

Deliberation, Democracy, and the Rule of Reason in Aristotle's *Politics*

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Deliberative democratic theorists argue that important moral questions turn on whether regimes are sufficiently deliberative. To attribute “deliberativeness” to a regime, we need an account of “deliberative integration” that connects such a holistic assessment to the acts or qualities of individuals and smaller groups. I turn to Aristotle's *Politics* for instruction in developing such accounts, arguing that he judges regimes according to how reliably they act pursuant to excellent common deliberation—a manner of excellent rule that I call the “rule of reason.” I then interpret Aristotle's metaphorical argument for the “wisdom of the multitude” to establish the claim that democracies may best integrate citizens' deliberations. This interpretation illuminates Aristotle's complex evaluation of regimes, including his ambivalent views on the rule of the many. It also suggests a structure for contemporary accounts of deliberative integration helpful even for those who differ from Aristotle in their basic moral concerns.

What makes a regime or state or constitutional order democratic? One of the lessons of deliberative democratic theory is that aggregation of citizens' preferences alone (e.g., through electoral representation) is insufficient to render a regime truly or fully democratic. A regime's democratic quality also depends on the character of political deliberation within the regime. This claim appeals for many reasons, but it raises the difficult question of what it takes to declare a regime sufficiently “deliberative” in the relevant way. How can we attribute deliberativeness, which at first blush seems to be a characteristic of individual citizens or officials, to a constitutional order comprising many people?

This question is an important one if we believe that significant moral and political questions turn on holistic assessments of regimes—that is, if we believe that such questions turn not simply on disaggregated assessments of individual performances, but on whether we can describe a regime or state as “deliberative,” “democratic,” or whatever. Political theorists often talk as if such holistic, regime-level qualities, such as a state's being legitimate (Buchanan 2004, chap. 5) or a society's being “nearly just” (Rawls 1999, 308–12), are that significant. Certainly, prominent deliberative democrats argue that important moral questions—indeed, foundational ones involving the basic justifiability of state action—turn on regime-level assessments of common deliberation (see, e.g., Dryzek 2001, 660–63; Gutmann and Thompson 2004, 3–13; Habermas 1996, 408–9).

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Thus, theories of deliberative democracy in particular, and perhaps political theories generally, confront the philosophical problem of connecting holistic, regime-level assessments to the actions and qualities of the individuals who constitute the regime.

A theory that places moral weight on collective deliberation must develop standards for what constitutes ideal—or at least minimally sufficient—deliberation among individuals who aim to reach a common decision. Theorists have articulated such standards (e.g., Cohen 1989; Habermas 1990), and political scientists have begun to study the extent to which actual practices of political deliberation in relatively small settings, sometimes called “minipublics,” proceed according to such standards (see Goodin and Dryzek 2006; Thompson 2008). But to the extent that we care about the deliberative quality of a regime, we need some account of how these small-scale practices can be integrated into decision-making processes spanning over time and space and very many citizens. Moreover, we need some account of the standards appropriate to such deliberative integration. In a state of any significant size, good deliberation at the regime level cannot mirror, in an enormous “committee of the whole,” the good deliberative practices of a small assembly or jury. Thus, we need to be able to conceive and evaluate processes of deliberative integration at a suitable level of scale and complexity—a problem that commands increasing attention among contemporary deliberative democrats (Chambers 2009; Goodin and Dryzek 2006; Hendriks 2006; Thompson 2008, 513–16).

This problem of articulating standards for deliberative integration is a contemporary one, but it has an ancient pedigree. In this article, I argue that this problem importantly shapes Aristotle's analysis and evaluation of regimes in the *Politics*. For Aristotle, regime quality turns in part on the extent to which the regime engages in political action pursuant to excellent deliberation. Given this standard, Aristotle faces the problem of how to characterize excellent deliberation on the part of a *regime*, as opposed to a single individual. Although his concerns about the character of deliberation vary somewhat from those of many contemporary

deliberative democrats—Aristotle stresses virtuous activity, whereas many deliberative democrats focus more on equality and respect for individual autonomy—the structure of the problem is similar. Moreover, the content of Aristotle's approach to that problem should interest deliberative democrats because, as I argue, he claims that regimes may be at their most deliberatively excellent when most or all citizens take part in political rule. Aristotle thus gives special attention to the problem of how, given citizens of diverse quality and expertise, political institutions and individual practices can combine to produce a suitably deliberative regime. The problem of deliberative integration is a central one for Aristotle, and keeping that problem in mind will help us better understand a number of interpretive questions about the *Politics*. Conversely, although reading the *Politics* cannot replace the difficult philosophical work needed to address contemporary problems of deliberative democracy, Aristotle's work serves as an example of how to approach deliberative integration among many citizens in an institutionally complex and differentiated way, as well as a lesson in the difficulties that confront such integration—difficulties of conceptual analysis, moral evaluation, and institutional implementation. I try to show that his efforts are instructive for contemporary deliberative democrats, even if they do not provide simple off-the-shelf blueprints for our own political challenges.

I organize my investigation of Aristotle's concerns with deliberative integration around the increasingly well-known passage in Book III, Chapter 11, of the *Politics*, in which Aristotle argues that the multitude of citizens has a claim to rule the city best, despite including many people who are far from excellent individuals. The passage presents significant interpretive puzzles, both because of its oblique, metaphorical presentation and because it is not easy to see how it fits with Aristotle's ambivalence toward democratic regimes throughout the *Politics*. I argue that we should understand the passage as part of Aristotle's broader aim to articulate how a regime may be good—in particular, how it may exhibit excellent integrated deliberation, or what I call “the rule of reason.” I outline this Aristotelian standard for evaluating regimes in the first section. In the second, I interpret Aristotle's argument for the wisdom of the multitude as an articulation of how cities may best achieve deliberative integration by having all or most citizens participate in rule. In the third and fourth sections, I show that the evaluative standard discussed in this article's first section, and the account of how best to meet that standard in the second, help us understand the broader structure of Aristotle's analysis and evaluation of regime types—that is, what makes regimes better or worse, and how different regimes compare—as well as clarifying Aristotle's views on cities ruled by the many. His ambivalence toward such cities, I argue, reflects the fact that they can (and do) vary substantially in the quality of their deliberative integration. The argument for the many in Book III, Chapter 11, shows how a diverse citizenry can produce excellent collective deliberation, but it is not an argument that

all democracies will in fact do so. I illustrate these points in the third section by discussing the “correct” version of the rule of the many, the polity, and its relation to Aristotle's ideal regime, while in the fourth section, I discuss the best and worst versions of democracy, the “deviant” version of the rule of the many. These regime investigations continue and extend the inquiry, suggested by the argument for the wisdom of the multitude, into how the deliberative activities of many citizens might be brought together in an excellent whole.

COMMON DELIBERATION AND THE RULE OF REASON

Aristotle presents the argument on behalf of the multitude in Book III, Chapter 11, in the service of the claim that “the many . . . can when joined together be better—not as individuals but all together—than those who are best” (1281a42–b1).¹ In the next section, we examine the grounds of this comparative judgment. But we must first try to understand the standard of comparison: What makes rulers better or worse?

The end “above all” of politics, Aristotle tells us, is living well or finely (1278b20–25, 1280a31–33).² Good rule must enable or promote the good, virtuous living of citizens (1332a33–35, 1324a23–35; *NE* 1099b29–32, *NE* 1103b3–4). One might read this as the simple instrumental view that regimes are better to the extent that their decisions result in the best living by citizens generally, however the regime reaches those decisions. But this view, by ignoring the character of political decision making itself, fails to account for the fact that the “finesness” of citizens' lives depends partly on the quality of their political activity.³ Aristotle declares that “the regime is the way of life of a city,” to which the basic principles of virtue ethics apply (1295a38–b1; see also 1323a40–24a2). Moreover, “a city is excellent . . . by its citizens'—those sharing in the regime—being excellent” (1332a33–35). A citizen sharing in the regime achieves excellence in part through excellent participation in the regime (see 1284a2–4)—that is, through excellent political activity. Thus, the goodness of regimes depends in part on how well those regimes conduct their political activity, and the goodness of individual lives depends in part on the quality of the regime in which they share.

¹ I use the translation of Aristotle's texts by Lord 1984 in the case of the *Politics*, Ostwald 1999 in the case of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Hutton 1982 in the case of the *Poetics*, and Roberts 1984 in the case of the *Rhetoric*. Parenthetical citations are to the *Politics* unless otherwise noted.

² Aristotle also says that the end of politics is the “common advantage,” but I take living well, “both in common and separately” (1278b21–23), to be an important constituent of the common advantage (perhaps the only constituent, along with living itself).

³ This argument does not depend on holding that Aristotle believes that the best life may be a politically active one (on which see Nichols 1992, 126–36). Even if one takes the view that a contemplative, non-political life is best, it is hard to deny that the lives of citizens who are politically active go better or worse according to the quality of their activities. We would only deny this point if we believed that the *only* criterion for evaluating a life was the extent to which it was ideally contemplative. This extreme view is implausible on its merits and not well supported by the text.

How, then, do we determine what constitutes excellent political activity? For Aristotle, just acts are “the kind of acts which a just or self-controlled man would perform,” and that are performed “in the way just and self-controlled men do” (*NE* 1105b5–8). In parallel, we might say that an excellent political act is an act that a politically excellent man would perform, performed in the way he would perform it.⁴ This understanding allows the quality of political action to be determined in part by the good consequences produced by the action—that is, the extent to which it promotes good living.⁵ But the quality of an action is not exhausted by the good ends it produces. Excellence requires a manner of action—the manner of a politically excellent man. What is this manner?

Taking the politically excellent individual as our standard for good rule might lead us to believe that the ideal ruler is an individual—that is, a monarch. Aristotle does, after all, indicate support for monarchy, precisely when it is justified by individual excellence. He suggests that genuine kingship would “rest on the great superiority of the person ruling as king” and would thus be “the first and most divine regime” (1289a39–b1; see also 1284b25–34, 1288a17–29). He points out that if some group’s claim to rule rests on the group’s virtue, then the members must concede that a single individual might be “so outstanding by his excess of virtue . . . that the virtue of all the others and their political capacity is not commensurable with . . . his alone” (1284a3–7).⁶ It is at least conceivable that a monarchy would be the best regime, as it is at least conceivable that such an outstanding individual could exist.

These concessions to monarchism, however, are importantly limited, and these limits show that the “excessively virtuous” king cannot stand in for the politically excellent man who serves as the general standard for virtuous political activity.⁷ Aristotle tells us that absolute kingship “resembles household management . . . for a city” (1285b31–33). But one of the very first lessons of the *Politics* is that “those who suppose that the same person is expert in political rule, kingly rule, [and] household management . . . do not argue rightly”

(1252a7–9). The disenfranchisement of all other citizens by the absolute king effectively subjects them to mastery (like that of a household manager over slaves), a kind of nonpolitical rule that even for the master is inferior to “the way of life of the free person” (1325a23–27, 1333b27–29; see Nichols 1992, 74–84, 144–45). Aristotle underscores this nonpolitical character of the king with his repeated references to the divinity or godlike quality of the man meriting absolute kingship (1284a10–11, 1284b29–31, 1289a39–40). One of the basic contrasts in the opening pages of the *Politics* is between human individuals and an individual who “is in need of nothing through being self-sufficient” and, therefore, “is no part of the city, and so is either a beast or a god” (1253a28–29). Like a god, the absolute king “can no longer be regarded as part of the city” given his excessive superiority (1284a7–8). He is apolitical in the basic sense of not being part of the polis, and his disproportionate regime is “contrary to nature” (1284b7–17). Humans, in contrast, are “political animals” because of our unique capacity for speech, our “partnership” in which “serves to reveal the advantageous and the harmful, and hence also the just and the unjust” (1253a2–18).⁸ That capacity could conceivably be used only for coordinating with, instructing, or commanding one’s “partners.” But although such univocal speech may be appropriate for a god-ruled household, it is not for the polis, which ought to involve “political” rule—defined as rule among equals rather than a relationship of mastery and servitude (1277b7–10; Newell 1987, 170–71; Nichols 1992, 74–76).⁹ To the extent that we are *political* animals, we are animals who discourse among, roughly speaking, equals (Bickford 1996, 4; Waldron 1995, 576). Thus, to say the king is godlike is to venerate him and his regime, but also to alert readers that the topic has been changed away from human political philosophy. The divinity of kingship makes the regime’s superiority more secure, but if its primacy depends on its *sui generis* character, then its significance for more profane human politics diminishes. True kingship involves a state of exception from the principles of human virtue, and so those principles cannot take their cues from that regime or its ruler.

Acting the way a politically excellent man would therefore does not amount to acting monarchically (or divinely), if that implies solitary reflection and command. On the contrary, Aristotle tells us that excellent political men do *not* act as if they were monarchs. [Aristotle’s example of a man of practical wisdom capable of “managing . . . states” is Pericles—not a monarch but a leader of democratic Athens (*NE* 1140b4–11; see Mara 1998, 314).] In general, “when great issues are at stake, we distrust our own abilities

⁴ Why specify the *politically* excellent man as the standard, rather than the man who is excellent *tout court*? I use the former primarily as a matter of emphasis. [Aristotle says that political wisdom [*politikē*] and practical wisdom [*phronesis*] are “both the same characteristic” (*NE* 1141b24).] However, using the specifically politically excellent man as a standard also helps us sidestep questions about whether the truly excellent man would avoid politics altogether.

⁵ Exactly how one identifies which acts are excellent (and the extent to which good outcomes contribute to the excellence of acts) in a virtue-ethical theory is a complicated matter that I cannot address here. Robert Audi (1995, 465–68) has a helpful discussion.

⁶ They must also concede the possibility that an even bigger group might be more virtuous: Aristotle’s discussion of absolute kingship is repeatedly inflected with echoes of the argument for the wisdom of the multitude (1286a25–b7, 1287b13–15, 1288a34–37).

⁷ Nichols (1992, 72–81) presents a number of reasons to believe that Aristotle views the claim to absolute kingship with skepticism and some irony. I defend here the weaker (and compatible) proposition that the absolute king does not define the standard for virtuous political activity, a proposition I argue is valid even if we take at face value Aristotle’s claim that absolute kingship (when merited) is the best regime.

⁸ Aristotle’s word for speech, *logos*, refers not only to voicing language, but also to reasoning or engaging in reasoned argument. See, for example, Martin Ostwald’s glossary in Aristotle [1962] 1999, 310.

⁹ Aristotle insists that the ideal city not be so large that one could only be heard by other citizens if one had “the voice of Stentor,” the legendary herald. The (monarchic?) “Stentorian” orator would speak but would not be (publicly) spoken to, and in this univocal context, “it is not easy for a regime to be present” (1326b2–7). See Nichols 1992, 138–39.

as insufficient to decide the matter and call in others to join us in our deliberations" (*NE* 1112b9–11). In the inexact and unpredictable matters of ethics and politics (*NE* 1112a34–b1, *NE* 1112b7–8), even virtuous individuals benefit from expanding their deliberation to include others (see Yack 2006, 419–21). The most supremely happy and virtuous men also benefit from friends with whom they can engage in common action, and from whom they may get "training in virtue or excellence" (*NE* 1170a4–12), in large part by "sharing each other's words and thoughts" (*NE* 1170b12–13). Even monarchs at their best engage in deliberation and action in common with others: Individual monarchs "create many eyes for themselves, and ears, feet, and hands as well; for those who are friendly to their rule and themselves they make corulers" (1287b29–32). Because, according to Aristotle, reliance on others for advice and for execution of one's decisions requires seeing them as friends, and because friendship involves an acknowledgment that the friend is "someone similar and equal," the monarch's entry into partnerships of speech and action with his counselors commits him to recognizing their equal entitlements to share in rule (1287b32–34). (A monarch who had no corulers would either have no friends and thus be incapable of acting well, or would do injustice to his friends by denying their claims to share in rule. Again, there may be an exception for the divine monarch.) Politics as an enterprise of living and acting well together requires even excellent individuals to develop deliberative partnerships in pursuit of the good and the just.

The way in which politically excellent men act, then, is through common deliberation aimed at producing good and just action. Individuals engage in excellent political action when they participate with other citizens in such deliberation, which then issues in the decision on and execution of excellent political acts. Regimes display excellence—they better instantiate and promote the political end of living well—when they reliably produce excellent actions issuing from processes of citizen deliberation aimed at good and just decisions. This action according to conscious common choice structured by regular processes and habits of deliberation parallels the virtuous individual agent's conscious choice "spring[ing] from a firm and unchangeable character" (*NE* 1105a30–34). Borrowing a phrase from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I call this model of excellent rule—this standard of regime virtue—"the rule of reason" (*NE* 1134a35–36). This phrase is not meant to suggest that excellent rule requires radical alienation from the nonrational, appetitive part of the soul. Rather, ideal political deliberations regulate desires, as well as the satisfaction of desires, according to common reasoning about the requirements of justice and virtue.¹⁰ Reason rules in excellent cities in the sense that the conclusions of serious common deliberation

about what are the best or most just actions actually determine regime behavior.

In saying that "reason rules" in an excellent regime, I do not mean to evoke any extravagant vision of an anthropomorphized "reason": Of course, in any regime, people rule. But I do mean to capture an important aspect of the way in which people ideally rule, and to leave open exactly how many or which people might rule in that way. The rule of reason is a general standard of excellence for all regimes, in the same way as is ruling "with a view to the common advantage" (1279a28–29). It remains to be seen what regimes might meet the standard. If the need for joint deliberations over "great issues" moves us away from solitary monarchical (we might say "monological" as opposed to "dialogical") political reasoning, it does not necessarily move us all the way to democratic inclusion. Perhaps we should only consult the few best; perhaps we only should be in "political" relationships with the excellent. (Maybe "we," you and I, would not qualify!) We still need to know who should take part in the deliberations that help constitute excellent politics, and how to sustain the habits and institutions necessary to preserve a regime's "firm character" of deliberative practice—that is, how to establish and sustain a deliberatively well-integrated regime. In the rest of this article, I suggest that Aristotle's discussion of the wisdom of the multitude goes to the heart of these questions. The many make a powerful claim not only to produce good political acts, but also to do so in the way a good regime would. This is why the many may rule better than the best but few.

THE MULTITUDE'S MANY-FACED WISDOM

Aristotle does not believe that many individuals lead fully virtuous lives (1301b40–02a2, 1276b37–38, 1279a39–b1, 1304b4–5). Nevertheless, he apparently endorses the view that the multitude of citizens may rule better than the few best individuals. Here is his primary explanation in full:

The many, of whom none is individually an excellent man, nevertheless can when joined together be better—not as individuals but all together—than those who are best, just as dinners contributed by many can be better than those equipped from a single expenditure. For because they are many, each can have a part of virtue and prudence, and on their joining together, the multitude, with its many feet and hands and having many senses, becomes like a single human being, and so also with respect to character and mind. Thus the many are also better judges of the works of music and of the poets; some appreciate a certain part, and all of them, all the parts. (1281a44–b9)

Aristotle does consider some inequalities to be sufficient grounds for exclusion from rule, as in the cases of women or natural slaves.¹¹ Moreover, Aristotle's brief

¹⁰ For the parallel point in the individual case, see *NE* 1119b11–19; see also Frank 2005, 72–73. I should add that my account of the "rule of reason" is not meant to be a specific gloss on Aristotle's passing use of the phrase.

¹¹ Here I assume the orthodox interpretation that Aristotle believes that women would not (perhaps should not) participate in political rule. (This is why I use male pronouns when referring to Aristotle's citizens.) For an extended defense of this interpretation, see Dobbs 1996; for a contrasting view, see Levy 1990.

on behalf of the multitude of free males only extends to “a certain kind of multitude,” one sufficiently superior to “beasts” (1281b18–21). Nevertheless, he takes the position that inequality of virtue does not itself justify exclusionary political practices, even if one accepts the broadly aristocratic premise that political rule should promote and instantiate virtue in the way I outline at the beginning of the article.

Aristotle’s reasons for endorsing what Jeremy Waldron (1995, 564) calls “the Doctrine of the Wisdom of the Multitude,” or DWM, are hardly transparent.¹² In this section, I try to clarify why ordinary citizens have a claim to rule well. I argue that DWM shows how wide participation in rule can reliably and sustainably produce good political acts, in the way a good city would—through civic-minded common deliberation. I do not depart much from Waldron’s excellent analysis of the passage, but I aim to extend that analysis by filling in some important interpretive detail. I thereby hope to dispel doubts as to whether Aristotle sincerely means to defend DWM in his own voice (e.g., Lindsay 1992a; Mulgan 1977, 106; Winthrop 1978). Understanding the grounds for the doctrine in a more fine-grained fashion will also help us understand Aristotle’s ambivalent treatment of the cities ruled by the many elsewhere in the *Politics* because DWM is not a proof that the many always or usually rule best, but an explanation of how and why they could achieve excellent deliberative integration.

Aristotle does not provide a straightforward argument for DWM as much as a series of illustrative metaphors and similes.¹³ Thus, my interpretation of Aristotle’s position largely consists of an interpretation of these metaphors. A brief word may be in order about the method and purpose behind this lengthy exercise.

According to Aristotle’s own view, metaphors enlighten readers by revealing subtle likenesses or relationships between different objects (*Poet.* 1457b7–8, 1459a5–7; *Rhet.* 1412a9–12) (e.g., by describing some object *A* with reference to another object *B*). But the metaphor will not help readers understand object *A* if they do not know much about object *B* or cannot perceive the relationship between the objects (*Rhet.* 1405a33–36, *Rhet.* 1406b6–8, *Rhet.* 1410b32–33). As readers lose knowledge of the author’s social and linguistic context, a metaphor that among an author’s contemporaries would have constituted “impressive diction” could devolve into an obscure “riddle” (*Poet.* 1458a21–27), or, perhaps worse, the reader may perceive a relationship between objects that was never

¹² I follow Waldron (1995, 564) in thinking that the phrase “summation argument” sometimes used to describe this passage can be misleading (see also Keyt 1991, 271). Thus, I hope the reader can excuse my use of Waldron’s slightly ungainly term and abbreviation.

¹³ Harry Jaffa (1963, 108) suggests that Aristotle’s use of analogies shows that Aristotle only means to attribute “analogical virtue” to the many. However, this comes close to denying Aristotle’s own claim that metaphor can *strengthen* argumentative prose (*Rhet.* 1405a5–9; see also Frank 2005, 95–98; Kirby 1997, 536–37, 547); it is not limited, as Jaffa implies, to rendering half-hearted substitutes for arguments. Jaffa also underplays the content of the metaphors, which, I argue, supports the explicit claim that the many have a claim to rule on the basis of their collective virtue. See also Nichols 1992, 195–96 fn. 23.

understood by the author. Understanding Aristotle’s metaphor-laden defense of DWM, therefore, requires some effort to recover what he thinks about the relevant objects of comparison, and what he might have expected his audience to think. Without pretending to undertake the Herculean hermeneutic task of completely recovering the Aristotelian context, I think his texts provide enough clues to give us confidence about the proper interpretation of his defense of the wisdom of the multitude.

I organize my interpretation around the three central metaphors in Aristotle’s primary presentation of DWM in the long passage quoted previously: the dinner provided by the many; the many-handed, many-footed human; and the many as judges of music. I then conclude this section with an explanation of how the institutional consequences Aristotle draws from DWM support the claim implied by the metaphors—that the rule of the many encourages relatively conscientious deliberation characterized by good judgment and effective execution.

Community and Plurality: Dinner with the Many

Aristotle first compares the many’s collective excellence to those dinners that “contributed by many can be better than those equipped from a single expenditure” (1281b1–2). Apparently, assuming that “dinners contributed by many” must be affairs of rather poor taste, some commentators suggest that Aristotle means that the many’s claim to political excellence is similarly dubious (Lindsay 1992a, 104–5; Winthrop 1978, 159). But these doubts take too much for granted about good dining.

Skepticism about the many’s dinner is rooted in an overly narrow view of how the many can contribute and of what makes a dinner best. The fact that the many, by each contributing to a dinner, can outdo one “equipped by a single expenditure” refutes oligarchic claims to preeminence by showing that the many together may have more wealth than any oligarch or even the rich class as a whole (see 1283a40–42, 1283b30–34). The multitude’s resource base suggests something important about their capacity for action (see Keyt 1991, 253)—a point to which I return in the next section. But we should not take this point to represent the democratic acceptance of flawed oligarchic standards of justice, according to which the wealthiest group is entitled to rule (1279a18–25; cf. Lindsay 1992a, 104–5). The multitude’s claim to dining excellence (and, in parallel, political excellence) lies elsewhere.

According to Aristotle, it is not just the cuisine that makes a dinner excellent; it is also, and essentially, the communal practice of sharing a meal—of socializing, learning habits of cooperation and civility, and taking pleasure and rest together (Nichols 1992, 67). Aristotle repeatedly recommends the institution of the “common messes” or “friend’s messes,” in which citizens eat together, as a way to make the city “one and common” through “habits” in a way that, unlike Socrates’

social engineering schemes in Plato's *Republic*, respects the city's internal plurality (1263a30–64a1, 1271a27). [Notably, tyrannies forbid common messes as one of several institutions that promote “high thoughts and trust” among citizens (1313a39–b1).] Aristotle prefers the collective, rather than individual, provision of these messes (1272a14–21, 1330a3–13), in accord with his general view that individuals and the city benefit from the practices of virtue that accompany common use of private possessions (on which, see Frank 2005, 76–79). The many contribute to an excellent dinner not by gathering enough money or food to mimic a generous oligarch, but rather by developing a cooperative practice that provides the city both material and social sustenance.

This wider view of the practice of dining diminishes the significance of complaints that the food provided by the many would taste worse (Nichols 1992, 195 fn. 20; Waldron 1995, 567; Winthrop 1978, 159). “Potluck” dinners need not lack good taste in a way that would matter to Aristotle. The variety of foods might reflect the propitious heterogeneity of the city, even as the common meal promotes social integration (Waldron 1995, 567–68).¹⁴ In any case, judging meals solely with respect to the taste of the food arguably embraces a metric that—if used exclusively and immoderately—Aristotle considers self-indulgent and almost bestial (*NE* 1118a23–b4). A similar point emerges when he later reintroduces the gastronomic theme, arguing that “once mixed with those who are better, [the multitude of citizens] bring benefit to cities, just as impure sustenance mixed with the pure makes the whole more useful than the small amount of the latter, but each separately is incomplete with respect to judging” (1281b35–38). *Pace* Winthrop (1978, 159), this mixing analogy fits with the view that the different parts of the city may unite in an excellent common project of feasting or deliberating, even if some of the parts on their own are not elevated or fine. “Impure,” after all, does not mean “poisonous”; moreover, in ancient Greek culture, diluting (pure, potent) wine with (mundane) water was a sign of civilization and moderation against barbaric, sensuous, self-indulgence.¹⁵ Instead of taking a gourmand's view of a dinner, we should consider the whole contribution of the dining experience to the well-being of the participants, in which pleasurable taste may be one, but only one, component. This holistic score is more relevant to Aristotle's political purposes in intro-

ducing the metaphor, and one on which the many may justly claim superiority.

The dinner metaphor teaches that the experience of common work in a social endeavor brings important benefits for which mere resource provision cannot substitute. Participation in the common work of politics may promote civic friendship and concord (e.g., *NE* 1167a26–30; *Pol.* 1295b23–27)—if not erasing conflict, then at least motivating citizens to resolve conflicts through common political processes (Yack 1993, 125–27). This concord improves citizens by making them more willing to recognize others as fellow contributors to common life and action, and more motivated to pursue just and good decisions rather than their own partisan agendas.¹⁶ These consequences would likely improve both the internal quality of political practice and the quality of the resulting decisions.

Capacity and Integration: The Many-handed City

Aristotle says that “on their joining together, the multitude, with its many feet and hands and having many senses, becomes like a single human being, and so also with respect to character and mind” (1281b5–7). Delba Winthrop (1978, 159 fn.11) argues that by using the image of a being with “many feet and hands,” Aristotle implies that the many's rule will be “monstrous.” But this conclusion is too quick. In another passage, Aristotle explicitly connects excess body parts with political excellence, writing that “it would perhaps be held to be odd if someone should see better with two eyes, judge better with two ears, and act better with two feet and hands than many persons would with many” (1287b25–29).¹⁷ (Remember from the beginning of this article that the best monarchs generate extra eyes and hands for themselves by creating deliberative “corulers.” Monarchs become excellent when they act with the “many-handed” plurality of the wise multitude.) Moreover, perhaps the best-known beings of many heads and many hands in ancient Greek culture were the Hecatoncheires or Hundred-Handers, mythological 50-headed, 100-handed creatures who serve as a cosmic warning not to judge by appearances. As the ancient poet Hesiod retells the popular story in his *Theogony*, the Hundred-Handers are imprisoned by

¹⁴ Nichols (1992, 66) suggests that meals would require coordination by preeminent individuals, but planning could occur through more egalitarian means (see Waldron 1995, 570–71). In any case, some official leadership is consistent with Aristotle's institutional vision for implementing DWM (see what follows). Democratic deliberative integration need not involve strict equality in political power.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Homer, *Odyssey* 9.200–15, 353–63 (Cyclopes' barbarism exemplified by refusal to dilute wine); Herodotus, *Histories* 6.84 (Spartan king goes mad after drinking wine in foreign, unmixed fashion); Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters*, 2.35c–38e (unhealthy drinking and drunkenness associated with unmixed wine), 10.423b–431f (collecting sources discussing the proper mixture of wine); Theophrastus, *Characters*, 4.9 (the “Boor” “drinks his wine too strong”). Thanks to Kellam Conover for pointing me to these sources.

¹⁶ Aristotle claims that “friends enhance our ability to think and act” (*NE* 1155a14–16). He uses the same quote from Homer (“when two go together . . .”) that he is glossing there to illustrate his reprise of DWM against the claims of monarchy in Book III, Chapter 16, of the *Politics*. These passages thus connect the wisdom of the multitude, civic friendship, and virtuous action.

¹⁷ In contrast, Aristotle uses the image of *fewer* or isolated body parts to represent conditions of anarchy, violence, and political impotence—for instance, in his invocation of the lawless and warlike one-eyed Cyclopes (1252b23–24; *NE* 1180a27–29), or in his use of the image of an isolated hand or foot to represent the poor condition of individuals outside the city (1253a19–27). Aristotle does, when criticizing lawless democracy, quote Homer's line that “many-headed rule is not good” (1292a14–15), but he is unsure exactly what type of rule Homer means to criticize, implying that it matters just how the many join together politically into one (i.e., how they integrate their deliberations).

their father Sky (Uranus), who is “indignant” at their “form and size,” but Zeus frees them and they play a decisive role in the Olympian gods’ defeat of the Titans (*Th.* 617–720). The Hundred-Handers are almost unique among Hesiod’s monsters in using their power as hybrid creatures to support, rather than undermine, the order of the cosmos (Clay 1993, 106–7), and by Hesiod’s account, they explicitly recognize the claim of wisdom, rather than brute strength, to rule (*Th.* 654–663; Blickman 1987, 31). In the context of this well-known story,¹⁸ the image of many heads and many hands evokes beings whose crudeness or ugliness need not prevent them from using their power—and their combination of individuality and plurality—to advance the cause of wisdom, justice, and order. The city of the many may be like the Hundred-Handers in being a strange but ultimately salubrious mix of beastliness, humanity, and divinity (Clay 1993, 113).¹⁹

This literary excursus casts doubt on claims that Aristotle’s comparison of the multitude to a many-limbed creature implies a disavowal of the democratic argument. The image also provides some clues about the positive case for the multitude. The “many eyes” and “many senses” of a multitude of corulers suggest adeptness at gathering information. Aristotle explicitly connects “many ears” with good judgment, gesturing at citizens’ mutual attentiveness—which can both promote trust and concord (Bickford 1996, 35–41) and improve the transmission and synthesis of important, politically relevant knowledge (Ober 2008, chap. 3). He connects “many hands” and “many feet” with quality of action—implying that superior capacity for executing political judgments may accompany expansion of the scale of rulership. Aristotle doubts whether a few excellent citizens could ever have the basic capacity to act effectively in common (1283b10–12, 1287b7). By increasing the number of people engaged in the activity of ruling, the city becomes better able to manifest its judgments through action—just as the Olympian gods finally overthrew the Titans by freeing the unsightly but remarkably effective boulder-throwing Hundred-Handers. The rule of the many may therefore have significant advantages over other regimes in the basic political skills of knowing, judging, and acting.

Moderation and Expertise: The Judgment of Journeymen

As seen, Aristotle suggests that many people judge better with their many ears than one person does with

just two (1287b25–29). Aristotle elaborates on this connection between the multitude’s good listening and its good judgment when he says that “the many are also better judges of the works of music and of the poets; some appreciate a certain part, and all of them all the parts” (1281b7–9). Some commentators see this as a sly denial of both the aesthetic and political judgment of ordinary citizens (Lindsay 1992a, 104–5; Mulgan 1977, 105; Winthrop 1978, 159 fn.11). But Aristotle’s views on musical judgment nicely fit the democratic claim to excellence.

Aristotle does insist that good aesthetic judgment requires some experience in producing music (1340b22–25; *NE* 1181a17–23), rejecting the Spartan view that ones who “do not learn themselves [to make music], nevertheless are capable of judging correctly” (1339a42–b4). But experience does not mean expertise (*pace* Lindsay 1992a, 105), and Aristotle advocates against teaching citizens to become musical experts (1340b36–41a15, 1341b9–18). Modest musical training has a number of benefits, not least habituating players to “judging in correct fashion . . . respectable characters and noble actions” (1340a16–b11), something very close to the development of prudence (*phronesis*) necessary for quality deliberation and virtue (see also 1341a13–14). A multitude of the moderately trained, moreover, may judge music well because its members variously recognize different kinds or sources of excellence (see Ober 2008, 111–13). Expertise, however, diverts the player from this development of prudence into the mastery of the “art” (*techne*) involved in producing “those works that are difficult and extraordinary” (1341a9–13). Musical expertise thus undermines virtue in several ways: it may “make the body vulgar and useless with a view to military and political training” (1341a6–7), it promotes a “vulgar” obsession with winning performance contests and producing “crude pleasure” in audiences (1341b9–18), and it encourages the category mistake of confusing the prudence that accompanies excellent action with the skill involved in artful production (see *NE* 1140a1–b30).

Musically, Aristotle believes that the city is best populated not by a few maestros, but by many people with modest participatory experience. The political parallels are striking. Those with ambitions for extraordinary expertise seek recognition of their mastery through cheap flattery and the satisfaction of the base pleasures of the population. This, for Aristotle, is the behavior of demagogues and tyrants (1313b39–14a4, 1319b26–29, 1292a17–28). Such experts may cease to view politics as a matter of activity guided by prudence, instead conceiving it wholly as a matter of production guided by art—an attitude befitting mastery more than political rule (see Newell 1987, 162–68).²⁰ In contrast, modest experience through participation in music teaches citizens how to appreciate others’ performances and to recognize their own limitations, just as modest

¹⁸ Aristotle was certainly familiar with Hesiod’s works, including the *Theogony*, explicitly referencing the author and quoting lines from various poems (e.g., 1252b11, 1312b5; for a list of Aristotle’s references, including some to the *Theogony*, see Hesiod 2006, 245–49). Moreover, the basic outlines of the myth were widely known prior to and apart from Hesiod’s poem (Mondi 1986).

¹⁹ More generally, Aristotle doubts that the human form (with its two feet, two hands, and so on) is the universal standard of beauty and value. He scoffs at the “ridiculous” idea of imposing human standards on the gods (*NE* 1101b19–20) and observes with scholarly skepticism the fact that “human beings assimilate . . . the looks of the gods to themselves” (1252b25–26).

²⁰ This is not to deny that politics might sometimes involve art; see Frank 2005, 44–46. The problem arises when the expert sees politics solely as art, and ignores the large scope of political activity that ought to be regulated by prudence.

political participation teaches citizens not only how to rule, but also—and essentially—how to be ruled and to appreciate others' claims (1277b7–22, 1261a29–b5, 1333a2–12). This mutual recognition of the different “parts” of the city (like the different “parts” or constituents of a work of music) characterizes a “political multitude” (1288a14–16, 1288a33–37)—that is, a multitude in a polity, ruled by the many—and one guided by law (1287a16–18).²¹ The many can institutionally express this recognition of different parts of the city, for example, by having officials from different “tribes, quarters, or clans” rule in turn (1300a23–27). The aesthetic metaphor thereby conveys Aristotle's conviction that a broad base of moderate competence promotes more virtuous politics than a sharp separation between an expert elite and an unpracticed political audience. Stark differentiation between rulers and ruled generally produces not aristocracy or virtuous kingship, but rather “a city not of free persons but of slaves and masters” (1295b18–22).

What about the true experts, those whose extraordinary virtue prevents their corruption? Aristotle admits that such people might exist (1324b32–33, 1326a3–4). But he believes that true *aristoi* rarely assert claims for rule (1301a38–39, 1304b3–5), in part because many virtuous persons seek leisure for philosophical contemplation (1324a25–33, 1325a16–21; *NE* 1177a11–79a33). He also doubts that there really exist people so virtuously disproportionate to ordinary citizens as to remove them from the political enterprises of mutual deliberation, ruling, and being ruled, “there being none so different from the ruled as Scylax says the kings in India are” (1332b23–24). Although divine greatness may merit special entitlement to rule, for humans, permanent rulership and the disposition to develop mastery over others—even and especially over radical inferiors—degrade character and ultimately judgment itself. History, says Aristotle, confirms that rulers in regimes commonly called aristocracies often “aggrandize themselves” and cause the regime to collapse through unjust rule (1307a33–35, 1307a20–25). Thus, it is “hazardous” to have “the same persons always ruling” (1264b6–7), even if they begin as people of superior virtue.²² Regimes built around the rule of multitudes may better capture the benefits of expertise because the experts will be moderated by their practice in being ruled, whereas ordinary citizens will have sufficient experience in ruling to recognize expertise when appropriate. Individuals and communities sustain good judgment most reliably by fostering a roughly egalitarian context rather than pursuing or rewarding vaulting ambition.

Aristotle returns to this critique of the political claims of expertise two paragraphs after introducing

the musical metaphor. He rejects suggestions that political experts should only be judged by other experts (high officials, perhaps) (1281b39–82a3), both “because of the previous argument” (a reference to DWM) and because “there are some arts concerning which the maker might not be the only or the best judge, but where those who do not possess the art also have some knowledge of its works” (1282a14–19). The argument instructs makers (i.e., rulers) that their judgment will improve to the extent that they also become “users” (i.e., ruled) (1282a19–23). Apart, perhaps, from the quasimythical divine king—the pure political maker—the few eyes and ears of even the most excellent individuals are insufficient to give them panoptic knowledge of what is good for others, whether in economic production, exchange, or political action (Frank 2005, 94). Ordinary citizens—users without experience “making” in the great offices—may have insight into performance in those offices, particularly when the users' judgments are collectivized properly. Moreover, if, as Jill Frank (61) argues, “proper use” for Aristotle involves using a thing “in a way that allows it to be what it is,” good users of rule allow rule to be (proper) rule. Users actualize rule through recognition: they recognize authority (of laws and officials), expertise, and different parts of the city as each capable of contributing to deliberation and action. [Self-aggrandizing experts, in contrast, are virtually defined by their refusal to recognize others; at the limit, lawless, Cyclopean kings recognize—“see”—virtually no one (1252b19–25).] Proper recognition is hardly passive obedience: it involves a variety of deliberative dispositions requiring cultivation and exercise. It also involves official responsibility through participation in collective bodies such as juries and assemblies, the institutional embodiment of users' judgment. The user/maker analogy continues and extends Aristotle's insight that those of diverse, partial, and limited virtue may be well suited for excellent collective deliberation. Although many members of the multitude fall short of the full excellence that would qualify them to be counselors and virtue friends to the *aristoi*, they may nevertheless be equipped with what we might loosely call “integrative virtues”: regularly manifested dispositions that enable them to interact in coordination with large groups of others in ways that produce excellent common action.²³ These dispositions—to share in common work, to communicate and receive political knowledge, to recognize the expertise of different citizens, and so on—do not themselves render their possessors virtuous individuals; but an adequate distribution of the dispositions can nevertheless secure an excellent regime.

The Multitude's Rule of Reason

Aristotle concludes his presentation of DWM by outlining its institutional consequences, which further emphasize the aim to actualize the deliberative quality of

²¹ On these mutual connections between citizens' habits of moderation and restraint, their willingness to rule and be ruled, “political” rule, and the rule of law, see Frank 2005, 135–36; Kraut 2002, 381–82, 390; Nichols 1992, 38, 94; Yack 1993, 194–208.

²² I take this phrase, closing Aristotle's discussion of the *Republic*, to refute the suggestion he floats earlier that “it is clear that it is better if the same always rule, where this is possible” (1261a38–39; see Nichols 1992, 39).

²³ These qualities are only loosely called “integrative virtues” because I do not claim they are necessarily virtues in the strict Aristotelian sense. We might think of them as “parts of virtue” (1281b4–5), but not much turns on the point.

the multitude. He argues that ordinary citizens should “share in deliberating and judging” (1281b31–32): They should “choose officials and audit them” (1281b33–34), and participate in assemblies, councils, and juries (1282a32–41). Throughout the *Politics*, Aristotle claims that deliberation and judgment are definitive activities of political offices, describing the people making up authoritative political institutions as the “deliberative element” of the city (1298a4–9; see also 1329a2–4). He also considers participation “in an office involving deliberation or decision” to be definitive of citizenship itself (1275b17–20; see Ober 1998, 319). This emphasis on deliberation as *the* fundamental political activity suggests that the multitude’s claim to rule has to do with the quality of citizens collectively as deliberators.

This connection between deliberative quality and political entitlement harkens back to Aristotle’s understanding of our nature as “political animals” (see Waldron 1995, 575–77). There is a tight verbal parallel between ordinary citizens’ entitlement to enter into that “element” of the city that “deliberates concerning the advantageous things and judges concerning the just things” (1329a2–4), and the human, political speech that “serves to reveal the advantageous and the harmful, and hence also the just and the unjust” (1253a14–15). *Politics* at its core involves (interpersonal) deliberation and judgment about the just and the good. Ordinary citizens merit participation in this core political practice. Aristotle has what David Keyt (1991, 248, citing 1282b30–83a2) calls “fitness” and “contribution” criteria for distributing political office: Offices should go to those who will best make contributions appropriate to politics.²⁴ Thus, citizens’ entitlements must stem from the quality of their contribution to the political practice of deliberation.²⁵

DWM does not entail popular entitlements to staff individual offices: The virtues of collective deliberation tell us little about which individuals should hold a given office (1281b26–27; Keyt 1991, 272; Kraut 2002, 367; Ober 1998, 319). Therefore, DWM may be consistent with a limited conception of democratic citizenship that admits popular entitlements to participate in collective bodies, but not the “greatest offices” (1281b26). Even on a restrictive reading of Aristotle’s views of the

qualifications for office, however,²⁶ DWM establishes that the multitude should have *ex ante* and *ex post* control over officials (through election and auditing), as well as the substantial powers generally invested in the assembly, the council, and the courts (see Manin 1997, chap. 1). Thus, DWM shows that the multitude “justly has authority over greater things” (i.e., the offices) (1282a37–38), and that deliberative popular participation is an important constituent of an excellent manner of ruling—a constituent, that is, of the rule of reason.

Aristotle’s broad institutional conclusions from DWM dovetail with his metaphorical suggestions that the rule of the many may reliably produce excellent political action on the basis of good deliberation. The many possess among them the integrative virtues enabling them collectively to deliberate with an orientation toward the good and the just, and to act on the basis of its deliberations. Because collective deliberation tends to improve its participants, this collective political excellence may be stable and self-sustaining in a way that aristocratic or monarchic deliberation, with its problem of mastery over excluded citizens, generally is not. The rule of the many, therefore, may best be able to establish the habits and institutions that amount to the “firm and unchanging character” of a regime necessary to produce virtuous politics.

Aristotle’s vision of democratic excellence is not a guarantee, however. The integrative virtues do not develop and actualize themselves: Ordinary citizens may be especially suited to such qualities, but that does not mean they will acquire and collectively express them in all social and political conditions. Moreover, such virtues need institutional fora for their expression and continued development. Thus, the possibility of good collective deliberating and judging does not ensure that all expressions of the rule of the many will constitute the rule of reason. This is why, for all Aristotle’s support of DWM expressed in the metaphors, it is not his last word on the rule of the many. On the contrary, it is a beginning: It leaves open how different ways of politically organizing groups might succeed in the task of deliberative integration. That is, it leaves open how good different regimes are. Understanding DWM, however, informs the task of analyzing and evaluating regimes by showing how large groups of people might implement the rule of reason, and by suggesting how they might fall short. Having surveyed the components of excellent deliberative integration, we can better understand Aristotle’s moral appraisal of cities ruled by the many—an appraisal notable for the ambivalence with which it treats the multitudes who have such potential for wisdom.

²⁴ A contribution, as I understand Aristotle, is partly constituted by the extent one’s actions flow properly from one’s capacities (or, in the collective case, how one’s participation will integrate with others to produce actions flowing from reliable institutions, collective habits, and so on). “Contribution” is not merely performance considered apart from capacity, or apart from manner of performance. Therefore, I take this claim about Aristotle’s “contribution criteria” to be broadly compatible with Jill Frank’s (1998) nuanced account of Aristotle’s criteria for distributing offices.

²⁵ The deliberative explanation for collective wisdom fits better with Aristotle’s text than other possible explanations. Broadly utilitarian explanations emphasizing aggregation of private preferences without common deliberation fit poorly with the antihedonistic strands of Aristotle’s arguments (Waldron 1995, 569–70). Sometimes Aristotle’s argument is said to foreshadow Condorcet’s jury theorem, which turns on the increasing probability of a majority’s getting a decision right as the number of voters increases, as long as each has a greater-than-random probability of getting the decision right. However, Ober (2008, 111–12) and Estlund (2008, 232) both convincingly distinguish DWM from the ideas behind the jury theorem.

²⁶ Aristotle may have supported a type of caste exclusion from high office along the lines of Solon’s constitution (compare 1281b32–34 with 1273b34–74a21). Yet, he seems to consider openness of offices consistent with polity and even aristocracy (e.g., 1300a8–b4). This would be true, presumably, as long as those selected for office are generally good—such selection itself arguably being largely a matter of good deliberative integration.

THE GOOD MANY: THE IDEAL REGIME AND THE PLACE OF POLITY

If we see the argument for the wisdom of the multitude as a conclusive defense of the superiority of rule by the many, then Aristotle's more detailed evaluation of regime types, including his belief that democracies are deviant regimes and his stated preference for monarchies and aristocracies (1289a38–b4), would seem to contradict that argument, perhaps even casting its sincerity into doubt. If, however, we view DWM as a guideline for good deliberative integration, or an identification of components, accessible to the many, which reveal the potential for such integration, we see Aristotle's evaluation and comparison of regimes in a different, and, I believe, clearer light. His ambivalent treatment of both democracies and polities (regimes implementing "correct" rule of the many) reflects not the abandonment of DWM, but its extension and application. Polities and democracies, regime types that include significant internal variation among instances of the type, both vary substantially in their success in deliberatively integrating (i.e., in actualizing the potential wisdom of the multitude). Appreciating this point will help us understand as a consistent whole Aristotle's evaluation of the rule of the many, and will give us some insight into the complex relationship between democracy and aristocracy (Frank 2005, 169–78; Ober 1998, 321, 326). Aristocracy, in the form of Aristotle's ideal regime in Book VII, exemplifies the rule of reason (in a way divine monarchy does not); therefore, I begin in this section with a brief discussion of that regime, before moving on to discuss the polity's place in Aristotle's evaluative scheme.

Aristotle's ideal regime represents his most ambitious description of a city which subjects social life to the rule of reason. The city is inclusive in that "all the citizens share in the regime" (1332a35). Every one of these citizens virtuously lives and acts "in the best manner" (1323a17–19). [Disenfranchised natural slaves underwrite this excellence by engaging in necessary labor and freeing up citizens for lives of leisure and politics (1328b37–29a2, 1330a25–29).] Because "all being excellent follows from all individually being excellent," Aristotle favorably compares this city to the city whose claim to deliberative excellence depends on the idea that "it is possible for all to be excellent but not each of the citizens individually" (1332a33–39). With enough individual virtue, details of the integration process (of which Aristotle provides few) are not very important: The wide and deep distribution of virtue guarantees excellent deliberative integration. This universal virtue and participation among the citizen class gives the ideal regime a democratic flavor (or, more strictly, the flavor of a polity; Kraut 2002, 359 fn. 5; Ober 1998, 310). Citizens all deliberate in common, their individual excellence guaranteeing an orientation to the good and the just, as well as minimizing any risk that narrow partisan conflict will result from their heterogeneity.²⁷

²⁷ There are poor citizens in the ideal regime (1330a3–7), but no apparent class conflict.

Meanwhile, their sufficient numbers guarantee effective capacity for action (1326b8–9).

How does the polity compare to this ideal vision? Aristotle declares that aristocracy and kingship are the "best regimes," in part because "each of them wishes to be established on the basis of virtue that is furnished with equipment" (1289a29–33). The mention of "equipment" or "external things" consistently characterizes Aristotle's distinction between these best regimes and the polity (1288b22–27, 1295a25–31, 1325b37–39). He describes these things as "dependent on chance," and repeatedly refers to them as the object of "prayer" (1288b23–24, 1295a28–29, 1325b38). None are meant to be impossible (1325b39), but the clear message is that these things—the right demographic profile, the right natural geography, and so forth—are not ones that many (or any?) cities possess. Aristotle views the polity as the best regime when one's prayers are not answered by special fortune—the best, that is, "that circumstances allow" (1288b26–27), or the "best for most cities and human beings" (1295a25–26). Ideal aristocracy and divine kingship are superior then partly because their blessedness allows for a kind of virtuous rule otherwise virtually unattainable, but this does not deny the real and substantial goodness of the polity, the best unblest city.²⁸

The ideal regime's favorable equipment elevates it above the polity in large part because it allows the city to be "made up of those who are best simply on the basis of virtue . . . for only here is it simply the case that the same person is a good man and a good citizen" (1293b2–7). In the polity, in contrast, all or many might have "the virtue of an excellent citizen," but many or most do not have the full virtue of an excellent man (1276b37–77a3). (In light of DWM, we might read "the virtue of an excellent citizen" of a polity as a sufficient share of what I called the "integrative virtues.") This distribution of virtue is certainly a good one, to the extent that, through deliberative integration, it allows the city to act virtuously, and thus allows citizens to act excellently, insofar as they participate in excellent common activity. But the universal, full excellence of the ideal regime constitutes an even better distribution of virtue. Notice, however, that this difference between the regimes leaves open the possibility that a given city could move from polity to aristocracy without any changes in its rules for inclusion: The shift would occur if and when the citizens of the polity all came to develop full human virtue to accompany their citizen virtue. True aristocracy, despite officially representing the good "rule of the few" in Aristotle's regime typology (1279a33–37), is not defined by any particular exclusion, but by universal excellence among those

²⁸ In saying that aristocracy is "virtually unattainable," I mean that Aristotle sees it as unattainable for a given city at any time it is not favored with the right "equipment" or "things." This leaves open the possibility that the city itself could generate the requisite equipment, thus effecting through its activity a longer-term transition to aristocracy. (For a slightly different understanding of how ideal aristocracy might be "factual and actualizable," see Frank 2005, 141–42.) Transition to kingship seems much less attainable through action, however, because it depends on the emergence of a god in the city.

who are citizens. Although Aristotle's discussion of the ideal regime suggests that as a matter of metaphysical possibility, he believes that such universal excellence depends on suitable equipment, including a large natural slave class, as a conceptual matter he shows that the very best polities—the very best cities of the many—could shade into aristocracy.²⁹

Understanding Aristotle's grounds for favoring aristocracy thus shows, perhaps surprisingly, that polities can be aristocratic. But this is not to say that Aristotle's view of the polity is uniformly rosy. On the contrary, he treats polities with some ambivalence. This is because, like other regime types, "polity" is a type that comprises many subtypes, and these subtypes differ in their quality of deliberative integration. Aristotle gives most detailed attention to the different subtypes of democracy and oligarchy (1289a8–9, 1291b15–16), but the principles of differentiation within regime types are more general (1297b30–31). Regime subtypes may differ according to the "parts" (people) that make up the city (1290a12–13) and according to differences in institutional arrangements (1297b37–98a4, 1294a35–b13, 1317a28–32). Aristotle indicates that polities and regimes "called aristocracies" (but which are not Aristotle's ideal aristocracy) come in different varieties (1293b9–19, 1294a25–29): These correct regimes do not have a single archetypal form. Variations at this fine-grained level mean that the broad regime types actually overlap and bleed into one another (1316b39–17a9). The best polities "border on" so-called aristocracy to the extent that "we may speak of both as one" (1295a31–33). By the same token, however, there are polity subtypes that are less excellent, including some that border on (deviant) democracy. Thus, we should expect ambivalence in Aristotle's account of the broader category of polities, and, in fact, this is what we find.

The polity is, as Bernard Yack (1993, 235) points out, "tremendously flexible" in its institutional structure. Aristotle goes into great detail in outlining the ways in which the regime's political institutions—its mode of deliberation, its structure of offices, and the makeup of its court system—can vary (see 1297b41 and following). Virtually all variation comes from differences in inclusiveness of various institutions, in incentives for participation aimed at different groups, and in the methods of selecting which qualified citizens will serve in various capacities. These are, in effect, different institutional schemes for deliberative integration. Among the very fine-grained institutional differentiation Aristotle discusses, a few notable general principles for integration

in the polity emerge. First, the integration, however constructed, encompasses all the citizenry (all have at least some say) and, in particular, gives effective voice to both rich and poor. Thus, institutional devices should ensure "a just mixture" according to which "all would participate" (1297a14–40); as Aristotle remarks, "all will deliberate better when they do so in common—the people with the notables and these with the multitude" (1298b19–21). Second, this universality should *not* be achieved by having "all meet to deliberate on all matters" (1298a29–30); this kind of "committee of the whole" approach to deliberative integration, says Aristotle, characterizes the worst, most tyrannical democracies, for reasons I discuss in the next section. Third, the universality of deliberation among citizens coincides with a policy of disenfranchisement. To keep the polity "made up only of those possessing heavy arms," a marker of some wealth (see 1321a12–13), Aristotle recommends keeping the "assessments" (effectively property qualifications) as high as possible, as long as those with political power outnumber those without (1297b2–5). Thus, many subtypes of polity limit the extent to which they can gain the benefits of wide participation. Perhaps worse, Aristotle's qualification that the regime set the level of exclusion so as to keep the heavy-armed participants stronger than the excluded poor has ominous overtones of corrupting mastery.³⁰ Like the ideal regime (see Nichols 1992, 145), the polity exhibits both a deliberative universality and a worrisome domination over its excluded class.

Aristotle's description of the regime type as a whole continues this sense of ambivalence about the internal quality of polities' activity. He describes polity as a "mixture of oligarchy and democracy" (1293b34), both deviant regimes primarily defined by the dominance of one economic class or another. This emphasis on the polity's moderate, evenly balanced class structure also appears in Aristotle's explanation that, of the three things "disputing over equality in the regime, freedom, wealth, and virtue," the polity represents a mixture of "the well off and the poor," that is, the claims of wealth and freedom, with virtue conspicuous by its absence (1294a19–23). Notably, so-called aristocracies also mix virtue: Polities and aristocracies, as we know, "are not far from one another" (1294a29), so the best, aristocratic polities may indeed regulate their economic relationships and class politics with reference to virtue. But in less rarefied polities, the regime's character, if ultimately producing the common advantage, derives primarily from its class mixing rather than virtuous common reasoning.

Aristotle's characterization of the polity suggests a kind of spectrum of possibilities, running between two ideal-typical cases. At the more excellent end, the polity's economic life and its demographic makeup support the development of virtue, while in turn individual prudence and good collective institutions regulate

²⁹ Aristocracy is formally characterized as the good rule of the few, but substantively encompasses any regime ruled by the excellent—who usually happen to be few. Similarly, democracy (oligarchy) is formally characterized as the bad rule of the many (few), but substantively encompasses any regime ruled by the poor (rich)—who usually happen to be many (few) (1290a30–b3). In these cities, the substantive element of the definition is primary. In the polity, the formal and substantive elements of the definition blend: formally, a polity must be ruled by the many, and substantively, it must be collectively excellent (although individual citizen-rulers are not necessarily fully excellent). If all citizens of the polity are also individually excellent, then it would also be an aristocracy—the types are not exclusive.

³⁰ The best polity might avoid this problem if it could ensure that all citizens gained enough wealth to meet the assessment; see Frank 2005, 174. In this case, there would be no disenfranchisement, no mastery, and greater scope for the operation of DWM.

economic life according to virtue. At the less excellent (if not quite deviant) end, the polity's good acts result less from (individual or collective) regulation of social life according to virtue, but rather from fortuitous demographic and economic circumstances and the relatively unreflective pursuit of self-interest. How excellent a given polity is within the range available to the regime type depends on the extent to which virtue (individual and collective) takes precedence in the explanation of its stability and prosperity.

The polity's population further underwrites this ambivalent range of possibilities. Aristotle declares that the best realizable regimes are predominantly comprised by people of "middling possession" (1295b5, 1295b35–37). Members of the middling element occupy a socioeconomic position that causes their own interests to be relatively moderate and benign: "for neither do they desire the things of others, as the poor do, nor others their property . . . and as a result of not being plotted against or plotting against others they pass their time free from danger" (1295b29–33). If the middle class is sufficiently "numerous," then it can keep the political balance of power between rich and poor, "for when added to one it will tip the scale and prevent the opposing excesses from arising" (1295b37–39). The middle class must be "superior" to the other classes (1295b37). Political "superiority" admits of both a "qualitative," aristocratic dimension and a "quantitative," *realpolitik* dimension of political power (1296b16–18, 1309b16–17, 1321a6–23). The "lasting polity" arises from two overlapping sources, in varying degrees: the quantitative dominance of a centrist bloc that, exerting its political power, curbs the extremist and centrifugal tendencies of the struggle between rich and poor; and the qualitative preeminence of a large, "trustworthy," fair-minded group of citizens untainted by *pleonexia*, the overreaching desire for power and wealth (1296b35–97a7, 1296a24–31; Frank 2005, 167–69).

Praising the middle class for their economic position does not preclude Aristotle from praising citizens or city for exhibiting deliberative virtues and practices. Citing his own ethical theory, he writes that if "virtue is a mean, then the middling sort of life is best," with "the middling sort of life" now understood to include middling possessions (1295a35–b5). In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle declares that "virtue aims at the median" between "excess and deficiency" with respect to a particular characteristic (NE 1106b15–27). Finding the proper median or mean in any given case requires careful deliberation and "right reason" (NE 1138b23–28), just as does making context-sensitive equitable judgments in political or legal cases. We see echoes here of DWM in the suggestion that ordinary, middling citizens may be well suited for citizenly virtues. But Aristotle's shift in emphasis from virtuous mean to demographic mean underscores the potential shift, in the lesser polities, from deliberative reasoning to economic-power politics. In those cases, the celebrated middle becomes a matter of fortuitous socioeconomic structure rather than the arduous, life-long development of prudence. Class position takes an explana-

tory priority over deliberation oriented to virtuous action.

Aristotle does say that middle-class people are "readiest to obey reason" (1295b5–6), but the compliment is importantly back handed. On its surface, it suggests the widespread possession of virtue, citizenly and integrative, or, at the aristocratic limit, full. But the language of *obeying* reason evokes Aristotle's description of that part of the soul that does not possess reason "contained within itself," but "complies with reason and accepts its leadership," much like one might "reasonably" accept the advice of one's father or friends even if one lacks one's own full rational comprehension of a matter (NE 1102b28–03a3, NE 1102b25–28, NE 1098a3–4; *Pol.* 1333a16–18). This distinction between the active and passive aspects of rationality in the soul has its parallel in Aristotle's discussion of types of people in the city. In the extreme, slaves are "wholly lacking in the deliberative element" (1260a10–12), although they can "perceive" reason and can develop the minimal virtue of responding to the needs of the master and the work (1254b21–23, 1260a34–36). The free citizens of the polity are certainly not natural slaves, but they may lack the full development of part of their rational soul. They may have "true opinion" (achieved through "reasonable" epistemic deference), which Aristotle describes as the virtue of the ruled, while lacking prudence, the virtue of rulers (1277b26–29). Readiness to obey reason is certainly superior to irrational intransigence and may suggest willingness to be lead by the prudence of others. But at the limit it is a passive, deferential quality, suggesting little active, deliberative wisdom.

The middle-class citizens of the polity therefore do not entirely lack virtue. Such virtue as they have is limited, however, as Aristotle explicitly says (1279a39–b2). He associates the polity with the "military virtue" of the heavy-armed warrior element (1279b2–4, 1265b27–29, 1297b2). This military virtue does apparently imply the capability to rule and be ruled according to law (1288a14–17). But Aristotle also worries that the regime may mistake this "part" of virtue for the whole, as he says the example of Sparta illustrates (1271a42–b11, 1324b6–9, 1333b13–15). The organization of a regime around military virtue causes the city to seek imperial domination and perpetual acquisition, rather than simply securing self-sufficiency and the goods needed for a virtuous life (1333a42–b3, 1333b37–34a2, 1334a36–b4). The heavy-armed middle class is thus somewhat schizophrenic in having an economic position that moderates its desires for wealth and rule, and a military orientation that encourages mastery and acquisitiveness. Aristotle's more direct discussions of the polity tend to emphasize the former characteristics over the latter (Nichols 1992, 98), but the military roots of citizens' virtue threaten to erode the ethics of moderation and mutual recognition that make the polity a good regime.³¹

³¹ Stephen Salkever (1990, 199) emphasizes the tension between the polity's military virtues and the political and ethical need for

With citizens of limited, relatively passive reason and partial, warrior virtue, the lesser polities do promote the common advantage. But the process by which these ordinary citizens combine to produce a beneficent whole differs importantly from the processes that would constitute the rule of reason and that characterize the better polities. To borrow terms from Jürgen Habermas' sociology, the better polities produce communicatively achieved "social integration" (through the rule of reason), whereas the lesser polities rely on "systemic integration" through "mechanisms that stabilize nonintended interconnections or actions by way of functionally intermeshing action consequences" (Habermas 1987, 117). This systemic integration occurs through the "functional intermeshing" of citizens' economic pursuits and political balancing in the context of middle-class "quantitative superiority" (see Kraut 2002, 443; Lindsay 1992a, 115). Any polity, like any society, coheres through both "social" and "systemic" integration. But priority matters: it matters the extent to which social integration through (individual and collective) deliberation directs and conditions the operation of functional systems, or the extent to which, conversely, the functional maintenance of the economic structure "represses and replaces" citizens' self-conscious communicative integration of society (Habermas 1987, 186).

Virtuous political (and economic) action requires not only an act that coincides with that of a virtuous regime, but also the conscious choice of the act *because* of its accord with virtue. In that way, "the city's being excellent is no longer the work of fortune, but of knowledge and intentional choice" (1331b32–34; see also 1280a31–34, 1284a3–4).³² Such is life in the better polities, where citizens prudentially (i.e., with *phronesis*) regulate the pursuit of moderate political and economic desires. But the integration of the lesser polities rests more on the systemic imperatives of interest group "power politics" than on the conclusions of reasoned discourse. Thus, Aristotle's discussion of the polity regime type reflects the ambivalence appropriate to its range of subtypes. These subtypes vary in the extent to which reason rules—in the extent to which the "scattered and separated" are brought "into one" (1281b11–12) through speech regarding the just and the unjust rather than through the fortuitous balancing of pleasures and pains.

deliberation, writing that military courage "is the virtue that requires the least deliberation and thought, and is, in fact, a virtue whose expression is clearest when there is the least possibility of deliberation."

³² Consider Aristotle's dismissal of Carthage's freedom from class conflict due to the ease of emigration to imperial possessions: "this is really the work of chance, whereas they ought to be free of factional conflict through the legislator" (1273b17–22). Aristotle connects "chance" to the unintended aggregation of economic decisions and their demographic consequences. Better cities achieve excellence through conscious, collective political intention. Audi (1995) helpfully provides an analysis of what it might mean to consciously act on the basis of an action's accord with virtue in the individual case; for work on a similar theme with more focus on Aristotle, see Gottlieb 1994.

DEVIANT DELIBERATIVE INTEGRATION: THE BEST AND WORST OF DEMOCRACY

Like the polity, the regime-type democracy has, according to Aristotle, many subtypes of varying quality. Two are of particular interest in sharpening our understanding of how the rule of the many can succeed or fail in deliberative integration: the best democracy and the worst.

Aristotle argues that the best democracy is one predominantly populated by farmers (1292b24–31, 1318b6–11). The farmers' democracy has several attractions for Aristotle, but, as in the case the polity, the nature of his praise also suggests important concerns. The best democracies respect a kind of class equality, according to which the rich and poor as groups have equal power and receive equal treatment (1291b29–33, 1318a5–8). So, for instance, Aristotle endorses a kind of protobicameralism in which "whatever is resolved by both [rich and poor] or by a majority of both should stand as authoritative" (1318a30–18b1)—something similar to the deliberation in common that characterizes polities, which the very best democracies presumably border. The farmers' democracy exhibits these desirable features, however, not—as in the polity—through the political engagement of its ordinary citizens but precisely through their disengagement. Farmers "have enough to live on as long as they work, but are unable to be at leisure, so they put the law in charge and assemble only for the necessary assemblies" (1292b27–29, 1318b13–16). Thus, when Aristotle discusses "the only way it is possible for democracy and aristocracy to exist together" (1308b38–40), he describes not DWM's aristocratic argument for democracy (Coby 1988, 909), but a scheme in which formal openness of offices combines with profit-motivated apathy among citizens to produce elite control—a picture similar to the practice of politics in the farmers' democracy (compare 1309a1–9 with 1318b13–38). The best democracy achieves class equality and fair treatment of the rich through self-disenfranchisement of the laboring poor—their many hands kept on the plow rather than applied to the work of politics.

Having the best few rule is not trivial, and it reflects some success in deliberative integration to the extent that the many recognize expertise and approve (or at least refrain from rejecting) the leadership of the best citizens (see Frank 2005, 170–72). One lesson of DWM, after all, was that proper recognition (of expertise, of the law) is itself an important integrative virtue, requiring some judgment. To the extent that the farmers' democracy depends on the disengagement of the many, however, its integrative virtues are thereby foreshortened: fewer engage in the common work of politics, limiting the development of civic friendship; fewer eyes gather information, fewer ears judge, and fewer hands execute decisions; and dissimilarity grows between expert rulers and the untrained ruled. The profit-motivated work of the poor may help develop a middle class, and thus transition the regime to polity (Frank 2005, 174), but in the meantime the wisdom of the multitude in the best democracy is more latent than actual.

The very lawfulness that stands as a central virtue of this city further calls into question the regime's internal quality. The farmers' lack of leisure causes them to politically disengage and "leave the law in charge." But according to Aristotle's general views on the relationship between deliberation and lawfulness, the proper rule of law sits uneasily with mass abstention. He regularly insists that law be complemented by "equity," the prudential, particular judgments that serve as "rectification of law where law falls short by reason of its universality" (*NE* 1137b26–27; see also *Pol.* 1282a42–b6). When Aristotle compares the arguments of proponents and critics of kingship in Book III, the positions converge on the proposition that the rule of law must be supplemented by the rule of men (1286a23–37, 1287a25–28, 1287b19–23); the dispute only centers around how many and which men should deliberate and judge what is equitable (1287b23–24). In the course of presenting these competing arguments, Aristotle refers twice to DWM, the first time presenting an almost complete reprise of the metaphorical elaboration presented in chapter 11 (1286a27–35, 1287b12–15). Thus, two important lessons from the staged colloquy on kingship are that good politics involves rule of law complemented by equitable judgment, and that DWM stands as an ever-present challenge to those who hope to restrict the number of citizens (at the limit, to one) involved in equitable deliberation.

These lessons about law and equity are set aside in the farmers' democracy, where common meetings in the assembly are kept to a minimum and the law, with all its inflexible universality, is left in charge.³³ Therefore, the virtues of recognition in this city come at the price of a stilted view of justice that prizes strict legality over equity even though the latter "is the better of the two" (*NE* 1137b11). In so abstaining from the task of rendering equitable judgments, Aristotle's best democracy abandons one of the central tasks of collective political deliberation.³⁴

Aristotle presumably considers this sacrifice of equity to law the best democracy can do given his fears that other, inferior democratic arrangements do away with both. In the worst democracies, "the people . . . seek to rule monarchically on account of their not being ruled by law" (1292a10–17). Radical democrats have the same lawless tendencies as the radical partisans of absolute kingship in the Book III colloquy: The democrats become like "the king who acts in all things according to his own will" (1287a1–2), and who fails to recognize even the modest concession that the ruler "must necessarily be a legislator, and that laws must

exist" (1286a22). This monarchic democracy, according to Aristotle, rules by the decree and fiat of the majority, abandoning the complementarity of universal law and particular equity for willful self-assertion (1292a32–37). Interestingly, for our purposes, this worst version of democracy, which, far from exhibiting group wisdom, "bears comparison with dynastic oligarchy and tyrannical monarchy," is precisely that democracy in which "all deliberate on all matters" (1298a29–33; see also 1292a25–26, 1293a3–4). In such a city, Aristotle suggests, mass discussion does not constitute good deliberative integration. The immoderation of the "living as one wants" combines with democrats' demand for "equality on the basis of number" to produce unrestrained majoritarianism (1317b3–15). Democrats abandon any commitment to moderation, common work, and ruling and being ruled in turn, using the force of numbers to engage in self-aggrandizing acts that Aristotle associates with beastliness and tyranny (1281a15–23, 1318a24–26).

This account depicts the most apparently "deliberative" democrats, in what by now we should see as the crude sense of ruling by the (majoritarian) results of mass discussion, as the democrats who most flagrantly depart from the ethic and practices that underpin the wisdom of the multitude. This simple institutional arrangement of "committee of the whole" deliberation with majority voting fails to cultivate integrative virtues, or to express them institutionally, as successfully as polities' (or superior democracies') more complex, differentiated institutional arrangements.³⁵ This is not simply a matter of elitism: As we saw previously in this article, one important principle guiding deliberative integration in all polities is universal citizen participation at some point in the political process. [Conversely, even radical democracies are not free of disenfranchisement; democrats may loosen citizenship requirements in order to "make the people stronger," but they do not go so far as universal manumission (1319b5–11).] Aristotle's analysis of the rule of the many thus anticipates David Estlund's (2008, 185) argument that we should not take deliberative democratic theory to require the institutional mirroring, in large, complex societies, of "model deliberation" as it proceeds among imagined individuals in ideal settings. In some social settings, institutionally mirroring some ideal assembly of everyone may more likely give expression to self-aggrandizement and discord than deliberatively corral it. Aristotle's doctrine of the wisdom of the multitude, as extended by his evaluations of the regimes ruled by the many, suggests that more sophisticated strategies are likely required in order to integrate deliberation excellently and implement the rule of reason.

³³ Yack (1993, 183) convincingly puts to rest the temptation to believe that having the law alone rule is Aristotle's ideal. See also Frank 2005, 114.

³⁴ Perhaps equitable deliberation occurs, but only among the best few who actually rule? Aristotle's language of "leaving the law in charge" suggests little scope for equitable departures from the law, but if we read this as allowing elite equitable deliberation, Aristotle's own arguments about law and equity—in which DWM plays a central role—suggest that this institutional scheme is inferior to equitable deliberation among a (well-integrated) multitude. I thank one of the reviewers for pressing me to address this point.

³⁵ A thorough account of Aristotle's explanation of how misguided democratic ideology and unfavorable social conditions lead institutions of mass deliberation to coincide with a lack of integrative virtues, as well as to militate against the development of such virtues, is beyond the scope of this article. For a helpful discussion, see Lindsay 1992b.

CONCLUSION

Distancing himself from the claim that “Aristotle is an early adherent of deliberative democracy,” Stephen Salkever (2002, 344) writes that “Aristotle sees deliberation as a virtue of human individuals rather than a characteristic of a regime as a whole.” Salkever is right that Aristotle’s primary concern is with the virtue of individuals. But the deliberativeness of individuals and regimes are connected because if individual life involves politics, then good individual life requires participation in good common action. Our political nature—our being thrown together to live with other reasoning speakers—makes our individual virtue to some extent mutually dependent. Any virtue-based political theory must provide an account of virtuous common action and relate it to the action of individual citizens—explaining, for example, how individual excellence must be distributed for common excellence to be achieved, and what common excellence specifically requires of individuals. Universal individual excellence may be the conceptually simplest route to common excellence, but it is only the facile beginning of a general theory of political virtue. Aristotle’s doctrine of the wisdom of the multitude is, in part, an attempt to fill out such a theory and provide a more realistic response to the puzzle of excellent common action.

The relationship between collective action and individual quality should also be of interest to those of us who do not subscribe to virtue-centered political theories. Many of us believe that important practical and evaluative questions turn on appraisals of collective activity at the regime level. Deliberative democrats, in particular, argue that morally significant qualities of regimes—their legitimacy, their political egalitarianism, the justifiability of their actions—turn on the quality of deliberation in those regimes. Theorists who hold these views face a problem parallel to that of the virtue theorist: They must explain how such regime-level qualities connect to the acts, dispositions, or other qualities of individuals. Deliberative democrats must develop accounts of deliberative integration—how the deliberative activities of individuals and groups must be brought together in order to satisfy some collective standard. An account of deliberative integration requires specification of this standard, of what value common deliberation is meant to express or promote, or what practical question it is meant to answer. It requires an explanation of what distribution of acts or qualities is required among individuals in order to make the satisfaction of that standard possible, and it requires some suggestions about the institutional arrangements that might allow or encourage these individual acts or qualities to synthesize into the satisfaction of the stated standard. Developing such complex and fine-grained accounts of deliberative integration will improve the precision and quality of our moral argument, and give clearer guidance to empirical scholars attempting to study deliberative democracy in practice (see Habermas 2006; Thompson 2008).

Aristotle’s political theory gives deliberative integration a central place, and his work includes a relatively

well worked-out account of such integration. He articulates a basic ethical concern with good life and virtuous activity. He surveys the kinds of individual qualities and activities, which I call “integrative virtues,” necessary to sustain common excellence, and he devotes considerable attention to the ways different institutional arrangements might enable and express those virtues in ways that would satisfy his ethical standard. Attending to these aspects of Aristotle’s work helps clarify his political theory as a whole, and his views of the rule of the many in particular. They reveal his doctrine of the wisdom of the multitude to be neither an ironic dismissal of democracy nor a flat statement that group deliberation is necessarily better when more inclusive or diverse. It is, on the contrary, an account of how the most excellent deliberative integration might be democratic.

Reading Aristotle will not substitute for the philosophical boring of hard boards involved in developing accounts of deliberative integration responsive to contemporary moral concerns. Recognizing the similarity of the problems in his work, however, and attending to the conceptual structures and evaluative strategies he developed in response to those problems, may be of no small assistance. If, in the course of our own work, we decide that Aristotle’s account gives too short shrift to important concerns such as political equality or respect for persons, or to important strategies of institutional design, then we may have to say of him what he said of Socrates: His work was “extraordinary . . . sophisticated, original, and searching. But it is perhaps difficult to do everything finely” (1265a10–12).

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