Preface

The title of this study adapts Aristotle's remark from the very end of *Nic. Eth.* where he announces to examine in the following treatise lawgiving and constitution and adds the purpose he pursues: "so that to the best of our abilities the philosophy of human affairs be completed" (*hopōs eis dynamin hē peri ta anthropeia philosophia teleiōthēi*, 10.10 1181b12–15). Adding the enquiry of *Pol.* after *Nic. Eth.*, about whose – planned – existence we are informed here for the first time, will accomplish this end.

Here, Aristotle uses the most general term "human" and does not add a noun to describe which aspects of "human" this specific branch of philosophy covers – "affairs" commonly used in translations, is an addition whereas in Greek the article *ta* added to the adjective "human" (*anthrōpeia*) gives it the function of a noun. "*Ta anthrōpeia*" is the barest description of this branch of philosophy Aristotle could have chosen, and no further details , e.g. activities performed or ends pursued like "human flourishing", are given.

One can understand that interpreters of the two works included in the philosophy of human affairs, the *Nic. Eth.* and *Pol.*, have tried to go beyond this and be more specific. In 1900, J. Burnet declared that "the subject of both works is equally 'Politics'" (1900, xxvi), and this view has been cited verbatim over time. Actually, right at beginning of *Nic. Eth.*, in 1.1, *politikē* which controls every activity and craft in the *polis* is introduced as the most authoritative (*kyriōtatē*) knowledge and ability, and in his first classification of constitutions in *Pol.* 3.6, Aristotle operates with the notion of the sovereign authority (*to kyrion*), which is the respective citizenry (*politeuma*) under the ever-existing constitution. However, the abstract knowledge of an ability with unfettered powers, *politikē*, of *Nic. Eth.* has nothing in common with the – to use the anachronism – "republican" concept of politics of *Pol.* 3.6–7 by which different social groups of citizens govern as sovereign (*to kyrion*), and on the whole Aristotle will not resort here to the notion of *politikē* of *Nic. Eth.* for any of the many political issues he addresses.[1] Assigning to both works the subject of "politics" does not inform us about the incompatible notions of politics Aristotle employs in the two works.

I add another observation: in *Nic. Eth.* 1.1 Aristotle argues that the end of the one most sovereign (*kyriōtatē*) and architectonic knowledge and ability (*politikē*), which controls and directs everything in the *polis*, is to provide the human good (*tanthrōpinon agathon*) in the *polis* – this objective will be pursued in *Nic. Eth.* 1 from various angles. The beginning of *Pol.* is to some extent the counterpart of

1 For Aristotle *Pol.* 3.12 see below chapter 14.2.

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Nic. Eth. 1.1, since in *Pol.* as well the most sovereign good is the end of the most sovereign (*kyriōtatē*) political entity, which is now, however, not a knowledge and ability but the *polis* as community. And here Aristotle does not pursue this notion of the good any further, as he does in *Nic. Eth.*, but changes in *Pol.* 1.1 after seven lines the subject and now proceeds to reject the view of others (here Plato) that rulers for whom different names exist are in fact one and the same person. Aristotle calls this view "not true" and outlines then a "method" to clarify the differences he asserts to exist.

Pol. 1.1 differs from *Nic. Eth.* 1.1 in so far as the "most sovereign good" does not dominate the subjects to be addressed but cedes immediately to one which does not aim at this end and the ethical quality of the *polis* but aims to establish *the truth* about *a matter of political theory* first – to seek truth is a goal of theoretical philosophy,[2] and here it affects the identity of the *polis* as a community that differs from a household. For Aristotle there are different sorts of rule, and the ever-appropriate sort is determined by the specific conditions of the community governed. Thus, he characterizes Plato's faulty view as implying that "a large household and a small *polis* do not differ" (1252a12 f.). Furthermore, the distinction of types of rule has great impact on the quality of life of the *polis*, which is a community of those who *are free* and must *not be ruled in a despotic manner* (3.6 1278a19 – 21).

Nic. Eth. 1.1 introduces with the *knowledge* and *ability* of *politikē* a most sovereign power which controls all *crafts* and *activities* in the *polis,* however, it does not know the theoretical concept of governing, of the *persons* who *govern* or are *governed* Aristotle addresses at the beginning of *Pol.* 1.1 (*archōn*, *archomenos*, 1252a16). The first half column of this work operates with the basic notions of the central concept of government in a *polis* (cf. 7.14 1332b12 f.) which *Nic. Eth.* could not introduce since the paradigm of a supreme *art* that controls all other *arts* does not know *people* who govern and are governed, does not know the notion of community nor the criteria for the distinctions between them which in turn determine the appropriate sort of rule, and does not single out the *polis* as the central subject matter of *Pol.*

In order to support this view, which runs counter to the common reading of the two works in question, I will refer briefly to the first chapter in *Pol.* that deals with political theory, *Pol.* 2.2. Here Aristotle takes issue with the Platonic stipulation of common possession of property and wives by arguing that it does not lead to "the best result" Plato aims at, namely that "the entire *polis* possesses unity as much as possible" (2.1 1261a4 – 2 1261a16). However, Aristotle does not address this issue head-on but starts his examination by defining "the nature of the *polis*" first

2 Cf. *Nic. Eth.* 6.2 1139a27 – 29.

as a multitude of humans, who *differ* from one another but establish an *equality* of proportional value by exchanging their different products. He clarifies that a *polis* does not consist of equals. While he recognizes as well in the *polis* the existence of persons who are "free *and equal*", he finds *inequality* in the positions as governing and being governed as well (1261a32-b6). Aristotle addresses the arrangements Plato proposed by identifying one crucial component, the *polis*, whose main elements are identified as number and quality *of people.*

I chose this example of *Pol.* 2.2 for two reasons, first to illustrate Aristotle's method in this work which is that of a systematic thinker who identifies "the nature" of the subject in question; it is here the *polis.* He will proceed in the same systematic manner in 3.1, where he does not address the new subject of constitution head-on but demands that one has "to *examine first*" (*prōtē skepsis*) what the *polis* is (1274b33). Second, I wanted to prepare my reading of *Nic. Eth.* 1.1 where "politics" is the exercise of the unlimited power of the knowledge of *politikē* which controls all activities in the *polis* but differs from governments as Aristotle assumes them ín *Pol.,* e. g. 3.6 – 7, by being a free-floating knowledge (it is not disclosed who possesses it) that controls crafts or tasks, but not people (they do not exist), in a vacuum because there is no territory for a non-existing *polis* – in *Pol.* 3.9 1280a32 – b 23 this is a necessary prerequisite for the existence of a *polis.* In *Nic. Eth.* 1.1, in a depopulated area (which is not addressed) an abstract, inanimate knowledge interacts with subordinate abstract, inanimate sorts of expertise in order to realize "the human good" even though no humans exist. One could call this a caricature of political thinking, and it is by comparison with *Pol.* 2.2 where Aristotle addresses the Platonic arrangement of common possession of property and wives by *defining* the *polis* first by the number and then by the quality *of people* and by *their* interactions. However, this is not meant to be my assessment of the introductory chapter of *Nic. Eth.* 1.1 but of an interpretation which finds here the fundamentals of Aristotle's political philosophy.

"Politics" is a diffuse term, and what sort of "politics" Aristotle deals with in the two works is not specified by those who claim that it is the subject matter of both works,[3] while there are in fact stark differences: the central approach of the constitutional theory of *Pol.* is to identify the "parts of the *polis*".[4] In the taxonomy of *Pol.* 7.8, Aristotle lists the specific contributions of various sorts of expertise without which a *polis* cannot exist (1328b2 f.). He identifies as one of them technical craftmanship (*technai*) justifying its necessity by pointing out that "to live requires

3 Schofield considers it a "fact that for Aristotle ethics and politics are not two distinct … disciplines but one and the same subject. The name for this subject is 'politics'" (2000, 310). We will discuss Schofield's approach in chapter 2.1.

4 See below chapter 3.1 and 11.2.

many tools" (1328b6 f.) and moves from the abstract of expertise to the people who practice it: "technicians" (*technitai*). He summarizes this account: "these are the tasks every *polis* needs" for self-sufficiency (1328b15 – 23). While they will be assigned to *persons* of different social status (7.9), this is not the starting point for a hierarchical ranking of various arts as in *Nic. Eth.* 1.1 with subordinate crafts serving the ends of superordinate ones. Rather, in *Pol.*, individual crafts are acknowledged in their specific role to make *human life possible* or enable self-sufficiency of the *polis*[5] or living well – a dimension social sciences need to address, whereas the conceptual objective of *Nic. Eth.* must ignore it because it focuses in its *l'art pour l'art a*pproach on the success of the (most) architectonic *art*, while humans and their various needs, aspirations and interactions are not a concern.

And does *Nic. Eth.* deal with "politics"? In *Nic. Eth.* 1.1 Aristotle had posed the question of which knowledge is concerned with the good and the best, and after listing the many tasks and activities *politikē* controls, he defines the human good as its end (1094b6 f.). Still, after remarks about the accuracy possible in "an investigation about what is noble and just which *politikē* undertakes" and about the moral quality of a person who attends a lecture on *politikē* (1094a14-b13) Aristotle repeats the question of "which end *politikē* aims at, and which is the highest of the goods realized in actions" (1094b14 – 1095a13). With this question he identifies on the one hand the focus of his investigation and eliminates on the other as its subject the concern of *politikē* about controlling other arts which had occupied him before. Obviously Aristotle strips *politikē* of the notion of politics in the sense of being the ruling power, and a "master science of politics" (*politikē*) that controls everything in the *polis* is not a theoretical concept he subscribes to.[6]

The following chapters in *Nic Eth.* 1 develop the profile of *politikē* and of the individual who practices it, the statesman (*politikos*), culminating in *Nic. Eth.* 1.13 where Aristotle cites the view that the effort of the statesman is to make citizens good and identifies this as the objective of the investigation of *politikē*. He demands from the statesman knowledge of the soul (1102a7– 25), and actually begins right here an account of the parts of the soul, starting with the distinction between the irrational and rational part.[7]

This is an intrinsic part of Aristotle's ethical theory, and one must ask why he determines the investigation which pursues the human good to be "in a certain sense political" (*Nic. Eth.* 1.1 1094b10 f.). I argue in chapter 6.2 that Aristotle is in-

5 See below chapter 3.1.

6 See below chapter 4.3 and 5.1.

7 See below chapter 6.1 – 2.

debted here to the views and terminology of Socrates in Plato's *Gorg.* Aristotle conducts his ethical enquiry in the conceptual terms of the contradictory claims of Socrates that he performs the task of the *true statesman*, whose utmost effort is devoted to the quality of the citizens, to their soul, while he rejects to be a politician. Clearly, in *Nic. Eth.* the task of the knowledge of *politikē* is not to govern. By this reading of *Nic. Eth.* 1, we lose on the one hand the element of genuine political theory, but given the deficiencies we exposed above, this is not a real loss, rather, it rescues Aristotle from charges of political naïveté. At any rate, for this loss we are more than compensated by the gain of his insights into ethics he offers, and they are the objective of *Nic. Eth.* On the other hand, *Pol.* does not start a political study which implements the aims of *Nic. Eth.*

I am reaching different conclusions than Schofield, who claimed that the ethics and politics are one subject which is called "politics", and characterized "as its aim the achievement of the good for human beings" (2000, 310). However, the approach of reducing the subject of two substantial philosophical works, *Nic. Eth.* and *Pol.*, to a single aim raises quite serious concerns, and the one aim identified by Schofield does not do justice to the wealth of issues addressed in *Pol.*, to their complexity and to the penetrating depth of the analyses undertaken – in particular to the dominating interest in clarifying theoretical issues, the definition of the *polis* and the determination of its nature, the explanation of the existence of a greater number of constitutions and of the differences between them, or the causes for discord among citizens which can culminate in civil war (*stasis*). The achievement of the good for human beings" (Schofield 2000, 310) is not one of them. Aristotle was aware of the wide scope of the topics examined in *Pol.*, and his magisterial undertaking transcends a single objective. This grand endeavor, adequately described by Zeller (see the motto above) is trivialized by reducing the wide range of issues addressed and aims pursued to one aim. My reading does not offer a harmonizing view concerning the relationship between ethics and politics but emphasizes the fundamental differences. The two projects of *Nic. Eth.* and *Pol.* have nothing in common.

The view that ethics and politics are one and the same subject invites to crossover in a lopsided manner by which the specific objective, in our study that of *Pol.*, is characterized in terms extrapolated from the ethics while *Pol.* is not analyzed, presented and valued in its own terms: in *Pol.* 2.2 these terms are first the theoretical interest in identifying the *polis* as the one central notion of political philosophy and defining its constituent elements of people, their qualities and interactions either in commercial dealings or as governing or being governed – concerns the "politics" of *Nic. Eth.* 1 does not encompass. In fact, in *Nic. Eth.* 1.1 the *polis* that is a community of people does not exist, let alone constitute the fundamental concept, as it had to be clarified in *Pol.* 2.2 first in order to address an issue like com-

mon property. Second, there is the very practical objective in *Pol.* 2.2, namely, to save the *polis* from destruction (1261a21 f.; b8 f.). The issue of a constitution's stability dominates *Pol.* but is not considered in *Nic. Eth.* 1.1 to 2.1, where the focus is on the *quality* of a constitution as being *good* or *bad* (*agathē, phaulē*) depending on the success of the legislator's efforts to make citizens good by habituation (1104b3 – 6), but not on its stability. Clearly, both works are better understood by analyzing them according to their own objectives, and this is my approach: to compare passages from one work with identical or related subjects covered in the other and to bring out the differences in content and purpose.

My concern is of a conceptual nature since the results of studies on *Pol.* seem to me to aim at formulating insights of a universal character which simplify matters from a narrow perspective e. g. of a single concept of the human good or human flourishing pursued both in *Nic. Eth.* and *Pol.*[8] without doing justice to the interest in *Pol.* of addressing seriously almost every scenario possible, including two very different recommendations for making the rule of tyrants last (*Pol.* 5.10 – 11). Aristotle's remarkable approach in *Pol.* consists in addressing, explaining and defining in a systematic way the essential concepts of political theory and in offering a mass of detailed historical information whose content and significance for political theory must not get lost by reducing it to one general concept, or a few at best.

Above, I called the Aristotelian notion of *politikē* in *Nic. Eth.* 1.1 1094a28 – b6 a caricature of political theory and argued that it is not a concept Aristotle pursues there, or in *Pol.* Contrasting *Pol.* with *Nic. Eth.* places the issues discussed in *Nic. Eth.*, like *politikē*, into their wider Aristotelian context as part of the philosophy of human affairs which is completed by the addition of *Pol.* and can only be understood as a whole by taking fully the content of *Pol.* into account, and this larger perspective should counteract a tendency I sense, namely to elevate the positions of *Nic. Eth.* in an almost idolatrous manner as great concepts Aristotle developed. This is not only the case for *politikē* of *Nic. Eth.* 1.1 but also for the concept of professional expertise and productive crafts. However, the interaction between members of the *polis* can be that of experts who exchange goods (*Pol.* 2.2) or that of their contribution to living or living well in a *polis* (4.4 1290b38 – 1291a4). By contrast, in *Nic. Eth.* 1.1, their interaction is presented as that of subordinate crafts which are under the control of architectonic arts, are "used" by them (1094b4 f.) and are pursued for the ends of the superordinate arts (1094a15 f.). However,

8 Bodéüs 1993, 3: "… the unity of purpose which clearly governs the elaboration of the two *Ethics* and the *Politics*." Balot 2015, 104 f.: "Aristotle's practical philosophy was unified whether Aristotle focused his attention on political particulars or on the highest questions of the human good."

this one-dimensional teleological model is not adopted in *Pol.* Including in one's analysis the specific notions of crafts as presented in *Pol.*, one recognizes that *Pol.* goes beyond the narrow parameters of *Nic. Eth.* Thus, it should be understood that there are Aristotelian alternatives to the model of the hierarchically arranged interaction of crafts according to *Nic. Eth.* 1.1. *Pol.* widens and enriches our understanding of Aristotle's thinking on this and all other central issues.

I prepared for the part of this study which deals with *Pol.*, with my first book of 1980 and the four volumes of my commentary (1991–2005), and their results (which I still generally share) are always present. However, here I will include in my analyses parts of *Nic. Eth.* as well, first to offer my understanding of them and to suggest reexamining some views, e. g. on the purpose assigned to forms of expertise in 1.1. In particular, *Nic. Eth.* will be used as a foil which allows me to contrast, demonstrate and highlight the – as I believe – always different objectives and dimensions in the discussion of common subjects in *Nic. Eth.* on the one hand and *Pol.* on the other. I came to the conclusion that only *Pol.* contains Aristotle's political philosophy which is not indebted to, and does not pursue the objectives of, the ethics.[9] His expressed intent at the end of *Nic. Eth.* that with the addition of *Pol.* he completes the philosophy of human affairs indicates clearly that the investigation of the issues addressed in *Nic. Eth.* does not cover the whole of the philosophy of human affairs, however, Aristotle does not claim that *Pol.* completes the ethical enquiry by adding details not addressed, as has been claimed. Something more important will be accomplished: the completion of the philosophy of human affairs.

Aristotle preempts in *Pol.* 2.1 a possible objection that his plan to contemplate the best political community could be perceived as stemming from a "desire to engage in clever trickery" (*sophizesthai boulomenōn*). He argues that both existing constitutions, which enjoy the reputation of having a good legal order, and those, that have been proposed by some theorists and are considered good, are actually "unsatisfactory" (*mē kalōs echein*). His intent is to further an understanding of "what is right and useful" (*to orthōs echon kai to chrēsimon*, 1260b27–36). Only Aristotle could make such a claim, in particular since the one theorist, whose political ideas he examines critically at considerable length, is nobody less than Plato whose constitutions outlined in *Rep.* and *Laws* are by this account unsatisfactory.

Perceived flaws in the work of one's predecessors are a good enough reason for a scholar to undertake a study of topics dealt with by others before, and

9 When Aristotle addresses in *Pol.* 7.1–2 the good life and happiness, then not because he is indebted to this concept of the ethics but because it was a central issue of Plato's political philosophy which Aristotle both identified and criticized (5 1264b15–24).

they are the reason for my study. I will examine many assumptions that are taken for granted in scholarship on Aristotle's *Pol.* and articulate, if needed, my points of disagreement. Nevertheless, criticism is not an aim in itself but is always the starting point for an attempt to advance the understanding of *Pol.*, or at least to propose readings that are not presently considered. Overall, I try to offer to the reader the wide range of Aristotle's views in their theoretical context. I chose the subtitle "Analyses – Interpretations" and by this emphasis I intended to offer insights into Aristotle's undogmatic thinking as a political philosopher which cannot be explained as the application of a few principles, let alone those from the ethics. Furthermore, I will point out that Aristotle cites Plato almost verbatim at times. Paying more attention to the fact that many Aristotelian analyses are inspired by Platonic arguments should help to better assess Aristotle's contribution to political philosophy. I do not read Aristotle's political philosophy as a development that started by closely following Platonic views and moved away eventually from such ideas until reaching complete independence in a new empirical approach as Jaeger 1923 had argued.[10] However, Plato's political philosophy is ever present in *Pol.* – in my view much more than is recognized –, and showing in which way Aristotle is indebted to Plato, or contradicts him, helps to describe, assess, and value his political philosophy in a better way.[11]

After an introduction, I will deal in the main part of this study, in chapters 2 to 9, first with *Nic. Eth.* 1, which is used so often for the understanding of the Aristotelian concept of "politics", and then with *Nic. Eth.* 10.10 which introduces the transition to *Pol.*, and in most cases I will compare the specific topics discussed in *Nic. Eth.* with issues dealt with in *Pol.* In chapters 10 to 13, I will turn to the two introductory chapters of *Pol.* 1 which outline central concepts of Aristotle's political philosophy, and I will examine these subjects as they are addressed in *Pol.* The final chapter 14 will summarize my reading that there is no political thinking in *Nic. Eth.* The translations of Greek passages are mine, except when noted otherwise.

I thank the editors of the Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, Professors Susanne Daub and Michael Erler, for accepting my study for publication. I asked Professor Scott Farrington, a former student of mine at the University of Colorado at Boulder, to review the manuscript of this study which was written by a non-native English speaker, and he agreed to undertake this enormous task. He did not only correct

10 For a critical assessment see Schütrumpf 1980, 288 – 298, cf. Schütrumpf, in *Polis.* 23, 2006, 286 – 301.

11 After Lear 2004, 5, remarked that scholars of Aristotle's theory of happiness in *Nic. Eth.* "have not made as much of the Platonic corpus" as they could have in his view, I extend this judgment to the whole of Aristotle's political theory and hope to show its relevance and Aristotle's debt to Plato on crucial issues.

obvious grammatical mistakes but also improved the manuscript in terms of its stylistic qualities. His concern became as well whether what I had written expressed what I might have meant to say. He forced me to reevaluate my arguments and made me often reconsider and rephrase my thought. I am responsible for all remaining imperfections.

The outside reader of my Habilitationsschrift on Aristotle's *Pol.* (published 1980[12]) was the classicist K. von Fritz, and at that early stage of my career I owed to his detailed report, in which his immense knowledge and good judgment are reflected, important directions for my future research and writing on Aristotle.

The goal of Aristotle's political writing on the best state, namely that "what is right and useful be recognized" (*Pol.* 2.1 1260b32 f.), remains a challenging standard for my own effort.

12 See the bibliography.