

Aristotelian Pluralism and Diversity: The Conditions for Civic Education and the Common Good

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With the decline in social capital and the rise of the immigrant populace in the United States, there is renewed interest in civic education as a way to provide a meaningful understanding of citizenship and thereby greater civic integration into American political life.¹ Although public education is often seen as a repository and conveyance of civic education, it is also transmitted through institutions in civil society, such as the family, religious organizations, and the mass media.² However, scholars focus on public schools because studies have demonstrated that they are the most effective institutions in delivering civic education.³ Furthermore, most states have an explicit mission to prepare students for citizenship by requiring some sort of civic education in their schools. It is only in schools where a deliberate type of instruction about civics takes place, resulting in a substantial increase in students' understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens.⁴

Given the importance of public schools in civic education, it would appear that Spartan and Socratic models of education would be preferred. In both regimes, the political community removes the institutions of civil society, like the family, from the civic education of children so there are no obstacles to the state teaching them. Substituting itself for their families, the political community provides a civic education that is common to all children, as opposed to the Athenian version where education is practiced privately, yielding disparate lessons about citizenship. By contrast, the Spartan and Socratic regimes offer an education where all children know their civic roles and responsibilities because there is no discordant voice. At first it would appear that the Spartan and Socratic regimes would serve as a model for the United States to revitalize civic education for its citizens.

But these regimes actually undermine the very conditions that would make a meaningful civic education possible. As Aristotle points out, by not respecting the plurality of institutions and the diversity of goods that exist in the political community, both the Spartan and Socratic regimes are not able to cultivate virtues like piety, civic friendship, and generosity, which are required for the common good to exist and be sustained. Although the aims of the household, as an institution of civil society, are ultimately subordinate to the aims of the political community, it must be allowed to flourish so as not to eliminate the conditions that make a genuine civic education possible. Instead of being its greatest advantage, the elimination of civil society is the greatest weakness in Spartan and Socratic civic education. The result is not virtuous citizens but a bestial and divisive people.

This examination of the household, and more broadly of civil society, as the required conditions for civic education is neglected by Aristotelian scholars; rather they focus on the

relationship between the common good of civic education and the happiness of individual flourishing (*eudaimonia*).⁵ What I contend is that the plurality of institutions and the diversity of goods that exist within the political community are the conditions that enable citizens to recognize the common good, and thereby become more fully integrated into the regime. Civic education is having citizens learn to balance among their personal interest, the regime's peculiar ends, and virtue itself within their own souls and in their judgments about the common good. Contrary to its Spartan and Socratic counterparts, the Aristotelian political community requires plurality and diversity for these excellences to exist.

This is one of a series of paradoxes for Aristotle in his account of the conditions needed for civic education: philosophical truth and public piety requires the family; civic friendship and generosity depends upon private property; the political justice of the community presupposes the natural justice of the household; and devotion to the common good arises from private friendship. It is the preservation of the plurality of institutions and diversity of goods that enable citizens to become part of the commonality of the regime. It is these paradoxes that make possible a civic education dedicated to the common good.

Spartan Education

According to Aristotle, one of the great fallacies of understanding politics is that “there is no difference between a large household and a *polis*” (*Politics* 1252a12–13).⁶ This fallacy explains Aristotle's criticism of “those who think the same person a fit statesman, and a king, and a household head, and a slave-master” (*Politics*, 1252a7–9; 1260b22–1261a22). Although the political community is the most architectonic of human associations, political authority is not to supplant domestic authority—whether the father, husband, or master—in the ruling of its proper subjects—the child, the wife, or the slave. For Aristotle this differentiation in authority is required because of the differences in the character of the appropriate subjects: political authority governs over citizens, domestic authority administers over the household, and the despot rules over its subjects (*Politics* 1259a37–1259b17; 1260a12–14). Those who blend these types of authority rather than differentiate them create a political community that is contrary to human flourishing, especially in civic education.

For the promotion of civic education, Aristotle maintains that good laws are critical because of their compulsory nature: they ensure obedience (*NE* 1180a18–21). The lawgiver therefore should “attend to such matters as our nurture and pursuits [...] and were to do correctly” (*NE* 1180a25–30). However, the problem is that political authority is incapable of making the particular distinctions required for good education. Because of the political community's incapacity to address the particular needs and demands of every child in its upbringing, domestic authority is desired, since “greater accuracy will result when care is private and directed to the particular case, for then each is more likely to receive what is suitable” (*NE* 1180b11–13). Thus, the best education is one which is attentive to individual needs while, at the same time, being

directed by someone “who possesses legislative art” (*NE* 1180b13–25). The political community continues to have a role in education for Aristotle, but it must work with domestic authority.

While the political community should not supplant the household’s role in its education, it is also equally important that domestic authority be awakened from its complacency in education. For Aristotle, domestic authority is specifically best equipped to “help their own children and friends in the pursuit of virtue” (*NE* 1180a31–34). Domestic authority has a more commanding strength than civic laws in children’s obedience, owing to the natural affection that exists in the household. Political authority does not have access to the interior principles of motivations that domestic authority does: it must rely upon coercion to compel its citizens.⁷ By contrast, domestic authority can inculcate habits that are internally motivated and therefore become part of a child’s character.

Aristotle’s reliance upon domestic authority in the rearing of children highlights the problems of Sparta’s civic education.⁸ Although it is a renowned example of a regime taking interest in education, where education “must be common instead of along private lines,” Sparta’s civic education ultimately makes its citizens “bestial and coarse” rather than courageous and martial (*Politics* 1337a22–26, 31–32, 1138b11–14, 32–36; *NE* 1180a24–26). In fact, Sparta’s political leaders do not even seek to discover whether their training actually cultivates courage in its citizens (*Politics* 1338b16–17). The result is that Spartan citizens may be acting courageously—as nobody knows or is willing to discover—out of state coercion rather than being internally motivated, i.e., becoming ethically virtuous. Instead of fostering virtue, Sparta’s civic education serves as an example of how not to educate citizens.

Although Sparta’s civic education is in “common,” its defects outweigh its gains due to its removal of domestic authority in education. Instead of replacing it, the political community must preserve and help the household in education. Specifically, political authority must help elevate domestic authority out of its own primordial tribalism like the Cyclopes, each of whom “lives as he pleases, laying down the law to his children and wives” (*NE* 1180a24–29; *Politics* 1252b22–23).⁹ The Cyclopean education is antithetical to Sparta’s: each parent determines for itself how best to educate its children, thereby making political community impossible. Between these two extremes is Aristotle’s golden mean: the complementary contributions of both political and domestic authorities to education.¹⁰ The preservation of its plural institutions enables the political community to avoid both primordial tribalism and civic indoctrination of its citizens.

Socratic Education

This reliance upon the golden mean for education also explains Aristotle’s criticism of Plato’s *Republic* where Socrates prescribes a political unity that reduces the *polis* to the household and, thus, destroys the political community as such (*Politics* 1261a21–22).¹¹ Socrates proposes that all citizens regard one another as siblings by sharing family life and property communally, which, in turn, would reconcile conflicts of interest that destroy political communities (*Republic* 464a4–c4). However, for Aristotle, the political community evolves out of many households, with a

household outside the political community existing only imperfectly. Only when the household is part of the political community is it complete or perfect (*telestheises*), achieving its proper end (*Politics* 1252b9–39, 1253a18). If one does what Socrates proposes—makes a household out of the political community—then the political community would not be a political community per se, for “it is evident that virtue must be the care of the *polis* that is truly, and not merely for the sake of the word calling it so” (*Politics* 1280b6–8, 1253a23–25). Aristotle’s objection to Socrates’ proposal is that it disrupts both the political community and the household from achieving their proper ends.

By abolishing the family, Socrates creates a communal, civic education to promote political unity. The problem with this type of education for Aristotle is that it is limited in its effectiveness. Socrates’ guardians will become spirited (*thumos*) but eventually will fight among themselves: “The manner in which Socrates selects the rulers is hazardous, for the same persons always rule. But this is a cause of faction even in the case of those lacking notable qualities, and it certainly will be the case among spirited and warlike men” (*Politics* 1264b6–10). Furthermore, and more importantly, the guardians will not become philosophical, which was why they required education in the first place (*Republic* 375e9–376c5, 525b8–9). Thus, the community’s existence is precarious, as it depends upon the guardians who are spirited and warlike but unphilosophical.

This failure to develop the guardian’s philosophical capacity is due to Socrates’ reliance on the household as the model for civic education and political organization. Because the guardians are all siblings to one another, they cannot claim what is most important to them other than the *polis*, thereby preventing them from acting out of public piety. For piety, according to Aristotle, requires one to transcend what is most important to a person for the sake of philosophical truth: “It would seem to be a better thing, and also part of our duty, to forsake even what is close and dear to us (*ta oikeia*) in order to preserve truth, especially insofar as we are lovers of wisdom (*philosophous ontas*); for although both of them are dear, it is pious to honor the truth first” (*NE* 1096a14–17).¹² Philosophical truth cannot exist in Socrates’ regime because the guardians are unable to challenge what is closest and dearest to them, as everyone and everything belongs to one another.

For Aristotle, citizens who have the greatest capacity for philosophy are made to care for their own political community at the expense of their households, just as they are to care for philosophical truth at the expense of their own opinions. Thus, Socrates’ regime is similar to Sparta’s in that philosophical education is impossible because there is no distinction between the political community and the household. Citizens from both regimes are defective in virtue: they lack character, as they are not internally motivated except through state coercion, and they are unphilosophical, as they are unable to distinguish from what is important to them and what is important for truth. But what may be even more disturbing is that these arrangements make citizens incapable of critical virtues required by the political community: civic friendship, generosity, public piety, and political justice.

Civic Friendship, Generosity, and Public Piety

At first glance, Socrates' communal arrangement seems to promise "wondrous friendship" among everyone (*Politics* 1263b15–18). But, as Aristotle argues, this arrangement actually undermines civic friendship (*homonoia*), a type of concord among citizens (*NE* 1167b2–3, 1155a22–28). According to Aristotle, *homonoia* arises for fellow citizens when "concerning what is of common interest they share a like judgment, chose the same things, and act on common resolutions" (*NE* 1167a26–28). But saying the same thing is not indicative of *homonoia*, for citizens may speak not out of personal conviction but out of external pressure (*NE* 1261b16–32).

In Socrates' regime, this problem becomes particularly manifest. It is impossible to know what belongs specifically to each citizen because everyone is part of the same family: "Each of the citizens comes to have a thousand sons, though not his personally (*hos hekastou*)" (*Politics* 1261b38–39). The clarity of personal interest is obscured because nobody knows who specifically belongs to whom. Citizens are not able to partake in *homonoia* because they do not know their personal interest and therefore cannot overcome it for the common good of the political community. It may appear contradictory that attachments to specific personal interests are required for the common good; however, these attachments of personal interests oblige citizens to weigh their self-interests against the community's, allowing them the opportunity to transcend their parochial concerns for shared ones.

By contrast, the claim of all saying "mine" rings hollow in Socrates' regime, for merely saying the same thing is not sufficient for *homonoia*. If all the citizens proclaim that they will rule, the result is civil war rather than civic friendship. *Homonoia* exists when the whole political community deliberates about a particular person to be political ruler, if he or she is willing (*NE* 1167a30–34). Because citizens are not saying the same thing—the ruled call for a specific ruler, and, in turn, the ruler says he or she will rule—civic friendship exists. By saying different but concordant things, citizens are able to partake—and be educated—in civic friendship.

This preservation of disparate interests not only clarifies personal interest but paradoxically provides deliberation about the common good.¹³ This is also why Aristotle divides the property of each citizen who resides in the best political community: one part safely in the city and the other part perilously near the frontier (*Politics* 1330a14–20). The citizen has a personal interest in both places and consequently for the political community as a whole. Public policy therefore can be based on common personal interest rather than factional ones. By dividing citizen's property, Aristotle evaluates the concerns of the household not by transforming them into ones of the political community but instead by offering citizens the opportunity to transcend their particular perspectives for the common good.

This preservation of private property also provides the opportunity for citizens to practice the virtue of generosity. Contrary to Socrates' abolishment of private property for the guardians, Aristotle's defense of it enables citizens to partake in civic friendship by being generous. The citizen accomplishes this task by having his private property used in common, although Aristotle

rejects proposals to have property used in common by either possession or usage, as these ideas tend to result in neglect, abuse, and overconsumption (*Politics* 1262b37–1263a3). Kept legally private, property is made common by virtue (*Politics* 1263a26–27, 1263a37–39).

Since human beings are naturally political animals and thus belong to the political community, they must be willing to overcome their self-love for the common good (*Politics* 1253a3–4, 1263a41–b5).¹⁴ Although it is natural to love (*philia*) oneself, it is unnatural to love one's possession as oneself. This person is incapable of partaking in the civic friendship of the community (*NE* 1155a22–28).¹⁵ By contrast, the person who is able to practice generosity with his private property is able to participate in civic friendship and thereby become a flourishing citizen.¹⁶

This also applies to familial love (*philia*). Another problem with Socrates' regime is that he fundamentally mishandles erotic love (*eros*). Because nobody knows his/her natural family, Socrates' regime permits incest and other unnatural sexual acts to transpire (*Politics* 1262a25–27). These acts have the greatest impropriety for Aristotle. By eradicating the household family, Socrates allows *eros* to pervade the entire political community to the extent that familial love cannot arise and develop without contamination of incestuous *eros*.

It can be inferred then that *eros* has no place in familial love for Aristotle except between husbands and wives. Unlike Socrates' regime, Aristotle believes that familial love of children and siblings needs to be nurtured and developed in an environment that is protective rather than sexualized. This environment is only possible if both the political community and the household are preserved. The result is that children remain with their natural parents so that both the political community and the household can work together in the care of them (*NE* 1180a29–b13). While parents are able to provide *philia* to their children without *eros*, the political ruler can provide laws and conventions (*nomos*) that support and supplement parental rule over children.

In turn, parental support of these laws adds to children's piety of political authority (*NE* 1180a18–24, 1180b3–7). Since parents have access to the interior principles of motivation of children that political authority lack, they are able to provide a more robust education for children to respect the political community than what the regime's law can do.¹⁷ Good parents are better at inculcating virtuous habits in their children not only because of children's affection for them but also because parents know the particular context and situations of their children and respond accordingly, whereas the political community cannot. Thus, both the political community and the household mutually reinforce each other in the civic education of children in civic friendship and public piety.

Natural and Political Justice

The differentiation between the political community and the household also makes possible a civic education in political justice.¹⁸ However, the political justice of the community presupposes the natural justice of the household. Aristotle makes the distinction between political justice, which requires the conditions of freedom, equality, sociability (*koinoia*), self-sufficiency, and

law with other forms of natural justice: household (between husband and wife), paternal (between father and son), and despotic (between master and slave) (*NE* 1134a26–30; *Politics* 1134b8–18). Although political justice requires an understanding of freedom and equality, these concepts are not learned first in the political community but in the household where natural justice is performed (*NE* 1162a16–18).¹⁹ For instance, even though they are not citizens, children and wives are free people in the household; and husbands and wives practice a form of proportionate equality among themselves (*Politics* 1259a39–b1, 1260b18–20; *NE* 1160b25–61a25; *EE* 1241b33–41). These types of relationships in the household allow inhabitants to learn about freedom and equality as a part of natural justice and, in turn, prepare them to practice political justice.

In fact, Aristotle claims that natural justice would exist even if the political community were absent: “a person is characteristically not a solitary but a social animal with those whom he shares a natural kinship (*physei syggeneia*). There would therefore be a sociability and some justice (*dikaion ti*) even if there were no political community” (*EE* 1242a24–28). It is the household where justice and politics originate and becomes a model for political regimes (*EE* 1242a24–28, 42b1–2; *NE* 1160b23–24). Thus, by existing temporally before the political community, the household serves as a training ground for citizens in political justice, making the type of natural justice of the household correspond to the type of political justice in the regime.²⁰

Thornton Lockwood provides a schematic of different Aristotelian households corresponding to different types of regimes.²¹ For correct regimes that are governed for the common good, paternal rule resembles monarchy, with both the father and the monarch ruling asymmetrically for the good of their subjects. The rule of husband and wife is similar to aristocracy as a form of proportionate equality and governance based on merit. The camaraderie of siblings is similar to timocracy with governance based on the exchange of ruling and being ruled. Likewise, deviant households match deviant regimes, those which are governed in the interest of the ruler: the household of the master and the slave resembles tyranny; the unequal rule between marital partners based on power or wealth corresponds to oligarchy; and the household without a master is similar to democracy as a type of anarchy. The type of household determines not only the type of natural justice, or its deviant, but also influences the form of political justice, or its deviant, in the regime.

As a form of natural justice, parental governance resembles monarchial justice as both are asymmetrical in their relationships between ruler and ruled. Each form of justice corresponds to each other but remains distinct in their character and community. Political justice does not strictly exist in the household because “there is no injustice in an unqualified sense towards one’s own possessions [...] and a child, until it reaches a certain age and is separated, is, as it were, a part of one’s self” (*EN* 1134b9–12). But children will eventually become partners (*koinonoi*) in the political community and are to be ruled as free persons; therefore, they need education in the household to prepare them for this role (*Politics* 1260b20–21; 1259a40). Children must learn to rule and be ruled in order to become citizens who practice political justice (*Politics* 1332b36–33a1). This exchange—ruling and being ruled—transpires first in the household where parents

provide children their existence and education, and, later, when children take care of their parents in old age and continue the familial line.²² In spite of its asymmetrical character, parental governance rules in the best of interest of its children, unlike the tyrannical household where parents treat their children no better than slaves (*NE* 1160b28–32; *Politics* 1160b25–26; 1252b7–8).

The natural justice between husband and wife resembles the political justice found in aristocracy where citizens treat one another with proportionate equality and according to merit. Although it is clear that Aristotle believes there are fundamental, even biological, differences between males and females, it does not necessarily result in the conclusion that husbands and wives should be treated unequally.²³ The marriage of husband and wife resembles aristocracy in that each partner governs over the things that each one should. It is only when a husband tries to govern everything, doing things of which he is not capable, or when a wife governs because of her wealth and power and not because of her virtue, that the aristocratic resemblance becomes an oligarchical one (*NE* 1160b32–61a4). The Aristotelian marriage is the golden mean between the oligarchical partnership where spouses overstep their authorities and the Socratic arrangement where all husbands and wives belong to one another. It is the differences between husbands and wives that makes possible for natural justice to exist and prepare them for political justice.

Finally, the natural justice of siblings matches the political justice of timocracies (*Politics* 1161a4–7). The relationship between siblings is characterized by a form of equality because of similarities in age and education, thereby allowing them to speak frankly with one another and ruling and being ruled in turn (*NE* 1161a6–7, 26–31; 1162a13–14). This characterization also resembles the citizens of the polity where their equality forms the basis of them ruling and being ruled (1161a28–30). These forms of equality therefore become the basis of both natural and political justices among siblings and timocracies.

Political justice requires the conditions of freedom, equality, sociability, self-sufficiency, and law; however, it is unable to provide these prerequisites unless the household exists. It is only the household that can socialize citizens into these habits because familial members have access to internal principles of motivations that the state lacks. Natural justice therefore does not only demand that the household be preserved but it also requires that differences among familial members persist for different forms of justice to be practiced. Unlike Socrates' proposal, which abolishes these differences, Aristotle recognizes that the plurality both within the household and the political community enables citizens to be best educated in political justice.

Private Friendship, Public Results

The similarities between political and natural justice paradoxically rests upon the fundamental distinction between the political community and the household. Political justice consequently presupposes and looks past the household in the direction of civic education. Aristotle believes that the household offers the advantage of access to internal principles of motivation, such as love and respect among familial members; but ultimately the political community is the model of

civic education because citizens must forgo their personal interests for the common good and thereby become virtuous. Those who remain defective in virtue are confused in the understanding of their interests, which can negatively overspill into the political community, causing social disorder (*EE* 1248b27; *NE* 1169a21–2). For Aristotle, these people need to change their motivations in understanding both their parochial and political interests.

According to Aristotle, moderation is the antidote for excessive personal attachment to one's own interests (*Politics* 1267a10). Moderation is not the restriction or limitation of self-interest but the transformation of it so that people no longer see themselves as competitors over scarce resources but partners in the same political community. This requires the formation of a reasonable person who will not want too much, i.e., to understand that one's self-interest is not to accumulate but to share external goods, for accruing too much would destroy the very conditions that enable one's happiness (*Politics* 1267b6–8). But how does one change the motivations of a person to become reasonable and moderate? How does one get this person to understand what goods he or she actually needs to live virtuously (*NE* 1094b11, 1103b27, 1179b1–4)?

By moving people from defining themselves as their possessions to an understanding based on virtuous relations, Aristotle believes this change will form reasonable and moderate people (*NE* 1095a22–23). Most people understand their relations as a form of material equality, thereby reducing all relations to a type of business contract of narrowly defined self-interest (*NE* 1158b3, 1163a30–35). Aristotle wants to move beyond this understanding to one that gives a motive for people to choose the common good because their happiness depends upon it. Rather than having possessions define one's happiness, Aristotle argues that virtuous relations is the appropriate criteria for human flourishing. Paradoxically, to engage in virtuous relations forces one to recognize one's dependency on the various communities to which one belongs.²⁴ The person must decide whether to fulfill one's responsibilities and duties to one's dependencies in the household and the political community. If the person is delinquent in these activities, then the person not only damages one's own chance for happiness but also the community on which one depends.

This is why friendship is so critical in Aristotle's account of ethics and politics.²⁵ Virtuous friendship activates a type of awareness (*noein*) or perception (*aisthanesthai*) in the person about what should be pursued for happiness (*NE* 1170b1–5, 1170a18).²⁶ With the aid of virtuous friends, a person will be able to determine what is truly good: this is the reason why friends are the greatest good for a person (*NE* 1169b10). Friendship does not create a scarcity of resources, as with material possessions, but a surplus of virtue that satisfies ethical and intellectual demands. It makes people reasonable and moderate in their claims, thereby precluding social disorder in the political community (*NE* 1137b34–1138a2). Friendship consequently is important not because what one possesses but because it satisfies what one lacks.²⁷ Aristotle's quote of Heraclitus—"it is opposites that help each other" from which the "sweetest harmonies" arise—reveals that it is inequality and incommensurability that make virtuous friendship possible (*NE* 1155b4–6). It is diversity and not Socratic unity that provides the conditions for human flourishing.

Private virtuous friendship corresponds to civic friendship. As there is more virtuous friendship, there is more civic friendship; as there is more civic friendship, there is more political justice in the regime; and as the regime becomes more just, civic friendship, in turn, increases (*NE* 1167b2–5). With this improvement in political justice and civic friendship, it becomes more difficult for citizens to be unreasonable and immoderate. However, this directional relationship is one-way for Aristotle: civic friendship cannot be transformed into virtuous friendship.²⁸ This is what Socrates attempts when he abolishes the family and private property. Virtuous friendship must always remain pre-political.

By remaining private, virtuous friendship paradoxically is able to awaken people to their political responsibilities and duties. Reasonable and moderate citizens will understand that their self-interest is dependent upon the common good and therefore will act accordingly. The political community becomes the model of civic education where citizens sacrifice their personal interests for the community's in order to be virtuous. Thus, Aristotle's civic education starts in private friendship but it ultimately yields public results. By having virtuous friends, people are able to recognize what they lack, moving from a self-definition of possessions to a self-understanding based on virtuous relations.

Education's Dual Aims

If the household plays a critical role in the cultivation of citizens, so does the political community in directing the aims of education. For Aristotle, the education of children is the preeminent concern of the political community because they determine the continuity and stability of the regime (*Politics* 1337a10–18).²⁹ However, there exists a tension as to what type of education children should receive. Paralleling the tension between the good citizen and the good person, Aristotle argues that education should correspond both to a political community's peculiar ends, e.g., a democratic education for democracies, and to virtue itself (*Politics* 1276b16–1277b32, 1337a10–21; also 1332a33–34). But it is not immediately clear what Aristotle means: for instance, what happens in a democratic regime if a teaching about virtue comes into conflict with an instruction about democratic values? How should this situation be resolved?

Aristotle further complicates his view of education by claiming that education should be “one and the same for all,” since the political community as a whole possesses a single end; consequently, the supervision of education should be conducted by the state (*Politics* 1337a21–26). But Aristotle's insistence that education should be supervised by the political community does not equate into abolishment of the household, like in Socrates' proposal; rather, the household cannot dictate what the aims of education should be. It would be an invitation to anarchy, as in Athens or among the Cyclopes, if every household could determine for itself the ultimate purpose of education of its children. The objective of education and its final supervision is determined by the political community but, as argued above, the community needs the household to deliver part of that education. Thus, “one and the same for all” is in reference to the

ultimate objectives and supervision of education and not the replacement of the household with the political community.

With the differentiation between the political community and the household intact, Aristotle's proposal that education should aim for virtue, while, at the same time, for the peculiar ends of a political community can be better understood. While speaking about how political communities should educate children for its own peculiar ends, Aristotle concludes that "the best character (*ethos*) is always a cause of a better political community (*politeias*)" (*Politics* 1137a16–17). Aristotle seems to suggest that political communities, which are not the best ones, are capable to evolve into something better if the character of its citizens changes (and corresponding devolves into something worst if the citizens' character becomes corrupt).³⁰ But from where does this source to produce the best character come? It cannot come from the political community, as it undoubtedly aims to educate children for its own peculiar ends. The best character therefore must come from the household, or more broadly, civil society.³¹

Civil society potentially can offer a civic education that improves the character of its children, who over time will influence the nature and aims of the political community. When Aristotle states that education should aim simultaneously for the political community's peculiar ends and virtue, he is reserving a space for better characters to be cultivated in civil society which, in turn, will aid the political community. Ultimately it will be left to the prudence of political leaders to determine whether these exceptions should be permitted to flourish in civil society.³² In this sense, Aristotle selects the golden mean in the aim of education between the extremes of political indoctrination and political indifference. By targeting both virtue and the peculiar ends of the political community together, Aristotle avoids both stagnation and anarchy in his civic education.

An example from American history might be useful to illustrate this point. At one time, the United States codified racial slavery and segregation, indoctrinating its citizens in support of this belief. However, abolitionists and civil rights leaders looked outside the political community's education—civil society—to cultivate a more just character among its citizenry.³³ When they were able to persuade political leaders and a majority of citizens that all people in the United States should be afforded equal treatment and rights, the United States became a better political community. Conceding that this transformation took over a century, and even may not yet be completed today, it is an example of Aristotle's point that education should aim for both virtue and the peculiar ends of a regime at the same time in the hope that "the best character is always a cause of a better political community."

Plurality and Diversity

The common good of the political community therefore is both its peculiar ends and virtue. This is the final aim of civic education for Aristotle. Properly educated citizens consequently have to balance, among their personal interests, the political community's interest, and virtue itself in their determination for the common good. The diversity of these goods—personal interest, peculiar ends, and virtue—is only possible if pluralistic institutions and a diversity of goods are

preserved. Without any one of these elements, a person remains defective both as a citizen and as a person. Thus, not only is the common good both unitary and diverse simultaneously but so is the person's own soul.

The diversity of goods required for the citizen to be virtuous underscores Aristotle's earlier point that virtuous friendship are rooted in what one lacks. Virtuous friends activate an awareness in the person about what should truly be pursued for happiness (*NE* 1170b1–5, 1170a18). Just as people need friends who are different from them, so does the individual person need different goods within one's soul to be able to see what would be best for oneself and the community together. If a person only had one good in its soul, it would be impossible to know whether he or she were defective in the possession of any other goods.

This diversity of goods in the citizen's soul gives more credence to Aristotle's insistence that all citizens cannot be of similar character, especially with respect to virtue (*Politics* 1277a1). The political community is composed of dissimilar citizens, like the goods in the citizen's soul, because those who rule require a different type of education than those who are ruled (*Politics* 1277a29–31). If citizens were of the same character by receiving the same education, they would not be able to discern whether they are defective because they have no point of comparison. Nor would they be able to transcend their personal interests for the common good, as all citizens would share the same self-interest. Unlike Socrates' regime, Aristotle understands that the common good is maintained only if there is a diversity of citizens and a plurality of institutions.

Aristotle's preservation of this pluralism, particularly the household, allows access to the internal motivations of people which the political community does not have. This is the problem with Spartan and Socratic civic education: by abolishing private ownership, the political community can only rely on coercion and abstract appeals to motivate its citizens. The result is bestial and coarse citizens in the case of Sparta, and civil strife combined with incestuous relations in the instance of Socrates. Both regimes have removed conditions that prevent any opportunity for people to overcome their personal interest for the common good. Philosophical truth, piety, civic friendship, generosity, and familial love without erotic danger are absent in these regimes.

The preservation of the household also makes it possible for its inhabitants to practice natural justice as a type of preparation for political justice: parental authority resembles monarchical rule, spousal rule corresponds with aristocratic governance, and sibling governance is similar to timocratic government. But the motivation to practice political justice at the expense of personal interest only comes from virtuous friendship which is a pre-political relationship. In such friendships, the person recognizes what one lacks, and thus for what one should strive, realizing that one's ultimate personal interests depends upon the common good of the political community. By making the common good the object worthy to be loved, friendship resolves not only private disputes but public ones, too (*NE* 1155a3–17).

But it is important to remember for Aristotle that the household exist only as a part of the political community and its specific virtue exists only as a part of virtue as a whole (*Politics* 1260b8–24). Although the household exists prior the political community, the political

community must exist conceptually before the household. Education in the household must be ultimately supervised by the political community. But this does not necessary translate into political indoctrination. Aristotle allows the possibility that a prudent superintendent could incorporate lessons from the household to improve the character of the regime, even if those teachings were contrary to the peculiar ends of the political community.³⁴

By preserving the household and providing civic education a dual aim, Aristotle allows the common good to be defined diversely with personal interest, political ends, and virtue, all seeking equilibrium in both the community and the citizen's soul. The plurality of institutions and the diversity of goods are the necessary and sufficient conditions for civic education to flourish. Rather than encouraging discord and anarchy, these conditions promote unity and concord among citizens. Without diversity and plurality, a civic education of philosophical truth and civic friendship would not be possible. Thus, the path to integrate citizens more fully into the political community paradoxically requires one to respect the diversity of goods and the plurality of institutions that persist in society today.

Endnotes

1. For social capital, refer to Putnam 2001; for civic integration, refer to Ravitch and Viteritti 2001; Galston 2001, 2005; Huntington 2005; Macedo 2005; Levinson 2012.
2. Finkle 2002.
3. Sherrod, Flanagan, and Youniss 2002; Torney-Purta 2002.
4. Gutman 1987; Hess 2009.
5. Galston 1991, 2002; MacIntyre 1999; Nussbaum 1996 and 2001; Smith 2001; Collins 2004, 2009; Salkever 2007.
6. All in-text citations of Aristotle and Plato are from Loeb Classical Library editions: *Politics* for *Politics* (Aristotle 1932); *NE* for *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle 1934); *EE* for *Eudemian Ethics* (Aristotle 1935); *Republic* for *Republic* (Plato 1930). Translations are my own.
7. Velleman writes in length about external versus internal factors in motivation (Velleman 1996).
8. For more about Aristotle's account of Sparta, refer to De Laix 1974; David 1982; Schütrumpf 1994.

9. For a contrary interpretation of Aristotle's understanding of the Cyclopes, refer to Lindsay 1992.
10. For more about the relationships among the household, the political community, and the common good, refer to Kronman 1979; Booth 1993; Smith 1999; Keys 2006.
11. For more about Aristotle's criticism of Plato, refer to Bornemann 1923/24; Frank 1940; Cherniss 1944; Flashar 1977; Saxonhouse 1982; Dobbs 1985; Mayhew 1993a, 1996, and 1997; Simpson 1991 and 1998.
12. Aristotle considers piety a virtue but under the category of justice (Broadie 2003).
13. For more about Aristotle's views of private property, refer to Mathie 1979; Dobbs 1985; Irwin 1991; Mayhew 1993b and 1995; Frank 2002 and 2005; Miller 2005.
14. Mulgan 1974.
15. If property were kept entirely private, there could be no sharing of it and therefore no possibility of generosity and civic friendship. Aristotle names such a disposition as stingy or money-loving (*NE* 1121b12–16).
16. In fact, Aristotle notes that greatest pleasure comes from helping friends, guests, and comrades from one's own private property (*Politics* 1263b5–6).
17. For more about emotions in Aristotle's thought, refer to Nussbaum 1996 and 2001; Koziak 2000; Abizadeh 2002.
18. For more about Aristotelian political justice, refer to Miller 1995; Frank 1998; Lockwood 2006.
19. Miller also makes this point: Miller 1995.
20. The household exists prior to the political community temporally but not conceptually (*Politics* 1253a19–25).
21. Lockwood 2003.
22. Todd 1994.

23. For more about Aristotle's views of men and women, refer to Horowitz 1976; Morsink 1979; Smith 1983; Francis 1985; Saxonhouse 1985; Levy 1990; Salkever 1990; Swanson 1992; Tess 1992; Mulgan 1994; Dobbs 1996.
24. Salkever 1990; Swanson 1992.
25. For more about Aristotle's account of friendship, refer to Price 1989; Cooper 1996; Belfiore 2001; Jacquette 2001; Sokolowski 2002; Smith 2003; Heykin 2008; Salkever 2008.
26. Jacquette 2001; Heyking 2008.
27. Bickford 1996.
28. Yack 1993, 110–14.
29. For more about the contents of Aristotle's education for the best regime, refer to Lord 1982 and 1996; Shaw 2005.
30. This would partly explain why Aristotle devotes Books IV and V of the *Politics* to how regimes preserve themselves as well as how they change.
31. Another source for the regime to improve itself is outside the *polis*. However, Aristotle rejects this option (*Politics* 1327a12–b18, 1330a35–31a18; also see Frank 2004).
32. Although the political community is governed by the rule of law, equity also is needed for justice (Goerner 1983; Shiner 1994).
33. Dyer 2013; also refer to Timothy W. Caspar's article in this symposium.
34. For more about Aristotle's account of prudence, refer to Ruderman 1997; Abizadeh 2002; Salkever 2007; Trepanier 2013.

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