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"ONCE AGAIN INTO THE BREACH" OF THE DEBATE ABOUT "POLITY" IN ARISTOTLE'S POLITICAL TEACHING: ANOTHER CLOSER LOOK AT POLITICS 4 CHAPTERS 12 AND 13

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Abstract
This paper offers a reexamination of Aristotle's *Politics* 4, chapter 12–13–the so-called account of polity or the mixed regime. Aristotle suggests that the forthcoming discussion delves into either the optimal governing system in general or the most prevalent form of governance across various cities. However, upon closer examination of *Politics* 4.12–13, a distinct perspective emerges. Working off the account of the *meso* (the middle) of *Politics* 4.11, in 12–13 we are not offered an account of the best practical regime, that is of a specific regime form. Instead, Aristotle presents an account on how regimes can achieve moderation and harmony–that is stability. So instead of an account of a specific regime type, we get an account of what moderates and stabilizes regimes generally.

Keywords
Aristotle's Politics, regime, best regime, Aristotle, constitutions, polity, middle class, mixed regime

Introduction

The analyses presented in this paper focus on *Politics* 4 chapters 12 and 13, with the view of reevaluating the existing interpretations of Aristotle's political thought regarding "polity", which many argue Aristotle conceived as the best political regime. Others purport that it is in fact an alternative to the best regime, thus presenting it as a plausible argument for democracy–the rule of the many–and the potential for law to restrain it. In this article, I argue that the view of "polity" (which includes the "mixed regime") as portrayed in

Politics 4 is an anachronistic reading of the "mixed constitution" of the Middle Ages and its misapplication into Aristotle's political thought.[1]

After examining the basic forms of regimes (*politeias*) and their sub-variations in detail up in chapters 4 through 10 of *Politics 4*, Aristotle turns to the question of the best regime, or the best regime in practice.[2] Here, I argue that his aim is to identify the regime "that is best for most people" and "the best practical political community", which requires understanding of factors that moderate and stabilize political regimes. To help clarify things, the standard reading of Aristotle *Politics* is that Books 7 and 8 analyse „the best regime in theory" (or the regime one would pray for), whereas in chapters 12 and 13 of Book 4 takes up the „best regime in practice". In contrast, the author claims that in Book 4 (specifically 4.12 and 4.13), rather than making a case for the best regime in practice (that is a specific regime (*politeia*) type called *politeia*), Aristotle instead discusses the way and means (and tools) of moderating–understood in terms of stabilizing–any given regime.

When interpreting the arguments put forth in chapters 12 and 13 of *Politics* 4, the most authoritative interpreters and commentators on Aristotle and his work claim that his arguments pertain to the best regime in practice, rather than in theory (which was the topic of *Politics* 7 and 8).[3] They support this perspective by referring to Aristotle's six-fold typology of regimes where he asserts that the rule of many for the common advantage "is called by the term common to all regimes, regime" (3.7.1279a38–39). In this context, *politeia* is translated as "polity" rather than "regime", "government", or "constitution".[4] Yet, a closer look at the text reveals something different, especially in Chapter 11, which Aristotle opens by saying:

> [W]hat regime is best (*aristos*) and what way of life is best for most (*pleistais*) *polises* and most human beings (*anthpropon*), judging with a view neither to excellence (*arête*) of the sort that is beyond private persons, nor to education, in respect to those things requiring [special advantages provided by] nature and an equipment dependent on chance, nor to the regime that one would pray for, but a way of life which it is possible for most to share in, and a regime of which most *polises* can partake? (Aristotle's *Politics* 1295a25–30)

1 The most likely culprit for this erroneous perspective is Thomas Aquinas. For the best account currently available of the intellectual history of "mixed constitution" in medieval political thought, see Blythe (1992). Von Fritz (1954) argues that it was Polybius who put forth the idea of the "mixed constitution." On "polity" as "mixed-constitution" or "mixed regime" see Bluhm (1962), Eidelberg (1968), Diamond (1978), Socker and Langtry (1986), Johnson (1988), Nichols (1991), Lockwood (2006), and Cherry (2009).

2 Regarding the decision to translate *politeia* as "regime" rather than "constitution" or "political system", see Bates (2014, 142–143). With respect to the translation of Aristotle's *Politics* that is given here, it should be noted that it is a significantly modified translation provided by Lord (2013), based on the works of Newmann (1902: IV), Ross (1957), Dreizhnter (1970), Robinson (1996 [1962]), and Keyt (1997).

3 Several scholars share similar views, including Lockwood (2006), Cherry (2009, 2013), and Ober (2013).

4 Regarding the more traditional interpretation of this passage and its connection with the so-called "polity" or "mixed-regime" interpretation, see Sidgwick (1892), Bluhm (1962), Mulgan (1977, 76–77, 102–115), Diamond (1978), Colby (1986, 1988), Stocker and Langtry (1986), Johnson (1988 and 2015, 43–154), Nichols (1992, 95–99), Simpson (1998, 327–335), Bondi (2007), Pangle (2013, 181–193), and Rubin (2018). See Bates (2003, 102–121) for an argument against this view of not only translating "the *politeia* called *politeia*" but for the whole interpretation of "polity" as Aristotle's teaching about the best form of popular rule.

Now this turn "to the best" is not a repeat of the question of "what regime is the best" raised in *Politics 3* or the account provided in the extended discussion of "the regime to be prayed for" provided in *Politics* 7 and 8. The "best" here refers to that which is "best" for most the "communities" and most "human beings". According to Aristotle, we are to understand this "best" not in light of any super-ordinary excellences but rather those excellences one would find among average human beings. Consequently, many commentators and scholars argue that what is being addressed here is a more sustained account of what was traditionally labeled "polity"–"the regime (*politeia*) called regime".

Bluhm, Johnson, and Nichols, along with many others, argue that "polity" is the best regime in practice because it fulfills the teleological nature of the city. In other words, "polity" is the regime which most fully achieves human political nature in practice, and is thus not beyond actual attainment (see Bluhm 1962, 745–46; Johnson, 1988; Nichols 1991, 85–123). These authors further assert that "polity" is valid as it allows individuals to accept the validity of the regime typology (as argued in *Politics* 3.7 and *Politics* 4.2), rendering democracy a defective regime. Yet, these authors and those that share the same views seem not to fully appreciate that the six-fold regime typology of 3.7 and 4.2 is Aristotle's last word on the subject.[5] In fact, by dismissing number of rulers as a definition of either democracy or oligarchy, Aristotle seems to undermine the six-fold regime typology in *Politics* 3.8 (see Bates 2003, 84–93). Moreover, at the end of *Politics* 4.2, he sets aside the six-fold typology of regimes and develops a whole newly account of regime in *Politics* 4.3 that shapes not only *Politics* 4 but *Politics* 5 and 6 as well.

Beneficial regimes and their circumstances

After the discussion of the different types of regimes and their various sub-variations in Chapters 4 through 10 of *Politics* 4, Aristotle starts Chapter 11 by asking "what regime is best and what way of life is best for most *polises* and most human beings" (1259a25–26).[6] Yet, at the start of Chapter 12, Aristotle turns to the question of "what regime is advantageous (*sumpherei*) for which *polises*, and what sort for which sort of persons" (1296b13–14). This transition occurs because at the end of *Politics* 4.11, Aristotle seeks to distinguish the best regime from what is advantageous (or beneficial) concerning the regime. In chapters 12 and 13, he then focuses on the type of *politeia* (regime) or regime that is advantageous for a particular political community (i.e. when we speak of people who share a life together within their "country"). On this issue, I challenge the standard reading of these two chapters (as advocacy for a specific variety of regime typically referred to as "polity" or "the mixed regime"), as I interpret it as a perspective on the ways and means one could stabilize and help moderate actual regimes in specific political communities. I further argue that, in these two chapters, Aristotle is conveying to the reader the means by which a particular regime not only suits a given people, but also renders it sustainable in the long term. Thus, the character of Aristotle's regime science (described in *Politics* 4–6) is practi-

5 Several arguments supporting the rule of the many in *Politics* 3—including superiority in both deliberating and judging, and greater ability to provide for the city and the relative stability of its population, whose demands are less dangerous than those of the few who seek either honor or power—are in favor of a virtuous form of democracy rather than "polity."

6 This paper does not fully examine *Politics* 4.11 as doing so would require an extensive discussion of issues raised in Chapter 11, which is beyond the scope of this analysis. I have addressed the various issues of *Politics* 4.11 and its interpretation of the "best" elsewhere (Bates, forthcoming).

cal science that embraces the actual lived experience of human beings as political entities, rather than a theoretical (abstract) science of eternal and unchanging truths.

To make the case for the claims presented here, I will turn to Aristotle's writings in *Politics* 4.12–13 where he says, "Now the same thing must first be grasped about all of them generally: the part of the *polis* that wants the regime (*politeia*) to continue must be superior to the part not wanting this" (1296b14–17). In other words, as all political communities are unions of many discrete parts comprising members of those communities, the superior part typically imposes the regime (*politeia*) that gives the political community its political form. Owing to this connection between the regime (*politeia*) and the superior and ruling part (*politeuma*), the survival of a regime, according to Aristotle, depends on the part of the community supporting the regime being stronger and more powerful than the part that opposes or does not what the regime.

Aristotle further argues that every political community "is made up of both quality and quantity. By quality I mean freedom, wealth, education, and good birth; by quantity, the preeminence belonging to the multitude (*plethous*)" (1296b18–20). Thus, every political community can be examined in terms of a claim on quality and quantity, aligning with the regime typology that Aristotle describes in *Politics* 3.7. Specifically, he purports that the regime is to be typologized in terms of a qualitative claim (whether its rule is for the sake of common advantage or for the sake of ruler's advantage) and the quantitative claims, such as presence of one (*mono*), a few (*hoi oligoi*), or many (*hoi polloi*) rulers. In *Politics* 3.7–3.8, Aristotle argues that the quantitative claim is superfluous to the understanding of the nature of the regime (*politeia*), as other factors (such as the view of justice, way of life, and the appreciation of what is truly advantageous and disadvantageous) is far more relevant. Yet, in 4.12, we are told that a political community is defined by both qualitative and quantitative claims. Here, the qualitative claim replaces what Aristotle presented in the early regime typology of 3.7, whereas quantitative claim relates to determining who is preeminent in the community, or rather who has the authority and the ability to ensure that their authority is obeyed. These arguments resonate with what Aristotle wrote about the regime and its role in shaping the political community in earlier chapters of *Politics* 4, as well as in *Politics* 3 (albeit with some modifications). Regarding the claim of "quality" in 4.12, the statement "preeminence belonging to the multitude (*plethous*)" should not be understood as suggesting that the many (*hoi polloi*) are preeminent, but rather refers to those that are most numerous in the community, which could be the wealthy (*plousios*) as well as the poor (*aporos*).

Aristotle also examines the interactions between these two claims and their role in the type of regime that will suit a particular community. Specifically, he argues:

> It is possible that, while quality belongs to one part of the *polis* among all those of which a *polis* is constituted, and quantity to another part (for example, the ignoble may be more in number than those of good family, or the poor than the wealthy), the larger part is nevertheless not preeminent in quantity to the same extent that it falls short in quality. Hence these [two factors] must be judged in relation to one another. (1296b20–24)

In this passage, Aristotle aims to convey to the reader the importance of individual parts of a community (and their nature and claims), as those that are dominant or ruling will control those that are not. Thus, he seems to say that both quality (the value they

bring to the community) and the power and control over the community will determine who is "preeminent" in the community.

Following the two-fold connection between quality and quantity, Aristotle turns to the dynamics of this process and their connection to the regime:

> Where the multitude of the poor is preeminent, therefore, with respect to the proportion mentioned, there democracy is what accords with nature–and each kind of democracy according to the preeminence belonging to each sort of people. If, for example, the multitude of farmers predominates, it will be the first sort of democracy; if that of workers and wage earners, the last sort, and similarly for the others between these. But where the element of the well off and the notables predominates in quality to a greater extent than it falls short in quantity, there it is oligarchy that accords with nature, and in a similar manner each of its kinds according to the preeminence belonging to the oligarchic multitude. (1296b25–34)

In the above excerpt, Aristotle connects his views on the forms of democracy and oligarchy in *Politics* 4 chapters 4 through 6 to the differences of the multitudes (*plethoi*) that are ruling within the given community. Thus, the character and composition of those who are ruling will influence the kind of regime (*politeia*) that will emerge. Still, a disconnect can arise between the character of the people who are ruling a political community and the type of regime that is present in that community, but such arrangement is unnatural and only temporary. Consequently, only a regime that reflects the character of the people who are preeminent in that community will be sustained.

Next, Aristotle reaffirms the need to grow or create a middling sort (which many translators and commentators call the middle class).[7] Specifically, he argues that "[t]he lawgiver (*nomotheten*) should always add those of the middling sort to the dominant element in the regime" (1296b35–36). He further states "[i]f he enacts oligarchic laws, he ought to aim at the middling sort; if democratic ones, he ought to attach these to them" (1296b36–38). Aristotle tells us we need to do this because "[w]here the multitude of middling persons predominates either over both of the extremities together or over one alone, there a lasting regime is capable of existing" (1296b39–1297a1). Again, he highlights the role of the middling sort (or the middle class), which in his view is to provide stability and balance to a political community.[8]

In the excerpt below, Aristotle shows how the middle class provides such balance and stability to a political community:

> For there is no reason to fear that the wealthy and the poor will come to an agreement against them: neither will want to be the slaves of the other, and if they seek a regime in which they will have more in common, they will find none other than this. They would not put up with ruling in turn on account of their distrust toward one

7 The issue of the *meso* (middling sort) of *Politics* 4.11, as many suggest, points to the middle classes (see Bluhm 1962; Mulgan 1977; Stocker and Langtry 1986; Johnson 1988; Nichols 1991; Simpson 1998; Rubin 2016). The discussion of the *meso* does not pertain to a specific type of regime (*politeia*) but rather to the character of the parts that constitute any political community, especially the parts that are more conducive to having a stable form of rule against those types that bring instability.

8 On the issue of the multitude and its relevance to the question of the best regime for attaining stable and decent rule, the debate between Cammack (2013) and Cherry (2013) is particularly informative. Cammack (2013) makes a case for the virtue of the multitude and the democratic regime, whereas Cherry (2013), expanding on his previous arguments (Cherry 2009), focuses on the polity and political participation. While I concur with Cherry, I still find that Cammack (2013) ultimately has a stronger case based on the evidence provided in *Politics* 3 (see Waldon 1995; Bates 2003, 122–153; Ober 2013).

> another. The most trustworthy person everywhere is the arbitrator; but the middling person is a sort of arbitrator [between the rich and the poor]. (1297a1–7)

Here, Aristotle once again repeats what he said about the middling sort earlier in Chapter 11 – that they are more moderate part–because they lack the arrogance of the very wealthy and the envious, servile, and base character of the very poor (see 4.11.1295b36–1296a21). However, now he portrays the middling sort as the arbitrator and judge between the very rich and the very poor and argues that this capacity makes them better suited to ruling than either the very rich or the very poor. This role also mandates that the lawgivers (*nomothetes*) take care of the middle class, given that the middling sort enables a regime to be moderated to govern well for the benefit and advantage of both the ruler and the ruled.

Once again, we are prompted to appreciate the importance of the middling sort in balancing out and harmonizing the mixture that characterizes any political community. In its absence, the rich and the poor will pull and tear against each other and will ultimately cause disharmony within the community. In such a state, there will be very little peace because neither side can trust the other. Only the middle class has the capacity to play this moderating role in the community, as its members lack the extreme wealth of the very rich and will side with the poor regarding the arrogance and presumption of the wealthy. On the other hand, because they have their own property and means to survive, they do not condone the poor's desire to forcefully take assets from those who have more than they do, and thus become an ally to the rich on such matters.

This is aptly surmised by Aristotle when he says that "[t]he better the mixture in the regime (*politeia*), the more lasting it will be" (1297a7–8). Longevity is a very important character in politics–as the perpetuation of the given political order provides stability and insurance that future generations will benefit from it as much as the present ones do.

Indeed, Aristotle has a warning to those who fail to heed his lesson: "[m]any of those who want to set up aristocratic regimes as well thoroughly err not only by the fact that they distribute more to the well off (*euporos*), but also by deceiving the populace (*demos*)" (1297a8–10). Thus, those who seek the rule of the best one (*aristoi*) often wrongly assume that the best ones are those who have more than the rest. In fact, nature wants for each of us enough to live well or beautifully (*kalos*). On this issue, Aristotle further notes, "[f]or in time from things falsely good there must result a true evil, and the aggrandizements of the wealthy are more ruinous to the regime than those of the populace (*demos*)" (1297a10–14).

It is very interesting to note here what Machiavelli says in Chapter 9 of *Prince* about the "two humors of the city"–the people and the great–"the end of the people is more honest than that of the great, the latter wanting to oppress, the former not to be oppressed." Here, Machiavelli suggests that a prince ought to side with the people rather than with the great. In modern times, the people are assumed to take precedence over the great, which is counter to the view promoted by the Ancients that the best ones (*aristoi*) should support the great against the people. Aristotle thus warns us about presuming to know who the best and the good really are, as this would lead to "the false good" which may turn into a "true evil."[9]

9 In modern political and social science, guided by the insights shared by Montesquieu and Tocqueville, this idea of the middle-class political order is shaped into an argument about the so-called middle class hypothesis of democratic stability (Diamond 1978). For an updated assessment, see Lipset

The Balancing Act

Following the discussion on the balancing of the parts of the community and the need to be cautious when determining what the best lawmaking path is, in Chapter 13, Aristotle turns to the devices used by the regime to ensure the optimal balance or mix in the community. He starts by examining "the devices used in regimes as pretexts against the demos" (1297a15), arguing that the devices against the *demos* or populace "are fine in number, being connected with the assembly, the offices, the courts, armaments, and exercise" (1297a15–17). On this point, he continues:

> As regards the assembly, the device is that it is open to all to attend assemblies, but either a fine is imposed on the well-off (*euporoi*) alone for not attending, or a much larger one on them; as regards the offices, that it should not be open to those who are assessed to abjure, but it should be to the poor (*aporoi*); as regards the courts, that there should be a fine against the well-off (*euporoi*) if they do not attend, but impunity for the poor (*aporoi*), or else a large fine for the ones and a small fine for the others, as in the laws of Charondas [which was to adopt the fine to the condition of the offenders]. (1297a18–24)

In other words, these devices or tactics are used to force the well-off to participate more than they might be inclined to do in order to prevent the poor (*aporoi*) from dominating over the well-off (*euporoi*) in the regime.

Aristotle outlines other devices that would prevent the poor (*aporoi*) from shaping the policies and laws of the regime:

> In some places it is open to all to enroll themselves for the assembly and courts, but if they [those who were enrolled for the assembly or the courts] do not attend the assembly or adjudicate once they are enrolled they are fined heavily–in order that they avoid enrolling, and through not being enrolled do not adjudicate or attend the assembly. They legislate in a similar manner concerning the possession of heavy arms and exercising. It is open to those who are poor (*aporoi*) not to possess them, but the well-off (*euporoi*) are fined if they do not, while if they do not exercise there is no fine for the former, but the well-off (*euporoi*) are fined, so that the ones take part in these things on account of the fine, and the others do not take part through not being afraid of it. (1297a24–34)

Again, none of these tactics exclude the poor (*aporoi*) wishing to participate in public life, as they are intended to punish the well-off (*euporoi*) for opting out. Yet, the same penalties are not imposed on the poor (*aporoi*) choosing to opt out.

According to Aristotle, the aforementioned lawmaking devices are oligarchic in character. Conversely, lawmaking devices can be used to push the regime in a more democratic direction if the aim is to achieve a better harmony. On those democratic counter-devices, Aristotle says: "[t]o the poor (*aporoi*) they give pay for attending the assembly and adjudicating and arrange not to have the well-off (*euporoi*) fined for not attending" (1297a36–39). He further notes, "[s]o it is evident that if one wishes to have a just mixture, elements from both must be brought together–for example, the ones being provided pay, the others fined; in this way, all would participate, while in the other way the regime comes to belong to one side alone" (1297a39–b1). Clearly, the goal is to achieve the right balance within the regime so that one part (especially the very rich or the very poor) does not dominate and bring disorder to the regime.

(1959, 1994), Easterly (2001), and Fukuyama (2011), and contrast their views with the arguments presented by Rubin (2018).

On arms and the regime

Now Aristotle turns to the question of arms—the resources needed to defend the city in times of war as well as peace. He says that "a regime should be made up only of those possessing heavy arms" (1297b2). This is to say that the part that forms the regime—or the ruling part of the political community (the *politeuma*)—must have the tools to not only defend the political community from those who seek to harm it, but also to ensure that those who are unwilling to obey the law can be forced to do so, which in his view requires force. Therefore, the ruling part must use arms to impart the force needed to ensure submission or compliance.

Regarding the political community's need for such tools, Aristotle says that those who have the arms ought to be tied to the regime, allowing the regime to defend itself. Aristotle raises an interesting point about the possession of such arms when he says:

> But it is not possible to define the amount of assessment in simple fashion and say that so much must be available; rather, one should investigate what sort of amount is the largest that would let those taking part in the regime be more numerous than those not taking part and arrange for it to be this. (1297b2–6)

In other words, the regime is responsible for equipping the community with the required resources, while ensuring that those who take part in the regime are "more numerous than those not taking part." The latter condition is crucial, as suppressing those opposing the regime would require much greater force if they outnumber those that support it.

At this juncture, it should be noted that it is a truism that the arms necessary to secure and defend the political community require means the poor (*aporoi*) do not possess, as they struggle for their own survival. Regarding the poor (*aporoi*), Aristotle says that they "are willing to remain tranquil even when they take no part in the prerogatives, provided no one acts arrogantly toward them nor deprives them of any of their property" (1297b6–9). Thus, they will not rebel against the regime as long as the regime does not act "arrogantly towards them" or takes away their property. This aligns with Machiavelli's observation in Chapter 9 of the *Prince*, "the poor will let things be if you don't touch their honor or their property. And if you want them not to be agitated against the regime you only need not do these things." Still, Aristotle is aware that doing "this is not easy, for it does not always turn out that those taking part in the *politeuma* (the ruling part) are the refined sort" (1297b9–10). This is to say those who make up the *politeuma* (the ruling part) that gives shape to the regime (*politeia*) need to be composed of people who are well-educated or well-tempered, to prevent them from acting arrogantly or rapaciously.

Consequently, moderation is necessary for the survival of the regime, which in this case mandates that the disposition of the poor (*aporoi*) to the regime is favorable, especially when they are the most numerous part of the given political community. This is aptly conveyed by Aristotle when he says "[a]nd when war comes, they are in the habit of shirking if they are poor unless they receive sustenance; if someone provides them sustenance, however, they are willing to go to war" (1297b10–13). In other words, if they are not part of the regime, the poor (*aporoi*) will avoid from any responsibility because they lack the means to survive, let alone fight for the regime.[10]

10 Yet, in the United States—especially since the 1960s—the opposite has been true, as it is the

Next, Aristotle writes:

> In some cases, the regime is made up not only of those bearing heavy arms, but of those who had once done so. Among the Malians the regime was made up of both of these, though they elected to offices from those who were actually soldiers. And the first sort of regime that arose among the Greeks after kingships was made up of the warrior elements, and initially of cavalrymen. For strength and preeminence in war then belonged to the cavalrymen: without organization the heavy-armed element is useless, but experience in such matters and tactical arrangements were lacking among the ancients, so that their strength lay in the cavalrymen. But as [political communities] increased in size and those with heavy arms provided relatively more strength, more persons took part in the regime. (1297b13–24)

Thus, the arms used to secure the regime will determine the type of regime that will be viable. This is why Aristotle refers to the practices of the Greeks after kingships. We must remember that the rise of the *polis* relates to the rise of the members of the community taking up arms together to defend themselves rather than relying on a protector to defend them. By their joint effort to protect themselves, they did away with kingship's claim over them and brought forward the concept of citizenship—where one is both the ruler and the ruled, and shares in the rule of the community.

The question of arms in relation to the regime points to the size of the community and the ability to secure the necessary means to pay for or produce the tools needed for the community's defense. As a result, those who supply the means of security for the community will all too often demand the right to rule or decide about the most important matters of life in the community. Indeed, this was the case in Athens, as it became radical democracy at the time of Pericles due to the naval victory at Salamis. As the rowers made the victory possible, they demanded the right to participate in the regime (see 2.12.1274a13–15).

Once again on so-called "polity"

In 4.13, Aristotle says that "the regimes we now call regimes used to be called democracies" (1297b24–25). This is a reference to the form of regime first mentioned in *Politics* 3.7 as the rule of the many for the common good. Yet, according to many scholars of the *Politics*—especially analysts of chapters 12 and 13 of Book 4—Aristotle in fact discusses the so-called polity/mixed regime.[11] I challenge this interpretation, and instead contend that there is no such regime and that here Aristotle merely uses a common name (*politeia*) to describe any "regime" prevailing in a community.

Thus, the question here is why Aristotle chose to examine "regime" rather than specifically addressing democracy. Perhaps he was driven by the anti-democratic prejudice of the philosophically inclined after the death of Socrates by Athens. Indeed, the Socratics purport that, as common people are uneducated and unwise, any rule by the people would be inferior to that of the educated and those who seek wisdom. This supposition is supported by Aristotle's arguments put forth in *Politics* 3.10–13 for the wisdom of the many, albeit based on the exclusion of alternatives.[12] Conversely, at 4.13.1297b24–25, Aristotle

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wealthy and the well-off that shirk from their duty regarding serving the regime by taking up arms.

11 See Bluhm (1962), Mulgan (1977), Stocker and Langtry (1986), Johnson (1988), Nichols (1991), Simpson (1998), Lockwood (2006), Cherry (2009), and Rubin (2016).

12 Contrast Booker (1995), Bates (2003, 122–153), and Cammack (2013) with Mulgan (1977), Stocker and Langtry (1986), Johnson (1988), Nichols (1991), Simpson (1998), and Cherry (2009).

seems to offer a more explicit support for democracies, and specifically well-ordered democracies in which the ruling element (*politeuma*) is composed of moderate people.

He makes a further argument on the wisdom of the many at 3.11.1282a15–18, where he notes that the multitude (*plethos*) are capable of ruling beautifully "provided the multitude is not overly slavish (for each individually will be a worse judge than those who know, but all when joined together will be either better or no worse)." Aristotle thus seems to suggest that democracy is only possible when the moderate middling sort and all but the most destitute poor make up the ruling element (*politeuma*) that gives shape to the regime (*politeia*). Still, he emphasizes that such a regime and its ruling part (*politeuma*) must be restrained by law to ensure that the character of its rule will be moderated. When the rule of law is replaced by the rule by the will of the majority, lack of moderation will cause it to become despotic towards those parts of the political community that do not participate in or support the regime–in the democracy, this would pertain to the very well-off (*euporoi*).

In 3.13, Aristotle notes "[t]hat the ancient regimes were oligarchic and kingly is reasonable: on account of a lack of manpower [political communities] did not have much of a middling element, so being relatively both few in number and weak in organization, the multitude (*plethos*) put up with being ruled" (1297b25–28)[13]. As stated previously, the task of protecting the political community (i.e., those that are going out there and fighting for the regime) and the burden of having to procure the means (*poroi*) necessary for that fight will be seen by the poor as a burden when the population of the political community is small. Hence, they will not be motivated to join the fight and will concede to those who have the means and want to do it. This is particularly problematic in very small communities, where it would be difficult to have sufficient number of those that are neither very rich nor too poor, as the middling part will be virtually nonexistent. In such cases, the poor will inevitably submit to being ruled, as they will lack the motivation for taking on this role. However, when the ruling part fails to provide security and protection to the poor, they will rebel and demand change.

Wrapping things up again

Aristotle ends this whole section of Book 4 with the following statement:

> For what reason there are several sorts of regimes, then; why there are other sorts beyond those [generally] spoken of (for democracy is not one in number, and similarly with the others); further, what the varieties are and for what reason it happens that they are different; in addition, which is the best of the regimes for the majority of cases, and of the other regimes which sort suits which sort of *polis*–this has been spoken of.

13 Here Lord's (1984, 139) translation is superior to that offered by Lord (2013, 120) because it explicitly refers to the people (*demos*) while in 4.13.1297b25–28 only *plethos* s referenced—which Lord translates as multitude. I am of view that he deliberately uses *demos* in order to impose the so-called polity interpretation on this passage and chapter, as well as chapters 11, 12 and 13 of Book 4. Sachs (2012, 128), on the other hand, offers a much more faithful translation to the Greek original: "It was reasonable for the ancient governments to be oligarchic and kingly, since, because of underpopulation, they did not have much of a middle group, and it, being small in number and weak in organization, put up with being ruled." The same is true for Simpson (1997, 196), even though like Lord he is a proponent of the so-called polity interpretation of these sections of *Politics* 4. Simpson translated the passage in question as follows: "But the ancient polities were oligarchic and kingly, as was reasonable enough, because on account of the lack of human beings, the middle was not large and so, being weak in numbers and in military formation, they were more ready to put up with being ruled."

Clearly, Aristotle is referring to his discussion on the sub-variations of democracies and oligarchies presented in chapters 4 through 6 of *Politics* 4. However, I find that, based on his arguments, it is impossible to deduce "which is the best of the regimes for the majority of cases, and of the other regimes which sort suits which sort of" political community.

Not only are the readers left to ponder on the regime that would suit the wealthy, the poor, and the middling element, we must recall that the middling sort is never mentioned in *Politics* 4.1 through 4.4. This glaring omission casts doubt on his prior writing on the importance of the middling sort in the interpretation of various regime variations.

I thus argue that, to determine the type of regime that is best for a particular political community, it is necessary to examine its members' character and way of life. With respect to the middling sort, irrespective of whether it exists and how numerous it is, all political communities will have the well-off and the poor at their opposing ends. In *Politics* 4.11, Aristotle suggested that these ends of the spectrum will inevitably oppose each other and can only come to some compromise through the intervention of the middling sort. This would suggest that, in the absence of such moderator, disorder and disharmony are inevitable within any regime–be it democratic or oligarchic. Hence, the lawmakers and statesmen should focus on providing for a middling sort to ensure that it predominates within the political community.

Nonetheless, the suitability of a regime to a political community will depend on the character and nature of the ruling part, suggesting a link between regime types and classes of people. Specifically, in communities comprising mostly of the poor, democracies tend to arise, whereas the conditions for oligarchic regimes emerge when the wealthy predominate. Still, as Aristotle does not precisely delineate conditions for other regimes, such as aristocracies and tyranny, we are led to believe that they are just nothing more than a more elevated version of an oligarchy and are thus likely to lead to disorder.

Thus, it is appropriate to end the analysis of *Politics* 4 chapters 12 and 13 by stating that in the subsequent three chapters (14–16) Aristotle turns to various offices or institutions that form the regime and the ways these institutions react to and interact with different forms of regime. Therefore, we can interpret chapters 12 and 13 as an introduction to these further discussions, prompting the reader to ponder on what regime is most advantageous for a particular political community as well as how such a regime preserves and maintains its ability to do what is best for those who live in that political community.

In sum, the science of the regime developed by Aristotle in Books 4 though 6 of the *Politics* seems to require a constant reevaluation in light of specific circumstances, as well as the path a regime (*politeia*) has taken to get there, along with the histories of those who constitute the community being governed by the regime. I thus conclude that Aristotle's science of regimes, rather than offering definitive answers, merely points to the complexity of the phenomena being discussed, highlighting the danger of applying simple formulas or models in this context. In other words, a science (*episteme*) of regimes needs to be cautiously applied in *praxis* (action).

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