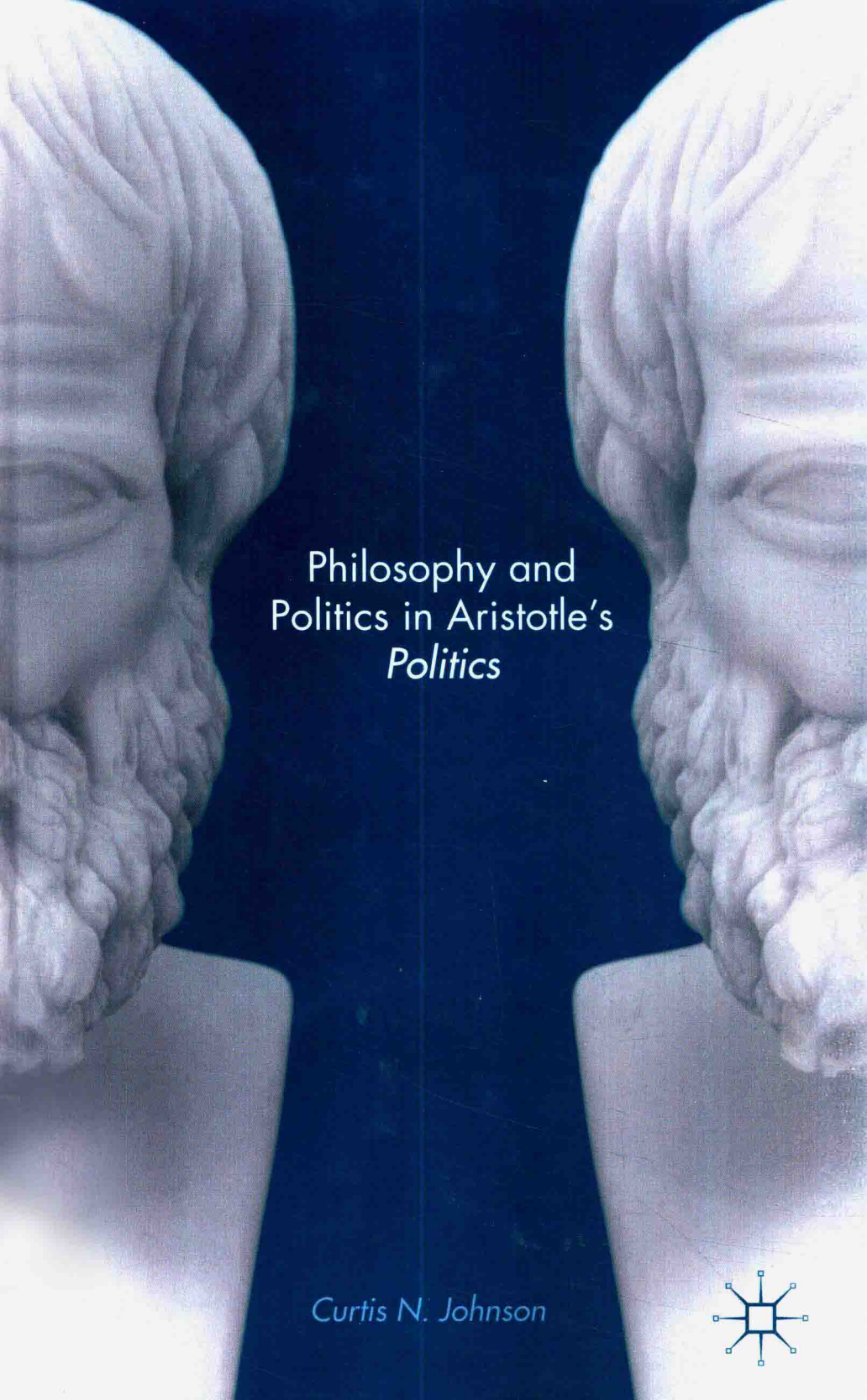

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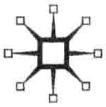

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For Sophia, Alexis and Loretta

Preface

I owe the title of this book to reflections upon Aristotle's target audience for the *Politics*. He intended it, of course, mainly for students in his school, the Lyceum in 4th century BCE Athens. The school was large for its time. Aristotle's successor as headmaster, Theophrastus, could count about 2,000 students enrolled (Grayeff, 1975, 39–41)—about the size of many liberal arts colleges in the United States today. The range of subjects was also vast by comparison with the other schools of that time. Cicero reports that young men at the Lyceum were studying and preparing for all walks of professional life—oratory, history, mathematics, music, and all of the known sciences. After graduation, students went out from the Lyceum to put their acquired knowledge to useful work around the Greek world and beyond.

The *Politics*, one can surmise, would have had special appeal to only a subset of those students, namely aspiring philosophers (*philosophoi*) and statesmen (*politikoi*). That it was written for would-be statesmen is generally conceded (e.g., *NE* I. ii 1294a26–28; I. iii 1295a1–14; Kraut, 2002, 386–96). One way of reading the book is to recognize that it contains a great deal of "advice" for future leaders. This purpose is evident, for example, in Aristotle's counsel about how to preserve constitutions, how to improve constitutions and citizens, who should be admitted into citizenship, how to prevent revolutionary change, and more generally how to be a successful leader. Leaders need skill, vision, and wisdom in practical affairs to achieve the aims of virtuous statescraft, and Aristotle wants to help these people (*Pol.* 1253a2–4; cf. 1324a28–29; *NE* 1177b19–28; Hansen, 2013, 27; Rosler, 2005, chapter 4). The questions above are for men who had their sights on political careers.

It may be less clear that the book was written also for philosophers. Their interest in politics is at best indirect. One way of putting this, as Aristotle did himself (*NE* III. iii 1112b12–16), is that "statesmen" (*politikoi*) are interested only in actions that are in their control, or with the means for achieving desired ends; they do not, *qua* statesmen,

deliberate about "ends." To do so is the business of the philosopher, not the actor. "The mind achieves the truth in different ways," Aristotle claims, one of these being "*prudence*" (*phronesis*), the province of the statesman, another being "*wisdom*" (*sophia*), the province of the philosopher (*NE* VI. iii 1139b15–18; VI. v 1140b31–1141a3; VI. vii 1141a16–27). Philosophers are not drawn to the political arena from a desire to participate in the hurly-burly of practical affairs. They may, it is true, have had an interest in ***advising*** leaders about proper courses of action, as Aristotle himself evidently did, but they would be just as happy, or even happier, staying away from ordinary political activity altogether and instead engaging in private conversations with individuals, as Socrates did, or even absorbing themselves in "pure contemplation." Can the *Politics* be read as intended for this group of men also?

It seems to me it can and should be. In fact, seeing two different audiences for the book helps to make sense of the structure and logic of the entire treatise, both of which have long been regarded as puzzling, to say the least, among Aristotle scholars. It helps us to see some parts as addressed specifically to future politicians, but other parts do not make much sense for that audience. The latter are much more abstract and philosophical than of any immediate practical value and so must have been written for a different group of students.

The book that follows tries to clarify the distinction. As a preliminary, however, one might test the hypothesis by considering the questions of central concern to this study, all stemming in one way or another from our primary question: what is the essential nature of the state (*politeia*)? Why, for example, would a politician have any interest in the definition or essential nature of the polis? Why should he care that the constitution is ***defined as*** "the organization of the state with respect to its political offices"? Why should he even care to know what a "definition" in its proper sense is? While it might matter to a statesman—and we hope it would!—to know that states come in "right" and "deviant" forms and to have some idea about the difference between them, why should the further refinements of constitutional taxonomy, e.g., that oligarchies and democracies come in four different varieties each, that there are three forms of tyranny, or that constitutions are to be classified by using multiple differentiae simultaneously, be of much immediate practical use to the person of public affairs? Even Aristotle's discussion of the question "what is justice and what are its varieties?" could well go beyond the immediate interests of many statesmen. Perhaps in a general way such questions may be of practical value, but the great detail and high-level

abstractions that Aristotle brings forward would seem to be less so. Unless Aristotle believes the statesman, even the virtuous statesman, is something akin to Plato's philosopher-rulers, it is hard to imagine that many of them, if any, would care about such matters. And yet these are some of the most important questions that occupy Aristotle's attention in the *Politics*.

Unfortunately, the *Politics* is not explicitly divided into two named parts: "For the Philosopher" and "For the Statesman." One thus must make guesses both that two audiences are intended and which parts are intended for which audience. It is also perhaps unfortunate that the two parts are often thoroughly intermingled. Book I, for example, seems to have both theoretical value (e.g., Aristotle's reflections about the nature of "nature") and practical value (e.g., what is the proper role of masters, husbands, women, and slaves in the household). But with a little imagination and educated guesswork one may try to disentangle the "politics" from the "philosophy" in the *Politics*.

I do not mean to exaggerate. Some questions raised in the *Politics* no doubt are of interest to philosophers and statesmen alike. Not everything in the text is black or white. Nor shall I try to engage in much detail regarding another question that would help us work through the distinctions I am making: Is the treatise to be read as a *normative* work, mainly giving prescriptions to would-be actors, or mainly as a *descriptive* or an *empirical* study, only setting out in factual language the shape and structure of the political universe, an approach that would probably be of greater interest to philosophers than actors? Many parts of the work might be read either way. I should observe, however, as my small contribution to this controversy, that even when Aristotle seems to be at his most "prescriptive," he has a habit of casting many of his statements, in effect, as hypotheticals: *if* the statesman wants to achieve "x" (e.g., to create a more moderate state, or to reduce the probability of revolutionary change, or to provide conditions for the promotion of virtue among the citizens), *then* these are the steps that he or she should take (Johnson, 2008). Such hypotheticals are easily read as choices Aristotle himself would make were he in a position to do so, and they are often read this way today. But, strictly speaking, they are descriptive, not prescriptive statements.

I shall confine myself mainly to identifying and analyzing what I regard as "philosophical" issues in the *Politics*, ones that on any account would be hard to read as prescriptions. Only in the final two chapters do I take on what seem to me to be eminently "practical" questions, questions for future statesmen: what is the best *attainable* constitution (treated mainly in parts of Books III and IV)? And

what is the absolutely *ideal* constitution, the one we should "pray for" (treated mainly in Books VII and VIII)? Both questions may be read, I think, as giving advice to rulers: "if you want one of these two forms of constitution, these are the things you should know and the things you should do." Implicit in this "advice" is the supposition that good—i.e., virtuous—statesmen would *want* to achieve one of these goals.

This book thus presents one way of reading the *Politics*. It is not exactly an "introduction" to the *Politics*, but I have written it in a way that I hope makes the *Politics*—a difficult book by any account—more accessible than it otherwise might be to students and teachers who have an interest in Aristotle's political philosophy but who are not necessarily Aristotle scholars. I thus have written it with minimal use of Attic Greek phrases and expressions—no familiarity with the ancient Greek language is necessary—and with no footnotes. Abundant references to ancient texts and modern scholarship may be found in the in-text citations for students who wish to explore specific questions more fully.

A final point: my approach to the *Politics* is admittedly concerned with a different set of questions than those one normally encounters in modern studies. I am not particularly concerned with what today would be called Aristotle's political philosophy: was he a democrat, a liberal, a totalitarian, a monarchist, an aristocrat, a republican, or what have you? Nor am I interested in what type of freedom he favored (several candidates have been proposed). I do not address what is the proper way to understand his assertion that the citizen is a "part" of the polis in the same way that the hand is a "part" of the body, or that a person living outside the polis is either a beast or a god. Some scholars ask how Aristotle could have been so wrong about "natural slaves" (i.e., that they exist), or about women and wives (i.e., that they lack the deliberative capacity that would make them eligible to participate in politics). But those, and many others, are not my questions.

I do not mean to diminish the interest or importance of these questions. They are simply questions with which I am not especially concerned in this book. My interest is to clarify the distinction between the theory and the practice of politics in Aristotle's *Politics*. Again, I have tried to supply ample and current references to the best recent scholarship addressing these questions in the in-text citations and bibliography for those who are interested.

Acknowledgments

I have many debts. The first I wish to acknowledge are to the many current Aristotelian scholars whose works have brought Aristotle to the forefront of modern studies. A partial list must include Jonathan Barnes, J. M. Cooper, Eugene Garver, M. H. Hansen, David Keyt, Richard Kraut, Fred Miller, Jr., Josh Ober, Andres Rosler, N. D. Smith, among many others. Their scholarship has made clear, yet again, how important Aristotle studies have been to audiences through the ages, a truism that perhaps is even more pertinent today. Aristotle remains after all these centuries the preeminent philosopher of politics. In fact, he has been uniquely known through the ages simply as "The Philosopher." It is hard to dispute that title. His works repay close study.

More directly, I need to thank the many scholars who have read and commented on parts of the current work: Nicholas Smith, Ron Polanski, John Bussanich, Thomas Brickhouse, Mark McPherran, Thomas Lindsay, and others. Their critical comments have led to improvements in the argument of this book. I must emphasize that any remaining defects are solely my responsibility.

I also must acknowledge my students at Lewis and Clark College, 1990–2013. I have worked through ideas about Aristotle with them over the years and have invariably learned much through the lenses of these students. They have confirmed my idea that Aristotle has influenced not just seasoned scholars but also younger students, who see the value in understanding how the Aristotelian polity can help us think more clearly about political matters and the challenges facing us today.

I am grateful to the following editors for granting permission to reproduce parts of my articles that were published in their journals:

"Who Is Aristotle's Citizen." *Phronesis* 29 (1984): 73–90, 1984.
"The Hobbesian Conception of Sovereignty and Aristotle's *Politics*." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 46 (1985): 327–347, 1985.

"Aristotle's Polity: Mixed or Middle Constitution,—" *History of Political Thought* 9 (1988): 189–204.
Several book reviews, *Ancient Philosophy*, 2010–2013.

I wish also to acknowledge my mentors over many years of Aristotle studies, beginning with John Schaar, Sheldon Wolin, Henry Jannsen, Herbert Deane, Julian Franklin, Hannah Pitkin, Peter Steinberger, Timothy Kaufman-Osborn, and members of the Portland Area Political Theory Discussion Group. Their contributions to my understanding of Aristotle's political thought have made this book better than it could possibly have been without them.

My greatest debts are to my wife Loretta and daughters Sophia and Alexis. I cannot thank them enough for their help in ways impossible to enumerate. I dedicate this work to them.

List of Abbreviations

The following are abbreviations to Aristotle's works as used in this volume:

Pol.	*Politics*
NE	*Nicomachean Ethics*
EE	*Eudemian Ethics*
MM	*Magna Moralia*
HA	*History of Animals*
PA	*Parts of Animals*
GA	*Generation of Animals*
MA	*Motion of Animals*
Phys.	*Physics*
Metaph.	*Metaphysics*
Ath. Pol.	*Constitution of Athens*

A Note on Aristotle's Text and Translations

I have adopted the text edited by W. D. Ross, *Aristotelis Politica* (Oxford, 1957). This is the Oxford Classical Text. I have also consulted the texts of A. Dreizehnter (Munich, 1970) and of J. Aubonnet (Paris, 1960, 1973).

I have referred to cited passages by the standard book and chapter numbers as found, say, in Barker or Lord. I have adopted the conventional manuscript order of the books of the *Politics*. I have also used the Bekker numbers (e.g., 1279 b32ff.) for every passage cited, as they are found in Rackham (in the Loeb Library series). Since Rackham's lines are not as long as Bekker's, occasionally instances of the number found in Bekker do not match perfectly those employed by Rackham. I hope the easier availability of the Rackham edition to most English readers justifies the procedure.

I have consulted the translations of Barker (1946), Reeve (1998), Lord (2013, second edition), Sinclair (revised by Saunders, 1982), and Rackham (reprinted 1972). Occasionally, for consistency, I have used my own translations, indicated as such in the text.

Contents

Introduction: Philosophy and Politics in Aristotle's *Politics*

Anyone who has spent much time with Aristotle's *Politics* knows that it is a particularly difficult work to understand in political philosophy. A "proper" interpretation on most points of interest is usually contested territory among Aristotle scholars. The challenges may be even greater for students (teachers and students alike), whether they are encountering the *Politics* for the first time or they have read it before. They may still be left with questions about a proper understanding: What is the thesis of the book? For whom is it written? What purposes did Aristotle hope to accomplish in writing it? and many others.

My aim here is to offer an interpretation of the *Politics* that centers on what I take to be the central philosophical issue raised in the work, specifically Aristotle's understanding of the nature or essence of the state. My central argument is that Aristotle's discussion of this question gives the book an inner logic that holds the many parts of the *Politics* together, however imperfectly. The question itself is not an easy one; the doctrine of the state that emerges from Aristotle's discussion of it is complicated and involved. My aim is to elucidate it. Perhaps in doing so some of the disputes about a proper interpretation of the text will be found to be less intractable as well.

One may well ask, "what Greek word am I translating here as 'state'?" Usually state is a term chosen by translators to render the Greek word *polis*, and it is often translated as "city-state." This work will engage questions about the *polis*, so in one sense this work examines Aristotle's understanding of the essence of the *polis*. But this work is really more about *politeia*, a term often rendered in English as "constitution" or "regime." I have generally tried to avoid those translations at the beginning of this work because of unintended connotations those terms may convey to a modern English-speaking audience. But, as the analysis proceeds, and we become clearer about what *politeia* meant to Aristotle, my usage will shift to "constitution" or "regime," accordingly (Hansen, 2013, chapter 3, discusses the

translations of and relationships among *politeia*, *politeuma*, and *polis* in Aristotle).

The two words, *polis* and *politeia*, are obviously related etymologically. But they are also substantively related, so much so that it is difficult to speak of *politeia* without also speaking about the *polis*. As Aristotle says, the *politeia* is the "form" of the *polis*. *Poleis* (Greek plural for *polis*) share some common features, but what differentiates poleis from one another are their respective *politeiai*. So, for this work, while both *polis* and *politeia* are central concerns, the focus will be more on the latter than the former.

I aim to advance understanding on a number of fronts. In doing so I will perform two major tasks. The first is to help those who are relatively new to Aristotelian studies attain a better comprehension of what the controversies are, especially those that have emerged in the 25 years since my *Aristotle's Theory of the State* was published (Macmillan, 1990). New studies of Aristotle's *Politics* have proliferated in that period. I will not attempt to review and comment on all the arguments, even the most important ones, in any detail, but only to indicate the general lines along which modern controversies have moved. The bibliography will give some indication of the recent contributions.

The second aim is to advance my own interpretation of the work. This will be similar in some ways to my earlier studies, but also departs from them in important ways. I hope to offer an interpretation that will be accessible both to students who are relatively new to Aristotle studies and also to more seasoned scholars who have devoted time and thought to sorting through the difficulties the text presents. I thus understand from the outset that I am aiming at two somewhat different audiences, in terms of level of experience and familiarity with Aristotle. Yet I hope to do so in a way such that both groups will find something of value in what follows.

I. MODERN CONTROVERSIES

A. The Text

Let me begin with a few very brief preliminaries about the text itself. I shall pass over the tangled history of how the text descended through the ages to modern times or related controversies about whether the text we have today is the precise text that circulated in the Lyceum. Scholars, mainly of an earlier generation, spent a good deal of effort working through these matters, but they seem largely to have passed

now from being contemporary concerns (see, for example, Hansen, 2013, and Grayeff, 1975, for introductions to some of these issues).

As to the text we have, it can seem at first to look like a total mess (cf. R. Robinson, 1962, pp. viii–ix; Frede, 2005, 168). Does it cohere as a single work? Did Aristotle even write it himself? Many scholars have assumed that it is not and was not intended by Aristotle to be an integrated treatise, but rather is a compilation of notes jotted down by students during Aristotle's lectures and then loosely assembled into a single book by a later editor. Others doubt that the eight books comprising the treatise are ordered properly. For example, some would place Books VII–VIII just after Book II or perhaps Book III, and then place Books IV–VI at the end of the treatise. In other words, the *logic* of the treatise is sometimes called into question on the basis of how the eight books have been arranged (see Kraut, 2002, chapter 6, for a recent review of the controversies).

Then we have the old controversy about whether the book is intended mainly as a treatise about "the best state absolutely" or mainly as a treatise about "deviant" regimes. The first person to push home this question with special vigor was the great Aristotle scholar Werner Jaeger (1923, translated into English in 1934) and it continues to find adherents today. This question is often referred to as the "idealism vs. realism (or empiricism)" question or the "developmental" question, on the grounds that Jaeger argued the complex structure of the *Politics* could best be understood as reflecting different stages in Aristotle's intellectual development. This, he claimed, is what gives the work its disjointed appearance, and it is one factor that prompted Jaeger to decide the conventional ordering of the books is incorrect and needs to be changed more clearly to separate out the various stages of his development. Most scholars today have abandoned the Jaegerian approach.

B. Was Aristotle a "Communitarian" or a "Liberal" Thinker?

The attributions "liberal" and "communitarian" may seem to point more to modern debates in political theory than to ancient ones, but recently they have been recruited for construing Aristotle's thought. The issue is about whether Aristotle was a proto-"liberal" thinker. Those supporting this view hold that, without going as far as Hobbes or Locke down the "liberal" way, Aristotle still finds room for a doctrine of "natural rights" in his theory and thus an obligation on the part of the state to protect these rights for all citizens or even all inhabitants in the *polis*. One recent study has called this interpretation