

# ARISTOTLE AND WESTERN RATIONALITY

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ABSTRACT. In order to make Aristotle's philosophy better understood, I would like to provide here a brief but accurate account of the concepts of *logos* (discursive reason) and *nous* (intuitive mind), and their respective functions in his method of dialectic. Dialectic was used in all the major works of the *corpus Aristotelicum*, in the philosopher's great effort to noetically grasp and philosophically explain the place of man in the cosmic order of things, and his search for *eudaimonia* (well-being). Since Aristotle's conception of human nature and its potential for virtuous activity, at the ethical and political or at the intellectual levels of excellence, has deeper roots in his ontology and ousiology, such a synoptic account will be useful, for it will provide an appropriate context for the correct evaluation of the ethical and political views of this philosopher. It will become clear from our analysis that he is misunderstood by scholars in the West and in the East for different historical reasons, which will be elucidated as we proceed further into the discussion of our theme in this essay.

KEYWORDS: Aristotle, rationality, *logos*, *nous*, *eudaimonia*, ontology, ousiology, philosophy, dialectic, man, cosmos.

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## Introduction

By providing a new interpretation of the Aristotelian conception of man as rational and, more importantly, as noetic being, I shall attempt to show that Aristotle was a genuinely Hellenic and Platonic philosopher, that is, something more than a mere representative of European and "Western rationality."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, in reading his

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<sup>1</sup> In this respect, that is, in his relation to "European philosophy," Aristotle is not different from Plato as discussed in the second essay, "Plato and European Philosophy," in my *Hellenic Philosophy: Origin and Character* (2006). For a re-thinking of "rationality," "rational belief," and "rational decision making," along the lines of what is called neo-Utilitarianism and neo-Pragmatism, see Robert Nozick (1993).

various works, we should keep in mind that the basic concepts of logic, ontology, psychology, ethics, politics, and all areas of human experience, are expressed in words which are, as Aristotle often emphasized, *pollachos legomena* (i.e. ambiguous and poly-semantic terms with more than one meaning).

Such a reading will also provide us with the key to understanding Aristotle's philosophy correctly and evaluating it perhaps more judiciously. For his views on God and man, nature and *polis*, poetic and noetic activity, ethics and politics, personal virtues and the common good, domestic relations and political associations are, for him, all ontologically connected as parts of an organic whole held together by a kind of philosophic attraction and sympathy. This whole complex can be methodically explored with the effective method of dialectic as developed by the Platonic Socrates and perfected by Aristotle, *the Philosopher*.<sup>2</sup>

For Aristotle, and other Platonic philosophers, a search into any of the above mentioned subjects will inevitably lead to all the rest with which it is ontologically connected. For instance, determining the ultimate ethical/political *telos* (that is, the end, aim, goal or good) of man understood as a political animal and citizen of a Hellenic *polis*, would call for an inquiry into the nature of man *qua* man (the what-it-is-to-be-human). This will lead to psychology, to ontology, to cosmology, to teleology and, ultimately, to natural theology. For Aristotle, "the good of man" is identified

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<sup>2</sup> In Aristotle's hands especially, the method of Socratic and Platonic dialectic became a powerful tool or *organon* of inquiry into any conceivable area or aspect of nature and culture. Compare this breadth of the Hellenic conception of philosophy with the sort of linguistic activity to which it has been reduced by the narrow-mindedness of contemporary analytical "philosophers," for whom philosophy has become an *ancilla linguae* (a handmaid of language) and a bad joke. For example, Ayer insists that: "What confronts the philosopher who finds that our everyday language has been sufficiently analyzed is the task of clarifying the concepts of contemporary science. But for him to be able to achieve this, it is essential that he should understand science... What we should rather do is to distinguish between the speculative and the logical aspects of science, and assert that philosophy must develop into the logic of science" (Ayer 1972, 201-202). While for Wittgenstein, "The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of *depth*. They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language. – Let us ask ourselves: why do we feel a grammatical joke to be *deep*? (And that is what the depth of philosophy is)" (Wittgenstein 1968, 47, paragraph 111). Rudolf Carnap put it briefly; "The only proper task of philosophy is Logical Analysis" (in Morton White 1955, 223).

with the wellbeing of each citizen and all the citizens who, collectively, make up the political community of a free Hellenic *polis*, the classical city-state.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, as Aristotle envisioned it, the organization of the Hellenic *polis* as a whole should make it possible for each and all of its citizens to actualize their potential as human beings naturally endowed with certain physical, psychic, logical, and noetic capacities. In this way, the naturally and culturally best among them would be able to rise to perfection.<sup>4</sup> This road, as is dialectically mapped by Aristotle, leads to the summit of human perfection and enlightenment. It is to be followed primarily by the genuine philosopher, the ideal citizen of a Hellenic *polis*, as he heroically traverses the ontological distance separating the man-goat (or satyr of Hellenic mythology and drama) from the man-god (or sage of Platonic philosophy).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>To understand Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* correctly, one should place it in the context of his *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*. For him, the same ordering principle pervades the cosmos in the form of divine *Nous*, and is present in the individual human soul, in the form of human *logos* (discursive reason) and of the human *nous* (intuitive intellect), and their manifestations in all forms of social organizations and natural associations. These include, naturally for Aristotle, the family and the *polis* as well. But even A. MacIntyre, who attempted to provide an open-minded approach to Aristotle's theory of virtue and its relevance to our society today, seems to have missed this important point. See, MacIntyre 1981, chapters 9, 11, 16, and 18; and my review of the book in *The Review of Metaphysics*, XXXVII, no. 1 (1983) 132-134.

<sup>4</sup>Being an open-minded and clear-sighted philosopher, and not a revolutionary propagandist, Aristotle could see that only a few citizens of any given city-state would be able to rise to the top, even under democratic equal conditions of freedom and education, due to the other important factor, natural endowment. As a good biologist he appreciated this factor, while in our time it is overlooked in political declarations of "human rights." For Aristotle, the recognizable "rights" are those of the citizen, and are reciprocal and proportional to his actual or potential contribution to the common good of the city-state. See on this MacIntyre 1981, chapters 8-18; Waldron 1984; Golding 1968; Evangeliou 1988a; and Miller 1995.

<sup>5</sup>This, of course, was to be "the true philosopher," a god-like man among mere common mortals. By free, independent, and autonomous pursuit of the truth, and by an ethically impeccable life, the true lover of wisdom was expected to be able to give up the brutish ways of indulgence in self-centered pleasures of the flesh and to rise towards the stars or the Gods. Accordingly, for the Pythagoreans, between the mortal men and the immortal Gods, there was a third category of "being," represented by their teacher Pythagoras. For Plato (*Symposium*, 212a) and Aristotle (*NE*, 1177b-1178a), the true philosopher was the only mortal worthy of the company and friendship of the immortal Gods. For Epicureans, like Lucretius, he who would follow the precepts of Epicurus would live "like a god among men," for "man loses all semblance of mortality by living in the midst

It will become clear, in the light of my advanced interpretation, that the Platonic Aristotle, like the Platonic Socrates<sup>6</sup> and like Plotinus later on, had a high opinion of the power of philosophy to perfect the human being. He was convinced that, (working slowly upon the soul and mind of the ascending philosopher, who has climbed step by step the *scala amoris*), the true love of wisdom will bring in contact the human and the Divine. What is divine in us, the *nous* (the intuitive mind, the noetic light shining in the human *micro-cosmos*), and the *Nous* (the Intellect of the *macro-cosmos*) are of the same essence.<sup>7</sup> At such privileged moments of noetic contact and enlightenment, it would appear that the energized human intellect acquires both self-knowledge and knowledge of “The Other,” the divine Noetic Being. Thus, man becomes beloved to the Supreme God,<sup>8</sup> the eternally active Intellect, which moves

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of immortal blessings” (Saunders 1966, 52). This noble conception of philosophy has been lost in the history of the so-called “Western philosophy” of the Christian Europeans.

<sup>6</sup> The Platonic Socrates is different from the “Socrates” of modern and contemporary Western “philosophy,” whether he derives of the hermeneutic or the analytical school, who is virtually indistinguishable from the Sophists. For the Platonic Socrates has more love for divine wisdom and a “greater soul” than language analysts do and post-modernists can comprehend or appreciate. See, for example, Tejera 1984; Vlastos 1991; and my review of the book in *Journal of Neoplatonic Studies*, vol. 1, No. 1 (1992): 133-141. Consider, for instance, how would the Platonic Socrates address the Sophists of his, as well as of our, time:

“Do you think it a small matter that you [Thrasymachus] are attempting to determine and not the entire conduct of life that for each of us would make living most worth while?” *Republic* 344d (repeated in 352d). Again: “And, by the god of friendship, Callicles, do not fancy that you should play with me, and give me no haphazard answers contrary to your opinion. And do not either take what I say as if I were merely playing, for you see the subject of our discussion--and on what subject should even a man of slight intelligence be more serious?--namely, what kind of life one should live, the life to which you invite me, that of a ‘real man,’ speaking in the assembly and practicing rhetoric and playing the politician according to your present fashion, or the life spent in philosophy, and how the one differs from the other.” (*Gorgias*, 500b-c)

<sup>7</sup> In this light, it would seem that Aristotle’s conception of the Divine is closer to the Eastern than to Western conceptions of God, that is, the Christian and Islamic versions of the intolerant and anthropomorphic Judaic monotheism. Consider, for instance, A.N. Whitehead’s view on this point: “The Eastern Asiatic concept [of God is that of] an impersonal order to which the world conforms. This order is the self-ordering of the world; it is not the world obeying an imposed rule.” In contrast to this, “The Semitic concept [of God as] a definite personal individual entity... is the rationalization of the tribal gods of the earlier communal religion” (Whitehead 1926, 66-67; also Whitehead 1978, 342ff).

<sup>8</sup> That is to say, the noetically activated philosopher becomes a friend of God; see on this, Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177b-1178a, and compare it to Plato’s *Symposium*,

the cosmos by the irresistible power of its erotic attraction, as if in a rhythmic dance orderly and eternal.<sup>9</sup>

In this way, a kind of philosophic *apotheosis* seems to take place at the end of the long road of Peripatetic dialectic. At this point, *logos* (discursive reason) must yield to intuitive and superior power of energized human intellect (*nous*). There, the human being, conceived here as a living, sensible, reasonable, noetic, communal, political, poetic, and potentially divine being, becomes divine actually, suddenly, and even self-knowingly. Thus, philosophically perfected, the ideal citizen of the Hellenic *polis* becomes fully enlightened.<sup>10</sup> That is to say, the actualized and active human intellect suddenly grasps, as in a flash of self-awareness, the truth that in its very nature the human being is *homoousion*, that is, of the same essence or *ousia*, as Divine Intellect.

Following along the path suggested by Aristotelian dialectic, we can then see that the eternally energized Divine Intellect and the dialectically perfected (and, thus, noetically transformed) mind of the true philosopher are identified as being essentially the same. So, at the end, they are recognized as closely related beings, as two beloved friends.<sup>11</sup> This is the road to enlightenment, which my Platonic interpreta-

212a-b. Clearly, on this important point, the two Hellenic philosophers were in agreement with each other and in disagreement with the Europeans.

<sup>9</sup> As Aristotle put it almost poetically in the heart of his *First Philosophy* or *Metaphysics* (1072a 20-30): "There is, then, something which is always moved with an unceasing motion, which is motion in a circle; and this is plain not in theory only but in fact. Therefore the first heaven must be eternal. There is therefore something, which moves it. And since that which is moved and moves is intermediate, there is something, which moves without being moved, being eternal, substance, and actuality. And the object of desire and the object of thought move in this way; they move without being moved. The primary objects of desire and thought are the same. For the apparent good is the object of appetite and the real good is the primary object of rational wish. But desire is consequent of opinion rather than opinion of desire; for the thinking is the starting point." Anyone who has ever experienced true love, will understand perfectly well Aristotle's deepest thought regarding the power of the noetically erotic "object of desire" to move by its beauty the entire heavens no less than the human heart and mind. That power cannot be other than the Divine Intellect or God. On this point, as in so many others, Aristotle remained to the end a true Platonist. In this respect, Porphyry was justified in writing the treatise: *On the Unity of Plato's and Aristotle's Philosophy*. See also Evangeliou 1996, 5.

<sup>10</sup> The meaning of Aristotelian enlightenment lies precisely in that, by the ultimate divine contact, the maturing philosopher as a potentially noetic being is transformed into an actually noetic and god-like being, thanks to the power of the love of wisdom.

<sup>11</sup> See cases A, B, and especially C, below. The point of my thesis is that, if we can show that this self-realization and *apotheosis* is the ultimate outcome even of the philosophy

tion of Aristotle's philosophy will reveal fully in what follows. It may be called properly the Aristotelian *via dialectica*.<sup>12</sup>

In this new light, Aristotle's philosophy and the Platonic tradition to which it belongs, would appear to be closer to Eastern ways of thinking (especially the Indian), than to the narrowly defined "Western rationality." By this expression is usually meant the kind of calculative and manipulative *ratio*, which is in the service of *utilitas*. For it serves utilitarian, technological, and ideological goals, which characterize much of modern and post-modern philosophy in the West under various masks, such as: British "logical analysis," Baconian "scientific method," and Marxist "scientific socialism."<sup>13</sup>

In the same light, as a genuine Hellenic and Platonic philosopher, Aristotle will appear to be something very different, better and nobler, than the caricature of a

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of Aristotle, considered as the most rigorous and scientific Platonist, then *a fortiori* we will have shown that the same holds in other "more spiritual" Platonists. Since in the Platonic tradition, as if in a great river, converge all the springs of Presocratic philosophical speculation; and given its longevity and influence on the development of Hellenic philosophy, it would be reasonable to take it as representing the Hellenic philosophical thought as a whole. Thus, Hellenic philosophy is brought closer to the eastern philosophical traditions than to the narrowly conceived Western "rationalism" and "philosophy." One could make the case that the same holds even for Epicureanism and Stoicism, at least in their ethical theories, and in spite of their materialistic conceptions of reality. But even if they were considered exceptions to the rule, this would not alter the fact about Platonism as being the mainstream of Hellenism.

<sup>12</sup> This sounds very much like the "*Tat tuam asi*" of the Vedanta, as the Indian friends of wisdom would recognize. In other words, *via dialectica* is the Hellenic way of expressing the same truth as that which is captured by the wonderful Indian formula "That are Thou," (that is, you as *atman* and God as *Brahman* are essentially one and the same). As Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1973, 38 and 85) put it: "The Upanishads speak to us of the way in which the individual self gets at the ultimate reality by an inward journey, an inner ascent ... The goal is identity with the Supreme." The same noble goal pervades the Hellenic philosophical tradition, from Pythagoras to Proclus, if correctly understood. Aristotle and Plato are two central figures of this honorable Hellenic tradition, as we said.

<sup>13</sup> The modern and post-modern European "philosophers," who have reduced Hellenic philosophy (the traditional queen of arts and sciences) to a "humble handmaid" of (technocratic) science and (political) ideology respectively, seem to follow on the steps of Medieval (Christian and Moslem) theologians, for whom philosophy had become another *ancilla theologiae*. The enslavement of Hellenic philosophy to such strange "Masters" in the West has transformed its original autonomous character to an almost unrecognizable degree. The echo of the name *philosophia* may sound the same, but the meaning is different for its joyous and free spirit has been lost. But it can be recovered.

“servant philosopher,” into which he has been compressed in the West. For he has been presented alternatively but equally narrowly, either as the scholastic logician and rationalist thinker in service of dogmatic medieval theology, or as the empirical and analytic thinker in the service of technocratic modern science.<sup>14</sup>

This double portrait of Aristotle, whether Medieval or Modern European, clearly does not resemble the historical Hellenic philosopher in his dialectic fullness. For his philosophic mind wanted to accomplish all of the following diverse tasks: see noetically the entire *kosmos*; understand the form and the function of every kind of substantive being; grasp the *telos* of man as citizen of the Hellenic *polis* and his multiple creations; admire the eternal beauty of the Cosmos; and find in it the proper place for God (understood as the Cosmic Intellect) and man's noetic self. For this human-noetic-self or *nous* was seen as a microcosmic god in the making, being potentially present in the well-endowed human soul. Clearly, then, the Western picture of *the Philosopher* does not fit the acuity of Aristotle's dialectic in all its flexibility and complexity as displayed in his texts.<sup>15</sup>

It is this “other side” of Aristotle's Platonic philosophy that my thesis will attempt to bring to light and to revive because it is needed now, and will be needed even

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<sup>14</sup>By turning Modern Science, in the same way as the Medieval Theology, into a tool of controlling power, the Europeans, whether capitalists or socialists, have exploited the natural and cultural resources of the globe for profit and political power with disastrous results for humanity's future wellbeing on Mother Earth.

<sup>15</sup>Aristotle, in this light, would appear to be very different from what we find, for example, in Owen 1986. What logicians of science and analytical “philosophers” do not seem to understand is that, for Aristotle and any genuine Hellenic philosophers, the concern with language and logic was only preliminary to more fundamental questions of philosophy such as, “How should we live?” Related to this Socratic question there was a cluster of questions of ethical, political, psychological, theological, ontological, and cosmological import: Who really are we and what does it mean to be human? What is the good (or the best possible) life for human beings *qua* human? What is the good (or the best possible) organization of the city-state, in which the good life of its best citizens can be realized? What is our place in the cosmos and what kinds of beings does it contain? What is “Being” in general and how is it related to other beings? Is there anything divine in the cosmos and perhaps in us? What is divine, philosophically conceived, and how is the divine being related to cosmos and to man?

To perceptive students of Hellenic philosophy it would be clear that for Aristotle, as for the Platonic Socrates, a complete answer to any of these questions presupposed or implied specific answers to the other questions, with which it is connected. Ultimately, the connections would lead back to the fundamental teleological question of the human *telos*, and the kind of life which would help the philosopher, as the best specimen of the human species, to achieve the highest good for man. At least this is my thesis here.

more in the near future than ever before. For, at the present, the global failure of the Marxist “scientific socialism,” in the communistic *praxis* of the so-called “dictatorship of the proletariat” in its Leninist and Maoist versions, is a historical fact. With its collapse and as the dreadful divisions of mankind (along the familiar lines of tribal nationalism, monotheistic intolerance, and sectarian fanaticism) begin to re-surface globally,<sup>16</sup> the need to revive the lost spirit of Hellenic philosophy becomes apparent. The spirit of religious tolerance, philosophic pluralism, and Hellenic humanism is needed now and its need is felt deeply by sensitive souls and far-seeing minds.<sup>17</sup>

Let this suffice, as an introduction. It is now time to turn to Aristotle and the available textual evidence, which will help us substantiate this challenging thesis as outlined above.

### Aristotle’s Move from Logos to Nous

For anyone wishing to discover the roots of “rationality,” as it is understood in the West, Aristotle would seem a reasonable *terminus a quo*. For, as we saw in the first two essays, European historians of philosophy believe that Hellenic philosophy, whose characteristic trait is assumed by them to have been the *logos* in the sense of discursive reasoning, reached its climax in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. They were closely related as teacher and student.<sup>18</sup> Besides, whatever little the Medi-

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<sup>16</sup> To this list one may add America, where wrong-headed atheists, equally dogmatic monotheists (whether Christians or Muslims), and other gentler and kinder persons (who may be neither monotheists nor atheists) must learn to live together in peace. Hence our need for the help which Hellenic philosophy can provide. In the new light of my Platonic interpretation of Aristotle, the Aristotelian views on man, nature, cosmos, the divine, and their respective multiple relations, become relevant once again. By extension, so do the views of other Hellenic philosophers of the Platonic tradition, as well as the perspectives of other non-Hellenic traditions and cultures. Especially relevant would be the cultures of the East (India, China, Japan), which were relatively free from fanatical intolerance, technocratic arrogance, political ideology, theocratic hierarchies, and religious inflexible dogmas.

<sup>17</sup> Consider, for example, A. Armstrong’s judicious judgment. “This sort of monotheistic complacency is becoming more and more difficult to maintain as we become more and more vividly aware of other religious traditions than Judeo-Christian-Islamic, notably that of India... The Greeks in the end found it perfectly possible to combine this with monotheism, to believe in God without ceasing to believe in the gods” (Armstrong 1981 and Evangelidou 1989).

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle spent about twenty years in Plato’s Academy from which he departed only after his beloved teacher’s death. In spite of occasional criticism of specific Platonic doctrines on which he respectfully disagreed with his teacher, Aristotle remained a loyal



eval Western World knew about Ancient Hellenic philosophy was related to parts of Aristotle's logic, the famous *Organon*.<sup>19</sup>

For such an inquirer, therefore, and for these reasons, the following questions are of special interest: Was Aristotle the “first cause” of the rising of rationalistic and technocratic science in Europe in the last few centuries, as has been alleged? Does “Western rationality,” in the above-specified sense, really have its beginnings in Aristotle's philosophy? Can Aristotle's philosophy without distortion, and his dialectic method without misapplication, provide justification to claims of cultural superiority and hegemony that have been advanced by the European powers in order to justify their colonial exploitation of Africa, America, and Asia? Last, what do the terms “reason” and “rationalism” mean, and is Aristotle the root of “Western rationality?”<sup>20</sup>

The answer to these complex questions cannot be simple. It may be affirmative or negative depending on the sense which is attached to the word *ratio*, which was itself a clumsy attempt to render into Latin the poly-semantic Hellenic word *logos*. In the language and literature of Ancient Hellas, the word *logos* has as many meanings and shades of meanings, as Proteus has faces, forms, and shapes. Basically, it means meaningful or significant speech, that is, the richness of hu-

Platonist to the end. Many miss this point because they tend to focus narrowly on points of difference between philosophers, which are there but make no real difference. When one looks at Plato and Aristotle, as the Hellenic philosophers of late antiquity looked at them, they appear to belong to the same school of philosophy, the Socratic tradition. In this light, my “new” interpretation of Aristotle is really ancient. It needs no apology. See also, Evangeliou 1996, 1-14.

<sup>19</sup> Even the “revolt against Aristotle,” which led to the revival of Platonism in the fifteenth century and to the scientific revolution of the seventeenth centuries, was fought to a large extent with the weapons of Aristotle's logic and categories, transmitted to the West by the commentaries and translations of Boethius. See on this, Evangeliou 1996, 164-181.

<sup>20</sup> In the sense in which, for example, Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza are said to be rationalists; or even in the sense in which Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke may be called “rational” empiricists. Would Aristotle have felt at home, in the company of either of these groups of Europeans? Not exactly, in my view, because he was a philosopher of a more versatile, flexible, noetic, dialectic, and non-dogmatic character. Aristotle was a Hellenic philosopher of the type which the Aegean and the Ionian seas used to produce in abundance until their waters were “polluted” by the spread of the “decadent” spirit of Christianity, as Nietzsche would have it (see *Twilight of the Idols and The Antichrist*, pp. 55ff; also Nehamas 1985; and my review of the book in *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. XL, No. 3 (1987) 592-594). In his fury, Nietzsche extended the characterization “decadent” to the Platonic philosophy, perhaps because he, like so many other European thinkers, failed to distinguish between the two versions of Platonism, Hellenic and Christian.

man (preferably Hellenic) language and the human mind with all its concepts, thoughts, feelings, and visions, which can be symbolically expressed orally or in writing by the power of this specifically human tool, the human *logos*.<sup>21</sup> In this broad sense, not only great Hellenic philosophers, but every human being, who is unimpaired and prepared to make careful and meaningful use of the innate *logos*, is naturally a *logical* and *rational* being.

As an epistemic concept, employed widely in modern theories of knowledge and epistemology and extensively discussed in the histories of “Western philosophy,” rationalism is contrasted to empiricism and to intuitionism. Its method is called deductive because it supposedly moves from general, self-evident, and axiomatic principles to implications, which follow necessarily from such principles, if and when they are combined in proper syllogistic forms, according to specific logical rules of inference. In this sense, Pythagoras, Descartes, and Russell, for example, who were mathematicians and philosophers, are considered as “rationalists.” They were willing to follow the hypothetical and deductive method of reasoning as the only correct way of obtaining reliable scientific knowledge. As pure rationalists, they did not trust the evidence provided by sense experience. In this respect, they differed radically from the empiricist philosophers, like Democritus, Epicurus, and Hobbes, for example. For the latter, the senses are the only source of trustworthy information about the real world which, for them, was identified with the sensible world.

Where, then, did Aristotle stand on this epistemological division? Was he a rationalist and “the root” of Western rationality, as some scholars and historians of philosophy have maintained? Or was he to be found in the opposite camp of the empiricists, where Kant, among others, had placed him?<sup>22</sup> It would be closer to truth to say that he was both an empiricist and a rationalist, because he was a dialectician with common sense. His common sense and his open mind allowed Aris-

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<sup>21</sup> According to Aristotle, “Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience, and written words are the symbols of spoken words. Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images... A sentence [*logos*] is a significant portion of speech, some parts of which have an independent meaning, that is to say, as an utterance, though not as an expression of any positive judgement.” (*De Interpretatione* 16a-b).

<sup>22</sup> He was also a lover of *nous* (the intuitive mind), as we will see. In this light, Kant’s judgment is incorrect: “In respect to the origin of the modes of ‘knowledge through pure reason’ the question is as to whether they are derived from experience, or whether in independence of experience they have their origin in reason. Aristotle may be regarded as the chief of the empiricists, and Plato as the chief of the noologists [which is Kant’s neologism for rationalists]” (Kant 1965, 667).

tote to see that each side was correct in some specified sense, but neither had the whole truth. On this matter, as in many others, Aristotle was the antithesis of what is called a “dogmatist.”<sup>23</sup>

Being critical of the dialectical deficiencies of the various previous theories of knowledge, Aristotle was able to simultaneously praise the senses and criticize empiricism.<sup>24</sup> He was also able to define syllogism and the deductive method used in mathematics but, at the same time, admit that induction and intuition played an important role in ascertaining the first principles and the major premises of valid deductions.<sup>25</sup> Above all, he was able to conceive of truth as being neither revealed

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<sup>23</sup> It must be credited to the rhetorical skills and ingenuity of Christian and Moslem theologians, who managed to persuade the medieval and much of the modern world that they had found in Aristotle’s philosophy sufficient support for their respective revelations and the theocratic *dogmata*. Ironically, it was against this “Aristotle” that European thought rebelled in modern times. Since then, it has served faithfully Modern Technology and/or Political Ideology, instead of Medieval Theology. Sadly, philosophy has not as yet recovered its ancestral autonomy and dignity. In this sense, European “philosophy” is very different from genuine Hellenic philosophy. The sooner we grasp this historical fact the better off we will be philosophically in the future.

<sup>24</sup> “All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer seeing to everything else.” (*Metaphysics*, 980a 22-24, the translation is that of Ross). Aristotle proceeds to show how human understanding moves from sense experience to the reasoned accounts of the arts and sciences, to the noetic grasp of first principles and causes, and ultimately to the intuitive knowledge of Divine Intellect (*Nous*) and of the human inner self (*nous*). For him, as for Plato, God and man are essentially the same. This is, in a nutshell, my thesis.

<sup>25</sup> “A syllogism is discourse in which, certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of necessity for their being so. I mean by the last phrase that they produce the consequence, and by this, that no further term is required from without in order to make the consequence necessary.” *Prior Analytics*, 24b 18-22; (A.J. Jenkinson’s translation). Compare it to conclusion of *Posterior Analytics* (100b 5-13):

“Thus it is clear that we must get to know the primary premises by induction; for the method by which even sense-perception implants the universal is inductive. Now of the thinking states by which we grasp truth, some are unfailingly true, others admit error-opinion, for instance, and calculation, whereas scientific knowledge and intuition [*nous*] are always true: further, no other kind of thought except intuition [*nous*] is more accurate than scientific knowledge, whereas primary premises are more knowable than demonstrations, and all scientific knowledge is discursive. From these considerations follows that there will be no scientific knowledge of the primary premises, and since except intuition nothing can be truer than scientific knowledge, it will be intuition that apprehends the

dogma nor private property of any human being regardless of his philosophical accomplishments. On the contrary, for the open-minded Hellenic philosopher, the truth was a “common property” belonging to mankind as a whole. It was a kind of “commonwealth,” to which all persons more or less contribute, even when they are in error, since others may learn how to avoid such errors and find truth.<sup>26</sup> The fol-

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primary premises—a result which also follows from the fact that demonstration cannot be the originative source of demonstration, nor, consequently, scientific knowledge of scientific knowledge...”

<sup>26</sup> “The investigation of the truth is in one way hard, in another easy. An indication of this is found in the fact that no one is able to attain the truth adequately, while, on the other hand, we do not collectively fail, but every one says something true about the nature of things, and while individually we contribute little or nothing to the truth, by the union of all a considerable amount is amassed.” (*Metaphysics* 993a 30-b 6).

Compare this thoughtful statement with the Indian wisdom as expressed in a Jaina saying: “Perfect truth is like an ocean: it is the Jina's omniscience; and all philosophical views are like rivers.” Quoted by K.S. Murty (1991, 190). It is enlightening indeed to contrast these sensible eastern views on truth to the statements made by Kant, the most “critical” representative of European thought. Without irony the critical Kant has stated: “In this inquiry I have made completeness my chief aim, and I venture to assert that there is not a single metaphysical problem which has not been solved... Metaphysics, on the view which we are adopting, is the only one of all the sciences which dare promise that through a small but concentrated effort it will attain, and this in a short time, such completion as will leave no task to our successors save that of adapting it in a *didactic* manner according to their preferences without their being able to add anything what so ever to its content. For it is nothing but the inventory of all our possessions through pure reason, systematically arranged. In this field nothing can escape us.”

Thus spoke the author of the *Critique of Pure Reason* ( p. 13). But a few years later G.W.F. Hegel was to prove Kant wrong in this arrogant claim and to beat him sorely in this especially German word-game which is called “metaphysics.” For, as G. Lichteim says, in his introduction to Hegel's *The Phenomenology of the Mind [or Spirit]* (1967, xxi): “Kant's rather bleak rationalism in turn provoked a Romantic reaction—of this Hegel's *Phenomenology* may be regarded as an example, in so far as its author did not disdain the use of metaphor for purposes other than illustration.” As expected *The Phenomenology* ends appropriately in German fashion at “the Golgotha of the Absolute Spirit” (p. 808), and the “imaginative idea” that: “The Divine Being is reconciled with its existence through an event—the event of God's emptying Himself of His Divine Being through His factual Incarnation and His Death.” (p. 780)

It makes one wonder what would Anaxagoras or Epicurus say if they could read this kind of European “philosophy?” So much about “modesty” or “truth” as expressed in German Idealism and Rationalism representing the apex of “Western philosophy.” See

lowing statement is characteristic of this and reveals Aristotle's mind and method of inquiry:

Now our treatment of this science [Ethics] will be adequate, if it achieves that amount of precision, which belongs to its subject matter. The same exactness must not be expected in all departments of philosophy alike, anymore than in all the products of the arts and crafts.... For it is the mark of an educated mind to expect that amount of exactness in each kind which the nature of the particular subject admits. It is equally unreasonable to accept merely probable conclusions from a mathematician and to demand strict demonstration from an orator.<sup>27</sup>

There is no need to add more passages like the above in order to make the point that dialectical flexibility, sharpness of questioning, and moderation of expression are characteristic of Aristotle's method.<sup>28</sup> He had learned from his teacher Plato and from Socrates the importance of dividing and defining, of clarifying and qualifying, of distinguishing and analyzing the terms involved in a given question or a proposed problem. With unsurpassed confidence and acuteness, he practiced the method of dialectic to the best of his ability in the service of truth and humanity. As a critical philosopher, Aristotle wanted to ascertain the facts in each case and "to save the phenomena." He also wanted to review "the received proverbial wisdom" of the many and the opinions of the few "wise men" and to suggest solutions, which might

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also G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (1988, 489); Part III, "The Consummate Religion," is revealing of the mind of this "European philosopher."

<sup>27</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094b 13-28. Compare it to Kant's endeavor to make Metaphysics a "science" of the same precision and exactness as Euclidean Geometry and Newtonian Physics. He would accomplish this task by the critical method of "pure reason" applied with "German thoroughness" to "the subject" as seen in the light of the "Kantian revolution," which again was patterned after the "Copernican revolution." See *Critique of Pure Reason* (1965, 13-25). At the end, however, Kant confesses humbly on page 29: "I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith," (that is, faith in the existence of God, the freedom of the will, and the immortality of the soul, just as E. Gilson would have expected). His *Critique* ends with his declaration of faith in the three dogmas of his "moral theology" which cannot be demonstrated but is "postulated" as the demand of the Supreme Will: "Thus without a God and without a world invisible to us now but hoped for, the glorious ideas of morality are indeed objects of approval and admiration, but not springs of purpose and action." (p. 640)

In other words Kant, the philosopher of Protestantism, wants: "To make him [the Christian man] *fear* the existence of a God and a future life" (p. 651), the underlining is not added. How alien is all this to the Hellenic philosophers, "the wonderful Greeks!"

<sup>28</sup> Absent from Aristotle's thinking and writing are the dogmatism and the obfuscation, which characterizes what has been coming out of Western Europe in the last few centuries under the homonymous term "philosophy."

pass the test of time and, more importantly, the test of competent criticism and self-criticism in seeking consistently “the truth.”<sup>29</sup>

The flexibility of Aristotle’s dialectic method, which can embrace reasonable discussions of questions related to the foundations of the practical (e.g. Ethics and Politics) and the theoretical sciences (e.g. Physics and Metaphysics), is impressive. His honest search for human truth by human means, and the sharpness and openness of his mind are such that they have made Aristotle one of the best representatives of Hellenic philosophy. Carefully following the flexible, though slippery, path of dialectic, he succeeded in embracing the claims of empiricism and rationalism, as well as the claims of the intuitive and noetic vision (*noesis*).

Aristotle was able to accomplish this task as a philosopher because he did not limit human experience to sensations and sense data, as modern empiricists have done; nor to cogitation and rationalization, as modern rationalists did. For him, besides the basic realm of *aisthesis* (sense perception) and the realm of practical human *logos* (discursive reasoning, rational discourse, meaningful speech), there is the realm of divine *nous* (intuitive, intellective, immediate grasp of first and true principles; non-discursive reason, intellect, intelligence). The door to this realm opens, at certain privileged moments, to dedicated Hellenic lovers of wisdom, who may follow the long road of Aristotelian dialectic and inquiry to the very end.<sup>30</sup>

More significantly, for Aristotle as for fellow Platonists, the Hellenic philosopher considered as an intellect, which is engaged in theorizing about the cosmos and the nature of things, was not alone in this noble pursuit.<sup>31</sup> For them, the philosophically

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<sup>29</sup>The proverbial “*Amicus Plato sed magis amica veritas*” captures this trait of Aristotle’s philosophical mind, which is Socratic, Platonic and Hellenic. It is also found in Indian thought and is best expressed by Gandhi’s “passionate adherence to truth” (*satyagraha*).

<sup>30</sup>The perfected philosopher, described in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book X) and *Politics* (Books VII-VIII), fits the Platonic pattern as developed in the *Republic* (Books II-VII). As a human being, (that is, as a composite entity of body, soul, and mind), s/he must have been naturally well endowed and culturally prepared by the appropriate *paideia*, which s/he would have received as a citizen of the Hellenic *polis*, through gymnastics and the musical or liberal arts. The more an actual city-state would approximate the ideal *polis*, as envisioned by Plato (for both sexes) and Aristotle, the greater the probability of the actualization of the philosophic perfection of its citizens would be.

<sup>31</sup>I use “theory” here in the original sense of the Hellenic word, that is, to look and see, to have a view of something, to intuit, to contemplate. By engaging in intelligent *theoria* of the intelligible cosmos, the Hellenic philosopher was at home with nature and the world, unlike the contemporary “existentialist souls” of ex-Christian European thinkers, who feel at a loss in an “absurd world.” I have in mind thinkers and writers such as, for example, Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Nikos Kazantzakis, and Martin Heidegger.

conceived cosmos was orderly, beautiful, and intelligently governed at the highest level by the Divine *Nous* (the eternally energizing and active Intellect, or Aristotelian God). For these philosophers, there was a plurality of other and lesser intellects too, including the one in us, in the human soul, the *nous*.<sup>32</sup>

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So, in order to bring the question closer to us, we may ask: What can Hellenic philosophy possibly mean to post-modern men and women, as they try to cope with “the absurdity” of their lives? Even if their lives are not always as “nasty, brutish and short,” as Hobbes would have them be, they are certainly mortal and seem meaningless to many Westerners, including some “philosophers.” As they drag their existential *Angst* along a Sisyphus’ pathway, life on earth, and the earth itself, looks to them like an “old bitch.” And to think of it, it is the same earth which ancient poets, philosophers, and common people respectfully called “Mother Earth!” and “Sweet home!” It will emerge, from our discussion of Aristotle’s road to enlightenment, that part of the suggested answer to the above question would relate to the double loss which Europe had suffered, that is, the loss of philosophical contact with (a) the divine spark in us (the *nous* within) and (b) the divine *Nous* in the cosmos. This would seem to have occurred, when the two “aberrations” of genuine Judaism, namely Christianity and Islam, introduced into the Mediterranean world, especially into Western Europe, the monomaniac monopoly of the One God and the myth of “the chosen people.”

By reducing all the ancient gods and goddesses to one masculine God, Christian and Muslim theologians have, perhaps inadvertently but unwisely, pointed the way to the abyss of “No-God,” which Marx, Nietzsche, Sartre and other post-Modern atheists and nihilists followed blindly, in their furious rebellion against the despotism of dogmatic Catholicism and the fanaticism of puritanical Protestantism in Europe. Hence, the need to rediscover and reconnect with our roots in pluralistic and polytheistic Hellenism, in polyphonic philosophy, and in the Hellenic emphasis on “harmony in diversity.”

<sup>32</sup> The affinity of this Hellenic thought to Chinese and Indian philosophies is evident from passages like the following: “Silent, isolated, standing alone, changing not, eternally revolving without fail, worthy to be the mother of all things. I do not know its name and address it as Tao. If forced to give it a name, I shall call it ‘Great;’” “What is God-given is what we call human nature. To fulfil the law of our human nature is what we call the moral law” (Lin Yutang, 1942, 596 and 845); and “The real which is at the heart of the Universe is reflected in the infinite depths of the self” (Radhakrishnan–Moore 1973, 38). It would seem that the Aristotelian relation, between *Nous* and *nous*, is analogous to the Indian relation between *Brahman* and *atman*, of which the Upanisads speak. On this relation and the corresponding double intuitive knowledge (*vidya*), of human self and the Divine Self, the Vedanta system of thought is based. See, K. Satchidananda Murty 1991, 3-7. Professor Murty renders *vidya* as “science.” But its meaning may be something more than this. A better translation would be “intuitive knowledge” or “intuition” to capture the meaning of “seeing” which is at the root of the Indian word *vidya*, as it is in the equally beautiful Hellenic and Platonic word *idea*. The same Ancient Hellenic word [*nous*], has also been used for something divine in us by Hellenic poets from Homer to

Consequently Aristotle was simultaneously the philosopher who invented the syllogism, systematized logic for the Hellenes and, perhaps more than any other Hellenic philosopher, practiced and perfected the Socratic method of dialectic. Yet the same man did not hesitate to describe the cosmic God, the highest Intellect, in poetic language which would have pleased even a demanding Hellenic poet, like Aeschylus or Pindar.

For Aristotle's God is noetically conceived as the inexhaustible source of pure noetic energy, which erotically attracts and harmoniously moves everything in the cosmos, as we will see in the next section. It is the Great Beauty, with which the entire cosmos seems to be in love. It is the Great Light and cause of enlightenment for the mind of the true philosopher in the triple Socratic manifestation. The first is identified as lover of Hellenic *mousike*,<sup>33</sup> that is, the practitioner of the art of poetic rhythm, harmonious sound, and audibly appreciated beauty. The second is identified as lover of Hellenic *eidetike*, that is, the practitioner of the art of visible patterns, symmetrical forms, and optically appreciated beauty. The third is identified as lover of Hellenic *dialektike*, that is, the practitioner of the art of logic, ordered form, principled life, rational discourse, intuitive grasp of principles, and noetically appreciated truth.<sup>34</sup>

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Kazantzakis, whose magnificent *Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* (a poem of 33,333 lines), ends with the liberation of Odysseus' mind (*nous*) from the body thus:

"Then flesh dissolved, glances congealed, the heart's pulse  
stopped and the great mind [*nous*] leapt to the peak of its  
holy freedom, fluttered with empty wings, then upright through  
the air soared high and freed itself from its last cage,  
its freedom..." Book XXIV, lines 1390-1394, (Kimon Friar's translation).

<sup>33</sup>The importance of music for the development of Hellenic philosophy, especially in its Pythagorean, Socratic, Platonic, and Neoplatonic lines cannot be overestimated. For these philosophers, music and harmony were always connected to mathematics, that is, to theories of number (*arithmos*) and proportion (*logos*). A comparative study, which would consider Hellenic music, arithmetic, philosophy, and compare them with possible parallel developments of Indian music, mathematics, and the various philosophical systems, would be very interesting and welcome. I would not be able to do it here (or elsewhere for that matter); Dr. Lath's comments (1992, 60), regarding Aristotle's theory of music and harmony and its political implications, seem interesting but inadequate. For more on number and harmony see Huffman 1993, 54-77.

<sup>34</sup>That is to say, all the first principles of "primary being," "indubitable knowing," and "virtuous living." For my thesis, this third road, the road of dialectic, *via dialectica*, which would culminate in a "noetic vision" of the whole cosmos, including God and man, and the end of man as a free citizen, was Aristotle's long peripatetic road to enlightenment. In all these aspects Aristotle, I would like to suggest, remained to the end a Platonist, that



### Aristotle on Divine and Human Beings

The above perception and interpretation of Aristotle certainly differs from that of the scientific thinker and logician, with whom the Western world is accustomed. For it is framed around the Hellenic word *nous* (mind) which is not easy to translate into English.<sup>35</sup> Besides, the noetic affinity and friendship which exist naturally between (the philosophically conceived Aristotelian) God and the perfected human being (that is, the Hellenic philosopher who is engaged in noetic vision and understanding), are expressed by him in a strange language. It is more poetic, noematic, and enigmatic, than the logical discursive reasoning (*logos*), with which he is identified in Europe.<sup>36</sup>

I would like, therefore, to allow Aristotle to speak on behalf of his noetic philosophy and in support of my unorthodox thesis. He will provide us with sufficient textual evidence for the consideration and enlightenment of any non-prejudiced person regarding this Platonic aspect of Aristotle's philosophy and its potential political implications for the following triangle of relations: West/Hellas, Hellas/East, and East/West. Consider, therefore, the following three paradigmatic cases of Aristotelian texts, which point the way to Hellenic philosophic enlightenment.

#### A. Ousiological Questions Lead Aristotle to Cosmic God

We have said in the *Ethics* what the difference is between art and science and the other kindred faculties; but the point of our present discussion is this, that all men suppose what is called Wisdom to deal with the first causes and the principles of things; so that, as has been said before, the man of experience is thought to be wiser than the possessor of any sense-perception whatever, the artist wiser than the man of experience, the master-worker than the mechanic, and the theoretical kinds of knowledge to be more of the nature of Wisdom than the productive. Clearly then Wisdom is knowledge about certain

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is, an enlightened pupil of Plato, a free inquirer, and an able practitioner of the philosophic method of dialectic.

<sup>35</sup> Intelligence or intellect, in the sense of intuitive reason and noetic seeing, is perhaps the best rendering of *nous*, which I have tried to follow in this essay consistently. To avoid any confusion, I have simply transliterated this important word in most cases.

<sup>36</sup> This is not to suggest that Aristotle the original logician, or Aristotle the empirical biologist, is not a legitimate aspect of the Aristotelian philosophic outlook. On the contrary they are, but they are not the only legitimate aspects, nor are they the most important aspects for the post-modern world which needs help to face its multiple crisis. That Aristotle and other representatives of Hellenic philosophic *logos* can provide such help in this time of need, is the main point of my thesis.

principles and causes. Since we are seeking this knowledge, we must inquire of what kind are the causes and the principles, the knowledge of which is Wisdom...<sup>37</sup> The subject of our inquiry is substance;<sup>38</sup> for the principles and the causes we are seeking are those of substances. For if the universe is of the nature of a whole, substance is its first part; and if it coheres merely by virtue of serial succession, on this view also substance is first, and is succeeded by quality, and then by quantity... There are three kinds of substance—one that is sensible (of which one subdivision is eternal and another is perishable; the latter is recognized by all men, and includes e.g. plants and animals), of which we must grasp the elements, whether one or many; and another that is immovable... On such a principle, then, depend the heavens and the world of nature. And it is a life such as the best which we enjoy, and enjoy for a short time (for it is ever in this state, which we cannot be), since its activity is also pleasure. And thinking in itself deals with that which is best in it-self, and which is thinking in the fullest sense. And thought thinks on itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with, and thinking, its object, so that thought and object of thought are the same... If, then, God is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better, this compels it yet more. And God is in a better state. And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>The inquiry is what is known today as *Metaphysics* 981b 25-982a 6; but to Aristotle it was simply *First Philosophy*, since it dealt with the first principles or causes; see Evangelou 1996, 59-92.

<sup>38</sup>By applying his dialectical method and his theory of the categories Aristotle succeeded in transforming the traditional inquiry of being (or *to on*, ontology) into an inquiry of *ousia* or substance (*ousiology*). For Aristotle, *ousia* (that is, essential being), is the most important of the ten categories or “genera of being,” because it captures the basic sense of the term “being,” whose ambiguity allows it to become a predicate of different kinds of things. See Evangelou 1996, 188-204.

<sup>39</sup>*Metaphysics* 1069a 18-34; and 1072b 14-29. That Aristotle's conception of the Divine was very different from the despotic, dogmatic, moody, mean, jealous, and vindictive character of the Biblical Jehovah, who has influenced both the Christian and Islamic conceptions of God, is evident also from the following remarks:

“That it [first philosophy] is not a science of production is clear even from the history of the earliest philosophers. For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize... Evidently then we do not seek it for the sake of any other advantage; but as the man is free, we say, who exists for his own sake and not for another's, so we pursue this as the only free science, for it alone exists for its own sake. Hence also the possession of it might be justly regarded as beyond human power; for in many ways human nature is in bondage, so that according to Simonides ‘God alone can have this privilege,’ and it is unfitting that man should not be content to seek the knowledge that is suited to

## B. Psychological Questions lead Aristotle to God Within

Holding as we do that, while knowledge of any kind is a thing to be honored and prized, one kind of it may, either by reason of its greater exactness or of a higher dignity and greater wonderfulness in its objects, be more honorable and precious than another, on both accounts we should naturally be led to place in the front rank the study of the soul. The knowledge of the soul admittedly contributes greatly to advance of truth in general, and, above all, to our understanding of nature, for the soul is in some sense the principle of animal life. Our aim is to grasp and understand, first its essential nature, and secondly its properties...<sup>40</sup> Hence the soul must be a substance in the sense of the form of a natural body having life potentially within it... What has soul in it differs from what has not, in that the former displays life. Now this word has more than one sense, and provided that any one alone is found in a thing we say that thing is living. Living, that is, may mean thinking or perception or local movement and rest, or movement in the sense of nutrition, decay and growth. Hence we think of plants also as living [besides animals and human beings]... Certain kinds of animals possess in addition the power of locomotion, and still another order of animate beings, i.e. man and possibly another order like man or superior to him, the power of thinking, i.e. mind [*nous*]... Thinking, both speculative and practical, is regarded as akin to a form of perceiving; for in the one as well as the other the soul discriminates and is cognizant of something, which is. Indeed the ancients go so far as to identify thinking and perceiving... Thus that in the soul, which is called mind (by mind I mean that whereby the soul thinks and judges) is, before it thinks, not actually any real thing. For this reason it cannot reasonably be regarded as blended with the body... And in fact mind as we have described it is what it is by virtue of becoming all things, while there is another which is what it is by virtue of making all things: this is a sort of positive state of light; for in a sense light makes potential colors into actual colors. Mind in this sense of it is separable, impassible, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity (for always the active is superior to passive factor, the originating of force to the matter which it forms). Actual knowledge is identical with its object: in the individual, potential knowledge is in time prior to actual knowledge, but in the universe as a whole it is not prior even in time. Mind is not at one time knowing and at another not. When

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him. If, then, there is something in what the poets say, and jealousy is natural to the divine power, it would probably occur in this case above all, and all who excelled in this knowledge would be unfortunate. But the divine power cannot be jealous (nay, according to the proverb, "bards tell many a lie"), nor should any other science be thought more honorable than one of this sort ... All the sciences, indeed, are more necessary than this, but none is better." (*Ibid.* 982b 11- 983a 12).

<sup>40</sup>This is the opening statement of the *De Anima* 402a 1-8. The other passages are from Books II and III; (the translation is that of J. A. Smith).

mind is set free from its present conditions it appears as just what it is and nothing more: this alone is immortal and eternal, and without it nothing thinks.<sup>41</sup>

### C. Ethical Questions Bring Together the Two Divinities

Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been defined to be that at which all things aim. But a certain difference is found among ends ...<sup>42</sup> Now, since politics uses the rest of the sciences, and since, again, it legislates as to what we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the good for man ... But if happiness consists in activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be activity in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be the virtue of the best part of us. Whether then this be the intellect [*nous*], or whatever else it be that is thought to rule and lead us by nature, and to have cognizance of what is noble and divine, either as being itself actually divine, or as being relatively the divine part of us, it is the activity of this part of us in accordance with the virtue proper to it that will constitute perfect happiness; and it has been stated already that this activity is the activity of contemplation ... Such a life as this however will be higher than the human level: not in virtue of his humanity will a man achieve it, but in virtue of something within him that is divine; and by as much as this something is superior to his composite nature, by so much is its activity superior to the exercise of the other forms of virtue. If then the intellect [*nous*] is something divine in comparison with man, so is the life of the intellect divine in comparison with human life. Nor ought we to obey those who enjoin that a man should

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 430a 14-25. In a parenthesis, which I omitted, Aristotle explains why the active intellect in us, after its separation from the body by death, will have no memory of its earthly adventures. He states: "we do not, however, remember its former activity because, while mind in this sense is impassible mind as passive is destructible."

Like Platonic Socrates, Aristotle prudently does not say much on such a speculative subject as the destiny of the noetic part of the human soul after death. It was left to Christian and Moslem theologians (who found in the Holy Scriptures vivid descriptions of Hell and Heaven) to worry about the details. Presumably he thought that the Platonic philosophers (or other people who had a noetic experience and had become self-aware), would not need much explanation here, while no detailed explanation could enlighten those who did not have the enlightening noetic experience itself. As Plato said (*Timaeus*, 28C): "But the father and the maker of all this universe is past finding out, and even if we found him, to tell of him to all men would be impossible." Having told his "likely story," Timaeus concluded thus: "We may now say that our discourse about the nature of the universe has an end. The world has received animals, mortal and immortal, and is fulfilled with them, and has become a visible animal containing the visible--the sensible God who is the image of the intellectual, the greatest, best, fairest, most perfect--the one only begotten heaven." (*Ibid.* 92C).

<sup>42</sup> This is the opening of *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a 1-4.

have man's thoughts and a mortal the thoughts of mortality, but we ought so far as possible to achieve immortality, and do all that man may to live in accordance with the highest thing in him; for though this be small in bulk, in power and in value it far surpasses all the rest. It may even be held that this is the true self of each, inasmuch as it is the dominant and best part; and therefore it would be a strange thing if a man should choose to live not his own life but the life of other than himself. Moreover what was said before will apply here also: that which is best and most pleasant for each creature is that which is proper to the nature of each; accordingly the life of the intellect is the best and the pleasantest life for man, inasmuch as the intellect more than anything else is man; therefore this life will be the happiest.<sup>43</sup>

The above and similar passages of the Aristotelian corpus, if read in the context of his philosophy as a whole and in its relation to other Hellenic philosophies of nature and *polis*, provide a clear picture of Aristotle's conception of God and man, and their respective place in the cosmos. The kind of life of which man is optimally capable, as well as the communal and political arrangements, which would make possible the flourishing of such a life for the best qualified citizens, are recognized by Aristotle. They are not considered as the arbitrary recommendations or commandments of some divinely inspired and dogmatic prophet, but as the fulfillment of an entelechy, that is, as the *telos* (end), which is present in the human soul and human nature *qua* human. For the same intelligent ordering principle, which pervades the entire cosmos, is also potentially present in the individual human soul. It can manifest itself in the rational structuring of various forms of natural and political associations, such as the family and the *polis*, as well as the perfected human life by *philosophia*. Accordingly, in order to understand Aristotle's *Politics* correctly, one should place it in the context of his *Metaphysics*, *De Anima*, and *Ethics*. I will try to do so, in a synoptic way, in the following sections.<sup>44</sup>

### Distinguishing Between Ontology and Ousiology

Aristotle's model of the cosmos is perhaps more complex than any of the other models, which were advanced by his predecessors from Parmenides to Plato. In fact, it is the antithesis of the Parmenidean absolutely immovable One Being. By Aristotle's time, the Parmenidean "theory of being" had been transformed by a series of revisions of the original formula either "It is" or "It is not." For Parmenides the disjunction, "Being or non-Being," was an exclusive disjunction, for between the sphere

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<sup>43</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177a 13-18; 1177b 29-1178a 8.

<sup>44</sup> In this way, a context will be also provided for a judicious appraisal of Dr. Lath's (1992) claim, regarding the close connection between Aristotle's rationality and Western philosophy.

of Being and the abyss of non-Being, nothing else could possibly be. Being was to be conceived and thought of as one whole, eternally immovable, and internally undifferentiated.<sup>45</sup> In the history of Hellenic philosophy, it was probably Anaxagoras who first set the two spheres apart, the “sphere of material being” apart from the sphere of pure *Nous*. Thus, matter and mind, that is, the material world and the noetic world, were distinguished. Like a powerful ruler, the Divine Mind or *Nous* ruled the material cosmos from afar.<sup>46</sup>

To simplify the process by which Plato attempted to correct and to complete the Parmenidean conception of cosmic Being, it may be said that in him we find each of the old divisions, Being and non-Being, but each of them is subdivided once again and made double. So we have two spheres of each, Being and non-Being. By mixing two of the divided spheres (one sphere of Being and one of non-Being) Plato was able to create the sphere of Becoming. This is interposed between the sphere of pure Being (the noetic world of Forms or Ideas, the model or paradigm of the cosmos) and the sphere non-Being (formless matter). The sphere of Becoming, which is the world of sense experience, the copy, image, or icon, is the result of the mixing of certain images of the Platonic Ideas or Forms with that part of non-Being, which receives them, the Receptacle. The multiplicity of perceptible entities, which populate the visible cosmos<sup>47</sup> and the cosmos itself, were brought into being by the Platonic Demiurge.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> A revision of Parmenides’ model was made at the school of Leucippus and Democritus, who split the sphere of the Parmenidean Being into a multiplicity of “beings,” *atoma*. These are the invisible, indivisible, perpetually in motion particles of matter, which move randomly in the *kenon* [void, empty space], collide and give birth to everything in the cosmos. Thus not only the absolute oneness of the Parmenidean Being has been replaced by a multiplicity of solid atoms, but also the Parmenidean non-Being has been compromised by becoming part of the “sphere of Being” as the void separating atoms. While Parmenides’ “Being” had been of the same stuff as *Nous*, in Democritus’ cosmos the minds and souls of human beings and gods are made of the same atomic matter in its more refined forms. Lucretius explains all this in *The Nature of the Universe, III*.

<sup>46</sup> The Parmenidean identification of *einai* (to be, being) and *noein* (to think, thought), which was temporarily abandoned by Anaxagoras, reappeared in Plato. He incorporated Pythagorean insights into his ontology, and was able to introduce the most elaborate revision of Parmenides’ doctrine. Thus, the way was prepared for Aristotle’s move from *ontology* to *ousiology* with his conception of the Divine as “noetic substantive being,” (that is, *Nous* and *Ousia*).

<sup>47</sup> Actually, these are spatialized, temporized, magnified, dimensionalized, quantified, qualified, relativized, and realized, in the sense of being materialized, copies of Platonic Forms. The process by which the “materialization” of these Forms was supposed to take place

With this background in mind, we can see that Aristotle's conception of the cosmos differs significantly from those of his predecessors, although he borrows from them and builds upon their foundations. In a sense, the Aristotelian cosmos is like the Parmenidean sphere, since it is one, non-generated, indestructible, and eternal; but it is movable and ultimately moved by the Unmoved Mover (Divine Intellect). Thus, it is dynamically or organically unified whole, whose parts are functionally differentiated, but interactive and even partially interchangeable.

This conception avoids the fragmentary randomness of the Democretian model of cosmos, as well as the artificiality of the Platonic/Pythagorean model. Its orderliness is not explained in terms of chance (*tyche*) and necessity, as in the former; nor in terms of *techne* (art) and persuasion, as in the latter; but in terms of *physis* (nature), life, and *nous* (the active, intuitive, self-knowing intellect), as if it were a living being.<sup>49</sup>

However, the process by which Aristotle moved dialectically from *ontology* to *ousiology*, in his account of the cosmos, is rather complex and in need of further elaboration.<sup>50</sup> For, according to Aristotle, the Hellenic word for being (*to on* or *einai*) does not have only one sense; that is, it is not a mono-semantic word as it was for Parmenides. For it does not mean the "One-Being" in its uncompromising and aloof antithesis to non-Being. Rather it is predicated in many ways and, therefore, it has many different "categorical" meanings.<sup>51</sup> In Aristotle's view, it has as many meanings as there are kinds of things, which have categorically a claim to be, in some sense.

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became a target for Aristotle's critique throughout the *Metaphysics*, especially in Books A, M, and N.

<sup>48</sup> According to Timaeus' "likely story," the cosmos is conceived as the only offspring of the unique metaphorical couple, Form (in the role of Father) and Matter (in the role of Mother), who are brought together by the Demiurge (as the cosmic matchmaker). As part of the Platonic cosmos, human beings are also double, composed of body and soul (or matter and form, the hylic and the noetic parts, the maternal and paternal principles), with a different destiny after death for each of the two components.

<sup>49</sup> Ontologically considered, the Aristotelian cosmos is a vast collection of different kinds of individual things and substantial beings, some of which are living. But it is not alive, in the sense in which the Platonic world of Becoming was alive as endowed with a soul, unless we restrict the meaning of "soul" [*psyche*] to its noetic function. For the Platonic model of creation, see the "likely story" told by Timaeus in the *Timaeus* and compare it with the Aristotelian model as presented in the *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, and *De Caelo*.

<sup>50</sup> We can do no more than provide a *paraphrasis*, a summary account, of the involved dialectic or "peripatetic" process here.

<sup>51</sup> To use Aristotle's favorite expression, it is a *πολλαχῶς λεγόμενον*, an ambiguous and polysemantic term.

As a matter of fact, Aristotle specified as many senses of the word “being” as there are items enumerated in his tenfold list of categories.<sup>52</sup> The tenfold division of beings is simplified by radical reduction into a twofold division, substance and accidents (or properties). Under the latter are subsumed the kinds of beings, which belong to any of the other nine categories as determinations of substance or *ousia*. They are: being qualified (quality), being quantified (quantity), being related (relation), being in position, being in possession, being in place, being in time, being active and being passive. Aristotle has specified that the most important of the ten generic categories is the category of *ousia* (substance). On it all the other categories depend *ontologically*.<sup>53</sup>

So far so good, but for Aristotle the word *ousia* (substance), like the word *on/onta* (being/s), is also poly-semantic, that is, it can be predicated in many different ways, and by doing so it may refer to different entities. It may, for example, refer to the primary substances, the concrete individual entities, each of which is a composite of matter and form; or it may refer to secondary substances, that is, the species and the genera, which can be predicated of the respective primary substances “essentially.”

Furthermore, even within the limited sphere of the individual primary substances, there are important subdivisions. In fact, it was the search for the most primary among the primary substances that led Aristotle to discover his God and the linkage between God and man *qua* man, that is, the human species in its essence or “essential being.” In his view, the best specimen of man is the philosopher, that is, the man whose potential has been fully actualized by the acquisition and exercise of an excellent (that is, ethical, rational, and noetic) self. Thus traditional *ontologia*, the theory of being *qua* being and inquiry into the nature of reality, was transformed by Aristotle’s dialectic into *ousiologia*, the theory of substance and inquiry into the nature of *ousia*.<sup>54</sup>

Accordingly, the Aristotelian cosmos is populated by a great number of primary substances (*ousíai*), which are classified in terms of the following pairs of contraries: either perishable or imperishable, temporal or eternal, organic or non-organic, sensible or non-sensible, movable or immovable, mortal or immortal, and potential or

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<sup>52</sup> See on this Evangeliou 1988b, 147-162.

<sup>53</sup> *Categories*, 2a 35-36. Here we read, (in Apostle’s translation): “Everything, except primary substances, is either said of a subject which is a primary substance or is present in a substance which is a primary substance.”

<sup>54</sup> Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* is devoted to this ontological/ousiological inquiry and its philosophical implications. The *ontological* question of “what is being?” is changed into the *ousiological* question of “what is substance?” in the following way: “And indeed the inquiry and perplexity concerning what being is, in early times and now and always, is just this: What is a substance?” (1028b 4-6)



actual.<sup>55</sup> To a concrete human being apply the first terms of each pair, the less valuable; to a divine intelligence apply the second and more valuable terms of each pair. God is thus conceived as a very special primary substance, unlike any other being, in that it is not composite, but simple. God is a living and eternally active Intellect (*Nous*), that eternally energizes other divine Intellects, and occasionally even the *nous* (intellect), which is potentially present in each human soul.<sup>56</sup>

According to Aristotle, therefore, the soul or *psyche* of man is a complex system of powers or faculties. These psychic powers range from nutritive and reproductive powers (which are actually shared by all living beings); to sensitive and kinetic powers (which are shared with other animal species); to logical powers (in the double sense of *logos*, as the capacity to reason and as articulate speech). Best of all, though, are the intuitive or noetic powers of human soul, not only as a potential, but also as an actualized *nous* or intellect, which are shared with other divine intellects.<sup>57</sup>

By the stimulus of philosophy and the appropriate education (*paideia*), to be offered by the well-organized Hellenic city-state (*polis*) freely to its competent citizens in accordance with the principles of right reason (*orthos logos*), the human potential can be actualized and some human beings at least can flourish optimally. They can, thus, become enlightened personalities and God-like human beings, in so far as an optimal outcome is possible for the composite substance of human beings.<sup>58</sup>

Therefore, at the end of our analysis and by following the long and meandering road of Aristotle's dialectic, we have reached the place where the "end of man," understood as the ultimate ethical *telos* or goal, and the supreme human good are located. This is the well-ordered *polis*, as the result of the proper function of the difficult art of Hellenic politics, which Aristotle calls "the architectonic art."<sup>59</sup> The rest of our brief discussion will be devoted to this aspect of his philosophic theorizing.

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<sup>55</sup> The central books of *Metaphysics* seek to explicate these contrasts in search for the most special kind of *ousia*, i.e. the divine or God. On this see Owens 1963; and compare it with Marx 1954.

<sup>56</sup> See Cases A and B, above.

<sup>57</sup> See Case B and C, above.

<sup>58</sup> Due to its composition, human nature is complex and limited in many ways. See also cases C and A, above.

<sup>59</sup> For Aristotle, the sphere of "practical reason" is to be distinguished from the sphere of "poetical reason" as applied by craftsmen and artists, and from "theoretical reason" as used by scientists and philosophers for the development of scientific theories and of philosophic *theoria*. In its application, the practical reason appears threefold, as it may, alternatively, be concerned with the wellbeing of individual citizens (Ethics), the household (Economics) or the *polis* and the political community as a whole (Politics).

### Perfecting the Aristotelian Political Animal

The *raison d'etre* of the Hellenic *polis*, as Aristotle conceived of it, was the securing for all of its citizens the conditions not simply of life, but of “the good life,” according to their respective merit. In this way, the optimal actualization of human natural and educational potential would be fully accomplished.<sup>60</sup> The citizens, who may entertain hopes of reaching such politically desirable peaks, would have to have extraordinary natural endowments, as well as an excellent or good *paideia* (education).<sup>61</sup>

An ideal citizen would have to be all of the following, in a complete course of life from childhood to maturity and to old age. First of all, he would have to be naturally well endowed with the necessary powers of the body, the soul and, especially, the mind. He would have to be educationally well trained, in music and gymnastics, acquiring a good physique, good habits, and the excellences of character and intellect. He would have to be personally well ordered, so that the soul would rule over the body wisely, and the rational part of the soul over the irrational part gently. The noetic part would enlighten the rational part of the soul, by providing the appropriate principles of thinking and acting virtuously. He would also have to be domestically well equipped with wife, children, servants, parents, and moderate property. Finally, he would have to be politically well organized with other friends and well disciplined, so that he can learn how to rule and be ruled with justice by his equals in turns.

At the end of his life, if all went well, he would have: (a) survived the just wars in defense of the *polis*; (b) seen his sons take his place in the hoplite ranks; (c) freed some of his domestic servants, if they could take care of themselves;<sup>62</sup> (d) dedicated himself (and perhaps his graciously aging wife) to the service of the

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<sup>60</sup> “When several villages are united in a single complete community, large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing, the state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life. And therefore, if the earlier forms of society [family and village] are natural, so is the state, for it is the end of them, and the nature of a thing is its end.” *Politics* 1252b 27-32.

<sup>61</sup> To the natural and educational goods of the body and the soul, the external goods of moderate property and wealth may be added. The latter more than the other goods are affected by luck. For a good discussion of the role of luck in Aristotle’s ethical theory see, Nussbaum 1986; and my review of the book in *Skepsis* I (1990) 210-216.

<sup>62</sup> If the servants were of a “servile nature,” which was the only type of servitude approved by Aristotle; and if they had learned by their service of a good man how to take care of themselves as well as of others, who were of a more servile nature than themselves; and if, of course, they wished to be freed, they could, then, be released and become free.

many gods and goddesses of the city-state; and (e) occupied himself with philosophic *theoria* of the Supreme *Nous*, the magnificent cosmos, and the divine *nous* within the human soul.<sup>63</sup>

In this connection we may recall that, according to Aristotle, the nature of the ideal *polis* in the Hellenic sense of a city, which was also the center of a measurable state, is not artificial, conventional or simply man-made, as European political theorists have maintained following the “social contract” theory.<sup>64</sup> It is as natural as the union of male and female, the growth of the family tree, and the formation of a small village which, with the passage of time, may branch out and give birth to other small villages. When these villages of common ancestry would unite politically for better protection, exchange of goods, self-sufficiency, and the good life of virtue, a Hellenic *polis* would come “naturally,” according to Aristotle, into being and political life begin.<sup>65</sup>

In his view, the defense, protection, and well-being of the naturally constituted political community necessitates the division of labor among males, in an analogous way as the survival and preservation of the human species has naturally necessitated the different roles of male and female, and those of father and mother.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> This would be a difficult task to accomplish, but it would not be impossible with the help of the appropriate political *paideia* as proposed in the last books of the *Politics*. Those who fail to see the philosopher as a citizen growing in a political environment are bound to argue about the compatibility of the theoretic and the practical life and their respective contribution to happiness. See on this, Broadie 1991, 366-438; Cooper 1987 and 1975; and Keyt, 1978.

<sup>64</sup> Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau probably found in Plato's *Republic* (opening of Book II) the beginning of the theory of “social contract,” which they helped popularize in the West. Needless to say, neither the Platonic Socrates nor Aristotle would take seriously Glaucon's hypothesis that there ever was such a political contract. Their insight into human nature and the nature of *Hellenic polis* helped them avoid this kind of blunders.

<sup>65</sup> “Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity ... That man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech [*logos*].” (*Politics*, 1253a 1-10).

<sup>66</sup> In view of the difficulties of giving birth, infant mortality, and child rearing at that time, it is not surprising that the female contribution to the state was exhausted by fulfilling the fundamental function of producing new citizens for the *polis*. If, instead of such primary need, the ancient city-states had a problem of over-population, and given his common sense, his open mind, and his favor for better education for all members of the community, Aristotle would have probably assigned additional political roles to the

Domestically, the wife was to play the role of “the queen” of the house. The man’s main duty *qua* citizen was the politically assigned task of “protecting the family” as a whole and its property by the art of war, in times of war, and by the art of politics in times of peace.

These activities were to be undertaken in friendly co-operation with other citizens of equal political status as heads of families.<sup>67</sup> Since the art of war and the art of politics at that time were rather demanding, in terms of physical and mental powers, the males who could not measure up to prevailing standards were assigned the “servile role” of assisting in domestic production.<sup>68</sup>

The master/servant relation (as understood by Aristotle, and strange as it may sound to post-modern ears) was for the good of both parties involved. In this respect, it differed from the husband/wife and parent/child relations, which served exclusively the interests of the protected parties. Enslavement by force is to be condemned, in Aristotle’s view, and so is “equality” among unequals. Equality among equals, that is, the citizens of a *polis*, and what he considered as “natural servitude,” was approved.<sup>69</sup>

But it should be obvious that such thorny issues as natural slavery and political equality and inequality demand extensive treatment, which cannot be provided here.

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female portion of the population of the city-state. However, he would have in all probability objected to “same sex marriages” because of their sterility and unnaturalness in the eyes of the biologist philosopher.

<sup>67</sup> Aristotle would have approve of Manu’s lawful request: “Women must be honored and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law who desire (their own) welfare” (III. 55).

<sup>68</sup> As Radhakrishnan put it: “Each one has to perform the function for which his nature best suits him” (1973, 172). Aristotle, and the Platonic Socrates of the *Republic*, would agree with this statement, but for them, unlike Manu, the capacities of individual human beings are not to be determined by family and caste, but by nature and *paideia*.

<sup>69</sup> These are the men to whom Aristotle (innocently would seem, though shockingly to some) refers as “natural slaves.” This has become the target of criticism including that of Dr. Lath (1992). In this connection, it should be considered that Aristotle’s “servant by nature” may correspond to “the sudra,” although he did not believe in a caste system, like the one legitimized by the law of Manu: “He was created by the Self-existent to be the slave of a Brahmin.” Again, “A sudra, though emancipated by his master, is not released from servitude; since that is innate in him, who can set him free from it?” (*The Laws of Manu*, 413 and 414, quoted by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan 1973, 189).

### Conclusion

In the light shed by our synoptic analysis of the Aristotelian road to enlightenment, we may now see clearly the nobility of this Hellenic conception of the human *telos* and his ability to assign to human beings a privileged place in the cosmos, mediating between gods and beasts. Above all, his readiness to acknowledge man's affinity and potential friendship with the philosophically conceived God (the Divine Intellect that erotically attracts and noetically governs the cosmos) is apparent here. Evidently, he made a heroic philosophic effort to conceptually grasp the entire cosmos, in all its multiplicity of accidental and substantial beings, including the complex human being and the divine *ousia*. In his attempt to provide a reasoned account of all human experiences (aesthetic, logical, noetic, ethical and political), Aristotle succeeded in developing a comprehensive system of rational thought. This system naturally reached beyond the Western "rationality" of discursive reason (*logos*), moving towards the noetically intuitive *nous*, and even towards the intelligible and divine realm of *Nous*.

Because of this solid basis, there is no doubt that Aristotle's system is one of the most complete and influential philosophical systems, which the Hellenic minds, produced. For our synoptic discussion has shown that the reasoned account of the Aristotelian road to enlightenment (*via dialectica*) is based on sense experience (*empeiria*) and discursive reasoning (*logos*). But it, significantly, includes the intuitive and self-validating activity of the mind, that is, the respectively (eternally and temporally) energized intellects of God (*Nous*) and of man (*nous*). Thus, the conventional gap separating the human and the divine realms of intelligent activity, as well as the gulf allegedly dividing the East and the West culturally, has been here dialectically and satisfactorily bridged.

In this important sense, then, Aristotle would seem to have been something more than a mere "rationalist," simple, cold, and dry. If this be so, I would like to think that I have done my "peripatetic duty" of defending Aristotle against the unfair charges of those who like to dump on him the accumulated intellectual and other waste of the Western world in the last two millennia. Neither Aristotle, nor any other Platonic and genuinely Hellenic philosopher, would have approved of what the Modern European man, in his greedy desire for profit and his demonic will to power, has made out of Hellenic *philosophia*, forced to serve theocracy and technocracy, sometimes together.

For, in the eyes of the Ancient Hellenes, genuine philosophers (as opposed to Sophists) were supposed to contemplate the cosmic beauty, not to deform it by changing it. They were supposed to comprehend the cosmic order and to live in harmony with it, not to pollute it by exploiting it. Above all, they were expected to

provide prudent suggestions for the appropriate organization of human affairs so that the free spirit of inquiry and the flourishing of the human life of excellence would become possible for the human being as citizen. This being was conceived as living, sensitive, reasonable, communal, political, noetic and, (potentially, but essentially), a god-like being.<sup>70</sup> Hence the urgent need felt by the few philosophically minded persons in Europe and the West today to return to their primordial philosophic roots, which were pre-Christian and pre-Islamic. The Platonic Aristotle, and the Hellenic philosophy in general, perhaps can guide their steps towards this noble goal.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> An echo of the Hellenic and Aristotelian understanding of the close relation between philosophy and freedom is to be found in the following statement: "Philosophy is a means of education through and for freedom" (Murty 1952, 189); the same spirit echoes in the conception of "philosophy as seeking of *truth* and *freedom*." The Experts' Panel in Philosophy Report of 1978" (quoted by Murty 1991, 167).

<sup>71</sup> The tragic case of Bosnia may be just the prelude of a much larger scale tragedy to unfold in the Balkans and Central Asia, in the remnants of the former USSR, and in the Middle East, where Islam and Christianity are bound to collide again as they have collided many times before. One could add Judaism, the elder sister of the three monotheistic religions, although there is a basic difference between it and its offshoots, Christianity and Islam. The traditional Hebraic monotheism and its pious myth of the "chosen people" seemed innocent compared with its Christian and Islamic versions, in view of their fanatic and missionary zeal to spread the faith in the one God and the one Messiah or Prophet. The present day Zionism and its politics is a different matter.

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