to nature is unjust.

3.5 Therefore, every deviant constitution is unjust.

Although this argument does not occur explicitly in the *Politics*, it does introduce coherence into the various things that Aristotle says about deviant constitutions. The only premise that Aristotle does not endorse explicitly in the *Politics* is 3.2. But, given its appearance in other treatises, it seems a reasonable one to supply. If this interpretation is on the right track, we have additional evidence for thinking that the anticoercion principle is an operative, though tacit, principle in the *Politics*; for the principle simply telescopes argument 3.

The vast majority of fourth-century Greek cities, it should be noted, had deviant constitutions. Most were democracies or oligarchies (IV.11.1296a22-23, V.1.1301b39-40). Aristotle is hard pressed for contemporary examples of correct constitutions. "Kingships," he remarks, "do not come into existence any longer now, or if they do, they are rather monarchies or tyrannies" (V.10.1313a3-5). Aristocracies are of two main types: true and so-called (IV.7). His favorite examples of so-called aristocracies are Sparta and Carthage (II.9, 11; IV.7.1293b14-18), though he mentions that Thurii and the Epizephyrian Locri were (so-called) aristocracies at one time (V.7.1307a23-29, 34-40).³² He gives no example of a true aristocracy. The third and last type of correct constitution, polity, seems to have existed for a period at least at Mali (IV.13.1297b12-16), Tarentum (V.3.1303a3-6), Syracuse (V.4.1304a27-29), and Oreus (V.3.1303a18-20);³³ but, like kingship and aristocracy, it "did not occur often" (IV.7.1293a39-b1).

Aristotle's view, then, was that virtually every fourth-century Greek polis was ruled unjustly by a group of men using force to advance their own interests at the expense of a body of second-class citizens. His evaluation of the actual constitutions that people lived under in fourth-century Greece is as unfavorable as that of the proto-anarchist Diogenes.

5. Legitimate Force

The anticoercion principle, which links the forced with the unjust, entails that nothing just is forced. Thus, in searching for evidence that Aristotle accepts and tacitly uses the anticoercion principle in the *Politics*, one needs to examine the role, if any, that coercion plays under the constitutions that he regards as correct and hence as just (III.11.1282b8-13). It will suffice to consider only the best constitution, which is a generic constitution with two species: kingship and true aristocracy (III.18; IV.2.1289a30-33, 7.1293b18-19). By the stricter analysis of Book IV, the other correct constitutions, so-called aristocracy and polity, are regarded as deviations from "the most correct constitution," and the three original deviations as deviations from the less correct (IV.8.1293b22-27). The most correct constitution is thus the

only one that is absolutely just.

In discussing kingship Aristotle explicitly raises the question to which we want to know his answer. He asks "whether the man who is to rule as king should have some force about him by which he will be able to compel those who do not want to obey" (III.15.1286b28-30). His answer is that the king should have a force stronger than a single individual or small band of individuals but weaker than the many (III.15.1286b34-37). The many referred to here are "the whole body of [second-class] citizens" in the kingdom.³⁴ If the king had a force stronger than the whole body, he could, if he wished, turn his kingship into a tyranny. This seems to be the rationale for Aristotle's answer. If so, Aristotle is tacitly assuming that coercion of second-class citizens is unjust. The rationale of Aristotle's answer is of a piece with that which lies behind his negative evaluation of deviant constitutions. The passage indicates, however, that Aristotle does not accept the anticoercion principle in an undiluted or unrestricted form. But, then, as we have seen, neither does Godwin.³⁵

The true aristocracy sketched in Books VII and VIII of the *Politics*³⁶ has an army, and in two passages Aristotle discusses its proper employment. In the first Aristotle says that "the members of a community must have arms in their own hands also³⁷ both for purposes of government, on account of those who are disobedient, and with a view to those who try to wrong them from without" (VII.8.1328b7-10). Later in Book VII Aristotle gives a second list of the legitimate purposes of armed force. The armed forces in his best polis, he says, have three purposes: first, self-defense; second, hegemony, or leadership, in foreign affairs exercised, not despotically, but "for the benefit of those who are ruled"; and, finally, "to be master of those who are worthy to be slaves" (VII.14.1333b38-1334a2).

The mention of hegemony (see also VII.6.1327a40-b6) suggests that Aristotle's best polis will adopt an aggressive foreign policy; and, indeed, the great nineteenth-century commentators on the *Politics* believe that this is exactly what Aristotle is advocating, or at least condoning, in the passage just quoted. Franz Susemihl and R. D. Hicks regard Aristotle as a precursor of Bismarck. They remark that "like Athens, Sparta, and Thebes, [Aristotle's ideal state is] to exercise an hegemony; that is, to stand at the head of a more or less dependent confederation, in which union has been achieved, if necessary, with the edge of the sword."³⁸ Newman, in a similar vein, construes Aristotle's idea broadly enough to accommodate any British imperialist. Aristotle's enumeration of the aims of war, according to Newman, "is wide enough to be accepted by any conqueror, however ambitious, who might be willing to adjust his methods of rule to the claims of the States subjugated by him."³⁹

Both comments are misrepresentations. Susemihl and Hicks are demonstrably mistaken in thinking that Aristotle wishes his best polis to emulate the sort of hegemony, or leadership, displayed by Athens or Sparta

in the fifth and fourth centuries. Aristotle had no illusions about the Athenian and Spartan empires. He says that, when Athens and Sparta were in positions of leadership, the one set up democracies, and the other, oligarchies, in the cities under their sway, "looking not to the advantage of the cities [they led] but to their own" (IV.11.1296a32-36; see also V.7.1307b22-24). The leadership of Aristotle's best polis is to be the very opposite of this: not despotic, but for the benefit of those who are ruled. In response to Newman's idea that Aristotle's remark about hegemony is wide enough to be accepted by any ambitious but forbearing conqueror, it must be said that one would be hard pressed to cite many historical examples of the sort of hegemony Aristotle envisages. For, as Aristotle points out, cities in a position of leadership, including those that do not tolerate despotism at home, have a propensity for acting despotically toward the cities under their sway (VII.2.1324b22-41, especially b32-36). A city in a position of leadership that looks to the advantage of the cities under its sway would seem to be even rarer than a city with a correct constitution.

The main point for our purposes is that Aristotle evaluates leadership among cities by the same principles he uses in evaluating constitutions. The anticoercion principle, to whatever extent he accepts it, is not abrogated when he turns to a discussion of foreign affairs.

A further question about Aristotle's two lists of the legitimate purposes of armed force is whether the second adds one item or two to the first. In addition to defense against external aggressors, the first list mentions "purposes of government, on account of those who are disobedient." The second list, on the other hand, mentions defense, hegemony, and mastership over natural slaves. Are the disobedient of the first list the natural slaves of the second?⁴⁰ If so, Aristotle does not envisage the use of force or the threat of force *within* his best polis.

6. The Best Polis Proper

The polis described in Books VII and VIII has a two-tiered social structure. One tier consists of the proper parts (*oikeia moria*) (III.4.1326a21) of the polis; the other, of the mere accessories required for its existence. The proper parts, who together hold all the landed wealth in the polis, are hoplites, officeholders, and priests; the accessories, who provide for its material needs, are farmers, traders, artisans, seamen (VII.6.1327b4-9), and day-laborers (VII.8-9). Traders (*agoraioi*) are either merchants (*emporoi*) or shopkeepers (*kapêloi*) (IV.4.1291a4-6).⁴¹

The proper parts of Aristotle's best polis are citizens; the accessories are not (VII.9.1328b33-1329a2, 17-19). Furthermore, there are no second-class citizens in Aristotle's polis. "A polis is good," Aristotle says, "because the citizens who share in the constitution are good; and for us all the citi-

zens share in the constitution" (VII.13.1332a32-35). To say that all the citizens share in the constitution is to say that all the citizens are first-class citizens.

If farmers, craftsmen, and traders are not citizens, what is their legal status in Aristotle's best polis? Farmers are to be slaves or barbarian serfs (VII.9.1329a25-26, 10.1330a25-31). The status of craftsmen and traders is not indicated, but it can be inferred. They cannot be slaves; for art and trade require a mental capacity denied to natural slaves,⁴² the only sort of slaves allowed in a polis that is absolutely just (see VII.2.1324b36-41). Since the population of a polis consists of citizens, metics, foreign visitors, and slaves, craftsmen and traders must be metics or foreign visitors. Foreign trade, the province of the merchant, could all be in the hands of foreign visitors; but craftsmen and shopkeepers would have to be metics.⁴³ This is their status in the Cretan city of Plato's *Laws* (VII.846D1-847B6, 850A6-D2; XI.920A3-4). Aristotle seems to be silently following in Plato's track.

The regulation and control of foreign visitors and metics is never discussed by Aristotle. This is surprising since he was himself a metic during his long sojourn in Athens (367-357 and 335-323 B.C.)⁴⁴ and remarks on the inferior position of a metic (III.5.1278a37-38, *EE* III.5.1233a28-30). Perhaps he thought that rule over metics, from the standpoint either of a ruler or of a metic, did not raise any philosophical problems. From the standpoint of the ruler, the relation of a metic to the polis would be purely economic and contractual. From the standpoint of the metic, the relation would be wholly voluntary, since (except for a few involuntary exiles) a metic would have a native polis where he enjoyed the privileges of citizenship and to which he could return whenever the life of a metic became a burden.⁴⁵

Most of the noncitizens in Aristotle's best polis will be natural slaves. A natural slave, in Aristotle's view, is a mental defective who lacks forethought and the ability to deliberate, "shares in reason to the extent of apprehending it but without possessing it," and is capable as a consequence of nothing higher than physical labor (I.2.1252a31-34, 5.1254b16-26, 13.1260a12). Such a person lacks the forethought to provide for tomorrow or next winter and would perish without someone to look after him. If he were not so dimwitted, he would recognize his need for a master and join in a friendly relation with him (I.6.1255b12-15; see also *EN* VIII.11.1161b5-8). But natural slaves do not ordinarily recognize this need and are not willingly enslaved. Consequently, one role of the army in Aristotle's polis is "to be master of those who are worthy to be slaves" (VII.14.1334a2). Aristotle envisages using the army to capture natural slaves (see I.7.1255b37-39, 8.1256b23-26) and to insure that, once captured, they do not revolt. For Aristotle, it seems, what is forced is not always unjust. The anticoercion principle apparently does not apply to natural slaves.

But the matter is not quite as clear and straightforward as this. For

Aristotle cannot forget, even while justifying natural slavery, that within his philosophy the forced and the just are polar opposites. The anticoercion principle exerts pressure even on his discussion of slavery. Thus, Aristotle says that “there is an element of advantage and friendship for slave and master in their relation to each other when they merit these things [i.e., mastership and slavery] by nature; but when [those who are enslaved are] not [slaves] in this manner, but *through law and by being forced*, the opposite is the case” (I.6.1255b12-15). Given Aristotle’s identification of the common advantage and the just (III.12.1282b16-18), this passage opposes force not only to advantage and friendship but to justice as well.

If, setting the accessories aside, one focuses on Aristotle’s best polis proper and the relation of its citizens to one another, what comes into view is a community that approaches the anarchist ideal and where the anticoercion principle is alive and active. The end of Aristotle’s best polis is true happiness, a life of virtuous activity, for its citizens (VII.13). And its adult male citizens possess all the cardinal virtues—wisdom, bravery, temperance, and justice (VII.1.1323a27-34, b21-23; 15.1334a11-40). Indeed, Aristotle describes them as “great-souled men” (*megalopsuchoi*) (VII.7.1328a9-10, VIII.3.1338b2-4). Greatness of soul, or *megalopsuchia*, is a magnification and “a sort of adornment (*kosmos*) of the virtues; it makes them greater, and does not come to be without them” (*EN* IV.3.1124a1-3). Aristotle’s best polis is thus a virtue state or a moral community.⁴⁶ It is no accident, then, that its rulers, being just men (VII.9.1328b37-39), seek the common advantage, the advantage of all the citizens, and not the advantage of some segment of the citizen body only. Furthermore, in such a virtue state, coercion and compulsion will be virtually unknown. For coercion is neither appropriate nor necessary among men of full virtue (see *Rhet.* I.14.1375a16).

This interpretation is borne out by Aristotle’s views on corporal punishment. Aristotle does not have much to say about punishment in the *Politics*, but a few ideas emerge. Punishment in Aristotle’s eyes, though sometimes just and hence good, is good only conditionally and not absolutely: “just retributions and punishments spring from virtue, but are necessary, and possess nobility [only] in a necessary way (for it would be preferable if neither man nor polis had any need of such things)” (VII.13.1332a12-15). Aristotle would punish those citizens who disobey a law against obscenity in different ways depending upon the age of the offender—a youth with blows and dishonors, an adult with slavish dishonors, but not with blows (VII.17.1336b3-12). He is reluctant, in other words, to inflict corporal punishment on an adult, but is prepared to use it on a minor.

Aristotle certainly believes that coercion has a role to play in the moral education of the many as distinct from the well-bred (see *EN* X.9.1179b4-13). In discussing the moral education of the many, he remarks

that “generally passion [which the many live by] seems to yield not to argument but to force” (*EN* X.9.1179b28-29) and that “the many obey coercion more than argument and penalties more than the noble” (*EN* X.9.1180a4-5). But it is noteworthy that coercion plays no role in the education, including the moral education, envisaged in *Politics* VIII, perhaps because all the young men in his best polis will be well-bred (VII.7, especially 1327b36-38). The passions of the young men of Aristotle’s best polis yield not to argument but to music (VIII.5-7).

What Aristotle attempts to describe in *Politics* VII and VIII, if the foregoing interpretation is correct, is a political community (= a moral community) held together by the justice of its citizens rather than by the sword, and sustained by a system of moral education that relies on methods subtler than force.

7. Noncoercive Rule

It should be clear by now how Aristotle can embrace both the polis and the anticoercion principle. Coercion is not, in Aristotle’s eyes, an essential feature of political rule. It is no more the function of a ruler to coerce his subjects than it is for a physician to coerce his patients or a helmsman his crew: “Nor do we see this [the use of coercion] in the other sciences [any more than in political science]; for it is the function neither of the physician nor of the helmsman to persuade or to compel his patients or his crew” (VII.2.1324b29-31). For someone brought up on Thomas Hobbes⁴⁷ this idea can be difficult to grasp.

Just as the anticoercion principle is derivable from first principles of Aristotle’s ethical and natural philosophy, the idea that correct political rule is noncoercive is derivable from first principles of Aristotle’s metaphysics together with a basic theorem of his political philosophy.

In every unitary entity, Aristotle argues, there is one component that rules and another that is ruled: “For whatever is composed of several parts, whether continuous or discrete, and becomes one common thing, in every case rule and subordination (*to archon kai to archomenon*) may be discerned, and this [rule and subordination] is present in living things from the whole of nature; for even in things that do not share in life there is a ruling principle, for example, of a musical scale” (I.5.1254a28-33). The idea here, an idea firmly rooted in Aristotle’s metaphysics, is that what distinguishes a whole (*holon*) from a heap (*sôros*) is the presence of form (or soul)⁴⁸ and that the natural relation of form to matter (or soul to body) is that of ruler to subject (I.5.1254a34-36). Not all wholes, in Aristotle’s view, have the same degree of unity. Nature is a stronger unifying agent than force: “That which is whole and has a certain shape and form is one [i.e., unitary] even more [than that which is one by continuity], especially if it is

one by nature and not by force (like a thing made one by glue or a nail or a cord) and has within itself the cause of its being continuous" (*Met.* X.1.1052a22-25).

Aristotle systematically applies these metaphysical ideas to political communities. First of all, since a polis is an organized community and not simply a mass of human beings, it must, like other wholes, have a principle of organization, a form. This form is its constitution (III.3.1276b1-13). Secondly, being a whole, a polis must have a component that rules and another that is ruled. A polis without rulers, Aristotle says, would be an impossibility (IV.4.1291a35-36). Finally, according to a basic theorem of the *Politics*, a polis is a natural rather than an artificial whole (I.2.1252b30, 1253a2, 25; VII.8.1328a21-22) and, consequently, is *not* held together by force when in a natural condition. Thus, coercion is not an intrinsic feature of political rule.

Hobbes and Aristotle differ on the role of force in the life of a political community because they differ about the sort of whole a political community is. For Hobbes a state must be held together by force because it is a product of art rather than of nature: "For by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE . . . which is but an Artificiall Man."⁴⁹

As part of his naturalism, Aristotle compares a polis to an animal and identifies its ruling element, which corresponds to the soul of an animal, with those functional groups that preserve it by governing and bearing arms (IV.4.1291a24-28). He never envisages a polis without arms. But for the warriors of a polis to use them against the body politic is as contrary to nature, in Aristotle's eyes, as it is for an animal to use its teeth or its claws against its own body. Aristotle recognizes that even a state that cultivates justice at home is prone to forget about justice when dealing with other states. In their relations with each other, states too often resemble lower animals. But he does not condone such conduct and thinks that a political community, no less than a human being, should strive for a life higher than that of a beast.⁵⁰

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all references are to Aristotle's *Politics*.

2. On the early critics of slavery, see W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 3, *The Fifth-Century Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp.

155-60.

3. William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, 3d ed., 2 vols. (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1798). Reprint (2 vols. in 1) ed. Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976). Pages cited within square brackets are those of the 1976 edition.

4. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 342 [p. 645]; see also vol. 2, pp. 333-37 [pp. 639-42].

5. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 372 [p. 667].

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 271 [p. 272].

7. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 267 [p. 269].

8. One meaning of the Greek adjective *anarchos* is "without a ruler." Thus, Aristotle distinguishes political animals that are under a ruler, such as the crane and the bee, from others, such as the ant, that are *anarcha* (*Historia Animalium* I.1.488a10-13).

9. Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 3d revised ed. (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1917 [repr. 1969]), p. 56 [repr., p. 50].

10. Godwin, *Enquiry*, vol. 1, p. 230 [p. 242].

11. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 334 [p. 639].

12. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 2-3 [p. 408].

13. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 337 [pp. 641-42].

14. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 479-84 [pp. 743-47].

15. For Diogenes' relation to the modern movement, see Donald R. Dudley, *A History of Cynicism* (London: Methuen, 1937 [repr. 1974]), pp. 211-12.

16. But perhaps not with all his ideas, for Aristotle remarks that "no one else [besides Plato] has proposed such an innovation as community of children and women" (II.7.1266a34-35). See W. L. Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887-1902 [repr. 1973]), *ad loc.*

17. See Newman, *Politics*, vol. 1, pp. 24-25, and Ernest Barker, *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle* (London: Methuen, 1906 [repr. 1959]), pp. 59, 271-72.

18. On Aristotle's "totalitarianism," see Jonathan Barnes, "Aristotle and Political Liberty," and Richard Sorabji, "State Power: Aristotle and Fourth Century Philosophy," in *Aristoteles' "Politik,"* Akten des XI. Symposium Aristotelicum, ed. Gunther Patzig (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1990).

19. In one passage, both points are combined: "We say that nature makes for the sake of something, and that this is some good" (*De Somno et Vigilia* 2.455b17-18).

20. It is not a syllogism strictly speaking since the parenthetical expression counts as a fourth term. The argument is of course valid.

21. Aristotle also says that "the political good is the just" (III.12.1282b16-17). Since he goes on in this passage to discuss distributive justice, it is plain that the justice in question here is particular rather than universal justice. This is the reason that the good that is equated with it is the political rather than the social good.

22. For the four juristic categories in a typical Greek polis—citizens, metics, foreign visitors, and slaves—see III.1.1275a7-8, 5.1277b38-39; VII.4.1326a18-20, b20-21.

23. The *kai* in this passage is epexegetical.

24. Newman, *Politics*, vol. 1, p. 119n.

25. That a full citizen will be an adult male is taken for granted.

26. Retaining (contrary to Ross) the *e* of all manuscripts.

27. It was illegal in Athens after the middle of the fifth century for a citizen to marry an alien. See Douglas M. MacDowell, *The Law of Classical Athens* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 87.

28. For one exception, see John M. Cooper, "Political Animals and Civic Friendship," in Patzig, ed., *Aristoteles' "Politik,"* pp. 228-29.

29. Newman, *Politics*, vol. 1, p. 230.

30. See *ibid.*, *ad loc.* and vol. 1, p. 229.

31. Aristotle sometimes defines democracy juristically in terms of free status (see IV.4.1290b1, 1291b30-39, 8.1294a11, 15.1299b20-27; V.1.1301a28-31, 8.1309a2; VI.2.1317a40-

41, 1318a3-10). In so doing, he reverses the essential and incidental (the defining and nondefining) properties of proletarian democracy and defines what might be called "egalitarian" democracy. This kind of democracy is essentially rule by the free and only incidentally rule by the poor (since the poor are normally a majority of the free). Contrary to his official definition of democracy, Aristotle remarks in one passage that "in democracies it just happens (*sunbainei*) that the poor are more powerful than the rich" (VI.2.1317b8-9). What "just happens" in such a democracy need not always happen. When it does not—when, for example, property is fairly evenly distributed—the free will not split into rich and poor, and will be able, in theory at least, to rule with an eye to the advantage of all the citizens. If they do, the constitution will be correct rather than deviant. In fact, the best polis described in Books VII and VIII seems to be just such an egalitarian democracy. See the note to 1275b5 in Franz Susemihl and R. D. Hicks, *The Politics of Aristotle*—Books I-V [I-III, VII-VIII] (London: Macmillan, 1894 [repr. 1976]). It should be noted that since egalitarian democracy is defined purely juristically, nothing prevents an egalitarian democracy from also being an aristocracy.

32. See Newman, *Politics*, *ad loc.*

33. See Newman's note to 1293a39.

34. Newman, *Politics*, *ad loc.*

35. See the text flagged by note marker 5 above.

36. The polis of Books VII and VIII is never called an aristocracy. The noun *aristokratia* does not, in fact, occur in Books VII and VIII; and the adjective *aristokratikos* occurs only once (VII.11.1330b20). This has led some scholars to question whether it is really supposed to be an aristocracy. For a recent discussion of this matter, see Charles H. Kahn, "The Normative Structure of Aristotle's 'Politics,'" in Patzig, ed., *Aristoteles' "Politik,"* pp. 375-81.

37. Newman adds: ". . . as well as in the hands of any mercenaries they may employ or any allies they may possess" (*Politics*, *ad loc.*).

38. Susemihl and Hicks, *Politics*, p. 55.

39. Newman, *Politics*, vol. 1, p. 328.

40. As Susemihl and Hicks imply in their *Politics*, (note to 1328b8).

41. For the distinction between *emporoi* and *kapeloi*, see Plato, *Republic* II.371D5-7 and *Sophist* 223D5-10.

42. The ability to deliberate is an essential property of a craftsman or artisan (see *Met.* VII.7.1032a25-b21; *EN* III.3, VI.4), whereas a natural slave "wholly lacks the deliberative faculty" (I.13.1260a12). Aristotle distinguishes two types of *hired* labor: "that of the vulgar (banausic) arts [retaining *technon*]" and "that of the unskilled who are useful for their body only" (I.11.1258b25-27). Since the latter phrase describes the highest work of which a natural slave is capable (I.5.1254b25-26), even the lowest artisan is not a natural slave. For the definition of banausic art, see VIII.2.1337b8-15.

43. This is the standard interpretation. Thus, Susemihl and Hicks write in their *Politics* that "[o]nly foreigners and resident aliens are allowed to engage in trade, industry, or manual labour [in Aristotle's best State]" (p. 54).

44. See David Whitehead, "Aristotle the Metic," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, n.s. 21 (1975), pp. 94-99.

45. David Whitehead, *The Ideology of the Athenian Metic* (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1977), pp. 71-72; G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London: Duckworth, 1981), pp. 95, 289.

46. This is true, to some extent at least, of every polis that has a correct constitution (III.7.1279a39-b4, 17.1288a6-15).

47. Thus, Hobbes writes:

For the Lawes of Nature (as Justice, Equity, Modesty, Mercy, and (in summe) *doing to others, as wee would be done to,*) of themselves, without the terrour of some Power, to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our naturall Passions that carry us to Partiality, Pride, Revenge, and the like. And Covenants, without the sword, are

- but Words, and of no strength to secure a man at all. (*Leviathan* [London: Andrew Crooke, 1651], ch. 17, p. 85)
48. *Met.* V.6.1016b11-16; VII.16.1040b8-10, 17.1041b11-33; VIII.6.1045a8-10 together with *De Anima* II.1.412a19-21, *Met.* VII.10.1035b14-16.
49. Hobbes, introduction to *Leviathan*.
50. The research on this paper has been aided at critical junctures by that wonderful contribution of modern technology to ancient scholarship, the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.