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**Introductory Remarks**

Andrew Murray provides an articulate and comprehensive exposition of Aristotle’s book *Politics* in the language that is simple for average educated person to understand and appreciate. The book has ten chapters, the first is the introduction with all its components, namely, statement of the problem; objective of the book; the significance of the book; scope & limitations of the book and definitions of terms. In his definitions of terms Andrew Murray provides up to date terms in place of the original terms used by Aristotle making the book relevant for the present generation. The term *Koinonia* is translated as ‘community’; *Polis* in translated as ‘country’. Aristotle uses *politeia* in two ways, for the first, the book uses ‘constitution’ and for the second, the book uses ‘republic’. For the quotations from the *Politics*, the book used the translation of Carnes Lord in each instance, with the above changes where they apply.

The eight chapters comprised comprehensive exposition with splendid articulation of Aristotle’s thoughts in his Books of the *Politics*. The unique structure of the book offers four Excursions which are fitted between chapters, constitute another set of informative expositions providing the actual settings which converge into the final chapter fulfilling the objective of the book. The entire book is an evidence of a splendid scholarship significant in its accuracy of the expositions and relevance to the needs of Pacific countries confronted by conflicts with the foreign systems and values they inevitably adopted from their colonizers.

**Core Messages of the Book**

This review highlight the core messages the book offers to the Pacific Countries based on the Aristotelian concepts of:

- **Pre-Political Communities**: Aristotle used this concept to refer to natural traditional groups such as: families; clans; village group; religious groups in contrast to the concept of Hobbes and Locke which presupposes individuals in a “state of nature” entering into social contract to form the state. Murray sees the Aristotelian “per-political communities” in the Pacific.

- **Political Community**: Aristotle uses this concept to refer to [countries] which are constituted by the pre-political communities. The pre-political communities come together seeking better and happier lives which can only be achieved through cooperative community efforts rather than individual competitive struggles.

- **Good**: Aristotle in his *Politics* and *Ethics* stresses that individuals and communities must have ‘end’ or ‘goal’ to achieve in life which is the ‘happiness’ entailed by ‘living well’. Aristotle states in his *Politics* – ‘Every art and every investigation and similarly every action and pursuit, is considered to aim at some good.’ So he proceeds to investigate human happiness, the virtues, friendship and pleasure. He further states- ‘since we see that every [country] is a sort of [community], and that every [community] is constituted for the sake of some good…. It is clear that all [communities] aim at some good’. The concern of each is the same – the good is the object of action. In *Ethics*, it is personal action that is at stake, in the *Politics*, it is the action of and indeed the very formation of the community.

- **Living Well**: Every person and country as a whole aims to live and live well. Aristotle’s concern in his *Ethics* and his *Politics* is that people or communities which form Political Communities or countries know what their goal is and find the best means of achieving it. The goal Aristotle envisages is ‘happiness’ which they can
only achieve when they are not just living but *living well* which can be ensured by an appropriate Constitution.

- **Country & Constitution:** To achieve its objective of providing the best means for its citizens and the country as a whole to live well and achieve their goal of happiness, the country must be constituted well. This depends on the formation of a coherent community with good laws which is the work of the politicians and statesman. Aristotle’s hope is that communities are developed in which all citizens can flourish intellectually, socially, economically and morally. Andrew points out that through the modern states which work upon individualism of Hobbs, Locke, Hegel and Machiavelli, the goal of ‘happiness’ is difficult to achieve but is possible through the Constitution founded on pre-political communities such as families, clans and village already here in the Pacific to be utilized.

- **Political Justice:** According to Aristotle under the sound constitution political justice will be achieved which is not a *transactional or commutative* but rather *distributive justice*. This form of justice cannot be disseminated through the kind of constitutional presuppositions of Hobbs, Hegel, Locke and Machiavelli built on individualism where ethical concerns are kept in the periphery of political arena but rather through the traditional social structures found in small Pacific Island countries consisting of “Obligatory Relationship Network” such as Wantok System found in Melanesia: Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands; Micronesia: Chamorros and the Polynesian countries as well.

As his point of departure, Andrew Murray highlighted the undesirable labels often ascribe to Pacific countries, such as ‘weak states’ and ‘failed states’. Andrew Murray rebuts these judgements by pointing out the confusions the Pacific people have is - that despite being weak or failed states they are able to ensure that no one is starving or unhoused but in the advanced Modern States there are homeless peoples sleeping on streets and starving. This raises the question: What is the purpose of being a citizen of the country or state? Aristotle’s answer would be “to find security, hospitality, bond of love & friendship, food, shelter, clothing and live well in happiness”.

**Conclusion**

Finally, Andrew Murray’s splendid expositions of situations in the Pacific countries through his four Excursion which highlighted: - the advantages and disadvantages of the Wantok System in Melanesia: Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu; the constitutional struggles in Fiji due to historical consequences that divided the country in two major ethnic factions; Tonga’s successful transition from Monarchical rule to Democratic rule through its two major constitutional changes and in Micronesian: where the Chamorros in particular, have successfully maintained their cultural values and practices despite so much external intervention- must be commended by the Pacific People. As a Melanesian, involved in designing and teaching a course titled *Melanesian Philosophy*, I am greatly relieved by this book because it affirms all that I have been advocating in my teachings.

Thank you Andrew Murray for your professional contribution. The onus is on us the Pacific Islanders, the professionals and political leaders to take heed that your legacy is fulfilled. That the Aristotelian political and ethical instructions are adhered to for our people to ‘live well’ and achieve ‘happiness’.

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