

*Kingship and Philosophy in Aristotle's Best Regime**

P. A. VANDER WAERDT

Ἐὰν μὴ, ἣν δ' ἐγώ, ἢ οἱ φιλόσοφοι βασιλεύσωσιν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἢ οἱ βασιλῆς τε νῦν λεγόμενοι καὶ δυνάσται φιλοσοφήσωσι γνησίως τε καὶ ἰκανῶς, καὶ τοῦτο εἰς ταῦτόν συμπέσῃ, δύναμις τε πολιτικῆ καὶ φιλοσοφία, τῶν δὲ νῦν πορευομένων χωρὶς ἐφ' ἐκείτερον αἱ πολλαὶ φύσεις ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀποκλεισθῶσιν, οὐκ ἔστι κακῶν παύλα, ὧ φίλε Γλαύκων, ταῖς πόλεσι, δοκῶ δ' οὐδὲ τῷ ἀνθρωπίνῳ γένει·

– Socrates to Glaucon, *Republic* V 473c11-d6

I

There is a fundamental but neglected problem concerning the εἶδος ἀρχῆς most suited to foster the way of life of the best regime – the regime one would pray for – that Aristotle elaborates in books VII and VIII of his *Politics*. In several passages he maintains that a king of outstanding ἀρετή and πρακτικὴ δύναμις, should one arise who differs from the ruled as much as gods and heroes differ from human beings, ought to rule permanently regardless of the natural character or excellence of his subjects (1284b25-34, 1288a15-29, 1325b10-4, 1332b16-27; cf. 1259b10-7, 1261a38-9); but, when discussing the institutional arrangements of his best regime in book VII, he assumes that the second-best alternative of an aristocracy governed according to πολιτικὴ ἀρχή – the rotation of office among natural equals – will be in effect (1325b7-10, 1329a2-17, 1332b25-1333a16). At first sight Aristotle's willingness to countenance a king's permanent rule would appear to contradict the doctrine that it is just for natural freemen to share in ruling through rotation of office¹, and his preference for kingship in the case of the best regime raises other serious doctrinal difficulties. But there is abundant evidence that its way of life and scheme of education are

* I am grateful to David Furley, David O'Connor and Friedrich Solmsen, who kindly discussed an earlier version of this essay with me, and to the National Endowment for the Humanities, whose fellowship support provided the leisure to write it.

¹ The citizens of the best regime are naturally endowed with θυμός and διάνοια and hence, being natural freemen, may be readily guided by the lawgiver toward virtue (1327b36-8; cf. 1332b8-10, 1334b7-8); for πολιτικὴ ἀρχή as the just order among natural equals cf. 1259b4-9, 1261a30-1261b6, 1277a12-25, 1277b7-32 and the passages cited *supra* in the text. The best regime includes classes of serfs and farmers (1329a17-26, 1332b29-32), who are to consist either of slaves who are neither all of the same stock nor

compatible with either kingship or aristocracy. In a passage at the end of book III which plainly is intended as a transition to the account of the best regime in books VII-VIII,² Aristotle says that one could constitute the city either as an aristocracy or as a kingship on the basis of its scheme of education (1288a37-b2). Moreover, three passages in book IV refer back to the account of the best regime as the “discourses on aristocracy” (1290a1-3; cf. 1293b1-7) or as an account of kingship and aristocracy (1289a30-8). These passages must refer specifically to the account of the best regime in books VII-VIII and not to any of the brief discussions of aristocracy in book III, for it is only in the best regime that the citizens are good men without qualification, not good relative to the end promoted by their regime.³ So, thymoeidetic or, failing that, barbarian subjects of this nature (1330a25-33; cf. 1264a34-6, 1285a19-22 with VII 7; also 1269a34-b12, 1328b7-10). These classes may comprise a large part of the city, but they are not “craftsmen of virtue” (1329a21; cf. *Rep.* 500d-e) and consequently are not part of the citizen body (1326a16-21; cf. 1327b3-19); see *infra*, n. 11.

² Since III 18 breaks off with a transition to the best regime (1288b5-6 is repeated verbatim at 1323a14-5), introducing books VII-VIII but not IV, editors often have inserted VII-VIII (the latter of course incomplete) between III and IV, a transposition which also explains the three references to the best regime cited *infra* in the text. The transposition has been endorsed most recently by C. Lord in the introduction to his translation (Chicago, 1984) 15-6. It must be recognized, however, that the outline at *EN* 1181b12-24, although it clearly refers only to books II (b15-7), V-VI (b17-20; cf. 1301a19-25, 1316b31-6) and VII-VIII (b20-1), plainly validates the current order of investigation, that this outline together with numerous unfulfilled forward references in our *Politics* are evidence of Aristotle’s intention to revise it into the work on νομοθεσία and the πολιτεία generally announced in *EN* X 9, and that, since the composition of the *EN* postdates that of our *Politics*, the outline at *EN* 1181b12-24 represents Aristotle’s final plan for revision of the *Politics*; see P. A. Vander Waerdt, “The Political Intention of Aristotle’s Moral Philosophy” *Ancient Philosophy* 5 (1985).

³ Cf. 1293b1-7: “Now it is right to call the regime we treated in our first discourses an aristocracy, for only the regime that is comprised of those who are best simply, on the basis of virtue, and not of men who are good in relation to some *hypothesis*, is justly referred to as an aristocracy; only in this regime, in fact, is the man who is good simply also the good citizen – those who are good [citizens] in others are so in relation to their regime.” This passage plainly refers to the account of the best regime in books VII-VIII (cf. 1328b34-1329a2, 1332a7-25, 1333a11-6) and not, as W. L. Newman suggested (*The Politics of Aristotle* [Oxford, 1902] IV 193), to 1279a34-7 – the latter refers rather to the second kind of aristocracy that Aristotle distinguishes in IV 7, i.e. a regime in which elections take place at least partly on the basis of merit (1293b7-12) and which borders on polity (1295a31-4). In fact, it is because Aristotle has already treated kingship and aristocracy that he can pass directly to polity in the plan of IV 2 (cf. 1289a26-38). Similarly, 1290a1-3 refers to the discussion of the parts of the city in VII 7-9 and not, as Newman suggested (IV 155), to the brief account at 1283a14-22, which certainly could not be referred to as “discourses on aristocracy” (1290a2).

given that the best regime's way of life is compatible with both kingship and aristocracy, the question arises of why Aristotle considers a certain kind of kingship preferable to πολιτική ἀρχή. Commentators sometimes have been puzzled by the serious doctrinal difficulties involved in his preference for kingship, but no plausible explanation has yet been advanced.⁴

These difficulties center around Aristotle's willingness to elevate one man to permanent rule over the thymoeidetic citizens of his best regime, a move which appears to involve him in the fundamental mistake he sees in the institutional arrangements of Plato's *Republic*: that permanent rule – even by a man or men of incomparable virtue (or of golden souls) – over citizens whose θυμός naturally impels them to rule is likely to cause στάσις (cf. 1264b6-15 with *Rep.* 375a-376c; 1327b38-1328a15). In the first place, then, how can Aristotle reconcile kingship with the natural impulse of thymoeidetic men to rule? Second, given his doctrine of virtue according to which the good citizen becomes a good man through the activity of ruling, which enables him to attain φρόνησις (cf. 1277a12-6, 1277b7-32, 1278b1-5, 1288b1-2, 1293b5-7, 1333a11-2), would not the king's permanent rule deprive the citizens – even the μεγαλόψυχοι (cf. 1328a9-10, 1338b2-4) whose διάνοια and θυμός make them natural freemen, hence naturally suited to participate in office – of the opportunity to attain φρόνησις and thereby become good men without qualification? Only the rotation of office involved in πολιτική ἀρχή would appear to provide the citizens with the opportunity to attain the good man's virtue and thus to bring about the conjunction between their good and the good without qualification which it is the purpose of the best regime to produce (cf. 1331b24-1332a38; *EE* 1236b38-1237a3, 1248b26-37). Consequently, in preferring kingship to πολιτική ἀρχή, Aristotle would appear both to impede the citizens' moral education and to succumb to Plato's mistake of appointing a permanent

⁴ Commentators usually have explained away Aristotle's preference for kingship either by resorting to biographical speculations concerning Macedonian politics (H. Kelsen, "The Philosophy of Aristotle and the Hellenic-Macedonian Policy" *Ethics* 48, 1937, 16-64) or by labelling it "purely hypothetical" (W. T. Bluhm, "The Place of Polity in Aristotle's Theory of the Ideal State", *Journal of Politics* 24, 1962, 743-53; R. G. Mulgan, *Aristotle's Political Theory* [Oxford, 1977] 78-88; cf. Newman [*supra*, n. 3] I 288-9). The first approach, being supported by nothing in the text, is both methodologically unacceptable and unconvincing as an explanation of the relevant evidence (cf. V. Ehrenberg, *Alexander and the Greeks* [Oxford, 1938] 71-85). Proponents of the second approach, in their zeal to banish the man of incomparable virtue from the scene, have inevitably failed to do justice to the evidence and to the philosophical motivation of Aristotle's preference for a certain kind of kingship.

ruler on the basis of his incomparable virtue without regard for the thymoeidetic character of the ruled.⁵

My purpose in this essay is to show that these doctrinal difficulties may be resolved by considering the relative rank of kingship and πολιτικὴ ἀρχή in light of the particular way of life which the best regime's εἶδος ἀρχῆς is intended to promote. Aristotle prefers a certain kind of kingship, I shall argue, because it is better suited to foster the life of φιλοσοφία or leisured culture to which the best regime is dedicated. This way of life involves a comprehensive reorientation of the citizens' activities toward σχολή which renders political activity an impediment to the development and exercise of citizen virtue. The citizens of the best regime, being properly educated in accordance with the natural hierarchy of human goods, will avoid wherever possible unleisured activities such as politics which detract from their εὐδαιμονία and will readily entrust their common affairs to a king whose incomparable political virtue and beneficence make their life of σχολή possible. Of course, men whose virtue is so outstanding as to be incomparable to that of their fellow-citizens are rare, and, given the practical character of his enquiry (cf. 1265a17-8, 1325b38-9), Aristotle cannot assume that one will be available to rule his best regime; consequently, when discussing its institutional arrangements in book VII, he assumes that πολιτικὴ ἀρχή, the second-best alternative, will be in effect.⁶ But there can be no doubt that he considers kingship the εἶδος ἀρχῆς best suited to promote the life of φιλοσοφία to which the best regime is dedicated. In this respect he accepts the famous tenet of Plato's *Republic* quoted at the outset, but he disagrees with Plato both in the meaning he assigns to φιλοσοφία and in the kind of virtue which constitutes the king's natural title to rule. By these

⁵ In ranking kingship over πολιτικὴ ἀρχή Aristotle might also seem to compromise the central doctrines developed throughout the *Politics* in his polemic against Plato's identification of the εἶδη ἀρχῆς with one another (1252a1-16, 1253b14-20, 1255b16-24; cf. *Statesman* 258e-259c, 292c-293a, 300c-301b; *Protagoras* 318e; *Laws* 690a; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* III.4, III.6.14): he argues in book I, for example, that rule is just only when it corresponds to the natural character or virtue of the ruled, which Plato disregarded (cf. 1254a24-8, 1255b16-20, 1259a37-1260b7, 1287b37-1288a29), but the king's incomparable virtue entitles him to rule regardless of his subjects' nature (cf. 1284b25-34, 1288a15-29, 1325b10-4, 1332b16-23).

⁶ In fact Aristotle is quite reticent concerning the institutional arrangements of the best regime, no doubt because either kingship or aristocracy is compatible with its way of life. He assumes that πολιτικὴ ἀρχή will be in effect because of the rarity of kingly virtue (cf. *infra*, n. 26), not because he prefers the institutional arrangements of πολιτικὴ ἀρχή over those of kingship.

departures Aristotle intends to avoid the fundamental difficulties he finds in the rule of Plato's philosopher-kings.

Our discussion is organized as follows. We begin (section II) by showing that the relative rank of kingship and πολιτική ἀρχή is problematic only in the case of the best regime, for all other regimes of natural freemen would justly ostracize a man of incomparable virtue. We next consider why kingship rather than πολιτική ἀρχή is most suited to promote the way of life of the best regime, the cultivation of φιλοσοφία (section III), and why – should a ruler of kingly virtue be available – its thymoeidetic citizens would consent to be ruled permanently (section IV). We then show that the king's ἀρετή is incomparable to that of his subjects – it is a kind of heroic or divine virtue different in εἶδος from both moral and philosophical virtue – and that this difference explains why the king would consent to rule permanently, thus depriving himself of the leisure he would need if he wished to engage in φιλοσοφία (section V). Finally, we conclude (section VI) that Aristotle's doctrine concerning the relation between kingship and philosophy is intended to resolve the fundamental difficulties that he finds in the rule of Plato's philosopher-kings.

II

The relative rank of kingship and πολιτική ἀρχή is problematic only in the case of the best regime. Only the best regime, Aristotle argues in III 13, cannot justly ostracize a man of incomparable virtue; in all other regimes ostracism constitutes an act of political justice in the interest both of preserving the regime's εἶδος ἀρχῆς and of the outstanding man who would suffer injustice if ruled by his inferiors. Ordinarily, of course, kingship is just only if the subjects are naturally suited for royal rule (1287b36-1288a32) – as for example the Asians, whose lack of θυμός makes them natural subjects for the king's permanent rule (cf. 1285a19-22, 1327b27-9); kingship over natural freemen, on the other hand, is necessarily tyrannical (cf. 1295a19-23, 1301b27-8, 1313a3-10). So it is only in the best regime, which may not justly ostracize a man of incomparable virtue, that kingship would exclude worthy men from rule.

The man whose virtue is so outstanding as to be incomparable to that of his fellow-citizens obviously poses a problem for all regimes, “correct” and “divergent” ones alike, for such a man cannot be regarded as part of the city – he is like a god among men, a law unto himself who would be wronged if ruled as an equal by his inferiors (1284a3-b34). Aristotle accordingly holds that legislation must concern those who are equal in race and capacity, and

that it would be foolish to try to legislate over one who might well say what, according to Antisthenes, the lions said when the hares demanded equality in the assembly: “where are your claws and teeth?” (1284a10-7). The institution of ostracism enables a regime to banish men of outstanding virtue, over whom it cannot justly legislate, and thus preserve its εἶδος ἀρχῆς and way of life; consequently, ostracism involves an element of political justice even if it is not simply just (1284b3-25). Although this practice commonly is associated with democratic regimes, which particularly strive for equality, Aristotle maintains that *all* regimes, “correct” no less than “divergent” ones, may justly employ it, so long as they do so for the common good of the city rather than the rulers’ private interest (1284a33-b22). The best regime, however, presents a special difficulty (1284b25-34):

In the case of the best regime there is much perplexity as to what ought to be done should there be someone who is outstanding not through an abundance of the other goods – such as strength, wealth, or multitude of friends –, but through virtue. For certainly no one would say that such a man ought to be expelled and banished. But neither would anyone say that he should rule over such a man: in fact this would be almost as if men should deem themselves worthy of ruling over Zeus by dividing up the offices.⁷ There remains then the natural course of everyone gladly obeying such a man, so that such men may be permanent kings in the cities.

Why should not the best regime resort to ostracism, like all other regimes, to banish a man whose outstanding virtue makes him incomparably superior to his fellow-citizens and who cannot justly be bound by the regime’s laws? The reasoning used to justify ostracism in all other cases might seem to apply no less to the best regime, since a change in a regime’s εἶδος ἀρχῆς entails a corresponding change in its way of life and in the ends it promotes.⁸ In the special case of the best regime, however, Aristotle plainly holds that the substitution of kingship for aristocracy would not alter, but rather perfect, its way of life. The explanation for this difference lies in the fact that only in the best regime is the good citizen the same person as the good man without qualification, while those who are good in

⁷ Professor Solmsen suggests (*per litteras*) the conjecture εἰ τοῦ Διὸς ἄρχειν ἀξιόειν <οἱ θεοὶ> μερίζοντες τὰς ἀρχάς (1284b31), which certainly would improve the sense of the analogy.

⁸ Cf. 1276b1-13, 1289a15-8, 1294a9-14, 1295a40, 1311a8-20, 1317a40-b17, 1328a37-b2, 1337a14-32, *Rhet.* 1366a2-6 and the discussion of L. Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago, 1964) 46-8.

other regimes are so relative to its end (cf. 1288a37-b2, 1293b1-7, 1328b34-1329a2, 1332a8-25, 1333a11-6). To ostracize a man for his incomparable virtue therefore is incompatible with the best regime's end, the education of its citizens in accordance with the natural hierarchy of human goods.⁹ Kingship and aristocracy both are suitable for this regime, since each is constituted on the basis of virtue and seeks to foster εὐδαιμονία among its citizens (cf. 1286b3-8, 1288a37-b2, 1289a32-3, 1289b2-5, 1293b1-7, 1294a9-11, 1310b2-3, 31-4; *Rep.* 445d-e). The relative rank of kingship and aristocracy accordingly depends upon which of them is better suited to promote the way of life of the best regime.

III

The passages cited at the outset show plainly that Aristotle ranks kingship over πολιτικὴ ἀρχή and that the latter is a second-best expedient made necessary when a ruler of kingly virtue is unavailable (1261a29-b6, 1288a15-29 with 1284b25-34, 1325b7-14, 1332b16-27). To understand why πολιτικὴ ἀρχή is second-best we must consider the way of life of the best regime, the end which its εἶδος ἀρχῆς is intended to promote.¹⁰ This way of life consists, I shall argue, in the φιλοσοφία of a citizen body properly educated in accordance with the natural hierarchy of man's ends. Since the virtues involving σχολή have a higher rank than those involving ἀσχολία, which merely provide the necessary conditions for the former, the citizens' εὐδαιμονία does not consist in political activity, which entails ἀσχολία (cf. 1333a30-b5, 1334a2-10; *EN* 1177b1-26), but rather in a kind of leisured culture which is the closest approximation to the theoretical life possible on the level of politics. Consequently, political activity in the best regime impedes rather than promotes citizen virtue. If, because no ruler of kingly virtue is present, the citizens must share in office according to πολιτικὴ ἀρχή, they will rule to benefit others in recompense for having their own interests looked after while they are out of office (cf. 1279a8-16); but, should a king relieve them of the duty of ruling in turn, they could devote themselves to the leisured cultivation of φιλοσοφία, thus becoming better

⁹ The city exists by nature to foster εὐδαιμονία among its citizens' (cf. 1252b29-30, 1278b21-4, 1281a1-4, 1325a5-10, 1328a35-41), but only in the best regime is the citizens' good identical with the good by nature (cf. *infra*, section IV).

¹⁰ In studying books VII-VIII I have learned much from C. Lord's invaluable commentary, *Education and Culture in the Political Thought of Aristotle* (Ithaca, 1982). Among earlier work, see particularly F. Solmsen, "Leisure and Play in Aristotle's Ideal State", *Rheinisches Museum* 107, 1964, 193-220.

citizens and human beings than they could by engaging in politics themselves. Kingship thus is better suited than πολιτική ἀρχή to promote the citizens' activity of φιλοσοφία.¹¹

In his thematic account (VII 14-5) of the way of life of the best regime, Aristotle holds that life as a whole is divided into ἀσχολία and σχολή, war and peace; that actions are divided into those which are directed toward necessary and useful things, on the one hand, and noble things on the other; and that their relative rank corresponds to that of the parts of the soul, the worse always being for the sake of the better: war is for the sake of peace, occupation for the sake of leisure, and necessary and useful things for the sake of the noble. This hierarchy in turn governs the best regime's educational program: "The political ruler must legislate looking to all these things in the case both of the parts of the soul and their actions, but especially to the things that are better and are ends. And he must do so in the same way in regard to the ways of life and the divisions among activities; for one should be capable of being occupied and of engaging in war, but should rather remain at peace and leisure, and one should perform necessary and useful actions, but noble ones more" (1333a37-b3; cf. 1325a5-10, 1334a2-10, 1337b33-1338a13). Obviously the citizens must be educated in those activities, such as war, which may prove necessary to preserve their freedom and way of life, but this kind of education is intended solely to provide the necessary conditions for leisure and is not an end in itself, as it is for example for the Spartans (cf. 1324b2-22, 1333b5-35, 1334a40-b5). The more leisure the citizens have, the more they will be able to engage in noble rather than merely necessary activities.

Now this ranking of the best regime's activities need not, by itself, preclude that the citizens' participation in office might be a necessary condition for its way of life, for example because they might need to engage in political activity to attain the good man's virtue (see *supra*, p. 251). Indeed, when discussing in VII 2-3 the dispute between those who eschew political office on the ground that the life of the freeman is best and those who, identifying εὐπραγία with εὐδαιμονία, hold that the political life is

¹¹ It is because the citizens are dedicated to φιλοσοφία that the best regime has no δῆμος, being composed only of gentlemen, on the one hand, and slaves and metics on the other (cf. *supra*, n. 1). Where the δῆμος exists, of course, it cannot safely be excluded from a share in rule (1274a12-21, 1281b21-34, 1328a35-41, 1328b24-1329a2, 19-26); but, since it is hostile by nature to nobility and philosophy (cf. *EN* 1179b4-1180a14; *Rep.* 494a), it cannot share in the way of life of the best regime. Aristotle restricts its citizen body to gentlemen because they alone have the leisure and natural capacity to share in the activity of φιλοσοφία which constitutes the best way of life.

best, Aristotle comes down squarely on the side of the active life.¹² But he then proceeds to re-define the “active life” so as to sever any necessary connexion with political activity: “the active way of life is not necessarily to be regarded as being in relation to others, as some suppose, nor those thoughts alone active which are engendered from action for the sake of what results, but much more those that are complete in themselves – contemplation and thought that are for their own sake” (1325b16-21). It is plain from the sequel (b21-32), where Aristotle describes a city situated by itself with no external affairs as “active”, that this re-definition of the active life is intended to refute the contention of those who maintain that the best way of life consists in relation to others, whether in the city’s internal or external affairs. To say that the active life consists above all in “contemplation” pursued not for what results from it but for its own sake is to identify the best way of life, both for human beings and for cities, with φιλοσοφία. Consequently, for reasons we shall consider further in section IV, political activity impedes rather than promotes the best way of life, and in re-defining the active life so as to encompass φιλοσοφία Aristotle lays the foundation for his thematic account of the best regime’s way of life.

In this account, based upon the natural hierarchy of human goods just discussed, Aristotle makes φιλοσοφία the locus of the citizens’ leisured activities (1334a19-34):

It is fitting that the city be moderate, courageous and capable of endurance, for “slaves have no leisure”, as the proverb has it; and those who are unable to face danger courageously are slaves of those who attack them. Courage and endurance then are required with a view to unleisured activities; φιλοσοφία, with a view to leisure; moderation and justice, at both times, and especially when [the citizens] remain at peace and at leisure. For war compels men to be just and act moderately, while the enjoyment of good fortune and the activity of leisure in times of peace tend to make them hybriatic. There is, then, a need for much justice and much moderation on the part of those who are held to act in the best way and who enjoy all the things that are regarded as blessings, like those who, the poets say, are “on the islands of the blessed”. For these men will have particular need for φιλοσοφία and moderation and justice, in as much as they are at leisure in the midst of an abundance of good things of this sort.

Aristotle is remarkably reticent in books VII and VIII about the precise character of this “public philosophy” and its role in the educational pro-

¹² Cf. Lord (*supra*, n. 10) 183-9.

gram of the best regime. Plainly it is not identical with the individual's theoretical activity, partly because the city would seem to be capable at best only of an analogue of φιλοσοφία θεωρητική, and partly because Aristotle indicates that not all the citizens will possess a theoretical capacity (cf. 1333a24-30) – hence training in strictly theoretical activities will not have formed part of the continuing education in virtue that the music education outlined in book VIII is intended to provide.¹³ As Carnes Lord has recently demonstrated, public philosophy rather involves intellectual culture in a broad sense – the leisured enjoyment of music, poetry and the arts –,¹⁴ activities in which intelligent and thymoeidetic men may find the locus of their εὐδαιμονία.¹⁵ Such activities of course need not *exclude*, and may well be intended to foster, theoretical activity in the strict sense among those who are capable of it, but in view of the fundamentally practical character of the educational scheme elaborated in book VIII it seems more likely that such theoretical activity will remain a private affair, made possible by the regime's life of leisure, or, perhaps, that it will have a semi-

¹³ The educational program of book VIII is intended to provide the citizens of the best regime – mature as well as young ones (1340b33-9; cf. *EN* 1180a1-4, 29-34) – with a continuing training and habituation in “actions of virtue” (1337a18-21), by which Aristotle means, in the first instance, “political virtue” (1341a1) – i.e. the military and civic capacities necessary to preserve the regime and its way of life (cf. *Laws* 641a-c). This education must not make the body vulgar and useless with a view either to military and political training or to the “learning to be undertaken later” (1341a5-9). To this end Aristotle warns against the study of certain “liberal sciences” with a view to technical proficiency (1337b4-21), which is liable to render a freeman's soul or mind useless for the practice of virtue; but, since “the worse is always for the sake of the better” (1333a21-30, 1334b13-28) and moral and political virtue, being the perfection of the irrational part of the soul, cannot be man's highest end, the citizens must undergo a further “liberal education” designed to train them to use the leisure that is spent in pastime properly (1337b29-1338b4). It is unfortunate that this promised account of liberal education (1338a30-4) has not come down to us, for it is here that Aristotle will have clarified the precise rôle of φιλοσοφία in the educational program of the best regime. Since this program is “one and the same for all” (1337a21-32; cf. *EN* 1180a14-34), it is quite unlikely that φιλοσοφία θεωρητική could have been prescribed for all the citizens, some of whom will lack the capacity for it (1333a24-30). The liberal education to which Aristotle refers instead will have been an education above all in “pastime and prudence” (1339a25-6; see particularly Lord [*supra*, n. 10] 100-4, 150, 177-9), whatever the precise rôle of φιλοσοφία.

¹⁴ For this usage cf. Isocrates, *Antidosis* 181-8, 264-71; Thucydides II.40.1; Plato, *Phaedrus* 278d and *Republic* 498a-b.

¹⁵ Lord (*supra*, n. 10) 196-202; cf. *infra*, n. 30.

public rôle analogous to that of Plato's Nocturnal Council.¹⁶ But whatever the status of theoretical activity in the strict sense, the public philosophy to which the best regime is dedicated plainly involves a comprehensive reorientation of the citizens' ends away from un leisured activities such as politics and toward the noble and virtuous activities made possible by the proper enjoyment of leisure.

This hierarchy in the citizens' activities explains why Aristotle considers kingship better suited than πολιτικὴ ἀρχή for his best regime. In the first place, since the best regime's way of life consists in the internal activity of public philosophy, which requires leisure, the ἀσχολία inherent in political affairs can only detract from the citizens' εὐδαιμονία (cf. 1333a30-b5, 1334a2-10; *EN* 1177b1-26). The king's permanent rule not only releases them from politics, providing them with the leisure to engage in their highest activity, φιλοσοφία, but it also facilitates the comprehensive reorientation of their activities toward the proper enjoyment of leisure and thus enables them to become better citizens and human beings than they could through ruling themselves (see *infra*, section IV). Second, Aristotle's analysis of the natural basis for πολιτικὴ ἀρχή among political equals shows plainly that it is not best suited for a regime dedicated to the proper enjoyment of leisure, for the citizens' thymoeidetic character makes πολιτικὴ ἀρχή inherently unstable: θυμός supports πολιτικὴ ἀρχή among natural equals, but it always threatens to turn the regime toward conquest and rule over others, away from its internal activity.¹⁷

In simultaneously supporting and threatening πολιτικὴ ἀρχή within the city, θυμός is the source both of φιλία, including the civic φιλία which makes men well-disposed toward their fellow-citizens, and of any power of commanding and any desire for freedom (1327b38-1328a16; cf. 1315a29-31). Aristotle has recourse to this dual character of θυμός when he criticizes Plato for making his guardians friendly toward their fellow-citizens and harsh to strangers (*Rep.* 375a-376c). He says that θυμός, as the δύναμις of

¹⁶ Cf. *Laws* 961a-end with 908a, 909a, 951d-952d, 960b-d; T. L. Pangle's discussion, *The Laws of Plato* (New York, 1980) 504-10; and Isocrates, *To Nicocles* 12-3, 50-3. In view of the testimony of fr. 647 Rose (quoted *infra*, p. 270) that "the king should listen to and take the advice of those who truly philosophize", which parallels the Athenian Stranger's rationale for the establishment of the Nocturnal Council – that the preservation of the best regime finally depends upon the rule of philosophers (cf. *infra* n. 33) –, one might suppose that Aristotle intends his king to rule with the help of philosophers' advice. The difficulty with this analogy is that Aristotle does not provide an institutional framework like that of the Nocturnal Council, but perhaps this may be explained by his general reticence concerning the institutional arrangements of his best regime (cf. *supra*, n. 6).

¹⁷ Cf. *infra*, n. 19.

the soul whereby one loves, causes them to be friendly to those they know; but he objects to making the guardians harsh toward strangers, and says that μεγαλόψυχοι are harsh only toward wrong-doers, especially toward companions who wrong them (1327b38-1328a16). This objection points up the political problem raised by θυμός.¹⁸ As the source of the civic φιλία which constitutes the natural bond or impulse of the political community, θυμός when properly directed supports πολιτική ἀρχή among natural equals. It is the natural quality which leads the citizens to strive for virtue (1327b36-8) and impels them to desire to office; but as the source of freedom it impedes the permanent rule of any one class, both encouraging virtue and restraining excessive ambition. For so long as the citizens have the prospect of sharing in rule, they will strive for the virtue which would entitle them to office; but once that prospect is taken away, it will incite them to rebellion and impel them to political liberty. Θυμός is Janus-faced. It is not merely the source of the desire to protect one's own. It is also the source of the desire to rule others, of the passions which lead to conquest and despotic rule. Consequently it fosters both civic φιλία and the drive to exercise despotic rule over others.¹⁹ It supports πολιτική ἀρχή within the city even as it constantly threatens to turn it toward conquest of others. Thus πολιτική ἀρχή is unstable at its core, and perhaps only the music education of the best regime elaborated in book VIII can soften the harshness as well as the excesses of θυμός and ensure that the μεγαλόψυχοι who comprise the citizen body of Aristotle's best regime, unlike Plato's guardians, are not fierce to outsiders – only to wrong-doers.

The dual rôle of θυμός in both supporting and threatening πολιτική ἀρχή shows why this εἶδος ἀρχῆς is only second-best for a regime which

¹⁸ Aristotle's revision of Plato's tripartite psychology in the moral psychology of his ethical writings, which deprives θυμός of its status as an independent source of motivation (see P. A. Vander Waerdt, "The Peripatetic Interpretation of Plato's Tripartite Psychology", *Greek, Roman & Byzantine Studies* 26, 1985), has led commentators to overlook its central rôle in his political psychology, despite the explicit statement that φανερόν τοίνυν, ὅτι δεῖ διανοητικούς τε εἶναι καὶ θυμοειδείς τὴν φύσιν τοὺς μέλλοντας εὐαγώγους ἔσσεσθαι τῷ νομοθέτῃ πρὸς τὴν ἀρετὴν (1327b36-8; cf. 1332b8-10, 1334b7-8). Explanation of the status of θυμός in Aristotle's psychology as a whole must await another occasion; but in connexion with our analysis of θυμός as the source both of φιλία and of the desire to rule note the close parallels with Plato's treatment (see T. L. Pangle, "The Political Psychology of Religion in Plato's *Laws*", *American Political Science Review* 70, 1976, 1062-5).

¹⁹ As the source of man's desire to rule others θυμός tends to express itself in politics; but, if participation in politics is considered the best way of life, then the city inevitably will seek conquest and despotic rule over others and so be deprived of leisure and peace (cf. 1324a5-12, 1324a35-1325a10, 1325a34-b2, 1333b31-1334a10).

takes the activity of public philosophy as its primary end: it always is in danger of turning the city's energies to conquest and despotic rule over others, away from its leisured internal activity. Of course the music education sketched in book VIII is intended to moderate the excesses and inherent impulse to rule which accompany θυμός, and the stability of the best regime, if governed by πολιτική ἀρχή, clearly depends upon the lawgiver's success in this regard.²⁰ But since unleisured activities are pursued in the best regime for the sake of σχολή, an εἶδος ἀρχῆς which tends to find its end in political activity or external affairs can only imperfectly foster a way of life essentially dedicated to the internal cultivation of φιλοσοφία. Kingship better corresponds to this way of life, for the king's permanent rule ensures that the citizens will continue to seek εὐδαιμονία in the proper enjoyment of leisure and not become distracted by politics or conquest.

Aristotle plainly has good reasons to consider kingship the εἶδος ἀρχῆς most suited to foster the best regime's way of life. But why should its citizens accept the king's rule?

IV

Aristotle objects to the institutional arrangements of Plato's best regime because Socrates makes the same men – those with golden souls – permanent rulers over thymoeidetic and warlike subjects, thereby risking στάσις (1264b6-15). Θυμός is the natural root of the impulse toward ruling and freedom (1328a5-7), and consequently thymoeidetic citizens, if denied the opportunity afforded by πολιτική ἀρχή to share in ruling, might be expected to fight to preserve their freedom (cf. 1329a9-11). The king's permanent rule raises a fundamental difficulty: on the one hand, θυμός is the natural quality which enables the lawgiver to turn the citizens to the pursuit of virtue (1327b36-8; cf. 1332b8-10, 1334b7-8); on the other hand, it also impels them to resist permanent rule, even – one might suppose – that of a king of incomparable virtue.

Aristotle's solution to this difficulty lies in a comprehensive reorientation

²⁰ Cf. Lord (*supra*, n. 10) 159-64 and *infra*, section IV. Perhaps Aristotle expects the citizens to safeguard πολιτική ἀρχή because they are μεγαλόψυχοι (cf. 1328a9-10, 1338b2-4), and the μεγαλόψυχος, as Aristotle explains in *EN* IV 3, is marked by his disinterest in the objects of vulgar ambition and his willingness, except when pursuing some high honour or achievement, to step aside for others. The μεγαλόψυχος would appear to regard ruling a benefit he does for others, and hence would be the best guardian of πολιτική ἀρχή: he might willingly step aside to allow another to rule.

of the activities of the best regime toward σχολή which renders politics an impediment to citizen virtue. Of course the citizens must be capable of preserving, through war or other kinds of political activity, the conditions necessary for their way of life; but they undertake such activity for the sake of leisure and peace, which alone make possible the life of nobility in which εὐδαιμονία consists (see *supra*, p. 252). The distinction between actions which are noble only with respect to a particular regime and those which are noble in an unqualified sense (1332a7-27) shows that citizen virtue in the best regime consists precisely in the virtue of the man for whom things that are good without qualification are also good for him (1332a21-5; cf. *EE* 1236b38-1237a3, 1248b26-38). Indeed, the explicit purpose of the educational program elaborated in books VII and VIII is to bring about this conjunction between the citizens' good and the good without qualification. The citizens of the best regime, being so educated, will act in accordance with the natural hierarchy of human goods, wherever possible avoiding political activity, which only secures the necessary conditions for σχολή, and devoting themselves to the public philosophy which constitutes the closest approximation to the theoretical life possible on the level of politics.

This reorientation of the citizens' activities toward φιλοσοφία is made possible by their θυμός. At first sight it might seem puzzling that it is the political passion *par excellence* which motivates them to forego politics and other un leisured activities and to seek their εὐδαιμονία in a trans-political or quasi-theoretical activity. Yet it is the citizens' θυμός which makes them natural freemen and motivates their desire for virtue; consequently, once it has been properly tamed and re-directed by the best regime's program of music education, it is the source of their passion for nobility and philosophy. This point would be clearer had Aristotle like Plato and Xenophon shown how philosophy alone can satisfy a noble and ambitious youth's passion for virtue. Plato in the *Republic* and Xenophon in the *Memorabilia* (III.6) present Glaucon as the paradigmatic case of the potential tyrant, one whose great ambition to rule – fired by the conviction that virtue consists in ruling others – is coupled with lack of the virtue that could enable him to realize that ambition.²¹ Plato represents Socrates as taming Glaucon of his excessive ambition by persuading him that the philosophical life alone is

²¹ Plato's attempt to cure tyrannical desires through philosophy of course differs from Aristotle's, since one might hold that Glaucon's conversion to philosophy is motivated by his erotic rather than thymoeidetic side whereas ἔρωξ has no such status in Aristotle. Although important, this point is irrelevant for my present purpose, which is only to establish that for Aristotle θυμός is the motivational factor in the reorientation of the best regime's citizens toward philosophy.

choiceworthy, Xenophon by convincing him that he must obtain a thorough knowledge of public affairs before seeking to rule. Yet, even if he has not provided an example of this kind of ψυχαγωγία, Aristotle too is aware of the problem raised by the man like Jason who goes hungry except when tyrant (1277a24-5). Since the greatest injustices are motivated by excessive desires – “no man becomes a tyrant in order to get out of the cold” –, an education which instills moderation by levelling desires is necessary (1266b28-1267a16); but, in the end, only the intrinsically superior pleasures of philosophy can satisfy the craving for tyrannical rule which, according to Plato (*Rep.* 619b-e), lurks in the souls even of law-abiding gentlemen: “if certain men should want gratification through themselves alone, they should not seek it except by means of philosophy [φιλοσοφίας ἄκος]” (1267a10-2).

This passage shows more clearly than any other the curative effect of philosophy on the desire to rule engendered by θυμός. If only philosophy can satisfy the passions of thymoeidetic men, then those with a natural affinity for virtue must be turned away from un leisured activities such as politics toward καλοκαγαθία and φιλοσοφία. Speaking in the concluding chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics* of the powerlessness of discourses to stimulate “the many” to moral nobility,²² Aristotle states νῦν δὲ φαίνονται προτρέψασθαι μὲν καὶ παρορμήσαι τῶν νέων τοὺς ἐλευθερίουσ ἰσχύειν, ἧθὸς τ’ εὐγενὲς καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς φιλόκαλον ποιῆσαι ἄν κατοκώχιμον ἐκ τῆς ἀρετῆς (1179b7-9; cf. 29-31). Now men are naturally free, as Aristotle explains in *Politics* VII 7, only if they possess both διάνοια and θυμός; the faculty of φρόνησις by itself is morally neutral, capable of securing the means to base as well as virtuous ends (cf. 1144a23-36), and it is θυμός which motivates men to seek noble ends. To ensure that their ends are noble they must be educated and habituated in actions of virtue which accord with the natural hierarchy of human goods; and this entails, as we have seen, that they forego un leisured activities such as politics and war and devote themselves to the noble enjoyment of leisure. In the best regime, of course, political activity is undertaken to secure εὐδαιμονία for the citizens as something distinct and apart from politics (cf. 1177b12-5). So, in educating them to seek εὐδαιμονία in a trans-political activity, the lawgiver must re-direct their θυμός, the source of their passion for virtue and nobility, toward the quasi-theoretical activity of public philosophy.

The orientation of the best regime toward φιλοσοφία thus explains why

²² Cf. R. Bodéüs, *Le philosophe et la cité* (Paris, 1982) 100-18.

its citizens, unlike those of all other regimes, find their highest perfection not in politics but in the leisured activity made possible by their king's permanent rule.

V

Clearly it is in the interest of the citizens of the best regime to accept a man of incomparable virtue as their king. But why should such a man consent to rule permanently? Why should he accept the life of continual ἀσχολία entailed by ruling and thus deprive himself of the σχολή he would need to engage in φιλοσοφία? This problem is identical with the great dilemma of the *Republic*: how can the philosophers, who know that true εὐδαιμονία consists solely in the activity of philosophizing, be motivated to descend once again into the cave and rule its prisoners? Plato's Socrates compels them to rule contrary to their own interest (see *infra*, section VI). This course is not open to Aristotle, who holds that legislation is binding only upon natural equals (1284a3-17) and who rejects Socrates' solution because it destroys the εὐδαιμονία of the guardian class and therewith that of the city as a whole (1264b15-23). But he obviously must face Socrates' problem, for the king whose εὐδαιμονία consisted in φιλοσοφία, as that of the citizens of the best regime does, could have no motivation to rule.

Aristotle solves this problem by altering the kind of virtue upon which the king's rule rests: his natural title to rule consists not in φιλοσοφία, like Plato's philosopher-kings, but in a kind of heroic or even divine virtue which differs in ἔδος from both moral and philosophical virtue. The king's heroic virtue, being incomparable to that of his subjects, thus undermines the basis for πολιτική ἀρχή: their virtue, even if taken altogether, cannot exceed his, because it differs in εἶδος; consequently, since they cannot justly ostracize a man of outstanding virtue, the only course open to them is to accept his permanent rule. The king himself does not suffer from the conflict of interest in the rule of the philosopher-king or find ἀσχολία an impediment to his εὐδαιμονία, because heroic virtue displays itself in great and noble deeds rather than in the private activity of philosophizing.²³

²³ See H. V. Jaffa's fundamental discussion of heroic virtue, *Thomism and Aristotelianism* (Chicago, 1952) 53-115. Aristotle does not specifically trace the king's beneficence to his heroic virtue, but the point is easy to establish. Kings originally attained power on account of their εὐεργεσία (1285b6-9, 1286b10-1, 1310b31-1311a5), just as the αἰσυμνήτης is elected for a specific purpose or time (1285a29-b3; cf. Theophrastus, *On Kingship* ap. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* V. 73 and F. E. Romer, *American Journal of Philology* 103, 1982, 25-46). Aristotle traces the king's beneficence to his complete self-

This solution to Socrates' problem, however, has a consequence the philosophical motivation of which we shall have to consider in section VI: it severs the common ground between the virtue of ruler and ruled. The citizens of the best regime, because of the reorientation of their way of life toward the proper enjoyment of leisure, find their εὐδαιμονία in philosophy rather than in political activity; their king, on the other hand, is motivated to rule permanently by his heroic virtue, which leads him to find his εὐδαιμονία not in philosophy, but in doing good works for the city.

Let us now set forth the evidence concerning the king's heroic virtue. In his account of ostracism, Aristotle considers the case of the man whose virtue and political capacity so exceeds that of his fellow-citizens as to be incomparable (1284a3-14):

If there is some one man – or more than one, but not enough to provide a full complement [of citizens] for the city – who is so outstanding through excess of virtue that neither the virtue of all the others [taken together] nor their political capacity [πολιτικὴ δύναμις] is comparable to that of their own, if there are several, or if there is one, to his alone, then such men must no longer be considered part of the city. For they will suffer injustice if deemed worthy of equal things when they are so unequal [to the others] in virtue and political capacity: in fact it is likely that such a man will be like a god among human beings. From this it is clear that legislation necessarily must concern those who are equal both in stock and capacity, and that there is no law over such men – for they are themselves a law.

In the discussion which follows, Aristotle comes to the conclusion (1284b25-34, quoted *supra*, p. 254) that in the case of the best regime it would be unjust to expel such men or force them to share ruling with others, so that the natural course is for everyone to accept them gladly as permanent kings.

sufficiency and concern to promote the noble (1311a5): “The tyrant studies his own advantage, but a king that of his subjects. For the king is not a king unless he is self-sufficient [αὐτάρκης] and superior in every kind of good; for a ruler of this kind has need of nothing, and therefore would not study his own benefit, but that of his subjects” (*EN* 1160b2-6; cf. 24-7 and 1161a11-5). Since one who has need of nothing through self-sufficiency is no part of the city, but is rather a god or beast (1253a27-9; cf. 3-4), and since it is heroic virtue which elevates the king to heroic or divine status, his noble beneficence plainly is motivated by his heroic virtue. The doctrine that the king's proper virtue is εὐεργεσία of course is very common (cf. e.g. Xenophon, *Cyropaideia* III.3.4, *Memorabilia* III.9.10-3; Isocrates, *Philip* 114-6; Diodorus XI.26.6 and the evidence collected in E. R. Goodenough's survey, “The Political Philosophy of Hellenistic Kingship”, *Yale Classical Studies* 1, 1928, 55-102).

The first point to settle concerning the king's virtue is the sense in which it is "incomparable" (μη συμβλητή [1284a6]). Aristotle's usage of συμβλητός shows that things are "comparable" only if they belong to the same kind (εἶδος or γένος [cf. *Physics* 248a10-249a28; *Topics* 107b13-8; *Metaphysics* 1055a6-8 and Ross ad 1080a19]); hence the king's virtue is incomparable to that of his subjects not because it exceeds all of theirs, taken together, but because it differs in εἶδος (cf. 1259b10-7, 36-8). Consequently the argument that the multitude might make against those who claim to rule on the basis of merit or wealth – that the people taken together are more virtuous or wealthy than the few or one, even if less so taken singly (1283a42-1283b35) – cannot apply in this case, since the king's heroic virtue, being different in εἶδος, simply is incomparable to theirs. His virtue undermines the basis for πολιτικὴ ἀρχή – which presupposes that the citizens are natural equals, at least in the sense that their virtue is commensurable with one another (1134a24-b18) – and provides the natural title for his permanent rule: the citizens cannot justly legislate over him, since legislation must concern those who are equal in stock and capacity, and they cannot justly ostracize him, since the best regime is dedicated by nature to the cultivation of human virtue. This situation leaves them with the natural course of transforming their regime from an aristocracy into a kingship, leaving their common affairs in the king's hands, and devoting themselves to public philosophy.

Aristotle does not explain in 1284a3-14 or in two parallel passages (1288a15-28, 1325b2-14) exactly how the king's virtue differs in εἶδος from that of his subjects, but the statement that he would "be likely to be like a god among human beings" (1284a10-1; cf. 1284b30-1), no less than the reference to kingship as "first and most divine" (1289a39; cf. *Statesman* 303b and *Laws* 875c), suggests that his virtue is the heroic or divine kind discussed in *EN* VII 1, and confirmation is provided by 1332b16-23: "Now if the rulers were as different from the ruled *as we consider gods and heroes to differ from men*, exceeding them greatly first in body and then in soul, so that the preeminence of the rulers were indisputable and evident to the ruled, it is clear that it would be better always for the same men to rule and the same to be ruled once and for all."

The italicized words indicate the character of the heroic virtue which provides the king's natural title to permanent rule: he must differ, and appear to differ, from his subjects as gods and heroes are considered to differ from human beings. The place of heroic virtue in the framework of Aristotle's thinking on the moral phenomena emerges clearly in the "new beginning" of VII 1, where he undertakes a re-evaluation of the moral

problem as he has formulated it in *EN* II-VI. He broadens the scope of his inquiry from the simple virtue-vice dichotomy which had characterized his discussion to include a variety of moral states ranging from bestiality to divinity; he abandons the *hypothesis* of the strict rationality of the passions upon which his discussion had rested (1103b31-4, 1144b26-30); and he re-evaluates the moral problem on the basis of a different perspective on the rationality of the passions.²⁴ The broadened scope of his inquiry is evident immediately after he announces that it is necessary to make a “new beginning”: in VII 1 (1145a15-b2) he says that the three states of moral character to be avoided are κακία, ἀκρασία and θηριότης, and that the three opposite dispositions are ἀρετή, ἐγκρατεία and a superhuman virtue of a heroic or divine kind (τὴν ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς ἀρετὴν, ἥρωικὴν τινα καὶ θεϊάν [1145a19-20]). His explanation of this last-named virtue runs as follows (1145a19-27):

As the opposite of bestiality it would be most fitting to speak of superhuman virtue, a kind of heroic and divine virtue, just as Homer has represented Priam as saying of Hector that he was of surpassing excellence: “nor did he seem like the child of a mortal man, but of a god.” So that if, as men say, gods are born out of men through an excess of virtue, it is clear that the disposition opposed to bestiality would be of such a sort. For just as there is no vice and virtue in the case of a beast, so also in the case of a god: the god’s disposition is more exalted than [human] virtue, and the beast’s is different in kind from vice.

Heroic virtue is an excess of [human] virtue (ἀρετῆς ὑπερβολή) which transforms men into gods and places them beyond the sphere of human virtue and vice; it is more exalted than any moral excellence ordinarily attainable by human beings.

One would like to know more about the king’s heroic virtue, particularly about the public rôle it leads him to play in promoting the city’s ends and securing the necessary conditions for its leisured way of life. But there can be no doubt, I think, that it is the king’s heroic virtue which motivates his noble beneficence, his disinterested concern to promote his subjects’ well-being, even though Aristotle does not spell out precisely the kind of disjunction between his heroic virtue and his subjects’ quasi-theoretical

²⁴ Discussion of this subject must await another occasion.

virtue of φιλοσοφία.²⁵ Aristotle's reticence on this question no doubt is to be explained by the avowedly practical intention of his enquiry into human affairs and of his account of the best regime in particular: in view of the rarity of heroic virtue and its corresponding vice, bestiality (cf. 1145a27-33), he assumes that πολιτικὴ ἀρχή will be in effect in his best regime,²⁶ and does not explain how the substitution of heroic kingship would alter the institutional arrangements he sketches in books VII-VIII. Consequently, one can only speculate about the public face of the regime one would pray for – the regime in which a king of heroic virtue strives to benefit his subjects by enabling them to engage in the leisured activity of public philosophy. But Aristotle plainly holds that kingship founded upon heroic virtue is better suited to promote the way of life of his best regime than πολιτικὴ ἀρχή, and we have tried to understand how he may plausibly and consistently have held this doctrine.

VI

The evidence we have considered so far shows that the kingship Aristotle envisages for his best regime is founded upon a kind of heroic or divine virtue incomparable to because different in εἶδος from the public philosophy in which the citizens' virtue consists. It is not self-evident why this is the εἶδος ἀρχῆς most suited to foster the way of life of the best regime. Why is a king whose virtue is heroic rather than philosophical best suited to promote φιλοσοφία among the citizens? The explanation for Aristotle's doctrine emerges, I suggest, when one sees it as a response to the difficulties he finds in the rule of Plato's philosopher-kings.

The argument of the *Republic* culminates – in its third wave – when Socrates asserts, in response to Glaucon's demand to know whether it is possible for the just city to come into being, that the smallest change capable of bringing about its realization is the conjunction of political power and philosophy – that unless philosophers rule as kings or kings

²⁵ Cf. *supra*, n. 23. In particular, one would like to know how the difference in εἶδος between heroic and philosophical virtue explains why the former culminates in political rather than theoretical activity. What is the natural basis for the disjunction between the two paths of apotheosis – the two different ways man may transcend moral virtue?

²⁶ Perhaps the explanation for this assumption lies in the fact that, in Aristotle's own day, the political culture of the *polis* seems to have destroyed the conditions which made the exercise of kingly virtue possible in ancient times – and even to have rendered problematic the emergence of any form of regime other than democracy (cf. 1252b19-27, 1286b8-21, 1313a3-9).

philosophize there will be no rest from evils for cities nor for the human race (473c-e).²⁷ Only a radical change, however, on the part of both cities and philosophers could bring about this natural harmony or conjunction necessary for the just regime's realization: the cities would have to become willing to accept the philosophers' rule and the philosophers would have to become willing to rule. The only way for Socrates to effect the latter is to compel the philosophers, unwilling and contrary to their own interest, to descend once again into the cave and submit to the necessity of ruling over the city (499b-c, 500d, 519c-520e, 521b, 539e-540b). When Glaucon objects that he does them an injustice by depriving them of the better life that is available to them, Socrates has recourse to the notion of justice as paying one's debts that he had rejected in book I: he argues that it is just for the philosophers to repay their debt to the city for nourishing their education by consenting to return to the cave (519d-520d; cf. 419a-421c, *Laws* 903c-d). But, whether just or not, the very fact that the philosophers must be *compelled* to rule points up the fundamental difficulty (which Aristotle will criticize) in Socrates' attempt to secure the εὐδαιμονία of the city as a whole at the expense of its best class: it is entirely against the philosophers' interest to rule. Gazing upon the sun as they do they believe that they dwell on the Isles of the Blessed (519c), and would rather undergo anything whatever than return to their former condition among the prisoners in the cave (516c-d; cf. 514b-515c); once they have seen the idea of the good they are unwilling to attend to the human things, as their souls always yearn to spend their time above, in the sunlight (517b-d; cf. 500b-d, 592a-b) – one would pity the soul returned to the darkness of the cave from the light of the sun (518b). In short, as Aristotle recognizes, the sole source of the philosophers' εὐδαιμονία consists in the activity of philosophizing. Even if a city could be persuaded to accept their rule, they would resist the return to the cave which would destroy their εὐδαιμονία. Indeed, the chief reason the just city can never be realized in deed, that it is intended rather to serve as a παράδειγμα laid up in heaven for the man who wishes to found a city within himself (592a-b; cf. Cicero, *De Republica* II. 52), is that the natural

²⁷ Socrates envisages that this conjunction might come about either by philosophers taking charge of a city or by a true erotic passion for true philosophy flowing from divine inspiration into the sons of those who hold power, or into the fathers themselves (499b-c; cf. 501e-502b, *Laws* 711d-712a).

tension between philosophy and the city precludes the voluntary rule of the only man who is just, wise and happy – the philosopher.²⁸

Aristotle's response to Socrates' compulsion of the philosophers explains the philosophical motivation for his own doctrine concerning the relation between kingship and philosophy. He objects that in attempting to make the city as a whole happy Socrates destroys the εὐδαιμονία of the guardian class; that the city as a whole cannot be happy unless all or at least some of its parts are happy; and that, if the guardians are not happy, no one else will be, certainly not the artisans or the vulgar multitude (1264b15-23; cf. 1329a22-4). Now this objection plainly implies that, if the lawgiver is to secure εὐδαιμονία for the city as a whole, he must ensure that its ruler or rulers are not compelled to rule against their interest and thereby be deprived of εὐδαιμονία. To avoid the conflict of interest inherent in forcing a philosopher to rule, I suggest, Aristotle makes heroic rather than philosophical virtue the basis for kingship in his best regime.

It is remarkable that Aristotle does not explicitly refer to Plato's philosopher-kings in the *Politics*, not even in his detailed criticism of the *Republic* in book II.²⁹ But additional support for the interpretation here advanced is provided by an important fragment of the *On Kingship* (fr. 647 Rose), preserved by Themistius (*Orat.* VIII 107 D), which coheres remarkably with indications in the *Politics* and suggests that Aristotle's doctrine on kingship grew out of his critique of Plato:

Even if divine and worthy of admiration in all other respects, Plato was utterly reckless when he made the statement that evils will never cease for mankind until philosophers are kings or kings philosophize. This statement has been refuted and has paid its debt to time. It is proper to admire Aristotle, who slightly altered Plato's statement and made it truer. Aristotle said that it is not merely not necessary for a king to philosophize, but even a positive hindrance; and that the king should listen to and take the advice of those who truly philosophize. For so he would enrich his reign not merely with words but with good deeds.

²⁸ See particularly Strauss (*supra*, n. 8) 121-8. J. M. Cooper believes that the philosopher's ultimate end is "to maximize the total amount of rational order in the world as a whole", that "a true philosopher never concerns himself merely with his own good", and that "any philosopher who ever opts for the mixed life will actually be more εὐδαιμόνων than any who opts for a purely intellectual life" ("The Psychology of Justice in Plato", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14, 1977, 155-7), but does not adduce the slightest evidence in the text of the *Republic* for these claims, nor is there any.

²⁹ This silence of course is deliberate; for a possible explanation cf. Strauss (*supra*, n. 8) 122.

Themistius does not explain why, according to Aristotle, it is best for a king not to philosophize, but – since this statement is an explicit criticism of Plato – his view obviously grows out of difficulties he perceives in the account of the rule of the philosopher-kings in the *Republic*. In considering φιλοσοφία an impediment to ruling, Aristotle apparently recognizes that the activity of philosophizing, as Plato conceives it, precludes the voluntary rule of those most able to do so, and in making his king's virtue heroic rather than philosophical he seeks to avoid the conflict of interest that arises from forcing the philosopher to abandon his εὐδαιμονία in order to rule. The king of heroic virtue will not have his εὐδαιμονία destroyed by losing the leisure to engage in philosophical activity, for he seeks to display his beneficence and so to foster εὐδαιμονία among his subjects. Aristotle thus agrees with Plato that the way of life of the best regime consists in the cultivation of φιλοσοφία and that kingship is the εἶδος ἀρχῆς best suited to bring about the necessary conditions for it, but he disagrees with Plato both in the meaning he assigns to φιλοσοφία as the way of life of the best regime and in the kind of virtue which constitutes the king's incomparable virtue.

The first point may be clearly illustrated from the passage considered earlier (*supra*, p. 257) in which Aristotle makes φιλοσοφία, understood as a kind of leisured culture, the end toward which the city's activities are directed (1334a19-34), as well as from his explicit criticism of Plato in II 5 for attempting to make the city a unity by destroying the natural difference between city and household rather than by habits, φιλοσοφία and laws (1263b36-40). It is hardly plausible that Aristotle forgot that it was precisely the scheme of philosophical education outlined in *Republic* VI-VII upon which Plato rested his hopes for the unification of the city. What Aristotle objects to, rather, is that Plato conceives φιλοσοφία narrowly as theoretical contemplation rather than more broadly as intellectual culture.³⁰ This difference in the way in which Plato and Aristotle understand φιλοσοφία as the way of life of the best regime stands at the core of their different analyses of the kind of kingship necessary to promote it in the best regime.

This consideration leads us to the second point of disagreement. For Plato the δεσποτική ἀρχή exercised by the philosopher-kings over their subjects, their δούλοι, is based solely upon their ἐπιστήμη: only philosophers are capable of genuine virtue, and therefore only they have a natural

³⁰ Aristotle's use of φιλοσοφία in this broad sense is also attested by his repeated references in his discussion of music education to "those engaged in philosophy" (1341b29, 33, 1342a31), where he is plainly referring to Aristoxenus (cf. Lord [*supra*, n. 10] 214-7).

title to rule.³¹ By broadening the meaning of φιλοσοφία to encompass activities in which an entire body of intelligent and thymoeidetic men may find the locus of their εὐδαιμονία, Aristotle undermines Plato's justification for the rule of the philosopher-kings. His agreement with Plato concerning the natural superiority of kingship in the case of the best regime thus is fully compatible with his general polemic against Plato's views on the εἶδη ἀρχῆς,³² for his kings are paragons of heroic virtue, not philosophers, and his preference for kingship in this instance derives from the integral connexion between a regime's εἶδος ἀρχῆς and the way of life it is intended to promote.

* * * *

Aristotle's doctrine that kingship founded upon heroic virtue is the εἶδος ἀρχῆς most suited to promote the φιλοσοφία which constitutes the way of life of his best regime represents an ingenious and comprehensive solution to the difficulties he sees in the rule of Plato's philosopher-kings. He bases the king's natural title to permanent rule upon heroic rather than philosophical virtue in order to preserve not only the ruler's εὐδαιμονία, which Plato destroyed by forcing his philosophers to rule contrary to their interest, but also, by releasing them from un leisured political activity, that of the true philosophers (i.e. those capable of φιλοσοφία θεωρητική) and of the citizen body as a whole. Aristotle buys this solution to Socrates' problem, however, as we have seen, at the cost of severing the common ground between the virtue of ruler and ruled. One who doubts, in the end, that such a regime could ever be realized in deed may best regard the relation between heroic kingship and πολιτική ἀρχή as analogous to that between the unrealizable best regime of the *Republic* and the more practical, second-best alternative of the *Laws*, an analogy made all the more

³¹ Cf. e.g. 590c-d. Nothing is more revealing of the implications for governance of Plato's identification of virtue with ἐπιστήμη than his frequent use of δουλεία denote the proper condition of subordinates: δουλεία to the laws constitutes the core of citizen virtue (*Laws* 700a; cf. G. R. Morrow, *Mind* N.S. 48 [1939] 187-8, 200-1). Aristotle repeatedly objects to the identification of virtue with ἐπιστήμη (cf. 1144b17-30; *EE* 1216b3-25, 1246b33-6; [Ps.-Ar.] *MM* 1182a15-23, 1183b8-18, 1190b28-32), and by assigning certain kinds of virtue to those who do not possess ἐπιστήμη in the full sense he does away with the basis for understanding governance as a kind of despotism (consider particularly *Politics* I 13).

³² Cf. *supra*, n. 5.

fitting by the Athenian Stranger's description of the best regime of the *Republic* as a "city of gods".³³

Princeton University

³³ *Laws* 739d-e. Aristotle correctly recognizes that the "second-best" regime of the *Laws* by virtue of its abandonment of radical communism is only a more practical version of the best regime of the *Republic*, as the Athenian Stranger himself suggests (cf. 1265a1-9, 1264b26-8 and 1265b31-1266a6 with *Laws* 739a-e, 711a-712a and 875c-d), and therefore that it presupposes the same scheme of education and the rule of the same philosophy (cf. H. Cherniss, *Gnomon* 25, 1953, 377-9; Pangle [*supra*, n. 16] 376-7, 459-62, 504, 509-10).