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Aristotle and Thucydides on Wealth, Exchange, and Acquisition

By

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Since the introduction of Adam Smith's treatises on the mechanisms involved in the market economy, the field of economics has been categorized as a social science; a subject that could be analyzed and studied through the use of scientific methods in order to achieve a better understanding of exchange and wealth. The immense influence on economic thought caused by *The Wealth of Nations* granted mankind the license to compartmentalize his desires and interests. Yet, the perhaps fatal flaw in this turn in logic is the sequestering of economics away from an ethical standpoint. For Adam Smith was not a professor of economics, but of moral philosophy (as economics was commonly named at the time). The importance of the interplay between the ethical components inherently linked with moneyed exchanged, and the scientific models produced to create a more logical understanding of this sphere of society, has largely withered in the modern industrial era. It is this dichotomy in economic thought between the purely philosophical theory and the sometimes-harsh political reality that is the focus of this study, and this difference in analysis is exemplified in our two authors of interest, Aristotle and Thucydides. The philosopher and the historian composed their respective works at opposite ends of the Grecian intellectual spectrum, but it precisely this difference in thought process provides the most compelling analysis and evidence for this study. While Aristotle submits theoretical economic and ethical models of existence, the historiographical text of Thucydides provides a sociopolitical reality upon which to overlay these theories and to decipher where they apply, where they do not, and why in each case.

Three specific elements of ancient acquisition, wealth, and exchange will be the primary interest of this analysis. First, the limits of exchange and wealth will be explored and how the countering motives of self-sufficiency and self-interest drive economic

activity. These ideas form the foundation upon which the majority of Aristotle's socioeconomic theories are based, and a thorough understanding of their intricacies is essential for a continuing exploration of the economic and moral issues inherently linked. The political justification of the Athenian Empire, exquisitely portrayed by Thucydides, calls into question the validity of many of these philosophical theories. Next, the discussion of limits, wealth, and economic motivation will be scrutinized through an ethical and moral prism. For Aristotle, this means deciphering what it is for these ideas to be 'natural' (an ambiguous term at best and the subject of a probing word study), and by moral association, what the implications of the true nature of man have upon natural economic activity. Here we see perhaps the most gaping philosophical worldview between Aristotle and Thucydides, as the philosophical readings of human nature seems to clash at all junctions with the sociopolitical pessimism of the historian. Lastly, these morally philosophic theories and economic studies of natural wealth and exchange will be applied to the relationship between the individual household (*oikos*) and the political institutions of the city-state (*polis*). This partnership of *oikos* and *polis*, upon which all aspects of Greek society are formed, is a major focus of Aristotle's *Politics* and thus deserves a critical discussion of its socioeconomic merits. However, the ostensible lack of any mention of Athenian political institutions is jarring to the modern reader and the reason for its exclusion is not directly addressed by Aristotle. Therefore, Thucydides must act as our historical guide for how this key relationship between city and household existed during the harsh realities of wartime Athens and, through his sociopolitical insights, attempt to answer the question of Athens' relative absence within the pages of the *Politics*.

Through this procedure of analysis, this study hopes to provide further insight into the economic mindset and dealings of ancient Greek society; a topic of interest that has received surprisingly little attention from scholars, especially in light of the recent socioeconomic struggles and crises of our own modern society. Only recently has man's seemingly supreme grasp of the science of economics been called into question. Has there been an egregious oversight of a vital component of this social science, namely the social and human component? Can human nature be so easily compartmentalized into a series of graphs, charts, and appendices, or has the human element underpinning the modern societies of the world been vastly misinterpreted and misrepresented?

# ***Chapter 1***

## *The Limits of Wealth: Self-Sufficiency and Self-Interest*

A key illustration in comparing and contrasting the socioeconomic tendencies found in Aristotle and Thucydides is the interplay between the concepts of self-sufficiency and self-interest. In many ways, these ideologies are still much discussed today, even in the present global-capitalistic world. One needs to look no further than the recent crisis of the global financial system, which many have attributed to greed and excessive self-interest, in order to note the relevance of examining these ideas in classical literature. Wendell Berry, in an article for *Harper's Magazine*, brings to bear these ideas following this crisis and many of his arguments are relevant to this very study: "A second problem is that the economic fantasy of limitless in a limited world calls fearfully into question the value of our monetary wealth, which does not reliably stand for the real wealth of land, resources and workmanship".<sup>1</sup> The concept of limits plays a key role in this discussion of sufficiency and interest, and what is the natural state of man in this economic regard. However, this chapter of the study will focus exclusively upon these two ideas in our texts of concern, without any moral judgments on the part of this or the ancient authors.

### *Self-Sufficiency and Self-Interest*

Let us begin then with an examination of the two terms that concern us in this chapter, namely sufficiency and interest, in the Greek. Sufficiency appears multiple times in

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<sup>1</sup> Berry 2008. The language of limitlessness and limits that throughout the article is frightfully Berry uses similar to that of Aristotle in the *Politics*. His article could have very easily and justly been entitled "Aristotelian Economics" instead of "Faustian Economics".

both Aristotle's *Politics* and Thucydides as *αὐτάρκη* and *αὐτάρχεια*, the former being the adjectival form and the latter the noun. Its definition is simple enough: sufficiency in oneself, independence. Thucydides expands this definition slightly by extrapolating the concept to characterize a city-state (2.36), but since the ancient concept of the city likened its needs and wants to that of a single household, this definition of state sufficiency remains within the bounds of the accepted definition. The Greek word for interest is slightly more ambiguous. Thucydides makes use of the word *ωφέλεια* with great regularity, and although its primary definition may not make it ostensibly seem a likely candidate (help or aid, especially in war, thus why it has such prevalence in Thucydides' text), its secondary definition is much closer to the idea of personal interest: advantage, benefit, profit, and gain. Thus, it is not a difficult intellectual leap to connect this definition of gain and profit to the idea of economic self-interest. Now that the Greek parameters of the key terms have been explored, the analysis of the texts can begin properly.

The *Politics* of Aristotle is an extensive study into the human construction of regimes and legislatures that govern everyday life in the *polis*, and it is with his discussion of the primacy of the city in book 1 where this study begins. Aristotle's first book quickly shifts its focus from the city to the home and its proper management. It is in this section on *oikonomike* that we find the passages pertinent for the purposes of this study, beginning with Chapter 3 on the nature of property and business. In typical Aristotelian style, a categorization of property and wealth is sought. This is somewhat of an alien concept to the modern reader, whose sense of pure capitalism places no weight upon the origin or

differentiation of wealth. One kind of wealth and property, posits Aristotle, is that which is attained for the necessity and sufficiency of the household.

kai\ e)/oiken o(/ g )a)lhqino\j plou=toj e)k tou/twn ei}nai. h( ga\r  
th=j toiau/thj kth/sewj au0ta/rkeia pro\j a)gaqh\n zwh\n ou)k  
a)/peiro/j e)stin

And it is these goods (those goods attained for sufficiency) that riches in the true sense at all events seem to consist. For the amount of such property sufficient in itself for a good life is not unlimited.

1256b30-34

This sense of true wealth is limited to the amount necessary for life, that is, true wealth is merely what is sufficient and no more. This manner of thought certainly clashes with the modern sense of economics and most of what we think to understand about the competitive nature of man. Aristotle is not ignorant of this capitalist nature of man and it is this more materialistic pursuit that he identifies as the other kind of wealth:

)/esti de/ ge/noj a)/llo kthtikh=j h(\n ma/lista kalou=si, kai\ di/kaion  
au)to\ kalei=n, xrhmatistikh/n, di )h(\n ou)de\n dokei= pe/rav ei}nai  
plou/tou kai\ kth/sewj

But there is another kind of acquisition that is specially called wealth-getting, and that is so called with justice; and to this kind it is due that there is thought to be no limit to riches and property

1256b40-1257a1

So these are the two kinds of wealth according to Aristotle: one whose end is self-sufficiency, and the other whose end is pure gain. The language of limits (or lack thereof) is found in both passages, and this is a key differentiating factor for Aristotle in compiling his categorization of wealth. The acquisition of true wealth is limited to that amount of property that is sufficient for life, whereas the acquisition of monetary wealth is unlimited



because money is both the limit and the end of the exchange. Since one cannot consume or subsist upon money alone, there cannot be a sufficient amount to be had. Aristotle recognizes the essential nature of exchange (since the means for a sufficient life are not made readily available to every household) and also of coinage (since some goods cannot easily be carried to and fro owing to their size or weight), but he takes issue with this second kind of wealth when used outside of necessary exchange:

ο(τε\ de\ πα/lin lh=roj ei}nai dokei= to\ no/misma, kai\ no/moj  
 panta/pasi fu/sei d ) ou)qe/n, ο/(ti metaqeme/nwn te tw=n  
 xrwme/nwn ou)qeno\j a)/cion, ou)/te xrh/simon pro\j ou)de\n tw=n  
 a)nagkai/wn e)sti\

but at other times, on the contrary, it is thought that money is nonsense, and nothing by nature but entirely a convention, because when those who use it have changed the currency it is worth nothing, and because it is of no use for any of the necessary needs of life

1257b10-13

Again, these postulations are foreign and altogether strange for the modern reader, whose livelihoods are placed not in sustenance farming or the like, but in a monetary income whose value is unwaveringly vouched for by the government. However, one needs to look no further than pre-war World War II Germany, where skyrocketing inflation rates caused the value of currency to disintegrate to nearly nothing, in order to see the rational truth in these words even in our modern economic times. Thus, plainly laid out for the reader are the two types of wealth, one with a sufficient natural limit and the other with no limit at all. Aristotle clearly favors the economics of sufficiency and condemns that of pure profit, but the moral elements of this dichotomy will be visited at length later in the study.

## *The Limits of Empire*

Let us move then to our other text of main interest, the *Histories* of Thucydides, specifically to the Athenian justification of their empire. The imperial ambitions of Athens following the conclusion of the Persian Wars had resulted in substantial territorial and monetary gains at the expense of many other city-states throughout the Aegean, who in turn looked to Sparta to provide some respite against the Athenians. The aggression of the Athenians at the battle and ensuing siege of Potidaea in 432 BC led to a summit of the Peloponnesian League at Sparta, where the Athenians sought to justify both their warlike actions and the empire that they had built:

ε)Ϸ αυ)του= δε\ του= ε)/ργου καθναγκα/σχημεν το\ πρω=τον  
προαγαγεi=n αυ)θη\ν ε)j το/δε, μα/λιστα με\ν u(πο\ δε/ουj, ε)/πειτα  
και\ τιμη=j, u(/steron και\ w)feli/aj.

And the nature of the case first compelled us to advance our empire to its present height; fear being our principal motive, though honor and interest afterwards came in.

1.75.3

The Athenians themselves cite their own self-interest (w)feli/aj) as a motivating factor in building their empire. Upon overlaying the Aristotelian framework of wealth, it appears the rest of the allied Greek cities indeed have much to worry about concerning the ambitions of Athens. For by their own admission the Athenians are self-interested and seek wealth, which is without limit. Thus, the Athenians should theoretically desire a similarly limitless conquest. However, the situation is far more complex than it ostensibly appears.

Aristotle speaks briefly on the business of war in the *Politics*, and his categorization is surprising in light of his statements concerning self-interest:

di\ kai\ h( polemikh\ fu/sei kthtikh/ pwj e)/stai (h( ga\r qhreitikh\  
me/roj au0th=j) h{| dei= xrh=sqai pro/j te ta\ qhri/a kai\ tw=n  
a)nqrw/pwn o(/soi pefuko/tej a0/rxesqai mh\ qe/lousin, w9j fu/sei  
di/kaion tou=ton o1nta to\n po/lemon

Hence even the art of war will by nature be in a manner an art of acquisition (for the art of hunting is a part of it) that is properly employed both against wild animals and against such of mankind as though designed by nature for subjection refuse to submit to it, inasmuch as this warfare is by nature.

1256b23-27

Here Aristotle likens war to hunting, in that there are those among men who are by nature meant to be conquered and subsequently made slaves. As Simpson aptly points out in his commentary on the *Politics*, there is no socioeconomic difference between hunting and warfare provided that it is “done by better humans against worse”.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, this leaves a fair amount of ambiguity concerning the justification of war, for clearly there is no objective method for determining whether a city is better or worse than any other. Athenians would obviously seem to think that they are the best among men (one needs to look no further than the self-aggrandizing and pandering in the funeral oration to witness the inflated sense of relative self-worth that the Athenians have for themselves and their city). Aristotle has provided an ideological loophole in his careful analysis of wealth that allows for cities to conduct war as they please by proclaiming to be “better humans”.

Even if the ambiguous nature of “better” and “worse” are removed from the question of justification, an unambiguous measure of “stronger” and “weaker” provides a

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<sup>2</sup> Simpson, 1998.

truly Thucydidean justification of empire based purely upon military power. As is noted by Thucydides throughout the buildup to the Peloponnesian War, the naval capabilities and monetary resources of Athens were far beyond that of any other city.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, according to the Aristotle's natural order of war, Athens' power should have allowed her conquest of the Peloponnese. Since this certainly was not the case, what factor or event occurred that shifted the balance of power away from Athens? Following the plague in Athens, Pericles gives a speech to the Athenian assembly (2.60-64) in which he attempts to restore the city's confidence and morale. Thucydides proceeds with an account of the character of Pericles following his speech, and reveals that if Pericles had survived the plague he believes that Athens would have been victorious in the war. The course of action that he suggested was one of caution: not to overextend or attempt new conquests and to focus upon the strength of Athenian power, namely the navy. Yet the self-interest of a few individuals intervened for the worse:

oi( de\ tau=ta/ te pa/nta e0j tou0nanti/on e0/pracan kai\ a1lla e1cw  
 tou= pole/mou dokou=nta ei}nai kata\ ta\j i0di/aj filotimi/aj kai\ i1dia  
 ke/rdh kakw=j e0/j te sfa=j au0tou\j kai\ tou\j cumma/xouj  
 e0poli/teusan, a9\ katorqou/mena me\n toi=j i0diw/taij timh\ kai\  
 w0feli/a ma=llon h}n, sfale/nta de\ th|= po/lei e0j to\n po/lemon  
 bla/bh kaqi/stato.

What they did was the very contrary, allowing private ambitions and private interests, in matters apparently quite foreign to the war, to lead them into projects unjust both to themselves and to their allies—projects whose success would only conduce to the honor and advantage of private persons, and whose failure entailed certain disaster on the country in the war.

2.65.7

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<sup>3</sup> See 1.80, 1.142, and 1.143. Also see 1.11, 1.13, and 2.97 for explicit linkage of monetary resources to naval and military power, as well as the excellent book concerning this very topic by Lisa Kallet-Marx entitled *Money, Expense, and Naval Power in Thucydides' Histories*.

The greater interests of the city became subservient to the personal interests and greed of a few, which eventually led to the destruction of the Athenian empire. In this way, a city that was “better” (speaking in terms of naval and monetary power) than any other was brought to her knees due to overwhelming self-interest.

The socioeconomic norm of self-sufficiency put forth by Aristotle in his *Politics* is further confirmed by Pericles in his funeral oration, in which he expounds to the assembled Athenian populace:

Kai\ th\n po/lin toi=j pa=si pareskeua/samen kai\ e0j po/lemon kai\  
e0j ei0rh/nhn au0tarkesta/thn

While the mother country has been furnished by us with everything that can enable her to depend on her own resources whether for war or for peace

2.36.3

The key term *au0tarkesta/thn* appears again, this time in the superlative. So while proclaiming to be driven by self-interest in negotiations and matters of war, Pericles makes the opposite proclamation to the Athenian people, namely that Athens is the most self-sufficient of all cities, which proves thusly that Athens is the best among cities. Nicole Loraux entitles the conclusion of her study on the funeral oration “Imaginary Athens”<sup>4</sup>, which is an especially apt description for this passage. The propagandizing nature of the funeral oration as a genre allows the modern reader to carefully scrutinize Pericles’ notions of Athenian self-sufficiency. Yet this in itself is enlightening, for the Athenian people expect and desire to be self-sufficient, or else Pericles would not have so boldly told them so when the truth is to the contrary. The generally accepted social norm then was indeed self-

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<sup>4</sup> Loraux, 1986.

sufficiency, even though in matters of the state and war the opposite path of state self-interest (imperialism) was sought.

## ***Chapter 2***

### *The 'Nature' of Exchange*

The previous examination of the economic roles that self-sufficiency and self-interest play in Aristotle and Thucydides demonstrates the apparent tension between a perceived ideal social norm on the one hand, and the socio-economic reality upon which modern economics is based on the other. This tension becomes still more pronounced when Aristotle's ethical considerations are taken into the equation, namely that he deems

those manners of exchange that achieve self-sufficiency as being natural, while the rest he deems unnatural. Aristotle's seeming obsession with the classification of the natural and the unnatural is not unique to this treatise, but nowhere else does he indulge this infatuation with so much vigor. In total, book I of the *Politics* uses words based on the root "nature" (fu/siv) 86 times, far more than any other section of the *Politics* or *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>5</sup> And while a similar usage rate of such vocabulary can be seen in Aristotle's more scientific treatises such as the *Physics* or his biological texts, the profuse use of "nature" in the sociopolitical realm is certainly of note. As was shown in the previous section, both Aristotle and Thucydides confirm self-sufficiency as an ideal socioeconomic norm, but it is exactly the ideal nature of this norm that produces a theoretical quandary between what is "natural" and what is socio-politically useful. It is this tension that will be examined in the following section and how the "naturalness" of exchange may better inform how Aristotle and Thucydides perceive, not just the nature of economics, but the nature of man as a whole.

Aristotle's use of nature in book I is profuse in its scope and range, so a deeper examination of the root word is required in order to attain a fuller understanding of the implications inherent in this discussion. The term of interest here then is fu/siv, which is defined broadly as the nature, inborn quality, property, or constitution of a person or thing. A more specific entry narrows this definition to "natural order, nature".<sup>6</sup> While the issue of Aristotle's categorization of economic exchange was briefly touched upon in a previous section, it was merely an overview of a much more detailed set of stereotypical Aristotelian

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<sup>5</sup> Ambler 1984

<sup>6</sup> Liddell and Scott 1909

arguments, ones which will be given their due attention in short order. Nature plays a central role in this cataloging of exchange.

*The Various Categorizations of Exchange and their 'Naturalness'*

Aristotle distinguishes four separate forms of exchange in the *Politics*, each determined by the means through which an end is achieved as well as the desired end itself. Scott Meikle, in his article "Aristotle on Money", expertly provides a detailed breakdown of these forms of exchange.<sup>7</sup> The first of these is simple barter of commodities in the absence of money (1257a7-35), and it is this absence of trade through a different medium that makes barter exchange the most simple method and according to nature. But barter is hardly a convenient or efficient manner of attaining self-sufficiency. This is why, Aristotle illustrates, metal currency was introduced. This natural form of *chrêmatistikê* is justified on the grounds of attaining self-sufficiency. However, with the introduction of money came about an unnatural form of *chrêmatistikê*, one in which the end is not self-sufficiency but profit and self-interest. These are the traders of the market who earn their livelihood through the buying and selling of commodities without ever having produced them. The two forms of exchange (natural and unnatural *chrêmatistikê*) are intrinsically linked and Aristotle even confesses that one is often confused for the other. It is important to note that Aristotle makes no mention of the nature of man in his use of money, only the nature of the money itself. The fourth and last form of exchange is by far the most loathed in the opinion of Aristotle, that of usury. This makes sense given that the basis of his analysis rests on the ends of the exchange, and usury is, in this analytical context, merely a

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<sup>7</sup> Meikle 1994



proliferation of money through no productive intermediary. These then are our four forms of exchange: barter, natural *chrêmatistikê*, unnatural *chrêmatistikê*, and usury.

Yet Aristotle's analytical and categorical method seems odd upon further review: why is it that Aristotle, who in his scientific works relies upon conclusions drawn from careful observations in order to ascertain what is natural, freely admits that he observes all of these forms of exchange in society, and yet deems some of these forms of human behavior natural and others unnatural. Clearly the "naturalness" that Aristotle speaks of in the *Politics* is of a different manner than that used in, for example, his treatises on the anatomical and biological nature of animals (*History of Animals* [486a], *Parts of Animals* [639a], and *Movement of Animals* [698a] as just a small subject sample of his larger biological and scientific works), for the method by which each is ascertained is itself of a different nature. The later are based upon scrupulous observations of natural processes and anatomical investigations, with his conclusions drawn directly from this scientific approach of observational understanding. The *Politics*, as its name would suggest, is a text concerned with the political nature and regimes of men. Aristotle would seem to think that he is able to catalogue this political nature in the same manner as he does the laws of nature. This ostensibly contrarian methodology is based upon logic and theoretical exercise, but Aristotle is not blind to the sociopolitical realities of how men use, seek, and acquire money. It is where he places the blame for the unnaturalness of exchange, and the political implications that arise from it, which is of most interest. The advent of money, which Aristotle explains, "was of necessity provided; for not all things that are naturally needed are easy to carry about", he simultaneously dismisses as "nonsense and altogether a thing of law and by nature nothing" (1257a34-1257b12). It is money itself that is both

natural and nothing at the same time and responsible for the unnatural consequences thereof.

*Aristotle, Thucydides, and the Economic Nature of Man*

We have already seen that Thucydides is more than aware of the political realities of acquisition; in fact one could say that his text is based upon his understanding of the sociopolitical realities of war and empire. Thucydides' pessimism is a topic of frequent discussion for those who study his works, and his comments surrounding human nature give very little reason to doubt this aspect of his text. Inherent in the idea of man's nature are his political ideologies, about which Thucydides frequently expounds:

ε)παινεῖται οἱ οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ἄνωγον ἀρνούμενοι τὴν φύσιν ἀλλὰ δίκαιον ἢ τὸν νόμον ἀρνούμενοι

And praise is due to all who, if not so superior to human nature as to refuse dominion, yet respect justice more than their position compels them to do.

1.76.3

The Athenians, as they attempt to justify the empire that they have acquired, assert that they are merely acting according to their human nature and that those who would do otherwise are behaving outside the bounds of human nature. While the issue of whether the Athenians passively accepted dominion or actively pursued it is irrelevant for this discussion, the fact that they present as evidence for their justification that they were acting in accordance with nature is illuminating. The Athenian's assertion of the naturalness of self-interest ideologically clashes with Aristotle's categorization of exchange. Any yet, the modern reader would be hard pressed to disagree with the rational of the

Athenians since modern capitalist society adheres to those same principles. Here is clear evidence that Aristotle's theorems on exchange are based not upon observation of human behavior and nature, but upon theoretical ideals. Even more damning for Aristotle's classifications is the apparent impossibility of changing human nature. Thucydides' account in book 3 of the debate among the Athenian assembly concerning the fate of the rebel Mytileneans does not directly discuss the economic philosophy which has been the primary concern of this study, but does shed some light on the nature of man in general through the mouth of Diodotus:

a9plw=v te adu/naton kai\ pollh=v eu0hqei/av, o3stiv oi1etai th=v  
a0nqrwpei/av fu/sewv o9rmwme/nhv proqu/mov ti pra=cai  
a0potroph/n tina e1xein h2 a2llw| tw| deinw=|

In short, it is impossible to prevent, and only great simplicity can hope to prevent, human nature doing what it has set its mind upon, by force of law or by any other deterrent force whatsoever

3.45.7

Although the speech of Diodotus concerns itself with the issue of whether or not to use capital punishment upon the rebellious Mytileneans, the implications of the impossibility of changing human nature are clear. Not even the laws of men, much less the laws of nature, can affect change on the actions of men. If man is driven by self-interest, he does so according to his own nature, and no amount of laws can change this.

These statements about the nature of man, however, are not the words of Thucydides himself. Although he acts as the literary mouthpiece for these speeches and thus, either purposefully or inadvertently, imprints his own ideologies, Thucydides'

thoughts on the nature of man have not yet been examined. Later in Book 3 Thucydides offers his personal description of the evils of revolution (he speaks of revolution in general, but this specific description is brought about by the Corcyraean revolution in 427 BC). After writing at length on the topic, Thucydides' true pessimism concerning human nature is shown:

cuntaraxqe/ntov te tou= bi/ou e0v to\n kairo\n tou=ton th=| po/lei  
 kai\ tw=n no/mwn krath/sasa h9 a0nqrwpei/a fu/siv, ei0wqui=a kai\  
 para\ tou\v no/mouv a0dikei=n, a0sme/nh e0dh/lwsen a0krath\v  
 me\n o0rgh=v ou}sa, krei/sswn de\ tou= dikai/ou, polemi/a de\ tou=  
 prou/xontov

In the confusion into which life was now thrown in the cities, human nature, always rebelling against the law and now its master, gladly showed itself ungoverned in passion, above respect for justice, and the enemy of all superiority<sup>8</sup>

3.84.2

It is enlightening that Thucydides notes that it is human nature to rebel against law, whether they are those created by human convention or those governed by nature. So, according to Thucydides, it is in fact the nature of man to act in an unnatural fashion; to rebel against those natural laws by which he is supposedly governed. This in many ways fits with Aristotle's classification of exchange: money is, by necessity to achieve self-sufficiency, natural. And yet, it is simultaneously unnatural on account of its misuse for selfish interests.

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<sup>8</sup> It is necessary to note that this passage is believed by some ancient critics and modern editors to have been a later addition to the *Histories* and cannot be ascribed to Thucydides. However, I believe that these comments on the evils of civil strife resonate with other passages concerning his views about human nature and should be considered as evidence for Thucydides' authorship of this passage.

The scathing opinion of Thucydides on the unbridled lawlessness of human nature in the previous passage is where the key differences begin to appear between the historian and the philosopher. Aristotle is certainly aware of the seeming violations of his proposed laws of natural exchange, but instead of searching for the fault in man's nature, he finds fault directly with the method of business:

kai\ tau/thv me\n a0nagkai/av kai\ e0painoume/nhv, th=v de\  
 metablhtikh=v yegome/nhv dikai/wv (ou0 ga\r kata\ fu/sin a0ll ) a)p  
 ) a)llh/lwn e0sti/n)

and the latter branch (natural *chrêmatistikê*) is necessary and in good esteem, but the branch connected with exchange is justly discredited (for it involves taking things from one another)

1258a40-1258b3

These two branches, which Aristotle by his own admission notes are nigh indistinguishable and often confused with each other, he now finds easily distinguishable and at opposite ends of the moral and natural spectrum. Thucydides however finds fault with man himself. Without the bounds of law and order (and even they often fail in containing man's greed), human nature seeks gain without respect for justice or 'nature'. While Aristotle and Thucydides seem to agree about what is the proper and 'natural' economic mode of life, Thucydides has no illusions about the inability of man to live in this manner. In the end, their differing opinions concerning the nature of man contribute to their views on the nature of exchange.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> As a final note on the matter of human nature, in no way am I attempting to decipher the entirety of these author's leanings concerning the metaphysical nature of man, for this topic would fill a number of volumes and still then would likely be incomplete. I am merely examining how they form these views through a prism of acquisition and wealth.

*Natural Imagery and sw=ma au1tarkev*

Aside from the metaphysical implications of its extensive use, the abundant use of 'nature' by Aristotle in the *Politics* brings to mind a more concrete and physical imagery, namely of the biological and medicinal variety. Examples of such imagery are found in the pertinent sections of both authors. In order to elucidate his more clandestine metaphysical theorems, Aristotle makes frequent use of layman examples. Oddly enough, a fair amount of these examples in Book 1 refer to the medical profession, especially during the discussion of the nature of business and exchange (see 1258a). The proximity of these medical allegories to such clustered usage of 'nature' could be dismissed as mere coincidence, but Aristotle could have just as easily have used any other number of arts or skills to validate his argument. However, the reference is too veiled for any implications to be definitively drawn. Perhaps Thucydides may be able to shed some light upon the matter. The echoing of a specific phrase in Book 2 is of note due to both the vocabulary used and its placement within Thucydides' historical narrative. As Pericles delivers his funeral oration, he lauds the Athenian character and spirit, praising the city with propagandist splendor:

kai\ kaq )e1kaston dokei=n a1n moi to\n au0to\n a1ndra par )  
h(mw=n e0pi\ plei=si ) a1n ei1dh kai\ meta\ xari/twn ma/list ) a1n  
eu0trape/lwv to sw=ma au1tarkev pare/xesqai

while I doubt if the world can produce a man, who where he has only himself to depend upon, is equal to so many emergencies, and graced by so happy a versatility as the Athenian

2.41.1

It is the end of this passage which is of the most interest; *sw=ma au1tarkev*. The later word has already been discussed in regards to self-sufficiency. The former, *sw=ma*, is defined as a body (a definition that encompasses both the ostensible biological realm and a also socio-political entity). Obviously, the individual meaning of a living person is the primary intention in this passage, but a subtle reading of the text could confer a further meaning concerning the political institutions of Athens. As a piece of propaganda (the implications of which have already been noted in Chapter 1), either reading of the text is flattering and likely overblown. However, we see the same exact combination of words mere paragraphs later as Thucydides describes the nature of the plague that is afflicting Athens:

*sw=ma te au1tarkev o1n ou0den diefa/nh pro\v au0to\ i0sxu/ov  
pe/ri h2 a0sqenei/av, a0lla\ pa/nta cunh|/rei kai\ ta\ pa/sh| diai/th|  
qerapeuo/mena*

Strong and weak constitutions proved equally incapable of resistance, all alike being swept away, although dieted with the utmost precautions.

2.51.3

Here a mere coincidence seems less likely given the proximity of the two passages and the near exact echoing of the phrase. The placement of the second incidence is telling as well. The plague narrative directly follows Pericles' funeral oration, and the repetition of the phrase in both passages suggests that perhaps Thucydides is attempting to convey an ulterior motive here. Just as the Athenian individual and citizen body was praised, so too is that same body equally incapable of resisting the corrupting influence of the plague. Obviously, the plague could be read as any number of socio-political ills, but the addition of

au1tarkev, a term so vital for both authors in their discussion of wealth and exchange, could convey a economic meaning to these passages. Thucydides is not the only historian in which this metaphorically potent phrase occurs, for in documenting the historical buildup to the Persian Wars, Herodotus briefly touches on the mater of self-sufficiency and sw=ma au1tarkev. In relating a conversation between Solon, the king of Athens, and Croesus, the king of Lydia, Herodotus asserts that by living a life of virtue (through the pursuit of self-sufficiency, not self-interest) one “has no injury, no sickness, no painful experiences” (1.32.6). He slightly curbs this statement by inserting the qualifier that no man can achieve the self-sufficiency which he so desires alone:

ta\ pa/nta me/n nun tau=ta sullabei=n a1nqrwpon e0o/nta  
 a0du/naton e0sti/, w3sper xwrh=| ou0demi/a katarke/ei pa/nta  
 e9wuth=| pare/xousa, a0lla\ a1llo me\n e1xei e9te/rou de\  
 e0pide/etai : h4 de\ a2n ta\ plei=sta e1xh|, au3th a0ri/sth. w4v de\  
 kai\ a9nqrw/pou sw=ma e4n ou0de\n au1tarkev e0sti/ : to\ me\n  
 ga\r e1xei, a1llou de\ e0ndee/v e0sti

Of course, it is impossible for one human being to receive all these blessings together, just as no one country can produce everything it needs by itself. What one has, the other lacks, and the one that has the most is the best. So too, no one man can be self-sufficient either; he surely lacks something.  
 Herodotus, 1.32.8

This additional historiographical repetition by Herodotus further confirms the previous supposition of self-sufficiency as an ideal social norm, and Athens, who instead sought the path of unnatural self-interest, fell victim to the societal illness metaphorically embodied by the plague.



Reading Thucydides in this light does indeed lend further credence to the highlighted references in Aristotle concerning medicine. Whereas Thucydides views the economic nature of man as a corrupting plague, affecting the whole of humanity alike, Aristotle perhaps views these unnatural forms of acquisition practiced by man as something that may be cured with the right treatment. These literary interpretations fit nicely with the conclusions previously arrived at concerning each author's respective opinions on the nature of man in relation to acquiring wealth.

## ***Chapter 3***

### *The Economic Relationship Between the Polis and the Oikos*

Thus far, exchange has been examined in Aristotle and Thucydides in relation to the manner by which it motivated the ancient Greeks, the very nature of exchange in its various forms, and the general ethical morality of the acquisition of wealth. Let us now take these ideas of self-interest, self-sufficiency, and the 'nature' of wealth and apply them to the two spheres of society that made up the vast majority of Greek life: the *polis* and the *oikos*. Together, the *polis*, or city-state, and the *oikos*, or household, came to characterize how Greek life was organized, whether in the political, economic, or social realms. D. Brendan Nagle's book on this topic, *The Household as the Foundation of Aristotle's Polis*, is an extensive study that concerns itself with how these two institutions of Greek civilization are realized by Aristotle in his political treatises. His research forms the basis for this study's examination into the economic interplay between the city and the household in Aristotle's *Politics*. Although Aristotle's insights into the natural order of city and household are posited in the typical Aristotelian fashion, there is a notable omission in his discussion of the best regimes for cities: the constitution of Athens is largely ignored by Aristotle. Approximately 300 individual references are made in the *Politics* to various city constitutions, and of that number a mere thirty come from the city of Athens.<sup>10</sup> We can say

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<sup>10</sup> Nagle 2006: 54.

with confidence then that Aristotle was not an Athenocentric author, but the reason for this is not readily apparent. In attempting to answer this question, Thucydides will prove to be of particular use, as he is almost entirely concerned with Athens. By thoroughly investigating the relationship between the city and household in Aristotle's model regime, and exploring if and how this relationship existed in the sociopolitical reality of wartime Athens, this chapter hopes to uncover whether this proposed relationship between *polis* and *oikos* exhibited true economic equality or whether the balance of power was tilted to one side or the other.

### *The Origins of the Oikos-Polis Partnership*

Aristotle's *Politics* begins by tracing the very origins of the conceptual city-state, since men obviously did not begin their existence organized in such a complex manner. He traces the foundations of the *polis*, through a series of partnerships, to the very origins of the human species. The base of society is the partnership between male and female, a partnership made with a view to continuing the existence of the human race. Aristotle notes that all animals do the same, and that this alone does not differentiate man from beast. However, this partnership between man and woman, when further combined with a 'natural slave',<sup>11</sup> composes a household. The *oikos* was the most ancient and basic of Greek institutions; the base unit of any agrarian society and completely self-sufficient economically. Aristotle himself is well aware of the archaic nature of the *oikos* as he harkens back to the Cyclops of the Homeric age to elucidate his description of the

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<sup>11</sup> Aristotle's theory of natural slavery is a topic of constant research and study, since it is the most jarring of his proposals to the modern reader. Although this chapter of the *Politics* is fascinating to say the least, this study will cast no more than a cursory glance at the themes of natural master and slave.

household (1252b23-24). But man is by nature a political animal, and thus he seeks to attain, “the limit of virtually complete self-sufficiency” (1252b29). As stated earlier in Chapter 1, Aristotle believed men were driven by self-sufficiency in order to achieve “the good life”, so it stands to reason that men would form still another partnership, a partnership of households, in order to better reach the good life; thus the *polis* came into existence. The city is the culmination of this protracted series of partnerships.

So it has been determined in no uncertain terms that a city-state is, by the above definition, an assortment of households joined together for the purpose of achieving a common goal:

αὐτῶν οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν ἄλλο, ἢ τὸ κοινῶν αἰεὶ κατὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν ζῆναι καὶ τὸν ἀποκοινῶν ἀποφυγεῖν, ὡς καὶ τῶν οἰκῶν καὶ τῶν οἰκιστῶν ἀποκοινῶν ἀποφυγεῖν καὶ τὸν ἀποκοινῶν ἀποφυγεῖν.

But a state is a partnership of families and of clans in living well, and its object is a full and independent life.

1280b33-34

Aristotle repeats this sentiment time and time again throughout the *Politics* because it is the foundation upon which the bulk of his treatise is based. The economics of self-sufficiency, which Aristotle submits is the only way to live a good life in book 1, is a shared quality of both the *oikos* and *polis*. The household has already been established as the basic societal unit of the city-state, and it seems the same can be said of the economic realm. As opposed to the modern sense of economics, morality is intrinsically linked with exchange and wealth according to Aristotle, so that the *oikos* is, in all three of these aspects (societal, economic, and moral), a microcosm of the larger *polis*. The last of these assertions is perhaps the most interesting to consider, for the societal and economic status of the household can fairly be logically extrapolated as being representative of a particular city-

state. Yet, the morality of an *oikos* being echoed in the institutions of the *polis* is bit more difficult to conceptualize altogether, but Aristotle proposes exactly this early in book 1:

του=το γὰρ προῦν τὰλλα ζω=|α τοι=ν ἀνθρώπων/πολιῶν ἰδιόν, τὸ μόνον  
ἀθάνατον= καὶ κakov= καὶ δίκαιον/καὶ ἀδίκον/καὶ τῶν ἀλλῶν  
ἀίσιμων ἐξείν, ἡ δὲ τοῦ/τῶν κοινῶν/πολιῶν οἰκία/ἀν καὶ πόλις

For it is the special property of man in distinction from the other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities and it is partnership in these things that makes a household and a city-state.

1253a16-18

The philosophical basis for both the household and the city-state is the human capacity to tell right from wrong, to make decisions on an ethical basis with a view of attaining self-sufficiency. While this may be somewhat expected of a *polis*, Aristotle extends this same ability to the individual household. Nagle rightly considers this statement of special importance, “He implies that the *oikos*, like the state, is a community of speech and reason. It is an ethical institution whose members, primarily the husband and wife, have the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, virtue and vice. Those human qualities that generated the state also belong to the household”.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Aristotle has demonstrated that the household and the city-state are intrinsically intertwined through their joint humanism; the same ethical and moral values which guide the *polis* are similarly observed and conducted by the individuals of the *oikos*.

### *Economic Relations of the Oikos and the Polis*

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<sup>12</sup> Nagle 2006; 154.

Given the societal boundaries that are shared by the household and city, one may be inclined envision that Aristotle is proposing a communal existence. Yet he does not go so far as to suggest this, but in fact refutes the idea that man has the natural capacity to exist in a communistic society. Book 2 of the *Politics* concerns itself with describing the best regime by which to govern a city. Aristotle begins this analysis by examining those theoretical regimes presented by previous philosophers, giving special attention to the works of Plato, *Republic* and *Laws*. Specifically, Aristotle finds Plato's socioeconomic ideals of a communistic society to be particularly untenable. But whereas modern detractors of communistic society direct the focus of their criticism on a purely economic basis, Aristotle expands the faults that he finds in this system to include the societal hindrances of communism on the proper development of human nature.<sup>13</sup> Where Plato's socioeconomic system fails in the eyes of Aristotle is in its inability to provide the proper motivation to act in an ethical manner and care for the *polis* and the *oikos*:

du/o ga/r e0stin a4 ma/lista poiei= kh/desqai tou\v a0nqrw/pouv kai\  
filei=n, to/ te i1dion kai\  
to\ a0gaphto/n, w[n ou0de/teron oi[o/n te  
u9pa/rxein toi=v ou3tw politeuome/noiv

For there are two things that most cause men to care for and to love each other, the sense of ownership and the sense of preciousness; and neither motive can be present with the citizens of a state so constituted.

1262b23-25

In Plato's proposed *polis* all things are held in common; possessions, land, homes, even the members of one's own family cannot truly be claimed by any individual, but belong to the state. Aristotle's criticism of this system is simple but profound: men need to possess a sense of ownership in order to care for something, otherwise everything is held in common

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<sup>13</sup> Dobbs 1985; 1.

but nothing is looked after. This logic is further realized when it is applied to the family, for the societal connections acquired through the inherent partnerships that make up both the *oikos* and *polis* allow for true self-sufficiency to be attained.

In this way, the socioeconomic system favored by Aristotle is not pure communism, as advised by Plato, but something of a hybrid between capitalism and communism, where there exists simultaneous private ownership but common use of possessions. This system could only exist in a *polis* that adheres to the principles of living an ethical life through the pursuit of self-sufficiency, for it relies upon the common sense of liberality, which members of *polis* held towards their fellow citizens. The level of self-sufficiency sought by *polis*-dwellers was nearly impossible to attain by oneself, and so methods of exchange were developed in order to achieve as near an equality of possessions as was possible. However, Chapter 2 of this study demonstrates the attitudes held by Aristotle towards the concept of monetary exchange and the moral dilemmas thereof. Therefore, Aristotle proposes an informal system of borrowing and lending possessions, money, and other needs among the members of a *polis*, individuals who can be trusted (owing to the societal and ethical bonds shared by members of the city-state partnership) to reciprocate. This system hinges crucially on the societal norm of obligation and reciprocity towards one's fellow citizens, "Socially, an ethos of reciprocity and mutual obligations enabled householders to construct and maintain alliances and networks of mutual assistance with other citizen householders without becoming dependent in emergencies on sources of credit controlled by outsiders".<sup>14</sup> Although it seems as though Aristotle has proffered a theoretical economic model that fully and efficiently achieves the goal of self-sufficiency, there is a perhaps fatal

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<sup>14</sup> Nagle 2006; 62.

flaw which Aristotle himself knowingly acknowledges: is it dependent upon human nature. While the model provides an elegant solution in theory, the socioeconomic realities of human self-interest are not lost upon Aristotle:

tou=to de\ sumbai/nei dia\ to\ bou/lesqai me\n pa/ntav h2 tou\ v  
plei/stouv ta\ kala/, proairei=sqai de\ ta\ w0fe/lima

The reason (for disputed lending and borrowing) is that all, or most, men wish what is noble but choose what is profitable.

*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1162b36

Aristotle's system of informal lending and borrowing only works insofar as the character of those involved remains virtuous and noble, for the societal norm of trust, obligation, and reciprocity is broken by the corrupting influence of self-interest and profit seeking.

### *The Problem of Athens*

Modern readers of Aristotle will notice a somewhat notable exclusion from Aristotle's general discussion of cities and the regimes by which they are governed: the near complete lack of mention of Athens. As the vast majority of extant Greek texts and inscriptions come to us from the city of Athens (thus indicating the prolific nature of Athenian discourse and culture), it seems strange that Aristotle, who spent twenty years of his life in Athens, should largely ignore her institutions and write from a non-Athenocentric viewpoint. Thus, the obvious question becomes, for what reason was Athens not fit to be used as an example of a Greek *polis*? Nagle finds an answer in a rather ambiguous statement by Aristotle concerning the proper size of a *polis* which states that, "Ten people would not make a *polis*, and with a hundred thousand it is a city no longer; though perhaps



the proper size is not one particular number but any number between certain limits” (*NE* 1170b31-33).<sup>15</sup> Certainly, Athens was a good deal larger and more populous than almost any other Greek city, and “fitting it into Aristotle’s description of the *Normalpolis* would be difficult”,<sup>16</sup> but how specifically does the considerable size of Athens impinge upon her institutions and method of governance? On a very basic economic level, the city was incapable of being autonomous with regards to a steady supply of food, but this lack of self-sufficiency is fairly superficial and provides no further insight into the city’s institutions. Nagle provides another intriguing possibility, one which requires quite of bit of consideration: “It was too large to be considered a face-to-face society, where citizens knew each other’s characters sufficiently well to make good choices for public office”.<sup>17</sup> This logic fits perfectly with Aristotle’s socioeconomic model of a reciprocal *oikos-polis* relationship; if the ethical character of those individuals governing the city is different than those of the household-owning citizens, the societal trust between city and household, thus the relationship, is corrupted and can no longer function as naturally intended.

Let us test this hypothesis concerning the socioeconomic partnership between the city and household by drawing from Thucydides, whose focus on Athens may help to shed some light on the issue. Both sides of this relationship must be examined in turn so as to ascertain where, if any, blame may be associated. The obligations of the *oikos* to the *polis* under normal circumstances are, as shown in the previous section, to aid fellow citizens in need, but also to partake in the political duties expected of an Athenian citizen (voting, assuming office if selected, etc.) and to protect the city in times of need. This last item is of

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<sup>15</sup> Nagle 2006; 57.

<sup>16</sup> Nagle 2006; 58.

<sup>17</sup> Nagle 2006; 58.

particular importance for this analysis of Athens precisely because the circumstances during which Thucydides is writing are not normal. It is logical to assume that slightly more must be asked of the citizenry during wartime, and Thucydides provides multiple examples of personal sacrifice on the part of the *oikos*. Whether he illustrates this point through a historical example (The hasty rebuilding of the city walls following the Persian Wars by sacrificing private households as building material; 1.90. 3), or by highlighting their more recent sacrifices in the current war, in which the Spartan invasion of Attica destroyed vast swathes of households outside the confines of the city:

th/n te o0lo/fursin mh\ oi0kiw=n kai\ gh=v poiei=sqai, a0lla\ tw=n  
 swma/twn : ou0 ga\r ta/de tou\v a1ndrav, a0ll 0 oi9 a1ndrev tou=ta  
 ktw=ntai

We must cry not over the loss of house and land but of men's lives; since  
 houses and land do not gain men, but men them.

1.143.5

Pericles urges the households of Athens to be selfless in the face of the impending Spartan invasion and to sacrifice their own private possessions and land for the good of the *polis*. One cannot find fault with the *oikos* in the fulfillment of their civic obligations. In fact, the fervor and single-minded devotion of the citizens for the common purpose of the city is remarkable.

Since the virtue of the *oikos* in this partnership has not been found wanting, let us then examine the role of the *polis*. In return for their self-sacrifice, the citizenry of Athens would likely expect their virtue to be rewarded by the city to a magnitude equal to that of their sacrifice. Yet, the statesmen of Athens fail to see this partnership between *oikos* and *polis* as being equal:

e0gw\ ga\r h9gou=mai po\lin plei/w cu/mpasan o0rqoume/nhn  
w0felei=n tou\v i0diw/tav h2 kaq 0 e3kaston tw=n politw=n  
eu0pragou=san, a9qro/an de\ sfallome/nhn. kalw=v me\n ga\r  
fero/menov a0nh\r to\ kaq 0 e9auto\n diafqirome/nhv th=v patri/dov  
ou0de\n h{sso n cunapo/llutai, kakotuxw=n de\ e0n eu0tuxou/sh|\n  
pollw=| ma=llon diasw/|zetai

I am of the opinion that national greatness is more to the advantage of private citizens than any individual well being coupled with public humiliation. A man may be personally ever so well off, and yet if his country be ruined he must be ruined with it; whereas a flourishing commonwealth always affords chances of salvation to unfortunate individuals.

2.60.2-3

The assertion by Pericles that the city of Athens, by its mere existence, provides more for an individual than he could ever achieve otherwise lends some credence to an unbalanced view of the *oikos-polis* relationship. In the eyes of Pericles, the *oikos* is totally dependent upon the 'national greatness' of the *polis*. And while realities of war ensure that the ruin of the city corresponds with the ruin of her citizens, countless households had already been destroyed by the invading Spartans and yet the city still stands and asks for further sacrifices. Surely, there is a disconnect between these two spheres of social existence, for the reciprocal relationship no longer appears to be equal in nature. Above all, the *oikos* and the *polis* seem to disagree about what defines living 'the good life'; the *oikos* adheres to the Aristotelian principles and accepted social norm of economic self-sufficiency, but the *polis* desires an entirely different end altogether, namely more power economically, politically, and militarily. And whereas Athens still benefits from its partnership with the citizen household, the *oikos* receives only state rhetoric for further personal sacrifice in the name of 'national greatness'.

The size of a *polis* does indeed prove to create a socioeconomic disconnect between the rulers of the city and the ruled, as exhibited by the example of Athens. The moral, economic, and social values of the households must match that of their partner city, or else the city ceases to function as such and becomes something entirely different.

εὐνοίας τεταύται παρεκβασιῶν, ὡς περὶ καὶ τῶν δικαίων ἐπιμικροῦν  
ἐστίν, οὐδὲν καὶ ἡ φιλική, καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἐν τῇ ξείρῳ : ἐν  
τυραννίδι γὰρ οὐδέ τις μικροῦν φιλική. ἐν οἷς γὰρ μηδέ τις  
κοινότης τῶν ἀρχόντων καὶ ἀρχομένων, οὐδέ τις φιλική : οὐδέ τις  
γὰρ δικαιοσύνη

Under the perverted forms of constitution, friendship, like justice, can have but little scope, and least of all in the worst: there is little or no friendship between ruler and subjects in a tyranny. For when there is nothing in common between ruler and ruled, there can be no friendship between them either, any more than there can be justice.

*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1161a30-34

According to this passage from Aristotle, the degradation of that basic relationship which forms the basis of Greek society has caused Athens to slide into tyranny. Not a tyranny in the traditional sense of the term, but a revised definition in which the socioeconomic ideals and ends of the *polis* and *oikos* are at odds with each other. Thus, Aristotle's socioeconomic model of obligation and reciprocity, a system based upon trust and friendship, cannot function properly. As if further confirmation of this failed relationship was needed, Pericles himself is in agreement with Aristotle's assessment of the nature of Athenian governance:

ὅτι τυραννίδα γὰρ ἡδὴ εἴχετε αὐθιγῶν, ἣν λαβεῖν μὲν ἀδικῶν  
δοκεῖ εἰσὶναι, ἀφεῖναι δὲ ἐπιβουλή

For what you hold is, to speak somewhat plainly, a tyranny; to take it perhaps was wrong, but to let it go is unsafe.

Thus, this is the reason for Athens' exclusion from Aristotle's discussion of the best regime, for Athens was not a city at all, but a tyranny.

## *Conclusion*

This study began with the intention of exploring the interplay between the economics of exchange and the ethical norms of classical Greece through the texts of Aristotle and Thucydides. These two authors in particular provide a useful analytical tool, for where Aristotle offers a theoretical model or suggests a socioeconomic norm, Thucydides provides a historiographical background by which these philosophical theorems may be checked for their validity.

The first objects of interest were the themes of self-sufficiency and self-interest, a common topic of discussion for Aristotle. Self-sufficiency is the much-preferred mode of economic motivation for him, as it appears to have been in Greek society in general according to our testimony from Thucydides. However, the socially idealized norm of self-sufficiency seemed to be something that ought to be desired, but often was relegated in favor of the personal self-interests of men. Both Aristotle and Thucydides are in agreement concerning the realities of the seductive draw that self-interest has on the nature of man, but they disagree about where the blame for this fault in human character falls.

Further inquest into the differing natures of exchange revealed that Aristotle's method of categorization produced four distinct forms of exchange, two of which were 'natural' and two of which were not. The very meaning of this ambiguous qualifier was determined to mean something quite different in and of itself, for it refers to a more human nature, not a natural order or law. Man's economic nature was then explored at length concerning its economic motive (the previously mentioned self-sufficiency and self-interest), and the potential to change the nature of man. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Aristotle and Thucydides disagree on this point of interest.

Lastly, these ideas of the nature of exchange and the limits of wealth were specifically applied to the *oikos* and the *polis* and how these two pillars of Greek society interacted with each other. Their economic relationship was quite complex but simultaneously idealistic in nature, if working properly. The system required a dutiful sense of obligation and reciprocity towards one's fellow citizens and city-state, for an informal system of borrowing and lending allowed individual *oikos* households to achieve a greater level of self-sufficiency than could be arrived at alone. However, Athens is a notable exclusion from Aristotle's discussion of city-states and their regimes, and an answer for this was found in the pages of Thucydides: the enormous size of Athens created a sociopolitical disconnect between those individuals running the city and the independent *oikos*-dwellers that made up her citizenry. The city of Athens therefore assumed the mantle of a tyranny, sense the goals of her imperialism were in direct conflict with the end of self-sufficiency and a 'good life' sought by the people of Athens.

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