

Stasis and Aggression in Plato and Aristotle

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Is political unity a source of military aggression or an antidote to it? Plato and Aristotle both agree that the absence of political unity—factional conflict—is a dangerous state of affairs that detracts from human flourishing within a particular political community and leads to aggression against those outside that political community. But as much as they agree on the problem of factional conflict, they disagree about what can be done to avoid factional conflict and its effects. I will argue that Plato's particular analysis of factional conflict as a cause of foreign aggression leads him to advance a solution to factional conflict that still generates motivations for foreign aggression. Whereas, Aristotle's contrasting analysis of factional conflict as a cause of aggression concedes that factional conflict cannot be eliminated, but should instead be managed. This more moderate solution to the problem of factional conflict is based on a rival standard of political organization—self-sufficiency—that can substantially reduce factional conflict, without also creating new forms of aggression.

Factional conflict (στῆσις) is a central problem that Plato is concerned with in his *Republic*.¹ Factional conflict manifests itself as a state of psychological disunity in the individual person and a state of political disunity in various regimes (πολιτεία). While Plato's discussion of these states is well known, I will summarize the most important features of it since it forms the backdrop for his discussion of aggression.

The psychological disunity of the person is the result of psychological parts that are badly formed and the misshaped relations between those badly formed parts. Each person has three kinds of psychological parts, that each contribute a unique cluster of characteristic motivations.² The appetitive part is motivated by those desires associated with the most basic preservation of the person at the bodily level -- food, drink, and sex.³ The spirited part of the person is motivated by emotions concerned with what is praiseworthy or blameworthy in a political community.⁴ Motivations such as anger, shame, admiration, envy, vanity, spite are all motivations that occur in a person in response to an action performed or characteristic possessed by another person (note: or sometimes with respect to oneself).⁵ These motivations are responses that imply some standard of good or bad held by a person, and usually shared in common throughout a political community. Consider the case of the reaction one may have when one sees a highly skilled con artist -- perhaps someone posing as an investment counselor -- preying upon a person who is both naïve and in a particularly vulnerable position. If one feels indignation at the actions and attitudes of

¹ All translations will be taken from the following texts: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1933); Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Trans. J.H. Freese (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1926); A. Bloom, *The Republic of Plato* (Basic Books, 1991), C. Lord, *Aristotle: The Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

² *Republic* 436a6-437a2.

³ *Republic* 439d4-439e6.

⁴ *Republic* 439e6-440e6.

⁵ It is sometimes the case that spirited motivations are a response to something one has done oneself. While this kind of situation is not the most frequent situation of spirited response, it is still, nevertheless, common and important for Plato. Shame is the most paradigmatic version of this response. But there are also very prominent instances of moral anger directed at oneself. Consider the case of Leontius, in *Republic* 439e-440a, who is morally indignant with (and ashamed of) himself when he glances at a corpse. And this example also brings out another distinction on this topic. Even spirited motivations directed at oneself rarely, if ever, occur apart from a conviction about what is good or bad. And such motivations rarely occur apart from a situation that carries some social impact that is either good or bad (i.e. one feels shame or self anger because one has done something is praiseworthy or blameworthy in a social context that others can recognize). It may be true that there are some actions or states that are not so transparent to others. But even in those situations, the good or bad of the situation is understood based on a social opinion; the notable exception being the philosopher, who is a rare person.

the con artist it is because one has some impression about the kind of injustice occurring between the two person, as well as a related impression about the persons involved.⁶ This indignation may be either appropriate or misguided depending on how accurately one's impressions of the circumstances capture the reality of the circumstances. But an understanding of the precise limitations of one's impressions in a circumstance, as well as the overall good or bad that might result from a particular circumstance is usually beyond the scope of the spirited part. It is the rational faculties that provide a more reliable grasp of the reality of a particular circumstance, as well as the more comprehensive understanding of what may be good or bad in particular circumstances. The rational part of the person is motivated by a desire to understand for its own sake. The kind of questions that the rational part is concerned with may vary. One may be interested in a subject matter of a theoretical sort that admits of different levels of precision. The level of precision possible in mathematical questions is different than the level of precision achievable in the social sciences. One may also be interested in the sphere of practical rationality where the subject matter requires a deliberation about a specific circumstance. In this sphere, the rational part is also motivated by a concern for what is the most reasonable conclusion about what should be done in that particular circumstance. So, even in this sphere the rational part is at its best when it considers what should be done in a circumstance, and makes a conclusion in the form of a rational judgment that is fully motivated by an interest in what is reasonable. In both the more theoretical and more practical spheres of reality, Plato understands reason to be concerned with the good of the whole.

The disunity of the person occurs when the motivation of each of the psychological parts becomes distorted and, with it, the proper relations between the parts. The unified person is characterized by four virtues, two of which are constituted by the proper function of two respective psychological parts and two of which are identified with proper relations between all three parts. The virtue of courage is a state of character in the spirited ($\psi(\mu\omicron\omega)$) part of the person where it preserves convictions it has received about what is good and bad.⁷ By being in such a state it is appropriately affected by the spirited motivations (already discussed above). To the extent that it is not in a state where it preserves the given convictions about what is good and bad, its reactions are distorted in the direction of either excess or deficiency. The virtue of wisdom is a state where the person is motivated to rationally understand the good of the whole in either the more practical and/or theoretical sphere.⁸

The virtues of justice and moderation involve the proper relations between these psychological parts.⁹ The particular virtue of justice is a state where each part does its job, neither less than its particular job nor more than its particular job.¹⁰ The prominent vice of particular injustice typically occurs when a psychological part like the appetitive part does more than its job. Instead of being in such a state that it functions under the appropriate motivation of desires for food, drink, and sex and only that function, it overtakes the function of other parts. For example, the scale of inappropriate appetitive desires may be so great that the function of reason is co-opted by it. Along these lines, the function of reason in the practical sphere -- to make a judgment about what the appropriate amount and type of food or drink might be in a

⁶ It is also important to note that while the crucial difference between the appetitive motivations and spirited motivations is that the former are motivated by mere life or the generation of life, and the latter based on some conviction about the good life and not merely life, the latter can also be motivated by convictions about the good life that are inflamed due to some deprivation at the appetitive level. Consider the difference between a person that takes a lunch that one has just bought versus someone who takes a lunch that one was expecting to consume but had no particular claim to consume. In the latter case one's hunger may be intensified or frustrated when someone comes along and takes the lunch one has not yet purchased (from, for example, a cafeteria line). In the former case both appetitive and spirited motivations are concerned about the same situation, though due to different motivations. One's hunger is intensified and one's sense of moral indignation is exercised, prompted by the taking of the lunch; and it is motivated even more prominently than the appetitive motivation is.

⁷ *Republic* 442c1-4.

⁸ *Republic* 442c6-11.

⁹ I shall refer to Justice as a whole and particular justice. The latter involves a psychological and political excellence where each part of the soul and city does its job and only its job. The former is a state where the individual soul and the city is fully unified due to the possession of the four virtues, including particular justice.

¹⁰ *Republic* 441d7-e5

circumstance -- becomes dominated by appetitive desire. The rational part becomes a tool of the appetitive part, calculating how to deliver what the appetitive part happens to desire rather than deliberating about what would be an appropriate way to satisfy an appetitive good in a given circumstance. In this sense, the appetitive part fails in two ways. First, it fails to do its job by not being appropriately motivated by appetitive desire. Second, it goes beyond its job by extending its influence over the rational part in such a decisive way that the concern of the rational is no longer reason; but it is instead, the distorted interest of appetite.¹¹

It is also possible for the spirited part to be unjust in a similar way. In this case the spirited part may be in such a state that it fails to be appropriately motivated by its native motivations. In this case spirit, probably does both less than its job and more than its job. Consider an example from the film *Seven*. In this movie Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman are two New York City detectives on the trail of a sadistic serial killer, who is sure to kill again very soon. In one scene, the two detectives follow a lead to the floor of an apartment building where the actual killer resides. Noticing the presence of the detectives, the killer opens fire on them. This leads to a heated chase scene between Brad Pitt and the killer. Brad Pitt, who (unlike the older Morgan Freeman) is still driven by the urgency of his convictions and still has the agility and endurance to back them up. But the killer's speed and cunning keep him just beyond the long arms of (Brad Pitt --) the law. When Pitt returns, empty handed, to the location where the shoot out began, all is not lost since he and Freeman have still located the killer's apartment. But Pitt, who is still in the frame of mind from the chase, has a difficult time accepting the counsel of Freeman: letting themselves into the killer's apartment might create legal problems that could lead to his eventual acquittal. At this particular moment in the scene Pitt becomes fully motivated by something like Plato's spirited part; but motivated by a version of it that misshaped in such a way that it also overreaches (*πλεονῆξια*) into the business of the rational part. Pitt's moral indignation, intensified by the frustration of his recent failure, overtakes him. The aim of his indignation is to bring the killer to justice. Even though Pitt recognizes that the overall aim of justice may be delayed, if not lost altogether, if he breaks down the door of the killer's apartment, he is increasingly controlled by the exclusive rule of his spirited part. In a final fit of rage Pitt desperately kicks at the door. The loud crashing noise from his kicks drowns out Freeman's weak pleas for restraint. Then the door breaks. Freeman shakes his head with frustration. Pitt continues on to the next task without regret.

So there is more than one way for the person to possess particular injustice at the psychological level. The two most common possibilities occur, according to Plato's discussion, when appetite co-opts reason, and when spirit co-opts reason. The latter condition, where spirit co-opts reason is much more difficult case because the role of the spirited part is closer to the role of the reasoning part than the appetitive part is. So, it is much more often the case that the aims of the spirited part closely resemble the aims of the rational part. The situations that trigger the characteristic responses of the spirited part imply a view of the good that the spirited part must be concerned with; but, for which, it cannot make a comprehensive assessment. So, it may often be the case that the urgency of its aims make it easy for spirit to override the counsel of reason. But, as it turns out, the aims of spirit are best realized when it lets reason rule. This is where the virtue of moderation becomes important.

Moderation is a virtue that, like the virtue of particular justice, is not identified with a part of the soul as wisdom and courage are. Moderation is a state that requires a different relation between the parts of the person than the state of particular justice requires. Instead of each psychological part doing its job and only its job, moderation calls for a proper interaction between the parts of the person.¹² Moderation is a state where reason is willing to rule over both spirit and appetite *and* spirit and appetite are each receptive to the rule of reason. If either condition is not met then moderation breaks down. In this sense, moderation can be understood as a corrective to particular injustice. As a psychological part begins to not do its job, moderation can provide an adjustment that brings that part back to its proper function. If the spirited part is overly affected by one of its characteristic motivations, and begins to usurp the role of reason then moderation counteracts that tendency. It does so through a quality it possesses. It possesses a

¹¹ *Republic* 442a1-b3.

¹² *Republic*, 443c7-444a1.

well established receptivity to reason as the appropriate ruler.¹³ Spirit's receptivity to reason enables it to be corrected when it strays from its job.

But how can spirit or appetite even be receptive to the rule of reason? Spirit and appetite can be receptive to the rule of reason because reason can most optimally satisfy the interests of spirit and appetite. And spirit and appetite can be trained to recognize the interest that they each have in the rule of reason. But what is crucial for the establishment of moderation is that the spirited and appetitive parts each recognize that when reason rules they can realize their own interests in a *more* sustainable manner than they can when reason doesn't rule. For example, the good associated with many appetitive desires can be lost when appetite rules itself and the person. The nourishment and pleasure associated with a certain kind of food and drink become diminished under an addictive psychological state. Whereas the most sustainable basis for nourishment and pleasure is achieved under the guidance of those same appetitive desires by reason. In this sense, reason doesn't desire for the appetitive desires, it deliberates about an appropriate means for satisfying the best of the appetitive desires. Moderation can also be seen as a corrective to the overreaching of spirit.

Let us reconsider the earlier illustration from *Seven*. Brad Pitt's moral indignation is ultimately motivated by the interest of bringing the perpetrator to justice. The aim of spirit in this situation is better served by listening to reason than by taking over the job of reason. But whatever receptivity may be possessed by his spirited part in this illustration, it seems to be overridden by the urgency of his anger. But in this case, even the urgency of the situation has passed, since there is nothing that can be done immediately to stop the progress of the killer. So, the breakdown of moderation allows particular injustice to increase. And a stable state of moderation is a consistent corrective to the growth of particular injustice.

The psychological disunity of persons also leads to a considerable level of disunity in the political community.¹⁴ While each person has all three parts, each person at their best is motivated more pronouncedly by one of those parts. So, some individuals are most motivated the appetitive part, even though they are motivated by spirit and reason. This is not to say that the person is most motivated by appetite because appetite is the controlling or ruling faculty for that person. Reason may rule over spirit and appetite. And it would still be consistent for appetite to be the most prominent motivational source for that person. Along these lines, there are some individuals (but fewer, as a whole) who are most motivated by the spirited part. These individuals are also motivated by reason and appetite; but only to a lesser extent. Lastly, there are yet other individuals (the fewest) who are most motivated by the rational part, though they are motivated by spirit and appetite.

Each of the individuals just outlined, occupy groups that serve social functions in the political community. The first group is the producers because they do important work providing for the basic needs of the city. They perform jobs of craftsmen, farmers, merchants, builders, laborers, etc. The idea of the *Republic* is that each social function provides a match with the temperament of the person occupying the role. So the person is able to contribute to the good of city, while also at benefiting themselves by doing a job that provides a one to one match with their particular temperament. One does for the city what one is best at, and thereby optimally benefits the city and oneself. Along these lines, the second group is the guardians, who internally police the city as well as provide protection from foreign aggression or exercise aggression. The third group is the ruling class. These "philosophers", emerge from the guardian class, and supplement the moral education of music, gymnastic, and speeches, with a highly sophisticated regiment of theoretical studies. As these individuals develop into philosophers they become prepared to eventually rule for the good the city, if the city will have them.

The disunity of the city occurs because the individuals in the city are disunified. So when a large enough group of producers are ruled by appetite they don't do their jobs so well. On the one hand, their performance as producers is suboptimal. But more importantly, their tendency to be ruled by appetite makes them a group who will tend to take over the job of ruling in the city. If the guardians are not ruled by reason in their personal contexts then they are less effective guardians. They become ruled by spirit,

¹³ It is possible for spirit both to attempt to usurp reason and still possess a receptivity to reason as its ruler. It may be that in one sphere of activity spirit has become prone to usurp reason. It may still be possible for the established receptivity of spirit with respect to all the other spheres of activity to be a corrective influence in the sphere of activity in question.

¹⁴ *Republic* 441a.

since that is the part from which they receive the most natural motivation anyhow. When a sufficient number of guardians develop in this direction, not only do they begin to take over the job ruling (without the faculties to rule a city), but they each begin to take over ruling in their own way. This creates the worst basis for disunity in the class that must be most unified. The conditions as a whole, create a power struggle that, at very least, hinders the accomplishment of the most important aims of the city. The dividedness of individual citizens is passed on to the city as a whole; which then fails to provide for the well being of its citizens. It may also be the case that the city degenerates further, thereby, producing citizens that are increasingly maladjusted, if not altogether vicious.

Plato's discussion of psychological and political disunity are ways of describing the factional conflict within the person and within the state that leads to foreign aggression. The image of factional conflict for psychological and political disunity is helpful because it underscores the political character of the problem, even when addressing the individual person. Factional conflict within the person is a power struggle that occurs between each psychological part.¹⁵ Since it is a power struggle, the most common backdrop for the struggle will always be the most powerful parts of the person. The appetitive part and spirited part of the person are driven by the majority of the desires in a person.¹⁶ These may or may not be the most defining desires of the person on Plato's account. But the sheer quantity of these desires at the appetitive and spirited level give appetite and spirit a relative power advantage that can often result in the rule of one or the other, though it need not be the inevitable result of this disparity. The general meaning of a state of factional conflict is that a group with some particular interest introduces its own aims as the aims of the whole. And this certainly occurs in the political realm where the factional aims of the producers, guardians and rulers can destabilize the city or at least create a division that hinders the well being of both the city and its individual citizens. The producers and guardians are the groups of the city that are the (respectively) most numerous. Like the appetitive desires, the producers have the most power in terms of sheer number. The guardian class, while much smaller than the producer class, still holds considerable numbers. It, like the producer class, can introduce its particular aims, as an alternative to the ruling class, due to its power.

One other important factional dynamic present psychologically and politically in the *Republic* is that factions can oftentimes form alliances of interest with other factions. Instead of training the appetitive part to be receptive to reason in the way that spirit is receptive to reason, the spirited part can form an alliance with the appetitive part. In this alliance it may be that either spirit or appetitive interests are slightly favored. But in either case, they may both have some common interest served by the alliance. Such an alliance still undermines the overall good of the person, since reason is the faculty best equipped to consider the overall good of the person; and, therefore, is the most fit to rule. But this being said, reason can also fail to rule by being party to some factional alliance. It may be that appetite and reason or spirit and reason form alliances that serve the narrow interest of their parts. Of course, political faction operates this way all the time for Plato. The narrow interests of a maverick military class intent upon waging an unwise military campaign can find a mutual interest, in certain situations, with a producer class that may profit from the war industry. The rulers can also depart from their role either because they are intimidated by the rest of the city or because they no longer are motivated by rational desire. When the rulers are in this state, for whatever reason, they can also form factions with other another group. For example, the rulers may ally with the producers so that the rulers can more easily rule, even though the content of their rule is centered on the narrow interests of the producers. Rulers that are no longer willing to do the job of ruling have a new distorted interest, in such an arrangement. They maintain the pretence of rule without the painful challenges that come with the job of ruling well. By using their rational resources to calculate just how to deliver, what the productive class happen to desire, the rulers pacify the producer class. And the rulers still have the appearance of being rulers, even though they have effectively surrendered their rule to the producer class as soon as their deliberative capacities became reduced to the narrow calculation called for by the producer class. A similar alliance can also be achieved between the ruling class and guardian class. But in all cases the narrowed interests of the factional participants find a common interest that works contrary to the overall good of the city, person or both.

Factional Conflict and Foreign Aggression

¹⁵ *Republic* 444b.

¹⁶ *Republic* 428e-429a, 431c-d.

This state of faction is a crucial cause of foreign aggression in Plato's *Republic*. There are a number of ways that the factional strife internal to particular citizens and between groups of citizens can occur. But there are a couple of factional configurations that are most likely to lead to foreign aggression. The state of overreaching (*πλεονΥξια*) is one where a person wants more gain or more honor. This can be also be true of groups who strive after more gain or honor for their groups. Something like this is at work in the *Republic* when the first city has been completed. This first city is only a city of sows, since it is only concerned with the needs of the body.¹⁷ The same producers may desire to have more luxurious versions of what they already have. This requires resources that the first city doesn't have. To achieve this more luxurious way of life they need an even more specialized division of labor to produce a wider range of luxury goods. This requires a larger labor pool, not to mention a wider base of natural resources to provide the luxury goods they desire.¹⁸ If the first city had more territory under its control it could live a more luxurious life. But it takes a strong and stable military power to conquer and maintain the territory that it aspires to have. So this is the first motivation for factional strife. The producers can ally with the guardians to plunder the resources of other.

What interest would the guardians have in this? If the moral education of the guardians is undertaken with the wrong proportion of music and gymnastic education they can develop the desires of either mercenary soldiers or soldiers of vainglory. In either case they find a common interest with the producer class. Perhaps they conquer out of the love of military victory and receive support from the producers who want them to conquer due to the love of gain. Or it may be that the guardians become soldiers who enjoy a fight that they can win, but also like the producers enjoy the goods that they plunder and the territory they secure. In the later sense, they are more like soldiers of fortune and find common cause with the producers because they increasingly resemble the producer class.

Plato tells a similar factional story within the person. The producers are in a state of *πλεονΥξια* because they want to acquire more than is good for them. This state is the product of a factional condition between appetite and reason or appetite and spirit. Instead of reason ruling over spirit and appetite and, thereby providing a sustainable regime of satisfaction for the aims of spirit and appetite, reason becomes the weak ally of appetite or the passive accomplice in an appetite-spirit alliance. In either setting, the person desires more gain or honor than is appropriate. The pursuit of gain or honor in this way intensifies those excessive desires. Whereas a more unified state in the person provides a more reasonable limit to the appetitive and spirited needs. This is not to say that the mere desire for luxury goods is itself a state of *πλεονΥξια* for Plato. Perhaps such desires among some producers can be realized in a manner that is actually in keeping with the unity of those same producers and the unity of the city. But the state of *πλεονΥξια* is certainly a likely psychological state that motivates political expansion. Similarly, political expansion may occur even without a factional producer-guardian axis. But on Plato's account, political faction of this kind is a common motivation for political expansion.

There is another way in which factional conflict causes aggression. The city with factional conflict is vulnerable to the fomenting of revolution on the part of foreign powers, eventually leading to foreign aggression. Plato shows how easily a factious city-- one that should actually be thought of as "many cities", due to its disunity--can be tampered with by foreign powers. Socrates reveals this possibility to Adeimantus in the following passage:

"You are a happy one," I said, "If you suppose it is fit to call a 'city' another than such as we have been equipping."

"What else then?" He said.

"The others ought to get bigger names," I said. "For each of them is very many cities but not a city as those who play say. There are two, in any case, warring with each other, one of the poor, the other of the rich. And within each of these there are very many. If you approach them as though they were one, you'll be a complete failure; but if you approach

¹⁷ *Republic*, 372c-d.

¹⁸ *Republic*, 373b.

them as though they were many, offering to the ones the money and the powers or the very persons of the others, you'll always have the use of many allies and few enemies."¹⁹

In such a weakened state a city is vulnerable to the kind of aggression that Plato discusses earlier. Other disunited states that are dominated by gain or honor will try to conquer cities that they can conquer. So, factional conflict leads to aggression in two ways. It motivates cities to be aggressors towards other cities and it makes cities vulnerable to such aggression.

In contrast, Plato maintains that the unified city--that city that can be properly be called a city--is not vulnerable to foreign aggression. It does not possess discordant elements that can be pitted against one another, as a precursor to actual aggression. And it is certainly the case that such a city does not possess factions that can find common interest in unlimited acquisition or vainglory. But it is not clear that the unified city will not be involved in wars of aggression. In a crucial exchange with Glaucon, Socrates contrasts the motivation for aggression of the acquisitive, factious city and the ideal city:

Then must we cut off a piece of our neighbors' land, if we are going to have sufficient room for pasture and tillage, and they in turn from ours, if they let themselves go to the unlimited acquisition of money, overstepping the boundaries of the necessary?

"Quite necessarily, Socrates" he said.²⁰

So even the ideal city will sometimes have to wage wars of aggression to secure resources that are necessary for a fully thriving city; resources that the "city of sows" can live without. But this still contrasts with other cities that wage war, not so much to produce flourishing lives for its citizens, but rather to acquire excessive wealth, honor, and other unnecessary goods. This contrasts still suggests that factional conflict is a decisive cause of foreign aggression, whether it leads a city to initiate war or to be a target for war. But it also suggests that the absence of factional conflict in a city does not altogether eliminate the motivations for war. The absence of factional conflict does, in Plato's view, reduce the incidence of war. And when war does occur it occurs in a climate where power shifts are less erratic, and the wars themselves less capricious.²¹

Aristotle on Factional Conflict

Aristotle also argues that factional conflict is a cause of aggression. But he provides a somewhat different analysis of factional conflict itself. And while Aristotle, like Plato, recognizes the inherent dangers of factional conflict, Aristotle doesn't try to eliminate factional conflict altogether. He argues that the Plato's quest for the extreme unification of the person and the city is sure to be counterproductive. Such a quest would actually heighten the problem of factional conflict and generate a more dangerous species of factional conflict. Instead, Aristotle suggests an alternative approach to the problem of factional conflict where a standard of self-sufficiency, rather than complete unity, provides a superior organizing principle for the city.²² The standard of self sufficiency concedes a certain level of factional conflict in cities -- especially non-ideal regimes such as democracy, tyranny, and oligarchy.²³ But even in non-ideal regimes, Aristotle treats factional conflict as a dangerous problem, but still a manageable problem.²⁴ So, Plato and Aristotle disagree in their assessments of just how problematic factional conflict is for a regime. Plato

¹⁹ *Republic*, 422e3-423a8.

²⁰ *Republic*, 373d7-e1.

²¹ On model for understanding the distinction between merely acquisitive states and excessively acquisitive states is through Aristotle's discussion of household management (οὐκονομία). In this discussion Aristotle outlines a way of providing for the basic needs of a flourishing household that involves a moderated level of acquisition. By setting a limit based on the basic needs of a flourishing household the household can sustain some acquisitive habits. But it is the household disposed to acquire without any natural limit that becomes excessively acquisitive (*Politics* I.8-11).

²² *Politics*, II.1-5.

²³ *Politics*, III.6-8.

²⁴ *Politics*, V.8-9.

maintains that it is the worst problem for a regime (and a person, for that matter). And this justifies measures that would bring about the complete unity of both the city and (at least) its guardians. Aristotle considers factional conflict a very serious problem for a regime. But, it is not a problem that is so serious that it justifies (what he considers to be) the equally risky measures for eliminating factional conflict at all levels. So, given this contrast in emphasis with Plato, is Aristotle's account of factional conflict one that sees factional conflict as a decisive cause of foreign aggression? And if so, is Aristotle's best solution to the problem of factional conflict one that also impacts the incidence or quality of aggression in any substantive way?

Aristotle's account of what factional conflict is, shares a broad similarity with Plato's account. Aristotle agrees with the general view of Plato that factional conflict is a disunity of characteristic groups in the city that is similar to the psychological disunity manifest in the persons inhabiting that city. Aristotle also maintains that there are certain forms of psychological disunity that can be identified as crucial influences on the formation of political disunity in the city. But Aristotle doesn't make the link between psychological disunity and political disunity (and vice-versa) as central to his *Politics* as Plato does in the *Republic*. Furthermore, while Aristotle understands sub-virtuous states (such as continence, incontinence, and vice) to be constituted by varying degrees of disunity, he doesn't consider the disunity present in these states to be their most defining quality.²⁵ Rather, he treats these states as character deficiencies that are best understood as an interlocking breakdown in the faculties of desire, deliberation, and choice.²⁶ Each of these sub-virtuous states involve a breakdown in one or more of these faculties. So while these problems may surely be marked by psychological disunity, in Aristotle's view, they are most characterized by an integrated fulfillment of the person's highest ends.²⁷ Lastly, Aristotle's reference to the problem of factional

²⁵ *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.7-10.

²⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.1-5.

²⁷ Aristotle's definition of virtue provides a helpful understanding of human flourishing. It is i. a disposition or perfected state of a desiderative faculty which quality determines the agent to ii. a choice of action that lies in the mean between two extremes choices of action relative to the agent. That iii. mean is set by what the deliberative reason of the prudent person would recognize as the mean (*Nicomachean Ethics*, II.iv.).

When i. is explained it includes the role of emotion and desire. Emotion. The disposition or perfected state of the desiderative faculty of a morally virtuous person is such that they stand well to specific emotions and desires. The desiderative or desiring faculty of this person is in such a well trained or perfected state that when they encounter a fearful situation or a situation where they are slighted they are affected by the emotion of fear or anger in appropriate ways. Desire. Because their desiderative or desiring faculty is so well trained that they stand well to a particular emotion, they are consequently motivated by the right desires. This is because the way one stands to a particular emotion decisively influences the quality of the desire resulting from that emotion. An emotion is an intrusive feeling of pleasure or pain based on an image of someone or something perceived to be good or bad. It thereby leads to a *desire* in the person to choose to act in such way that this pleasure is prolonged or the pain corrected. So a well trained or perfected state of a person's desiderative faculty enables him to stand well to a particular emotion and, consequently, to be motivated by the right desire that issues out of the particular emotion.

Part iii. of the definition refers to a mean that would be recognized by the deliberative reason of the prudent person. Prudence or practical wisdom is an intellectual virtue possessed by the morally virtuous person. It is an ability to do the right thing at the right time and in the right manner, based on their experience in the world living well. It is extremely contextual. And it is an intellectual virtue that can only be learned by someone who already has it. With the intellectual virtue of prudence or practical wisdom the morally virtuous deliberates upon their right desire. They must choose an action that will be the most suitable means to achieving the end motivated by their right desire. This deliberation involves three factors: the person's natural abilities or resources, their background issues, and the context of the situation. So this person uses their intellectual virtue of prudence or practical wisdom to rightly deliberate upon their right desire to choose the best course of action.

conflict is usually a reference to the political context of disunity between crucial groups in the political community. So, Aristotle is in agreement with Plato's view that factional conflict should be understood as something like a psychological disunity in the person is similar to and a source of political disunity; but he doesn't refer to both contexts as factional conflict.

The best way to examine the nature of factional conflict in Aristotle is to consider the sources of factional conflict. I maintain that factional conflict in Aristotle is most prominent in his non-ideal regimes: democracy, tyranny, and oligarchy. While his ideal regimes (Monarchy, Aristocracy, Polity) are not immune from factional conflict, these regimes themselves are difficult to realize. And so, like Plato, much of the discussion about factional conflict is in the context of non-ideal conditions. In Aristotle's non-ideal regimes the most decisive sources of factional conflict are a few specific vices: envy, vanity, and quarrelsomeness.

To make this case it is necessary to show that causes of factional conflict are ultimately character based causes. A close reading of Aristotle's discussion of this topic in *Politics* V (1301a19-1303b17) shows that most of the sources of factional conflict which he describes there can be traced back to a few dangerous vices. Aristotle comments on this topic in *Politics* V can be classified into three groups of points: i. the general conditions in which factious conflict occur (1302a23-30), ii. the goods for the sake of which factious conflict occur (1302a31-33), and iii. the more proximate causes triggering factional conflicts (1302a34-1302b4). These passages must be interpolated carefully. But it can be seen that three of Aristotle's vices, envy ($\square\phi\psi\omicron\nu\omega$), vanity ($\square\nu\omicron\rightarrow\tau\omega$), and quarrelsomeness ($\delta(\sigma\epsilon\rho\leftrightarrow\omega)$) are character states that are crucial causes of factious conflicts. While Aristotle does not explicitly present these three moral vices as causes of factious conflicts, his actual descriptions of the causes can be traced back to these three moral vices.

The context in which the discussion opens concerns the ongoing disagreement between the people and the oligarchs (or "notables") about the application of the principle of justice as proportionate equality to various sections of society. Aristotle says:

Then the former claim to merit a share in all things equally on the grounds that they are equal, while the latter seek to aggrandize themselves on the grounds that they are unequal, since 'greater' is something unequal."²⁸ According to Aristotle, both groups are prone to particular injustice even though each group considers themselves just and the other unjust. My argument, however, will not focus so much on the vicious state of character associated with particular injustice. Rather, my argument establishes the link between the vices of envy ($\square\phi\psi\omicron\nu\omega$), vanity ($\square\nu\omicron\rightarrow\tau\omega$), and quarrelsomeness ($\delta(\sigma\epsilon\rho\leftrightarrow\omega)$) as the root causes of the factious conflicts which Aristotle describes. It may be that these three vices also contribute to the state of character associated with particular injustice. And this is quite likely since the fundamental context in which factious conflicts occur is that of particular injustice. But I don't make the claim that the moral vices most responsible for factious conflicts are responsible for these factious conflicts because these three moral vices contribute to a state of character called particular injustice.

Part ii. of the definition refers to the choice of action which the *quality* of the well trained or perfected state of the person determines them towards. Because the person possesses this quality they stand well to specific emotions and the related desires of those emotions such that the person has right desires. The person's right deliberation upon those right desires enables them to recognize the right choice of action. Indirectly this quality in the person determines towards a right choice of action. This choice of action is between two extreme choices of action relative to the agent. So this quality of the person determines them not to just any choice of action, but one that is a mean specific to their natural abilities, background, and current situation.

This definition can be summarized in the formula: moral virtue is a state of character in the person based on that person's right desire, right deliberation upon that desire, and their consequent right choice of action.

²⁸ Aristotle, *Politics* 5.1:1201a33-35.

$\epsilon^{\text{TM}}\tau\alpha\ \omicron\downarrow\ \mu\prime\nu\ \supset\omega\ \delta\sigma\iota\ \lambda\ \nu\tau\epsilon\omega\ \pi\ \square\ \nu\tau\omega\ \tau\ \omicron\ \nu\ \delta\sigma\omega\ \square\ \phi\iota\omicron\ \sigma\iota\ \mu\epsilon\tau\ \Upsilon\ \xi\epsilon\iota\nu\ \omicron\downarrow\ \delta\exists\ \supset\omega\ \square\ \nu\ \sigma\iota\ \lambda\ \nu\ \tau\epsilon\omega\ \pi\ \lambda\epsilon\omicron\nu\epsilon\kappa\tau\epsilon\ \lambda\ \nu\ \zeta\eta\tau\omicron\ \lambda\ \sigma\iota\nu\ \tau\ \uparrow\ \gamma\ \rho\ \pi\ \lambda\epsilon\ \lambda\ \omicron\nu\ \square\ \nu\ \sigma\omicron\nu\ \phi\ \xi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\ \mu\prime\nu\ \omicron\ \nu\ \tau\ \iota\ \pi\ \square\ \sigma\alpha\iota\ \delta\ \leftrightarrow\ \kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\nu\ \text{,} \text{ } \mu\alpha\rho\tau\eta\mu\ \Upsilon\ \nu\alpha\iota\ \delta\exists\ \square\ \pi\ \lambda\ \omega\ \epsilon\ \Rightarrow\ \sigma\iota\nu\ \text{.}$

for themselves or for their friends).³¹ In the above *Politics* 5.2 passages 1302a23-30 and 1302a31-33 Aristotle isn't referring to a general aspiration of the poor to have more in the way of gain and honor than they currently have. Aristotle maintains that the poor aim to secure those goods of gain and honor with which other equals aggrandize themselves. But does this fit Aristotle's own description of envy?

The tendency which Aristotle is referring to should be considered the state of character of envy. And this state of character is envy to the extent that the poor consider the gains and honors of the notables deserved. To the extent that the poor consider the gains and honors of the notables undeserved, whether the gains and honors of the notables *are* actually undeserved or not, the poor are righteously indignant. And righteous indignation is a virtuous state of character qualitatively distinct from the vice of envy. But it is plausible to think that Aristotle's poor do, in fact, consider the notables to be deserving of the gains and honors they receive, at least some of the time. It is plausible to think this of Aristotle's poor precisely because of the notion of equality that he thinks they have. In the view of Aristotle's poor all people, whatever their abilities, circumstances and actions are equal in all respects. Along these lines, the gains and honors of the notables are not in themselves unfair to the poor. The poor would consider it unfair that individuals who are equal to them (such as the notables) to continue to make gains or to accrue honor when the poor are not receiving similar gains or honors.

One other important distinction in the former passage also reinforces the necessary assumption of the envy claim that the envious must perceive the envied as deserving the relevant goods. And, furthermore, it is reasonable to infer from the following text that Aristotle does understand the poor to have the following perception. The poor sometimes construe the notables to deserve the gains and honors which the notables receive. Aristotle says that "to strive for these things may be justified; it may also be unjustified."³² "These things" may refer to either the aim of the poor to secure or to not lack the goods with which equals aggrandize themselves. The equals being referred to are the notables. And "these things" may also refer to the aim of those notables who are not equal to the people to receive more in the way of gain and honor than the poor. While this is a logical possibility, Aristotle's poor usually do not think of the notables as ever being anything but equal to themselves. When it is the case that the poor are not justified in their aspirations to secure the goods possessed by the notables or to not lack those goods possessed by the notables there are a couple plausible reasons why this is the case. The poor are not justified in their strivings because they do not deserve what they are striving for. But it is a separate issue as to whether the group that the poor consider their equals and who have aggrandized themselves with certain gains or honors deserve those goods, let alone whether the poor perceive that group as deserving those gains or honors.

The most likely scenario under which Aristotle would label the strivings of the poor to be unjustified, besides the fact that the poor do not deserve the goods they are striving for, is due to the fact that the notables possessing those goods deserve to possess them. In other words, it is unlikely that Aristotle would consider it unjustified for the poor to strive for goods they do not deserve and which the notables also do not deserve. So it may be that the poor are unjustified in their strivings for goods which the notables deserve. But the poor are particularly unjustified in their strivings for goods which the notables deserve when the poor actually perceive the notables to deserve those same goods. In this sense, the most prominent reason that the poor would be unjustified in aspiring to receive what the notables have is because the notables deserve what they have and the poor are well aware that the notables deserve the goods which the notables have. This circumstance is one where envy is possible.

There are some circumstances where Aristotle would consider it unjustified for the poor to strive for goods they perceive to be undeserved by the notables, even though the notables actually deserve those goods. But these circumstances are ones where the strivings of the poor are unjustified, but more justified

³¹ Aristotle, *Politics* V.2: 1302a31-33.

περ< εν δ' στασι<ζουσιν /στ< κ'Υρδοω κα< τιμ< κα< τ<ναντ<α το(τοιω. κα< γ<ρ <τιμ<αν
φε(γοντεω κα< ζημ<αν, α| π'ρ α| τ<ων α τ<ων φ<λων, στασι<ζουσιν <ν τα(τω π)λεσιν.

³² Aristotle, *Politics* V.2: 1302a28-29.

ο< μ'ν γ<ρ =>σ)τητοω /φιΥμενοι στασι<ζουσιν <ν νομ<ζωσιν τι δ' κα<
<δ<κ<ω.

to spite. Spite is a state where the person is prone to take pleasure in the misfortune of another. The spiteful person is therefore concerned with images of actual circumstances, not images of potential circumstances. The version of envy that emerges from interpretation II is a state of character where the poor person desires the notable to have less than he currently has, not the state of character that would lead the poor person to take pleasure in the notable having lost something that the notable deserved. In the case of the former the poor person has such a character that he tends to be inspired by the emotion of envy. This emotion triggers a feeling of *pain* at what the notable has, even though the poor person doesn't consider the goods of the notable to be undeserved. The envious person does not take *pleasure* in a situation where the notable suffers an unfortunate loss of those same goods. So, the envy of interpretation II is not as malicious as spite. But the envy of interpretation II can be considered to be a dissatisfaction with the good fortune of others when those others are equals.

Which interpretation is the more plausible interpretation of the opening passages of in Book V of the *Politics*? And which interpretation is most in keeping with the claim that the vice of envy is a deep source of factional conflict? Further clarification of the context of these passages brings more resolution to these questions. The textual support for interpretation II is strongest when Aristotle is discussing the proximate causes of factional conflict. Whereas the textual support for interpretation I is strongest when Aristotle is discussing the general cause of the conditions of factional conflict. The most foundational cause of factional conflict is interpretation I: the tendency of the poor to envy the gain and honor that their equals aggrandize themselves with. This can be called envy and not righteous indignation because the poor consider the notables to deserve these goods as much as the poor consider themselves to deserve those same goods. But the poor do not happen to have those gains and honors yet. If the notables' securing of those goods prevented the poor from securing those goods it would prompt fear in the poor, not envy. And, if the notables did not deserve the gains and honors possessed by them then the poor would not envy those goods. Envy as understood in interpretation I, the more standard understanding of envy, is a more fundamental cause of factional conflict than the version of envy found in interpretation II. But the version of envy articulated in interpretation II is still a plausible source of factional conflict insofar as it refers to the conditions that most immediately trigger factional conflict. So, what initially sets factional conflict into motion is the state of character where the envious person is affected by the emotion of envy such that he desires that the aggrandizing person have less than the aggrandizing person currently has, even though those goods are not undeserved. The desire of the poor for aggrandizing notables to have less eventually becomes the desire of the poor to secure the same gains and honors that the notables possess.

The Vice of Vanity ($\square\nu\omicron\rightarrow\tau\omicron\omega$)

While Aristotle regularly associates the moral vice of envy with the poor, he associates the moral vice of vanity ($\square\nu\omicron\rightarrow\tau\omicron\omega$) with the notables. Vanity is the state of character of the notables that makes them contemptuous towards the poor, and which reinforces the tendency of the notables to further assert their superiority towards the poor and other notables by inflicting dishonoring insults.

Contempt ($\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\phi\rho\gamma\nu\eta\sigma\iota\omega$) is a feeling of disdain that those considering themselves superior in some fundamental respect (i.e. birth, wealth, power) feel for those that they consider beneath them.³⁵ But it is usually (unless the person is great-souled) not based on an actual judgment of merit. This attitude of contempt is characteristic of the wealthy.³⁶ An attitude of contempt is a problem that Aristotle consistently associates with those notables that form the ruling base of the oligarchic regimes.³⁷ Along these lines, the notables feel contempt for the poor as a group that is beneath them. This is because the notables perceive the poor to lack important marks of greatness such as noble birth, wealth, and power.

There is a broad base of textual support across the *Politics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Nicomachean Ethics* to support both the claim that Aristotle considers contempt to be an important cause of factional conflict and that the notables' contempt towards others is symptomatic of the moral vice of vanity. Aristotle maintains that contempt is an important cause of factional conflict when he first outlines the causes of factional conflict (*Politics* V.2:1302b2-4), as well as in his subsequent breakdown and analysis of those causes. In

³⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* II.11: 1388b.

³⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IV.3:1124a30-1124b3.

³⁷ Aristotle, *Politics* V.3: 1302b25-33.

the later context (*Politics* V.3:1302a25-33) Aristotle locates the incidence of contempt in both oligarchies and democracies.

Through contempt as well [men] engage in factional conflict and attack one another – in oligarchies, for example, when those not sharing in the regime are a majority (for they suppose themselves superior), and in democracies, when the well off are contemptuous of the disorder and anarchy.³⁸

According to Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* IV.3, this attitude of contempt is chiefly exhibited by those notables (i.e. those with wealth, power, and noble birth) who lack the moral virtue that should guide the good use of their fortune. And the reason the notables of this sort display such contempt towards others is due to the moral vice of vanity. In Aristotle's discussion of the vanity he says:

It is true that even those who merely possess the goods of fortune may be haughty and insolent; because without virtue it is not easy to bear good fortune becomingly, and such men, being unable to carry their prosperity, and thinking themselves superior to the rest of mankind, despise other people, although their conduct is not better than another's. The fact is that they try to imitate the great-souled man without being really like him, and only copy him in what they can, reproducing his contempt for others but not his virtuous conduct.³⁹

So the earlier description of the emotion of contempt is filled out further under the rubric of the vice of vanity. As suggested above, the moral vice of vanity is what makes many of the notables prone to contemptuous attitudes.⁴⁰

The vice of vanity is a state of vicious character that determines the person to an emotion of contempt or disdain for individuals they take to be beneath them. This induces in the agent a related desire to be honored by others to the inflated level of high honor that the vain person mistakenly estimates himself to deserve. The vain person desires this because he foolishly considers himself to be morally virtuous merely because of his material fortune. Along these lines, the vain man expects to be treated as if he were a person possessing all of the moral virtues; and so, therefore, as a person worthy of high honor. So, the vanity of the notables consistently leads them to be contemptuous of the poor. Whereas, the poor tend to envy the notables.

While the vain notables perceive their own superiority or pre-eminence (ἡ περ)ξη) over others, and especially the poor, the notables also make great efforts to assert their superiority or pre-eminence. Aristotle continually identifies a tendency of the notables to inflict insult or hubris upon others in order to especially assert their pre-eminence over the insulted party. The wealthy and young, being especially prone

³⁸ Aristotle, *Politics* V.3: 1302a25-33.

οἱ δ' τῶν ἐνισθητῶν καὶ τῶν περοξῶν ἢ πολλαμύνησιν ἴντεω ἐνισσοὶ μὲν πλῆθον φέξειν ἄλλῃ δὲ σὺν ἄφλαττον (τοῖσιν δὲ φσι μὲν ἰργεσσαι δικάσῃω, φσι δ' καὶ ἐδῃκῃω): ἄττουω τε γῆρ ἴντεω ἴπῃ ὅσοι ἐσι στασιάζουσι, καὶ ὅσοι ἴντεω ἴπῃ μεῖζουω. πῶ μὲν οἱ φξοντεω στασιάζουσιν, ἐδρηται: περὶ ἐν δ' στασιάζουσιν ὅτῃ κῆρδῳ καὶ τιμὲ καὶ τῶναντῃα τοῖσιν.

³⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IV.3: 1124a29-1124b5.

κατὰ ἄλῃψειαν δὲ ἰγαψῆω μῆνω τιμητῷ: ὡ δὲ ἄμφῃ ἰπῆρξει, μῆλλον ἰφιοῖται τιμῶ. οἱ δὲ ἰνε ὡ ἰρετῶ τῆ τοιαῦτα ἰγαψῆω φξοντεω ὡτε δικάσῃω ἄαυτοῖω μεγῆλων ἰφιοῖσιν ὡτε ἰρηῆω μεγῆ λῆχῆξοι λῆγονται: ἰνε γῆρ ἰρετῶ παντελοῖω ὅκ φσι ταῦτα. ἰπερ)πται δ' καὶ ἰβρισταῖ καὶ οἱ τῆ τοιαῦτα φξοντεω ἰγαψῆω γῆνονται. ἰνε γῆρ ἰρετῶ ὅφ =ἰδιον φῆρειν ἰμελῆω τῆ εἰ τῆξῃμα τα: ὅφ δυνῆμενοι δ' φῆρειν καὶ οἱ μενοι τῆν ἄλλων ἰπερ)ξειν ἰκεῖνων μὲν καταφρονῶσιν, ἄτ οἱ δὲ ἰτι ἰν τῆξῃσι πῆττουσιν. μιμῶνται γῆρ τῆν μεγῆλῆχῆξον ὅξ ἰμοιοι ἴντεω, τοῖτο δ' δρησιν ἰ ὅσῳ δῆναιται: τῆ μὲν οἱ κατὰ ἰρετῆν ὅφ πῆττουσι, καταφρονῶσι δ' τῆν ἄλλων.

⁴⁰ See also Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles*.

to slight others in this way, trigger the emotion of anger in the insulted party.⁴¹ The specific kind of slight which Aristotle consistently refers to as hubris is the central occasion for anger outlined by Aristotle in his discussion of anger in his *Rhetoric*. It is no surprise that the hubris inflicted by the notables upon others, and especially the poor, influence the poor to vindicate themselves. For anger in Aristotle's view, is usually a response to the hubris of others.⁴² And one unmistakable context in which political anger is exhibited is in the vice of quarrelsomeness. The ongoing hubris of the notables towards the poor tend to misshape the character of the poor by making them irascible and quarrelsome. The hubris of the notables, somewhat distinct from the contempt of the notables, is also a central source of factional conflict.⁴³ The manner in which the hubris of the notables leads to factional conflict can be distinguished from the way in which contempt leads to factional conflict. It is the vanity of the notables which makes them prone to perceive a highly exaggerated image of their own pre-eminence. The perceived pre-eminence of the notables makes them highly susceptible to the feeling of contempt towards those they take to be their inferiors. But when the notables unleash hubris upon their perceived inferiors the notables aim to regain a more recognizable position of pre-eminence. Whereas the notables convey an attitude of contempt not to reassert their position of pre-eminence vis-à-vis the poor (and others) but to condescend to the poor (and others) precisely from a position of pre-eminence.

The Vice of Quarrelsomeness (δ(σερ↔ω)

Aristotle's discussion of the causes of factional conflict in *Politics* 5.2-5.3 reveals three scenarios in which the dishonoring of the poor generates factional conflict. In all three scenarios the persistent dishonoring of the poor makes the poor irascible and, more importantly, quarrelsome. First, the passages in Aristotle that lend credibility to interpretation I of envy – the more prominent strain of envy in this discussion – also highlight the desire of the poor to not be dishonored. The poor want the goods of gain and honor when those who the poor take to be of equal status (such as the notables) aggrandize (πλεονεκτη(ντοω) themselves with those goods. One natural consequence of the poor wanting the honor possessed by the notables is that the poor, also, do not want to be dishonored by the notables.⁴⁴ This leads to irascibility and especially quarrelsomeness (δ(σερ↔ω) on the part of the poor. It also intensifies the power struggles between the wealthy. So the tendency of the wealthy to cause factious conflict by way of hubris (ἴβριω) can be understood under the rubric of the vice of quarrelsomeness.

The vice of quarrelsomeness is a state of character that makes quarrelsome individuals prone to quarrels when they are slighted by the hubris of another. The vice of quarrelsomeness can lead to conflicts between wealthy individual individuals slighting other wealthy and quarrelsome individuals, or wealthy individuals slighting poor and quarrelsome individuals. Hubris is the third form of slight under the Aristotle's description of anger in the *Rhetoric*. It prompts people to feel pain, and desire to seek revenge. The more social version of this revenge is not so much through the characteristic of irascibility, but the more social characteristic of quarrelsomeness. This vice captures the more complex dynamic of social revenge that hubris often triggers in the deviant regimes.

The vice of quarrelsomeness is a particularly destabilizing factor in deviant regimes because disagreements between notables and the people in these regimes tend to have a polarizing effect. In the democratic regimes the disagreements between the people and the notables are exercised for the people through the role of demagogues. Whatever tendencies towards quarrelsomeness are found in the people drive the power of the demagogues and the struggles the demagogues wage against the notables. And in the oligarchic regimes the quarrelsomeness of the oligarchs towards other competing oligarchs that can destabilize the regime. One oligarchic faction takes up the cause of the people as a pretense for that faction's assertion of pre-eminence over a rival oligarchic faction. The quarrelsomeness of oligarchs towards one another reinforces the already established divide between oligarchs and people. The quarrelsomeness of the people for the oligarchs and oligarchs for the people is exhibited and reinforced in the struggles between the oligarchs. So, in both democracy and oligarchy the sources of quarrelsomeness that have been described in general terms already take on a more specific conflict dynamic.

⁴¹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* II.2: 1378b.

⁴² Aristotle, *Rhetoric* II.2: 1378b.

⁴³ Aristotle, *Politics* V.3: 1302b1-14.

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Politics* V.2: 1302a34-35.

Aristotle on Factional Conflict and Aggression

The vices of quarrelsomeness, vanity and envy form the motivations of specific factions in non-ideal regimes. Democratic regimes have oligarchic factions that are most motivated by vanity, and to a greater degree democratic factions that are most motivated by envy. Both kinds of factions are motivated by quarrelsomeness. Oligarchic regimes also possess oligarchic and democratic factions matching the above descriptions. According to Aristotle, Tyrannical regimes are the radical outgrowth of democratic regimes that allowed demagogues to lead the democratic faction, expel or persecute the oligarchic factions, and then abandon the earlier cause of the people. The tyrannical regime still forms subjects that have factious tendencies in both the direction of democratic and oligarchic factions, but the development of these factions is held in check by the tyrant. So the manner in which factions shape the decisions and actions of the cities at large depends on the kind of regime, and therefore, the kind of factions exerting influence in those regimes.

Aristotle's discussion of foreign aggression reveals that factional conflict is prominent cause of this aggression. While Aristotle's discussion of this link is even less straight forward than Plato's discussion of it, Aristotle sees factional conflict as playing a more exclusive role in aggression than Plato does. Aristotle's discussion of this topic makes constant reference to injustice as a persistent vice present in the states that do wage wars of aggression. These references are so striking because in his opening discussion of factional conflict he describes it as always making advancing claims about the injustice of their rival factions.⁴⁵ But even in that discussion it is clear that Aristotle recognizes injustice in most of these factions. However, his analysis of the characteristic vices that make these factions unjust is more informative than his actual discussions of injustice as a vice. So, to the extent that the vices most associated with factional conflict shape much of the injustice in non-ideal regimes, much of that injustice present in non-ideal regimes is associated with factional conflict.

Even if Aristotle's references to the injustice of those states initiating foreign aggression are not code words for the external effects of factional conflict, the examples cited and language employed must be. When Aristotle refers to states that are most known for aggression towards their neighbors he mentions states that he has already diagnosed in earlier discussions⁴⁶ as having particular problems with factional conflict. Sparta and Crete are two of these examples:

Indeed, among some [peoples] this is the defining principle of the regime and the laws -- that they exercise mastery over their neighbors. Hence while most of the usages existing among most [peoples] are, so to speak, a mere jumble,...it is domination that all of them aim at. In Sparta and Crete, for example, it is with a view to wars that education and the greatest part of the laws are organized.⁴⁷

Soon after this Aristotle addresses a group of nations that also share this warlike ethos.

"Further, among all nations that are capable of aggrandizing themselves, power of this sort is honored -- for example, among Scythians, the Persians, the Thracians, and the Celts."⁴⁸ The verb translated as "aggrandize" (*πλεονεκτοῦσιν*, in many instances) is consistently used by Aristotle in the sections on factional conflict to describe the manner in which certain factionaries assert their superiority over the members of other rival factions.⁴⁹ Aristotle's use of language here carries such strong associations of factional conflict that it is quite reasonable to understand the military posture of these nations as being connected with the characteristics of factional conflict. And when this word is used in the discussions of factional conflict, it has already been argued that it is the expression of vanity. While vanity is typically

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Politics* V.1-4.

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Politics* II.9, II.10.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Politics* VII.2: 1324b4-9.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Politics* VII.2: 1324b9-12.

⁴⁹ This discussion runs parallel to Plato's discussion of *πλεονεξία* as a driving cause of factional conflict and ultimately of aggression. While the context of Aristotle's discussion and philosophical meanings somewhat different, the general human motivation of *πλεονεξία* is very similar; and constitutes a political problem treated in both authors, not to mention in Greek literature, and history.

associated with the oligarchic factions, there may be other reasons for vanity such as perceptions of ethnic superiority, excessive cultural pride, past military victories or honors. So, it would be very much in keeping with the contexts of these passages to see the vice of vanity as a background motivation for the kind of aggression cited by Aristotle here.

The democratic form of factional conflict is another kind of factional conflict that also drives the aggression discussed by Aristotle. To recognize this point it is important to remember that Aristotle's discussion of aggression in this section is a prelude to his discussion of his ideal regime. This regime will not be aggressive in nature. It will not be very prone to factional conflict. And, therefore, the topic of the alleged nobility of unprovoked military aggression the highest end of politics seems very much out of place. Aristotle remarks:

Yet it may perhaps seems overly odd to those wishing to investigate [the matter] that this should be the task of the expert in politics, to be able to discern how the rule and exercise of mastery over those nearby, whether they wish it or not...How could this be characteristic of the political expert or the legislator when it is not even lawful?...But even by itself if a city could be happy--one that is finely governed (if indeed it is possible for a city to be settled by itself somewhere using excellent laws--and the organization of its regime will not be with a view to war and the domination of enemies; for [under this assumption] nothing of this sort would exist.⁵⁰

Given that the context of this passage is of an ideal regime, where such a topic would seem out of place, Aristotle's contrast with the assumptions of a democratic faction is more startling. He characterizes those assumptions as follows " But the many seem to suppose that expertise in mastery is [the same as] political expertise, and they are not ashamed to train [to do] in relation to others what they deny is advantageous for themselves. For among themselves they seek just rule, but they care nothing about justice towards others."⁵¹ This comment clearly describes an attitude, informing aggression, that fits the pattern of factional psychology in Aristotle. All of the factions described by Aristotle place the partial aims of their own factional interest above the good of the political community as a whole. Of course there is no common good *per se* in Aristotle's understanding of the international relations. Yet, it is still possible to exert the aims of national interest too highly. If this is a summary of the attitude informing aggression that is accurate then it is an attitude of aggression that captures Aristotle's factional psychology very well.

This statement also captures elements of the democratic factional psychology described by Aristotle. If there is a good case for envy as the characteristic motivation of democratic factions then the above statement describes the absence of righteous indignation towards others. This is a vice in Aristotle usually associated with either envy or spite. In either case the person is badly disposed to the situations of others. One may take displeasure in the deserved success of others or pleasure in the undeserved situations of others. Whatever the case may be, the person is badly related to others. But the vice of envy fits with this scenario insofar as it is a disposition that members of a large faction -- a democratic faction, in a democratic regime-- possess. It is immaterial whether envy motivates the aggression. It is immaterial whether the enemy is a perceived equal from the aggressors' vantage point, or whether the enemy possesses something valued by the aggressor. The claim, so far, has been that envy is a cause of factional conflict, and factional conflict is a state that is a prominent motivation for aggression. So, the motivation for factional conflict need not be the same motivation for aggression. The state of factional conflict is what provides the most decisive conditions for aggression.

But it is not at all far fetched to think of envy as a motivation influencing the foreign policy decisions of a democratic state dominated by democratic faction. Aristotle's version of democratic factional psychology assumes a perceived equality of individuals that can easily translate to the international arena. According to this psychology any actor perceives itself as an equal to every other. Along these lines, the possessions of any other state would be a valid envy candidate, a state for which any other state could feel displeasure in its deserved (or at least not undeserved) possessions. As long as those possessions are valued by the state that might envy them then, in fact, they are, enviable. It is in keeping with the context of these passages and the wider theory of factions, therefore, to recognize the link between the democratic psychology of factional conflict and aggression.

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Politics* VII.2: 1324b42-1325a6.

⁵¹ Aristotle, *Politics* VII.2: 1324b32-36.

What is clearest in these passages is the constant reference and implication of foreign aggression as tyrannical.⁵² This point is also consistent with the factional roots of aggression. As was argued earlier, tyranny is a non-ideal regime that is an outgrowth of a certain version of democracy. Aristotle claims that the most factious of democratic regimes sows the seeds for the ascent of a demagogue that eventually puts down the dangerous tensions between the factional elements; and he can only do so by force and sustained oppression.⁵³ Aristotle's discussion strongly conveys the point that foreign aggression resembles the tendencies of the tyrant. So it should be no surprise from such a theory, that factional conflict would profoundly nurture the ethos of military aggression.

Aristotle also agrees with Plato that factional conflict makes states vulnerable to foreign aggression when its not making them prone to initiate aggression. On this score, Plato sounds a note of general agreement with Plato for the reasons Plato suggests. The obvious divisions between factions of a city -- but especially the rich and the poor -- make these cities easy targets for the fomenting of instability. Aristotle even goes so far as to underscore the role of both oligarchic and democratic factions in this dynamic. Aristotle concludes as follows:

All regimes are overturned sometimes from within and sometimes from outside, when an opposite sort of regime is either nearby or far away but powerful. This is what happened in the case of the Athenians and the Lacedaemonians: the Athenians overthrew oligarchies everywhere, and the Spartans democracies⁵⁴.

So far, this discussion has argued for the important role that factional conflict plays in wars of aggression in the political thought of both Aristotle and Plato. Each have different understandings of what a faction is and the manner in which it influences foreign aggression. But Aristotle has a special set of reasons for not trying to eliminate conflict altogether. These reasons have little to do with the issue of foreign aggression. But it is still interesting to notice that Aristotle sees a more decisive link between factional conflict and foreign aggression than Plato does; and is also much more worried about the problematic nature of foreign aggression than Plato does. Yet, Aristotle insists that factional conflict is a problem that is here to stay, though it can be limited. Why would Aristotle have us reconcile ourselves to what he takes to be the dangerous incidence of factional conflict, especially in the international arena? Shouldn't Aristotle's theory suggest conclusions that are at least as aggressive in the elimination of factional conflict as Plato's theory suggest; especially since Aristotle actually finds foreign aggression objectionable?⁵⁵

Plato and Aristotle on Aggression: Unity or Self Sufficiency?

It turns out that the standard which Aristotle considers to be a superior principle of political organization than unity -- self sufficiency -- does more for this theory than is usually thought. Plato considers the bonds engendered through preferential associations such as marriage, family, particular friendships, and other voluntary associations to be a strong source of factional conflict. These kinds of associations work together with the incidence of private property and money to induce factional conflict in individuals as they unleash the easily disunified desires of appetite in such a setting, without an education in a setting where the spirited part can be refined and unified. This can only be done in a setting where "all things are held in common". The motivations of the spirited part of the person become unified in a setting where everyone shares property, money, friendships and family in common because only in such a setting can one full identify with the pains and pleasures of others. To feel the pleasure of the success of others

⁵² Aristotle, *Politics* VII.2: 1324b1-1325a15.

⁵³ Aristotle, *Politics* V.5, V.11.

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Politics* VII.2: 1307b20-26.

⁵⁵ This paper has been working from the assumption that the measures outlined in book V of the *Republic* for holding all things in common is a serious plan of action. But this paper only assumes the seriousness of this section of because Aristotle does. And much of the paper turns on what is and is not Aristotle's assumptions. In actuality, there are good reasons to think that the proposals of book V are actually not meant to be taken seriously. The radical nature of these measures are in fact comical. If one sees how drastic the consequences of these proposals are it questions whether the proposal is a solution for anything at all. While this is a controversial point of interpretation, it is probably the best way to read this section. This view seems compatible with the assumption of this paper, since much of it turns on Aristotle's interpretation of Plato.

and the pain of the hardships of others is more difficult when one is separated by family ties, by others who are closer friends to that person, or even by the barrier of unequal status or wealth. These divisions can engender envy, jealousy, misdirected anger, fear, and shame. These are all the passions that energize factional conflict.

Without the training of the spirited part in such a radical community the spirited part cannot be trained to be the natural ally -- though a subordinate to -- reason. And if spirit is not made receptive to reason then spirit can never exert a salutary influence over appetite to teach it that is in its appetitive interests to listen to reason. For without the friendly intermediary of spirit reason can never avoid the power imbalance possessed by appetite, and therefore the indifference of appetite to reason. And in such conditions the overall unity of the person is impossible. Of course, for Plato the disunity of the person quickly translates to an entrenched disunity of the social groups representing the motivations of appetite, spirit, and reason.

From Aristotle's perspective the aim of eliminating factional conflict altogether might be worthwhile if there were a good way to do it. But the alleged solution of holding all property and bonds of private association in common is more of a problem than a solution. For Aristotle it is precisely the natural role of private property and private association that provides a meaningful context for citizens to develop an attachment to their city. The absence of these more specific and private contexts deprives those individuals of an opportunity to be invested in anything at all in the city. For Aristotle, holding all things in common means that no one establishes any meaningful attachment in the city, let alone with the city itself. And the absence of such bonds of identification and personal commitment make people much more likely to be vicious, and certainly less helpful for the city. Instead, a principle of political organization based on the self sufficiency of the city should be fostered. A city is understood as an organization political community constituted by specific parts: households occupied by families and labor, organizations of households into clans, organizations of numerous clans into villages, organizations of villages (or some local structure like it) into towns, and organizations of towns into a city. For Aristotle, the city is the only long term self-sufficient political entity of those listed. So when self-sufficiency is understood as the best standard of political organization it means that it the best principle for achieving the good possible in a city.

But the standard of self-sufficiency is also a better standard of political organization than unity because it best avoids the conditions that lead to foreign aggression. It is an old debate as to whether factional conflict is eradicated by the elimination of private association and property or whether factional conflict is heightened under such conditions. But an additional reason for why self-sufficiency may be a better standard of political organization is that it seems to more effectively reduce the conditions of foreign aggression. In Plato's discussion, the achievement of unity still provides motivation for foreign aggression. Even though the kind of foreign aggression likely under a climate of political unity is probably less erratic and more concerted (than without it), foreign aggression is still likely. What reasons does Plato advance for why even unified cities might initiate wars of aggression? Plato suggests that it is due to a lack of self sufficiency as a good city, that unified cities would wage these wars. Whereas, the disunified cities are more likely to wage these wars due to excessive ambition or greed; that is, for more than what it would take to be a self-sufficient good city.

So there is an unexpected point of agreement between Plato and Aristotle on the issue of self-sufficiency. And this agreement provides an additional reason to think that the principle of self sufficiency is the best standard for political organization. For, in Plato unified and disunified cities cause wars of aggression, whereas unified and self-sufficient cities would have no motivation to initiate wars of aggression. Of course, if it were utterly clear, that producing unified cities through the measures which Plato introduces, then the standard of self-sufficiency would be an alternative with only a trivial advantage to that of unity. For the standard of self sufficiency is only a substantive rival to unity if it comes closer to avoiding the problems of factional conflict than the standard of unity does. And Aristotle does offer good reasons to, at very least, doubt the prospects of Platonic unity. Whether the schemes of the *Republic* would actually increase factional conflict or not need not be shown. Suppose that the principle of self sufficiency provides a standard that comes, even, as close to limiting factional conflict as an imperfect version of a system based on a standard of unity comes to limiting factional conflict. If this is the case, then the role that self-sufficiency plays in limiting foreign aggression, and which Plato concedes, is a weighty reason for thinking that self sufficiency is actually a superior standard of political organization. That is to say, the principle of self-sufficiency is a standard of political organization that best reduces the conditions for foreign aggression because it both limits the onset of an important cause of foreign

aggression -- factional conflict -- *and* can limit the additional motivations for foreign aggression which the best rival account suggests.