

entomologist classifying flies; and he is not averse to using priestly humbug to secure his ends. His state is static, it might easily become an old fogey society, ruled by inflexible octogenarians hostile to invention and jealous of change. It is mere science without art; it exalts order, so dear to the scientific mind, and quite neglects that liberty which is the soul of art..."

Thus, Plato offers a logical political system, but in describing only its ideal equilibrium state, he ignores many of the most pressing political issues. Given his ideal state (both political and mathematical), he says nothing about the measures necessary to obtain it. Today, few would disagree that a harmonious society composed of satisfied and productive individuals is a desirable goal. However, in reality, no group of individuals is harmonious and few people are satisfied--no matter what their condition. In Plato's Republic, all men perform the task for which they are most suited; in modern America, few people know what they want to do, fewer still do the task for which they are best suited. Plato is dependent upon a perfect educational system to select those best suited for particular social roles. Today, society has enormous difficulties making comparative judgements concerning student aptitude and potential; even the most basic standardized tests are under continual criticism. For these reasons, politics must often abandon the ideal for the real, the static for the dynamic.

With Aristotle we move closer to Machiavelli's ideology. Aristotle abandons Plato's ideal "forms"; he is biased toward the empirical. Thus, no absolute is to be strived for, but rather the "golden mean". This mean is no easily discernable mathematical quantity; it fluctuates with the collateral circumstances of the situation, and discovers itself only to mature and flexible reason. The excellence of reason which allows an individual to discern the golden mean is an art won by habituation and training; we do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but rather have these because we have acted rightly. (Durant 1933, 61) We see here the seeds of thought which are to become the basis for Machiavelli's political theory 1500 years hence. Machiavelli did not believe it was possible for any man to know the absolutes, thus it was useless (and potentially dangerous) to use them as a basis for government. The "golden mean" is found in Machiavelli's much less ideal conception of relative values and pluralism. Finally, Machiavelli believed in the ability of a good system of government to produce civic virtue.

Yet, even if Aristotle begins to suggest some of the themes which are to become cornerstones in Machiavelli's Discourses, his thoughts contain a number of normative/prejudiced notions which hamper him in the construction of a truly objective model of political interaction. His "golden mean" is still suggestive of some ideal set of laws which would uniquely determine such a thing. He belies overly idealistic tendencies by suggesting that there is such a thing as a truly "proper" action, as well as unjustified optimism that man has the capability to determine what this "golden mean" is. Even though he claims that excellence can be instilled through

proper actions, he fails to carry this observation to its logical conclusion--that a good political system can produce good men. In fact, some of his writings actually seem to contradict this statement. For him, the majority of men are natural dunces and sluggards, and in any system, they are sure to sink to the bottom. "From the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, and others for command." (*Politics*, i, 5) This hardly seems like the man who claims that actions affect attitudes. If natural inclinations cannot be overcome, education seems a fruitless exercise.

In a similar fashion, Aristotle's views concerning business demonstrate how he allows his prejudices to influence his observations.

"Retail trade is unnatural, . . . and a mode by which men gain from one another. The most hated sort of such exchange is . . . usury, which makes a gain out of money itself, and not from its natural use. For money was intended as an instrument of exchange, and not as the mother of interest. This usury, which means the birth of money from money, . . . is of all modes the most unnatural." (*Politics*, i, 10)

Although the dislike for usury is not an uncommon theme in Western civilization, the economist will note that money is much more than just a means of exchange. Power is derived from the control of money. Disapproval of this fact cannot alter it. Thus, although Aristotle contributed much to the development of scientific analysis, his thoughts are still far removed from those which were to allow the development of the modern political and economic theories espoused by Machiavelli and Smith.

During the Middle Ages, political thought moved away from the ideas of Aristotle. For one thousand years, the wrench of religious faith fouled the machinery of political theory. Many of the great political philosophers of this period were theologians (Augustine, Thomas Aquinas), and in their writings, the structure of the political system was subordinated to the individual's relationship with God. The question of social justice was for the most part pre-empted by the concept of Divine Right. In effect, anything the ruler did was acceptable. Only God had the right to question the judgement of a monarch. With heaven waiting in the wings, the idea of an ideal worldly political system became meaningless.

1.1 The First System Theorists

With these considerations in mind, it comes as no surprise that the first political philosopher to consider politics from a systematic perspective was not an overly religious man. Taking advantage of the large body of classical Greek literature, some insightful analyses of