COMPETING VERSIONS OF ARISTOTELIANISM AND CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEORY

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, political theorists witnessed two explosions of Aristotle scholarship. One, which I call commentary scholarship, aims to uncover Aristotle's argument. The other, which I call appropriation scholarship, creates political theories inspired by Aristotle's thought. Appropriation scholarship allows its readers to tease out implications of emphasis – that is, to explain how emphasizing aspects of Aristotle's argument colors the appropriator's conclusions. The projects of appropriation scholarship fall into four broad instantiations, which I call Modified Aristotelianism (Alasdair MacIntyre), Abstract Aristotelianism (Martha Nussbaum), Practical Aristotelianism (Hannah Arendt), and Intuitive Aristotelianism (William Galston). Nuanced but significant differences between the projects concern two points: first, the foundation (i.e., what they emphasize in Aristotle), and second, the results (i.e., how they extend and apply Aristotle's position).

Contemporary Aristotelians suggest that there is something about Aristotle's perspective that is necessary to understand the world. Why? Aristotle's first and most crucial contribution is his portrayal of human beings as political creatures – that is, his argument for the primacy of politics for human fulfillment. Second, and only slightly less crucial, is Aristotle's portrayal and defense of human excellence. Although they reach diverse conclusions, contemporary Aristotelians *all* rely on these two unique contributions. In addition, contemporary Aristotelians also exhort fellow philosophers to

recognize Aristotle as essential to comprehensive moral-political theories. Around these two points, we might reconcile contemporary versions of Aristotelianism.

Differences in what they take from Aristotle, however, overshadow this common ground. These differences lead to stronger and weaker versions of Aristotelianism, some providing a robust defense of Aristotle's role in improving moral-political theory and others diminishing their own attempts to appropriate Aristotle by distending his commitments. In different ways, Modified and Intuitive Aristotelianism provide 1) the most decisive arguments for Aristotle's pivotal role in contemporary political theory and 2) the most well-developed application of Aristotle's insights to moral-political questions. Despite renewed interest in his thought, Aristotle's insights are lost in a haze of competing arguments. By identifying the most defensible versions of contemporary Aristotelianism, scholars can reclaim those insights and work toward applying them to current circumstances.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: ARISTOTLE'S APPROPRIATORS

"Liberalism has demonstrated an almost unprecedented capacity for absorbing its competitors, aided by…its own virtuosity in reinventing itself and incorporating key elements from opposing traditions" (Dryzek, Honig, & Phillips, 2006, p. 23).

The "mongrel sub-discipline" of political theory is experiencing "a time of energetic and expansive debate" (Dryzek et al., 2006, pp. 34, 14). This debate makes plain "the dominance that has been achieved by liberalism" (Dryzek et al., 2006, p. 14). Since the publication of *A Theory of Justice* by John Rawls (1971), political theorists are often classified as proponents of some version of liberalism or critics of liberalism.[1] While these thinkers may also be other things, the prominence of this classification scheme reveals that, however nuanced liberalism may be, it is the dominant approach to the normative questions of politics.[2]

What is distinct, then, about contemporary liberalism's approach to political questions? What is liberalism? Zvesper (1991, pp. 285-286) describes it succinctly:

> The basic principle of modern liberalism is the view that politics is artificial. Government is necessary, but it is not natural. Liberty is the natural human

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[1] Indeed, the entry for John Rawls in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought* refers to *A Theory of Justice* "as the greatest single influence on Anglo-American political philosophy over the last fifteen [now twenty five] years" (Miller, 1991, p. 422). Therefore, using the distinction of adherent or critic, whatever nuances emerge in each category, seems appropriate.

[2] See Dryzek et al. (2006, pp. 13-35) for a particularly cogent explanation.

> condition. Political authority is conventional. Reason can guide politics, but nature furnishes reason no positive goals for political conventions, only negative ones, chiefly the avoidance of death, disease, and poverty. There are no ways of life and therefore no classes of human beings that can claim to rule by natural or supernatural right. The legitimate ends of government are limited to securing the conditions of all ways of life, and therefore consist of largely of the secular goals of peace and prosperity….These are the foundations of liberal thinking…the absence of positive moral guidance in nature, the priority of liberty over authority, the secularization of politics, and the promotion of constitutions of government and principles of law that establish the limits of government and the rights of citizens against government.

This mode of thinking is now pervasive in not only political philosophy, but in Western culture. But, as the two-fold classification presented above suggests, liberalism is not without its critics.

What does liberalism lack? Where do its principles fall short? Literature addressing these questions is the literature of the crisis of liberalism. The critique and subsequent crisis may be summarized as follows:

> …in stressing abstract individuals and their rights as building blocks for political theory, liberalism missed the importance of the community that creates individuals as they actually exist (Dryzek et al., 2006, p. 19).

This dissertation deals head on with the crisis of liberalism. Specifically, I examine four political theorists working (sometimes begrudgingly) within the liberal condition to reinvigorate its concepts of community, virtue, and individual contentment. They do this by turning to Aristotle and "incorporating key elements from [this] opposing tradition" into liberalism (Dryzek et al., 2006, p. 23). But, before I turn to these four thinkers, I should offer a definition of the crisis of liberalism.

The crisis of liberalism goes by many names: the crisis of modernity, the failure of the Enlightenment, the crisis of morality, the crisis of the liberal condition, and the

problem of political discontent, to name a few. Addressing the crisis of liberalism is the project of working on, as Martha Nussbaum (2006, p. 4) describes, “the unsolved problems of justice.” She (2006, p. 4) puts it well when she argues,

> These problems are not simply problems in academic philosophy. [They]…have deep and broad influence in our political life. Images of who were are and why we get together shape our thinking about what political principles we should favor and who should be involved in their framing….It is actually quite helpful…to go to the root of the problem, so to speak: for then we see much more clearly why we got into such a difficulty and what we must change if we wish to advance.

To get at these problems, to get at the crisis of liberalism, we must first take note of the major characteristics of the crisis: dissatisfying, deteriorating political association and a failure to justify morality using reason. Liberalism’s political association is dissatisfying because it is alliance-based, but more on that after the diagnosis of liberalism’s crisis is addressed. We seek a thicker, more purposive, more holistic form of political association: something deeper than an association, a community. The political association, the political life, liberalism creates lacks social connection; I am referring to life without meaning, life without context, a feeling of isolation marked by the inability to communicate and find common ground with our fellows. Here, I mean the context of morality and the communication only possible through shared moral commitments, or, at a minimum, a shared standard of moral defensibility. But, again, more on that after the diagnosis of liberalism’s crisis is addressed.

The crisis of liberalism is simply put: liberalism leaves us unable to answer the question, “How ought we to decide between the claims of rival and incompatible accounts of justice competing for our moral, social, and political allegiance (MacIntyre,

1988, p. 2) ?" This leaves us with a mechanistic basis of political association, which is dissatisfying. The fragmented intellectual terrain of liberalism lacks "fundamental assumptions…[needed] to articulate disagreements and organize debates" (MacIntyre, 1990, pp. 216-217).[3] In short, liberalism has failed to give us both a common ground to start our debates and a standard of defensibility to decide when those debates may end. Knowing where to start our moral debates and knowing they are not intractable protects us from moral relativism. As Galston (1991, p. 22) tells us, "the relativization of truth claims, both scientific and normative…is unacceptable." The crisis of liberalism, then, is a crisis of morality. Galston (1991, p. 29) compares the crisis to a society

> …whose members were no longer moved by criteria of formal rationality, that is, who were simply not bothered by contradictions among beliefs or between beliefs and practices….this would amount to a fundamental change in the meaning of being human. Nevertheless, this is what the call for the exorcism of the metaphysical impulse reduces to.

What we need, and what liberalism fails to give us, is a way to figure out these contradictions, an adjudicator with teeth. The four thinkers I discuss have come to the conclusion that a rational justification of a particular view of justice and morality is possible, but not within the strict philosophical confines of liberalism. It is liberalism's

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[3] Alasdair MacIntyre provides one of the most extensive and most famous treatments of the crisis of modernity in three of his most famous works, *After Virtue* (1984), *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988), and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (1990). Hannah Arendt, Martha Nussbaum, and William Galston each deal with the failings of liberalism, but none offers a discussion on par with MacIntyre's in terms of philosophical depth and diagnosis. As such, I reference his treatment.

simultaneous assertion of neutrality, its prioritization of nondiscrimination between ends, combined with its implicit nonneutrality, that makes it philosophically weak. Liberalism cannot adjudicate between moral claims because it refuses to discuss determinate, substantive ends, particularly the end of politics as "nothing less than to enable people to develop their distinctive human capacities" (Sandel, 2009, p. 194). Adding a discussion of those ends into liberal theory requires, at a minimum, a modification of liberalism's understanding of politics.

Politics can no longer be simply about alliance, covenant, or exchange (Sandel, 2009, p. 193). Movements toward Aristotle's work in contemporary political theory suggest this modification is best done by incorporating Aristotle's teleology into liberalism. The secular nature of Aristotle's work makes it particularly appealing to contemporary political theory. Without additions or modifications, liberalism lacks "the explanatory power" to help us resolve our moral debates (MacIntyre, 1990, p. 403). We are left with "unsolved problems of justice.…that the classical theory of the social contract cannot solve" (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 3). These unsolved problems have led some to refer to liberalism's crisis as a crisis of morality.

What does the crisis of morality look like? Regardless of the thinkers or traditions responsible for its beginning,[4] the phrase *crisis of morality* describes modern political philosophy's inability to justify morality with reason (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 14).

[4] Martha Nussbaum (2004, p. 60), for example, emphasizes Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarianism, while Alasdair MacIntyre (1984, p. 53) highlights the Protestant Reformation, Jansenist Catholic movement and Enlightenment science.

Reason has been removed from discussions of morality and charged with "truths of fact and mathematical relations but nothing more" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 54).

If reason once bolstered morality, what supports morality now? Morality is sometimes justified with cultural analysis, meaning it lacks the universals to determine the particulars. Philosophies claiming transcendence or relying on metaphysics have been evicted from the public sphere (Galston, 1991, p. 23). In cases where reason has been replaced with a combination of grace and Enlightenment science, liberalism makes "questions of truth in morality and theology…matter[s] for private allegiances" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 54).

When political or philosophical thinkers abandoned reason as a justification for morality, when morality became culture-based and privatized, society was left disoriented. The existence of private belief is not, in and of itself, problematic. The issues emerge when certain categories of private belief find themselves summarily excluded from public discourse. This exclusion eventually leads to the exclusion of questions of morality from the public sphere (Galston, 2002). This lumps morality in the same category as preference. Preference-based morality classifies "moral judgments [as]… nothing but expressions of…attitude or feeling" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 12). For liberalism, emotivism and relativism are two sides of the same coin. If morality is merely an expression of preference, radical individualism becomes the order of the day. Without a purpose or telos to unite us, we cannot create community and we cannot guard our moral commitments from competing claims (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 10).

What is so dangerous about a world of individuals without communities? Human beings can only understand themselves – that is, understand our purpose – in community. Community is the venue in which we develop ourselves, in which we practice our character and, we hope, experience happiness and contentment. We are story-telling creatures who receive moral teachings from the stories of our community (MacIntyre, 1984).

To avoid emotivism and relativism, we must have a rational basis for morality. Three things are required to provide this rational justification for morality. The first element is the recognition that we are incomplete and unfulfilled without morality (MacIntyre, 1984, pp. 50, 54). The second element is the belief that we have a *telos*, a vision of how we could be or ought to be. The third element is the belief this *telos* is worth seeking (MacIntyre, 1984). Part of this third element is the argument that morality is the means of pursuing the *telos* of our existence (MacIntyre, 1984).

Liberal projects to provide a rational basis for morality have failed because liberalism rejects a teleological "view of human nature…as having an essence which defines…[its] true end" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 54). Regardless of your description of this *telos*, people must acknowledge that the concept itself exists. The purposive view of human nature provides the frame for discussing moral questions.

But, how did liberalism deny or reject an essential view of human nature? The Reformation and related movements questioned the *telos* of the "old religion" and brought the existence of *telos* itself into question (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 52). Enlightenment science depicted an atomistic, mechanistic natural world "governed by

the laws of physics" (Sandel, 2009, p. 189). If the natural world lacked purpose, lacked essential meaning and direction, then human nature must also lack such purpose. The secularization of morality combined with mechanistic science destroyed political philosophy's belief in reason's ability to illuminate the second element, the existence of our *telos*. Left with no grounding for morality, we are left without a framework to understand our behavior, to understand our lives as part of a purposeful whole. As such, we are faced with three choices.

First, we could fruitlessly continue to compare moral schemas as we compare preferences. Second, we could figuratively throw our hands up and work to escape from community.[5] Third, and what I advocate for here, we can work to regain the rational basis of morality by looking to traditions apart from liberalism. We can work to give ourselves, once again, the context of community. Pursuing anything but this third option leads to isolation, relativism, and the continued deterioration of political community. What about our isolation, relativism, and lack of context is problematic? Why do we need to purse this third option?

Only the third option, only looking outside of liberalism, gives us the context of meaningful community. Indeed, liberalism is designed to intentionally not provide this context. Depriving human beings of the purpose and context only community offers forces us to our nature, to ignore our purpose, and leaves us discontented (MacIntyre, 1984, p. ix). Without the "context of practical beliefs and of supporting habits of thought, feeling, and action," modern, liberal societies leave us without the ability to

[5] Rousseau and Nietzsche take this second option.

understand or justify our commitments concerning the human good (MacIntyre, 1984, p. ix). As Michael Sandel (1996, p. ix) puts it, "For all we may resist such ultimate questions as the meaning of justice and the nature of the good life, what we cannot escape is that we live some answer to those questions – we live some theory – all the time." This is the heart of the problem with liberalism's false neutrality (something William Galston explores and I will discuss in a later chapter). As Galston will tell us, we intuitively know political community must be about more than mutual prosperity and protection; it must make us better, happier, more content. It must be purposive.

Liberalism lacks the philosophical context to help us create purposive community because it does not understand political community in that way. In fact, community may be too strong a term for the mutually-beneficial association liberalism advocates. If utility is the only justification of political association, we are left with a political and social order "inimical to the construction and sustaining of the types of communal relationship required for the best kind of human life"(MacIntyre, 1984, p. xv). Whether we know it or not, we are searching for a way to justify and to ground our understanding about the best ways to live, both in terms of individual action and social interaction. What should I do? How should I live? How should we live together? Those of us living in advanced, liberal democracies flounder when faced with these questions. We devolve into relativism, because liberalism, as a philosophy, provides "no rational way of securing moral agreement" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 6). The best it offers is false neutrality.

When faced with liberalism's inability to help us find common ground on moral

questions, to find answers to the inquiries about what I should do and how I should live, Aristotle is attractive because of the way his method and conclusions work together. We are looking for answers to the questions above, but we are also looking for the way to arrive at those answers. The method and the conclusions facilitate our flourishing – that is, a life without either of these things is discontented; it is not good for man. Aristotle's philosophy provides us with: 1) a justification and description of meaningful, purposive community and individual existence, and 2) a method affirming our job as scientists, as theorists, as thinking people is "to make plain the nature of things" (Salkever, 1990, p. 262).

Aristotle's method is two-fold. First, Aristotle works to refine implicit – what Galston will later call intuitive – practical wisdom. His theorizing concerns "particular customs and forms of discourse, rather than principled commitment" (Salkever, 1990, p. 262). Aristotle works to "articulate an account [of the good life] that is implicit in the thought, utterance and action of an educated Athenian" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 148). While we no longer live in the *polis*, Aristotelianism lets us use The Philosopher's method of looking to the best and brightest among us, those with cultivated inclinations for implicit answers to our moral questions (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 149).

Aristotle's impact on political theory is difficult to underestimate. Indeed, the history of Western political thought may, in part, be chronicled by the introduction, temporary disappearance, dominance, rejection, and reemergence of various

interpretations of Aristotle's thought.[6] In recent years, political theorists have witnessed two distinct developments in Aristotle scholarship. One, which I call commentary scholarship, is an analytical effort to identify and explain Aristotle's arguments. The other, which I call appropriation scholarship, is the articulation of political theories inspired and informed by elements of Aristotle's thought. I argue that these two veins of scholarship build on each other, with commentary scholarship providing the philosophical grounding and appropriation scholarship working to extend and apply various aspects of Aristotle's thought.

Commentary scholarship, I argue, has two distinct features. First, its adherents propose accurate readings of Aristotle, drawing our attention to overlooked or undervalued textual and historical evidence relevant to perennial debates about Aristotle's philosophy. Second, such scholars neither implicitly (through adopting a particular position) nor explicitly identify themselves as Aristotelian. Commentary scholarship will receive brief attention here, but not the sort its contributors might desire. That is, I do not propose a correct understanding of Aristotle's thought or a gold standard for the proper interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy.

Far more interesting to me are Aristotle's appropriators, scholars engaged in interpreting, extending and applying Aristotle to contemporary circumstances.

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[6] For a brief introduction of Aristotle's influence on the history of political thought, see Pocock (1975), Wolin (2004), Strauss and Cropsey (1987), Sheldon (2003), Kassim (2000), Skinner (1978, 2002), Nederman (1992, 1994, 1996), Sharples (2001), Sorabji (1990), and Tessitore (2002) to name a few.

Appropriation scholarship allows scholars to tease out the implications of emphasis – that is, to explain how emphasizing or deemphasizing particular aspects of Aristotle's argument colors contemporary scholars' arguments and conclusions. Contemporary thinkers from a variety of intellectual camps claim the mantle of Aristotelianism.

Each thinker highlights different elements of Aristotle's work, creating versions of Aristotelianism with unique strengths and weaknesses. Aristotle informs and inspires surprisingly diverse projects; I argue these projects fall into four, broad instantiations, which I call Modified Aristotelianism (Alasdair MacIntyre), Abstract Aristotelianism (Martha Nussbaum), Practical Aristotelianism (Hannah Arendt), and Intuitive Aristotelianism (William Galston).[7] Nuanced, but significant, differences between these projects concern two points: first, the foundation (i.e., what they emphasize in Aristotle), and second, the results (i.e., how they extend and apply Aristotle's position).

Of even greater significance, the extensions and applications (however disparate and controversial) in appropriation scholarship illustrate the appeal and relevance of

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[7] For different classifications of contemporary Aristotelianism, see Wallach (1992) and Knight (2007). Both argue that Arendt's theory is inspired by Aristotle, but stops short of being Aristotelian per se. This categorization of Arendt, I argue, is incomplete. Arendt's use of *praxis* as the foundation for her practical political goal to provide theoretical defenses against totalitarianism and fascism exemplifies a particular vein of Aristotle scholarship, practical Aristotelianism. Rather than warranting exclusion, Arendt's laser-like focus on *praxis* illustrates a distinctive feature of one type of contemporary Aristotelianism.

Aristotle's philosophy to the current moral-political world. Contemporary Aristotelians bring Aristotle's insights to bear on modern debates about the perennial questions of human experience. What is the purpose of human life? What should be the goal of all our efforts and activities? How should I live? What kind of life will bring me happiness and contentment? How should I relate to my fellow citizens? What can/should I expect from social and political institutions? These thinkers suggest that we need Aristotle and his successors to understand the current moral-political world, but why? Is there something about Aristotle's perspective that is necessary and sufficient for this project? In short, yes.

Examining different versions of contemporary Aristotelianism reveals the potential uses of Aristotle's work in theories about the current moral-political world. Aristotle's first and most crucial contribution is his portrayal of human beings as political creatures – that is, his argument for the primacy of politics for human fulfillment. Second, and only slightly less crucial, is Aristotle's portrayal and defense of human excellence. Although they reach diverse conclusions, I argue that contemporary Aristotelians *all* rely on these two unique contributions, although they often emphasize others as well. In addition to this similarity, contemporary Aristotelians also join together in their exhortation to fellow political philosophers to recognize Aristotle (and his contributions) as essential to comprehensive moral-political theories. Around these two points, we might reconcile contemporary versions of Aristotelianism.

Differences in what they take from Aristotle, however, overshadow this common ground. These differences, I argue, lead to stronger and weaker versions of

Aristotelianism, some providing a robust defense of Aristotle's role in improving moral-political theory and others diminishing their own attempts to appropriate Aristotle by distending his commitments beyond recognition. In different ways, Modified and Intuitive Aristotelianism provide 1) the most decisive arguments for Aristotle's pivotal role in contemporary political theory, and 2) the most well-developed application of Aristotle's insights to political and ethical questions. Aristotle has much to offer the moral-political world, but despite renewed interest in his thought, his insights are often lost in a haze of competing emphases and arguments. By identifying the most defensible versions of contemporary Aristotelianism, scholars can reclaim those insights and work toward applying them to current debates and circumstances. Before moving on to that project, however, a brief examination of the differences between commentary and appropriation scholarship is necessary.

Highlights of the commentary scholarship involve several aspects, from new readings of Aristotle's best life[8] to reinterpretations of his *megalopsychos* and moral virtue[9] to debates about the implications of Aristotle's metaphysical biology for his political philosophy[10] to reinterpretations of Aristotle's political exclusions[11] to debates about the meaning and implications of Aristotle's assertion "that a human being is by

[8] See Tessitore (1992) and Bartlett (1994).

[9] See Howland (2002), Collins (2004), and Ward (2001).

[10] See Frank (2004), Cherry (2008), and Nichols (1992).

[11] See Swanson (1992).

nature a political animal."[12] I take this scholarship as a collection of commentaries on Aristotle, rather than appropriations of the Philosopher's arguments. Commentary scholarship may be distinguished from appropriation scholarship in two ways. First, each thinker offers the 'correct' (or at least more accurate) reading of Aristotle, drawing our attention to linkages, overlooked passages, historical details, etc. relevant to perennial debates about the character of Aristotle's philosophy. Second, commentary scholars neither implicitly (through taking a particular position) nor explicitly identify themselves as Aristotelian.[13] Aristide Tessitore (2002) and Judith Swanson (1992) provide excellent examples of such a project. Addressing the claim that Aristotle's ethical theory is inconsistent in that it includes two competing conceptions of the best

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[12] See Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a1-10. See Mulgan (1974), Ambler (1985), Keyt (1987), and Nederman (1994). My treatment of commentary scholarship is brief. I chose works published in or after 1992 because Wallach's "Contemporary Aristotelianism" was published in 1992 and my project is, in part, a continuation of his. I disagree, however, with Wallach's classification of the various versions of contemporary Aristotelianism. As such, I did not restrict the works I chose as examples of appropriation scholarship to those published in or after 1992.

[13] But, one may ask, what of the debate concerning ability of Aristotle's ethical and political theory to stand apart from his theoretical propositions (i.e., his metaphysical biology)? The question is reasonable; to it, I answer that this debate is conducted on entirely different ground, for entirely different stakes.

life, Tessitore (2002, p. 214) delves into the text and concludes, "It is not that Aristotle is inconsistent, but that he consistently resists the temptation to try to reconcile completely two elevated ways of life which cannot be in every respect reconciled." A decade earlier, Swanson (1992, p. 63) presented a new reading of Aristotle's views on women, arguing that "female and philosophical virtues intersect" in Aristotle's work and that his assertions about their natural inequality are less severe than most readings suggest.

Both Swanson (1992) and Tessitore (2002) contribute tentative answers to questions of philosophical interest; they do not, however, *use* or *appropriate* Aristotle. Of course, their arguments meticulously reference Aristotle's work, but they (and the scholarship they exemplify) do not adopt any of Aristotle's principles to offer a more comprehensive, more accurate, or otherwise "better" ethical or political theory. These sorts of contributions, I argue, are self-contained – that is, commentary scholarship takes a position on Aristotle, but stops short of taking a position on either ethics or politics. The authors speak about Aristotle, but not as overt Aristotelians. Their arguments tell us how political theorists should read Aristotle, but not what Aristotle can contribute to politics or ethics, or for that matter, to ordinary people. Commentary scholarship does little to connect its philosophical conclusions with the moral-political world. If the "…power of political theory depends on its ability to address and illuminate major sentiments, intuitions, and beliefs of its audience about political life," commentary scholarship finds itself considerably lacking (Wallach, 1992, p. 613).

In contrast, Aristotle's appropriators interpret Aristotle in order to apply his insights to contemporary circumstances. At times, these scholars offer commentary, but

they devote the majority of their energy to constructing an original moral-political theory inspired by Aristotle. Here, construction serves as an appropriate analogy because Aristotle acts as the foundation for their theories; these theories, however, frequently build on Aristotle's own practical political conclusions (e.g., the exclusion of women from political and philosophical life). But if these scholars are all using Aristotle as their foundation, how could their final theories be so divergent? I propose to analyze comparatively four notable instantiations of Aristotelianism. An attempt to classify or label nuanced arguments is perilous, but categorization also reaps great benefits. By categorizing the contemporary writings on Aristotle into genres according to their approach and emphasis, I simultaneously render the literature manageable while drawing a coherent picture of the purchase Aristotle (in his myriad forms) offers political theorists today.

My comparative analysis of contemporary Aristotelians focuses on two questions. First, *how* is each thinker an Aristotelian? That is, what elements of Aristotle's argument does each thinker place in the foreground? Notice that the respective thinkers' Aristotelianism is not called into question. I do not propose to provide the guidelines for what can and cannot be labeled Aristotelian (at least not beyond commitment to the two core doctrines mentioned above). Second, what are the implications of this emphasis? Does it place any limitations on the theory? How does it strengthen the theory?

The core difference between the four Aristotelianisms is one of emphasis – that is, each scholar selects certain aspects of Aristotle's work and uses that aspect

(sometimes with significant modifications) to inform his or her own arguments. To get at the heart of their differing theoretical conclusions, we must identify their differences of emphasis. These differences create unique strengths and weaknesses, ultimately revealing important implications for the limits of Aristotelianism in contemporary political theory. Like respected and influential work, Aristotle's philosophy is sometimes stretched or truncated beyond recognition. Martha Nussbaum's Abstract Aristotelianism represents such a stretch, as I shall show, while Arendt's Practical Aristotelianism represents such a truncation. To be clear, by "beyond recognition," I do not mean to imply that these theories are not Aristotelian. Rather, I mean to suggest that their emphasized aspects of Aristotle's philosophy are ultimately unable to support their conclusions. In contrast, the aspects of Aristotle's work emphasized in Modified and Intuitive Aristotelianism do provide adequate support for the theoretical conclusions of Alasdair MacIntyre and William Galston. I argue that identifying the differences of emphasis also identifies the weakest instantiations of contemporary Aristotelianism and the most vulnerable (and ultimately defenseless) uses of Aristotle. Knowing the limits of Aristotle's theory allows scholars to abandon indefensible Aristotelianism(s) and concentrate their energies on making defensible Aristotelianism more coherent (and applicable).

To begin to distinguish between more and less defensible versions of Aristotelianism, I now turn to an outline of each appropriator examined in this dissertation. The first is Hannah Arendt, and what I call her Practical Aristotelianism. I

argue Arendt adapts Aristotle's *Politics*, emphasizing his concept of citizenship (as the source for political authority) and political action (*praxis*).

Arendt's (1977, p. 19) adoption, however, disconnects Aristotle's politics from his ethics in that she emphasizes she the "political and social conditions" of action (*praxis*) and speech (*logos*), while largely glazing over Aristotle's allegedly abstract ethical foundations. Arendt uses Aristotle's description of political practice to inform her conclusions on political authority, authentic human experience, labor, and political life. For Arendt, Aristotle enables political philosophy to reconnect with the material world, with real politics.

Like Aristotle, Arendt argues that the political life is the most comprehensive, complete human life. She posits that Aristotle's insistence that human fulfillment depends on "life in a *polis*" allows political philosophers to avoid "depriving thought of reality and action of sense" (Arendt, 1977, pp. 23-25). Arendt highlights Aristotle's argument that human life is a cyclical "kind of praxis" characterized by "action and speech" (1977, p. 42).[14] "Action and speech," for Arendt, "are indeed the two activities whose end result will always be a story with enough coherence to be told" (1977, p. 97). Arendt builds on Aristotle's distinguishing characteristic of human existence, particularly, its cyclical nature, to argue that understanding and improving of our natural, practical world is essential.

The public activity of politics, then, becomes the primary focus of philosophy. Arendt makes this argument by emphasizing Aristotle's *Politics*, particularly *praxis* and

[14] See Aristotle, *Politics* 1254a7.

citizenship. For Arendt, Aristotle becomes a remedy for the shortcomings of the dominant philosophies of her day (e.g., existentialism). Arendt (1998, p. 49) admits that virtue (*aretê*) "has always been assigned to the public realm" and, like Aristotle, she insists that *praxis* should be the goal of moral-political theory, but she largely ignores the substance of the virtue Aristotle uses to inform and guide *praxis*. As such, Arendt (1998, p. 49) disconnects Aristotle's *Politics* from his ethical arguments, going so far as to criticize Aristotle's insistence that beneficial political community requires the cultivation of habits into a stable disposition (*hexis*). This disconnection of Aristotle's political philosophy from its ethical foundation serves as the chief weakness of Arendt's Practical Aristotelianism.

The weakness of Practical Aristotelianism mirrors the weakness of what I call Abstract Aristotelianism, that is, Martha Nussbaum's appropriation of Aristotle. Both theories adopt Aristotle piecemeal. Arendt drew on his practical political work, while ignoring the symbiotic relationship between political practice and Aristotle's ethical foundations. Nussbaum took his metaphysical commitment to the common good and human sociability, while neglecting Aristotle's substantive definition of the common good. Arendt's overemphasis on political action leaves her Aristotelianism weak because she ignores the metaphysical foundations of Aristotle's project, ironically abstracting his position on the primacy of political action to construct her Practical Aristotelianism.

Here, I examine Martha Nussbaum's Aristotelianism as articulated in her explanation of the 'capabilities approach.' To be clear, I am not offering standards for

the proper interpretation of Aristotle or criteria to determine whether or not Nussbaum is an Aristotelian. Instead, I identify the core of Nussbaum's Aristotelianism – that is, the elements of Aristotle's argument that Nussbaum places in the foreground. I argue that Nussbaum adopts Aristotle's commitment to human sociability, human flourishing, and, to a lesser extent, natural teleology, but her adoption comes with two crucial qualifications. These qualifications, I suggest, act as a double-edged sword for Nussbaum's use of Aristotle.

In *Frontiers of Justice*, Nussbaum (2006, p. 182) grounds her argument, in part, on Aristotle's "conception of the person as a political animal." Human beings find fulfillment or "the good of a human being" in relationships of justice (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 86). This good requires "basic political entitlements" or "capabilities" (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 182). Capabilities mark Nussbaum's attempt to account for the shortcomings of Rawls's contractarianism by incorporating an Aristotelian commitment to an acknowledged common good. Nussbaum's appropriation of Aristotle, however, comes with two qualifications. First, Nussbaum (2006, p. 182) rejects Aristotle's "single idea of flourishing." Nussbaum's common good is "an idea of a space for diverse possibilities of flourishing" – an ethic that embodies human dignity, but stops short of hindering pluralism. Second, Nussbaum (2006, p. 79) deemphasizes proper human functioning, arguing "that the appropriate political goal is capability and not function."

Nussbaum's two qualifications allow her to emphasize a type of social justice infused with an abstract concept of human flourishing. They preclude, however, meaningful discussion of that flourishing's character or the habits necessary to achieve

it. This is the case, in part, because of Nussbaum's effort to respect pluralism. To achieve this, Nussbaum removes excellence from flourishing, and ignores the driving force of Aristotle's ethics, identifying the best life and explaining how to pursue it. The result is an Aristotelianism of malleable abstractions separated from everyday social interaction, which I call Abstract Aristotelianism. Nussbaum's Aristotelianism provides support for moving beyond Rawls's account of justice, but offers little guidance about what human beings are to do with their capabilities to pursue human flourishing.

The next appropriator, William Galston, shares much in common with Nussbaum in that both thinkers use Aristotle as a way to thicken liberal principles, particularly John Rawls's social contract theory.[15] Galston works toward this end in what I call his Intuitive Aristotelianism. Galston's Intuitive Aristotelianism, most clearly articulated in *Justice and the Human Good* (1980, p. x) and *Liberal Purposes* (1991), attempts to find "a place for individuality and totality, for temporal particularity and atemporal generality." Galston's (1980, p. xi) project is "an attempt….to show that although our ruling ideas are anything but Aristotelian, many of our experiences and intuitions are." Galston uses Aristotle's philosophy to identify the instincts, inclinations, and intuitions of modern liberal society. This modern liberal society and the political theories created within it, Galston (1991, pp. 142-143) argues, are informed by Aristotle's basic insight

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[15] It is important to note that Rawls's social contract theory is currently the dominant mode of political theory. While certainly not orthodox Rawlsians, Galston and Nussbaum represent a movement within the Rawlsian intellectual camp that recognizes the inadequacies of liberal principles and attempts to fortify them.

that "no political community can exist simply on the basis of diversity or of natural harmony; every community must rest on – indeed, is constituted by – some agreement on what is just." This insight represents "a tradition" inherited by liberalism (most recently, Rawls and his adherents).

Aristotle, for Galston (1991, p. 143), provides the philosophical rationale for our desire for "social unity" in pluralistic modern society. Aristotle also serves as the paragon of political philosophy properly understood. To explain, Aristotle reveals to contemporary political theory its roots, its proper self-understanding, its true goal, "truth-based political evaluation" (Galston, 1991, p. 154).

Despite his acknowledgement of Aristotle's influence, Galston adopts Aristotle's broad conclusion that a stable, beneficial political community should agree on what is good for its citizens, but he juxtaposes Aristotle's catalogue of virtues with liberal virtues. While it is certainly accurate that Aristotle provides an excellent philosophical explanation of our natural, human desire (and necessity) for community, Galston's use of Aristotle is too vague and too broad. In many ways, Galston's Intuitive Aristotelianism adopts Aristotle as "rhetorical support for a particular aspect" of his argument, rather than offering a sincere evaluation of Aristotle's moral-political theory. Galston (1991, p. 168) attempts to describe "liberal goods," but his use of Aristotle only allows him to argue that "our understanding of the human good reflects the contingent but pervasive and enduring features of our bodily constitution, our emotions, our need for society, and our rationality."

Here, again, Galston (1991, p. 170) shares much with Nussbaum in that he attempts to provide a theory of the human good that deals with "conditions, capacities, or functionings, not just internal states of feeling." Where Nussbaum would exclude function, however, Galston (1991, p. 173) includes the concept, arguing that his account of the good attempts "to capture best the intuitions about well-being that underlie liberal societies." These intuitions, it seems, concern virtue and the dilemma, recognized by Aristotle and now faced by liberal society, that individual virtue and communal virtue often conflict (Galston, 1991, p. 219). Galston works to found individualistic virtue on a social/communal intuition, using Aristotle as a foundation for his efforts, but he stretches Aristotle's insights beyond their limits.

Where Nussbaum's project is ultimately too abstract and Arendt's project too narrow, Galston's use of Aristotle makes his project too broad – that is, Galston's Intuitive Aristotleianism seems to be a mile wide, but only an inch deep. To be clear, this observation does not nullify Galston's project. It does, however, suggest that Galston's project might be strengthened by a more restrained application of Aristotle's political philosophy. Modified Aristotelianism, Alasdair MacIntyre's use of Aristotle, represents such restraint.

MacIntyre's Modified Aristotelianism is articulated in *After Virtue*, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*?, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, and *Dependent Rational Animals*. MacIntyre uses Aristotle's ethical theory, metaphysical biology and concept of the common good to construct an Aristotelian virtue-ethic with two components: (1) independent/autonomous virtues (those discussed in Aristotle's

philosophy), and (2) virtues of acknowledged dependence. The virtues of acknowledged dependence represent the core of MacIntyre's modification of Aristotle's philosophy.

MacIntyre (1999, p. 7) argues that criticism levied against Aristotle for his political exclusion and elitism stem from the natural dissatisfaction with Aristotle's emphasis on being autonomous and denigration of humankind's "animality, vulnerability, and dependence." For MacIntyre, Aristotelianism is capable of transcending this limitation. Indeed, MacIntyre claims that the resources for fixing this incorrect priority exist within Aristotle's philosophy. To make this argument, MacIntyre (1999, p. 127) rejects the *megalopsychos* as the "paragon of the virtues." This rejection becomes necessary, according to MacIntyre (1999, p. 1), when we admit to ourselves that "human beings are vulnerable to many kinds of affliction and…It is most often to others that we owe our survival, let alone our flourishing." We owe our survival to others because they care for us physically and mentally, exhibiting the virtues of acknowledged dependence (e.g., trustworthiness, reliability, just generosity, etc.) necessary for meaningful community (MacIntyre, 1999, pp. 110-126).

MacIntyre (1999, p. 110) argues that virtues of acknowledged dependence are the products of commonly understood rules, the foundation of our social relationships. These rules are the backbone of community, the existence of which is essential for the cultivation of virtue. Dependent virtues – and the recognition of our dependence that comes through practicing them – foster the mutual respect and cooperation necessary for a political organization that fulfills physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 124). In addition, dependent virtues compliment independent

virtues to create the communal standards of justice required for political organization. MacIntyre creates the virtues of acknowledged dependence (using Aristotle's logic and methodology) to complete Aristotle's catalogue of independent virtues. This combination characterizes a Modified Aristotelianism, which proves more defensible that either Practical, Abstract, or Intuitive Aristotelianism.

The strength of Modified Aristotelianism originates from its inclusion of a description of political community with guidelines for the inclusion of groups Aristotle summarily excludes, and its ability to address the primary inadequacy of Aristotle's moral-political theory, namely, his neglect of the dependent aspects of the human experience. Abstract Aristotelianism fails to provide the substance for its Aristotelian foundation, Practical Aristotelianism denies the substantive, ethical foundation for its concept of political *praxis*, and Intuitive Aristotelianism overestimates the breadth and depth of its philosophical foundation. By contrast, Modified Aristotelianism provides an Aristotelian foundation and describes the ethical and social substance that foundation implies, extending or modifying Aristotle where necessary.

What do these four veins of Aristotelianism tell us about Aristotle's relevance to our moral-political problems? As Wallach (1992) asked, "How are we to understand where we are going by turning to Aristotle?" I propose an answer, a standard of defensibility – that is, political theorists can understand the potential application (and pitfalls) of Aristotle's work by comparing the strength of the four common veins of contemporary political thought using Aristotle as their foundation. After examining these versions of contemporary Aristotelianism, Practical, Abstract, Intuitive, and

Modified, I argue that Modified and Intuitive Aristotelianism provide the most decisive arguments for Aristotle's pivotal role in contemporary political theory, and the best-developed application of Aristotle's insights to present-day political and ethical questions.

Aristotle has much to offer the present-day moral-political world, but despite renewed interest in his thought, Aristotle's insights are lost in a haze of competing Aristotelianisms. By identifying the most defensible versions of contemporary Aristotelianism, scholars can reclaim those insights and work toward applying them to current debates and circumstances. Of the four scholars I examine, the Aristotelianism of William Galston, which I call Intuitive Aristotelianism, demonstrates that Aristotle's insights have the potential to identify and remedy the shortcomings of liberalism, but its adherents stretch Aristotle's work beyond its limitations, ultimately weakening Aristotle's contribution. Similarly, Alasdair MacIntyre's Aristotelianism, which I call Modified Aristotelianism, makes comparable claims to its Intuitive counterpart, but works within Aristotle's arguments and methodology to provide appropriate extensions to his political philosophy, while appropriating his insights on excellence, community, and virtue to the present-day moral-political world.

Although I cannot offer the exact philosophical location contemporary Aristotelianism will lead political theory toward, I do suggest that Modified Aristotelianism provides the most clear theoretical path to follow. Scholars may, of course, not be convinced by my argument. Whether the substance is accepted or rejected, scholars should devote energy to the framework of my project to ensure

Aristotle's insights are not lost in esoteric discourse. That is, we should work toward identifying the most cogent, coherent, defensible appropriations of Aristotle's work in contemporary political theory so that we can apply ancient wisdom to current moral-political impasses.

I now turn to a more detailed exegesis of Practical, Abstract, Intuitive, and Modified Aristotelianism. The thinkers I explore do not describe their Aristotelianism systematically; rather, it is left to the reader to piece together their use of Aristotle and their interpretations of his work. I hope to fit together the pieces of Aristotle's influence found over the course of each of their prolific careers, turning those pieces into a discernible image of each author's Aristotelianism.

CHAPTER II

PRACTICAL ARISTOTELIANISM

In her appropriation of Aristotle, Hannah Arendt focuses on *praxis*, self-sufficient action.[1] Within this, Arendt affirms Aristotle's commitment to the importance of politics as a feature of the human experience. Arendt's project, then, becomes two-fold. First, if politics is so important to us, then she must define politics and the political. Second, she must describe what politics needs to survive. Arendt's answer takes on a deeply Aristotelian tone. Politics *is* a certain type of activity and politics *needs* a certain type of activity. As such, Arendt spends much of her work describing the uniqueness of *praxis* and relationships that facilitate *praxis*.

So, what of the strengths and weaknesses of Arendt's Practical Aristotelianism? Although she uses Aristotle to make her argument, Arendt unwittingly disconnects Aristotle's *Politics* from his ethical arguments. What does this disconnection look like? In her effort to put Aristotle's terms in everyday language, Arendt translates Aristotle's virtue (*aretê*) into her term "principle." Arendt's principle, like Aristotle's virtue, ceases to exist without politics, also called the public realm (1998, p. 49) . Just as Aristotle's *praxis* and virtue are symbiotic, so Arendt's *praxis* is symbiotic with principle. As a translated concept, however, principle takes with it pieces of Aristotle's human excellence, but it also includes things like fear. As such, the specificity and directionality of Aristotle's *aretê* is lost; the value of virtue's substance as a guide is lost.

[1] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1064a and *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a-b.

What Arendt creates, then, is a moral-political theory with the same goal as Aristotle's, *praxis*, but little ethical direction for its reader. If we are to take from Aristotle's work and from Arendt's work tips for the best actions, then Arendt's misguided addition of things like fear in the concept of principle leaves us with, at best, a rudder too small for our moral-political boat. In short, Arendt's Practical Aristotelianism leaves us with much talk about *praxis*, but little idea what that *praxis* should look like apart from political interaction. This disconnection of Aristotle's political philosophy from its ethical foundation serves as the chief weakness of Arendt's Practical Aristotelianism.

In her writings, Hannah Arendt works to define politics (as distinguished from force), explain the human relationships necessary to maintain politics, and outline the primacy of the political to the human experience. To do this, Arendt focuses on Aristotle's concept of practical reason, arguing that satisfying explanations of the human experiences stem from sensory experience and activity, not contemplation or the sanitized techniques of contemporary science. Politics is neither art nor science, but activity (Arendt, 1977, p. 153).[2] For most individuals, this activity takes the form of discourse and political friendship. Arendt also takes from Aristotle the importance of empirics. As such, she works to make Aristotelian arguments approachable (e.g., translating Aristotle's practical reason into her concept of common sense or his virtue into her concept of principle). The nuances emerge, however, when Arendt takes liberties in these translations. In her effort to translate the Aristotelian concept, Arendt modifies it. Arendt is not alone in this practice. To varying degrees, Nussbaum,

[2] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a-b.

Galston, and MacIntyre take similar liberties in their writings. What emerges from these modifications is what I call Practical Aristotelianism and appropriation of Aristotle ensconcing *praxis* (understood as self-sufficient activity) as the keystone of politics, which, for Arendt, makes *praxis* the keystone to the human experience. To understand the role of *praxis* in Arendt's Aristotelianism, it is necessary to explore Arendt's concepts of trust, political friendship, everyday language, principle, and her reading of Aristotle's distinction between the *polis* and the *oikos*.

In this chapter, I examine Hannah Arendt's Aristotelianism as articulated in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973), *The Human Condition* (1998), *Between Past and Future* (1977), *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1965), *On Revolution* (1963), *The Life of the Mind* (1978a, 1978b), and *Crises of the Republic* (1972). Of these works, *The Human Condition* encapsulates the thrust of Arendt's contribution to the Aristotelian tradition. Arendt placed Aristotle at the forefront of "the critique of liberal individualism, or of the modern tendency to confuse technical rationality and practical reason" (Salkever, 1990, p. 169). To alleviate this confusion, Arendt set about examining practical reason, particularly its connection to *praxis*.

To be fair, Arendt acknowledges a number of influences apart from The Philosopher. Although she utilizes Aristotle, she is an appropriator, not a disciple (Johnson, 2001, p. 84). She does, however, ground her work on an interpretation of Aristotle's core principles and a modification of his distinction between *praxis* and *poesis* (Arendt, 1998). Man's very humanity "is the result of…activity" (Arendt, 1977, p. 22). Activity refers to *praxis*, Aristotle's conceptualization of self-sufficient activity

or action. It is this concept of *praxis*, according to Arendt, that offers the proper understanding of the *polis* and its role in the human experience.

Praxis also facilitates acquiring the empirical knowledge, concrete, sensory knowledge, according to Arendt, that is necessary to satisfying explanations of the human experience. Arendt (1977, p. 274) argues,

> It is perfectly true that the scientist himself does not want to go to the moon; he knows that for his purposes unmanned spaceships carrying the best instruments human ingenuity can invent will do the job….And yet, an actual change of the human world, the conquest of space…, is achieved only when…man himself can go where up to now only human imagination and its power of abstraction,…could reach.

In short, to understand something "…we have to leave the world of our senses and of our bodies not only in imagination but in reality" (Arendt, 1977, p. 274). Leaving here refers to the literal exiting of the earth's atmosphere, not rejecting empirical reality or sensory experience. Like gaining knowledge of space through concrete exploration, knowledge about man's moral, intellectual, and spiritual abilities stems from empirical experience, activities a step beyond imagination and abstraction. The inactive steps in the learning process remain important, but they result in a less complete understanding of the human condition, as Arendt would call it. Indeed, Arendt insists that Aristotle missed this implication of his concept of *praxis*.

Arendt equates the acquisition of abstract knowledge with pure science, criticizing the disconnection of abstract knowledge from practical reality or implication. She argues, "The scientist qua scientist does not even care about the survival of the human race on earth or, for that matter, about the survival of the planet itself" (Arendt, 1977, p. 276). Scientists, for Arendt, embody the problematic tendency of industrialized

liberal democracies to separate the “everyday language of…human understanding” from mathematical language (1977, p. 271). Plagued by self-misunderstanding, scientists seek to “emancipate themselves completely from all such anthropocentric, that is, truly humanistic, concerns” (Arendt, 1977, p. 266). Lest Arendt appear to be simply anti-science, it is worth noting that she charges philosophy with the same error. She argues, “It lies in the nature of philosophy to deal with man in the singular, whereas politics could not even be conceived of it men did not exist in the plural” (Arendt, 1994, p. 443). In short, both science and philosophy miss the forest (community and politics) for the trees (individuals).

Liberation from these concerns begins when individuals renounce everyday language. This allows individuals to focus on sensory experiences and use common sense to arrive at half-truths. Multiple half-truths slowly combine to create “sophisticated conceptual refinements” that remain “bound to the world of the senses and our common sense” (Arendt, 1977, p. 266). This type of science, whether it leads to nuclear energy or sends men to the moon, creates two classes of citizens: the few scientists “whose superior knowledge entitles them to rule the many, namely all non-scientists, laymen…be they humanists, scholars, or philosophers” (Arendt, 1977, p. 268). Arendt opposes this social stratification, but not stratification broadly considered. In a discussion of the rise of mass culture, Arendt argues, “As long as society itself was restricted to certain classes…the individual’s chance for survival against its pressures were rather good” (Arendt, 1977, p. 200). Again, it is not the separation of society into layers, but the superiority granted to so-called pure science, to which Arendt objects.

Rediscovering anthropocentric concerns is not, for Arendt, the rediscovery of individual concerns. “This world of ours,” Arendt (1977, p. 156) argues, “cannot afford to give primary concern to individual lives and the interests connected with them; as such the public realm stands in the sharpest possible contrast to our private domain.” Individual freedom is not the focus, but rather “the freedom of the world.” Arendt criticizes the contemporary public realm for misunderstanding liberty. The world benefits from “freedom as virtuosity” – that is, a freedom “tangible in words that can be heard, in deeds which can be seen, and in events which are talked about,” rather than the modern understanding of individual freedom (1977, pp. 154-155). Although she refers to tangible freedom as ancient, it is, in fact, Aristotelian. To explain, Aristotle rejects the Platonic (and Socratic) claim that virtue is knowledge and ignorance vice.[3] As such, this tangible freedom is not simply ancient, but the work of a particular philosopher of antiquity, Aristotle. The link Arendt establishes between our senses and tangible freedom is one she inherited from Aristotle, whose concept of virtue, a *hexis* acquired through repeated action, not thought or knowledge.[4] Arendt’s appropriation of Aristotle’s *hexis* focuses on the term “principle.”[5] A *hexis* of virtue “becomes fully manifest only in the performing” (Arendt, 1977, p. 152). Principles, however, include

[3] For one example of Plato’s claim, see *Republic* 350d-e. See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1105b15-1106a10 for Aristotle’s rejection.

[4] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1103a30-1103b5.

[5] Arendt attempts to put all her arguments in everyday language, sometimes to the detriment of specificity.

more than the traditional, positive virtues (e.g., courage); Arendt describes fear as a principle, for example. Arendt's principles, like Aristotle's virtues, are universal and both concepts inspire a variety of actions depending on the circumstance.[6] Here lies a departure from Aristotelian thought for Arendt; principles are content-based, but she does not provide a classification standard for principles. The core of the concept, however, remains distinctly Aristotelian; to be a thing (e.g., courageous), you must act courageously. Arendt applies this logic to freedom: "Men are free…as long as they act" (1977, p. 153).

Here, Arendt reveals the importance of trust. First, individuals must trust their senses; they must trust their own experience. This comes through *praxis*, but is completed through "the specific and irreplaceable in-between" among men living in community and engaging in exchanges of judgment (Arendt, 1968, pp. 4-5). The completion separates the common experience from individual experiences, often marked by idiosyncrasies (Arendt, 1977, p. 223). These idiosyncrasies need not be rejected out of hand, but they should be recognized. Friendship describes the second level of Arendt's trust. Without the "in-between" or the exchange, thinking becomes impossible. Friendship, characterized by trust, is political; it is public and can only exist through the sharing of experience (Arendt, 1968, p. 24). Friendship begins with shared taste judgments, but must develop into "the constant interchange of talk….concerned with the common world" (Arendt, 1968, p. 24). This occurs, Arendt admits, within the boundaries of our limited linguistic capacity to describe our sensory experience, but it

[6] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1106b20-25.

occurs nonetheless.[7] The limits of our linguistic capacity may be overcome (or at least overcome to the best of our abilities) by using everyday language, rather than employing jargon. Among other things, the use of jargon by scientists and bureaucrats creates the type of social-stratification Arendt deplores.

Acting on principles, exchanging taste judgments, and establishing trust are events that occur within a broader conceptual framework Arendt creates. This framework stems from Arendt's use of a particular reading of Aristotle's distinction between the *polis* and the *oikos* (household) to ground her interpretation of *praxis*. The public realm (*polis*) and the private realm (*oikos*) stand in partial opposition to each other, separated by a "gulf between the sheltered life in the household and the merciless exposure of the polis" (Arendt, 1998, p. 35). While the *polis* "…was brought about by man's need to overcome the mortality of human life and the futility of human deeds," the *oikos* embraces mortality and actions undertaken as a means to the end of survival (Arendt, 1977, p. 71). While the *oikos* originates from physical necessity, the *polis* springs from psychological longings.

The psychological impetus for creating the *polis* stems from our desire to express (or disclose) our individuality to others, to have an audience for our actions (*praxis*) and our speech (*logos*). For Arendt, this is the crux of Aristotle's conceptualization of man as a political animal; the *polis* builds on the *oikos*. She (Arendt, 1998, p. 177) writes, "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world" of the public realm.

[7] Arendt (1968, p. 25) cites the heterogeneous population of Rome and the subsequent difficulties of cultivating friendship.

The *polis* “rises directly out of acting together….Thus action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it” (Arendt, 1998, p. 198). Spoken disclosure (Arendt uses word, speech, and *logos* interchangeably) seems less controversial for Arendt than deed (also called action, activity, and *praxis*).

When discussing the activity of exchanging taste judgments, Arendt describes the unique, practical character of the *polis*. Rather than emphasizing proofs, the *polis* concerns itself with judgment and decision. Arendt argues these concerns require “the judicious exchange of opinion about the sphere of public life and the common world, and the decision what manner of action is to be taken in it” (1977, p. 223). This exchange, impossible without speech, allows men to avoid physical and intellectual coercion; Arendt labels the latter “coercion by truth” (1977, pp. 222-223). Intellectual coercion emphasizes “compelling proof” rather than taste. Taste is a type of judgment concerned with “the world…not man” (Arendt, 1977, p. 222). This criticism is echoed by Arendt in her condemnation of contemporary science’s failure to focus on man writ large.

Political persuasion, a process of comparing taste judgments, is now misunderstood as arbitrary preference or private feelings. In contemporary society, taste judgments must be private and arbitrary because “the modern period has dethroned the sense of what concerns everyone” (Arendt, 1994, p. 20). This is the modern mistake that could be fixed, according to Arendt, by looking to and applying Aristotelian insights. Building on the primacy of the political found in Aristotle, Arendt argues that a person

offering and comparing taste judgments "discloses to an extent also himself, what kind of person he is," which establishes his place in the community (1977, p. 223). This is the case because, in order to be intelligible, the judgments must remain within the bounds of common sense. Rather than expressing arbitrary, private preference with no standard for intelligibility, this person is expressing something inherently public, inherently shared, and inherently political. In short, when someone expresses a taste judgment they are participating in *peitho*, public, political persuasion through speech. As such, the contemporary world errs when it swiftly dismisses taste judgments as idiosyncrasies. Taste judgments allow political discourse to transcend individual idiosyncrasy because the material being judged is common and the tastes expressed foster common bonds – that is, they create the kind of political, Aristotelian friendship Arendt praises. Arendt's focus on the political community, not the individual, is clear in this argument, as is her Aristotelian preference for empirical knowledge.

A type of renunciation, somewhat akin to that longed for by the scientists, occurs through sharing taste judgments; using judgment based on sensory experience, we identify and may free ourselves from "individual idiosyncracies" (Arendt, 1977, p. 223). As such, the generalization and detachment science pursues come not from isolated work in a laboratory or lone contemplation on a mountaintop, but through interaction "in the realm of acting and speaking" (Arendt, 1977, p. 223). Of the three mental activities Arendt describes – thinking, willing and judging – thinking remains at the foundation. Arendt (1994, p. 441) argues, "Thinking…is a practice carried out between men rather than the performance of one individual in his self-chosen solitude." Her choice to use

the term performance when describing thinking is telling. The performance and theatricality of politics begin with thinking, but culminate with judgment. It is judgment that best exemplifies the political. The act of judgment “most corresponds to the present and to the world in which we actually live” (Johnson, 2001, p. 82). It is the sensory grounding of judgment that gives it its political, which Arendt understands as superior, flavor.

Storytelling is one of Arendt’s favorite examples of the interaction between action and speech. Nonfiction stories help men communicate their sensory experience to others; they help explain “the viewpoint of common experience” and the taste judgments expressed within them decide “not only how the world is to look, but also who belongs together in it” (Arendt, 1977, p. 223) (Arendt, 1968, p. 21). Stories, as examples of taste, define and work within the society’s boundaries of common sense. Storytelling, for Arendt, combines three inheritances from Aristotle: virtue as resulting from the same, the primacy of the political, and the importance of sensory experience. Storytelling includes examples of principles in action, features the inherently political activity of taste judgment exchange, and exemplifies the characterization of politics as performance.

On this last point, Arendt begins to depart from Aristotle. She does not emphasize the classification of principle driven action into virtue and vice; within that, Arendt leaves behind Aristotle’s argument for human perfectibility. Instead, the performance of politics, the sharing of taste judgments themselves, takes precedence. As

Mara (1985, p. 1051) describes it, Arendt expressed "preferences for virtuosity over perfection."

With speech set aside, Arendt begins to unpack her understanding of the fulfilling, self-disclosing action only possible in the public realm, *praxis*. For Arendt, *praxis* is best understood in opposition to *poesis*, making or fabricating (usually characterized by imitation).[8] Arendt concludes that Aristotle uses an enormous amount of intellectual energy in his "emphatic attempts to distinguish between action and fabrication," but his logic left the distinction weak (1998, p. 196).[9] Taking up the mantle, Arendt attempts to realize Aristotle's intention and builds a political theory based, in part, on a dichotomous understanding of *praxis* and *poesis*.[10]

The supremacy of *praxis* is established by Aristotle's synonymous usage of *eudaimonia*. Arendt (1998, p. 193) claims, "To be *eudaimon* and to have been *eudaimon*, according to Aristotle, are the same, just as to live well (*eu dzen*) and to have lived well are the same….they are not states or activities which change a person's quality." Here, Arendt (1998, p. 193) equates unique personality, a person's "unchangeable identity," with Aristotle's conceptualization of *eudaimon* and argues that immortality, a lasting impression of a person's essence, is only achievable by "a man

[8] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1048b23.

[9] See also (2008); Nederman (2014), (2008), and (1994).

[10] Arendt would object to my description of her work as a political theory. I use the term in the sense that continuity exists across her many works, particularly regarding her use of Aristotle. See Johnson (2001, p. 56) for a more detailed discussion.

who does not survive his one supreme act." This man "remains the indisputable master of his identity and possible greatness"; only he achieves total "self-disclosure as the expense of all other factors" (Arendt, 1998, p. 194). Only the *polis* provides a venue for such self-disclosure through the "sharing of words and deeds." [11] In short, the actions necessary to self-disclose our permanent selves remain possible only in the *polis* or public realm (Arendt, 1998). The public realm, then, is a venue for politics as type of performance.

Aristotle insists on the supremacy of the *polis* to the *oikos* because the former "was supposed…to multiply the chances for everybody to distinguish himself, to show in deed and word who he was in his unique distinctness" (Arendt, 1998, p. 198). Thus, *praxis* stands apart from *poesis* because the latter's valuation requires a separate good or end. *Praxis*, in contrast, lacks this "work product" (Arendt, 1998, p. 207). Instead, *praxis* "can be likened to such activities as healing or navigation, where, as in the performance of the dancer…the product is identical with the performing act itself" (Arendt, 1998, p. 207). Aristotle labels action in the public realm "*ergon tou anthropou* (the 'work of man' *qua* man)…defined as 'to live well'" (Arendt, 1998, p. 207).[12] *Poesis*, or fabrication, is the private, imitative art of making (Arendt, 1998, p. 179).

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[11] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1126b12.

[12] Arendt (1998, p. 206) acknowledges the problem created by Aristotle's prioritization of the contemplative life in Book X of *Nicomachean Ethics* by stating, "It is of no importance in our context that Aristotle saw the highest possibility of "actuality" not in action and speech, but in contemplation and thought, in *theoria* and *nous*."

Praxis, in contrast, "takes places in a public arena and must be witnessed by others" (Fry, 2009, p. 45). In addition, the work product of *poesis*, as Arendt reads Aristotle, is often an imitation or reproduction, not a unique, spontaneous creation.

Poesis, then, lacks the spontaneity and trust of *praxis*. Those engaged in *poesis* imitate, following a predictable pattern to a known outcome, extending trust only to the pattern, not to their fellows. As such, Arendt distinguishes art from action on two fronts: 1) action is unpredictable and unique to the actor, and 2) actions do not exist independently from the actor(s), while an art product is independent from its maker. Given the second distinction, Arendt (1977, p. 153) argues that "politics is the exact opposite of an art." "Political institutions," for Arendt (1977, p. 153), "depend for their continued existence upon acting men." If politics is this spontaneous, public action that compromises our humanity, what does this action look like? What does politics as *praxis* look like?

To describe politics as *praxis*, Arendt focuses on Aristotle's work on choice, particularly his emphasis on adaptability. She draws from Aristotle's argument that actions have "nothing fixed or invariable about them."[13] They are "suited to the circumstances."[14] Described by Arendt as "ventures," these actions exemplify initiative and creativity. As such, they leave the actor vulnerable. Nurturing public realms

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[13] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1104a1.

[14] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1104a4, 1094b23. Arendt also references Machiavelli's *virtu* and *fortuna* to illustrate this point (1977, p. 153).

cultivate trust among actors. This "trust in people," according to Arendt, "…is difficult to formulate but fundamental" (1994, p. 23).

Arendt (1994, p. 118) readily addresses what she identifies as contradictions in Aristotle's work, namely, a "makeshift" concept of authority using examples from "the prepolitical sphere." The problem of his "glaringly contradictory statements" stems from the absence of authority in the Greek political experience. Aristotle, according to Arendt, plucked this new concept, authority, from the clouds of philosophy, so to speak, forcing The Philosopher to rely on "specifically unpolitical experiences" for justification (Arendt, 1994, p. 119). Here, again, Arendt emphasizes the superiority (perhaps even finality) of sensory experience to abstraction. Thus, Arendt holds Aristotle's theoretical feet to the fire by demanding he follow-up on his insistence that empirical evidence remain the standard by which we judge political organization (1994, p. 116).

CHAPTER III

ABSTRACT ARISTOTELIANISM

In this chapter, I examine Martha Nussbaum's Aristotelianism as articulated in her explanation of the 'capabilities approach.' As with Arendt's work, I am not offering standards for the proper interpretation of Aristotle nor criteria to determine whether or not Nussbaum is an Aristotelian. Instead, I identify the core of Nussbaum's Aristotelianism – that is, the elements of Aristotle's argument that Nussbaum places in the foreground. I then explore the prevailing criticisms of Nussbaum's Aristotelianism. These criticisms, in my view, do not address the crucial weakness in her appropriation of The Philosopher. While Nussbaum adopts Aristotle's commitment to human sociability, human flourishing, and, to a lesser extent, naturalistic essentialism, her adoption comes with two crucial qualificiations. These qualifications, I suggest, act as a double-edged sword for Nussbaum's use of Aristotle leaving her with an Abstract Aristotelianism alienated from the driving force of Aristotle's philosophical project.

Nussbaum's work on Aristotle begins with her dissertation, published as *Aristotle's De Motu Animalium* in 1978. My exegesis, however, will not focus on her earlier works, because Nussbaum's use of Aristotle has been overhauled multiple times. At least twice in writing, Nussbaum has set her earlier works apart from her current Aristotelianism. She writes about her earlier work, "I am no longer happy with what I say there" (Nussbaum, 1988, p. 179). Nussbaum chastises her critics for treating her pre-2000 work as "a product that is both static and coherent over time, since I feel that

most of what I wrote before has been definitely superseded by the new work" (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 103). Not all of Nussbaum's pre-2000 work is inconsistent, however, with her work from the last fifteen years. I will explore her most recent Aristotelianism, best captured in *Frontiers of Justice* (2006), along the way drawing from her pre-2000 writings that reveal crucial elements of Nussbaum's Aristotelianism.

Nussbaum's recent use of Aristotle comes to life in the 'capabilities approach,' an Aristotelian modification of social contract theory. Nussbaum began to develop this position, what she calls liberal Aristotelianism, in "Nature, Function, and Capability: Aristotle on Political Distribution" (1988) and "Aristotelian Social Democracy" (1990). In these two articles, Nussbaum rejects "Aristotle's…reasons not to advance an egalitarian perfectionism" (Knight, 2007, p. 34). Nussbaum further argues that Aristotle provides the strongest philosophical defense of social democracy.

Nussbaum's argument proceeds as follows. If the purpose of Aristotle's *polis* is the good life and the good life requires external goods, the polis should provide these things to able citizens according to need (Mulgan, 2000). In short, the *polis* should take an active role in redistributing resources as necessary to ensure the able are not thwarted by mere circumstance.[1] She develops this argument in "Human Functioning and Social Justice" (1992), where she explores Aristotle's argument for the symbiotic relationship between external goods and human flourishing, contending that Aristotle's emphasis on

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[1] Here, Nussbaum and William Galston share an emphasis on state-directed education. For more on Galston's version of civic education, see Chapter IV.

importance of external goods to the pursuit of internal goods provides a strong foundation for expanding the contractarian account of social justice.

Nussbaum developed this connection between flourishing and need in *The Fragility of Goodness*, first published in 1986. Here, her journey with Aristotle takes a more personal turn (2001). She focuses on his treatment of human limitations, of human imperfection.[2] She suggests Aristotle saw beauty and possibility in our vulnerability, rather than holding it in disdain. This reading complements her use of Aristotle as the foundation for resource (re)distribution based on need, a political and economic system designed to care for a community's weakest members.

It is not until *Frontiers of Justice*, however, that Nussbaum (2006) offers an in-depth treatment of her use of Aristotle's philosophy as the basis for the 'capabilities approach.' Nussbaum (2006) begins this treatment with two quotes, the first from David Hume and the second from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics.* The latter reads, "And it is rather peculiar to think of the happy person as a solitary person: for the human being is a social creature and naturally disposed to live with others." This statement, along with Aristotle's famous assertion that human beings are political animals, represents the core

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[2] On this point, Nussbaum and Alasdair MacIntyre overlap in that both thinkers read Aristotle's concept of the good life as one requiring involving intimate, vulnerable relationships with others. For both Nussbaum and MacIntyre, this necessary intimacy and dependence, to borrow MacIntyre's phrase, are positive parts of the human experience. For more on MacIntyre's emphasis on vulnerability and dependence, see Chapter V.

of Nussbaum's appropriation of Aristotle's philosophy.[3] As sweeping as it is fundamental, Nussbaum (2006, p. 85) builds her capabilities theory upon Aristotle's concept of "the human being as a social and political animal, who finds its fulfillments in relations with others." Aristotle's "conception of the person as a political animal" is the linchpin of Nussbaum's Aristotelianism (2006, p. 182).

Capabilities, according to Nussbaum, are the ten basic qualities, guarantees, freedoms, etc. necessary to live a dignified, human existence. These capabilities include life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses/imagination/thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, living with other species, play, and control over one's environment (Nussbaum, 2006). Each capability, Nussbaum argues, is best (and most pragmatically) defended by an Aristotelian alteration to Rawlsian social contract theory. In short, the dominant mode of social contract theory is lacking two things that, according to Nussbaum, only Aristotle can deliver. The first of these is our self-understanding as social/political creatures, and the second is an acknowledged common good through which we understand, categorize, and govern our interactions.

Nussbaum's adoption of Aristotle's conception is three fold. First, human beings require, seek, and enjoy social interaction and social cohesion. This might best be explained by the capabilities of affiliation and emotions. Guaranteeing the capability of affiliation translates into citizens "being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction" (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 77). The capability of emotion is the ability "to have

[3] See Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a1-3.

attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger" (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 77).

Second, human beings are human *animals*, "whose human dignity, rather than being opposed to this animal nature, inheres in it, and in its temporal trajectory" (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 87). Nussbaum (2006, p. 89) describes our distinctly animal nature as one of "asymmetrical dependence" during "certain phases" of our lives. Our neediness illuminates a core inadequacy of social contract theories that understand "basic political principles as the result of a contract for mutual advantage" (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 98). Nussbaum combines this reading of Aristotle's famous assertion with his overarching argument for the moral purpose (and obligation) of political and social interaction to suggest that his principles provide a solid foundation for government's provision of basic entitlements far beyond minimal political equality (Nussbaum, 1990).

Aristotle, according to Nussbaum, is a strong choice to help move beyond the failure of social contractarianism (and utilitarianism) "to deal adequately" with social, political, and economic injustice (particularly in relation to the needs of the disabled and oppressed), but also with the deeper emotional needs of all citizens (Nussbaum, 1990). Third, despite the importance of recognizing our animal natures, human beings are distinct in their capacity for reason and their sociability. This is best explained by Nussbaum's discussion of the intuitive basis for the 'capabilities approach.' This intuition, Nussbaum (2002, p. 130) suggests, stems from two Aristotelian points:

> …first, that there are certain functions that are particularly central to human life, in the sense that their presence or absence is typically understood to be a mark of the presence or absence of human life. Second,…that there is something that it is to do these functions in a truly human way, not a merely animal way.

Nussbaum uses these two Aristotelian intuitions to develop her distinction between basic capabilities (e.g., adequate food, shelter, and clothing) and the higher-order capabilities of play, affect, imagination, etc. Always grounding her argument on Aristotle's "conception of the person as a political animal" only able to find "the good of a human being" in relationships of justice, Nussbaum (2006, pp. 86, 182) draws directly from Aristotle's argument concerning the key differentiating characteristic of a human being, *logo*s, understood both as the ability to speak and the ability to reason.[4] Relying on Aristotle's distinction, Nussbaum (2002, p. 130) argues that the true mark of human exercise of faculties is "infused by reasoning and sociability." For example, the human use of food and drink involves perceptive (i.e., good or bad taste) and imaginative (in the sense of recipe creation) components, as well as fellowship, while the animal use of food focuses on sustenance (Nussbaum, 2002). To exercise a faculty in a human way, then, requires "basic political entitlements" or "capabilities" (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 182). To illustrate her point, Nussbaum describes the difference between the experience of eating for a starving person and for a person with adequate nutrition. The starving man, Nussbaum (2002) explains, attacks the food ravenously, indiscriminately, and quickly, while the other man enjoys the full experience of eating, chooses what he would like to eat, and enjoys fellowship during the meal. Both are engaging in the same physical

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[4] See Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a5-20.

activity, but the one partakes in eating in the animal way, while the latter exercises his faculties in a human way.

Human fulfillment or good, Nussbaum (2006, p. 182) argues, requires "basic political entitlements" or "capabilities." These capabilities represent "a partial account of basic social justice" designed to affirm and protect human dignity (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 182).[5] Capabilities mark Nussbaum's attempt to account for the shortcomings of Rawls's contractarianism by incorporating an Aristotelian commitment to an acknowledged common good. Nussbaum (2006, p. 66) describes this incorporation as a "thoroughgoing redesign of the social contract approach." Nussbaum steers clear of providing a technical definition of human flourishing or the good, but she does provide hints as to its content. For example, Nussbaum claims her common good is "an idea of a space for diverse possibilities of flourishing" – an ethic that embodies human dignity, but stops short of hindering pluralism. Nussbaum (2006, p. 86) argues,

> …a central part of our own good, each and every one of us – insofar as we agree that we want to live on decent and respectful terms with others – is to produce, and live in, a world that is morally decent, a world in which all human beings have what they need to live a life worthy of human dignity.

Second, Nussbaum (2006, p. 79) deemphasizes proper human functioning, arguing "that the appropriate political goal is capability and not function." To illustrate this point,

[5] Nussbaum also extends her concept of justice to non-human animals. This aspect of her theory represents and interesting extension of Aristotle's respect for nature and his natural teleology, but it will not be discussed here.

Nussbaum (2002, p. 132) states, "The person with plenty of food may always choose to fast, but there is a great difference between fasting and starving."

Nussbaum (2006, p. 86) refers to the Aristotelian foundation of her capabilities approach when she argues that "human beings want to live together, and they want to live together well, which they understand to include living in accordance with justice." As social and political animals, human beings find their fulfillment or "good" in just social and political relationships (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 86).

Nussbaum's (2006, p. 182) appropriation of Aristotle's commitment to an acknowledged common good, the importance of human flourishing, and human sociability, comes with two qualifications. First, Nussbaum (2006, p. 182) rejects Aristotle's "single idea of flourishing." Nussbaum's common good is "an idea of a space for diverse possibilities of flourishing" – an ethic that embodies human dignity, but stops short of hindering pluralism. Second, Nussbaum (2006, p. 79) deemphasizes proper human functioning, arguing "that the appropriate political goal is capability and not function." These two qualifications are interrelated and both are key pieces of Nussbaum's Aristotelianism. After I address previous criticisms, I will discuss the implications of these two qualifications.

While her Aristotelianism is most fully articulated in *Frontiers of Justice*, Nussbaum (2006, p. 95) consistently identifies the inadequacies of "social contract theories…in their moralized Kantian form" in her body of work. This position, and her use of Aristotle to remedy those inadequacies, elicit a variety of responses from Nussbaum's fellow scholars. In a series of replies concerning ethical decision-making in

novels, Hilary Putnam (1983, p. 195) argues that Nussbaum misreads Aristotle (and Kant) when she creates a juxtaposition between Aristotelian ethics and Kantian ethics. Accusing Nussbaum of misreading Aristotle is a common theme, typically resulting in conclusions about the weakness of Nussbaum's Aristotelian foundation.[6]

For example, Nussbaum's critics have commented that her Aristotelianism is a more tenuous foundation for certain arguments than she suggests. Mulgan (2000, p. 80) argues that Nussbaum stretches Aristotle too far in her use of his positions to advocate "redistribution in favor of the most socially disadvantaged." In short, Mulgan (2000, p. 100) exhorts Nussbaum and others dedicated to appropriating Aristotle to advance liberal democratic principles to "recognize that most theories of social justice, like Aristotle's, go only so far and no further." Strobach (2001) shares Mulgan's (2000) concerns about Nussbaum's misreading of Aristotle's comments on private property.[7]

Others argue that the universalism of her capabilities approach is largely unsupported by Aristotle, and, in fact, using Aristotle as the foundation of her political theory undermines Nussbaum's efforts (Charles, 1988). Knight (2007, p. 35) suggests that Nussbaum overextends "what Aristotle says of natural kinds and an inferred commonality of human beings to what he says of political community and the good of its members." It appears that Nussbaum fails to distinguish (as Aristotle did) between

[6] For highlights of this type of criticism, see Mulgan (2000), Alexander (2008), Knight (2007), Wallach (1992), and Arneson (2000).

[7] See Aristotle, *Politics* 1262b35-1264b40.

connection and community. Political community, the *polis*, is exclusive.[8] Meaningful membership and certainly the possibility of receiving the highest intellectual and moral benefits are not extended by virtue of someone's humanity. Therefore, Nussbaum's claim that Aristotle provides an adequate foundation for universalism and equal distribution of social goods is weak.[9] Despite this criticism, Nussbaum receives much praise for both the boldness of her capabilities approach as an effort to modify Rawls's social contract theory and for the quality of her scholarship.[10] Typical praise lauds Nussbaum's "capabilities approach" for creating a defensible moral alternative recognizing individual "human needs," while accounting for the benefits and hindrances created by tradition and culture (Charlesworth, 2000, p. 78). I agree with this praise for Nussbaum's capabilities approach, but I also agree with her critics that her Aristotelianism provides a less stable foundation for the capabilities than she suggests.

Just as Nussbaum's reference to the *Nicomachean Ethics* at the beginning of *Frontiers of Justice* (2006) provides insight into her use of Aristotle, so the opening comments in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* provide a similar insight into the weakness of Nussbaum's Aristotelianism. Aristotle begins his *Nicomachean Ethics* by insisting that his inquiry is fundamentally practical. His "investigation of social and political matters" is a study of "the highest good" aiming to secure this highest good for

[8] See Knight (2007, p. 35) for a succinct explanation.

[9] See Mulgan (2000) and Alexander (2008).

[10] For highlights, see Harpham (2002), Holland (2008), and Fitterer (2008).

individuals and "a nation and for states."[11] Nussbaum fashions her project after Aristotle's. She is concerned with providing an explanation of her capabilities approach, an explanation she hopes will serve her ultimate goal, implementation. Both her philosophy and her career reveal her interest in creating intellectual explanations to advance public policy goals (Harpham, 2002). Despite Nussbaum's goal to orient her work toward practical purposes, her project does not imitate Aristotle's search for the highest good. This, along with her rejection of the single concept of human flourishing, represents the two qualifications to Nussbaum's adoption of Aristotle's work.

These two qualifications are interrelated in that Nussbaum's argument for a plurality of flourishings prohibits her from theorizing about the substance of function. In an effort to stay away from imposing a singular, oppressive conception of the best life (thereby violating her concept of human dignity), Nussbaum overreacts by refusing to provide any general, substantive image of human flourishing outside of the attainment of the ten capabilities. Nussbaum's Abstract Aristotelianism provides support for moving beyond Rawls's account of justice, but offers little guidance about what human beings are to do with their capabilities to pursue human flourishing.

Nussbaum avoids fleshing out human flourishing or "the highest good" in favor of discussing the minimum entitlements of humanity. In short, Nussbaum adopts Aristotle's position on human sociability, but passes over his discussion of excellence or function and its role in human flourishing. Her (2006, p. 98) emphasis on "constitutional

[11] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a20-1094b13.

entitlements” and state reformation stems from her commitment to social contract theory, but this has serious implications for her Aristotelianism.

Readers may argue that Nussbaum (2006, p. 1) acknowledges the very problem I discuss when she states, “Theories of social justice should be abstract. They should, that is, have a generality and theoretical power that enables them to reach beyond the political conflicts of their time.” Nussbaum’s theory certainly fulfills her own definition of the abstract, but it also contains deeper, undesirable abstractions about the character of human flourishing, namely, the exclusion of excellence and function.

To call Nussbaum’s theory abstract, then, is to observe that she creates a transcendent theory, but it is also to argue that the Aristotelianism on which she founds that theory is, at best, substantively incomplete. In her description of her project, Nussbaum (2006, p. 182) argues, “Insofar as a highly general idea of human flourishing and its possibilities does figure in the approach, it is not a single idea of flourishing, as in Aristotle’s own normative theory, but rather an idea of a space for diverse possibilities of flourishing.” This openness is certainly warranted given the debate among Aristotle’s readers about The Philosopher’s own definition of human flourishing and the best life.[12] Nussbaum’s refusal to provide even a vague definition of human flourishing, however, is not motivated by this debate. Instead, Nussbaum’s abstraction is her solution to the problem of preserving pluralism. Nussbaum (2006, p. 352) argues,

> In the human case, the capabilities approach does not operate with a fully comprehensive conception of the good, because of the respect it has for the diverse ways in which people choose to live their lives in a pluralistic society. It

[12] Tessitore (1992) and Bartlett (1994) provide two examples of this debate.

> aims at securing some core entitlements that are held to be implicit in the idea of a life with dignity, but it aims at capability, not functioning…

Nussbaum's commitment to Rawls's social contract theory and her effort to thicken Rawls's concept of justice account for this solution, but it nonetheless leaves Nussbaum's Aristotelianism vulnerable.

Nussbaum's Abstract Aristotelianism would be less vulnerable if she provided substance to the broad Aristotelian commitments (e.g., human sociability, an acknowledged common good, and the importance of human flourishing) she adopts. I do not presume to provide the details of that substance. Indeed, this is my charge to Nussbaum. In response, Nussbaum may note that her capabilities represent the beginning of a definition of human flourishing and the common good. In this way, the ten capabilities could be understood to constitute the "good life" because they "promote the opportunity to plan a life for oneself, and to achieve emotional health, but not to preclude choices citizens may make to lead lives that inspire fear or involve deference to authority" (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 172). Nussbaum provides a life of military service as one example, but what of the *best* life, the *best* function, or flourishing? While protecting pluralism and revising Aristotle's political and moral exclusions are positive goals, what of his concept of excellence?

We can be certain, should she provide some definition of human flourishing or excellence, that it would not meet Aristotle's narrow criteria of "idealized rationality" (Nussbaum, 2006). Indeed, Nussbaum rejects Aristotle's obsession with intellect as the prerequisite for human (or animal, for that matter) dignity and fulfillment. Efforts to undermine Aristotle's exclusions by looking beyond intellectual excellence are not in the

purview of Nussbaum's capabilities approach alone. Other notable contemporary Aristotelians (e.g., Alasdair MacIntyre and William Galston) pursue related projects, as I shall show. In Nussbaum's understandable fervor to debunk Aristotle's exclusivity, she, in turn, seems to debunk (or at least omit) any explicit concept of excellence.

Nussbaum might respond that the exercise of the ten capabilities represents her implicit concept of excellence, but this position seems theoretically dissatisfying. Is not excellence, by definition, above the minimum and somehow rare? And if the ten capabilities are the basic requirements and entitlements of a human existence, and the goal of just society, then can or should individuals even be concerned with the attainment of excellence? Here, again, Nussbaum's Aristotelianism would be fortified by more exploration into substance of function, flourishing and excellence. Is excellence a state, national or global level construction, understood as the guarantee of the ten capabilities to *all* people? What of individual excellence? Are there things individuals can or should do with their capabilities? If "idealized reason" is not the pinnacle of human existence, what are some other contenders? Nussbaum provides some examples of the plurality of flourishings (e.g., choosing a life of military service despite its dissonance with the ten capabilities), but does little to discuss human life after the capabilities guarantees.

This is not to say that Nussbaum's Aristotelianism wholly ill-founded. Quite to the contrary, there is much that Nussbaum can soundly derive from Aristotle. For example, Nussbaum can rely on her Aristotelianism to construct arguments supporting the moral purpose of politics, a flexible relationship between the *polis* and social groups

depending on the group's intellectual, physical, and moral potential, the importance of external goods and education (translated by Nussbaum into the ten capabilities) to the *polis* and human fulfillment, and the possibility of everyone achieving a level of fulfillment/flourishing.[13] Outside of these arguments, however, Nussbaum's use of Aristotle is as controversial as it is fascinating.

To my knowledge, the weakness I attribute to Nussbaum's Abstract Aristotelianism has not been previously articulated by her critics. Perhaps the danger of Nussbaum's abstraction of an acknowledged common good from the necessary excellence and substantive treatment of the character of human flourishing escaped recognition because critics tend to emphasize whether or not Nussbaum is 'accurately' or 'correctly' interpreting Aristotle.[14] The 'accuracy' of Nussbaum's Aristotelianism is not my concern here. Rather, I look within Nussbaum's theory to identify what she emphasizes in Aristotle and what she constructs from that emphasis. My criticism, then, is not that Nussbaum misinterprets Aristotle, but that her theory would be stronger with an expanded Aristotelian foundation. In the initial phases of this work, I was of two minds about whether that expansion (i.e., the inclusion of some substantive treatment of flourishing and excellence) would be possible given Nussbaum's interest in protecting

[13] Mulgan (2000, p. 85) provides these examples. Aristotelians, by and large, consider these examples uncontroversial, although they differ on the details, and often flip Aristotle's arguments to account for the now-commonly accepted inclusion of those Aristotle precluded from this intellectual and moral theory.

[14] See Mulgan (2000), Charles (1988), and Alexander (2008) for three examples.

pluralism and avoiding metaphysical assertions. A look at the work of Alasdair MacIntyre and William Galston, however, suggests that such expansion is possible. In later chapters, I will demonstrate that Nussbaum's intellectual weaknesses can be contextualized within MacIntyre's and Galston's work.

It is not enough, however, to criticize Nussbaum for not being identical to other contemporary Aristotelians. If I continue to argue (as I do) that her Aristotelianism would be strengthened by providing a definition of excellence/flourishing, then looking for hints of this definition within Nussbaum's published work seems to be the next logical step. Her work implies two possibilities, both of which, I argue, are dissatisfying. First, the capabilities are the beginning of a good life, but when these capabilities are attained, individuals are free to choose lifestyles incompatible with certain capabilities (i.e., military service). There is an implied hierarchy of lifestyles in this possibility, but it is unaddressed. The reader is left asking what some contenders for the best life would be. Admitting there are a number of possibilities, in an effort to respect pluralism, Nussbaum should offer a few options about the best places the capabilities might take us. Second, perhaps the undirected use of (or ability to use) the ten capabilities might itself be the best life, but this leaves us with an issue. If we all have the capabilities, we necessarily reach different levels/results when we use or experience them, so substantive excellence is lost altogether. In short, if whatever we each get when we use/experience our capabilities is the best life, then there is no best. Both of these possibilities, I argue, leave us with an Aristotelian absent excellence, a half-use of Aristotle.

Should she provide some definition of flourishing or excellence, Nussbaum would certainly not meet Aristotle's criteria of "idealized rationality," but there have been other efforts to broaden Aristotle's "idealized rationality" excellence undertaken by other contemporary Aristotelians. The difference here is that Nussbaum keeps her Aristotlianism abstract – avoiding a definition of substance for flourishing for fear of paternalism and excluding discussion of function.

While Nussbaum sees the inclusion of some substantive treatment of excellence into her Aristotelianism as either unnecessary or impossible, her work would be strengthened – that is, she would be able to access and apply Aristotle's insights to the current moral-political world if she were to include this. Nussbaum's two qualifications allow her to emphasize a type of social justice infused with an abstract concept of human flourishing. They preclude, however, meaningful discussion of that flourishing's character or the habits necessary to achieve it. This is the case, in part, because of Nussbaum's effort to respect pluralism. To achieve this, Nussbaum removes excellence from flourishing, and ignores the driving force of Aristotle's ethics, identifying the *best* life and explaining how to pursue it. The result is an Aristotelianism of malleable abstractions separated from everyday social interaction, which I have called Abstract Aristotelianism. Nussbaum's Aristotelianism provides support for moving beyond Rawls's account of justice, but offers little guidance about what human beings are to do with their capabilities to pursue human flourishing. Despite her passion for practicality and policy reform, Nussbaum's Aristotelian foundation, characterized by the double-

edged qualifications of multiple flourishings and her de-emphasis of human functioning, creates a disjointed Aristotelianism hindered by abstraction.

CHAPTER IV

INTUITIVE ARISTOTELIANISM

William Galston's appropriation of Aristotle's philosophy, which I call Intuitive Aristotelianism, focuses on defending liberalism. In this chapter, I identify the foundation of Galston's Aristotelianism (i.e., what he takes from Aristotle) and how he extends and applies Aristotle's position. Examining Intuitive Aristotelian allows political theorists to identify the most defensible version(s) of contemporary Aristotelianism. This identification helps scholars to reclaim Aristotle's insights into political and ethical questions and to apply them to current debates and circumstances.

When first describing his reason for turning to Aristotle to defend liberalism, Galston draws a bright line between liberalism and relativism. Relativism is, for Galston, what most proponents of liberalism are implicitly defending. Galston uses an Aristotelian framework precisely because it prevents his defense of liberalism from such devolution. Galston bases his Intuitive Aristotelianism on what he calls Aristotle's basic insight, our desire for "social unity" (1991, p. 143). Galston begins from the premise that "no political community can exist simply on the basis of diversity or of natural harmony; every community must rest on – indeed, is constituted by – some agreement on what is just" (1991, pp. 142-143). Without Aristotle's insight, Galston argues, the formal justification of liberalism becomes impossible (1982, p. 627).

According to Galston, Aristotle also serves as the paragon of political philosophy properly understood. To explain, Aristotle reveals to contemporary political theory its

roots, its proper self-understanding, and its goal, "truth-based political evaluation" (Galston, 1991, p. 154). Galston (1982) contrasts this evaluation with the myth of liberal neutrality regarding individual choices, particularly those that demonstrate a lack of restraint and self-control. We intuitively turn to Aristotle's arguments to determine what is good for individuals: "No form of political life can be justified without some view of what is good for individuals. In practice, liberal theorists covertly employ theories of the good" (Galston, 1982, p. 621). As such, Galston's Intuitive Aristotelianism includes a theory of liberal goods and a catalogue of liberal virtues. Central to these are contestability and the freedom to deliberate within a constrained space. Galston does not use Aristotle to search for a single definition of the human good. Instead, Aristotle provides the theoretical leverage to help Galston bolster liberalism as a theory that admits of human excellence, but thrives on deliberation about – not only definition of – that excellence.

What, then, does Galston's Intuitive Aristotelianism look like? It includes two components: social and individual. First, Galston constructs a theory of liberal goods to flesh out the definition of social unity. He echoes Aristotle's argument that the human good must be a temporal end, but modifies Aristotle's concept by adding the criterion of contestability. The criterion of contestability transforms Galston's work from a single theory of the human good to a theory of multiple, sometimes competing goods. This transformative addition grounds the individual component of Galston's Intuitive Aristotelianism, namely, the role of deliberation in individual fulfillment. Galston uses

the freedom to deliberate to protect individuals from society, but Galston also defines a constrained space for deliberation through a catalogue of liberal virtues.

Galston uses an Aristotelian framework to create his liberal virtue catalogue – namely, Aristotle's conceptualization of virtue as excellence and his unification of the virtues. An excellent, liberal individual displays a series of dispositions all falling under the heading of taking personal responsibility to deliberate about the human good and choose a life in accord with the results of that deliberation. Individuals are understood in terms of their deliberative capacity and are protected in the exercise of that capacity. Society is understood in terms of its success in protecting individual freedom to deliberate balanced with its cohesiveness. Society, then, places appropriate limits on deliberation (i.e., on diversity) determined by an Aristotelian intuition. For example, individuals in a liberal society must share a commitment to noncoercion (Galston, 1991). We must deliberate, then, in a constrained space. The boundaries of that constrained space are determined by our interest in preserving social unity. With this, Galston's Aristotelian liberalism protects the individual from society and society from the individual.

How successful is Galston's appropriation of Aristotle? What are his stronger and weaker uses of Aristotle's work? Does Intuitive Aristotelianism provide us with a defensible version of contemporary Aristotelianism? While it is accurate to say that Aristotle provides an excellent philosophical explanation of our natural human desire (and necessity) for a semblance of "social unity" and community, Galston (1991, p. 168) adopts Aristotle as "rhetorical support for a particular aspect" of his argument, rather

than offering a more substantial evaluation of Aristotle's moral-political theory. Galston (1991, p. 168) attempts to describe "liberal goods," but his use of Aristotle only allows him to argue that "our understanding of the human good reflects the contingent but pervasive and enduring features of our bodily constitution, our emotions, our need for society, and our rationality." Here, Galston (1991, p. 170) shares much with Martha Nussbaum in that he attempts to provide a theory of the human good that deals with "conditions, capacities, or functionings, not just internal states of feeling." Where Nussbaum would exclude function, however, Galston (1991, p. 173) includes the concept, arguing that his account of the good attempts "to capture best the intuitions about well-being that underlie liberal societies."

These intuitions, it seems, concern virtue and the dilemma, recognized by Aristotle and now faced by liberal society, that individual virtue and communal virtue often conflict (Galston, 1991, p. 219). Galston works to found individualistic virtue on a shared intuition, using Aristotle as a foundation for his efforts, but he stretches Aristotle's insights beyond their limits. Where Nussbaum's project is ultimately too abstract and Arendt's project too narrow, Galston's use of Aristotle makes his project too broad. To be clear, this observation does not nullify Galston's project. It does, however, suggest that Galston's project might be strengthened by a more specific application of Aristotle's political philosophy. To explore the strengths and weakness of Intuitive Aristotelianism, we should first turn to Galston's concept of social unity, his adoption of Aristotle's most basic insight.

Galston's argument begins with his assertion that Aristotle's philosophy affords us the intuition behind modern liberal society. This intuition is our desire for social unity. Social unity implies neither relativism nor homogeneity. Galston (1991, p. 99) argues for "wide diversity" with a commitment to "some limits on diversity are not only compatible with, but required by, a liberal order." The liberal pluralism Galston (1991, p. 143) supports requires any defense of liberalism to make "truth claims" – in short, social unity is not merely similarity in behavior, but the conscious concurrence with acknowledged truth. These truths provide "the core meaning and purpose" of life, but Galston (1991, pp. 147, 154) is careful to distinguish between widespread agreement on an issue and the discovery of truth.

Drawing upon Aristotle, Galston's concept of truth is transcultural. Commitment to noncoercion represents one example. Noncoercion is a discovered truth about which widespread agreement exists, making it a truth claim (Galston, 1991, pp. 143, 155). Galston uses noncoercion and individual freedom synonymously. He is careful to note that if we are looking for social unity based on truth claims about human goods and a moral order, "the freedom to choose one's own conception of the good is among the highest-order goods" (Galston, 1991, p. 145).

Galston is careful, however, to stop short of permanently linking the social unity we experience via a commitment to individual freedom (and institutions that support it) to democratic society. Here, Aristotle proves a valuable resource. In his hesitance to limit the sources and foundation of individual freedom, Galston cites practices found in contemporary liberal societies that otherwise affirm a broad understanding of individual

freedom. Juries, lifetime tenure for federal judges, seat belt laws, and the criminalization of suicide are among Galston's examples. Perhaps the most illuminating, however, is Galston's interpretation of President Abraham Lincoln's suspension of *habeas corpus* protections. According to Galston (1991, p. 87), President Lincoln's refusal to ask the U.S. Congress for permission to suspend this protection reveals that

> …there are considerations based on the common good of a political community that can justify the violation of otherwise binding democratic norms. Just as the "good life" depends on "mere life," so too does a good ordering of the political community depend on the physical existence and integrity of that community.

For Galston, President Lincoln's decision-making process is closely linked to Aristotle's understanding of society's role in character formation. Lincoln's intuition could be trusted because of his character as revealed in actions and statements reflecting a constant commitment to certain political ideals, including social unity. President Lincoln's calculus, Galston argues, illustrates the role of intuition in the creation and protection of political community. Positive law will be (and should be, for Galston) silent in certain circumstances, leaving leaders and citizens alike to rely on intuition. For Galston, this intuition motivates us to create and protect social unity. In the absence of instructions from our system of positive law, our intuitive desire for unity motivates us to pursue actions in support of that end. Lincoln's intuition, not his legal knowledge, informed this and a series of future decisions ultimately preserving U.S. political community.

For Galston, then, society's visible structure is no more important than the intuitive commitments supporting that structure. Galston's use of Abraham Lincoln as an example of an Aristotelian principle serves three purposes. First, Galston argues that

the intuitive commitment to social unity exemplified by Lincoln stems not from the liberal tradition's defense of individual freedom, but from Aristotle's robust defense of the importance of community to human fulfillment. Second, Lincoln's reliance on this intuitive commitment despite the limits of positive law reveals the primacy of our Aristotelian foundation in individual choice. Third, our ability as a liberal society (through the study of history) to recognize and praise Lincoln's choice reveals the pervasiveness of the Aristotelian character of our social and political commitments. Indeed, for Galston, not only does our description of Lincoln as moral, wise, and judicious reveal our Aristotelian leanings as a society, but the way we define those adjectives reinforces the importance of Aristotle in our understanding of society's purpose and citizens' role in it.

If social unity is not simply a byproduct of democratic society, then how does social unity emerge? For Galston, social unity only emerges from the aggregation of individual commitments. At the heart of social unity are individuals' commitments to one particular truth claim, a definition of the human good. Galston begins defining the human good by establishing a list of standards a defensible theory of the human good must meet. He refers to these criteria as background conditions (Galston, 1991, p. 166).

First, neither society nor the individual can be fully understood in terms of the notion of well-being, particularly individual well-being. Second, the good must be defined apart from well-being alone – that is, the good must be universal and "of this world" Galston (1991, p. 167). Third, any definition of the good must capture or create commonality while protecting (at a minimum, permitting) choice and diversity. Fourth

and fifth, the theory of the human good is and can only be understood as a collection of "ends…conditions, capacities, or functionings, not just internal states of feelings" (Galston, 1991, p. 170). To explain, the theory of the good cannot be based on preference, but is marked by "a particular understanding of inner satisfaction (pleasure or gratification)" (Galston, 1991, p. 171). Sixth, the good must be contestable and ultimate. Seventh (and intimately related to the third criterion) is "the radical heterogeneity of the human good" (Galston, 1991, p. 172). Galston (1991) insists, however, that this heterogeneity does not imply that ranking interests, facts, and judgments become impossible.

These background conditions are presented here in the order Galston offers them. If, however, we examine each condition's connection to Galston's Aristotelianism, then the second, fourth and fifth conditions have the most in common with Aristotle's *eudaimonia*. The second condition requires that the human good be universal and temporal. In short, the good cannot be a reward found in an afterlife. It must be experienced here, in our world. This echoes Aristotle's insistence that the fulfillment found through virtue is not enjoyed by dead men, but is experienced through activity of the living, whether or not that fulfillment is "god-given."[1]

The fourth and fifth conditions provide the definition of the Aristotelian fulfillment Galston references. These conditions require that the theory of the human good be a theory of ends oriented toward a proper understanding of pleasure (Galston, 1991, p. 171). Simply preferring or liking something does not suffice, according to

[1] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1099b-1100a15.

Galston. The pleasure he references is deeper; it is Aristotelian – "the sensation of pleasure [that] belongs to the soul."[2]

On its face, Galston's sixth condition appears to merit inclusion with conditions two, four, and five in terms of their connection to Aristotle's work. Galston does use Aristotelian terminology in part of the sixth condition, but he redefines the terms. Galston's use of "ultimate" should be understood in terms of the means versus ends distinction combined with the term contestability. For a good to be ultimate, it must be the end rather than the means, but this end is contestable. Ultimate should not be conceived in terms of establishing a hierarchy of goods or singular conception of the good. Along with conditions one, three, and seven, it is the inclusion of contestability and a redefinition of the term ultimate that marks a substantial modification of Aristotle's concept of the good on Galston's part.

What, then, does Galston's liberal theory of the human good look like? Although he includes within it life, normal development of basic capacities, fulfillment of interests and purposes, society, and subjective satisfaction, the connection between freedom and rationality proves to be the essential component of Galston's (1991, pp. 174-176) human good. He draws this from Aristotle's understanding of deliberation, specifically, Aristotle's insistence that we deliberate about "things that are in our power and can be realized in action;…For in addition to nature, necessity, and chance, we regard as causal principles intelligence and anything done through human agency."[3]

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[2] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1099a5-10.

[3] See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1112a30-40.

Galston's also affirms the value of life and the importance of physical, mental and emotional health (e.g., the ability to speak and interact).[4] Here, he adopts Aristotle's idea of external goods as conditions for human flourishing.[5] In addition, Galston's (1991, p. 175) liberal human good views human beings as striving, purposive creatures who thrive in the "network of significant relations we establish with others" and enjoy the freedom of "self-assertion or self-determination." This freedom should be accompanied by our ability "to take satisfaction in a life marked by real personal accomplishments and positive relations with others" (Galston, 1991, p. 177).

The existence and affirmation of a human good is something Galston inherits from Aristotle's work. The keys to Galston's modification of Aristotle's *telos*, however, are contestability and choice (or freedom). Galston echoes Aristotle's argument that "choice involves reason and thought," but he is hesitant to do more than provide a basic

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[4] Galston is silent on the role of the disabled in political community. He does affirm the value of life in and of itself, but he stops short of exploring the fulfillment potential of individuals who lack the ability to reason, speak, or otherwise meaningfully engage with their fellows. Galston emphasizes the intellectual, rather than emotional interactions between citizens. In the next chapter, I will explore the way in which Alasdair MacIntyre approaches the question of disabled citizens' participation in and contribution to the community. Unlike Galston, MacIntyre addresses this question directly and works to create a theoretical foundation for the inclusion of individuals who were either ignored or marginalized in competing Aristotelian projects.

[5] See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1099a30.

framework of the good within which choices should be made.[6] In short, Galston does not follow Aristotle as he searches for the highest good. Galston works to define a liberal human good, but providing a specific robust definition that transforms the human good into an illiberal concept. The challenge, then, as Galston sees it, is to create a framework within which individuals may build and deliberate about sometimes competing, sometimes contradictory, but sometimes wholly compatible, versions of the good. This framework allows individuals to strike a balance between contestability and choice.

Working within the framework of the liberal human good, I may defend my concept of the good and my fellows may defend their concepts. When taken together, these individual goods and our ability to defend them (regardless of the quality of the defense) exemplify the liberal human good in that they were created and chosen freely by individuals. Galston is less concerned that individual understandings of the human good be defensible than that individuals have the ability (he comes close, here, to using the term right) to defend them. This feature of the human good framework might be appropriately called procedural defensibility.[7]

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[6] See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1112a15-18.

[7] What about understandings of the human good that conflict with the broad framework of the liberal human good? Galston (2002, p. 44) argues, "Those who invoke comprehensive doctrines against democratic governance and liberties must be met on their own ground; the evidence provided by those doctrines cannot be ruled out as

This difference between Galston and Aristotle stems, in part, from their competing concepts of justice. For Galston, procedural justice – equal opportunity and treatment – reigns supreme over substantive justice – justice according to desert. Galston, then, sees Aristotle's argument for a single *telos* as anti-liberal and rejects this component of Aristotle's thought in the same way he rejects Aristotle's understanding of true justice. Galston, however, is willing to classify portions of Aristotle's *telos* (e.g., rationality) as essential, but he remains unwilling to adopt an exclusionary concept of *telos*.

As Galston (1991, p. 220) understands it, a liberal society is organized under constitutional government and the market economy, praises individuality and diversity, asserts the primacy of individual rights, and prioritizes privacy protections to that end. Liberal society must not only have these features, but it must be committed to the principles embodied within them. Given that, Aristotle serves as the foundation for Galston's (1982, p. 627) argument that "the polity must commit itself to specific views of human personality and right conduct." How does a society embody and perpetuate this commitment? Civic education. Civic education is the instrument the state uses to enforce its definition of right conduct. While Galston values the individual, he nevertheless grants society a robust role in the individual's character formation. This robust role is one he adopts from Aristotle.

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inadmissible. The alternative is stubborn silence, a kind of democratic dogmatism that ill serves both theory and practice."

Liberal society's "public education…should focus on the core requirements of competent economic, social, and political performance expected of all citizens" (Galston, 1991, p. 298). This civic education is not philosophical or scientific. It is not interested in pursuing truth or developing an ethic of inquiry. The kind of civic education liberal societies need, Galston (1991, p. 243) argues, molds "individuals who can effectively conduct their lives within, and support, their political community." Here are a few of the virtues civic education must impart if liberal societies are to survive: "the willingness to fight on behalf of one's country; the settled disposition to obey the law;…independence, tolerance, and respect for individual excellences and accomplishments, for example" (Galston, 1991, pp. 245-246).

The state's role, then, is protective and pedagogical; it leads efforts of character formation (Galston, 1991, p. 244). The liberal state also reflects liberal society's truth claims and protects (sometimes provides) the basic "elements of individual well-being" (Galston, 1991, p. 166). On this point, Galston and Nussbaum have much in common. In its reflective capacity, the state codifies the polity's "more-than-minimal conception of the good that serves to rank-order individual ways of life and competing principles of right conduct" (Galston, 1982, p. 627). While the state is not "detached from the promotion of excellence and the recognition of merit," it still does not create those conceptions or rankings it employs. The animating factor here is the individual and its aggregate, society. Given that liberal society is the sum of its members' commitments and character, Galston (1982, p. 629) then turns to his development of "a liberal theory of virtue."

It is not enough, Galston (1982, p. 627) argues, to create a half-baked theory of the good based on "the easy assumption that only undeserving ways of life lose out in a liberal society."[8] The project must be to determine what ways of life flourish in liberal society. What, then, do deserving ways of life look like? Galston begins his argument by reiterating the importance of community and virtue to liberalism. The social unity liberalism requires also "needs a wide range of virtues to maintain itself" (Galston, 1991, p. 43). Virtues function as both ends and means in liberal society. As means, liberal virtues perpetuate the features of liberal society. Virtues as means include independence, tolerance, work ethic, self-control (described as "the capacity for moderate delay of gratification"), adaptability, imagination, initiative, reliability, civility, drive, determination, courage, law-abidingness, a sense of humor, loyalty, and patience (Galston, 1991, pp. 224-227). They also include

> …the disposition to engage in public discourse, an interest in minimizing hypocrisy, self-presentation, insight into individual character, perseverance, the ability to take criticism, willingness to admit error, the largeness of soul that makes possible some intuitive knowledge of and sympathy with a wide variety of characters… (Galston, 1980, p. 184).

As ends, virtues are the activities of the excellent liberal individual. The activities of excellent liberal individuals are separated into three components. First, excellence is "rational liberty or self-direction" (Galston, 1991, p. 229). Second, excellence is "the capacity to act in accordance with the precepts of duty" (Galston, 1991, p. 229). Third, excellence is self-determination or "a full flowering of individuality" (Galston, 1991, p. 230). Aristotle's description of excellence as activity provides the foundation for

[8] In contrast, Martha Nussbaum's Aristotelianism includes this assumption.

Galston's tripartiate liberal excellence. Galston (1991, p. 230) is explicit that liberal excellence is "a kind of activity."

All liberal virtues overlap in that they rely on "a vision of individuals who in some manner take responsibility for their own lives" (Galston, 1991, p. 230). Here, Galston echoes Aristotle's argument for the unity of the virtues, citing individual responsibility as the unifying theme of liberal virtue. Although a series of later thinkers fill in the details of these virtues, it is Aristotle's work that provides the groundwork for Galston's concept of liberal, overlapping virtues. First, Galston builds on Aristotle's definition of excellence as activity. Second, Galston adopts Aristotle's argument for the unity of the virtues, and third, Galston reaffirms Aristotle's assertion that

> …virtue or excellence depends on ourselves, and so does vice. For where it is in our power to act, it is also in our power not to act…if we have the power to act nobly or basely, and likewise the power not to act, and if such action or inaction constitutes our being good and evil, we must conclude that it depends on us whether we are decent or worthless individuals.[9]

Aristotle's political philosophy provides the springboard for liberal conceptions of personal responsibility and "a vindication of the dignity of every individual" (Galston, 1991, p. 231). The latter position is the most difficult to reconcile with a strict reading of Aristotle's work. Galston admits as much, claiming his use of Aristotle is wrought with tension, but effective nonetheless. Assuaging this tension requires striking a balance between the minimal theory of the human good Galston (1991, p. 301) offers and "the full theory of the good latent in liberal practice." This part of the project, however, Galston leaves to future liberal theorists. He instead takes up the second component of

[9] See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1113b5-15.

the tension created by his use of Aristotle. Galston suggests this tension might be assuaged if the reader avoids conflating individual dignity with neutrality and relativism. Here, Galston begins his Aristotelian critique of the liberal neutrality.

Neither liberal society nor the liberal state are neutral. Galston (1991, p. 301) argues,

> The strategy for justifying the liberal state that seeks to dispense with all specific conceptions of the good cannot succeed. Defenders of the liberal state must either accept the burden of inquiry into the human good or abandon their enterprise altogether.

Creating a specific definition of the human good demands that the liberal state "inevitably limit and shape the human possibilities it contains" (Galston, 2002, p. 26). Liberal societies and the states that reflect their truth claims must, however, feature "degrees of openness to difference" (Galston, 2002, p. 26). It is the liberal state's function to provide "disincentives…for leading our lives in particular ways" (Galston, 2002, p. 26). For the liberal state to do this successfully, disincentives must be based on the "traditional task of political philosophy – defining and defending the difference between better and worse forms of political organization" (Galston, 2002, p. 45). For Galston, Aristotle represents the paragon of this task. Only in Aristotle do we find the combination of defensible teleology, along with a non-tautological, non-neutral argument for individual responsibility and social unity. Indeed, Aristotle provides the most defensible and articulate impetus for observations "that political communities are organized around conceptions of citizenship that they must defend, and also nurture through educational institutions; as well as less visible formative processes" (Galston, 2002, p. 111).

From this reading of Aristotle, Galston works to define the state in light of the primacy of the individual. The link between the state, education, and "less visible formative processes" remains unclear in Galston's (2002, p. 111) work. He is careful, however, to draw a bright line between "the state's general public principles and the particular principles that guide…diverse subcommunities" (Galston, 2002, p. 110). The subcommunities may affirm (and act on) principles that are contrary to public principles or public norms without content-based restrictions stemming from the state (Galston, 2002, pp. 115-120). The primary public norm for a liberal state should be "feasible accommodation of diverse legitimate ways of life, limited only by the minimum requirement of civic unity" (Galston, 2002, p. 119). This requires participants "to experience…[a potential principle] clash imaginatively as part of a process that could create a wide shared understanding" (Galston, 2002, p. 117).

Galston's distaste for neutrality, however, should be read with his rejection of Aristotle's single (exclusionary) *telos* in mind. It is precisely the project of determining the boundaries of the inclusivity – that is, outlining the framework – for the human good with which Galston charges himself. Galston, then, is careful to avoid offering a lead role to the state or the community in defining the human good. Instead, this is left to individuals as they articulate their preferences through "public choices" and deliberation (Galston, 2002, p. 130). The state and the community, preferably the community for Galston, should instead protect the framework.

Communities and states are different in that communities are loosely organized according to intuition and latent commitments, while states feature institutions and legal

frameworks. To use terms related to Galston and Aristotle's ideas of justice, only the individual should be involved in substantive constructions of the human good. The state and community should focus on facilitating the construction and maintenance of the framework within which individuals may create their own substantive definitions. The state best equipped to accomplish this task is Galston's liberal pluralist state. Here, the difference between pluralism and relativism becomes central to Galston's argument.

Galston (2002, p. 1) stops short of using Aristotle's work to "reduce all goods to a common measure or create a comprehensive hierarchy among goods," but he does argue "that value pluralism does not degenerate into relativism." He makes this claim by establishing a foundation (or baseline, so to speak) of basic goods. These basic goods "are key to any choice worthy conception of life…[within] a wide range of legitimate diversity of individual conceptions of good lives…and purposes" (Galston, 2002, p. 1). Basic goods often take the form of limitations affirmed by the community and codified by the state. For example, as part of its role as protector, the liberal pluralist state must prohibit slavery and human sacrifice (Galston, 2002, p. 128). The explanation for why the liberal pluralist state must do this and the notion of basic goods or limitations are nested in Galston's concept of justice.

Justice, in this context, is neither universal nor relative. It is plural, multi-dimensional, and variant. In its broadest definition, justice is the force that enables societies to remain well-ordered. As a means to social order, Galston echoes Aristotle's classification of justice as something about which we may deliberate.[10] The demands of

[10] See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1112b5-10.

the society, then, determine the scope and content of justice. For example, societies may differ in what they classify as a need or a want. These differences “reflect not only the permanent conditions of human life and flourishing but also the community’s specific economic and social circumstances” (Galston, 2002, p. 129). To protect individual freedom and a community’s freedom of self-determination, justice must be understood as plural concept – that is, a flexible construct constrained not by a universal definition, but by basic or broad limitations. According to Galston (2002, p. 130), “There is no general theory that obliges particular communities to resolve…matters [of justice] in a uniform fashion; there is wide scope for legitimate variation.” Diversity, then, is permitted in the means and ends of justice dispute resolutions.

This diversity, Galston argues, stems from the link Aristotle makes between deliberation and justice. Galston’s argument begins with a reminder that Aristotle describes justice as something about which we deliberate. From this, Galston argues that Aristotle’s theory supports defining social unity in terms of deliberation, not agreement about the concept of justice. Politics, then, as a specific type of communal deliberation concerning justice, is secondary to the process of deliberation. And deliberation may be undertaken over a wide variety of topics and claims. Galston classifies this argument as Aristotelian in that it is informed by Aristotle’s work, but it also represents Galston’s greatest deviation from Aristotle’s original theory. Galston (2002, p. 131) argues,

> Politics would be less fragile if its claims clearly took priority over the claims of kinship, of self-expression, of free though, or of faith. Politics enjoys no such priority, and great evils ensue when the political order seeks to exercise it. Life would be simpler if there were clear rules to resolve the clashes between politics and its competitors. But there are not.

As such, Aristotle informs Galston's (2002, p. 131) project, but that project does not include "strict lexical orderings among goods" placing politics above other topics of deliberation. Furthermore, such orderings would not address the shortcomings of liberal societies. An argument for the primacy of political deliberation is not the philosophical leverage Aristotle provides. Using Aristotle to create "homogenous accounts of value" remains tempting in that it eliminates competing claims of political authority, but it also takes from individuals and communities a core component of their flourishing, deliberation "about matters of human agency" (Galston, 2002, p. 69). It is the primacy of this deliberation – that is, reasonable disagreement – Galston takes from Aristotle's work.

Citing *Nicomachean Ethics* 1112b-1113a, Galston builds on Aristotle's claim that "deliberation is the effort to choose the best course, all things considered, in circumstances in which reason shapes but does not fully determine the course." From this, Galston draws several conclusions. First, more and less choiceworthy actions and commitments exist. Second, which action or commitment is best depends on the circumstances. Third, reason does not provide formulaic guidance for our choice. In short, one individual's understanding of the circumstance differs from another's understanding; therefore, what constitutes a choiceworthy action may differ. According to Galston, these three components of Aristotle's argument give us the framework for individual freedom, particularly the freedom to deliberate. He (2002, p. 70) asserts

> Freedom operates…in a discursive arena in which some reasons are better than others but none is clearly dominant…. If ethics and politics are part of this zone,... then their substance will reflect this ceaseless interplay of strong but not compelling reasons for grappling with the variability of practical circumstances.

In short, Aristotle provides “the necessary ground of human freedom” (Galston, 2002, p. 70).

This position proves controversial because Galston is looking outside theories of liberalism for a foundation to its defining commitment to individual freedom. Galston (1982, p. 629) acknowledges this strange turn by claiming:

> Liberalism contains within itself the resources it needs to declare and to defend a conception of the good life that is in no way truncated or contemptible. Indeed, one could on this basis develop…a liberal theory of virtue: the traits of character that individuals must possess if they are to uphold liberal institutions and to pursue their good within these institutions.

Why, then, does Galston use Aristotle’s arguments that are outside the liberal tradition? Only by folding Aristotle into his larger liberal framework can Galston accomplish the goals of 1) identifying the basic human goods and fundamental assumptions unifying liberal society and 2) allowing for a multiplicity of choice worthy or deserving ways of life. Both Galston (1991, p. 167) and Nussbaum attempt to strike a balance here, arguing that “a liberal theory of the human good must achieve at least minimal unity and objectivity…[and] it must also leave very substantial room for individual choice and diversity.” Here, Galston explicitly differentiates himself from Aristotle’s *telos*. There is no perfect, complete human good; the closest approximation to Aristotle’s *telos* that Galston offers comes in the form of an outline of deliberative space determined by basic commitments and liberal virtues. These are not indications of perfection, nor are they possessed only by the paragon of virtue. Instead, they are inclinations or intuitions affirmed by a pluralistic liberal society. Individuals may possess one or all of the

virtues; they may affirm one or all of the commitments, but the key to both is their contestability and the individual's ability to choose and deliberate.

Galston's additions of contestability and the freedom to deliberate represent his major deviations from Aristotle's work; they are the distinctive features of Galston's Intuitive Aristotelianism. Building on Aristotle's basic insight that we crave social unity, Galston establishes criteria for a liberal theory of the human good – that is, a theory of human fulfillment that admits of diversity. Protecting this diversity requires contestability and freedom to deliberate. Social unity must be able to withstand (perhaps even thrive on) individual deliberation about the human good. Key to this theory is Galston's identification of liberal society's implicit recognition of human excellence. Galston points out this implicit recognition and then works to define what liberal societies do (and/or should) recognize as excellent. To this end, Galston uses two Aristotelian premises to create his catalogue of liberal virtues: the first, virtue is human excellence and, the second, Aristotle's theory of the unity of the virtues. This catalogue of liberal virtues provides the ground rules for individual behavior. It establishes guidelines through which individuals can understand the limits of their deliberative efforts. If deliberation leads to behavior in opposition to a liberal virtue, then the deliberation has extended beyond the constrained space established to protect social unity.

If this is Intuitive Aristotelianism, then how successful is it in providing a defensible application of Aristotle to contemporary issues? How successful is Galston's appropriation of Aristotle? Galston stands on firm philosophical ground when he returns

to and relies on Aristotle's argument about our longing for political community and Aristotle's defense of rationality and human excellence. Galston follows Aristotle's logic about rationality to its conclusion. That is, Galston places rationality at the forefront of his defense of liberalism. Although Galston is unwilling to rank rationality higher in any form of hierarchy, his argument for the primacy of deliberation does this implicitly. In this way, Galston is more Aristotelian than he recognizes. In his effort to protect pluralism, however, Galston stops short of following Aristotle's logic concerning *telos* and human excellence to its conclusion. Instead, Galston creates a catalogue of virtues designed to outline the constrained space in which an individual may debate (i.e., contest) competing understandings of human fulfillment.

Galston's use of Aristotle to protect individual deliberation through individualistic virtues is weak. That is, Galston's use of Aristotle to support liberal individualism attempts to extend Aristotle's insights too far.[11] Galston's use of Aristotle to establish the limits of individual deliberation, the constrained space needed to keep society cohesive, is a strong one. This use is echoed by Alasdair MacIntyre in his Modified Aristotelianism. As an example of contemporary Aristotelianism, Galston teaches us to avoid using Aristotle's philosophy to support individualism, but he also reveals how Aristotle's logic might support including excellences beyond his original

[11] Where Nussbaum's fails to make her Aristotelian foundation concrete and Arendt fails to see Aristotle's philosophical uses beyond *praxis*, Galston's use of Aristotle applies Aristotle's insights too broadly. Galston's project might be strengthened by a more restrained application of Aristotle's political philosophy.

schema. Modified Aristotelianism seizes this revelation (albeit independently) and develops it further. I explore this feature of Modified Aristotelianism in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

MODIFIED ARISTOTELIANISM

Here, I examine Alasdair MacIntyre's Modified Aristotelianism as articulated in *After Virtue*, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*?, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, and *Dependent Rational Animals*. MacIntyre uses Aristotle's ethical theory, metaphysical biology and concept of the common good to construct an Aristotelian virtue ethic with two components: (1) independent/autonomous virtues (those discussed in Aristotle's philosophy), and (2) virtues of acknowledged dependence. The virtues of acknowledged dependence represent MacIntyre's modification of Aristotle's philosophy. MacIntyre's appropriation of Aristotle's philosophy offers a social remedy—a combined catalogue of Aristotelian and humanitarian virtues—for the ills of modernity. MacIntyre's Modified Aristotelianism is based on the reaffirmation of Aristotle's method of analysis, particularly his "metaphysical biology," but also features an expansion of Aristotle's definition of *telos* and additions to his catalogue of virtues (Knight, 2007, p. 2). It is MacIntyre's use of Aristotle's logic to expand and improve upon Aristotle's work that makes Modified Aristotelianism successful.

MacIntyre (1999, p. 127) argues that criticism levied against Aristotle for his political exclusion and elitism stems from the natural dissatisfaction with Aristotle's emphasis on being autonomous and denigration of humankind's "animality, vulnerability, and dependence." For MacIntyre, Aristotelianism is capable of transcending this limitation. Indeed, MacIntyre claims that the resources for fixing this

incorrect priority exist within Aristotle's philosophy. To make this argument, MacIntyre (1999, pp. 7, 127) rejects the *megalopsychos* as the "paragon of the virtues." This rejection becomes necessary, according to MacIntyre (1999, p. 1), when we admit to ourselves that "human beings are vulnerable to many kinds of affliction and…It is most often to others that we owe our survival, let alone our flourishing." We owe our survival to others because they care for us physically and mentally, exhibiting the virtues of acknowledged dependence (e.g., trustworthiness, reliability, just generosity, etc.) necessary for meaningful community (MacIntyre, 1999, pp. 110-126).

MacIntyre (1999, p. 110) argues that virtues of acknowledged dependence are the products of commonly understood rules, the foundation of our social relationships. These rules are the backbone of community, the existence of which is essential for the cultivation of virtue. Dependent virtues – and the recognition of our dependence that comes through practicing them – foster the mutual respect and cooperation necessary for a political organization that fulfills physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 124). In addition, dependent virtues compliment independent virtues to create the communal standards of justice required for political organization. MacIntyre creates the virtues of acknowledged dependence (using Aristotle's logic and methodology) to complete Aristotle's catalogue of independent virtues. This combination characterizes a Modified Aristotelianism, which proves more defensible that either Practical, Abstract, or Intuitive Aristotelianism. The strength of Modified Aristotelian is its description of political community with guidelines for the inclusion of groups Aristotle summarily excludes, and its ability to address the primary inadequacy

of Aristotle's moral-political theory, namely, his neglect of the dependent aspects of the human experience. Abstract Aristotelianism fails to provide the substance for its Aristotelian foundation; Practical Aristotelianism denies the substantive, ethical foundation for its concept of political *praxis*; and Intuitive Aristotelianism overestimates the breadth and depth of its philosophical foundation. By contrast, Modified Aristotelianism provides an Aristotelian foundation and describes the ethical and social substance that foundation implies, extending or modifying Aristotle where necessary.

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre's critique of modernity is not, as some suggest, "…clothed as a rejection of the modern world;" rather, it is a rejection of modern moral schemas.[1] To describe MacIntyre's conception of modernity as simply "negative" or to

[1] See Pinkard (2003, pp. 176-200) for the opposite interpretation of MacIntyre's critique of modernity. Pinkard (2003, p. 181) suggests "MacIntyre's proposal has never been for us even to attempt to move back to a premodern, nonindividualist society; he has instead suggested what alternative process would be necessary for a new, nonindividualist society of the future to take shape." Indeed, MacIntyre does not offer communal restoration because he does not believe, in his trilogy, that such restoration is possible. MacIntyre's objections to classical society, which Pinkard accurately describes, do not overshadow MacIntyre's disdain for modernity and hopelessness about its future—that is, MacIntyre's pessimism about the possibility of society recovering a coherent and rationally defensible concept of morality—that permeates *After Virtue*, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*. For the argument that MacIntyre is "a modernist per excellence," see Pinkard (2003, pp. 197-198).

label MacIntyre as "a modernist par excellence" oversimplifies MacIntyre's work (Pinkard, 2003, p. 196). MacIntyre's critique is intended to illustrate how and why moral incommensurability came to be and his use of Aristotelian philosophy in *Dependent Rational Animals* provides the modifications necessary to help us reintegrate virtue into the modern conversation.

Modernity, according to MacIntyre (1990, pp. 216-217), is fragmented intellectual terrain absent "fundamental assumptions on the basis of which it is able to articulate disagreements and organize debates." Thus, modernity is currently unable to help us decide "between the claims of rival and incompatible accounts of justice competing for our moral, social, and political allegiance" (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 2). MacIntyre (1988, p. 3) argues that criteria for such a decision should not be established by arguments used "as weapons," but by arguments presenting a clear, consistent "expression of rationality." Consequently, MacIntyre (1988, p. 3) seeks to present such an "expression of rationality." For MacIntyre (1988, p. 403), rational justification of a particular view of justice, morality, and rationality itself is not impossible, but it does depend on "the adequacy and the explanatory power of the histories which the resources of each of those traditions in conflict enable their adherents to write." Here, MacIntyre (1988, p. 117) acknowledges that vastly different, yet legitimate, arguments could be developed from his insights, but he exhorts us "to begin speaking as protagonists of one contending party or fall silent." With this in mind, MacIntyre becomes an advocate for Aristotelian philosophy and the necessity of its reaffirmation, a decision he justifies through his critique of modernity and moral philosophy.

To define the issues plaguing modernity, MacIntyre suggests that the crisis of modern political thought is actually a crisis of morality. As such, the crisis is modern political philosophy's inability to justify morality rationally (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 14). According to MacIntyre (1984, p. 53), the Protestant Reformation, the Jansenist Catholic movement, and new science "embodied a new concept of [the] reason" used by classical philosophy and scholasticism to justify morality. The new concept held that reason was "powerless to correct our passions" and promote morality (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 54). Theological concepts of grace replaced reason as the means to "genuine comprehension of…[humankind's] true end" or *telos* (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 53). MacIntyre (1984, p. 54) proposes that the new science (beginning in the sixteenth century) limited reason's explanatory power to "truths of fact and mathematical relations but nothing more." Thus, political or philosophical thinkers abandoned reason as a justification for morality leaving society disoriented. In this directionless society, "questions of truth in morality and theology…have become matter for private allegiances" rather than relevant studies seeking fundamental assumptions and their justification (MacIntyre, 1990, p. 217).

Left with fragments of teleological morality, Enlightenment thinkers (e.g., Denis Diderot and Immanuel Kant) attempted to create a rational basis for morality (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 50). MacIntyre (1984, p. 55) argues that the Enlightenment failed to provide justification for morality because it had inherited a fragmented and disjointed moral philosophy. This fragmentation was caused by the Reformation and new science's reevaluation of reason, but also by the secularization of morality and the

rejection of Aristotle's teleological "view of human nature, any view of…[humankind] as having an essence which defines…[its] true end" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 54).

Telos and the teleological view of human nature were rejected when the Reformation and related movements questioned the ultimate conception of *telos* in the "old religion" and the "old world," thus bringing the existence of *telos* itself into question (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 52). MacIntyre argues that *telos* is among the essential elements of the rational justification for morality, articulated by Aristotelian thought. The first element is the recognition that humans are incomplete and unfulfilled without morality. The second element is the belief that humankind has a *telos*, a vision of how we could be or ought to be, and this *telos* is a goal worth seeking. The third element suggests that morality is the means to attaining the *telos* of our existence. According to MacIntyre (1984, pp. 50-55), the Reformation, new science, and the secularization of morality disenfranchised reason and destroyed political philosophy's belief in the second element, the existence of a *telos* for humankind. Thus, morality as the Enlightenment understood it (and as we now understand it) lacks a teleological frame. Therefore it cannot be justified rationally (MacIntyre, 1984, pp. 50-55).

The crisis of modern thought, according to MacIntyre (1984, p. 19), can be witnessed in the failure of the Enlightenment to justify morality and the subsequent creation of our current emotivist culture. Emotivism, as MacIntyre (1984, p. 12) describes it, "is the doctrine that all…moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, expression of attitude or feeling." Our emotivist culture lacks a goal or *telos*

to unite its members or create community among them. Thus, individualism is overly emphasized and the community and morality are devalued (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 10).

After evaluating several thinkers' solutions to the crisis of morality or political thought in *After Virtue*, MacIntyre (1984, p. 259) argues that the most complete and rational justification for morality is found in Aristotle's teleological philosophy. Echoing Aristotle, MacIntyre (1984, p. 259) suggests that human beings can only understand themselves and their *telos* in community – the venue in which human beings develop virtue through relationships, and successfully pursue their *telos*, *eudaimonia* or happiness. MacIntyre (1984, p. 259) describes human beings as "story-telling animal[s]" who receive moral teachings from stories told in their community. Thus, MacIntyre (1984, p. 259) discredits solutions to the crisis of morality that require a separation from society where storytelling is relevant.

In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, MacIntyre (1988) examines three traditions of justice and rationality, affirmed by Aristotle, Augustine, and the Scottish Enlightenment respectively. A tradition is "part of the elaboration of a mode of social and moral life in which intellectual enquiry itself was an integral part" (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 349). Traditions offer "contending accounts of practical rationality and justice" (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 349). Traditions give us context. They provide a narrative for our shared experience. They suspend the search for an external standard by which we may judge rationality and provide us with competing definitions of reason. Our task, then, is to compare the way in which each tradition arrived at their concept of justice and practical reason. Only through "the debates, conflicts, and enquiry of socially embodied,

historically contingent traditions" can we search for definitions of justice, political community, and virtue (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 349). The strongest traditions are those in which "the rationality of the tradition has been confirmed in its encounters with other traditions" (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 403). The Aristotelian tradition has passed this test, making it a viable tradition to ground an articulation of the inadequacies of the liberal condition.

While MacIntyre (1988, p. 403) stops short of labeling Aristotelian philosophy as practically perfect, he does argue that adherents to Aristotle's tradition "have every reason at least so far to hold that the rationality of their tradition has been confirmed in its encounters with other traditions." Further, MacIntyre (1988, p. 402) argues that the Aristotle's philosophy provides an, as of yet unparalleled, justification for morality and explanation of human nature "with resources for its own enlargement, correction, and defense." MacIntyre (1988, p. 402) describes Aristotelian philosophy as in need of some "enlargement" and "correction." However, he contends that classical philosophy's metaphysics is essential to understanding and rationally justifying morality (MacIntyre, 1990, p. 111). He (1984, p. 259) argues that the crisis of modern political thought or morality can be somewhat assuaged by a restoration or rediscovery of the Aristotelian tradition "that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments." MacIntyre (1984, p. 263) continues by offering his version of an escape from modernity - gathering together in insulated communities akin to Aristotle's *polis* "within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained." Only by

seeking to imitate Aristotle's polis can individuals hope to survive intellectually, spiritually, and morally in "the new dark ages" of modernity (1984, p. 259).

In *Dependent Rational Animals*, MacIntyre (1999, p. 117) commits to Aristotelian philosophy as not only as diagnostic tool for modernity, but a prescriptive philosophy. I now turn to the Modified Aristotelianism MacIntyre developed on the foundation of his *After Virtue* trilogy. In *Dependent Rational Animals*, MacIntyre (1999, p. x) describes his project as "a continuation of, but also a correction to, some of my earlier enquiries." With this, MacIntyre (1999, p. 77) presents his modified reading of Aristotle that accepts the philosopher's broad, formal definition of *telos* as *eudaimonia* or flourishing, "the highest good attainable by action."[2] But he uses Aristotelian language to expand the substantive force of that formal definition and the list of social relationships necessary for flourishing through the cultivation of two forms of virtue.

The foundation of MacIntyre's treatment of Aristotelian virtue appears in *After Virtue* when he discusses practice. Practices are coherent, complex, and cooperative human activities (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 187). The goods of a practice are internal; they are realized "in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 187). A practice is more than a task; it is an enterprise (e.g., arts, sciences, games, politics) (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 188). Practices require virtues. Why? Practices demand "a certain kind of relationship between" participants. Virtues "define our relationships to those other people with whom we share the kind of purposes and standards which

[2] See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095a15-20.

inform practices" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 191). For us to engage in practices, then, MacIntyre must outline a catalogue of virtues.

This project is Aristotelian in form in that MacIntyre (1999, p. 5) examines "our animal condition," thus using nature as a normative guide; and he insists on a teleological—albeit modified—ethical schema. Expanding his earlier moral philosophy, MacIntyre (1999, pp. 6-7) describes Aristotle's particular inadequacy, the self-sufficiency model, but uses "Aristotle's concepts, theses and arguments" to complete Aristotle's own philosophy. Thus, MacIntyre (1988, p. 402) puts into practice the praise he offered the Aristotelian tradition in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* – that Aristotle's philosophy has the greatest "resources for its own enlargement, correction, and defense." With the idea of adding the missing piece to moral philosophy using Aristotelian philosophy, MacIntyre (1988, p. 402) offers more specific criticism of Aristotle's philosophy than his own previous readings by highlighting Aristotle's "failure to acknowledge the facts of affliction and dependence."

For example, thinkers critique Aristotle's justification for slavery, his political exclusion of women and workers, and his description of the magnanimous man.[3] MacIntyre (1999, pp. 7, 127) argues that the undercurrent of this criticism is the natural dissatisfaction with Aristotle's (and modern moral philosophy's) emphasis on being "self-sufficiently superior" and insistence on systematically denigrating humankind's "animality, vulnerability, and dependence."

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[3] See Kraut and Skultety (2005) and Annas (1996) for interesting takes on these critiques.

At the heart of MacIntyre's (1999, pp. 7, 127) agreement with this criticism is his Thomistic rejection of Aristotle's magnanimous man or *megalopsychos* as the "paragon of the virtues." MacIntyre (1999, p. 136), who in his earlier work minimized the importance of that critique, now affirms and expands it by reminding his reader that modern society's egalitarianism frequently excludes the disabled, the infirm, the elderly, and children.[4] If Aristotle's self-sufficiency model is the main root of his much criticized elitism, then MacIntyre tackles this problem head on without diluting Aristotelian philosophy, but completing it with the virtues of acknowledged dependence (Knight, 2007, p. 134).

Dependent Rational Animals chronicles MacIntyre's struggle with this critique of Aristotle and his realization that it is applicable, in different ways, to many modern accounts of morality. MacIntyre uses Aristotle's method—a combination of anthropology, sociology, and biology—to illustrate the necessary expansion and correction his philosophy requires. Diverging from this restoration perspective, MacIntyre now suggests that by accepting this critique and integrating the missing piece we can create a comprehensive and rationally justifiable understanding of virtue that modernity could (and should) feasibly adopt.[5] With this, I argue that MacIntyre (1999, p. 77) reinvigorates and improves Aristotelian thought, creating his Modified

[4] See MacIntyre (1988, p. 402) for details of the critique dismissal.

[5] See MacIntyre (1988, 1990) for details about his adoption of an Aristotelian framework through which to examine various traditions.

Aristotelianism and making Aristotle's insights relevant and plausible in the context of modernity.

MacIntyre (1999, pp. 110-126) completes Aristotelian philosophy by creating a second category of virtues, those of acknowledged dependence, such as trustworthiness, reliability, just generosity, temperateness, and *misericordia*. On this point, MacIntyre's work is structured similar to Galston's outline of a catalogue of liberal virtues. Galston's and MacIntyre's work overlap at some points (e.g., classifying reliability, responsibility, and, to a certain degree, independence, as a virtue). Both thinkers also cite the source of their virtue catalogues as society's commonly held understanding – what Galston calls intuition and what MacIntyre (1999, p. 110) calls social rules – of appropriate behavior. For both Galston and MacIntyre, this behavior is broadly understood as our expectations of others.

Virtues of acknowledged dependence are the foundation of our social relationships (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 110). MacIntyre (1999, p. 110) echoes Aristotle when he argues that these rules are the backbone of community, the existence of which is essential for the cultivation of virtue. MacIntyre's (1984, p. 263) earlier work echoed Aristotle's arguments for the supremacy of insulated, self-sufficient, and internally egalitarian communities. MacIntyre (1999, p. 145) still advocates small, egalitarian communities, but their insulation is no longer necessary, and those suffering from physical and/or mental impairments are now seen as contributing members.[6] In

[6] See Aristotle's *Politics* 1252b28.

addition, the member's equality originates from their dependence on each other for physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual flourishing.

MacIntyre (1999, p. 124) extends his analysis of community to include what he believes to be essential virtues, cooperation and *misericordia*. *Misericordia* is a passion, our "urgent and extreme need without respect of persons," and a virtue, the instinctual desire to use our abilities and resources to fulfill another's need (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 124). First articulated by Thomas Aquinas, *misericordia* is "grief or sorrow over someone else's distress, just insofar as one understands the other's distress as one's own" (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 125). *Misericordia*, an example of the virtues of acknowledged dependence, is particularly indispensable to community because it is the virtuous human response to our condition of dependence (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 124).

Like Aristotle, MacIntyre (1999, p. 77) argues that the question, "What is human flourishing or *telos*?," must be explained by asking, "What is virtue?" MacIntyre (1999, p. xii) provides what he sees as the missing piece in classical philosophy by adopting Aristotle's framework (i.e., respect for nature's normative role in understanding humankind and the necessity of social relationships), while rejecting aspects of his work (i.e., the supremacy of intellectual/theoretical virtue and the magnanimous man). This missing piece is the acknowledgement of our "animality, disability, and vulnerability," followed by recognition of the value of social relationships that exemplify and assuage those conditions (e.g., parent-child interactions) and praise for the virtues cultivated therein (MacIntyre, 1999, p. xii).

MacIntyre (1984, p. 149) emphasizes the importance of Aristotle's *telos*, flourishing experienced by striving to live the contemplative life.[7] However, MacIntyre attributes Aristotle's elevation of *theoria* as an over-emphasis on self-sufficiency, and offers praise for *praxis* and *poesis* along with *theoria*, much in the tenor of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. MacIntyre's Thomistic critique of Aristotle's self-sufficiency model allows him to pluralize, but not relativize, our concept of *telos* and provide the other "half" so to speak of Aristotle's catalogue of virtues, the virtues of acknowledged dependence. Given that Aristotle's self-sufficiency model is the main root of his much criticized political exclusivism, MacIntyre appears to have solved this problem without diluting Aristotelian philosophy, by completing and complimenting it with the virtues of acknowledged dependence (Knight, 2007, p. 134).

MacIntyre's (1999, pp. xi, 124) project falls in step with thinkers like Thomas Aquinas who developed accounts of virtue that "not only supplement, but also correct Aristotle's" account by adding dependent virtues to Aristotle's catalogue, based on theological justifications appropriate for the tenor of their time. However, MacIntyre offers a synthesis of the virtues of acknowledged dependence and Aristotle's independent virtues absent theological justification. MacIntyre (1999, p. 124) augments Aristotle's catalogue by arguing that the virtues of acknowledged dependence belong in our "catalogue of the virtues, independent of their theological grounding." MacIntyre (1999, p. 22) replaces theological arguments with references to the psychology, sociology, anthropology, particularly the social structures and interactions present in

[7] See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1178a5-10.

nature, most notably the behavior of dolphins. MacIntyre (1990, p. 112) writes "with the intentions and commitments of a Thomistic Aristotelian," thus the exclusion of theological justification is an intentional and appropriate choice, considering modernity's disdain for theological arguments.[8]

Building on Aristotle, MacIntyre (1999, p. 133) refers to nature as the normative guide illuminating the human condition to illustrate that equally commendable virtues exist apart from Aristotle's catalogue of virtues. For example, MacIntyre (1999, p. 22) argues that dolphins purpose their *telos* and "flourish only because they have learned how to achieve their goals through strategies concerted with other members of the different groups to which they belong or which they encounter." In addition, MacIntyre (1999, pp. 25-26) cites examples of dolphins' hunting practices to suggest that nature endows some animals with the intuitive understanding of their *telos* and its goods (e.g., eating fish). Nature endows these same animals with the capacities (e.g., communication) required to evaluate and modify their behavior (e.g., pushing fish toward the shore) based on its contribution to the pursuit of their *telos*.

Dolphins' "perceptual learning" from experience is also exhibited in "what they have shown themselves able to learn from human trainers" (MacIntyre, 1999, pp. 25-26). MacIntyre (1999, pp. 25-26) argues that these behaviors illustrate that dolphins' perceptual learning capacity and the actual application of their acquired knowledge to behavior reveals that they are "no mere passive receptors of experience. And, like human beings, dolphins take pleasure in those activities which are the exercise of their power

[8] See also MacIntyre (2006b, p. xi).

and skills." MacIntyre concludes this example by citing Aristotle's similar observation of human behavior "that there is pleasure in all perceptual activity and that the pleasure supervenes upon the completed activity." This is a two-fold example illustrating an animal incarnation of 1) the inclination to pursue *telos* and subsequent goods using our perceptual abilities, and 2) the importance of the herd (social relationships) to this pursuit. As it did for Aristotle, for MacIntyre, the behavior of dolphins provides remarkable insight into the natural inclinations and behavior of human beings.

Defending his use of nature as a normative standard, MacIntyre (1999, pp. 25-26) suggests, "The similarities between their [dolphins'] strategies in pursuing their goals and the strategies of human beings have been obvious to human observers at least since Aristotle." MacIntyre completes classical philosophy with the virtues of acknowledged dependence, in part, by analyzing the social behavior exhibited in nature (e.g., dolphins' behavior) and also by observing the natural behavior in dependent, necessary, and fruitful relationships between human beings (e.g., parent-child and husband-wife). MacIntyre (1999, p. 63) uses his analysis of "natural social" behavior, both animal and human, to reveal humankind's "animality" and dependence. In addition to our "animality," MacIntyre (1999, p. 63) suggests nature also reveals human beings' unique characteristic, our "distinctive rationality."

Like dolphins, humans depend on each other for socialization and survival. However, unlike dolphins, human dependence extends one dimension further; humans, particularly children, depend on elders to impart an understanding of our *telos* and the virtues it demands (D'Andrea, 2006, p. 376). It is this self-examination or self-

awareness, particularly in the form of independent practical reasoning, that MacIntyre argues sets humans apart from dolphins and other animals. His observation of human and dolphin behavior, then, reveals to MacIntyre 1) the naturalness of dependence (i.e., our animality), 2) the nature of human dependence and the character of human rationality, and 3) what type(s) of behavior human beings consider virtuous in dependence-based relationships. By founding his project on what he considers to be rightly ordered natural occurrences such as dolphins' cooperation in hunting and an adult child caring for an elderly parent, MacIntyre justifies his completion Aristotle's philosophy with the virtues of acknowledged dependence using the philosopher's own method (i.e., nature as a normative guide and looking to what humans generally perceive to be moral or "good" action).

In addition to analyzing animal behavior, MacIntyre (1999, p. 16) also observed humankind in context - in our everyday environment marked by various life-stages - to gain a practical understanding of dependent virtues. For example, MacIntyre (1999, p. 116) considers "relationships of affection and sympathy," such as the parent-child relationship and the caregiver-disabled/infirm relationship. The intuitive and natural foundation for dependent virtues reveals MacIntyre's continued devotion to Aristotle's method of using nature as a guide for understanding human kind.[9] MacIntyre (1999, p. 156) argues that "in order to flourish, we need both "those virtues that enable us to function as independent and accountable practical reasoners [Aristotle's virtues] and those virtues that enable us to acknowledge the nature and extent of our dependence on

[9] See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1117a 4.

others.” This combination leads to deeper fulfillment and more complete happiness, marked by genuine humility and cooperation, than Aristotle’s philosophy alone (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 156).

Although he had yet to describe his dependent virtues in his *After Virtue* trilogy, MacIntyre (1999, p. 126) does argue that “intellectual vulnerability” is the mark of good moral theorizing. Not until *Dependent Rational Animals*, however, does MacIntyre (1999, p. 139) acknowledge the importance of physical and emotional vulnerability. MacIntyre (1999, p. 139) argues that “what we may learn about ourselves from grappling with” the disabled or infirm is awareness of our society’s disordered priorities and disconnected moral evaluations. This awareness is the first step toward recognizing our own vulnerabilities and developing social relationships not based on pity, condescension, or guilt.

With this, MacIntyre addresses one of the most powerful critiques of Aristotelian philosophy, abhorrence of his elitist political exclusion. MacIntyre, then, is not forced to reject Aristotle. Instead, MacIntyre uses Aristotle’s framework to illuminate his shortcomings, reaffirm his explanations of human psychology and morality, and justify additions to his catalogue of virtue. Thus, MacIntyre (1984, p. 14) offers a remedy for modernity’s inability to justify morality rationally, which he considers to be the crisis of modernity. MacIntyre’s Modified Aristotelianism praises Aristotle’s unparalleled insight and initiates a novel approach that evaluates modern ideas using the teleological orientation of his philosophy and his articulation of universal standards. This approach recognizes the limitations and faults of Aristotle’s work, but remembers what he

successfully explained, the rational justification of virtue and the teleological nature of human beings (MacIntyre, 1999, pp. 77, 156).

MacIntyre's work heralds a new phase in the appropriation of Aristotle's philosophy. Among the veins of appropriation discussed – Practical, Abstract, and Intuitive – Modified Aristotelianism proves the most successful because it broadens Aristotle's work on Aristotle's terms. These thinkers – Arendt, Nussbaum, Galston, and MacIntyre – all work to render Aristotle's insights applicable, to make his work relevant and workable for our world. Each moves toward that goal, but none gets as close as MacIntyre. Why? MacIntyre adopts Aristotle's logic and uses it to include excellences (e.g., dependence) beyond The Philosopher's original schema. The appropriators may use some of Aristotle's concepts, but only MacIntyre adopts The Philosopher's manner of thinking. Only by applying Aristotle's logic did MacIntyre recognize that dependent relationships and the virtues of acknowledge dependence were necessary to the pursuit of our *telos*. Aristotle, then, provides the framework and, in some sense, the first half of the picture. MacIntyre's (1999, p. xi) approach argues that the pursuit of our *telos* must emphasize humankind's "animality, disability, and vulnerability" along with our desire for independence and self-sufficiency. In his Modified Aristotelianism, MacIntyre uses the framework to draw the picture's second half.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This dissertation is an attempt to address the problem of political discontent, a particularly damaging characteristic of the liberal condition and the crisis of modernity. Attempts to address the discontent problem appear in both empirical political science and normative political theory. Evidence appropriate to each subfield demonstrates the existence and extent of political discontent. It is born out quantitatively in evaluations of political trust, political satisfaction, alienation, confidence, legitimacy, responsiveness, support, and approval ratings to name a few.[1] Outside of academic work, we witness discontent in everyday political experience. For example, consider the raging animosity that culminated in the 2011 debt-ceiling crisis. We are dissatisfied not only with the outcome of politics, but with the process and structure of politics. While the examples I offer are recent, the problem is not new. It remains systemic. My work here relies on recent scholarship in an effort to address the discontent problem as it exists today.[2]

By virtue of our method and textual resources, political theorists are uniquely

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[1] For a few interesting examples, see Holmes and Manning (2013), Tuorto and Blais (2014), Dionne Jr. (2012), Hetherington and Rudolph (2015), and Hetherington (1998).

[2] Recent means different things to different subfields in political science. For quantitative political scientists, recent often means a work published within the last five years. This is not the case for political theory. The oldest version of Aristotelianism I reference appeared in print in the mid-20th century.

equipped to tackle the puzzle of political discontent. Why? Because this discontent, this moral malaise, is animated by a particular philosophical orientation, a particular answer to questions about our nature, political community, and our relationship with our fellows. We live with "some answer to these questions – we live some theory – all the time" (Sandel, 1996, p. ix). In short, we live the theory of political liberalism or the liberal condition. Our understanding of political discontent, then, is incomplete unless we move beyond "the political arguments of our day" and tackle the inadequacies of the underlying philosophy, political liberalism, that gives them life (Sandel, 1996, p. 4).

Addressing the crisis of modernity or the problem of political discontent requires a turn to Aristotle. The four thinkers I examine acknowledge that the liberal condition, marked by isolation and social disconnect, and the liberal tradition that created it, provide little guidance when answering the questions about the good life. They turn to Aristotle for help with these questions.

Consider the following description of our predicament in the liberal West.

> What had been a community came to be recognized as an association of individuals: this was the counterpart in political philosophy of the individualism that had established itself in ethical theory. And the office of government was understood to be the maintenance of arrangements favorable to the interests of individuality, arrangements (that is) which emancipated the subject from the chains (as Rousseau put it) of communal allegiances….to enjoy it [individuality] came to be recognized as the main ingredient of happiness….the familiar warmth of communal pressures was dissipated….the familiar anonymity of communal life was replaced by a personal identity (Oakeshott, 1991, pp. 369-371).

In their descriptions of ways to improve or recreate political community, Arendt, Nussbaum, Galston, and MacIntyre echo Oakeshott's observations about the damage caused by deemphasizing, dismantling, weakening, or improperly grounding political

community. Rather than ushering in an era of contentment, the reconceptualization of political community leaves us disjointed, isolated, floundering, and, in extreme cases, excluded. Arendt (1998, p. 55) describes the dehumanization of community-less individuals,[3] the loss to creativity caused by political interactions governed by economic exchange, and the disappearance of the public sphere. For Nussbaum (2006, p. 2), political community needs to be redefined in terms of social cooperation and care, rather than "mutual advantage." Galston (2002, p. 10) proposes conceptualizing political community as a "public system of liberty" featuring both pluralism and unity. Only this political community protects "civic goals of justice and unity" while allowing individuals and groups to purse "distinctive conceptions" of the best life (Galston, 2002, pp. 9-10). In terms of movement away from liberalism, MacIntyre's proposal is more radical. Aristotle's ethics and politics must be read together to create political community more concerned with behaviors – with habits – than intellectual positions. This political community features: 1) a state (or multiple states) charged with "upholding a range of civil liberties" and 2) local groups "ordering their own conversations about their common goods as practically rational dialogue" (MacIntyre, 2006a, p. 214).

Political community poorly constituted leaves us with "impoverished civic life" (Sandel, 1996, p. 6). This poverty is identified by political philosophers writing within the liberal tradition and those working outside of it (e.g., communitarians and

[3] Arendt understands community-less individuals as self-obsessed individuals. She (1998, p. 280) argues, "modern philosophy…made sure in introspection that man concerns himself only with himself."

republicans). The four thinkers I work with in this dissertation identify as Aristotelians, but they do not all identify as liberals, republicans, or communitarians, to name a few camps of political philosophy in which Aristotelians reside. What, then, unites these thinkers?

These four thinkers stand united on three points: 1) as mentioned above, each labels their work as Aristotelian, 2) they agree that a deep discontent, caused by the absence or disintegration of political community, exists, and 3) their theories aim at reconstituting our civic life. Thus, each thinker uses Aristotle as a compass for our reorientation. In doing so, each exemplifies a strain of contemporary Aristotelianism. How, briefly, do these strains differ?

Arendt emphasizes Aristotle's connection between theory and action (*praxis*) to begin the process of reorientation. She is particularly concerned with translating technical terms into everyday language. In doing do, Arendt (1954, p.19) disconnects Aristotle's politics from his ethics. Her translation of virtue (*aretê*) into principle is a powerful example of this. Rather than providing guidance about appropriate political behavior, Arendt expands principle to include experiences like fear. This disconnection of Aristotle's political philosophy from its ethical foundation leaves us with a vague notion of politics and the importance of politics to the human experience, but little ethical direction. Arendt's Practical Aristotelianism leaves us with much talk about *praxis*, but little idea what that *praxis* should look like apart from political interaction. This disconnection of Aristotle's political philosophy from its ethical foundation serves as the chief weakness of Arendt's Practical Aristotelianism.

Nussbaum adopts Aristotle's arguments about human sociability, human flourishing, and, to a lesser extent, natural teleology. Nussbaum's Aristotelianism emphasizes social justice infused with a vague concept of human flourishing, but it precludes meaningful discussion of that flourishing's character or the habits necessary to achieve it. The result is an Aristotelianism of malleable abstractions that provides support for moving beyond Rawls's account of justice, but offers little guidance about what human beings are to do with their capabilities to pursue human flourishing.

Galston uses Aristotle's arguments about human sociability and human flourishing to ground individualistic virtue on a social/communal intuition. He establishes the limits of individual deliberation and uses Aristotle's argument to define the constrained space needed to maintain a cohesive, liberal society. Galston's use of Aristotle to support individualism is the weakest part of his work, but Intuitive Aristotelianism does reveal how Aristotle's logic might support including excellences beyond his original schema. Here, he provides more ethical direction than Nussbaum.

Modified Aristotelianism seizes this revelation (albeit independently) and develops it. Using Aristotle's reasoning, MacIntyre expands Aristotle's teleology. MacIntyre (1999, p. xi) argues that the pursuit of our *telos* must emphasize humankind's "animality, disability, and vulnerability" along with our desire for independence and self-sufficiency. MacIntyre takes Aristotle's insights about human sociability and, using Aristotle's reasoning, carries them through to identify missing pieces of Aristotle's work. These missing pieces, the virtues of acknowledge dependence, combine well with Galston's Aristotelian account of liberal virtues, Nussbaum's argument for a broader

understanding of human flourishing, and Arendt's cautions about the dangers of individualism. This combination helps us begin to use address the inadequacies of the liberal condition with Aristotle's insights.

How do my evaluations of each strain help political theorists understand the application of Aristotle's work? Applying Aristotle's insights requires, first, that we find them. This cannot be accomplished without sifting through the competing Aristotelianisms. For political theorists interested in overcoming the problem of modernity, spending our time discussing the nuanced interpretive issues is the wrong choice. In fact, the distinction between political theory and philosophy hinges on changing the conversation from a discipline-specific (i.e., internal) debate about interpretation to much more sweeping efforts at application that not only engage other subfields in political science and other disciplines, but engage with the nonacademic world. Let us explore one brief example of engaging across subfields in political science. Quantitative work on political polarization and resulting declines in political trust (e.g., Hetherington and Rudolph (2015)) help political theorists by substantiating their claims of discontent in a specific socio-political arena. Political theorists, in turn, provide the context and robust explanation for the discontent from which Hetherington and Rudolph (2015) identify a piece.

While quantitative work describes one result of the liberal condition, it is limited when it comes to offering wide-reaching remedies. For example, while Hetherington and Rudolph (2015) are able to suggest that political trust will increase as the US economy improves, they are unable to speak to the systemic issue of political and social

dissatisfaction. Political theorists can offer insights here. Engaging with the nonacademic world requires a combination of the political theory explanation and the quantitative work causality identification. But why should we engage the nonacademic world? Is it not enough to contribute to our disciplines? It is not enough. Projects like this dissertation include lived theories – that is, as Michael Sandel (1996, p. ix) argues, "…we live some theory – all the time." If we are interested in living better, analyzing strains of Aristotelianism rather than focusing on interpretive debates allows us to organize Aristotle's insights and slowly influence the socio-political climate.

This is not to suggest, however, that interpretive issues warrant no discussion. To the contrary, the examination of interpretative issues need to take the form of descriptive, comparative analysis – the method I use in this dissertation. Specifically, I am arguing for a particular method of evaluating Aristotelian thinkers. This is a three step method. First, identify *how* the author is an Aristotelian. That is, determine which pieces of Aristotle's work are emphasized. Second, examine the role of that emphasis. That is, *what* does the author build on or do with Aristotle's work? Third, evaluate the strength of that building exercise.

For example, is the thinker's use of Aristotle internally consistent? Does the author make clear the logical connection between their chosen pieces of Aristotle's work and the resulting Aristotelianism? How strong are those logical connections? If the author uses Aristotle to support something The Philosopher is rarely read to support (e.g., social democracy), then how robust is the author's argument? These are the questions I put to Arendt, Nussbaum, Galston, and MacIntyre. Asking each thinker these

questions allows us to learn more about their theories. Why? It forces us to read them through the lense of their contribution to the project of applying Aristotle's insights to the liberal condition. By comparing and contrasting these thinkers, we can more clearly identify the merits and pitfalls of their work.

But what if each variation of Aristotelianism is too nuanced to classify accurately? Why paint these meticulously crafted works with a broad brush? Because some form of classifying – of comparative sorting and organizing – must be done to identify a core. This core is what will help political theorists apply an Aristotelian salve to the wounds of the liberal condition.

It is true that sorting ignores most detail. But the work of a good sorter is to figure out which details serve as linchpins.[4] This detail identification work – a comparative, descriptive analysis of the Aristotelianism of Arendt, Nussbaum, Galston, and MacIntyre – is what I have begun to do here.[5] The previous four chapters include the explanation of my classification. Arguments about whether the details I identify are,

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[4] Christopher Ansell's work, *Pragmatist Democracy*, is one recent example of a sorting effort applied to a different camp of political theory. Ansell (2011) uses the process of classifying pragmatist thinkers to argue that public agencies are the cornerstone of democracy. This brief explanation does not present Ansell's argument in full. Instead, the example is one illustration of the benefits of classification efforts.

[5] Others (e.g., Wallach (1992) and Knight (2007)) have gone about this work in different ways.

in fact, linchpin details, are interpretative arguments worth having. With the project outline established, let me turn briefly to why I selected these four thinkers.

I chose Arendt, Nussbaum, Galston, and MacIntyre for two reasons. First, their work is connected in a unique way. Second, their work captures the trend of contemporary Aristotelianism.[6]

How are they connected and what is this trend? These four thinkers speak to the inadequacies of the liberal condition in a specific way. Each (even MacIntyre) has made peace with the present and each tries to work within it. All four thinkers agree that the heart of the problem – that is, the diagnosis of the liberal condition – is the absence of collective goods. The substance and reintegration of these collective goods are points of disagreement, but the damage done by their absence is not. Arendt, Nussbaum, Galston, and MacIntyre recognize that without collective goods, we are alienated and unhappy. They all agree that our alienation is a major political problem. They each, then, use Aristotle's spirit and substance to recover meaning in the liberal West. Why? With relative degree of pluralism, Aristotle tells us how Greece (with its diversity) held together, the *polis*. Each agrees Aristotle helps us diagnose and give an account of collective meaning and why we want that for ourselves.

What do I mean when I write that these thinkers have made peace with the present and try to work within it? For Nussbaum, Galston, and MacIntyre this means

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[6] Aristotelianism is not the only sect of political theory offering criticisms of the liberal condition. For example, republicanism (e.g., Sandel (1996) and Pettit (1997)) has much to say on the subject.

writing in academic disciplines dominated by the Rawlsian framework, also called Rawlsian liberalism. For Arendt, this means addressing the real political failures of liberalism. We will spend more time on Arendt shortly.

Let us turn to the different ways Nussbaum, Galston, and MacIntyre address Rawlsian dominance. Nussbaum notes the inability of Rawlsian liberalism to develop or support an account of the community's obligations to the individual. She, then, develops her Aristotelianism with this goal in mind – to determine what communities owe individuals and how communities can deliver on those debts. Galston notes the inability of Rawlsian liberalism to develop or support an account of the individual's need for a purposive structure to guide their choices (i.e., virtues). He, then, develops an Aristotelianism outlining the minimum standards of a purposive liberal community and the virtues of liberal individuals within it. MacIntyre notes the inability of Rawslian liberalism to provide context in which individuals and communities understand their symbiotic relationship. Unlike Nussbaum and Galston, however, MacIntyre argues this lack of context starts long before Rawls. Here, Arendt's work pre-dating Rawls is also helpful; the inadequacies of the liberal condition began long before Rawlsian came to dominate political theory.

MacIntyre's issues, then, with Rawlsian liberalism are actually issues with the liberal condition. MacIntyre writes his Aristotelianism with full knowledge that whether or not the conversation is dominated by Rawlsian theory, the problems with the liberal condition remain the same. Why, then, these three thinkers? The diagnosis is the same, but the approach is different. Nussbaum approaches the problem from the standpoint of

the community. Galston approaches the problem from the standpoint of the individual. MacIntyre approaches the problem from the standpoint of both. This, and his use of Aristotle's method, bolster Modified Aristotelianism.

What about Arendt? Examining her Aristotelianism is particularly valuable because she writes in a world grappling with the real failures of individualism and political liberalism predating the Rawlsian paradigm. Using Arendt gives my classification effort purchase on political liberalism generally, rather than the political liberalism of the late 20th century. While the other thinkers emphasize discontent and dissatisfaction, a luxury afforded by the late 20th century, Arendt explores (and reminds us of) the danger of the liberal condition, the danger of extreme individualism to the community and the individual. Although she has much to say about the dangers of liberalism, she does not advocate resignation. Instead, Arendt's work acts as the scaffolding. Her method of diagnosis and solution-seeking paves the way for Nussbaum, Galston, and MacIntyre to identify the failures of Rawlsian theory (an outgrowth of the individualism and liberalism Arendt addresses) and move toward finding remedies for these failures.

Given the connections shared by the four thinkers, let us now turn to the order in which they appear in this dissertation. Placing these four thinkers in this particular order makes their connection clear. I begin with a prophetic, solution-focused thinker writing before Rawlsian dominance. In short, Arendt operates outside of the Rawlsian paradigm. Arendt reminds us that the problems of the liberal condition did not begin with Rawlsian dominance, nor would they end if Rawlsianism faded from view. From

there, I move to three thinkers who build on Arendt's work, whether they are explicit about this or not, in that they find the liberal condition lacking (in different ways) and are forced to look beyond the liberal tradition to address its insufficiencies.

With the questions of selection and ordering addressed, the next question emerges. Why do these thinkers choose Aristotle to address the inadequacies of the liberal condition? Certainly others have written about political community. What special purchase does Aristotle give us? Why Aristotle and not Plato, for example?

First, a precedent, most notably Thomism, exists in political theory for using Aristotle's work to talk to secular and religious alike. His work also allows us to speak across comprehensive doctrines, to borrow Rawlsian language. Given that we live in a world where Christianity is no longer the dominant paradigm, political theorists need the ability to talk to Christian and non-Christian alike. Aristotle can help us span the gap between revelation-based arguments and reason-based arguments. Insights offered by those defending political community from a Christian perspective need not be lost to an increasingly secularized world.[7]

Addressing political discontent in modern liberal societies requires a political philosophy divorced from revelation. Aristotle provides an argument both compatible with, but independent from, Christian political thought. In short, Aristotle's description and defense of vibrant political community speaks to Christian and non-Christian

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[7] Catholic social thought is one example of tradition too easily dismissed or ignored because of its connection to revelation. See Williams (2011) for a recent overview of the tradition.

alike. It does not require the reader to accept or reject a theological perspective. What Aristotle gives us is the ability to deliberate, to come to the table or practice of deliberation with our varying belief systems.

Aristotle also gives us a model of political unity with a relative degree of pluralism. Arendt, Nussbaum, Galston, and MacIntyre each pick up on this balance – the balance between allowing individuals to deliberate about the human good and establishing common ground for political community. Aristotle gives us an account of common ground that goes beyond physical protection and emphasizing flourishing and fulfillment. Aristotelianism, then, allows us to move beyond survival and discuss what it might mean for humans to thrive. Why Aristotle? Why not Plato, for example? In both Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, we have an entirely metaphysical and static conception of the well-ordered *polis*. Metaphysics of one sort or another is the standard. By contrast, in the Politics, Aristotle is interested in how constitutions work and their variability. He includes a standard to judge them, but it is moral, not metaphysical.

If Aristotle's insights *can* help us justify and develop political community, then whose use of Aristotle gives us the leverage we need to go about this task? In short, whose Aristotelianism works? The short answer to this question is MacIntyre's Modified Aristotelianism. But getting to the short answer – that is, identifying whose use of Aristotle holds water, philosophically speaking – requires an exercise in comparison. This comparison is better characterized as a building exercise. This is ordering of the four thinkers – Arendt, Nussbaum, Galston, and MacIntyre – is important. Chronology plays a role in terms of their relationship to theories of liberalism, but they are placed

cumulatively. That is, each builds, whether implicitly or explicitly, on the other. The short answer is tempting in that, on its face, it might enable us to label who got Aristotle right and who got him wrong. Focusing on right readings of Aristotle changes the entire project. Those interpretative issues distract us from the real work. If we are to be solution focused, it profits us little to advocate returning to the right version of Aristotle as our only alternative, our only answer to the problems of modernity. Rather than returning to his work and adopting it wholesale, Aristotelianism asks us to *use* Aristotle's work. The two advantages I describe above make Aristotle's work a uniquely effective tool to diagnose and remedy the liberal condition. This is the real labor, figuring out whose application of Aristotle to the problem of our discontent is one that works. This starts with comparative analysis and classification.

Is it possible (or desirable) to move beyond or to synthesize the four models I use to strengthen the projects of contemporary Aristotelianism? The project of contemporary Aristotelianism is attempting to deal with the liberal condition, to infuse meaning into modern life. The four thinkers I examined share a cumulative relationship. Synthesis of them, then, does not mean we take an equal part from each, but that we take the strongest pieces from each. I have worked to identify these pieces and illustrate their appearance in the next thinker's work in the previous four chapters.

MacIntyre's Modified Aristotelianism provides the strongest starting point for an Aristotelianism aimed at offering a different vantage point from which to view the liberal condition. Modified Aristotelian, in many ways the culmination of the thinkers I have compared, is a springboard to applying Aristotle's connections between theory and

practice, between inquiry and assumption, between public and private to a theoretical approach to liberal democracy. The way MacIntyre arrives at his insights is as important as the insights themselves. MacIntyre uses Aristotle's framework to identify the missing pieces of Aristotle's work. Modified Aristotelianism, then, features a method, a type of inquiry that encourages deliberation with yourself and with your fellows, discourages dichotomous thinking, and integrates the community and the individual.

Yes, it is possible to use my analysis to pursue the project of contemporary Aristotelianism, because this project is concerned with infusing meaning into our modern lives. Take the model MacIntyre's Modified Aristotelianism provides, with its vantage point different from liberalism and different from traditionalism, to engage in rational inquiry, to go about the business of making life meaningful. I have identified MacIntyre's ability to work within Aristotle's framework to address The Philosopher's limitations and tease out the work's implications. This is the fruit comparative analysis bears. Either applying MacIntyre's model or engaging in more comparative analysis looking for similarly valuable fruit are two viable options for contemporary Aristotelianism.

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