

Aristotle's Ideal State, Hierarchy and Happiness

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“In all sciences and arts the end is a good, and the greatest good and in the highest degree a good in the most authoritative of all- this is the political science of which the good is justice, in other words, the common interest” (Politics, III, 12).

Introduction

For Aristotle, in equality and inequality refer to the abilities of a member of a community to perform a needed task. Within each task, such as farming or ruling, there is always a hierarchy based on skill and competence. A mechanic is equal to another in fixing machines with the same level of skill; they are unequal when one can fix what is required with greater skill than others. A citizen is equal to another citizen to the extent they are capable of establishing the common good relative to the needs and disposition of the whole. Within these parameters there are grades of skill and competence, and this is the ground for inequality. This paper will describe this in detail, and as a result, will argue first, that theoretical philosophy (or “contemplation”) is the highest vocation for man, and second, that political and social inequality derive directly from this.

Political skill (or virtue) refers to the ability of a citizen to place the general good, consistently, above their own. Aristotle states in Book I, “Wherefore, if [a man] have not virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals, and the most full of lust and gluttony. But justice is the bond of men in states, for the administration of justice, which is the determination of what is just, is the principle of order in political society.” This quote encapsulates Aristotle's entire approach to the political.

Justice and the State

The life of philosophical contemplation is not political, but it furnishes the theoretical parameters for it. The man of political virtue is an activist. He cannot generate theoretical principles about anything at all, but only concerning the political. Therefore, to some extent, the politician is dependent on the philosopher. The politician, in other words, is philosophy in action. Therefore, there should be more citizens capable of true political virtue than there would be philosophers.

Aristotle's foundation for all politics is the creation of happiness. Happiness is based on human nature, marked specifically by the ability to reason, deliberate and choose a course of action based entirely upon it. Since human nature is based on reason, the more a lifestyle relies on this faculty, the more happiness it will generate. The political community serves to create the infrastructure for the emergence and maintenance of such people.

The highest level of happiness will be as the result of “contemplation” or true philosophy. This discipline is the only one that deals with permanent, immutable truth. It is the highest good because it is all encompassing. All lesser goods are pursued in reference to it. All other goods, in other words, take their place in the cosmic order in their relation to the highest truth. Political justice is a good, and one high on the scale. But it is not the ultimate good. A rational community, however, is often required to create those capable of true philosophical activity (Kraut, 1989:26-27).

Philosophy is that discipline that deals with essences, or forms. A form, in Aristotle's sense, is the being of a thing, that which makes an object what it is. It is that which survives change. Plato might get older, yet, he is still Plato, he is still a man, and hence, he is always rational regardless of his getting older or fatter. Each object of contemplation is not taken as it

appears. It is taken for what it is. The material elements of the thing, its manifestation, do not give knowledge, as Plato getting older tells us nothing important about who he is. Material constituents of an object merely appear. The immaterial essence is the object of contemplation.

The philosopher situates the state in the cosmos. The politician situates all socially necessary work under the concept of the Just. Such people can never exist alone, and are manifest in a rationally organized community. Their virtue might be the most comprehensive, but they still remain dependent upon those who do the physical work. The thinker and the labourer, however, both manifest virtue and each does necessary work. The virtues of these two, however, are not equal. Aristotle states, "the ruler ought to have moral virtue in perfection, for his function, taken absolutely, demands a master artificer, and rational principle is such an artificer; the subjects, on the other hand, require only that measure of virtue which is proper to each of them" (1, 13). Therefore, Aristotle concludes that the good citizen's virtue is distinct from that of a good man, since a good man can have any occupation whatsoever. The virtue of a citizen, that is, one fit to rule, is the ability to grasp the essence of all social interaction.

Citizenship is the same as aristocracy in Aristotle's ideal state. There are several hierarchies at work: the first is the mental discipline to engage in such activity. It also, secondly, requires the ability to adapt the truths of philosophy to the state. Third, it requires substantial resources, including slaves, to perform these tasks full time. The gifted politician needs to be supported materially.

Concerning the nature of rule, the most basic relation is in Book I of the Politics:

At all events we may firstly observe in living creatures both a despotical and a constitutional rule; for the soul rules the body with a despotical rule, whereas the intellect rules the appetites with a constitutional and royal rule. And it is clear that the rule of the soul over the body, and of the mind and the rational element over the passionate, is natural and expedient; whereas the equality of the two or the rule of the inferior is always hurtful (I, 5).

The implications here could not be clearer. The rule of the body, which is the same as its appetites, is the very nature of authority. For the intellect to do this, it must already have developed the ability to see the form that is present within merely sensory data. The rule of the intellect in the person is the same as the rule of the theoretician over the state. The true politician, taking from philosophy, is required to situate all social functions in proportion to their worth, and this worth is based on the level of generality it encompasses (Kraut, 1989: 200ff).

Public order is the business police officers. The work is difficult and requires great mental and physical discipline. The policeman, however, is a tool. The just use of this tool can only be discerned by the politician who knows what justice is. Actions of law enforcement can be just or unjust. The justice of a specific enforcement act is not the business of the policeman. Since these issues require certainty of the eternal nature of justice, the virtues of the political thinker are essential (Politics, III, 4).

Given such a position, the true theoretician or philosophical legislator is not part of the common mass, and, in Aristotle's sense, he should not be treated as such. He is special and different, and therefore, he should get the superior rewards his superior mind earns. In this case, it is political office. To force the thinker to do field work is unjust, since it is out of proportion to his abilities. The true and virtuous ruler has the right to rule, but this right comes with the responsibility for the consequences of his policy. Aristotle states,

Since there are many forms of government there must be many varieties of citizen and especially of citizens who are subjects; so that under some governments the mechanic and the labourer will be citizens, but not in others, as, for example, in aristocracy or the so-called government of the best (if there be such an one), in which honours are given according to virtue and merit; for no man can practice virtue who is living the life of a mechanic or labourer (III, 5).

There are different constitutions because societies, like people, are unequal. In the society where the mechanic rules, one can be certain that either the concerns of the society are only material and utilitarian, or that the society is radically unjust. When aristocratic citizens rule, it implies that the tenor of society is capable of grasping the truths of the philosopher and obeying them (Politics III, 11).

Now, if this hierarchy is also that of happiness, then it follows logically that the worker in the lower fields cannot truly be happy. Commoners do not know what happiness is, often believing it to refer to money, fame or popularity. The vulgar, that is, the common, hold such ends as final, and this is what they pursue. In a very real way, Aristotle holds that the difference between the citizen and the vulgar is so pronounced, the latter will not grasp what the former say when they speak of social goods. As a result, the vulgar dismiss the citizen as socially useless (Politics, III, 12). Aristotle addresses the question of why some men develop into vulgar and unhappy people and others into virtuous citizens. Among other things, the reason is their attitude to wealth,

There are two sorts of wealth-getting, as I have said; one is a part of household management, the other is retail trade: the former necessary and honourable, while that which consists in exchange is justly censured; for it is unnatural. The most hated sort, and with the greatest reason, is usury, which makes a gain out of money itself, and not from the natural object of it (I, 10)

This quote is significant because it serves as both a cause for the hierarchy's development and as an example. Depending on external influences, some are led to believe that money is power, and power is virtue. Therefore, money is virtue. This is the inversion of justice. Others might, through superior upbringing and social examples, experience the goods of life quite differently. The result is two different personalities: one sees material gain as the highest in wisdom, the virtuous sees its power as illegitimate, unstable and unjust.

The Foundation of Hierarchy

To permit oneself to be directed from the outside is the very negation of freedom. Passions, as the word suggests, are things that are done to you. To develop the discipline to penetrate appearance and see the essence of things is difficult and it requires training, habituation and consistent reinforcement. The vulgar submit themselves to what will give immediate bodily pleasure. This is the easiest way to live because it requires the least discipline. Given the instability of such pleasures however, they are not productive of happiness.

The aristocratic citizen is the most happy and also the freest. The vulgar are never free since they are driven by base desire. For Aristotle, freedom is not arbitrary will. Freedom is very specific: it is the ability to choose the highest good because it is true and just, not because it brings the doer any immediate gain (I, 2). The actions of such a person will seem bizarre to the vulgar, who live only by conventional norms as to what is good. The philosopher is not bound by these conventions precisely because they are common. This is the distinction: reason is that ability to pierce appearance and grasp what produces the

phenomenon.

Political virtue, leading to true freedom and happiness, is based on the ability to judge actions, of a socially significant nature, rightly. The ability to judge actions correctly, including the philosopher's own, has several ingredients. First, it has to be free, meaning it cannot be based on common norms of mediocrity, or any desire for gain or power. Second, to be free, it must not be material, since material nature is determined by cause and effect. Democracies, generally, are those societies that cannot reach beyond the desire for gain; it is the rule of the ignorant. In fact, all perverted societies cannot see beyond desire and appearance. All social life, for them, is organized for gain, and hence, it is violent and chaotic. There is no common good. Third, the grasp of the common good, relative to the nature of the population, is required to properly evaluate political events. Without it, actions will be judged according to arbitrary categories that, almost always, reflect the self-interest of the actor (I, 5).

Slavery and Reason

Aristotle argues that sometimes, inequality among members of a community is based on nature, sometimes, by circumstances. The cause of the inequality is not as significant as the consequences of differing ability relative to socially important tasks. He writes,

[A]ll [people] are not either slaves by nature or freemen by nature, and also that there is in some cases a marked distinction between the two classes, rendering it expedient and right for the one to be slaves and the others to be masters. . . The abuse of this authority is injurious to both; for the interests of part and whole, of body and soul, are the same, and the slave is a part of the master, a living but separated part of his bodily frame. Hence, where the relation of master and slave between them is natural they are friends and have a common interest, but where it rests merely on law and force the reverse is true (I, 6).

A slave is defined here as one that does not, for whatever reason, have the ability to think or act freely. This is not a statement of capacity, but circumstances (Heath, 2008: 250). A person who seems to be ignorant, and incapable of logical thought might just find it easier to act like an animal. This person will still be called a “natural” slave. Aristotle was not making an argument based on genetics. The natural slave can still exercise virtue. His master, the legislator or philosopher, requires a loyal servant to provide him with basic physical goods. The slave on the other hand, is virtuous, so to speak, in that he assists the greatest asset of the community, the legislator or aristocrat. His role is essential, just not intellectual; the interests of both master and slave are served as a result. (Heath, 2008: 2-3 and Politics, I,5).

There is no generic concept of one being “superior” to another in every respect. This is nowhere to be found in Aristotle. These sorts of judgements concern one's abilities in concrete fields, although the fields are not themselves equal. The theoretical mind works differently from that of the mechanic. The former sees the general manifest in the particular, while the latter sees the particular only, and sometimes confuses it with the general. (Levin, 246).

Leo Strauss (1945) is important here because his method is to grasp ancient ideas as a contemporary would, not as a modern. His argument is that the modern mind does not understand the ancient mind. Aristotle defined justice and virtue given the reality he saw in different states and his own historical research. He has no reason to hold that there are any other possibilities until he comes across them. He came to the above conclusions due to his own observations on human behaviour. Strauss' point is that Aristotle did not start with

ideological concepts outside of experience such as “all men are equal.” He dealt with what he saw in front of him (Strauss, 1945: 55).

Aristotle was a biologist, and therefore, empirical reality was his only guide. He did not see equality in human affairs. He did see that to be a virtuous man is far more difficult than to merely permit oneself to be a slave to immediate desire. Goodness and virtue rest in the common good. Most are not capable of that because they often confused their own good with that of the whole. This suggested that not all people should have access to the levers of power (Strauss, 1945: 54). This was the distinction between citizenship and slavery. A slave was one that could not do anything but pursue his own interests and therefore, theoretically, bring great harm to others and himself. It would be unjust to give such a person political power due to his clear inability to use it.

Therefore, rather than contradicting each other, these two Greek giants strongly compliment each other. Regardless of the fact that in terms of style, the two writers are very different, they both end up in the same place: there is no ethics without freedom, no freedom without the apprehension of that which is not bounded by cause and effect relations, that is, spiritual realities.

The analysis above might be called meta-ethics, only in that it is the preparation for ethical thinking, in other words, the foundation of all ethical life. In this important area then, Plato and Aristotle are in full agreement. All ethical actions are then referred back to this nexus, and from there, can be intelligently judged as in accordance with the good.

Aristotle and Modernity

Aristotle's idea of virtue dominated the middle ages, while the Renaissance saw the development of counter theories, specifically by Hobbes and Machiavelli. The latter two writers represent a massive overhaul of Aristotle's view of the matter, while the three approaches to virtue as essential to understanding anything about their politics. In other words, to deal with these three writers together is not an easy task. The best way of dealing with them is to center on their conceptions of virtue, since it is at root of what they consider political right.

Aristotle can easily be considered a conservative realist, seeing the middle classes as the most stable group to control the state (Aristotle, IV, 11). The only thing that informs Aristotle's conception of politics is the extent to which a certain Constitution promotes the reason for the state's existence: virtue. Monarchy, aristocracy and democracy (within limits) can promote the world of virtue, but like Machiavelli, these depend on the nature of the people to be ruled. For Hobbes, the state exists for protection, and for Machiavelli at his worst, the state exists to serve itself. Machiavelli then represents a complete inversion of Aristotle, since the latter holds that the single variable that denotes a just state from an unjust one is whether it serves the common good or itself (Aristotle, III, 10). For Machiavelli, there is no common good, only power.

In Book I of the *Politics*, Aristotle holds that the state ultimately springs from biological needs. Its immediate end is the sustenance of its members, though that is not the final end, which is virtue. Hobbes holds that the state exists through contract, a contract from exhausted parties in the state of nature. Aristotle has no concept of a state of nature, and neither does Machiavelli. The very idea that the state springs from intrinsic, biological needs automatically means that the state is natural, while in Hobbes, the state is the artificial creation of sick, fallen human beings (Hobbes, 93-96).

Machiavelli and Aristotle agree in general about the nature of state power, in that it can be ruled by several types of state, but for Machiavelli, the type of state is merely a cover for the prince who actually controls it. *Virtu* for Machiavelli is the opposite of virtue in Aristotle. The primary definition of *Virtu* for Machiavelli is fortune, or, more accurately, the

ability of a politician to dominate it through insuring his rule against rebellion. If this can be done in an oligarchy or monarchy, this is no importance to Machiavelli's Prince, but circumstances of political expediency dictate the nature and form of state (cf. Esp Machiavelli, 66-68).

For Aristotle, virtue, far from giving support to the passions of politicians, seeks to control them. Hobbes as well will countenance no other motive for action except passion – one being more powerful than another. Aristotle makes it clear that passion is a problem – desire can never be satisfied, it will always seek to continually aggrandize itself. This is the main problem. Both the very rich and the very poor are too debased to rule the state, both are saturated with the passion for gain, the rich because they want more, and the poor because they seek to despoil the rich. Neither approach is just (Aristotle, IV, 11). For Aristotle, neither approach is just because the end of the state is virtue, the contemplation of truth, the highest motivation for a person to pursue. For Hobbes, regardless of other ends an individual might pursue (and he really doesn't care what these are), nothing can be accomplished without first securing people and property against each other (Hobbes, 132-135).

Machiavelli and Hobbes are both concerned with the passions as the motive force of human beings. Hobbes takes it for granted that reason is the slave of passion with the human person really being embodied will. Machiavelli holds the same, except the end to which the two conceptions are put differ. Ultimately, Machiavelli holds that the passions of human beings should be used against them. This is the domination of *virtu*. *Fortuna* is really a whore, following whoever can capture her and tame her. But the only one who can do this is the politician who knows how to use passion to control his subjects (cf. esp Machiavelli, ch III, as well as XXI). For Hobbes, this passion is destructive, but irremovable – it is an intrinsic and dominant part of human nature. While Aristotle demands the control of passion (the very essence of virtue), Hobbes can not envisage it not being the dominant form of motivation. Hence, the Hobbesian solution famously is the creation of a near-absolute state that serves to control the constantly clashing passions of individuals and groups that—in truth—is Hobbes' conception of civil society (Hobbes, 30-38).

In Book III of the *Politics*, Aristotle holds that political science is the summation of all particular goods of a society. It is the science of the Good of goods, or the public manifestation of private goods. Put differently, it is the synthesis and balance of all particular, private goods. Hobbes does not necessarily disagree, except that there is only one good, the very foundation of all constructive, purposive action, that is personal security. Hobbes does not take class membership into account, since his state of nature theory exists long before there are any classes. There is no biological necessity for the state in Hobbes except to hold that human survival is a “biological necessity.” That being said, the state, however, does not spring from a biological imperative, as Aristotle holds. As Aristotle argues this conception of state origin, it only later morphs into different forms such as monarchy/tyranny, democracy/mobocracy.

What holds Aristotle's argument together is the pursuit of virtue as an end. Machiavelli sees it as a means, while Hobbes sees it as an illusion. Aristotle's final end of the state is the ability to see truth, to see beyond appearances and reach the inner essence of a thing. Nothing could be more classically Greek than that. But the cynical approach of both Hobbes and Machiavelli sheds light on the mentality of the Renaissance. If these two writers can be considered typical of the Renaissance, then this historical era is certainly not about resurrecting the ancient practices of Greece and Rome, but rather to ensure the domination of the state (newly centralizing in this era) regardless of consequences. Political right is swept away in the modern obsession with centralization and alchemy—the obsession with man's domination over nature. Aristotle sought the political Constitution that conformed with human nature (relative to circumstances). The two Renaissance writers sought to alter human

behavior through centralization and manipulation of passions. No appeal to reason can be found in either writer. It is no stretch to bring the cynical nature of modern politics and the massive, almost inhuman power of the state back to these two writers.

The Renaissance is a diminution of the heritage of ancient Greece. Whether Plato or Aristotle, the main idea was the elimination of the destructive passions as hampering the ability to see Reality. Passions were irrational reactions to the world of appearance. They were intrinsically sunk in the world of cause and effect, rather than the truth, which is always immaterial. For Hobbes and Machiavelli, what could be seen and felt was real (cf. esp Hobbes, 47-48). But what can be seen and felt is all under the sway of cause and effect, of power relations and the world of appearance. *This* is the true nature of the Renaissance and it is destructive. Nature was to be dominated, legislated and controlled.

Aristotle realized that the human person could not live with others while dominated by irrationality and self interest. Hence, the stress on the middle class in Book IV makes sense since this class, all other things being equal, could serve as the moderating principle, the virtuous principle, between the equally debased rich and poor (particularly at the extremes). Without the virtue of prudence and temperance (objectified in the middle class), the rich and poor would be at each others throats. Machiavelli realized this, and had the politician manipulate the ruled, to weave for them a world of illusion. Hobbes merely reduced everything to violent force to control this clash. Power must be centralized, human nature repressed. Machiavelli despaired of human nature, and saw it only as the raw material to be manipulated by the politician – the lead to be alchemically turned to gold.

Aristotle, Kant and the Ends of Friendship

Aristotle's concept of friendship has little to do with its modern usage. "Friendship" in the ancient world, referred to the shared bonds of ethnicity, moral virtue and political justice. Without friendship, there could be no politics or justice, since the common virtues that it would be based upon do not exist (NE, VIII, 9).

Aristotle has a far more realistic approach to friendship than Kant in that Aristotle's view deals with one's entire social life. Kant focuses on the abstraction of the truly free will. Kant's abstractions refer to the mind of the philosopher, and not anyone that we might actually meet. Aristotle's holism is what makes his case so compelling, but this is dependent upon a firm knowledge of what "friendship" is. However, there is a case to be made that Aristotle and Kant can be used to compliment each other and compensate for their respective defects.

Friendship for Aristotle lies at the foundation of all social life. Social life aims at justice, which is the purpose of the state. Virtue is the means to justice (Pol, III, 12). This sort of virtue can only be cultivated in a tightly knit community which is the result of bonds of friendship. Inferior forms of friendship are based on the ends of material gain, utility or pleasure. Some of these might be goods, but they are not goods in themselves. These are inferior forms of friendship because they have no stable basis. As soon as the reason for the association is gone, the friendship dissolves (NE, VIII, 4).

Friendship and justice seem, as we have said at the outset of our discussion, to be concerned with the same objects and exhibited between the same persons. For in every community there is thought to be some form of justice, and friendship too. . . And the extent of their association is the extent of their friendship, as it is the extent to which justice exists between them (NE, VIII, 9).

"Friendship" and "love" in Aristotle are unfortunate terms because their modern understanding is distorted. However, Aristotle is well aware that, even in his own time, the

terms “friendship” and “love” were being used in ways that oppose its true meaning. He mentions, for example, that people call financial exchange a form of friendship. The friendship is based on the mutual desire for gain (VIII, 13). While technically a form of friendship, in the *Politics*, such associations are unnatural and harmful (Pol I, 10).

One important problem in Aristotle is that friendship is too broad of a term. It is used to cover any end whatsoever, including monetary gain, which in Book I of the *Politics*, is condemned. It is not very difficult to argue that he was using “friendship” in these cases loosely, but, when speaking of virtue and justice, was using it in a very technical and specific sense (Walker, 184).

Friends share the same “love.” Here, love refers to the nature of what it is they share, that is, their goal. There is an inferior form of love among those who join together for profit, but it is based entirely on an unstable and insatiable desire. As soon as this shared value no longer is served by the bond, then the former “friends” are now enemies and rivals. Love in Aristotle only takes on meaning in friendship, that is, on communal ties that aim at the life of reason and its manifestation in practical life (NE, VIII, 10).

Another way to interpret Aristotle's view is to understand that, unless there are ethical ties of affection among citizens, community, friendship, justice and virtue are not possible. There will be little motive for justice when citizens do not care for each other. Friendship and love were public virtues primarily, and not entirely voluntary, since one is born into an already existing community. While Aristotle defines “love” as a more intimate tie than friendship, it has a place in justice since citizens love their own, but might be indifferent or merely respectful to the foreigner (NE, VIII, 6).

When people share the same language, history and general outlook, they will sacrifice for each other. In an important way, peoples are tied together through generations and are responsible for each other. Individualism in modernity rejects this entirely, and hence, sees friendship as a purely voluntary and private affair. Aristotle writes,

It seems to be so in constitutional arrangements also; the man who contributes nothing good to the common stock is not honored; for what belongs to the public is given to the man who benefits the public, and honor does belong to the public. . . . For friendship asks a man to do what he can, not what is proportional to the merits of the case; since that cannot always be done, e.g. in honors paid to the gods or to parents; for no one could ever return to them the equivalent of what he gets, but the man who serves them to the utmost of his power is thought to be a good man (VIII, 14).

The citizen, as such, is an equal to all others. Citizenship is not, like in modernity, based on being a living adult only, but in possessing the quality of virtue. In this case, it is the ability to see the common good clearly, especially as it differs from one's private good (Pol, I, 5). This does not occur without friendship. What Aristotle is saying above is that citizenship is based on friendship in its true sense. It does not act in its own interest, but in the interests of the whole. Since this virtue can only be developed in a community with substantial kinship ties, it goes to the heart of what friendship and love mean in these contexts.

Kant and Autonomy

Kant's approach typifies the impoverished, content-less view of modernity. Like everything else that might have a moral nature, Kant argues famously that any moral act must be filtered through the abstraction of the Categorical Imperative. Simply, the CI is the ability to will freely, which means that the will functions without any sort of interest, emotion or coercion. From this, friendship here seems out of place, but, to reconstruct a possible

connection, it might go like this:

The agent recognizes the capacity for the CI in others and therefore, all human beings in society are equals in this regard (Kant, 17). This might be the foundation for friendship. The problem is that this does not sound like friendship at all. Kant's entire moral theory is based around the implicit concept that if relations exist for some emotional or political end, they have no moral value. They may not be immoral, but they fail the CI test since the bond exists for ends that contain actual content, interest and quite possibly, even emotion (Kant, 56).

Kant holds that friendship with intimate ties can be a good thing (Sherman, 611). This does not make it a moral thing, however. Sherman's (1987) take on this is to say that while Aristotle focuses on the kinship of mind, attitude and action to broad social ends, Kant cannot provide a reason for ethical action at all. Kant's abstract humans cannot have friends, partly because a disembodied will cannot have friends, but also that morality has already been defined as that which knows nothing but abstract right (Sherman, 612).

At the very maximum, Kant might be able to advocate friendships that serve to promote the understanding of the equality of all human beings (Kant, 40ff). Anything that might enhance that understanding might be moral, albeit in a derivative sense (Wood and O'Neill, 191-194). How such a friendship might function in practice is another matter. It might involve political action advocating for policies that promote equality, or pedagogical activities that argue for the rational life according to the truly free will. If this is permitted, it is not friendship in either the Aristotelian sense nor the modern sense, but it might have some "friend-ish" characteristics.

Kant and Aristotle

LeLue (1980) makes the well known case against Kant that the mere apprehension of the ground of morals tells us very little. It gives one no reason to act, and, even more, assumes that one lives in a society where this kind of abstract willing is taken seriously. LeLue makes an excellent case for Aristotle as completing Kant's view (regardless of the time distance between them). Kant is correct to say that friendship (in any sense) cannot be based on mere self-interest. It also cannot be based on abstraction. Aristotle's holistic doctrine of friendship provides the social context for the building of friendships based on social ties aiming at justice. When these two are combined, the Categorical Imperative finally can be useful in moral action (388).

Kant says that all friendships presuppose pragmatic friendship to some degree. But while Kant certainly thinks that friends must be able to count on each other for help in case of need, "friendship cannot be a union aimed at mutual advantage" (Denis, 6).

"Need" can only be referred to Kant's moral theory in general. "Need" is the building of respect for the CI. This comes close to being an extrinsic motivation, but possibly one that Kantians can live with. The fact that "need" is not the same as "advantage" strongly suggests just that, and it might be the start of a new understanding of Kant's morals.

Plato and Aristotle on the Forms

Philosophy is the love of truth and wisdom. She is loved for her own sake. Truth is its own good, its own reward. The people who sell the ability to persuade have no idea who she is – they are just whores looking to manipulate others. Truth "always speaks the same" – Truth never changes. Opinions always do; often with fashion, or when popular people hold to some opinion. Philosophy is supposed to cut through all that and get to the heart of the

matter.

Socrates/Plato claims that doing wrong is worse than suffering wrong. Why is this? Plato cares only about truth. This implies that our soul must be able to investigate truth, and recognize it when it discovers it. The soul is healthy when it discovers truth and lives accordingly. It is unhealthy when it lives lies (like the sophists do – think here of politicians or advertisers. All they care about is getting your vote or money. Truth is not in the picture).

So – if you live according to truth and justice and suffer wrong from others, no real harm is done to you. If you live according to lies and fashion and make others suffer, you ARE harmed, since your life is in the service of falsehood and wrong. If your life is in the service of falsehood, then you are living a delusion. You will soon become totally delusional, since you hold that there is no truth, only your desires (desires, by the way, can never be satisfied. As soon as you satisfy one, another comes right behind it). It is a living contradiction.

Callicles is making the argument that those who have power have the RIGHT to power and hence, can and should do what they want. There is no truth other than this, so the use of rhetoric is right. Truth is power; power is truth (Gorgias, 482-484). Callicles is making a central distinction: between nature and convention. Nature is that which exists on its own. Truth and Justice are “natural” in the sense that they are objective, and no one can deny it, unless their soul is unhealthy. Convention is what human beings invent in society. Conventions may or may not be true or just. A social convention, for example, might be that, when someone dies, we tell their family how “sorry” we are and that they are “in a better place.” It doesn't matter if it's true or not, we just have to say it.

Then, Callicles says that social conventions are for “the weak.” This means that the weak, the masses, envious of the strong and rich, create social customs which give them more say in what is right and wrong. He says that the truth is that “nature” decrees that the strong should rule over the weak.

In fact, this is how he defines justice. Now, what does this have to do with the nature of rhetoric? Remember, the powerful have the cash to hire powerful lawyers to do their bidding. They can win in court not because they are right, but because they are powerful. In fact, these are the types that would hire Gorgias to a) argue their case, and b) teach their kids how to do the same.

In Callicles' mind, this is OK, since “natural justice” says that the rich and powerful should rule over the weak. This also means that there is no real justice, since justice is whatever the rich and powerful say it is. When you get a sophist to argue for you, it's like hiring a PR firm – you get to broadcast your point of view to the world, making them think it's “natural.”

Socrates' entire point is to refute this idea. In reality, there is no real distinction between what is true and what is right/just.

If you believe that whoever is rich and powerful should rule, then there is no objective justice at all.

If you are powerful today, then you should rule. That is just.

If you lose all your money tomorrow, and others rule over you, that must also be just, right?

Even, as Callicles argues, the masses are capable of creating their sense of “equality” as a way to control the strong, would not this, of itself also be just? In other words, if the masses are strong enough to impose this prejudice on the world, then does this not mean that they are the stronger? Therefore, their views must be, by Callicles' definition, just and right.

So, if I were to summarize the entire dialogue in one sentence, it would be this: If you deny objective truth and justice, holding that all is “convention,” then all you have left is the

domination of the (temporarily) rich and powerful.

Plato, however, argues that such a state of affairs cannot be brought about voluntarily. Any act to bring it about must be done through ignorance. The evil is harmful, and no one wants to harm themselves.

Here are the problems with this argument:

1. It assumes that, if we know something, we can act on it each and every time.
2. In the Republic, Plato speaks of the average person, largely ruled by his lower passions, who does not have the capacity to know good from evil. In this case, the person does evil not out of ignorance, but from coarse habits and a weak mind. Hence, Plato is not even consistent with himself.
3. Since Plato spend so much time on the passions and how they can easily overpower our reason, the mere knowledge of something is not very meaningful.

Of course, there is another option: that Plato, by the word “know” means something different than what we do. Plato did not define knowledge as just memorizing facts. It is about transcendence. We must go beyond the flux of this changing world and behold the world of Forms, eternal Ideas that make things what they are (including good acts). A Form is a spiritual entity, existing separate from its material manifestations, that is eternal, unchanging and partakes of the ultimate Idea, the Good (Republic 508e2). This is a radically different conception of knowledge from our own.

If we go by THIS concept of knowledge, then yes, Plato is correct. But it should be pointed out that only a tiny handful of people ever reach that level of detachment so as to see the Forms disembodied. Hence, most people will do the right thing not based on knowledge, but on living in a well ordered society. They do the right thing not because they know it, but because it's what they've been brought up to believe.

Again, that depends on how we're using the term “knowledge.” Noting in the American judicial system comes close to Plato's definition of the term. But if we were to use the common definition of “knowledge” that is, the ability to understand facts and theories, then punishments would exist only for medicinal purposes. Plato says the same: punishment is meant to heal the soul. This is why Plato says that to commit an evil act is far worse than getting punished for one, since the punishment at least gives you a chance to reform. The more times you commit an evil act, the more of a habit that will be ingrained in you.

Therefore, punishment is about changing this: giving the person a new set of motivations, habits and prejudices (that's all there are, since only a handful of philosophers have true knowledge, Gorgias, 479b and 476a). In our contemporary case, it would lead to a justice system that cared only about reformation. Pain and discomfort might be used, but only as a way to modify behavior later on. It is hard to believe the present prison system would be left unchanged. It would become more educational and less punitive. The death penalty would have to be abolished, since there is always a chance that the person will change.

Metaphysics and the Good

There is no serious ethics that does not deal with the good. Postmodern capitalist theories aside, human nature demands the good and will not rest without it. It is on the nature of virtue, which has more similarities than differences in both Plato and Aristotle. Their sense of virtue and the good are very closely related. This paper will try to avoid the typical clichés and formulaic approaches of modern liberal writers and academics, and hence, will blaze a newer trail that actually takes the Greeks seriously rather than serve as a step towards academic promotion. Aristotle writes,

Have the carpenter, then, and the tanner certain functions or activities, and has man none? Is he born without a function? Or as eye, hand, foot, and in general each of the parts evidently has a function, may one lay it down that man similarly has a function apart from all these? What then can this be? Life seems to be common even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man. Let us exclude, therefore, the life of nutrition and growth. Next there would be a life of perception, but it also seems to be common even to the horse, the ox, and every animal. There remains, then, an active life of the element that has a rational principle; of this, one part has such a principle in the sense of being obedient to one, the other in the sense of possessing one and exercising thought. And, as 'life of the rational element' also has two meanings, we must state that life in the sense of activity is what we mean; for this seems to be the more proper sense of the term. Now if the function of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle, and if we say 'so-and-so-and' a good so-and-so' have a function which is the same in kind, e.g. a lyre, and a good lyre-player, and so without qualification in all cases, eminence in respect of goodness being added to the name of the function (for the function of a lyre-player is to play the lyre, and that of a good lyre-players to do so well): if this is the case, and we state the function of man to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle. . . (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, c 7).

This long passage needed to be cited in full because, despite its early appearance in Book I, is the central core of the entire work. Without understanding this passage, the message of the entire *Nicomachean Ethics* becomes vague. No one can speak of ethics without a conception of human nature. This is what makes this passage so central. Aristotle is clearly not dealing with abstract conceptions of the good, but the nature of the good analogous to people doing good things. Modern university classes in ethics, as the saying goes, are a joke. Amoral liberal instructors using trite examples to exemplify theories they loathe is not worth a \$100,000 year salary for 6 months work. The Greeks live in a world so foreign to the cosmopolitan academic is to make their scholarship on them worse than useless.

Outside of the subsidized and sheltered academic world, the specific ingredient to ethical life is reason, and hence freedom, the ability to choose among rational alternatives. Aristotle speaks of a "certain kind of life." By this he means that ethics is not an assent to intellectual propositions, but the embodiment of the good in all human relations. This is an active creed, and is no different from Plato in this regard.

We then get the first real definition of the good from this: the good is the use of reason for the purpose of organizing the lower forms of life and existence for the benefit of the rational. The rational is outside and above the cave wall. the mere existence of commodity obsession obscures, but does not destroy, the false reality of capital and its intellectual "rebels."

The essences, both considered immaterial in both Aristotle and Plato (despite other differences) are strictly objects for reason, and hence, freedom. The life dedicated to the appearances of things is the life of unfreedom, the life that is typified by the slavery to passions for gain and pleasures which of themselves are insatiable. Plato's comment "stooping to the earth" above is meant to show these types of people as little better than cattle. Their wills pointed downward to created things, while Plato wants their minds turned to that which is uncreated, the eternal and immutable forms of all creation. What brings these passages together is the clear connection of reason, freedom and the nature of reality (Hyslop, 1911).

Politically speaking, this approach seems to be that of democratic rule: both the rule of equality and the rule of passion. Since only the few can live according to the forms, democracy must be passion-based almost intrinsically. Democracy then is also described above, at least in its decayed sense as “mob rule,” or the mere rule of majority and lowest common denominator. Therefore, to avoid this, Plato holds that various forms of coercion and even official lying are necessary to keep the cattle in their place, lest they take over the ship of state and use it for their own temporal advantage. The state, coming from this approach to the good, can never be to anyone's advantage but that of the Good and It alone. The real problem with the republic then is to reconcile the majority of the population to the necessary rule of the few. This is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

It should also be noted that this connection with the immaterial is also connected to what Plato here calls “true pleasure.” The world of cause and effect is the realm of false pleasure because these pleasures are only temporary, produce much pain in the process of manifesting themselves, and are of a lower intellectual order than the pleasures of the body. Both Plato and Aristotle agree with the idea that pleasure is important, but these are the pleasures of the mind, things that last forever and are fully congruent with the life of a human being, of which the most powerful manifestation is the philosopher. The life of contemplation is paramount in both writers, but ultimately, contemplation is to serve the cause of action.

In Plato's cave allegory, philosopher, despite all his best instincts, must lower himself to go back into the cave and preach to the herd. This is a thankless job, but it is inherently connected with the life of philosophy. Hence, Plato finds himself (unlike Aristotle) in the position of holding that the true lover of pleasure, the philosopher, must, on order to stay true to his craft, live a life of suffering in trying to convince the cattle that their world does not—in fact—exist. Torture and death are the only expected results of this work. Without contradiction then with his basic principles, Plato holds that the earthly life of the true lover of real pleasures is agony. But these labels exist only in an earthly context. True pleasure is the ability to reject the body and its passionate demands. hence, Socrates, regardless of his violent death, is far happier than all the Sophists put together.

Freedom cannot exist in a material universe, since such a universe is totally governed by cause and effect. Immaterial things are essential to freedom, hence to virtue, which is an intellectual vision of the good. While Aristotle does not use such poetic language, the concept is the same in both cases. Immateriality means freedom, and freedom demands that human thinkers begin considering the nature of ethics as apart from the customs and traditions of peoples, and see the nature of the good that may or may not be embedded in them. If man were purely material, ethics would be meaningless, since human beings would be mere playthings of cause and effect. But this is the lot of those who did not know the immaterial nature of Reality. Those who are free are educated: they know the immaterial Reality behind all appearance. This is the most important insight of these two texts, and their central core messages.

Conclusion

What can we say then of these two texts? In both cases, the world of material things has no ethical value. While material things can be used in ethical acts, of themselves, they are mere appearances. While it is well known that both thinkers disagree on the actual nature of immaterial essences, they both agree that they are immaterial, spiritual, of ultimate ethical value and never change: they are the truth that lies behind the facade of appearance (Crisp, 2003).

But what does this have to do with ethics? It is the foundation for ethical reasoning. Ethics makes no sense without freedom, freedom makes no sense unless immaterial essences

exist, and a human soul that is capable of apprehending them, this making it necessary for the soul to be spiritual and immaterial as well (Hyslop, 1911).

Aristotle and Kant need not be seen as opposites. This paper has given an outline of a view showing them as complimentary. By himself, Kant's CI and all it implies is untenable, since it derives from a picture of human psychology that does not exist. On the other hand, Aristotle's moral doctrine is sufficient on its own. However, it is not unreasonable to argue that both writers have shortcomings, and that the logic of Kant can compensate for the endless number of exceptions, probabilities and changing conditions of Aristotle's moral agent. Kant's strength is in this strict, simple approach to the world. Aristotle's strength is to show that collective social norms (called "constitutions") are essential in judging moral acts. Mixing the two is theoretically dangerous since they are not of the same species, but the mutated offspring might be workable in practice.

Aristotle advocated for a society that reflected his experience, study and insight. Moderns adopt ideological maxims before they have any experience in politics. This imposes a view of the world that may or may not be there in reality. Aristotle, on the other hand, saw reason and law not merely in the mind, but in nature and all its components. Our mind, to function properly, is to act in the same lawful manner as one observes in nature. The only distinction is that humans do so freely. Nature does so because it does not reason and is not free. In both cases, however, there is no equality, but there is justice. This justice is based on the order that is rational and can be observed in any natural act.

Freedom is not easy. It does not come naturally to us, even though it is our nature. That is what makes humanity so difficult to study. Man can act against his nature because he is free. He can become habituated to think and act in a certain way, since over time, he has made decisions and seen examples that are harmful. The most rational community is one that minimizes this possibility, but no political system can remove it. The most important thing for the good of the whole, and especially for the good of the ignorant (whether they know it or not) is that the best, most virtuous and truly aristocratic members of the community regulate the action of others. The only right to do this is based on virtue.

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