

SECOND EDITION

ARISTOTLE'S POLITICS

Translated and with an Introduction, Notes,
and Glossary by Carnes Lord



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CHICAGO AND LONDON

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ARISTOTLE'S *Politics*

INTRODUCTION

To say that Aristotle's *Politics* is a classic work of political thought is to understate considerably the achievement and significance of this remarkable document. The *Politics* is a product of that singular moment in the history of the West when traditional modes of thinking in every area were being uprooted by the new mode of thinking that had made its appearance in the Greek world under the name of philosophy. It was in and through the elaboration of a philosophic-scientific approach to natural and human phenomena by the ancient Greeks—above all, by Plato and Aristotle—that the intellectual categories of the Western tradition took shape. The significance of Aristotle's *Politics* lies in the first instance in the fact that it represents the earliest attempt to elaborate a systematic science of politics.

The subject matter of the *Politics* is “politics” in its original sense—the affairs of the polis, the classical city-state. The word *polis* cannot be translated by the English “state” or its modern equivalents because *polis* is a term of distinction. It denotes a political form that is equally distant from the primitive tribe and from the civilized monarchic state of the ancient East. The polis, the form of political organization prevailing in the Greek world during its greatest period (roughly the eighth to the third century BC), was an independent state organized around an urban center and governed typically by formal laws and republican political institutions.¹ It is in important respects

1 · Of the classical city-states of the Greek world (see map, p. xlvii), Athens and Sparta are the best known to contemporary readers, yet in many ways, especially in population and extent of territory, they were exceptional. Kathleen Freeman, *Greek City-States* (New York, 1950), remains a useful introduction. See, more recently, Hansen 1991, 1993, 1998.

the forerunner, if not the direct ancestor, of the constitutional democracies of the contemporary West.²

Politics in its original sense is at once narrower and broader than politics in the contemporary sense. It is narrower in virtue of its association with an essentially republican political order, but broader by the fact that it encompasses aspects of life which are today regarded as both beyond and beneath politics. The *Politics* trespasses on ground that would today be claimed by the disciplines of economics, sociology, and urban planning, as well as by moral philosophy and the theory of education.

Yet the scope and range of the *Politics* represents more than a passive reflection of its historical moment. By exhibiting the complex unity of the elements of human life and the manner of their fulfillment in the polis and the way of life it makes possible, Aristotle provides at once an articulation of the phenomenon of politics in the fullness of its potential and a powerful defense of the dignity of politics and the political life. For this reason above all, the *Politics* is an original and fundamental book—one of those rare books that first defines a permanent human possibility and thereby irrevocably alters the way men understand themselves.

This much may be said at the outset regarding the general character and significance of the work before us. Before entering on a fuller consideration of the *Politics*, it is essential to present some account of Aristotle himself and the age in which he lived and wrote.

I

Aristotle's life is frequently presented as one of virtually uninterrupted devotion to study, with little connection to the great events of the age. To the extent that his well-attested relationship with the rulers of Macedon is acknowledged, it tends to be viewed as a sort of historical curiosity with few implications for Aristotle's own activity. Yet a good case can be made for quite a different interpretation. Although the evidence bearing on Aristotle's life is very incomplete and often conflicting and unreliable, it seems highly likely that he was more active politically on behalf of Macedon, and that his fortunes were more intimately bound up with those of its rulers, than is commonly supposed. At the same time, it appears that the traditional picture of Aristotle as a close associate and admirer of Alexander and his works is, at best, very overdrawn.³

2 · See, notably, Ober and Hendrick 1996.

3 · The case has been argued principally by Chroust (1979, 1:83–176). A comprehensive inventory of the evidence may be found in Düring 1957. On Aristotle and Alexander

Aristotle was born in 384 BC in the town of Stagira, in the Chalcidic peninsula of northern Greece. His father, Nicomachus, was court physician to Amyntas III of Macedon, and is said to have become the king's close friend and advisor; hence it would appear that Aristotle was brought up primarily in Macedonia itself. At the age of seventeen, Aristotle was sent to Athens to pursue his education. Most reports indicate that he immediately joined the Platonic Academy, though some evidence suggests that he may have enrolled initially in the rhetorical school of Isocrates, which was then better known throughout the Greek world.⁴ He remained in Athens, in close association with Plato, for the next twenty years.

The circumstances of Aristotle's departure for Athens are of some interest. Amyntas III had died in 370/69. His eldest son and successor, Alexander, was murdered shortly thereafter by Amyntas's brother-in-law, Ptolemy of Alorus, thus initiating a dynastic struggle that was only resolved with the accession of Amyntas's younger son, Philip, in 359. It may well be that the dispatch of Aristotle to Athens in 367 had as much to do with the political turbulence at home as with the intrinsic attractions of that great center of culture and learning.

Similar considerations are likely to have played a role in Aristotle's departure from Athens in 348/47. It is usually assumed that Aristotle left the Academy after the death of Plato because of disappointment at the choice of Plato's nephew Speusippus as the new head of that institution rather than himself, and possibly because of sharpening philosophical disagreements with the followers of Plato generally. Another explanation is, however, at least equally plausible. Ten years of Philip's rule had brought internal stability to Macedon, and the beginnings of the aggrandizement of Macedonian power and influence that was shortly to make it the most formidable state in the Greek world. Athens, its traditional interests in the north of Greece menaced by these developments, found itself increasingly at odds with Philip. In the summer of 348, with the capture and sack of Olynthus, the capital of the Chalcidic Federation, Philip succeeded in bringing all of the neighboring Greek cities under his control, in spite of a belated Athenian intervention stimulated by the fiercely anti-Macedonian oratory of Demosthenes. Given

see Victor Ehrenberg, *Alexander and the Greeks*, trans. Ruth Fraenkel von Velsen (Oxford, 1938), ch. 3.

4 · See Chroust 1979, 1:96–102. Plato was not actually present in Athens at the time of Aristotle's arrival, returning from his Sicilian journey only in 365/64. The central place of rhetoric in the intellectual preoccupations of Aristotle's early years will be discussed below.

the atmosphere then prevailing in Athens, it would not be surprising if Aristotle had chosen to remove himself from the city. In fact, there is some evidence that Aristotle actually left Athens before the death of Plato; and one account explicitly states that the reason for his departure was that he was “frightened by the execution of Socrates”—that is, by the prospect of a revival of the politically motivated popular hostility to philosophy that had led to the trial and death of Plato’s famous teacher at the hands of the Athenians a half century earlier.⁵ Some forty years later, during another outburst of anti-Macedonian feeling in Athens, allegations of treasonous activity by Aristotle during the Olynthian crisis could still be used to support a motion to banish all alien philosophers from Athens.⁶

Aristotle’s next five years were spent in Asia Minor. Two former members of the Platonic Academy had established a school at Assos in the Troad under the patronage of the local ruler, Hermias of Atarneus; it was here that Aristotle first settled. There is no direct evidence that Philip had begun to contemplate the possibility of an invasion of Asia Minor at this time, but the Atarnian state, which had been created at Persian expense during a period of imperial weakness, was a natural ally and staging area for any such undertaking. Philip soon received Persian exiles at his court in Pella, and when Hermias was captured in 341 thanks to the treachery of a Greek mercenary commander and brought to the Persian capital, the torture to which he was subjected appears to have had the purpose of laying bare the nature of Macedonian intentions in Asia. Given these circumstances, it seems quite possible that Aristotle had a role in forging an understanding of some sort between the two men. There is also evidence that Aristotle traveled to Macedonia prior to going to Assos in connection with the affairs of his native Stagira, which had been captured by Philip in the previous year. It may have been at this time that his relationship with the son of his father’s patron was first firmly established.⁷ In any event, Aristotle soon became an intimate of Hermias. This remarkable man—a eunuch, by report, who had risen from slavery to become a wealthy businessman before making himself “tyrant” of Atarneus—appears to have shared Aristotle’s philosophical interests. The

5 · *II Vita Aristotelis Syriaca* 2–4 (Chroust 1979, 1:117–24).

6 · The orator Demochares, supporting the motion of a certain Sophocles, alleged among other things that letters Aristotle had sent to Macedonia at this juncture were intercepted by the Athenians (Chroust 1979, 1:121–22).

7 · Demetrius, *On Style* 29 = Aristotle, fr. 669 Rose. Aristotle’s diplomatic role with respect to Hermias is accepted by J. R. Ellis, *Philip and Macedonian Imperialism* (London, 1976), 97–98. On Hermias’s torture and death at Persian hands see further 172–73.

personal attachment of the two men is reflected in Aristotle's marriage to Hermias's niece and adopted daughter, Pythias.

Possibly because of the increasing precariousness of Hermias's position in the face of the revival of Persian power under Artaxerxes Ochus, Aristotle left Assos in 345/44 for nearby Mytilene on the island of Lesbos. Then, in 343/42, he was invited by Philip to take up residence in Macedonia and—according to tradition—undertake the education of his son Alexander, future conqueror of the Persian Empire.

At the time of Aristotle's arrival, Alexander was thirteen years old. Within two years he would be heavily engaged in the affairs of the kingdom as regent during Philip's prolonged absence on campaign in Thrace, and subsequently as one of his commanders in the campaign that culminated in the decisive battle of Chaeronea in central Greece in 338. In view of these circumstances, it is difficult to imagine that Aristotle's influence can have been as decisive in the formation of Alexander's outlook as is often assumed. Moreover, there is reason to wonder whether the traditional account of their relationship can actually be sustained on the basis of the evidence available. That Aristotle acted as Alexander's personal tutor by no means represents the consensus of his biographical tradition, and is not supported by any contemporary sources.⁸ As regards philosophical affiliation, it has been persuasively argued that Alexander's political ideas were closer to Cynic cosmopolitanism than to the views of Plato or Aristotle.⁹

The most plausible explanation is that Aristotle was summoned by Philip to establish a school for the education of the sons of the Macedonian gentry, and only secondarily, if at all, for the sake of Alexander. Philip appears to have been concerned to inspire a spirit of unity and loyalty in the fractious nobles of his large and heterogeneous domains. One of his most significant measures to this end was the creation of a body known as the Royal Pages, adolescent sons of the nobility who were brought to Philip's court to prepare them for service to the monarchy and to Philip personally. Though evidence is lacking, it is plausible to imagine that Aristotle was charged with the education—an education in any case centered most probably on literary and rhetorical rather than philosophical subjects—of this select and important group. Among his students may have been the sons of Antipater, the re-

8 · Indeed, there is a competing tradition according to which Alexander's principal tutors were Leonidas, a relative of his mother Olympias, and a certain Lysimachus of Acarnania. See generally Chroust 1979, 1:125–32.

9 · See, for example, W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great* (Cambridge, 1948); Ernst Badian, "Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind," *Historia* 7 (1958): 425–44.

gent of Macedonia during Aristotle's first several years there as well as subsequently, and Ptolemy, the founder of the Lagid dynasty in Egypt, who was to be an important patron of the Peripatetic school after Aristotle's death. Aristotle evidently formed a close friendship with Antipater during these years, a friendship which seems to have been maintained through a regular correspondence after Aristotle's return to Athens.¹⁰

The extent of Aristotle's association with Philip himself is not known. Philip was absent from Pella during much of the period of Aristotle's stay. When the king again turned his attention to Greek affairs, however, Aristotle may well have played some advisory role, particularly with respect to Athens.¹¹ And we shall see that there is some evidence linking Aristotle to the political settlement imposed by Philip on the Greeks under the name of the League of Corinth. If Aristotle did have a hand in facilitating the reconciliation of the Athenians with Philip, it would help to explain his decision to return permanently to the city in 335. In spite of the renewed fighting that followed the assassination of Philip in 336 and Alexander's decidedly less gentle handling of the rebellious Greeks, Aristotle could still count on a store of popular good will sufficient to neutralize at least in part the resentment generated by his long-standing Macedonian associations. It may also be that Aristotle felt less welcome in a Macedonia now dominated by the partisans of Alexander.¹²

The next twelve years, during which Alexander destroyed the Persian Em-

10 · The location of the school appears to have been at a site near the city of Mieza (in the mountains southwest of the capital Pella) known as the Nymphaion (Ellis, 160–62).

11 · One of the Arabic biographies of Aristotle (*IV Vita Aristotelis Arabica* 17–19) records an inscription supposed to have been set up on the Acropolis honoring Aristotle's benefactions, and specifically his intervention with Philip on Athens's behalf. It makes sense to connect this with the circumstances of the Amphissan War of 338 and the aftermath of the battle of Chaeroneia, when Philip behaved with great leniency toward defeated Athens (Chroust 1979, 1:133–44).

12 · A crisis in the relationship between Alexander and his father was created by Philip's decision in 337 to contract a new marriage with the Macedonian noblewoman Cleopatra. Although polygamy seems to have been an accepted royal practice, Alexander and his mother, Olympias, apparently saw this step as a threat to his succession. That Olympias was implicated in the assassination of Philip in the year following, as some sources claim, is unlikely, but it is not impossible that the later factional struggle between Olympias and the family of Antipater had its roots in this period, and that Aristotle's close identification with Philip and Antipater had placed him in an awkward position.

pire and extended Macedonian power as far as India and Central Asia, were relatively uneventful ones in Greece. Antipater presided effectively over the settlement of Greek affairs begun by Philip and Alexander. Athens continued as an independent state under a democratic regime, and even enjoyed something of a revival in consequence of the financial and military reforms of Lycurgus, its leading politician; but its foreign policy remained highly circumscribed. It was during this period that Aristotle founded his own school there, the Lyceum, established a program of systematic research and teaching in virtually every area of knowledge, and composed many if not most of the works currently extant under his name.¹³

The relative tranquility of this era was shattered by the death of Alexander in 323. News of this event led to a general anti-Macedonian uprising throughout Greece, in which Athens played a prominent role. A force under the Athenian general Leosthenes defeated Antipater and besieged his army in the town of Lamia; only the arrival of reinforcements from Asia permitted the Macedonians to recover their position. In this atmosphere, Aristotle was indicted on a charge of impiety in connection with the poem he had composed years before honoring Hermias of Atarneus. Remarking that he did not wish Athens to sin a second time against philosophy, Aristotle withdrew to the city of Chalcis on the nearby island of Euboea, where his mother's family owned property and a Macedonian garrison offered protection. He died there in 322. In the year following, Antipater brought the Lamian War to a close with the forced surrender of Athens, the suppression of its democratic regime, and the installation of Macedonian troops in the fort of Munychia.

The *Politics* itself is singularly uninformative concerning Aristotle's view of Macedon and the two men who were responsible for its rise to greatness. In spite of the wealth of detail he provides on the political events and circumstances of the Greece of his day, Aristotle refers explicitly only once to Philip, and never to Alexander, although the reference to Philip in book 5 as already dead indicates that Alexander must have attained considerable prominence by the time the *Politics* was written. There is one passage, however, which is of great interest in this connection. In the course of a discussion of the relative rarity of the regime based on the "middling" element in a city as distinct from the rich or poor, Aristotle notes that "those who have achieved leadership in Greece" (he appears to think of Athens and Sparta) have looked only

13 · For useful historical background relating to the Lyceum, see J. P. Lynch, *Aristotle's School* (Berkeley, 1972).

to their own regimes and established democracies or oligarchies, with the result that the middling regime has come into being infrequently if at all. He then adds: "For of those who have previously held leadership, one man alone was persuaded to provide for this sort of arrangement, whereas the custom is established now even among those in the cities not to want equality, but either to seek rule or endure domination." In spite of the absence of a learned consensus as to the identity of the individual in question, consideration of the context of the reference and the absence of plausible alternatives can leave little doubt, I believe, that Philip is meant. Philip was officially designated "leader" (*hēgemōn*) in his capacity as head of the League of Corinth, and the constitution of the League contained measures that were designed to moderate the struggle of rich and poor within member cities.¹⁴

If this interpretation is correct, the implications are considerable. It would appear that Aristotle looked with some sympathy on the quasi-federal League of Corinth, and regarded the Macedonian hegemony in Greece not as a necessary evil but as a potential instrument for remedying the historic defects of the domestic politics of the cities. Accordingly, there is reason to suppose that Aristotle would have welcomed in principle the restricted democracy imposed on Athens, first by Antipater in 321 and then by Demetrius of Phaleron—a politician schooled in Aristotle's Lyceum—in the name of Antipater's son Cassander in 317.¹⁵

Does Aristotle's apparent closeness to Philip and his views also mean that he approved the tendency of Philip's foreign policy, in particular his projects of conquest in the East? To what extent can he be supposed to have favored

14 · *Pol.* 4.11.1296a32–b2. The seemingly pointed use of the word "persuaded" in this context might be intended to suggest some involvement in the matter by Aristotle himself. Various figures prominent in the domestic politics of the Greek cities have been suggested (notably, the Athenian politician Theramenes; see for example Newman, 1:470–71), but the context almost certainly refers to interstate relations. Particularly revealing is the phrase "now even among those in the cities," the contrast apparently being between contemporary Greek politicians, their older counterparts, and leaders from outside the world of the polis, i.e. Philip. The identification has been made by Wilhelm Oncken, *Die Staatslehre des Aristoteles* (Leipzig, 1875, 2:267), and Maurice Defourny, *Aristote: Études sur la politique* (Paris, 1932, 534 ff.). The terms of the peace agreed to at the Congress of Corinth in 338/37 appear from [Demosthenes] 17.15; see the account of Ellis, 204–8. Cities were enjoined from actions such as unlawful executions or banishments, confiscation of property, dispersal of land, cancellation of debts, or emancipation of slaves, where these things might endanger the existing regime.

15 · For Demetrius see W. W. Fortenbaugh and Eckard Schütrumpf, eds., *Demetrius of Phalerum* (New Brunswick, NJ: 2000).

the growth of Macedonian imperialism? When Aristotle remarks, in book 7 of the *Politics*, that the Greek nation has the capacity to rule all men “if it should unite in a single regime,”¹⁶ he has been frequently understood as endorsing both the political integration of Greece under Macedonian leadership and Alexander’s war of conquest against the Persian Empire. A similar meaning is often found in the advice Aristotle is said to have given Alexander to treat the Greeks “after the fashion of a leader but the barbarians after the fashion of a master, demonstrating concern for the former as friends and kin, but behaving toward the latter as toward animals or plants.”¹⁷ Apart from the very questionable authenticity of this citation, the evidence of the *Politics* hardly bears out the notion that Aristotle supported the conquest and subjugation of foreign peoples as a principle of policy. Indeed, he is explicitly critical of such a view of international behavior, and is at pains to distinguish between the legitimate use of military force for the acquisition and maintenance of “hegemony” and its illegitimate use for unprovoked conquest.¹⁸ As regards the “chauvinism” with which Aristotle is regularly taxed, it must be noted that he has high praise for the accomplishments of the Carthaginians, a conspicuous example of a non-Greek yet polis-dwelling people. That so-called barbarians and slaves were indistinguishable for him, as is sometimes asserted on the basis of several remarks in the *Politics*, cannot be seriously maintained.¹⁹

This is by no means to argue that Aristotle was indifferent to the Persian threat to Greece or unsympathetic to Philip’s efforts to counter it. There is, however, a considerable difference between eliminating or diminishing the Persian presence in Asia Minor and overthrowing the entire Persian Empire. When Isocrates, in his exhortation to Philip to turn his energies against Persia, canvassed the strategic possibilities available to the king, he identified three: the conquest of the entire empire, the detachment of Asia Minor “from Cilicia to Sinope,” and the liberation of the Greek cities of the coast.

16 · *Pol.* 7.7.1327b32–33.

17 · Plutarch, *On the Fortune of Alexander* 1.6 = Aristotle, fr. 658 Rose. See, for example, Oncken, 2.287 ff.; Defourny, 488, 494–95, 527–45; and Hans Kelsen, “The Philosophy of Aristotle and the Hellenic-Macedonian Policy,” *Ethics* 48 (1937): 1 ff.

18 · *Pol.* 7.2–3, 14–15 (particularly 1338b38–34a2). For a full discussion of these passages, see Lord 1982, 189–96.

19 · Aristotle makes clear, for example, that at least certain barbarians are abundantly endowed with a psychological disposition that leads them to desire freedom from foreign domination and even rule over others (*Pol.* 7.2.1324b5–22, 7.1327b23–27). Carthage is discussed in 2.1.

After the battle of Issus in 333, the Persian king Darius twice offered Alexander a settlement essentially corresponding to the second of these options. Alexander was urged to accept the offer by his senior commander, Parmenion, who appears to have been intimately involved in Philip's planning of the enterprise, and this may well be reflective of his original intention.²⁰

As regards the relationship between Macedon and Greece proper, there is good evidence that Philip was committed to a genuinely hegemonial rather than an imperial role with respect to the Greek cities, though it must be admitted that strategic considerations had somewhat eroded this distinction even in his own lifetime. By contrast, it is clear that Alexander became increasingly disinclined to treat Greece or Greeks on a privileged basis, whether out of a high-minded devotion to Cynic principles or a fascination with the trappings of oriental despotism. Alexander's execution of Aristotle's nephew Callisthenes in 328 for his refusal to do obeisance in Persian style, a pathological symptom of this development, permanently poisoned the relationship between Alexander and the Peripatetic school;²¹ but it should not be assumed to have been the governing factor in Aristotle's view of Alexander. Unsatisfactory as the evidence is, it seems relatively safe to suppose that Aristotle was personally and politically closer to Philip from the beginning than to his extraordinary son.

II

Interpretation of the *Politics* is significantly complicated by a tangle of questions concerning the character and composition of this work and of Aristotle's writings generally. The interpretation of any work of political theory must depend importantly on one's view of the kind of work it is and the audience for which it was composed, or what may be called the literary character of the work in a broad sense. Is the *Politics* a finished book composed with at least ordinary care? Or is it an accretion of notes used by Aristotle as the basis of a course of lectures? Is the *Politics* a theoretical treatise addressed only to advanced students within Aristotle's school? Or is it addressed rather to a wider audience whose concerns are predominantly practical ones? These questions continue to elude easy resolution.

In the second place, the specific difficulties posed by the text of the *Politics* continue to be regarded by some as convincing evidence of a lack of unity

20 · I follow here the account of Ellis, 227–34.

21 · See Philip Merlan, "Isocrates, Aristotle and Alexander the Great," *Historia* 3 (1954–55), 78–81; Chroust 1979, 1:83–91.

or coherence in the work as a whole. According to the very influential view originated in the early decades of the twentieth century by Werner Jaeger, the *Politics* is essentially an amalgam of two separate treatises or collections of treatises written at different times and embodying different and conflicting approaches to the study of political phenomena. Jaeger's view, and the interpretation of Aristotle's intellectual development on which it rests, amounts in effect to a denial of the very existence of Aristotelian political theory as a single and self-consistent body of thought.²²

The corpus of writings that has come down to us under the name of Aristotle represents only a portion of his original output. According to evidence supplied by various ancient sources and confirmed by references in the extant writings themselves, Aristotle's works fall into two broad categories: finished literary productions intended for circulation or use with a general audience, and a variety of more specialized works intended to support the research and teaching activities of the Lyceum. To the first category belong dialogues and treatises dealing primarily with moral, political, and literary subjects. Some or all of these writings are generally supposed to be identical with the so-called exoteric discourses (*hoi exōterikoi logoi*) cited on a number of occasions in the extant treatises. With the exception of a treatise in defense of philosophy—the *Protrepticus*—which has been reconstructed in substantial part from later ancient sources,²³ these works have been largely though not entirely lost. To the second category belong a series of "catalogues" or compilations of historical and other information, and a large number of more or less elaborate and finished treatises on all subjects. Apart from a study of Athenian constitutional history discovered in the late nineteenth century, and generally assumed to form part of the massive catalogue of "constitutions" (*politeiai*) put together by Aristotle and his students (whether Aristotle himself can be considered the author of this work is not certain), most of this material has also been lost. The Aristotelian corpus as it exists today consists overwhelmingly, then, of the specialized treatises. What is the character of these works?

It is generally agreed that the specialized treatises were not intended to be "books" in the contemporary meaning of that term, but rather were connected in some way with the educational activities of the Lyceum. The precise nature of this connection, however, remains uncertain. It is often as-

22 · Werner Jaeger, *Aristoteles: Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung* (Berlin, 1921); see Jaeger 1948.

23 · Ingemar Düring, *Aristotle's Protrepticus: An Attempt at Reconstruction* (see bibliography).

sumed that the treatises are notes or outlines that were intended to serve as the basis for “lectures” given by Aristotle to students in the school. In the ancient library catalogues of the writings of Aristotle and other members of the Peripatos, there are a few entries which expressly mention “notes” (*hypomnēmata*) or “course of lectures” (*akroasis*), but for the most part only the title or subject matter of a work is given.²⁴ Of all the works appearing in the catalogues, only the *Politics* is invariably described as a “course of lectures,” but it is not clear what inference is to be drawn from this. In any case, it makes sense to suppose that the treatises served also, or even primarily, as reference works which were treated to some extent as the common property of the school and were available for the use of students. The dense and carefully argued nature of these texts in any case makes it hard to believe that they were intended to be digested by students on an oral reading.

The fact that the specialized treatises appear to be distinguished by Aristotle from the “exoteric discourses” mentioned above has suggested to some interpreters that the former were intended only for the private use of students of the Lyceum. According to an extreme version of this view that acquired currency in late antiquity, the specialized treatises are deliberately written in a crabbed and obscure style in order to make them unintelligible to all but those who had been personally instructed by Aristotle or his associates.²⁵ Yet the term “esoteric” is never used by Aristotle or any early Peripatetic, and there is no contemporary evidence to support the notion that the specialized treatises contain a secret doctrine as such, or that there were significant differences between the doctrine of the specialized treatises and the more popular works.²⁶ Nor, for that matter, is there any real evidence that the lectures given by Aristotle based on the former were always restricted to members of the Lyceum. According to one account, Aristotle regularly lectured to students of the Lyceum in the morning, while in the afternoon he would give lectures for a public audience. But even if this story were true (the

24 · The lists also contain works that were probably not used for lecture purposes—in addition to the catalogue materials, collections of “theses” for training in dialectic and rhetoric and of “problems” reflecting the results of advanced research in various fields; it is sometimes difficult to distinguish these works as listed from the specialized treatises. The lists have been analyzed exhaustively by Paul Moraux, *Les listes anciennes des ouvrages d'Aristote* (Louvain, 1951), and Düring 1957; see also the extended discussion in Lord 1986. Texts of the catalogues may be found in Düring, 41–50, 83–89, 221–31, as well as in Rose's edition of the fragments of Aristotle (see bibliography), 1–22.

25 · Aulus Gellius 20.5, Plutarch, *Alexander* 7, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 5.9.

26 · See George Boas, “Ancient Testimony to Secret Writing,” *Philosophical Review* 62 (1953): 79–92; Düring 1957, 432–43.

source is in fact highly suspect),²⁷ it would not prove that Aristotle's "exoteric" lectures were based only on the "exoteric discourses" and not at all on the specialized treatises.

But whatever the situation with respect to the other specialized treatises, a good case can be made that the *Politics*, together with the closely linked ethical writings, was intended for an audience not limited to students of the Lyceum. That the *Politics* alone is consistently described in the ancient catalogues as a "course of lectures" may indicate that the work enjoyed a special and more public status. The assumption that the *Nicomachean Ethics* was intended for a wider audience is very helpful in explaining Aristotle's otherwise curious insistence that the subject of ethics is not one that can be profitably taught to the young. More importantly, the fact that Aristotle's ethical and political writings generally are expressly distinguished by a concern to benefit action or practice (*praxis*) rather than simply to advance knowledge strongly suggests that their intended effect was conceived as reaching beyond the confines of the school.²⁸ Generally speaking, the ethical and political writings appear to be addressed less to philosophers or students of philosophy than to educated and leisured men who are active in politics and actual or potential wielders of political power.

Such a view of the character of the *Politics* is supported by the evidence of Aristotle's own political involvement, and by what little is known of his early intellectual activity. One of the earliest of Aristotle's writings was a dialogue on rhetoric, and Aristotle is said to have given lectures on or instruction in rhetoric during the time of his association with Plato's Academy. According to one account, it seems that Aristotle undertook to teach rhetoric out of dissatisfaction with the education offered in the school of Isocrates, the most prominent rhetorician of the day, and that he did so in connection with an education in "political science" (*politikē*) designed to prepare students for a life of active participation if not a career in politics.²⁹ That Aristotle may

27 · Aulus Gellius 20.5.

28 · *Eth. Nic.* 1.2.1094a18–28, 9.1099b29–32, 10.9.1179a35–b4; *Eth. Eud.* 1.5.1216b11–25.

29 · Philodemus, *On Rhetoric* (*Volumina Rhetorica* 2.50–63 Sudhaus); see Düring 1957, 299–311; Chroust 1979, 1:105–16. According to Philodemus (an Epicurean philosopher hostile to the Peripatos), who seems to be paraphrasing a lost Aristotelian work either directly or as reported in an earlier polemical writing (perhaps the treatise *Against Aristotle* by Isocrates's student Cephisodorus), Aristotle taught that "political science is part of philosophy" and spoke of the differences between it and rhetoric (50–51), encouraging the study of political science on the grounds that too early an involvement in political activity would cut one off from "purer pursuits," while the pursuit of theoretical