1 □ An Aristotelian Analysis of Political Possibilities
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2 □ The Pacific Situation
• The challenge to Pacific countries:
  • ‘Weak state’ or ‘failed state’
  • Small islands unable to generate large economies
  • Difficulties in delivery of services
• Yet:
  • For the most part people do not go hungry
  • People prize their families and their connection to the land and sea
• Contrast: The Modern European State and other possibilities

3 □ Aristotle
• Born in Stagira in Macedonia; lived 384 – 322 BC
• Taught by Plato and inspired by Socrates
• Philosophy: an attempt to understand things in their broadest context
• Advantages:
  • His thought is non-coercive – analysis; how to think about things
  • Written with fresh experience of new Greek states in different forms
  • Rare ability to see things as they are and to articulate clearly
  • The clarity of something achieved by one mind
• Sources: Politics, Nicomachean Ethics, Rhetoric

4 □ Beginnings
• ‘Every Action aims at some good’ (Ethics I, 1)
• ‘Every country is constituted for the sake of some good’ (Politics I, 1)
• Not just to know good but to become good (virtuous)
  • Not by nature, or by instruction, but by habituation
• Requires the writing of good laws
  • Statesman who has the virtue of prudence or practical wisdom
  • Assisted by political science (philosophy)
• Political Philosophy: analysis of the nature and possibilities of political life

5 □ Kinds of Life
• Family Life – in a household
  • Founded on natural desire and daily necessity – instinct
• Clan or tribal life – in a village
  • Supplying the non-daily necessities by cooperation – custom
• Political life – in a country
  • ‘not for the sake of living but for the sake of living well’
  • Countries are established according to nature but not by nature – law

6 □ Kinds of Rule
• Mastery – the rule of master over servant
  • Are some naturally given to servitude and others to rule?
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- Ancient modes of slavery
- It becomes despotism if it appropriates the political realm
- Modern employment: Locke – servants for the hours of employment
- Political Rule – implies participation in rule
  - Art of the citizen: to rule and be ruled
  - Task of the politician:
    - To amend arrangements
    - To persuade to action

7  **Citizens and Country**

- Citizen: ‘whoever is entitled to participate in an office involving deliberation or decision’
- Country: ‘a multitude of such persons that is adequate with a view to a self-sufficient life’ (III, 1)
- The unity and identity of a country is established by its constitution – not just by particular people or territory
- Virtue of the citizen: the preservation of the country – good or bad
- To be able ‘to rule and be ruled’

8  **Constitution – A Fuller Definition**

- An arrangement in countries connected with offices
  - How they are distributed
  - What the most authoritative element of the constitution is
- Determining what the end of the community is
- Establishing laws in accordance with which rulers must rule
- Protection against those who would transgress the law
- ‘Rule of Law’: the rulers are not above the law; they must obey it
  - Law is written with care and attention, not in the heat of the moment
  - Officials may be given discretion in special cases

9  **The Formal Kinds of Arrangement**

- Correct Forms
  - Kingship – rule of one for the sake of the people
  - Aristocracy – rule of the virtuous few
  - Republicanism (polity) – rule of all for the sake of the whole
- Deviant Forms
  - Democracy – rule of the multitude for self advantage
  - Oligarchy – rule of the few (wealthy) for self advantage
  - Tyranny – rule of one for self advantage – failure
- Most communities will have a mix of these
- Energy from opposed interests, e.g. the rich and the poor

10  **Senses of the Best Constitution**

- The constitution ‘one would pray for above all’
  - A broad aristocracy under the best material conditions
- The best that a country can achieve in its particular circumstances
  - Size, capacity, resources, neighbours, institutions
- The best that a country can achieve given its history and culture and its present constitution - founders
• The most fitting and practicable for all countries as such
• The Political Question: How are people going to participate?
  • In the life of the country in its various forms
  • In actual functions of the country’s own life - politics

11 □ The Best Practicable Constitution
Best for most people, countries and times - achievable
• Republic
  • The mixed constitution – democratic and oligarchic
  • Interplay of claims on the basis of freedom, wealth and virtue
  • All parts blended:
    • Rich and poor
    • Rural and urban
    • Farmers, factory workers, teachers, doctors, ...
  • With a large middle element
  • Where the laws rule
  • Where participation in varied forms is offered to all
  • The politician must know the parts – arrangements – movement towards what is best

12 □ Other Senses of the Best Constitution
• The best that circumstances will allow:
  • The size and disposition of the land, the proximity and character of neighbouring countries, farmland, mineral and other resources
  • Compare Cook Islands; Nauru; Fiji;
    • How can they engage with modern large economies? – survival vs goods
  • The best that a particular people can achieve:
    • Culture; history; the constitution under which people currently live
    • Adjusting the constitutions of the 1960s and 70s
    • Do they recognise human differences? Do people know how to live in them?
  • For a constitution to last, the people must love it.

13 □ Monarchy – Chiefs and Nobles
• Not a preferred form for Aristotle: too easily leads to tyranny
• Kingship is, however, appropriate for very small communities and as a developmental stage in the formation of larger communities
• Various forms can be distinguished
  • Absolute or limited control
  • People willingly accept rule or ruled by force
  • Hereditary or elected
  • Rule by the king’s will or according to law and custom
• Rule is ultimately dependent on acceptance by the people
  • Undermined by anger and contempt

14 □ Change and Preservation
• Change of either regime or constitution begin with factions that claim greater partial justice – instability
• Other causes: arrogance, profiteering, excessive power, misbehaviour
• Modern political party is an institutional faction based on ideology
• Even in stable times there is pressure to change as circumstances change – population, success or failure of ventures, new threats, ...
• Politics: attending to the arrangements of a particular community and exposing a sympathetic direction for change:
  • Not instant desires – revolutionary or progressive
  • Nor general principles – rationalistic
  • But prudent judgement of what is necessary and possible now

**Political Justice**

• Justice is the highest of the political goods
  • What is the basis for decisions about membership of assemblies and appointment of officials?
  • How are the various goods of the country to be distributed?
• Equal share for equal merit – but different claims: freedom, wealth, virtue – partial; happiness of the whole community is at stake
• A matter of practical judgement exercised by legislators – a balance:
  • Democratic election provides the weight of collective judgement
  • Aristocratic eligibility provides for capacity in office

**Aristotle on the Good**

• The highest community aims at the highest good
  • Self-sufficiency, not just materially but for living ‘well’
  • Human beings are bound by the necessities of nature but nature also gives them a voice to articulate good and bad, just and unjust, true and untrue
  • The shape of the community, although limited by nature, is not determined by nature but by human collaboration, judgement and decision
  • Different groups will seek freedom, wealth, virtue, honour and so on
  • All of these are partial goods that need to be balanced by the legislator
• External goods – property, wealth, reputation
• Goods of the body – health, beauty, pleasure
• Goods of the soul – intellectual and moral virtues
  • What is useful and what is good in itself?

**The Good in Small Island Countries**

• Pacific countries differ greatly from their Western neighbours:
  • Extended families carry significance long lost in the West
  • Communities are built on affection rather than fear
  • Attitudes to wealth and its distribution are different
  • Land laws, customs and practices seen in intimately connected to families
  • Yet Pacific peoples have long lived successfully on small islands
• Which goods might they seek?
  • Goods of the soul – intellectual, cultural and moral
  • Goods of the body – health, strength and beauty; moderation?
  • External goods – what is needed and what can be managed?
• What can be learnt from Pacific traditions and practices?