Vilnius University Press

Contents lists available at Vilnius University Press

Problemos
2023, vol. 104, pp. 86–103

ISSN 1392-1126 eISSN 2424-6158
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15388/Problemos.2023.104.7

The Best Constitution for the Flourishing Lives: Aristotle's Political Theory and Its Implications for Emancipatory Purposes

Andrius Bielskis

Centre for Aristotelian Studies and Critical Theory, Mykolas Romeris University
Kaunas University of Technology
Email andrius.bielskis@mruni.eu
ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3560-5846

Abstract. The aim of this paper is to discuss the issue of the best constitution given Aristotle's account of human flourishing articulated in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. There, Aristotle claims that monarchy is the supreme form of constitution. A similar claim is repeated in *Politics*. The paper argues that these claims sit uneasily with Aristotle's teleological accounts of the *polis*, the citizen, and his discussion of the virtues of the citizen and the good man in *Politics*. Given Aristotle's philosophical definition of the state as "an association of equals for the sake of the best possible life" and his notion that "the best is happiness, and that consists in excellence and its perfect actualization and its employment", and Aristotle's argument on the relationship between the good man and the good citizen, this paper concludes that the best constitution is *politeia*. Yet, simply to argue so is not enough if we are to rescue Aristotle from his inconsistencies and his claims on "natural inequalities". Finally, a more radical interpretation of Aristotle is outlined, which rejects Aristotle's separation between the *oikos* and the *polis* and argues that the verticality of the former is philosophically arbitrary and contradicts the revolutionary implications of Aristotle's normative teleology.
Keywords: Aristotle; human flourishing; *politeia*; the best *polis*; excellence (*aretē*); citizen; the common good.

Geriausia politinė santvarka klestinčiam gyvenimui: Aristotelio politinė teorija ir jos reikšmė emancipacinei politikai

Santrauka. Šio straipsnio tikslas – aptarti geriausios santvarkos problemą Aristotelio politinėje teorijoje, atsižvelgiant į *Nikomacho etikoje* pateiktą žmogiško klestėjimo sampratą. Joje Aristotelis teigia, kad monarchija yra geriausia santvarka (1160a35–36). Šis teiginys pakartojamas ir *Politikoje* (1288a15–18). Straipsnyje aiškinama, kodėl šie Aristotelio teiginiai prieštarauja *Politikoje* aptartoms teleologinėms *polio*, piliečio ir gero piliečio vs. gero žmogaus dorybių sampratoms. Atsižvelgiant į Aristotelio filosofinį valstybės apibrėžimą, jog ji yra „lygių asmenų susivienijimas dėl geriausio įmanomo gyvenimo", ir teiginį, kad „geriausia yra laimė, o tai susideda iš tobulumo, tobulo jos aktualizavimo ir panaudojimo", be to, jo argumentus apie gero žmogaus ir gero piliečio santykį, straipsnyje teigiama, kad geriausia politinė santvarka yra *politėja*, o ne monarchija. Tačiau tokios interpretacijos nepakanka, jei norime išgelbėti Aristotelį nuo jo nenuoseklumo ir filosofiškai abejotinų teiginių apie „prigimtinę nelygybę". Siūloma radikalesnė Aristotelio interpretacija, atmetanti šio filosofo ontologinę skirtį tarp *oikos* ir *polio*. Teigiama, kad Aristotelio socialinių santykių šeimoje-ūkyje (*oikos*) vertikalumas yra filosofiškai nepagrįstas ir prieštarauja revoliuciniams šio filosofo normatyvinės teleologijos aspektams ir jos radikalioms implikacijoms.
Pagrindiniai žodžiai: Aristotelis, žmogiškas klestėjimas, *politeia*, geriausias *polis*, tobulumas (*aretē*), pilietybė, bendrasis gėris

Acknowledgement. This research was funded by a grant (No. S-MIP-21-48) issued by the Research Council of Lithuania. I am grateful to Tony Burns, Eleni Leontsini and Kelvin Knight for their critical comments on the first draft of this paper.

Received: 25/07/2023. **Accepted:** 06/10/2023

Introduction

There is a lively debate among interpreters of Aristotle as to which form of political constitution he considered to be the best.[1] Although this debate is primarily of importance to Aristotelian scholars, the discussion of the best political constitution – or, to put it in Aristotle's terms, the best political way of life – is also significant for political theorists. Liberal political theory has been shy in reflecting on substantive goods as key constitutional principles of political life. Prioritising rights over the good, it emphasises individual liberty over normative-teleological attempts to conceptualise a good – let alone best – political way of life. On the other hand, the conservative-republican political theory of Hannah Arendt and, more recently, Thomas S. Hibbs, appropriated Aristotelian teleology to reaffirm, rather than correct, his exclusivist-elitist conceptualisation of politics. Arendt was a pioneer of this appropriation, which inspired the republican separation of *oikonomia* (the private sphere of labour and work) from politics as an activity of the virtuous few.[2] The conservative reading of Aristotle is well founded in the original text: *Politics* does provide a sharp separation between the life of the *oikos* and the life of the *polis*. What we need instead, however, is a progressive, radical interpretation of Aristotle.[3] Such interpretation would be based on our attempts to dismantle Aristotle's inconsistencies and dismiss the outdated aspects of his political theory, thus freeing its revolutionary potential for contemporary theoretical debates on the nature of political life.

A note on the word "interpretation" is important here. Friedrich Nietzsche, when discussing his assertion that truth is yet another ascetic ideal in the *Genealogy of Morals*, writes that the key characteristics of interpretation are "violating, emending, abbreviating, letting go, filling in the cracks, composing, forging, and the other actions which belong to the nature of all interpretation" (Nietzsche, 2009: 126). I have argued elsewhere that Nietzsche's genealogical account of interpretation as misinterpretation is radically different from interpretation understood within the tradition of hermeneutics, thus it should be avoided when

[1] Although this debate is ongoing and positions vary, there are two major camps: those who argue that monarchy (and aristocracy) is the best form of constitution (e.g., Newman, 1887; Newell, 1987; Vander Waerdt 1985; Keyt 1991; Lockwood 2006, Inamura 2012; Buekenhout 2018) and those who favour *politeia* as "good" democracy (e.g., Lintott, 2017: 46; Kraut, 2002: 357–361; Everson, 1988: 90; Rowe, 2005: 386–387; Stark, 1965; Frank 2005). The closest to my reading of Aristotle's account of best constitution is C. C. W. Taylor argument that, given "the ideal *phronimos* is the *politikos*", "the citizens of a polis must participate in its government; every *polis*, not merely the best, must be a participatory democracy" (Taylor 1999: 242).

[2] For an illuminating critique of Hannah Arendt's reading of Aristotle see Trott 2017.

[3] Of course, the attempt to read and appropriate Aristotle for the purpose of progressive political theory is not new. Probably the best known is Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach (Nussbaum 1988, 1992) in its appropriation of Aristotle to argue for a non-relative account of virtues and thick non-culturally specific notion of the objective human good. Applying her capabilities approach she famously argued (Nussbaum 2020) that Aristotle's claims about common use of property, the state's provision of citizens sustenance, and their equal claims for ruling in turn position Aristotle closer to Marx and Scandinavian social democracy. Alasdair MacIntyre, to whom I am most indebted, has provided a more radical appropriation of Aristotle in his more recent work (MacIntyre 1999) than Martha Nussbaum. While claiming that Aristotle's conceptions of political community (*polis*) and politics are incompatible with the politics of liberal democracies, he invoked Marx's notion of communist society's formula of justice to substantiate his Aristotelian account of the collective flourishing in a communist like political community (MacIntyre 1999: 129-30).

applied to our interpretative attempts to distil positive insights from an ancient text (Bielskis 2005). In this paper, interpretation will be understood as a form of philosophical reading of an original text whereby some philosophically irrelevant textual evidence is ignored, especially those aspects which contradict or are unessential to the conceptual-structural core of the text. Such a reading requires both close textual analysis as well as the ability to separate what is most important philosophically from what contradicts the methodological-philosophical backbone. In Aristotle's political theory, the latter is normative teleology – his philosophical claims that the *polis* exists by nature, and that nature is the end and the best – while his claims regarding women, slaves, and workers are rooted, among other things, in his class prejudice.[4] I follow Alasdair MacIntyre, arguably today's most important Aristotelian moral and political theorist, and his dictum that contemporary Aristotelians should rescue Aristotle from himself (MacIntyre, 2016: 86). Yet such a rescue is not enough if we are to appropriate Aristotle as a truly progressive political theorist. What is needed is a radical interpretation – and possibly misinterpretation – of Aristotle that pushes his normative teleology to the point of showing that it can be used for emancipatory purposes. This paper is a small step in the direction of this appropriation.

I will argue that, despite Aristotle's claim in *The Nicomachean Ethics* that monarchy is the supreme form of constitution, Aristotle's normative definition of the state, together with his conceptions of citizenship and political rule and his critique of radical inequality in *Politics*, allow us to assert that the best political form of communal life is *politeia* – the constitution under which the majority of citizens rule and are ruled in turn for the sake of the common good due to which collective human flourishing becomes possible. However, we need to push Aristotle's political philosophy further to argue that his sharp separation of *oikos* and *polis*, together with his arguments for the verticality of the social relations within the former, are both philosophically arbitrary and contradict his philosophical-methodological conception of teleology. Thus, the main aim in this paper is to present a consistent argument of what I take to be Aristotle's normative argument for the best constitution judged from the point of view of his conception of human flourishing. Here, "normative" means that the main question is not what Aristotle's texts are saying about the best constitution, but what, given his main theoretical arguments on *aretē*, political rule, and citizens' participation, the logical implications of Aristotle's arguments are concerning the best constitution. My primary purpose, therefore, is to provide a particular reading of Aristotle to appropriate him as a critical theorist. The latter is the task of a philosopher seeking intellectual resources in the history of philosophy to construct philosophical arguments that enable us to address what is truly important today.

[4] See Josiah Ober's outstanding discussion on Aristotle as one of the critics of Athenian democracy and his intellectually uneasy and potentially contradictory exclusion of *bonausoi* (artisans and merchants) and *thētes* (menial laborers) from the life of the *polis*. On the Marxist critique of Aristotle's conception of natural slaves as the ideology of slave-owning society, see El Nabolsy (2019) and, to a certain extent, Schofield (1987). Schofield, in what has now become a classical interpretation of Aristotle's account natural slaves, provided a more balanced interpretation, arguing that the account could not be understood merely as an ideological concept. That is, Aristotle's does not appeal to his usual method of *endoxa* and it has some limited explanatory power. For a scholarly, neutral reconstruction of Aristotle's argument on natural slaves, see Heath (2008).

1. *The Nicomachean Ethics*: Is Monarchy the Best Constitution?

In Book 8, chapter 10 of *The Nicomachean Ethics* (hereafter *NE*), Aristotle claims that the supreme form of constitution is monarchy:

> There are three kinds of constitutions, and an equal number of deviant-forms –perversions, as it were, of them. The constitutions are monarchy, aristocracy, and thirdly that which is based on a property qualification, which it seems appropriate to call timocratic, though most people are wont to call it politeia. The best of these is monarchy, the worst is timocracy (1160a31-35).[5]

The deviations of these constitutions, we are told, are tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy.[6] Tyranny is the deviation from monarchy; oligarchy is the degenerate constitution of aristocracy; while democracy is the deviation of timocracy. It is worth noting that the classification of constitutions in *Politics* (III.6) is phrased differently: instead of timocracy, Aristotle writes exclusively about *politeia*, in fact the word "timocracy" is not mentioned in *Politics* at all. In his theory of constitutional degenerations, Plato conceptualises timocracy as the second-best constitution after his ideal *polis* and argues that its governing principle is the love of victory (*φιλόνικον*) and the love of honour (*φιλότιμον*) (*Republic*, VIII, 545a-550b). Given that Aristotle knew this conceptualisation, it is not entirely clear in which sense timocracy is synonymous with *politeia*. The word *politeia* means both the good form of democracy, where citizens rule and are in turn ruled for the common good, *and* "constitution" (and, therefore, arguably *the* constitution). Yet the conceptual context of the *NE* is instructive here. We learn from Book I (the same claim is repeated in *The Eudemian Ethics* I.4) that there are three candidates for a eudaimonious life: the philosophical life, the political life, and the hedonistic life (Aristotle dismisses the life of acquiring wealth on the grounds that wealth is an external good which cannot be an end in itself). Thus, since the life of politics is driven by *philotimon* (a claim often repeated by Aristotle) and the need to do noble deeds, we can reasonably suggest that *politeia* – the timocratic version of democracy where the many rather than few take part in politics – is the most *political* constitution.

To substantiate his claim that monarchy is the best, Aristotle argues that a king is a man who is "self-sufficient (*αὐτάρκης*) to himself and excels his subjects in the good (*ἀγαθός*)" (*NE,*1160b4). *Agathos* here means both moral excellence (*aretē*)[7] and other internal and external goods (noble birth, beauty, friends, wealth, etc.). Being so, "such [a] man needs nothing further", thus "he will not look to his own interests but to those of his subjects" (1160b6). Therefore, such an individual *should* rule, and their rule will

[5] David Ross's revised translation of *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle 1980) will be used in this paper.

[6] For an alternative interpretation of Aristotle's classification of constitutions see Mogens Herman Hansen (2020) who argues that books 4-6 of *Politics* provide us with more down-to-earth and in fact more accurate classification of constitutions in terms of democracy *vs* oligarchy.

[7] Although *aretē* is customarily translated as virtue, a more accurate translation, especially vis-à-vis Aristotle's function argument in the *NE* I.7, is excellence. For a discussion on the controversies of the translation of *aretē*, see Bielskis 2017: 85–86.

represent the supreme form of political life. Tyranny is the very contrary of kingship: a tyrant is someone who pursues only their own interests, and this represents the worst form of degenerate-constitution as "the contrary of the best is the worst" (1160b9). Aristotle's conclusion, therefore, is that the best of these six constitutions is monarchy while the worst is tyranny, which, following our conclusion on timocracy, is also the least political of them (that is, by treating his subjects as mere subordinates, a tyrant governs a city akin to how a despot governs their slaves within an *oikos*).

A similar claim is repeated in *Politics* (1284a3-b2; 1284b22-34),[8] where Aristotle writes that one who is (or several persons who are) pre-eminently superior in excellence (*ἀρετῆς ὑπερβολήν*) should either be ostracised (which often happens in democracies) or else should permanently rule as a monarch (Aristotle 2009). Given that excellence is the core principle of ruling, it would be unjust to ostracise such a person. A magnanimous individual, outstanding in excellence, is beyond law – they are a law in themselves. According to Aristotle, to rule over and legislate for such an individual would be like ruling over Zeus. "The only alternative left – and this would also appear to be the natural course – is for all others to pay a willing obedience to the man of outstanding goodness. Such men will accordingly be the permanent kings of their cities" (1284b30-34).[9]

Yet, from the assertion that the best individual ought to rule does not follow that monarchy is the best constitution. It is not inconceivable that, ideally, if the many are of supreme excellence, then they together should rule, and such constitutions would be better than the rule of a single excellent individual simply based on quantity: a better state is one where the many, rather than one, are excellent. Thus, our preliminary conclusion is that there is no explanation provided in the *NE* VIII.10 (nor anywhere else in the text) as to why monarchy is considered the supreme form of constitution. Equally, there is no argument as to why, of the three good constitutions, timocracy is considered the worst. Aristotle simply asserts that monarchy is the best and timocracy, or *politeia*, is the worst. His argument in *Politics* on the superiority of excellence is more convincing – indeed, the excellent should rule. Yet this argument relies on Aristotle's dubious ideal of *megalopsychos* – the great souled man – in the *NE* IV.2-3, the ideal which contradicts his own conceptions of political life and the *polis*, whose founding elements are the equality and freedom of citizens as its active members. To this issue we turn now.

[8] I will use Richard Stalley's revised Erenest Barker's translation of *Politics* (Aristotle 2009).

[9] It is reasonable to argue that this apparent tension between monarchy as best constitution and *politeia* is dissolved if we look at it from the point of view of *Politics* 3.17-18: given that the virtuous should rule, monarchy would be more fitting when there is a single individual of supreme excellence surpassing the rest, while *politeia* will be the best when many citizens are similarly virtues. Yet, as Carol Atack argued, Aristotle's discussion on *pambasileia* (virtue monarchy) is more complex than what Aristotle seems to be saying in 3.17-18. It is a reaction to the Greek discourse, including mythical narratives, of kingship whereby kings achieve cosmic "political ordering and unification" but does supports it himself because of his emphasis on citizenry in the bulk of book 3 (which argues, as we will see, for participatory conception of the citizen who rules and ruled in turn) and because there was a lack of historical examples when citizens surrendered their sovereignty to the supremely virtuous individual (Atack 2020: 188-191).

2. The Definition of the *Polis*

Aristotle's definition of the *polis* is instructive here as it applies conceptual tension to the above claims on monarchy:

> The *polis* is an association of alike (*ὁμοίων*) and its object is the best and highest life possible. The highest good (*τὸ ἄριστον*) is happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*) and that consists in perfect (*τέλειος*) actualization (*ἐνέργεια*) and employment (*χρῆσις*) of virtues (*ἀρετῆς*) (*Pol*, 1328a36-38).[10]

First, this definition is normative. It relies on Aristotle's conception of the good and solicits our evaluative judgments. Not every existing *polis* will comply with the criterion of well-being. Similarly, not every association of equals formed for some good (e.g., commercial success or military defence) will constitute a *polis*. Thus, *sensu stricto*, only those communities which actualise collective well-being can be Aristotelian city-states. The claim that the *polis* exists for the best life possible (*eu zēn*) rather than merely for life (*zēn*) is emphasised throughout *Politics* but is especially central to Book I where Aristotle contrasts the *polis* with the *oikos*. Second, the *polis* consists of those who are alike – of equals – and, consequently, rule within it is horizontal rather than vertical, as is the case in the household. The horizontality of political rule – "the rule of the stateman is rule over freemen and equals (*ἴσων*)" (1255b20) – is therefore an essential aspect to Aristotle's definition of the *polis*. [11]

Yet this equality is precisely what is missing in a monarchy. As observed, moral excellence, nobility, and other goods set a magnificent king apart from other mortals. Of course, a good monarch can treat their subordinates – the ruled (*hoi archomenoi*) – as if they were equals. A king can assign administrative and judicial tasks to their subjects, but in as much as they are subordinates, they will always be unequal. Furthermore, when Aristotle claims that political rule is the rule of equals, he contrasts it with monarchical rule in the household (1255b19), a rule which he sees as non-political. In this sense, we can once again conclude that monarchy, where the morally excellent rules permanently, is less political than rule within a community where citizens are equal and rule in turns. This conclusion can be strengthened via an examination of Aristotle's conceptualisation of citizenship.

---

[10] E. Barker & R. Stalley's translation is revised here using the original edited by D. Ross (Aristotelis 1957). *Aretēs* is rendered as "virtues" to emphasise the moral and plural aspects of excellence.

[11] I have discussed Aristotle's normative conception of the *polis* extensively elsewhere (Bielskis 2006; 2017: 86-91; 2020: 44-50), thus I will not repeat these arguments here. Again, there is a lot of outstanding literature on Aristotle's conception of the *polis* one of which is, no doubt, M. H. Hansen's (2020) *Reflection's on Aristotle's 'Politics'*. However, Hansen's claim that one of Aristotle's two definitions provided in *Politics* (the definition in book 1 as opposed to the second definition in book 3 where the *polis* is the community of all citizens) – "[a]s an aggregate of *oikiai*, the *polis* is an economic community rather than a political community" (Hansen 2020: 24) – is undoubtably wrong. Aristotle's definition of the *polis* as the highest form of community, which is ontologically distinctive from *oikia* and *kōmē* both of which *the polis* encompasses, is *political* through and through in book 1. According to my interpretation, there is no inconsistency between the conceptualizations of the *polis* in book 1 and book 3, furthermore, the definition of the *polis* quoted above (which we find in book 7) is the synthesis of both definitions we find in book 1 and book 3: it culminates in the claim that the *polis* is an association of alike (and only alike could be *politai* (book 3)) for the sake of the best flourishing life possible (book 1).

3. The Definition of the Citizen

As "a *polis* is a certain number of citizens (*politai*)", Aristotle proceeds to discuss the nature of citizens and citizenship in Book III of *Politics*. Scholars generally agree that Book III, especially its chapters on the relationship between the virtues of the good man and the good citizen, is central to Aristotle's political theory (e.g., Kraut, 2002: 358). Aristotle dismisses outright the notion that a citizen is "one by virtue of residence in a given place" (1275a7), or that someone is a citizen of a place because they were born there. In that case, foreigners and slaves would be citizens as well. Equally, he dismisses the principle (which later became known as the principle of *jus sanguinis*) of being "born of citizen parents on both sides" (1275b22). This is because it is impossible to apply the principle of descent to first inhabitants or founding members of a *polis* (1275b32-33). Hence, Aristotle's definition of the citizen:

> The citizen (*πολίτης*) in this strict sense is best defined by one criterion that he shares in the administration of justice and in the holding of office (*μετέχειν κρίσεως καὶ ἀρχῆς*) (*Pol*, III.1.1275a22-23).

This definition is important for several reasons. First, as is the case with the other main concepts of Aristotle's political theory, citizenship is conceptualised in terms of activity; in terms of *ergon* (characteristic function), rather than in terms of rights. To be a citizen is to take part in ruling (*archein*) and in judicial decisions (*krisis*). Second, even if citizens and their functions are different in different constitutions, this definition implies that citizenship is a peculiarity, first and foremost, of democracy. Indeed, Aristotle is explicit on this: we "may thus conclude that the citizen of our definition is particularly and especially the citizen of a democracy" (1275a5-6).

The notion of citizenship introduced in Book III allows Aristotle to further specify his definition of a *polis* as a form of association of citizens bound by a constitution (1276a1-2). It is this that gives identity to a *polis*: if the constitution of a *polis* changes – a democratic city becomes an oligarchy – it ceases to be the same state. Thus, if there are different constitutions, then under different constitutions – different institutionally established ways of life – the citizen and the key characteristics of the citizen will be different as well. It is here that Aristotle turns to discussing the issue of what constitutes a good citizen.

Aristotle advances the following thesis: if the citizen is different under different constitutions, then there is not and cannot be a singular definition of what constitutes a good citizen. Thus, it is a relative concept. The only underlying feature of good citizens is to keep "the safety of their association; and this association consists in the constitution" (1276b29-30). The preservation of a particular constitution is, therefore, the key function of the good citizen. Under good constitutions – whether monarchy, aristocracy, or *politeia* – the concept of the good citizen will mean different things, and it will be the same under deviant constitutions. These differences are both qualitative and quantitative. Under a constitution where the majority rules, citizens will take a more active role in political and judicial decision-making compared to citizens under constitutions where one or the

minority rules while the rest obey. The qualitative aspect concerns Aristotle's claim that each constitution has a typical citizen. We find this claim regarding a typical individual with a type of character that corresponds to a given *polis*, of course, in Plato's *Republic* (e.g., 544a). Similarly, Aristotle argues that forms of education should correspond to different forms of constitution, and that the

> type of character appropriate to a constitution tends to sustain that constitution as well as to bring it into being. The democratic type of character creates and sustains democracy; the oligarchic type of character creates and sustains oligarchy; and in every case the best type of character will always tend to produce a better form of constitution" (*Pol*, 1337a13-19).

Thus, it follows that the good citizen will have radically different key character traits in each constitution.[12] However, Aristotle never tells us what the specific character traits of the six different constitutions are.[13]

4. The Excellence of the Good Man *versus* the Excellence of the Good Citizen

Following his teleology, Aristotle conceptualises "man" and "citizen" in terms of their corresponding excellences (*aretai*). To avoid the relativism inscribed in his account of the good citizen – "the excellence of the citizen must be an excellence relative to the constitution" (1276b30-31) – Aristotle juxtaposes it against the excellence of the good man, which is "a single perfect excellence" (*ἀρετὴν εἶναι τὴν τελείαν* (1276b34)). The relationship between the two is the subject matter of Book III chapter 4, which, once again, is key to the whole of *Politics*. The first is less demanding, while the second is phrased in absolute terms: "it is possible to be a good citizen without possessing the excellence by which one is a good man" (1276b34-35). Aristotle immediately specifies that his discussion

[12] Richard Kraut argues that Aristotle's notion of the good citizen has a universalistic and normative aspect in it, and that tying it to a particular constitution is misleading. His argument, therefore, relies on the emphasis on the words *agathon* and *aretē*, which signify some objective goodness: it cannot be the case that a good citizen under the worst constitution – tyranny – would be solely bad in the sense of being loyal to the regime. A good citizen in a deviant constitution keeps "what is bad from becoming worse", and "must do what he can to prevent it from moving towards its pure form" (Kraut, 2002: 373). Although there may be some truth in Kraut's reading, it contradicts what Aristotle says in the citation quoted. More importantly, Kraut's account of the good citizen is not convincing because it is separated from Aristotle's account of "the excellence of the good man". That is, because the excellence of the good citizen is relative and depends on a particular constitution, Aristotle introduces and juxtaposes it against the excellence of the good man as a normative and absolute term.

[13] There is nothing on this issue in *Politics* nor in the *NE*. However, for the sake of argument, it is worth speculating. Following what Aristotle says on each constitution, it is reasonable to claim that the "ideal" character of tyranny as the worst constitution would be the lickspittle, the fawner. In an oligarchy, this character would be the admirer of property, wealth, and status; while the proponent of licence (as a form of radical freedom accompanied by the denial of legitimate authority when, as Plato argued in the *Republic* (563a), teachers are afraid of their students while students disregard their teachers) may be the character of the worst kind of democracy. To speculate about the characters of good constitutions is more difficult. It is not clear, for example, how an average citizen in a monarchy would behave. Would they be the kind of person who unconditionally trusts the virtuous monarch? A person who has legitimate opinions, but is not prudent enough? In an aristocracy, would they be a wellborn yet virtuous nobleman? In a *politeia*, a virtuous, free spirit?

on the relationship between the two will be understood "with particular reference to the best constitution" (1276b36). In this way, he moves away from the discussion on the relationship between the two excellences in deviant constitutions and instead focuses on the best. He then claims that it is impossible for a *polis* to be composed entirely of good men and that, given that the *polis* is a plurality and there are different tasks in a city to be performed, each citizen will perform a particular function. It follows that "there cannot be a single excellence common to all citizens" (1277a10) and that "the excellence of a citizen cannot be identical with that of a good man" (1277a1), even though the "excellence of a *good citizen* must belong to all citizens, because that is the condition necessary for the city being the best city" (1277a2).

This is not the case with the excellence of the good man as it is the single perfect excellence. The excellence of the good man is exercised in and needed for ruling: "a good ruler is a good man and possesses practical wisdom, while the citizen does not need to have practical wisdom" (1277a15-16). This is instructive: for Aristotle and for the Greeks, the excellence of a human being lies in ruling. As the old saying has it, power shows what kind of man one is[14]. It is in ruling that the excellence of the good man is fully exercised: we "may thus assume that the excellence of the good ruler (*ἀρετὴ ἄρχοντός τε ἀγαθοῦ*) is identical with that of a good man (*ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ*)" (1277a20-21). So, to be a good human being one needs to know how to rule well, for which practical wisdom (*phronesis*) is needed. Yet to learn how to rule one needs to be ruled first (1277b12). It is in this respect that people hold in esteem the capacity to rule and to be ruled well (1277a25-26). But since citizens *both* rule *and* obey, while the excellence of the good man is in ruling *only*, the excellence of the *good* man and the good citizen cannot be held in the same esteem. There are different types of ruling: for example, the rule of *despotes* within the household is the rule of slaves and servants. Such rule requires less virtue: one needs less practical wisdom to order around servants than to rule free citizens. Aristotle calls the rule of the free and equal *political rule* (*πολιτικὴν ἀρχήν*): "rule of the sort which is exercised over those who are similar in birth to the ruler, and are similarly free" (1277b7-8). Only in political rule and by virtue of ruling *only*, therefore, that the excellence of the good man and the excellence of the good citizen coincide: when citizens rule (but *not* when they are ruled) they need the virtue of practical wisdom (*phronesis*). As Aristotle puts it: "practical wisdom (*φρόνησις*) is the only form of excellence which is peculiar to the ruler" (1277b25-26). Now, the excellence of citizens when they are being ruled as subjects (*ἀρχομένου*) is not *phronesis*, but right opinion (*δόξα ἀληθής*).

Here our preliminary conclusions can be drawn. The excellence of the good man coincides with the excellence of the good ruler which is *phronesis*. The excellence of the good citizen when they rule coincides with that of the good man – *phronesis* – while when they are ruled, right opinion is enough. Yet political rule is "the sort of rule which

[14] Aristotle mentions this saying himself when he claims that "the saying of Bias is thought to be true, that 'rule will show the man'; for a ruler is necessary in relation to other men, and a member of a society" (*NE*.V.I.1130a1-2). The same dictum – "if you want to test a man's character, give him power" – was famously repeated by Abraham Lincoln too.

the ruler must begin to learn by being ruled" (1277b9). This is important: by claiming so, Aristotle recognizes the essential reciprocity and mutuality of ruling as the key political principle: to rule well one learns from being ruled well. Thus, the political rule of the equal and free, when citizens rule each other in turn, is conceptually linked to the general educational principle that we learn to rule well (as well as to excel at other meaningful activities) first by being ruled or by learning from others. Therefore, the only constitution where political rule of this sort is possible on the largest scale – that is, when applied to all citizens – is *politeia*.

5. *Politeia* as the Best Constitution

Given that the virtue of the good citizen and the good man coincide in political rule, and that political rule can only be fully accommodated and exercised in *politeia*, it follows that *politeia* is the best constitution. This claim is true only formally. It is not that in every political community all citizens who rule and are ruled in turn are good human beings in the specifically Aristotelian sense. Rather, *politeia* as a constitutional arrangement allows all citizens to rule, and because ruling is an essential activity for exercising practical wisdom (which is the key excellence of being a good human), all citizens can *potentially* become good human beings. Furthermore, Aristotle's conception of citizenship can only be fully actualized in *politeia* as the correct form of democracy. Once again, a citizen is someone who takes an active part in the governance and the courts of a *polis*, thus the constitution of the *polis* ought to be structured in a way so as to accommodate the activity of being a citizen. Although monarchies and aristocracies can accommodate the participation of some citizens in some of the functions of the governance of the *polis*, only in *politeia* – the institutionalization of political rule exercised for the common good of all citizens – can this be realized fully. Thus, *politeia* rather than monarchy is a more ambitious form of the best *polis*. The normative definition of the *polis* is also instructive here: as we saw, it is an association of alike, and it is the horizontality of the relationships of these alike individuals, among other things, that makes them political. In this respect, aristocracies and monarchies are less political than democracies: the relationships between rulers and the ruled are more vertical in monarchies and aristocracies, and there is greater separation within them between rulers and the ruled. Finally, the rule of the free and virtuous – the horizontality of political rule within well-functioning democracies – is more honourable than the despotic rule of the unfree (or the monarchical rule of loyal subjects as second-class citizens). Aristotle is explicit about this: "ruling over freemen is nobler (*καλλίων*) and more conjoined with excellence than ruling despotically" (1333b27-28). Thus, the political rule of the free and equal makes those who rule more morally excellent than the rulers of loyal subjects.

We find another set of arguments in favour of the political rule of the many in Aristotle's discussion of justice and sovereignty in chapters 9–13 of Book III. By claiming that "justice is concerned with people; and a just distribution is one in which there is proportion between the things distributed and those to whom they are distributed" (1280a16-18) and

that the "good in the sphere of politics is justice" (1282b17), he proceeds to consider who should be sovereign in the *polis*. Aristotle acknowledges that the claims to sovereignty of the rich (*πλουσίους*), the best/good (*ἐπιεικεῖς*), and the many (*πλῆθος*) have, in each case, some legitimacy. However, if any of these groups were to claim exclusive sovereignty, their conception of justice would be partial at best. Aiming at less partiality, Aristotle considers and prefers the idea that the law should be made sovereign, but that "the law itself may incline either towards oligarchy or towards democracy" (1281a37-38). Besides, as the law is general, whereas politics requires concrete decisions, the question as to who should rule remains open.

Despite several repetitions, Aristotle's argument is that the many rather than the one or the few should rule. He acknowledges that the case can be made that the absolute kingship of a family or a single individual outstandingly superior in merit is desirable (1288a15-16), but he nonetheless argues that it is better when more are involved in political decision-making. This is the case not least because a single individual is more prone to becoming corrupted than a numerous body (1286a31-34), but also because the many, given proper education, can deliberate and judge more effectively than the one or the few (1283a41). Chapter 11 of Book III is devoted to the discussion of whether it is more desirable for the best or the many to rule. Aristotle's conclusion is that while each citizen may individually be of an insufficient quality, it is likely that together they will collectively surpass the quality of the best few or the best individual (1281b1-3). Here, the argument is qualitative: the many will surpass the best few in terms of their collective expertise (and, presumably, in the excellence of *phronesis*). Yet Aristotle also argues that justice requires that the general body of citizens share in the deliberative and judicial functions of the city, and that there is a risk in not letting them do so because such a city will become full of enemies (1281b30-31), whereas political friendship is essential for a well-functioning *polis*. The claim that ruling and being ruled in turn is an essential characteristic of the true *polis* is also emphasised in Aristotle's critique of Plato in Book II (1261a30-b5).

Although Aristotle moves to discuss the best possible constitution in a set of given circumstances in Book IV (thus, as Aristotelian scholars suggest (e.g., Kraut, 2002), Book VII conceptually and thematically follows Book III), what he says on the middle element of the *polis* in chapter 11 is also relevant for our discussion on *politeia* as the best constitution[15]. Here he considers the best constitution and the best way of life for the majority of Greek states, rather than what is best ideally. Yet his argument relies on his conception of *aretē* as a mean between two extremes, hence his thesis that "the best way of life is one which consists in a mean (*μεσότης*)" (1295a37-38) has a universal aspect to it. Given that there are three elements of all cities – the very rich, the very poor, and those between the two – the most desirable and politically stable condition is when the social element in the middle dominates. Once again, this claim should not only be understood in terms of Aristotle's political realism – that is, that the most stable political communities are those where there is

[15] On the relationship between the ideal constitution of the *polis* discussed in Book VII and Aristotle's account of the second-best constitution in Book IV see Yack, 1985, and Leontsini, 2007: 105-106.

a strong middle class. It is also normative: "moderation and the mean are always the best", and those who exercise moderation in both acquiring wealth and enjoying it are "the most ready to listen to reason" (1295b4-6). The contrary is said of the two extremes:

> Those who are over-handsome, over-strong, over-noble, or over-wealthy, and, at the opposite extreme, those who are over-poor, over-weak, or utterly ignoble, find it hard to follow the lead of reason. Those in the first class tend more to arrogance and serious offences [while] those in the second tend too much to criminality and petty offences; and most wrongdoing arises either from arrogance or criminality (1295b7-12).

Furthermore, those who enjoy too many advantages (wealth, power, etc.) are incapable of obeying from childhood, as they have been "nurtured in luxury" and "never acquire a habit of obedience",[16] while those who greatly suffer from a lack of external goods "are far too mean and poor-spirited" (1295b13-18). He concludes that, in this type of city:

> There are those who obey, as if they were slaves, and, on the other hand, there are those who are ignorant how to obey any sort of authority and only know how to rule as if they were masters. The result is a city, not of freemen, but only of slaves and masters: a state of envy on the one side and of contempt on the other. Nothing could be further removed from the spirit of friendship or of a political association (1295b19-25).

Being rooted in the excellence of moderation as an essential prerequisite for practical rationality, this damning condemnation of radical inequality can be used against Aristotle's own unfounded assertion that monarchy is the best form of constitution and his ethical ideal of *megalopsuchia*. His discussion on friendship (*philia*), including political friendship, is based on the thesis that friendship presupposes reciprocity and requires a form of equality which "seems to be characteristic of friendship" (*NE*,1158b28). Friendship can indeed exist between people who are unequal (e.g., between parents and children), but different merits of and reasons for friendship allow a sense of equality to arise between friends. When there is a great difference in wealth and excellence – as in the case of a monarchy between a king and his inferior subjects – friendship cannot exist (*NE*,1159a1-2). Thus, even though monarchies cannot be compared to tyrannies, where tyrants treat their subjects as slaves, there is a form of alienation between a king and an ordinary citizen. Furthermore, the emphasis on the political mean as the principle of moderation contradicts Aristotle's ideal of *megalopshychos*, the magnanimous rich individual who is not able to acknowledge what they have received from others and is unable or unwilling to be ruled. By defining citizenship as an activity, the *polis* in terms of equals, and by claiming that "the excellence of the good man and that of the good citizen of the best *polis* must be one and the same" (1288a38-39), we can firmly conclude that the constitution of the best *polis* can be only *politeia* – a form of democracy where citizens are well educated and rule in turn for the sake of the common good.

[16] Perhaps the best modern example that immediately comes to mind here is Donald Trump.

6. The Best Political Regime for the Flourishing Human Life

Aristotle devotes Book VII to the discussion of the best constitution or, as Jill Frank (2009) put it, the polis of our prayers. Aristotle builds his theoretical account of the best political regime on what has been said in Book I, II, III, and, more importantly, in his *Ethics*. Here, the element of normative teleology in his political theory is fully articulated. Following the *NE*, Aristotle argues that "the best way of life which is most desirable for all men and in all cases", both individually and collectively, is "the life of *aretē* sufficiently equipped with the resources needed to share in the activity of excellence"[17] (1323b41-1324a2). Aristotle dismisses the life of power and imperial might as a candidate for the life of excellence based on his political thesis that a life of imperial foreign expansion leads to domestic tyranny. The life of imperial conquest also contradicts the ethical principle of moderation (*sōphrosunē*).

The emphasis on moderation mirrors his arguments in Book I, where Aristotle distinguishes between *oikonomia* (household management), two types of *chrēmatistikē* (the art of acquisition), and *kapēlikē* (trade), and claims that true wealth (*alēthinos ploutos*) has a natural limit since its purpose lies in the variety of its use-values. Thus, wealth acquisition for the sake of exchange-value, *chrēmatistikē* for the sake of *kapēlikē* and *nomisma* (money), is both unnatural and unethical – not least because it changes our perception of what a good life is about. It subordinates individual and collective life to the life of limitless wealth-acquisition, where wealth is seen in terms of pure-exchange value – of *nomisma*. Then, in the life of a *polis* (e.g., an oligarchic *polis*), their "state of mind is concerned with [mere] living, rather than living well (*eu zēn*)" (1257b41). The life of the *polis* then becomes subordinated to the life of *chrēmatistikē* as limitless wealth acquisition. This is the life, we might add, of contemporary liberal democracies which, amid ecological crises, have now realised that their way of life – the life of the banality of economic despotism at the expense of rational political deliberations on what is truly best for us – have brought about a near collapse of our natural world. So, the best way of political life for Aristotle is the life of excellence – the life of non-alienated meaningful human activities guided by practical wisdom and moderation. Rational enquiry – contemplation, to use Aristotle's term – has a priority in a well-structured Aristotelian political community. We may dismiss Aristotle's argument that the activity of philosophical contemplation, in as much as it allows us to transcend mere human life, makes our lives more blessed (*makarios*) and divine. Yet if by philosophical contemplation we mean systematic rational enquiry into the nature of things, then his claim that philosophy is of the highest importance and contributes greatly to the eudaimonious life of a *polis* becomes less dubious. Indeed, the life of theoretical enquiry, first for its own sake and then for the sake of what it can bring to us, ought to have an essential place in any flourishing political community.

For such a political community to exist, its citizens ought to be properly educated – they must be "absolutely just, rather than ones who are merely just in relation to some

[17] Barker-Staley's translation was revised using the original and C.D.C. Reeve's (Aristotle 1998: 193) translation.

standard" (or some interest) (1328b37-38) and have enough leisure time (*scholē*) to engage in meaningful activities of excellence. For Aristotle, the lives of mechanical workers (*βάναυσοι*) and the lives of traders (*βίον ἀγοραῖον*) should not have a share in the constitution of the best *polis*. They cannot be citizens because their lives are ignoble, low-born (*ἀγεννὴς*), and are inimical to excellence (1328b40-41). Together with his claim on women as being inferior to men (i.e., that women have the faculty of deliberation but lack authority (*ἄκυρον*) (1260a14)), the notorious conception of natural slaves, and his racist assertions on barbarians from the East and the North, these claims collectively make Aristotle's vision of the best *polis* highly questionable. Certainly, they make his best *polis* exclusivist, elitist, and racist. I have argued elsewhere that Aristotle's argument for the existence of natural slaves contradicts his own normative teleology,[18] and that there is nothing of philosophical significance in his teleological conception of *phusis* (nature) in the existing corpus of his written works to substantiate the superiority of men over women (Bielskis 2017: 90–95, 2020: 50–52). On the other hand, Aristotle argued himself that to treat women despotically was wrong, thus women in a well-functioning *polis* ought to be educated as women "are a half of the free population" and "where the condition of women is poor happiness is only half present" (*Pol*, 1260b18 & *Rhetoric*, 361a12).[19] Thus, the exclusivist claims should be dismissed as philosophically contradictory and irrelevant, given that Aristotle himself, when discussing mechanical (*banausos*) activities and crafts vis-à-vis their educative character in Book VIII, argues that it is not the activity itself but "the purpose for which acts are done" that matters (1337b18). Doing mechanical work for employment, at the vertical command of other people, and for the sake of profit "debases the mind", while doing it to satisfy a personal need, to help a friend, or to attain excellence can have an educational value (1337b19-22). In this respect, Aristotle's Marxist interpreters (e.g., McCarthy 1990, 1992; Meikle 1995) are right to argue that the way to address the issue of alienation is not by excluding workers from political life, but by transforming the alienated labour either through automation or (*and*!) by removing its alienating character, which is intrinsic to the capitalist system of marketized profit maximisation.

[18] The crux of the argument is the following: if the end (*telos*) of a slave by nature (*phusei doulos*), who is incapable of rational deliberation, is to be ruled over by a wise natural master (*despotes*), Aristotle is effectively implying that it is good for "natural slaves" to be incapable of practical deliberation. This conclusion follows from Aristotle's claim, repeated both in *Physics* and in *Politics*, that nature is the end and that the end is the best. But to imply that it is good to be incapable contradicts Aristotle's normative teleology, which presupposes that all human beings, given the right circumstances and habituation, have the capacity to act as rational agents in achieving their *telos* which is theirs by their very nature. In short, Aristotle's ethical account of natural slaves (it is ethical because it appeals to justice and implies that not every human being enslaved within the existing institution of slavery was a natural slave) erroneously conflates his teleological-normative account of *phusis* with his sociology (i.e., his appeal to the *phainomena*) of existing social relations. That is, by naturalising existing social relations Aristotle treats the actual submissiveness and incapacities of some people he calls "natural slaves" as their *nature* rather than a result of the habituation of dysfunctional and despotic social relations.

[19] Sophia Connell (2021), by combining Aristotle's biological works with his investigations in *Politics* and the *Ethics*, argues that women in Aristotle's treatment are not considered inferior on the basis of their biology but because they lack spiritedness and that, moreover, the voices of free women should be listened to in the best political community in order to achieve communal flourishing.

On the first of these options, Aristotle has something of importance to say. His brilliantly imaginative insight into automation (*automatos*) comes close to the spirit of what much later became the key thesis of historical materialism:

> We can imagine a situation in which each instrument (*ὄργανον*) could do its own work, at the word of command or by intelligent anticipation, like that of Daedalus or the tripods made by Hephaestus, of which the poet relates that "Of their own motion (*αὐτόματος*) they entered the conclave of gods on Olympus". A shuttle would then weave of itself, and a plectrum would do its own harp-playing. In this situation *master-craftsman* (*ἀρχιτέκτων*) *would not need subordinates* and *masters would not need slaves* (1253b34-39) (emphasis added).

This passage demonstrates Aristotle's astounding ability to foresee the future. It also shows that, given the context of the technological advancement of his age, Aristotle saw slaves, servants, and, possibly, wage-labourers as an economic necessity. Today, in the era of automation, we have the material conditions to overcome a great deal of repetitive mechanical work via the use of fully automated machines (one area of life which has particularly improved in recent decades is the sphere of social reproduction: automated domestic appliances have freed men and women from necessary but boring tasks such as cleaning, washing, etc.).

Furthermore, Aristotle's insight on the alienating nature of wage-labour (*penēs*) remains important today given the existing *despotic* conditions of wage-labour under capitalism. It is here that radical interpretation of Aristotle ought to be advanced. If we agree that political rule – the rule of the free and equal in turn – is essential for the development of (moral) excellences and, therefore, for individual and collective flourishing, then it is imperative to apply Aristotle's constitutional principles of *politeia* not only at the political level but also at the economic level: at the sphere of production. Paraphrasing second-wave feminists, we need to articulate and advance the thesis that private is indeed political. This would be to articulate (both through theorising and by advancing revolutionary policy proposals) the assertion that, amid enormous technological advancement, artificial intelligence, and ecological crisis, the despotic verticality of the sphere of production (and indeed in the sphere of social reproduction) under the economic system of privately controlled limitless profit maximisation has no moral nor rational justification. In this respect, interpreting Aristotle's political theory with its radically practical implications – the end of *politikē* (political science), according to Aristotle, is not truth *per se* but right action – has an important place in this revolutionary theoretical and political project.

Conclusion

I have argued in this paper that Aristotle's assertion in the *NE* that monarchy is the best constitution while timocracy/*politeia* is the worst of the three right constitutions is conceptually unfounded. The normative definitions of the *polis* and of the citizen, as well as the discussion on the relationship between the excellence of the good citizen and the excellence of the good man, allow us to argue that the best form of constitution is

politeia. The good man and the good citizen coincide only in *politeia*, because ruling is essential to being the good human being, thus the constitutional order of the *polis* should be arranged in such a way that citizens have an institutionalized possibility to rule (that is, to rule in turn) in order to become *phronimous*, which is the essential excellence of the good human being. Thus, *politeia*, formally (but not necessarily in actuality) is the best constitution. Given that the key principle of political life for Aristotle is the rule of the free and equal in turn for the benefit of the ruled, it is only via the right form of democracy aimed at the realisation of the common good of all its citizens that this principle can be fully actualised. Monarchies and aristocracies, let alone oligarchies and tyrannies, are less political than *politeias* and democracies – even if, according to Aristotle, democracies are deficient constitutions because their conception of justice is partial, and thus they have a despotic element in them. Aristotle is explicit about the fact that deviant constitutions are less political: ruling "takes two forms, one for the benefit of the rulers, the other for the benefit of the ruled. The former is what we call despotic (*δεσποτικὴν*); the latter involves ruling over freemen (*ἐλευθέρων*)" (1333a4-5). The key arguments of *Politics*, including on the nature of political community in Book I where a sharp divide demarcates the social relationships within the *oikos* and the *polis*, substantiate our claim that the key principle of *the political* is the horizontality of the social relations involved in ruling, backed by collective rational deliberation. The other two principles are the notion of the common good (*to koinei sympheron*) and (moral) excellence (*aretē*). To rule others for the sake of one's own interest is the principle of despotism. Such rule, *sensu stricto*, is *not* political.

Although Karl Marx was greatly influenced by the ideals of the Greek *polis*, his conception of the state and its power was an inversion of Aristotelian normative political theory. He saw state (or political) power in exclusively negative terms – as an expression of the interests of the dominant social class and as a means of securing and imposing them on the rest of society. It is not surprising that in a fully emancipated classless society – in human society or social humanity, as Marx called it in the 10th thesis on Feuerbach – the *political* power of the oppressive state will wither away. There are good reasons to reject this purely negative view of the *political*. In this rejection I follow Aristotle and his conception of the political as ruling in turn for the sake of the common good. Michel Foucault's analysis of power and his dictum that in political philosophy the king's head should still be chopped off are instructive. Indeed, human relations are political through and through. They are political in as much as they sustain the structures of the common good, and their consequences transcend those who are immediately engaged in them. The social relations involved in production under the conditions of contemporary capitalism are privatised *and* are seen as such by a great deal of dominant political theory. It is essential to politicise them. A radical interpretation of Aristotle's political theory along the lines suggested in this paper is of importance in this task.

References

Aristotlis, 1957. *Politika* (ed. W. D. Ross). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Aristotle, 1980. *The Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. D. Ross). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aristotle, 1998. *Politics* (trans. C. D. C. Reeve). Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

Aristotle, 2007. *On Rhetoric* (trans. G. A. Kennedy). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aristotle, 2009. *Politics* (trans. E. Barker and R. Stalley). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Atack, C., 2020. *Discourse on Kingship in Classical Greece*. London: Routledge.

Bielskis, A., 2005. *Towards a Postmodern Understanding of the Political*. Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Bielskis, A., 2006. Pilietiškumas ir valstybė klasikinėje politinėje mintyje: Aristotelis prieš liberalus ir Hegelį. In: V. Laurėnas ir kt. (sud.). *Pilietinė visuomenė ir politinė sistema*. Klaipėda: Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, 16–31.

Bielskis, A., 2017. *Existence, Meaning, Excellence*. London: Routledge.

Bielskis, A., 2020. 'Managers would not need subordinates and masters would not need slaves': Aristotle's *Oikos* and *Oikonomia* Reconsidered. In: A. Bielskis et al (eds.). *Virtue Ethics and Contemporary Aristotelianism*. London: Bloomsbury, 40–57.

Buekenhout, B., 2018. Aristotle's Peculiar Analysis of Monarchy. *History of Political Thought* 39: 216–34.

Connel, S.M., 2020. *Aristotle on Women: Physiology, Psychology, and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

El Nabolsy, Z., 2019. Aristotle on Natural Slavery: An Analysis Using the Marxist Concept of Ideology. In: *Science & Society*, 83 (2): 244–267.

Everson, S., 1988. Aristotle on the Foundations of the State. In: *Political Studies* 36(1): 89–101.

Frank, J., 2005. *A Democracy of Distinction: Aristotle and the Work of Politics*. Chicago, IN: Chicago University Press.

Hansen, M. H., 2020. *Reflections on Aristotle's 'Politics'*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

Heath, M., Aristotle on Natural Slavery. In: *Phronesis* 53 (3): 243–270.

Inamura, K., 2012. Democratic and Aristocratic Aristotle: An Aristotelian Response to Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach. In: *Polis*, 29(2): 286–308.

Keyt, D., 1991. Three Basic Theorems in Aristotle's *Politics*. In: D. Keyt and F. D. Miller, Jr. (eds) *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics*. Oxford: Blackwell, p.118–141.

Kraut, R., 2002. *Aristotle: Political Philosophy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leontsini, E., 2007. *The Appropriation of Aristotle in the Liberal-Communitarian Debate*. Athens: University of Athens Press.

Lintott, A., 2017. *Aristotle's Political Philosophy in Its Historical Context*. London: Routledge.

Lockwood, T.C., Jr. 2006. The Best Regime in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. In: *Ancient Philosophy* 26: 1–16.

MacIntyre, A., 2016. *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MacIntyre, A., 1999. *Dependent Rational Animals*. London: Duckworth.

McCarthy, G. E., 1990. *Marx and the Ancients: Classical Ethics, Social Justice, and Nineteenth-Century Political Economy*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

McCarthy, G. E., 1992. *Marx and Aristotle: Nineteenth-Century German Social Theory and Classical Antiquity*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Meikle, S., 1995. *Aristotle's Economic Thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Newell, W. R., 1987. Superlative Virtue: The Problem of Monarchy in Aristotle's '*Politics*'. In: *The Western Political Quarterly* 40(1): 159–178.

Nietzsche, F., 2009. *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemical Tract*. Arlington, Virginia, USA: Richer Resources Publications.

Nussbaum, M., 1988. Nature, function and capability: Aristotle on political distribution. In: *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy: Supplementary volume*: 145–184.

Nussbaum, M., 1992. Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism. In: *Political Theory* 20 (2): 202–224.

Nussbaum, M., 2000. Aristotelian Social Democracy. In: R. B. Douglas *et al* (eds.) Liberalism and the Good. London: Routledge, 203–252.

Rowe, C., 2005. Aristotelian Constitutions. In: C. Rowe and M. Schofield (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 366–289.

Schofield, M., 1987. Ideology and Philosophy in Aristotle's Theory of Natural Slave. In: G. Patzig (ed.). *Aristoteles' "Politik": Akten des XI Symposium Aristotelicum.* Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht: 1–27.

Stark, R., 1965. Der Gesamtaufbau der aristotelischen Politik. In: *La "Politique" d'Aristote*. Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1–35.

Taylor, C. C. W., 1999. Politics. In: J. Barnes (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 233–258.

Trott, A. M., 2017. Nature, Action, and Politics: A Critique of Arendt's Reading of Aristotle. IN: *Ancient Philosophy* 37: 113–128.

Vander Waerdt, P. A., 1985. Kingship and Philosophy in Aristotle's Best Regime. In: *Phronesis*, 30 (3), 249–73.

Yack, B., 1985. Community and Conflict in Aristotle's Political Philosophy. In: *Review of Politics*, 47(1): 92–112.