

ARISTOTLE ON HUMAN NATURE AS POLITICAL: ONTOLOGY AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

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Abstract

This paper is an analysis of Aristotle's naturalistic conception of politics, in which he sees politics as natural and human nature as political. For Aristotle, man is a political animal whose nature entails that his proper existence can only be realized in the polis where he can co-exist harmoniously with his fellows. According to him, proper employment of the natural credentials of rationality and speech disposes man for a meaningful life in the polis through debate, arguments and enlightened discourse as means of resolving possible conflicts or differences. For Aristotle, politics is natural and human nature is political in the sense that political life is rooted in human nature and human nature conversely requires political life for its fulfillment - the promotion of the wellbeing or good life and happiness of man and the development of society. Ironically, certain political actions contravene the very aim and natural end of politics. Selfish designs rather than the advancement of human common good and happiness appear to be the defining lineament or essence of politics in our time. It is our conviction therefore that proper understanding of Aristotle's relationship between nature and politics will enable man to properly understand and appreciate his true nature and reason for being in political society. This paper calls attention to the natural end of politics which seems to be jettisoned by many political actors and leaders in many climes.

Introduction

One of the striking political thoughts of Aristotle that has become so prominent even among many political theorists in their political discourses and writings in contemporary times is the naturalistic conception of politics. Aristotle begins his treatise on politics with an account of nature, vesting on it a normative force. Nature thus, serves as an incontrovertible ground and guide to politics, while politics makes it possible for the realization and sustenance of the essence of nature for man in the polity. This idea which was non-existent prior to Aristotle rests upon the belief that the political society has a natural origin for which man as a matter of compulsion, not option, cannot avoid it for the purpose of self-sufficiency. The necessity of politics therefore is to ensure the development and advancement of the good and natural being of man. Man is therefore a political animal whose life and nature it is to live in the political society. Politics is thus a sine qua non for securing human good and for human development in society. In fact, politics is the way in which we develop our nature in the sense that the good life for man corresponds to the natural origin and end of politics and the state. This is not to make politics prior to, or more fundamental than nature, or to say that nature is wholly political. It is rather to call attention to the relationship that exists between politics and nature. Aristotle uses

“nature” to establish the pre-political conditions and the aim or essence of politics. For him, all human conducts must be conducive to the good, and whatever intermediary objects are desired, they must be ordered towards the final good. The good, therefore, which is the end of politics and that which man naturally strives to achieve is in turn a product of nature.

The discovery of this good in relation to the nature of man and the end of politics, what it is and how to achieve it, is the ambitious task that Aristotle sets himself in both the *Politics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Accordingly, he begins the *Ethics* with an approving reference to the good, “Every art and every inquiry and similarly every action and pursuit is thought to aim at some good.” Consequently, “the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a1-3). In Book 1, section 2 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle sees the highest good to belong to the science of politics. According to him “The attainment of the good for one man alone is, to be sure, a source of satisfaction; yet to secure it for a nation and for states is nobler and more divine.” Likewise in the *Politics*, Aristotle writes that what makes an association stand or qualified as a polis is that it aims at the highest good. For him, “Every association is established with a view to some good; the polis, the state or the political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at the highest good” (*Politics* 1984b; 1252a1). This means that politics has as its object the highest and most commanding good. This object is not something accidental, suggested by the chance desires of the individual. It is rather nothing short of the final object of human life.

Aristotle uses various phrases to refer to the ‘highest good’, including good life, the perfect and self-sufficing life, a noble life, well-being and happiness. For us in modern times, a ‘good life’ is an ideal to be realized; it is out there waiting to be achieved. But in Aristotelian understanding, the good life is not an ideal at all. It is in the first place, a kind of life, namely, the life of those who act virtuously in the polis. The good life is inseparably inherent in politics; it is part and parcel of the meaning, essence and condition of politics in the most proper sense. It is not what one intends to bring about when he engages in politics; it is rather what articulates or circulates in political praxis. The highest good, therefore, is not a set of preferences people have in mind when entering the political arena; it is what circulates in a polis with a proper constitution such that its absence automatically entails the absence of politics. In fact, its absence is an aberration and a contradiction to the essence, meaning and understanding of politics. Before we proceed on this connection between politics and nature, let us have a brief overview of the concept of nature.

The Concept of Nature

When we take a look around us, it is not impossible for one to think that everything exist by nature. It is also possible on the other hand for another person to deny the natural existence of things. Among the scholars who drew insight into the underlying nature and origin of political society was Aristotle. According to him, of the various things that exist, “some exist by nature, some from other causes” (*Physics* 192b8-9). This means that not to exist by nature implies to exist by ‘other cause’. The ‘other cause’ can be a product of human agent or craft. The term ‘nature’ as used by Aristotle is the end or final cause of a thing; it is what a thing

becomes when perfected. A thing is said to exist by nature if it comes to be by nature and not by some other causes; and it has as its function the promotion of a natural end (Physics 199a6).

Aristotle, as a philosopher of nature believes strongly in the cause of nature. He develops and explains his entire philosophy on the basis of nature. For instance, his Physics announces itself as dealing with the science of nature (Ross 63). Aristotle sees nature as intelligible. He applies analytical techniques which he has developed in the Physics for the investigation of nature and natural phenomena. In his Physics, he discusses how to characterize a thing's nature:

Some people think that the nature and reality of a thing which is due to nature is the primary constituent present in it, [something] unformed in itself. Thus in a bed, it would be the wood, in a statue the bronze... That is one way of using the word 'nature': for the primary underlying matter in each case, of things which have in themselves a source of their movements and changes. It is also used for the shape and form which accords with a thing's account (Physics 193a9-12).

We can deduce two senses of the term 'nature' from the above, and of these two uses, Aristotle finds the second more satisfactory: "The form has a better claim than the matter to be called nature. For we call a thing something when it is that thing in actuality, rather than just in possibility" (Physics 193b7-8). A thing's nature is therefore what such thing is all about i.e. what makes such thing what it is rather than another:

And nature is also said to be as a process proceeds towards nature... That which is growing, as such, is proceeding from something to something. What, then, is it which is growing? Not the thing it is growing into. So the form is nature (Physics 193b12-18).

We can identify a thing's nature by seeing what it is when fully developed and what changes it undergoes in that movement. For instance, a tree or frog that grows will still be the same tree or frog; the adult mature man is still the same human being that was a baby, a child, a young man. Thus, for Aristotle, what has changed must have been changing, and what is changing must have changed; changing is preceded by having changed, and having changed is preceded by changing. Nature, according to Aristotle therefore is an inner principle of change and motion. It is an innate impulse to movement. It is thought of not as a transcendental principle but as a collective term for the natures of all 'natural bodies' working harmoniously together (Ross 1964:67-68). As a matter of clarity, Aristotle regards nature as the totality of objects which are capable of initiating change and bringing it to an end (Copleston 1946:320). He identifies the nature of a thing with the end towards which such thing moves (Ross 1964:236).

Those things are natural which, by a continuous movement originated from an internal principle, arrive at some completion; the same completion is not reached from every principle, nor any chance completion, but always the tendency in each is towards the same end, if there is no impediment (116).

From this analysis, every natural phenomenon certainly aims to an end. This end is its completion. This completion is certain except there is impediment or hindrance of the cause of events. Nature, seen or understood as directed towards an end implies that it is teleological.

Nature as Teleological

The term teleology is connected with the Greek *telos*, which is Aristotle's word for goal. A teleological explanation is therefore one which appeals to goals or final causes. The idea of "nature" as used by Aristotle is also identified with the goal or end towards which a thing moves or aims. It is the final cause of a thing; it is what a thing becomes when perfected. A thing is said to exist by nature when it has as its function the promotion of a natural end or teleology. Aristotle posits a number of arguments in support of natural teleology. He uses anthropomorphic language about the teleology in nature. "Nature does nothing in vain", "Nature behaves as if it foresees the future". Again, some of his arguments in support of natural teleology rest upon the notion that "art imitates nature" or "arts are imitations of nature." This means that if we can see final causes in the products of skill, we can also see them in the product of nature. Aristotle believes that everything aims to an end. According to him, "Every art and every inquiry, every action and choice, seems to aim to some good; whence the good has rightly been defined as that at which all things aim" (Nicomachean Ethics 1094a1-3). Man, politics, the state etc. aim to an end. This end is the supreme good of man:

If therefore among the ends of which our actions aim there be one which we wish for its own sake, while we wish the others only for the sake of this,... it is clear that the one ultimate end must be a good and indeed the best (Nicomachean Ethics 1094b19-22).

The end of nature therefore coincides with that of politics to bring about the good of man in the society. The good, as we have examined elsewhere is nothing other than the happiness of man. Therefore, the end of nature, state and politics is to bring about the happiness of man. This is the central idea of Aristotle's political naturalism.

Aristotle's Political Naturalism

Aristotle is seen as an ancestor of political naturalism. His politics is characterized as 'naturalistic' in the sense that it assigns a fundamental role to the concept of nature (*physis*) in the explanation and evaluation of its subject matter. His view of politics and human beings are teleological: he sees them as defined by an end for which they are striving, and as having their activities and behaviors explained by reference to it. It is this end, essence or function that determines whether an act is good or bad, desirable or undesirable (Miller1995:27). In the *Politics*, Aristotle presents his justification of human nature in politics which is derived from the logic that man cannot but be a political animal that must live in the polis. According to Aristotle, human beings are by nature political animal- *zoon politikon*, the polis or political community exists by nature, and the polis or political community by nature is prior to the individuals who constitute it. These are the core of Aristotle's political naturalism. Miller (1995:27), writes that Aristotle's political naturalism has the following doctrines implicit to its understanding: it implies that human beings have natural ends or functions; that the most authoritative good for human beings consists in the fullest possible realization of their nature; that the community should have authority over its members; and that the community can attain its ends only through rule by human agents (17-18).

Keeping in mind that Aristotle's politics is teleological characterized; that the meaning and nature of everything including man, politics and the state is to be looked for in the end of their being; that their explanation is to be found not in what they have developed from but in what they are developing into; and that their nature is seen not in their origin but in their destiny, we proceed to expound and defend Aristotle's main claims of political naturalism within the context of his teleological framework.

In his work *Politics*, Aristotle presents his justification of human nature in politics. The identification of the gift of speech with the social and moral capacities provides Aristotle's justification and forms the basis of his claim of human nature in politics. According to him, human beings are by nature political animals (*Politics* 1278a15-13), the polis or political community exists by nature (*Politics* 1252b30; 1253a1), and the polis is by nature prior to the individuals who constitute it. These theses though constitute the major claims of Aristotle's political naturalism defense; they are considered by many scholars as the most controversial and inconsistent postulations of Aristotle's political philosophy.

Aristotle's political naturalism theses make complementary claims, for instance, the thesis that 'the polis exists by nature' is based on, and naturally follows the postulation that 'human beings are by nature political animals', occasioned by man's social nature and his gift of reason and speech. The postulation that 'the polis exists by nature' makes, in part, the claim that in order to promote the natural ends of its members, the polis attains self-sufficiency, providing them with everything they need in order to realize their natural ends. Finally, the postulation that 'the polis is prior by nature to the individual' makes, in part, the complementary, but distinct, claim that human beings cannot realize their natural ends without the polis since the polis is complete and self-sufficient whole, while the individuals are not complete and self-sufficient.

Aristotle, through his theory of political naturalism established an intrinsic connection between nature and politics in the promotion of the good life and happiness of man. The good life of man corresponds to the natural end of man and that of politics. The fact that nature endows man with speech or reason and the perception of just and unjust implies that man should figure out how to live together in harmony through the use of reason and speech, while discovering what is just and creating laws that make it possible for human community to survive, and for the individuals in it to live virtuous life.

Human Nature and Politics: Ontology and Constructivism

Aristotle offers an account of the nature of man according to which his specifically human capacities cannot be realized outside the political society. The capacity or gift of speech which disposes man for a meaningful life in the company of his fellows as it engenders communication in acts of debates, arguments and resolutions of possible conflicts and differences; and the moral and intellectual or rational capacities which demand that man chooses the good life, the life in which he exercises the disposition for virtue. These dispositions of life are contingent upon the existence of the state or political society such that the existence of politics enables man to fulfill his natures, and reason and intelligence is for Aristotle the end of nature - so that it is to these that our birth and training of our habits should be regulated

(Politics 1334b15-18). Politics is a human phenomenon not as a conscious thriving but as a natural one. The implication of this is that there is a general human natural desire or propensity towards politics. The desire or propensity to attain or live a life of self-sufficiency is man's inherent tendency for politics. Man apart from the political society is not self-sufficient and cannot satisfy all his needs, desires and aspirations except in the political society, hence, politics is part of the ontology or being of man. By Aristotle's account of human nature, man is essentially rational and virtuous, and the political society allows him to be as free as possible without interfering with others.

The bases and reasons for Aristotelian claim that human beings are by nature political animals are grounded in serious controversy. Diverse interpretations have loomed large by different scholars suggesting different things which we do not need to reflect on or join issues with, in this work. However, his argument, that human beings are by nature political, we think could depend upon the claim that human beings possess innate potentialities for the political life (Politics 1253a7-18), and that they have the innate impulse to live in political communities (Politics 1253a29). Aristotle is convinced of the individual's innate sociability and the natural desire to congregate and remain in society, by virtue of the fact that a human being enjoys a unique capacity for moral choice and reasoned speech. Let us examine these claims in turns.

Man's Inherent Political Capacities

Aristotle invokes natural teleological argument that nature does nothing in vain (Politics 1253a7-9). He sees man as a political animal in the sense that he is a social animal who is capable of dwelling in a polis with others; he is the only animal that nature has endowed with the gift of speech (Politics 1253a9). This natural gift of speech makes him both a social and political animal, since with it, man can interact and express his views, as well as relate with others in the political society, thus, making peaceful and harmonious co-existence and co-operation possible. Man seeks harmonious co-existence because disharmony is possible among individuals; and because the basic necessities for human socio-biological and economic needs are not equitably distributed and are also insufficient.

In other words, man realizing his incapacity to provide self all his needs realizes that cooperation with his fellows affords him the opportunity of enjoying what he cannot provide himself, which only others can provide him in harmonious co-existence. Man's natural self-insufficiency is the function of nature's injustice as it is not equitable in distribution of its amenities; hence, people are not equally endowed, for talents vary with peoples and individuals. Man therefore discovers that to live life fully and meaningfully, he has to cooperate with his fellows in a harmonious coexistence and this makes society, state or, polis, not only necessary, but inevitable as a sine qua non (Nnamdi 2011:3).

Aristotle considers speech as the tool of politics to the extent that whenever there is speech, matters become political; for with it individuals can deliberate and discuss "jaw-to-jaw" rather than war-war, dialogue, negotiate and reach agreement or compromise. Reus-Smit (2004) writes:

I see politics as a variegated, multi-dimensional form of human deliberation and action, one that encompasses not just instrumental reason and strategic action, but also forms of reason and action that ordain certain actors with legitimacy, define certain preferences as socially acceptable, and license strategies over others (2004:5).

What is meant above is that speech has the purposive deliberative importance of encouraging a form of political action in which actors learn, articulate, justify, negotiate and revise their individual and collective preferences in the context of other actors' interests, expectations of legitimate conduct, and established social norms of rightful conduct. This is why speech for Aristotle serves to reveal what is advantageous or useful, just or unjust, as well as what is harmful (Politics 1253a13-15). In Furtherance of the above, Aristotle avers that another reason why man is a political animal is that he is the only animal among others that has the perception of what is good or evil, just or unjust. And because man shares a common view or partnership in these things or matters is what makes the polis, and with extension, qualifies him as a political animal (Politics 1253a15-18). Aristotle sees man as a political animal in a sense in which a bee is not or any other gregarious animal (Politics 1253a7). For instance, while man alone among other animals is endowed with the power of speech, other lower animals have voice (Politics 1253a10-13). And speech is different from voice; with voice the lower animals only express pains and pleasure. But with speech, argument is made by human beings, negotiation is carried out, while understanding and harmonious relationship is established.

Man's Innate Political Impulses

Aristotle writes that "therefore the impulse (horme) to such a community (i.e. the polis) is in everyone by nature (Politics 1253a29-30). The term 'impulse' refers to the innate tendency of a thing to attain a specific condition (Politics 1923b13-27). It is a propensity or natural tendency towards the attainment of a certain effect or state of being. Just as a seed has an innate impulse to develop into a tree, human beings have an innate impulse to live in communities (Politics 1278b17-30). Aristotle argues further that humans need the polis in order to develop their moral capacities and to realize their natural ends since they are not self-sufficient i.e. they cannot attain their natural ends on their own (Politics 1278b27-30), but only collectively, as members of the polis because the political society encompasses a holistic partnership in the sense that we can talk of complementarity of its members in the sustenance of individual needs and aspirations. Such partnership includes partnership in virtue, in perfection, in art, etc.

The fact is that the political society is a kind of association of people with diverse or different gifts and talents enabling each and every member of the association to benefit from the talents of others, especially in those areas one is deficient. Put differently, as a community or association, the state or political society embodies varied but reciprocal talents or gifts which are directed towards a common aim – the good life and happiness of its members. This drives man as a political animal to naturally join and be a part of the association in order to satisfy his vast and varied needs and survive. This is why Aristotle points out that no one would choose to

Have all (other) goods although he is by himself, for a human being is political, tending by nature to live together with others.

Aristotle's claim that the political impulse is present by nature in all human beings is thus open to a teleological explanation: nature endows human beings with the desire for political communities, because such community is necessary for full human accomplishment or self-realization. The arguments therefore from innate capacities and innate impulse together provide evidence for Aristotle's claim that human beings are by nature political animals. This means that human beings have both the innate capacity and the innate impulse for political life.

The Natural Origin of the Polis

In Aristotle's conception, the polis or state represents the pinnacle of social evolution. It is an instrument for an individual's self-perfection. It evolves naturally, having as its function or end the promotion of human natural ends. In fact, it is only in the state or polis that man can attain the level of self-sufficiency needed for him to achieve the good life or full self-realization. Here, the state provides self-sufficiency and at the same time exists for the sake of the good life of man. Self-sufficiency and good life are therefore the natural end of the state. For Aristotle, what counts as self-sufficient is not what suffices for a solitary person by himself, living an isolated life, but what suffices also for fellow citizens, since a human being is naturally political. Therefore, rather than self-sufficiency implying solitariness, human beings can attain self-sufficiency in political community, by cooperating with others (Politics 1253a26-28). In his analysis of the development of the state, Aristotle posits that the first move of the process is when human being enters into two necessary relations: that between man and wife, and that between master and slave.

Following these two relationships the household or family was formed. This relationship, Aristotle considers it as natural. He writes: "The community which comes about naturally (kata phusin) for an everyday purpose is the household (Politics 1252b12-14). As the family or household produces, so more households will be formed and from these the next stage of community will be formed-the village (kome). What actually makes or constitute the essence of the congregations of the family, village and community is as we have observed above, the thrill or desire of man to be self-sufficient. The inability or inadequacy of the family and the village to satisfy the needs of man gives rise to the state. Aristotle writes:

But from several households comes the village, the first community which is for the sake of not merely every-day need. The village seems most naturally to be a colony (apoikia) from the household, which some call "co-nursing" (homogalaktas) (Politics 1252b16-18).

The state as the final stage in the process is composed of several communities or villages. It is the highest or supreme association on the ground that it promotes the highest good of its members and secondly, because all other associations are subjected and subsumed in its folds. It represents plurality of vocations, basing itself on the reciprocity of services and division of labour. The state aims at the maximum development and promotion of the sense of rationality and maximum moral development among its members. Aristotle claims that the state too is a natural community (dio pasa polis physei estin), and gives two reasons to justify his claim. First, the state is natural;

if indeed the first communities are –for it is the end (telos) of these and nature is the end since each thing is what it is when its growth is completed and we speak of this being its nature-such as a horse or a man or a household (Politics 1252b32-36).

The state comes about at the end of a natural process which begins with man's entering naturally into marriage and keeping slaves. The communities of the household and then of the village are natural human societies and the state is the further development of these and must therefore be a natural society.

Aristotle argues that the polis is a natural phenomenon because it exists for an end. The natural end of the polis is the supreme good of man- the moral and intellectual life. The polis offers man the opportunity to be moral and to live a morally virtuous life through education which prescribes certain actions and prohibits others (Politics 1332b23-25). According to Aristotle, it is only in the polis that man can live the good life in the full sense, and since the good life is man's natural end, the polis must be called a natural society. Aristotle does not see any possibility of man existing outside the polis; rather man needs the polis to attain the level of self-sufficiency needed to achieve the good or full self-realization. He avers:

Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature and that man is a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either above humanity or below it (Politics 1253a1-4).

The main reason for the state, according to Aristotle, is in relation to self-sufficiency: when however, several villages are joined together to form a larger community that is "nearly or quite self-sufficing" (Politics 1252b28), then comes into existence the state. The content of the notion of self-sufficiency of the state according to Aristotle is understood not only in respect to economic condition; it also includes moral development and conditions necessary for self-sufficiency. A state is self-sufficient if it is able to meet the needs of its citizens. Aristotle says that it is necessary to acquire goods which are needed for life and useful for the state and the household. Wealth comes from such goods: "And it is of these goods that true wealth (ploutos) seems to consist, for in such property self-sufficiency for the good life is not unlimited" (Politics 1256b30-32).

A state's self-sufficiency is in respect of the good life, and of living well. It will not be until a man is a citizen of a state that he can have the possibility of leading a good life. A state will be self-sufficient if it provides what is necessary for its inhabitants to survive. On the other hand, a state will not be self-sufficient unless it enables its citizens to lead a good life. A man as an inhabitant of the state can only be self-sufficient as a citizen of the state who is provided with the preconditions for living well. Aristotle attributes self-sufficiency to happiness or Eudemonia when he writes: "We take what is self-sufficient to be what itself makes life desirable and lacking in nothing. Such do we consider happiness to be" (Nicomachean Ethic's 1097b16-17).

The truly self-sufficient man lacks nothing which he needs, for, to be self-sufficient with regard to something is not to lack it, or not to need it. What must be underscored in our analysis of self-sufficiency and the state is that it is only in the state that man can attain a life of self-sufficiency – a condition that man realizes his nature. This account of the state as both a

Product of natural human progression and the only means to fulfill man's natural end, the good or full self-realization expresses the relationship between nature and politics.

The Natural Priority of the Polis

Aristotle speaks of 'priority' in several different senses including the fact that a thing is prior to another when it is more complete or more perfect than another. So, to avoid ambiguity or contradiction, we shall base our analysis on this sense. Aristotle argues that the polis is prior, that is, more complete than the individual members that constitute it. With this view, he tries to bring to bear the importance of the polis (state) as a preserver of the needs and common good of man. He projects the polis to the level that it transcends its members. According to him, the polis represents the whole while the individual members represent the part. He puts it thus: "Further, the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part" (Politics 1253a18-21). This means that no one belongs to himself, but to the polis or state in an inseparable manner.

The argument above turns on the point that the polis is self-sufficient whereas the isolated individual is not. This is connected with the idea that only the polis is complete—suggesting that the individual cannot exist in separation from the polis. Again, the polis is prior to the individual, not chronologically, but teleological. Conventionally, or better put, historically, individual came first before the state, and after joining the family, the village, he joined the state which came later. But teleological, the state came first. An individual therefore becomes a human being in the proper sense after joining the state.

Aristotle analyzes this view with an organism and its individual organs on the one hand, and a polis and its individual members on the other. He sees the state as a living organism with compound character, having the individuals as its organs, and thus prior to and not after it. The individuals are not apart from the state. The state has the sole object of promoting good life of the people and besides this, has no independent purpose of its own. H.R. Murkhi's submission that "the state is a natural community; an organism with all the attributes of a living being. It is developing and growing. It is not stagnant or static", will make for a clearer understanding of Aristotle's claim. An organ cannot be separated from its organism, and as such, an individual cannot be separated from the state. For instance, individual body parts such as a finger or a hand cannot exist without the whole, whereas the whole can exist without them. Aristotle puts it thus: "For (the parts) cannot even exist if separated from the whole..." (Politics 1035a23). Similarly, the polis can exist without the individual member but the individual cannot exist without the polis; thus the polis is prior in separateness. However, the organs of an institution must work together and collectively for the development of the organism as a whole without which they are useless. Similarly, organism must look after the welfare of its organs. Organism lends significance to organs just as whole lends glamour to its parts. Whole gets priority over the individuals. The part cannot be conceived without its whole. To think therefore of individuals without a state is strange and unnatural.

Meanwhile, the polis is prior in completeness to the individual, because it represents a complete and self-sufficient whole whereas individuals taken by them and apart from the polis are not complete and self-sufficient. In general, Aristotle views self-sufficiency as a

Property of the polis rather than of its individual members and it is only in the polis, he says, that human beings can attain self-sufficiency by co-operating with others. Therefore, since the polis is more self-sufficient than the individuals, it is naturally prior in completeness to the individuals.

Evaluation and Conclusion

'Politics is natural and human nature is political' aggregates or chronicles Aristotle's articulation on the naturalness of politics. What Aristotle means is that political life is rooted in human nature and human nature conversely requires political life for its fulfillment. Man cannot be complete unless he lives in a political community. Just as it is part of human nature to seek happiness and abhor pains, it is equally part of human nature to live in the political society. The essence of this study therefore is to establish the relationship between politics, man and nature. This relationship manifests in the promotion of the good life and happiness of man and corresponds to the natural end or aim of politics. Generally speaking, Aristotelian political naturalism theses enable man to better understand and appreciate his true nature and reason for being in political society. It reveals to us the interdependency of humans in their quest for socio-political and economic satisfaction of needs. No man is an island unto himself. There is a necessary and mutual interconnectivity and 'complementarity' among individuals. Each depends on the co-operative contributions of others to satisfy his vast and varied needs to survive. In doing so, man must recognize the fact that no one is above the state. On the contrary, the state is above every individual, with its supreme powers and right over and above that of the individuals, including the political officeholders or anyone no matter how highly placed. Nature endows man with the rational ability to perceive what is just and differentiates same from the unjust. Such is a disposition that enables him to figure out how to live together in harmony and virtuously.

Significantly, Aristotle's postulation that man is by nature a political animal as opposed to Hobbes' view has been a major influence on a good number of modern theorists like John Locke who agreed with Hooker that "we are naturally induced to seek communion and fellowship with others". Similarly, Hugo Grotius concurs with Aristotle's claim that man is a sociable animal, for among the traits or characteristics of man is an impelling desire for society, that is, for the social life, a peaceful and organized life according to the measure of his intelligence. Samuel Von Pufendorf also calls man a sociable animal because men are constituted as to render mutual help more than any other creature. Seneca, Cicero and Hannah Arendt are also united in the view that man is a political animal. They believe that Aristotle's view that man is a social, or communal animal, apparently deems too obvious to need proof. According to them, Aristotle's argument that man is by nature a political animal is not only an attempt to prove that human beings are by nature social beings who satisfy their needs and establish their goals only through interaction with others, rather, it was his attempt at examining the character of a particular kind of community found among human beings. Such particular kind of community which Aristotle is concerned or interested to describe and account for is one we call 'political community'. These and others achievements are responsible to why Barnes rightly avers that "Aristotle bestrode antiquity like an intellectual colossus. No man

before him had contributed as much to learning. No man after him could hope to rival his achievements” (1982:1).

However, there appears to be some difficulties and contradictions inherent in the theses of Aristotle’s theory of political naturalism, but given his teleological view, there are plausible senses in his claims. With Aristotle’s teleological view, we can better appreciate the relationship and interrelatedness in his claims, especially his view that human being is by nature a political animal; that the polis exists by nature; and that the polis is by nature prior to the individual.

These theses as we have said make complementary claims especially when viewed from Aristotelian teleological argument. For instance, the thesis “the polis exists by nature” makes, in part, the claim that in order to promote the natural ends of its members, the polis attains self-sufficiency, providing them with everything they need in order to realize their natural ends. In the same manner, the view that “the polis is prior by nature to the individual” makes, in part, a complementary, but distinct claim that human beings cannot realize their natural ends without the polis. The difference between these claims corresponds, very roughly, to a distinction between sufficient and necessary conditions for leading a good life.

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