Politeja
Nr 3(90), 2024, s. 9-27
https://doi.org/10.12797/Politeja.21.2024.90.01

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ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF REGIME CHANGE

A RE-EXAMINATION OF POLITICS 5.1-5.3

ABSTRACT This paper offers a re-examination of Aristotle's theory of *metabole* found in the first three chapters of *Politics* 5. I argue that Aristotle offers a general theory of political change, which highlights the logic and mechanism that will explain not only why regimes will change but also what are the causes and triggers for such change. This paper offers a re-reading of these three chapters showing that what is being addressed here is much more dynamic and useful to contemporary scholars of political science than most presentations of these chapters present.

Keywords: *metabole*, *stasis*, Aristotle's *Politics*, revolution, political change, factional conflict

Political change or revolution (aka *metabole*) is one of the central themes in classical political science. Aristotle's *Politics*, specifically in Book 5, offers an understanding of how *metabole* occurs in a political community. He grants the reader a model that is effectively able to explain not only why but also how such political change has happened. Thus, Aristotle in the first three chapters of *Politics* 5 presents his theory of regime change. This theory of regime change offers the causal logic that helps us understand not only what the various factors that cause change are but why that change is likely (or not likely) to occur within a given political community.

In *Politics* 4 Aristotle gave us his account of the *politeia* (regime), essentially his account of the regime, its variation, what it is composed of and its structure. He offers an account not only of the variations and sub-variations of regimes but also, their parts.[1] From the full account of the *politeia* (regime) that is presented in *Politics* 4, we get a picture of the regime or at least the regime at rest. In Book 5, we now get an account of the regime in motion, that is the internal motion within the regime – how it changes.[2]

This discussion of motion, which is understood to be action taken within the *politeia* (regime) is Aristotle's account of political *metabole* (change). He sets forth a dynamic model of understanding how regimes transform from one particular regime to another. The role of *metabole* is often called "revolution" but our contemporary understanding of "revolution" goes well beyond a change to the political system or government. For Aristotle, what is called *metabole* regards changes, occasionally ones that affect the *politeia*. *Metabole* is a more general phenomenon than what we would call "revolution."[3] While 'revolution' is an extreme and drastic variety of *metabole*, not everything that Aristotle and others would label a *metabole* would qualify as a 'revolution' in our understanding. This is why 'regime change' or 'political change' is the preferable translation of *metabole* in the context of *Politics* 5.

From the outline addressing what he plans to cover at the start of Book 5, Aristotle moves to the question of the starting point (*arche*) of what is the cause of conflict (*stasis*) that shapes political action: disagreement about justice. Aristotle asserts that *many sorts of regimes have arisen because, while all agree regarding justice and proportionate equality, they err about this* (1301a26-28). By this he means that all regimes claim they aim at justice but the understanding of justice that each regime seeks is different. This

[1] See C.A. Bates Jr., *The Centrality of the Regime for Political Science*, Warszawa 2016, pp. 31-51; C. Zuckert, "Aristotle's Practical Political Science," in K. Moors (ed.), *Politikos*, vol. 2, Pittsburgh 1992, pp. 144-168; M.P. Nichols, *Citizens and Statesmen: A Study of Aristotle's* Politics, Lanham 1992, pp. 85-100; R.G. Mulgan, *Aristotle's Political Theory: an Introduction for Students of Political Theory*, Oxford 1977, pp. 102-138.

[2] See M. Davis, "Aristotle's Reflections on Revolution," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1986), pp. 49-63 and E. Garver, "Factions and the Paradox of Aristotelian Practical Science," *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek and Roman Political Thought*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2005), pp. 181-205; compare L.F. Goldstein, "Aristotle's Theory of Revolution: Looking at the Lockean Side," *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 2 (2001), pp. 311-331.

[3] See G. Hurtado, "What is a Change?," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy Supplementary Volume*, vol. 30 (2004), pp. 81-96 and T. Roark, "Why Aristotle Says There Is No Time Without Change," *Apeiron*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2004), pp. 227-246.

was the main point about the problem of the variation of claims of justice that each type of regime advances in *Politics* 3, chapter 10. Thus, right off the bat, Aristotle points out that justice and equity and disagreements concerning them are the starting point of why there is conflict (*stasis*).[4]

This seems to suggest that the beginning of most regimes is an agreement regarding the question of justice and proportionate equality. But these regimes err in what they agree is in fact justice and proportionate equality. They agree there ought to be justice and proportionate equality, but they disagree on what exactly is meant by either. Thus, Aristotle holds that *stasis*, understood as civil strife or factional dispute or division, is the engine that drives *metabole* (change) of the *politeia* (regime) in *Politics* 5. Injustice or the belief that injustice has been done is what drives division within a community and this is what creates *stasis*.[5]

STASIS AS AN ENGINE OF *METABOLE*

Given the role *stasis* will play in how *metabole* occurs we need to have a clear understanding of what it is and what it is not.[6] Anyone who is familiar with the discourse of political theory will need to acknowledge that one of the leading voices that shapes contemporary understanding about what *stasis* is and how important it is for any understanding of politics is Giorgio Agamben.[7] Agamben understands (and teaches) *stasis* as a state of civil war, which he takes as the key paradigm to understanding political behaviour.[8] In doing this he is following the logic of Thomas Hobbes, where civil war is the breakdown of a political order and all is returned to a state of nature where there exists no political authority whatsoever.[9] One could argue that Hobbes's understanding of

[4] For various accounts of how this *stasis* leads to civil conflict see M. Davis, *The Politics of Philosophy: A Commentary on Aristotle's* Politics, Lanham 1996, pp. 87-99; M.P. Nichols, *Citizens and Statesmen…*, pp. 85-90; E. Garver, "The Revolt of the Just," in L.E. Goodman, R.B. Talisse (eds), *Aristotle's* Politics *Today*, Albany 2007, pp. 133-143; R.L. Weed, *Aristotle on* Stasis*: A Moral Psychology of Political Conflict*, Berlin 2007.

[5] See S.C. Skultety, "Delimiting Aristotle's Conception of *Stasis* in the *Politics*," *Phronesis*, vol. 54, no. 4-5 (2009), pp. 346-370.

[6] See M. Berent, "*Stasis*, or the Greek Invention of Politics," *History of Political Thought*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1998), pp. 331-362; P.T. Manicas, "War, *Stasis*, and Greek Political Thought," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 24, no. 4 (1982), pp. 673-688.

[7] Agamben himself relies on not only Loraux but also Hannah Arendt, especially her book *On Revolution* in his examination on the application of *stasis* among the Ancient political theorists, but I raise his account of *stasis* to point to a contemporary political theorist who places the concept at the centre of his analysis of human political action. Analysis of Agamben's use or misuse of either Arendt or Karl Marx (or his use of the ideas of Carl Schmitt), are beyond the scope of what I am trying to do in this paper.

[8] G. Agamben, Stasis*: Civil War as a Political Paradigm*, Stanford 2015; compare N. Loraux, *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens*, Princeton 2002.

[9] G. Agamben, Stasis...

the breakdown or absence of political authority derives from his translation of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Yet to see civil war and radical violent civil strife as being what *stasis* is simply is a mistake. *Stasis* has a wide range of intensity, from the extreme of civil war to the difference of interest in a policy matter or a dispute over a decision or ruling by a civil magistrate or judicial ruling.[10]

Stasis occurs where there is a breakdown of the shared common advantage (*koinoin sumpheron*) that binds a community, especially a political community, together. Once there is division among the members of the community, where they no longer see themselves as fellow citizens and sharers in the common advantages of their union together, dispute and division arise. These divisions are the start of what one labels *stasis*.[11] This is why Aristotle in *Politics* 5 chapter 1 spells out how *stasis* arises within a political community through the introduction of injustice, a sense of unequal treatment regarding the goods or benefits that are held to be common among all who are partners and sharers within the community.

The realisation that this agreement about justice and equality might also explain why the first account of democracy that is found in *Politics* 4.4 disappears from the reiteration of the varieties of democratic regimes in *Politics* 4.6 and then again in *Politics* 6.4. The account of this first democratic regime, one of basic equality between all the citizens, echoes the point raised here about the agreement regimes purportedly have regarding justice and proportionate equality. It is useful at this moment to recall that in *Politics* 4.11 and 4.13 Aristotle presented an argument for the importance of the middling element and the rise of political rule per se.[12] In those two chapters, we get a claim that the Ancients had very limited regime choices: Monarchy, Aristocracy (oligarchy), and democracy. But here in *Politics* 5.1, Aristotle seems to say that regardless of the forms or varieties of regimes that one starts with, the forces that are at play in all regimes – the rich and the poor, the notables and the people – will drive regimes either towards extreme democracy or extreme oligarchy (which are varieties of tyranny).

But returning to *Politics* 5.1, we see how this disagreement about justice and proportionate equality emerges. Aristotle notes that *[r]ule of the people arose as a result of those who are equal in any respect supposing they are equal simply, for because all alike are free persons, they consider themselves to be equal simply; and oligarchy arose as a result of*

[10] See P.J. Coby, "Aristotle's Three Cities and the Problem of Faction," *Journal of Politics*, vol. 50, no. 4 (1988), pp. 896-919; K. Kalimtzis, "Aristotle's Concept of *Stasis*," *Philosophical Inquiry*, vol. 17, no. 1/2 (1995), pp. 44-78; S.C. Skultety, "Aristotle's Theory of Partisanship," *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek and Roman Political Thought*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2008), pp. 208-232; S.C. Skultety, "Delimiting Aristotle's Conception...," pp. 346-370; R.L. Weed, *Aristotle on* Stasis...

[11] See E. Garver "Factions and the Paradox...," pp. 181-205; M. Davis, "Aristotle's Reflection...," pp. 49-63; R. Polansky, "Aristotle on Political Change," in D. Keyt, F. Miller (eds), *Companion to Aristotle's* Politics, Oxford 1991; K. Kalimtzis, "Aristotle's Concept...," pp. 44-78; S.C. Skultety, "Aristotle's Theory...," pp. 208-232; S.C. Skultety, "Delimiting Aristotle's Conception...," pp. 44-68.

[12] See M. Wheeler, "Aristotle's Analysis of the Nature of Political Struggle," *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 72, no. 2 (1951), pp. 145-161; G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*, Ithaca 1981; compare N. Loraux, *The Divided City*...

those who are unequal in someone respect conceiving themselves to be wholly unequal, for as they are unequal in regard to property, they conceive themselves to be unequal simply (1301a28-33). Thus, from the common frame of justice and proportionate equality there becomes differences on what is the case here between those who see equality in one area (i.e. all being free) leading to the desire for all things being equal and on the other side those who see inequality in one thing (i.e. property) to see inequality across the board. Aristotle continues: *Then the former claim to merit taking part in all things equally on the grounds that they are equal, while the latter seeks to aggrandise themselves on the grounds that they are unequal, since 'greater' is something unequal* (1301a34-37). So we see the two different trajectories that emerge from the common reference of justice and proportionate equality. Here every regime type reflects a claim of that element or group that defines its ruling part (*politeuma*) and each type advances a certain claim – the well-born, their birthright, the wealthy, their wealth, the powerful, their strength, might, or power, and the many, their equality. These elements and the claim they advance offer their justification to rule over others.[13]

Aristotle concludes this section regarding the way justice is the engine of political conflict by noting: *All regimes of this kind have, then, a certain sort of justice, but in an unqualified sense they are in error. And it is for this reason that, when either group does not take part in the regime on the basis of the conception it happens to have, they engage in* stasis (1301a37-40). Thus, he makes clear the reason groups (or persons) engage in conflict with other groups (or persons) is over each group's (or person's) sense of being done wrong or harmed by the other. What he says immediately after is all the more shocking. Aristotle argues that *Those who are outstanding in virtue* (*arete*) *would engage in* stasis *most justifiably, yet they do it the least of all; for it is most reasonable for these only to be unequal in an unqualified sense* (1301a38-b2). He says here that the virtuous or the truly good man would rightly have a reason to assert his claim over the unjust or non-virtuous, that they rightly engage in factional strife to assert their rule or dominance. Such people, however, are the least likely to do so.

Next, he notes another case where there will be a conflict between parts of the community. Aristotle says, *[t]here are also certain persons who are preeminent on the basis of family and claim not to merit equal things on account of this inequality: they are held to be well-born persons, to whom belong the virtue and wealth of their ancestors* (1301b2-4). With what he states above Aristotle wraps up the initial overall claim about what motivates *stasis*: *[t]hese, then, are in a manner of speaking the beginning points and springs of* stasis (1301b5). Next, he turns to the varieties of *metabole*. In it, he highlights four different ways that *metabole* (regime change) can unfold within a given regime.

1. *Metabole* occurs in two ways: *stasis* with a view towards the regime, that is from one regime type to another. *For example, from a democracy into oligarchy or from oligarchy into democracy, or from these into a politeia or aristocracy, or from the latter into the former*. (1301b6-10)

[13] See *Politics* 3.10.

2. With a view to not changing the regime but bringing the regime into 'their' hands. That is "which of which" within a given ruling element of the regime will actually hold the ruling offices and be in the ruling body (*politeuma*). This is to say, that a person (or group) gains power over another (person or group). (1301b10-13)
3. *Stasis* regarding more or less tightening or losing the regime (especially democracy or oligarchy, where there is a change from one variety of democracy or oligarchy to another variety). (1301b13-17)
4. Changing a part (e.g. an office, institution, etc.) of the regime. *For example, to establish or abolish a certain office. Some assert that Lysander tried to eliminate the kingship at Sparta, and King Pausanias from the board of overseers; also in Epidamnus the* politeia *was altered partially – a council replaced the tribal officials, but it is still compulsory [only] for those of the* politeuma *who hold offices to come to the hall when there is voting for an office, and the single [supreme] official was also an oligarchic feature of that politeia*. (1301b18-26)

From this overview, Aristotle offers a summation when he makes this claim: [s]tasis *is everywhere the result of inequality, at any rate where there is no proportion among those who are unequal (a permanent kingship is unequal if it exists among equal persons); in general, it is equality they seek when they engage in* stasis (1301b26-29). So, wherever *stasis* is found there will be conflict and disputes. This then leads to a brief discussion of equality. Aristotle notes that, *Equality is twofold: one sort is numerical, the other according to merit. By numerical I mean being the same and equal in number or size; by according to merit, being equal in respect to a ratio. For example, three exceeds two and two one by an equal amount numerically, whereas four exceeds two and two one by an equal amount with respect to a ratio, both being halves. Now while there is agreement that justice in an unqualified sense is according to merit, there are differences, as was said before: some consider themselves to be equal generally if they are equal in some respect, while others claim to merit all things unequally if they are unequal in some respect* (1301b30-39).

Here the character and different forms of equality are spelled out by Aristotle. He also makes clear that the desire for it – or the desire to flee from or place oneself or one's group, party, class above it – is an engine or spring that drives people to engage in *stasis*. Here, we get a powerful motivating force why political actors will do what they will do.

Yet it arises out of the role that equality, either the desire for it or the desire to oppose it, drives the nature of political things. On this Aristotle highlights, *[h]ence two sorts of regimes particularly arise – rule of the people and oligarchy* (1301b40). He continues regarding this by saying that *[g]ood birth and virtue exist among few persons, these things among more: nowhere are there a hundred well-born and good persons, but in many places, the well-off are many* (1302a1-3). Thus, he points to the divide between the many and the few, between the vulgar and the great which pull at all regimes and drive them toward the rule of the many or the rule of the few.

Noting the polls that this tension leads to, Aristotle raises this problem *to have everywhere an arrangement that is based simply on one or the other of these sorts of equality is a poor thing* (1302a3-4). He continues by saying, *This is evident from the result: none of these sorts of regimes is lasting. The reason for this is that, once the first and initial error is*

committed, it is impossible not to encounter some ill in the end. Hence numerical equality should be used in some cases, and in others equality according to merit (1302a5-8).

Thus, Aristotle argues that it is an error to take from the divide over the issue of equality the guiding principle to shape the nature of regimes. While it is true that the divide over equality will shape the divisions within a given political community, to be merely guided by one claim over another is to make an error – an error that will only get worse and multiply over time. What is needed here is not some consistent application of a principle or strict rule but the application of prudence, which will know when each type of equality (and inequality) is warranted and when it is not. It is after this, that Aristotle makes a shocking claim *[n]evertheless, democracy is more stable and freer from* stasis *than oligarchy* (1302a9). He continues, *In oligarchies two sorts of* stasis *arise, one against each other, the other against the people; in democracies, though, there is only that against the oligarchs, there being none that arises among the people against itself that is worth mentioning. Moreover, the regime made up of the middling elements is closer to rule of the people than to rule of the few, and this is the most stable of regimes of this sort* (1302a10-16).

Here, Aristotle suggests that an oligarchic regime has more problems regarding *stasis* than a democratic regime. This is because he argues that in oligarchic regimes there is not only conflict between the rulers and the ruled, but among the rulers. Whereas in a democratic regime the only *stasis* is between the multitude and the wealthy and there are no conflicts among the people themselves that are "worth mentioning." He does not deny that such division among the people exists, but at this point of his examination of *stasis metabole* it does not merit mentioning. Perhaps in different circumstances it might be necessary to discuss conflicts among the people but such a discussion is not raised here.

POLITICS 5.2 – CAUSE

In turning to the second chapter of *Politics* 5, we will come to see the many causes (*aitia*) of conflict (*stasis*) that lead to change (*metabole*): matter (*hyle*) and ends (*teloi*) – which are the psychology and motivation of actors – and the efficient (*kinoun*) cause which Aristotle suggests is a catalyst not only for *stasis* but also the change (*metabole*) that is brought about because of it. At *Politics* 5.2 he lays out the analytical framework to help not only understand political conflict but also changes to the regime caused by it. What is of note about this account is that it can be operationalised in ways that use empirical evidence to test and to predict outcomes. Here Aristotle offers us the kind of theory that does what contemporary political science theory aims to achieve (i.e. offer a model to explain behaviour and offer means to verify its claims empirically).

Aristotle introduces chapter 5.2 stating, *[s]ince we are investigating the things from which both* staseis *and changes (*metebole*) affecting regimes arise, one must first grasp their beginning points (*archi*) and causes (*aitia*) in a general way* (1302a17-19). In other words he will offer a general view of the interaction between *stasis* and regime change

(*metebole*). He continues, *[t]hese are, roughly speaking, three in number, and must be discussed first by themselves in outline* (1302a19-20). That is to say that there are three varieties of causes. He continues, *One should grasp what condition men are in when they engage in* stasis; *for the sake of what they do so; and thirdly, what the beginning points are of political disturbances and of* stasis *among one another* (1302a20-23). Here is a quick outline of the three different levels of causation for regime change:

1. The conditions men are in when they engage in *stasis*.
2. For the sake of what they do so, i.e. why they engage in *stasis*.
3. What are the beginning points (*archai*) of political disturbances that give rise to *stasis*.

FIRST LEVEL OF CAUSE

When we look at these three causes, we see that they differ in their function. In fact, each one of these three echoes one of the four causes (*aitia*) that Aristotle states in his *Physics*.[14] Now the first level is clearly the material (*hyle*) cause. The second level is the final cause or *telos*, which is the purpose (or rationale) for why it is done. The third level is the efficient (*kinoun*) or moving cause, sometimes referred to as the agent or that which causes the change or movement. Of the four types of causation listed in the *Physics*, the one type not explicitly addressed here is that of the form (*eidos*) or the formal cause. Perhaps it is present, but we fail to notice it because it is omnipresent. This is to suggest that the formal cause for regime change is the regime (*politeia*) itself. Thus, the regime (*politeia*) is that which gives form and shape to the political community (i.e. body politic). And as such, the regime is the formal cause of the change that occurs (or gives rise to) in the given political community. The regime (*politeia*) was more completely discussed in *Politics* 4 (where he fully presented in terms of what it is) so Aristotle feels free not to rehash it here. After this introduction, Aristotle will now discuss each of these three stages of cause (*aitia*) in more detail.

Regarding the first level of cause, Aristotle writes *[t]he general cause of men being in a certain condition with respect to regime change (*metebole*) should be regarded as the one we have spoken of already. Some engage in* stasis *because they aim at equality if they consider that they have less in spite of being equal to those who are aggrandising themselves; others, because they aim at inequality and pre-eminence, if they conceive themselves to be unequal but not to take a greater part, but an equal or lesser one* (1302a24-29). This repeats the point he made in chapter 1 about the two-fold nature of equality and how different claims regarding it shape human action.

Aristotle notes the problematic character of this striving when he states, *[t]o strive for these things may be justified; it may also be unjustified* (1302a29-30). Since every side of a dispute will have their own reason to act, their sense will be that their action is justified or right. This is true of both the great and the lowly. Aristotle asserts that,

[14] See *Physics* 2.3 and *Metaphysics* 5.2.

[t]he lesser engage in stasis *in order to be equal; those who are equal, in order to be greater* (1302a30-31). Then he ends the explanation of the first cause by saying *[w]hat their condition is when they engage in* stasis, *then, has been spoken of* (1302a31-32).

This first level of cause, which looks at the "matter," tends to not only look at their mere condition but also takes into consideration the wealth and poverty, equality and inequality of those who compose the given political community. It is useful to recall what Aristotle said in *Politics* 4 about the divide between the multitude and the notables (which we would label as the elites): their variety and type will often dictate the type of *politeia* (regime). We need to remember that both the multitude and the notables can be either homogenous or heterogeneous in character, and that factor will also influence the "material" conditions that embody this first level. Another factor is the geographical location of the political community. Thus, one needs to look at the place where the political community is situated regarding resources and neighbours. With what has been addressed here we see the full range of what is involved in what Aristotle speaks here as the first cause.

SECOND LEVEL OF CAUSE

Regarding the second level of cause, Aristotle writes *[a]s for the things over which they engage in* stasis, *these are profit and honour and their opposites (for they may engage in* stasis *in cities in order to avoid dishonour or punishment either for themselves or for their friends)* (1302a32-34).[15] Here Aristotle gives the reason why the parties entered into conflict. He claims that the engine that drives men to act is *either profit and honour (and their opposites)*. This is the psychological underpinning that explains why actors do what they do. We are offered a complex model of human motivation, one that can also be found in his ethical writings (especially his *Nicomachean Ethics and Eudemian Ethics*), as well as in his *Rhetoric*.

If we look at what motivates us to do what we do, we see the desire for benefit, advantage, profit and/or gain (and the desire to avoid disadvantage, loss, and/or harm). All these factions are forms of utility and their opposite. Aristotle's account, however, does not leave it there. He then moves to the forces that arise from the thymotic character of human beings: their desire for honour and/or recognition (and the avoidance of dishonour and/or shame). This thymotic level of human desire deals with our desire for status and reputation.

Although the desire for justice is one of the key forces that motivates political action it is also driven by psychological (e.g. resentment, fear, hate, etc.) and material desires (e.g. profit, loss, etc.). Thus, Aristotle suggests a movement from the low (tied to goods

[15] Aristotle sounds eerily similar to Machiavelli with what he argues in the *Prince*. Much of *Politics* 5 makes claims similar to and sometimes identical with what Machiavelli advances in his *Prince*. These chapters in the *Politics* suggest that the division between the "Ancients" (or, at least, Aristotle) and "the Moderns" might not be as stark as commonly argued. See L.P.S. de Alvarez, *The Machiavellian Enterprise: A Commentary on* The Prince, DeKalb 1999.

of utility and cost), to the psychological, thymotic (which also includes honour and dishonour) and then, to the level of the noble and the good (*kalon*), which manifests in the division between virtue and vice.

THIRD LEVEL OF CAUSE

Regarding the third level of cause, Aristotle provides us a list: *[t]he causes and beginning points of the changes through which they come to be in a state of the sort spoken of and concerning the things mentioned are in one sense seven in number, but in another sense more* (1302a35-37). He goes on to state, *[o]f these, two are the same as the ones spoken of, though not in the same way. For men are stirred up against one another by profit and by honour – not in order to acquire them for themselves, as was said earlier, but because they see others aggrandising themselves (whether justly or unjustly) with respect to these things. They are stirred up further by arrogance, by fear, by pre-eminence, by contempt, by disproportionate growth, and further, though in another manner, by electioneering, by underestimation, by [neglect of] small things, and by dissimilarity* (1302a37-b4; see Adshead 1986). Here what was said to be seven turns out to be eleven things as what is mentioned includes its opposite, as well as subordinated or implicit factors. This list will be more fully elaborated in the next chapter, *Politics* 5.3. It is there that Aristotle revisits what appears to be the 11 triggers of *stasis* that produce *metabole* (change) in a *politeia* (regime). *Politics* 5.3 both expands on what is presented here, but when we look more closely at 5.3 we will notice differences in the account – the most obvious being the way the points (*arche*) and causes (*aitia*) are ordered, but also that the last trigger turns out not to be one but at least 5 different factors.

If we do a comparison of the two listings of the beginning points (*arche*) and causes (*aitia*), first taking how they are presented at the end of *Politics* 5.2 and then how they are more fully elaborated in *Politics* 5.3 we can better understand the way these triggers set in motion the forces that will lead to the *metabole* (change) in the regime.

	1st account of 5.2	**2nd account of 5.3**
1	*dià kérdos* gain, profit	*dḕ ŭnris* violence, arrogance, offensiveness
2	*dià timễn* honour, revere, reverence	*kaì kérdos* gain, profit
3	*dià ŭnrin*, LSJ 1940 wanton violence, whereas Slatter offers arrogance, violence, offensiveness	*dēlon dḕ kaì ē timí*, honour, revere, reverence
4	*dià phónon* panic, flight, fear	*di' ὑperokhễn* projection, prominence
5	*dià ὑperokhín*, projection, prominence	*dià dḕ phónon* panic, flight, fear
6	*dià kataphrónisin*, contempt, disdain	*dià kataphrónisin* contempt, disdain

	1st account of 5.2	2nd account of 5.3
7	*diὰ aὔxisin tẽn parὰ*. "disproportionate growth"	*di' aὔxisin tẽn parὰ* "by disproportionate growth"
8	*di' èrithían* labour for wages, Lord 2013 "electioneering" LSJ 1940 canvassing for public office, intriguing, selfish or factious ambition	*diá te tὰs èrithías*, Lord 2013 translates as "electioneering" LSJ 1940 suggests canvassing for public office, intriguing, selfish or factious ambition
9	*di' ὀligorían*, an esteeming lightly, underestimation	*kaì di' ὀligorían*, an esteeming lightly, underestimation
10	*diὰ mikrótita*, smallness, "small things"	*ẽti diὰ tὸ parὰ mikrón*. smallness, "small things"
11	*diὰ ἀnomiótita*. Dissimilarity unlikeness	Dissimilarity of. *tὸ mὴ ὁmóphilon* (of the same race or stock) Of equality/inequality; about having and being equal and unequal. *diὰ tovὺs tópous* the location *meuísti mὲn oὖn ἴsos diástasis ἀretẽ kaì mokhthiría* – the split between virtue and vice between wealthy and poverty-- *eἶta ploῦtos kaì penía*

Notice profit and honour which was first and second in 5.2 moves down to third and fourth in the later articulation of these beginning points and causes in 5.3. In addition, the third in 5.2, arrogance, is now the first in the presentation at 5.3. So, the top two move down one, and the third rises to the top. Next, the fourth, fear, and the fifth, pre-eminence, in 5.2, switch places in 5.3 – so pre-eminence becomes fourth and fear becomes fifth. All the remaining stay as they are, except the final trigger which turns out not to be one but five.

POLITICS 5.3 – EXPLAINING THE THINGS THAT SET OFF *STASIS*

We also need to be aware that the account of profit and honour discussed here is not a repeating of what was presented earlier but instead are specific cases or events of profit and honour that give rise to or trigger *stasis* that may lead to regime change.[16] In the earlier discussion of profit and honour in the second cause, we are given the logic or rationale that shapes the motivations and psychological drives that move political actors. Here we are talking about an event, a particular or specific act of honour or dishonour,

[16] By triggering I am not following either S.C. Skultety, "Delimiting Aristotle's Conception..." or R.L. Weed, *Aristotle on* Stasis..., but agree with P. Pellegrin, "Aristotle on *Stasis* as a Natural State of Cities," in C. Riedweg (ed.), *Philosophie für die* Polis*: Akten des 5 Kongresses der Gesellschaft für Antike Philosophie 2*, Berlin 2016, pp. 35-248, how these causes are not mere triggering events, but conditions that may exist over time before actually triggering the *stasis* that leads to *metabole* in the regime.

or a specific profit or loss that sets off a dispute between actors or groups within a political community.

If we turn to a fuller examination of this dynamic in *Politics* 5.3, we see that the second account not only reorders the list of these points and causes but significantly expands on each of them. So let us take a closer look at the second account at 5.3 of the beginning points and causes of *stasis* that can cause regime change (*metabole*).

Of these, the power that arrogance and profit have, and the sense in which they are causes, is fairly evident. For it is when those who are in office behave arrogantly and aggrandize themselves that men engage in stasis*— both against one another and against the regimes which provide them license to do so* (1302b5-10).

Aristotle raises an additional point when he notes that *[a]ggrandisement occurs sometimes at the expense of private, sometimes at the expense of common funds* (1302b10-11). He continues: *It is also clear what the power of honour is, and in what sense it is a cause of* stasis*. Men engage in* stasis *both when they themselves are dishonoured and when they see others honoured. This occurs unjustifiably in cases where certain persons are either honoured or dishonoured contrary to their merit, and justifiably in cases where it happens in accordance with their merit* (1302b11-14).

From aggrandisement Aristotle now turns to pre-eminence: *There is* stasis *through pre-eminence when a certain person or persons are greater in power than accords with the city and the power of the* polituma *(governing body); from such persons there customarily arises a monarchy or rule of the powerful. Hence in some places, they have the custom of ostracism— at Argos and Athens, for example. It is better to see to it from the beginning that no one is preeminent to such an extent, however, than to let them arise and to heal the ill afterwards* (1302b15-21).

Next, he brings up fear, saying: *Men engage in* stasis *through fear, both when they have committed injustice and are frightened of paying the penalty, and when they are about to suffer injustice and wish to forestall it— as at Rhodes, where the notables joined together against the people on account of the suits being brought against them* (1302b22-24).

Then contempt, where he notes: *Through contempt as well men engage in* stasis *and attack one another— in oligarchies, for example, when those not taking part in the regime are a majority (for they suppose themselves superior), and in democracies, when the well-off are contemptuous of the disorder and anarchy. In Thebes, for example, the democracy collapsed as a result of their being badly governed following the battle of Oenophyta, the one at Megara through disorder and anarchy when they were defeated; and [contempt was similarly aroused] in Syracuse prior to the tyranny of Gelo and by the people in Rhodes prior to the revolt [of the notables]* (1302b25-33).

Moving from contempt, Aristotle points out that *[c]hanges in regimes also occur through disproportionate growth of a part* (1302b34). He explains this by using the analogy from the body: *A body is composed of parts which must increase in proportion if a balance is to be maintained, and if this does not happen it perishes— for example, when a foot is four yards long and the rest of the body two feet high; and sometimes too it may be altered to the shape of another animal, if the increase is not only quantitative but qualitative and contrary to proportion* (1302b35-40).

Using this example from the physical body of a creature, Aristotle then applies it to the corporal body of a political community. He continues to elaborate on this: *So too is a city composed of parts; and frequently an increase in one of them is overlooked— for example, the multitude of the poor in democracies and regimes. Sometimes this happens also through chance occurrences. At Tarentum, for example, a democracy replaced a regime when many of the notables were defeated and killed by the Iapygians shortly after the Persian War. At Argos, when those of the seventh were killed by Cleomenes of Sparta, they were compelled to accept in the regime some of their subjects; and at Athens the notables became fewer as a result of their misfortunes on land, because they campaigned during the Spartan War on the basis of an enrollment list of citizens. This happens in democracies as well, though to a lesser extent. When there come to be more persons who are well-off, or when properties increase, they undergo revolution and become oligarchies and regimes ruled by the powerful* (1303a1-14).

Following the discussion of how disproportionate growth leads to a potential triggering of conflict, Aristotle turns to electioneering. He states that *[r]egimes undergo regime change (*metabole*) without* stasis *too, through electioneering* (1303a14-15). To help us see how electioneering can lead to regime change Aristotle gives two examples of said regime change, first at Heraea and then at Oreus: *[A]t Heraea, where they had the officials chosen by lot instead of by election because those engaging in electioneering were getting elected— and through underestimation, when they allow persons who are not friends of the regime to occupy the authoritative offices. In Oreus, for example, the oligarchy was overthrown when Heracleodorus became one of the officials: he instituted in place of the oligarchy a regime, or rather a democracy* (1303a15-20).

Here Aristotle shows how the election process itself produces change (*metabole*) and this change can occur without open conflict or dispute, but nevertheless, lead to changes in the regime. The inclusion of the activity of electioneering by Aristotle points to how change emerges out of the very nature of the political process.

After discussing electioneering he now speaks about "small things" (*mikroteta*) and their neglect. Addressing these "small things" he says: *Further, regimes undergo revolution through [neglect of] small differences. I mean that a great shift in usages often occurs unnoticed when a small thing is overlooked. In Ambracia, for example, the assessment was small, and eventually they came to hold office with none at all, the assumption being that there was little or no difference between none and a small one* (1303a21-24).

"Small things," paradoxically, appear to be minor or neglible things or actions that one would not think would lead to something important or difficult yet, they do.[17]

Now, we turn to the eleventh beginning point (*arche*) of dissimilarity. What we are given here is not one but at least five different varieties of dissimilarity that lead to division and *stasis* in a given political community. As we noticed earlier, the account in 5.3 speaks not simply of dissimilarity but also of "dissimilarity of stock." In other words, "dissimilarity of stock" produces stasis, *until a cooperative spirit develops. For just as a city does not arise from any chance multitude, so it does not arise in any chance period of time*.

[17] Aristotle will find the need to address "small things" in more detail in the first part of *Politics* 5.4.

Hence those who have admitted joint settlers or later settlers [of different stock] have for the most part split into factions (1303a25-30).[18]

From Aristotle's account of how the "dissimilarity of stock" becomes a factor leading to *stasis* within the community, he now addresses the second form of "dissimilarity," this time based on being equal or unequal. About this form of dissimilarity he says, *[i]n oligarchies, as was said earlier, the many engage in* stasis *on the grounds that they are done an injustice because they do not partake of equal things in spite of being equal. In democracies the notables engage in* stasis *because they partake of equal things although they are not equal* (1303b4-7).[19]

After talking about the dissimilarity due to equality and inequality, Aristotle now raises the third dissimilarity, this time due to "changes in territory" or to the location in which the various members or groups within a political community inhabit or live. Aristotle says about this: *Cities sometimes fall into* stasis *on account of location, when the territory is not naturally apt for there being a single city. At Clazomenae, for example, those in Chytrus engaged in* stasis *against those on the island; so also the Colophonians and Notians. At Athens too there is dissimilarity: those living in Peiraeus are more of the popular sort than those living in town. For just as in war the crossing of ditches, even if they are very small, splits apart the ranks, so every difference, it appears, makes a split between them* (1303b3-15).

After the dissimilarity due to location, he turns to the next form (the 4th) of dissimilarity which he says is *[t]he greatest factional split* which is *between virtue and depravity* (1303b15). Thus, the divide between the just and the unjust, the virtuous and the vicious is said to be the greatest division from dissimilarity. We are reminded of what Aristotle said in *Politics* 5, chapter 1 that those *outstanding in excellent (*arete*)* would have the greatest legitimacy to engage in conflict (*stasis*) yet tend not to (1302a24-25). Hence the division between virtue and vice becomes a trigger that divides a community.

Finally, in the discussion of the divide between virtue and vice, Aristotle raises the dissimilarity between *wealth and poverty* (1303b16). He does not go on much about this divide he only notes *so on with others in varying degree, one of these being that just spoken of* (1303b16-17). Yet this mention of the problem that the dissimilarity between the wealthy and the poor is about the disparity of their means (*poroi*) which is explicitly noticeable in their various labels in Greek. Here one is very much reminded of what Aristotle brought up at *Politics* 4, chapter 11, where he goes into the differences between the character and traits of the wealthy and the poor (see 1295b10-23). There it is clear that both the wealthy and the poor have such habits and characteristics that point

[18] Of those five varieties of dissimilarity all but one (the fourth one) are material in character – the first "of stock," the second of equality and inequality (which raises issues of justice and injustice), the third of location, the fourth of virtue (*arete*) and vice, whereas the fifth and final form of dissimilarity is between the wealthy (*ploutos*) the poverty/need (*penía*).

[19] As C.D.C. Reeve, *Aristotle* Politics*: A New Translation*, Indianapolis 2017, p. 323 notes that *Newman (1887–1902 IV p. 316) proposes that we read it at [5.1.1301a39] following the sentence that ends with 'engage in faction.'* Most current translators would agree with Reeve and not agree with Newman and place this passage here where we find it at *Politics* 5.3.

to the problem that each of them brings to the community. So it is this split caused by the dissimilarity between the wealthy and the poor that ends Aristotle's account of the various triggering causes of *stasis* that lead to changes in the regime (*metabole*).

CONCLUSION

In these first three chapters of *Politics* 5 Aristotle offers a model of political change where he lays out the three-level of change with the only major missing type of cause being the one that deals with form (*eidos*) – which is the *politeia* (the regime) itself. But by addressing the level of change at the level of the regime. This requires Aristotle to move from a general account to change to an account that needs must be framed by each specific regime type. And this is what he will do in chapters 5, 6, and 7 of *Politics* 5. There he will look at what are the directions of change within democracies, oligarchies, "so-called aristocracies," and *politieies* (regimes).

But before turning to the regime, Aristotle wants to wrap up some of the issues that he feels need more attention from the issues he raised through the first three chapters of *Politics* 5. Those remaining things that are discussed in chapter 4 are "small things," changes to the *politeuma* (the governing/ruling part), when the opposing parts of a city become equal to one another, and lastly the issue of force, fraud, and persuasion. All of which merely expands on aspects of what he raises in his general account of change in the first three chapters.

Yet at the end of *Politics* 5.3, Aristotle for the most part has set up the basic logic of his general model of political change. Yet given that this model of political change operates within the framework of regimes (which will be addressed in more detail in chapters 5, 6, and 7 of *Politics* 5) that what is being addressed here could equally be called a model of regime change, but such a model would require adding the variable of the regime (*politieia*) which is not done in the chapters of *Politics* 5 we are dealing with currently. As we have shown through our examination above, his model offers a very dynamic yet flexible approach that those studying a given regime come to see the causes and reasons why the changes that occur in that regime happen as they do. And that the model offers here considers and respects both the particularistic character of the individual regime in question, its history, and the forces and matter that make it up and a means to generalise and therefore have a framework to compare the various regimes to come to see what patterns and directions of change that they have in common and those that only have an effect on specific regimes. After seeing these things, we also come to understand that Aristotle here offers students of political science means to study political change that operates not only empirically, but also one that offers the kind of causal modelling that much of contemporary political science is striving to achieve.[20]

[20] Some will argue that the empiricism resting on positivist grounds radically conflicts with Aristotle's teleological model of causality, but others argue that not only Aristotle's approach adequately responds to the criticism laid against it by positivistic approaches, but rather don't fall into the problems and pitfalls that plague positivistic political science. But here I follow what Roger Masters, Larry

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